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**NEWS ANALYSIS**

Baghdad hit, Bosnia miss  
send message to Muslims

By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press  
7/2/93

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--When Iraqi agents plot in the dark to assassinate George Bush in Kuwait, the United States fires Tomahawk missiles into Iraqi intelligence headquarters in Baghdad.

When Serbian commandos murder Muslim men, women and children in broad daylight in Bosnia, the United States appears to send only a sympathy card.

President Bill Clinton said he sent a message to Saddam Hussein and other potential sponsors of terrorism with the strike on Baghdad: If you attack or plot against U.S. citizens and interests, the United States will retaliate.

Saddam may have gotten the message. Muslims in many countries, however, may have received a very different one: The so-called "Christian" West will punish any hostile action by an Islamic power but it won't lift a finger to stop the slaughter of Muslims in the heart of Europe.

Western powers have many good arguments for not becoming entangled in Yugoslavia's deadly disintegration. But such arguments don't convince many Muslims who watch Bosnian fellow believers die at the hands of the Serbs.

Muslim anger over what they see as a double standard that bloodies the hands of the West can only hurt Muslim-Christian relations, warn some observers. And it could fuel even more terrorist attacks by radical Islamic groups in the United States and Europe, like the World Trade Center bombing and the foiled plot to blow up the United Nations and other New York sites.

"The Muslims have learned to expect such things from the United States and the West," said Charles Beckett, a retired Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board staff member. "It just reaffirms for them that force often can only understand force. Terrorism is a way of expressing force in retaliation. If you don't have the army or navy to fight back, you have to do it more subtly."

Beckett, who worked among Muslims for more than a decade as a missionary in what is now Bangladesh, has been studying Muslim-Christian relations at Hartford (Conn.) Seminary.

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The destruction of Bosnia's Muslims is only the latest in a long list of Islam's grievances with the West but it is a particularly galling one. Many Muslims believe the United States could have pressured its allies long ago to stabilize Yugoslavia and save Bosnia if it had wanted to, according to Muslim specialists cited by Beckett.

"They feel (the inaction) is understandable because the West is embarrassed by the presence of Muslims in Europe in an autonomous state," Beckett said. "The increased infiltration of Muslims into Western Europe also is an embarrassment to some governments. Europeans (in the Muslim view) see it as a chance to rid themselves of an enclave of Muslims in Europe. The United States would deny that and it may not be our motive but it may be subtly involved in the thinking of some European leaders."

Increasingly violent and racist attacks on Muslim immigrants elsewhere in Europe, especially in Germany, only strengthen such a view in Islamic minds, Beckett added. And it comes as a bitter irony: Europeans have solemnly intoned the pledge "never again" ever since the Nazis attempted to exterminate European Jews and other ethnic minorities.

In a post-Cold War world marked by assaults on modern nation states by much older ethnic and religious forces, the Western powers and their allies may rue the day they turned their backs on Bosnian Muslims. Not only are more terrorist attacks in American and European cities a likely result, but support of attempts by Iranian-backed Islamic militants to overthrow moderate Muslim states such as Egypt will grow. Their goal: absolute rule of the "sharia," or Islamic law.

As for the attack on Baghdad, "It was probably a wasted exercise," said Jim Maroney, director of the Foreign Mission Board's Global Desk.

"They've lost a building. So what? Buildings aren't that important," Maroney said. "It's ideas and concepts that matter. And the attack didn't destroy anything as far as ideas and concepts ... (Militant Muslims have) hardened their position. It's going to just solidify more their hatred and anger and the feeling that we're Satan's children."

Christianity and the West are indistinguishable in many Muslim minds. So Christian groups in the Muslim world will continue to serve as convenient victims of anti-Western anger.

"The targets won't be missionaries, who have passports to leave, but will be Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Copts and others" indigenous to Muslim-dominated regions, Beckett predicted. "They'll be the victims. We may be inconvenienced. We may find it more difficult to work in Muslim countries, but that's nothing compared to burning down many churches in northern Nigeria or persecution in Sudan and other places."

Islam is anything but monolithic, as many Westerners mistakenly believe, Maroney and Beckett stressed. Muslims of various stripes differ over ancient theological disputes, politics, borders, ethnic divisions and aspirations. And not all Muslims believe the Bosnian tragedy is the fault of the West or the United States.

"Nobody dares to say that what is happening to Muslims in Bosnia is a reaction to what is happening to Christians in some Islamic countries," noted a Muslim commentator in the Arabic publication Akhir Sa'ah.

"If we try to sum up ... Islamic-Western dialogue in a couple of words, it would be like this: (Muslims) say (to the West), 'Give to us, help us, and save us, but do not forget that you are infidels and hell is your destiny.'"

When the United States rescued Kuwait from Iraq, Muslims said the reason was oil, the commentator continued. When U.S. forces entered Somalia to feed dying Muslims, Islamic clerics warned, "Beware, the (Christian) missionaries are on the move!" Now Muslims cry that the United States has abandoned Bosnian Muslims.

"Why do you (Muslims) not move to save your Arab or Muslim brothers?" the writer angrily demanded.

In fact, some Muslims have aided their Bosnian brethren -- not moderate Muslim nations, which fruitlessly call for Western action, but Iran and Afghanistan, which have sent holy warriors to Bosnia. Elsewhere, 150 armed Afghans tried to cross the border from Afghanistan into the former Soviet republic of Tajikistan July 2. The Tajik foreign ministry charged they were regular Afghan army troops sent to intervene in the Tajik civil war between Muslims and the government. Russian border guards reportedly killed and captured many of the Afghans, but fighting was continuing.

Such skirmishes point to a far larger threat:

Western inaction in dealing with Bosnia and the threat to Europe of a larger Balkan war "must demonstrate to ... Iran's ayatollahs that their campaign to take over the riches of the Persian Gulf and the Muslim republics of Central Asia will find little resistance," warned Arnold Beichman, research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution.

"For the immediate future, the West's most serious geopolitical challenge is Iran's unconcealed theocratic imperialism, which seeks to export its medieval and totalitarian ideology -- Islamic fundamentalism -- throughout the world by whatever means necessary."

That challenge ultimately could make both Bosnia and Iraq look like sideshows.

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Gang ministry manual available  
from SBC's Home Mission Board

Baptist Press  
7/2/93

By Sarah Zimmerman

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--A manual on ministries to gang members is available to churches and associations from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

The result of 17 months of research by a Southern Baptist task force, the manual was introduced during Home Missions Week at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center.

Christians considering a ministry to gang members should network with other organizations involved in gang intervention rather than attempt the ministry alone, said Lora Smith, director of weekday ministries for Victory Baptist Chapel in Cleveland, Ohio.

Smith, a member of the task force that compiled the manual, said she became involved in gang ministry when youth from her church met a 17-year-old gang member who already had 88 felony charges against him.

Only 10 percent of people who identify with a gang are "hard-core" members whose entire lives are involved in gang activities. Thirty percent are in training to be hard-core members but 60 percent are "wannabes," Smith said.

While intervention ministries may have the greatest impact on "wannabes," Smith said they can be among the most dangerous because they have something to prove.

Intervention should take place before children become involved in gangs -- as early as kindergarten and first grade, Smith said. "The earlier the better," she said. "If you wait until they're 16, they're already hard-core."

Children are attracted to gangs because they perceive gangs have a lot of prestige, Smith said. Children also see gang members as living out their fantasies with money, power and freedom.

Gangs are the result of a myriad of problems, from a lack of job opportunities to children with too much unstructured and unsupervised time, Smith said. Other factors contributing to gang involvement are low self-esteem, the need to belong, need for protection, lack of social activities and lack of positive male role models.

Profit from illegal drug trade and gun dealing is another motivation for gang membership, Smith said. Gangs based in Los Angeles, Chicago and Miami have established followers in cities along the nation's interstate highway system to facilitate drug and gun trafficking, Smith said.

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All the problems leading to gang involvement require a long-term commitment from Christians who minister to gang members, Smith said.

The HMB manual includes information on deciphering gang graffiti and hand signals, warning signs of gang involvement and ministry models. The manual, which costs \$19.95, can be ordered by calling Home Mission Board customer services, 1-800-634-2462 and requesting item 632-35P.

Members of the task force also are available to speak to groups considering a gang ministry. To reach a member of the task force, contact Ann Putman, HMB associate director of church and community ministries, at (404) 898-7438.

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Baptists criticize Clinton,  
Senate after Flynn confirmation      By Tom Strode

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WASHINGTON (BP)--The effort of Southern Baptists and others to reverse the United States diplomatic relationship with the Vatican quietly ended on the Senate floor.

In a voice vote June 30, the Senate confirmed Boston Mayor Raymond Flynn as ambassador to the Vatican.

Only Sen. Jesse Helms, R.-N.C., and a Southern Baptist, voiced any opposition. In a statement on the floor, Helms said he would have voted against the nomination had there been a roll call vote. He also placed in the Congressional Record a 1993 Southern Baptist Convention resolution opposing diplomatic ties with the Vatican.

"I'm very disappointed at the Clinton administration's decision to continue this unwise and unconstitutional policy of having an ambassadorial relationship with the Vatican," said Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"I am distressed both at the Senate's action and the Clinton administration's insensitivity to the unconstitutionality of this course of action. The president had a golden opportunity to correct this disastrous mistake made by President Reagan in 1984," Land said.

Oliver Thomas, general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee, said in a written statement, "This action confers special privileges on and grants special access to one particular denomination. Both President Clinton and the Senate ought to know better."

Helms said he had no problem with Flynn's character or ability. Flynn is a pro-life Catholic.

"My problem is that President Clinton has nominated Mr. Flynn -- and the Senate is about to confirm him -- to serve as ambassador at a place where there should be no U.S. ambassador at all," Helms said before the vote. "I would be equally strenuous if it should be proposed that an envoy be sent to represent the U.S. government at some geographic entity of the Baptist Church."

The SBC resolution placed in the record by Helms was adopted June 17 at the convention's annual meeting in Houston. It reaffirmed the convention's opposition to diplomatic ties with the Vatican and assured Roman Catholics the SBC was not acting on the basis of bigotry and would like to continue to work with them on moral issues.

The Christian Life Commission first asked President Clinton in early December not to appoint an ambassador to the Vatican, contending a Southern Baptist who says he supports church-state separation should understand the First Amendment problems in such a relationship.

Later in December, Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the National Association of Evangelicals also requested Clinton terminate diplomatic ties with the Vatican. In February, the CLC, NAE and three other bodies -- Church of the Brethren, Presbyterian Church of the USA and Seventh-day Adventist Church -- mailed a similar letter to the president.

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Nearly every Protestant group in the country opposed Reagan's appointment of the first ambassador to the Vatican in 1984. This time, several of those groups chose not to be involved in a joint effort to convince Clinton to end diplomatic ties with the Vatican.

In questions submitted for the record prior to a hearing, Helms asked Flynn if he, as a pro-lifer, would defend the Clinton administration's pro-choice position.

Flynn said he expected to discuss "population policy issues" in his role and "will effectively present the policies of the United States government in this area as I would on any other issue."

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New Orleans administrator  
accepts post at Southeastern

By Norman Miller

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7/2/93

Wake Forest, N.C. (BP)--Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary President Paige Patterson has announced that Southeastern trustees have elected Bart C. Neal to the seminary's administrative staff as vice president for external affairs.

Neal, 53, elected in a telephone canvass of Southeastern trustees in June, leaves New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he served in various capacities for 15 years.

"I am grateful the trustees chose me to serve alongside Dr. Patterson," Neal said. "There is a new day at Southeastern and I am thrilled to be a part of it." Neal will join Southeastern's staff July 28.

"The challenges that lie ahead of Southeastern challenge me. I'll meet these challenges with the same vision Dr. Patterson has for Southeastern," Neal said. "This vision sees theological education incomplete unless it results in lost souls being saved, churches being planted, fed and grown, and the needs of our world being met," he said. "And I want to do everything I possibly can to bring this vision into sharp focus so that Southern Baptists will see the need to support seminary training more tangibly than ever."

Patterson said, "The remarkable thing about Dr. Neal is his versatility. He is a multi-talented man; he served New Orleans seminary as director of admissions, registrar, vice president for development and assistant professor of church administration. He is a gifted musician who has worked in music evangelism and been a minister of music on the staffs of some of the larger churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, and he also holds an earned doctorate."

Neal will have "some, though limited, teaching responsibilities," Patterson said. "I prefer to have teachers who can be administrators and administrators who can teach; this shares the work among all of us and it is, I believe, good stewardship of the funds Southeastern receives from the Cooperative Program."

Neal holds three degrees from Southern Baptist institutions: a bachelor's in music from Baylor University and a master of religious education and doctor of education from New Orleans Seminary. He is married to Edith Latta Neal; they have two grown children.

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Experts address trends  
for preaching in the '90s By Chip Alford & Charles Willis

Baptist Press  
7/2/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--The communications boom of the late 20th century has done something to Americans. It's shortened their attention spans.

That's a fact preachers may want to note if they want to communicate biblical truths in today's world.

"Pastors are being compared with (news anchors) Tom Brokaw and Peter Jennings. (Churchgoers) sit down on Sunday morning and they expect a certain level of communicative skills from their pastor," said Michael Dudit, editor of "Preaching" magazine and compiler/editor of the "Handbook of Contemporary Preaching" recently released by Broadman & Holman Publishers.

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Many pastors are shortening their sermons to compensate for decreasing attention spans, Duduit said. Others are exploring other creative ways to capture the interest of listeners.

"Clarity is essential," he said, "and you have to have a lot of illustration. The story has to become increasingly important."

Harold Bryson, preaching and worship consultant for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, said illustrations are no longer just the "window" to the sermon; they are becoming the "truth" of the sermon.

"They are being used to tell the story," he said. "Sermon points are being related to the illustration."

Both preaching experts agreed topical preaching with a heavy emphasis on practical application also is becoming more common in Southern Baptist churches.

"The thing people in the pews are looking for is, How do I take this (sermon) and apply it to my life? People are being drawn to that practical dimension of taking Scripture and applying it at home, on the job and in the marketplace," Duduit said.

Bryson said topical preaching is coming to the forefront because "it is the front door of where people are listening."

"To be honest with you," he explained, "our greatest problem in preaching is secularity -- that people, even Christian people, come (to church) with a secular mindset. And, therefore, when they hear a life need addressed, that's a front door, and then we can take them to the biblical principle."

"If you look at the life of Jesus, he really taught that way a lot. With the woman at the well, he started with a drink of water. He didn't start with her husband."

Is there a danger in placing too much attention on topical preaching at the expense of expository sermons on Bible books?

"There is a danger in any kind of preaching, whether it is expository or topical," Bryson said. "In expository preaching, you may just expose what was happening in the first century church. And then there is the danger that you might take a hot topic like divorce or AIDS and not even come close with any biblical principles."

"I'm a homiletical heretic," Bryson continued. "I think we've developed a false hierarchy of preaching, and we think that expository is more biblical than textual, and textual is more biblical than topical. That's really a misnomer."

"There's no method of preaching that can't expose truth. Preaching is successful when a human need is addressed and biblical authority is expressed. These two things are absolute."

In a recent interview with "Facts and Trends," a BSSB news and information publication, Bryson shared a number of other trends related to preaching in the 1990s:

-- the emergence of a new literature dealing with those who listen to the sermon.

"We've studied the preacher. We've studied the sermon. But now we're realizing that we may need to study the listener more," Bryson said.

He cited a number of new books on the subject, such as "Surviving the Sermon, A Guide to Preaching for Those Who Have to Listen" by David J. Schlafer and "Pew Rights for People Who Listen to Sermons" by Roger E. Van Harn.

The books "represent a new vista of understanding for me," Bryson said, adding they emphasize "empathetic imagination" -- knowing the needs of people and finding creative ways to address them in sermons.

-- a renewed interest in matching the sermon content with the biblical text.

"I think that sometimes our real problem is that our sermons have truth but they have no relationship to the biblical text," Bryson explained. "We need to avoid manipulating Scripture to preach the 'sermon of the day' we'd like to preach. That's called accommodation. When the intent of the text and the intent of the sermon come together, that's biblical preaching."

-- an alarming rise in stress levels and ministerial burnout among pastors.

"Comparison is one of the real problems here," Bryson said. "A lot of pastors compare themselves to where their friends are (in ministry) and that is a futile comparison.

"Discouragement also comes because of a constant preoccupation with work," he said. "Pastors discuss church and preaching with their family and friends. They have it for breakfast, lunch and supper. They never change their diet. They don't take out time for their family, or for rest and relaxation."

Though breakthroughs in communications technology will likely continue to have an impact on preaching in the years ahead, Duduit has an encouraging word for pastors who may be somewhat worried about keeping up.

"I thoroughly believe preaching is going to survive and thrive in the 21st century," he said. "When movies and TV came on board, many people thought the stage was dead. Yet year after year more money is used to buy theater tickets because it is a different experience from sitting in your living room watching television.

"In much the same way, something unique and even mystical happens in worship as a preacher, inspired by the Holy Spirit, unfolds the Word of God and shares with the congregation what that means in their lives today. That is something that cannot be replaced by the TV preacher or in any other place. It is a very powerful tool of God," Duduit said.

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Preparing the preacher  
helps prepare the sermon

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press  
7/2/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Sermon preparation, as easy or as difficult as it may be for some individual pastors, can involve more work and offer more possibilities for success or failure than some pulpiteers may be aware.

Being well prepared for Sunday morning in the 1990s means far more than having the time-honored three points and a poem, according to contributors to the "Handbook of Contemporary Preaching," recently released by Broadman & Holman Publishers.

For some pastors, the personal preparation is as important as the study and organization of a sermon.

"On Saturday mornings I write the sermon I have been working on all week," related one of the contributors. "In the middle of this exercise, about 9:30, I go to the empty worship center ... I go and sit in the pews. I will sit where a widow usually sits and think about her and what she may expect when she comes to worship. I sat for a long time one Saturday morning in the place a 15-year-old occupies ... It changed me. It changed the way I thought about young people ... It made me want to preach sermons to which the young man would listen and be benefited."

The contributor of that material and the chapter on "Preparing the Preacher" is Frank Pollard, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jackson, Miss.

"Preachers must be more than sermonic disc jockeys playing others' creations or maybe their own," Pollard wrote on the issue of preparing to communicate the gospel effectively.

Michael Duduit, editor of the handbook and of "Preaching," a bi-monthly professional journal published by Preaching Resources, is executive director of the American Academy of Ministry, based in Louisville, Ky. He also will assume responsibilities this year as visiting professor of preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Duduit said his work at "Preaching" magazine "has given me an opportunity to be involved with some of the leading preachers and teachers of preaching." He said the idea for the handbook came out of his belief that the preaching ministry would benefit if these people were to "write to their colleagues out of their own areas of strength."

He said the 607-page volume is practical content for pastors in local churches as well as for ministerial students in seminary. The text offers advice, how-to guidelines, recommended readings, personal anecdotes and historical examples.

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Among subject areas in the 51 chapters are theology, history, tradition and literature of preaching. Discussions of contemporary preaching methods include expository, textual, topical, doctrinal and narrative preaching. Ten of the chapters deal with sermon preparation; another 10 chapters cover preaching and the biblical text.

Other chapters discuss the voice, the visual and preaching with and without notes. Preaching as it relates to ministry, worship, pastoral care, administration, education, missions and church growth are included, as well as preaching related to the family, the world of work, social concerns, evangelism, conflict and family crises. Ethics, creativity and the contemporary world are treated in relationship to preaching as well.

In all, 50 preachers and professors of preaching offer insights and personal experiences with the failures and successes of their careers. Duduit describes them as "evangelical in style, but not all Southern Baptists, from whom we have a lot to learn."

The names include Paul Borden of Denver Seminary in Colorado; Timothy George, dean of the Beeson Divinity School at Samford University, Birmingham, Ala.; Calvin Miller, professor of communications and ministry studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; and Lloyd John Ogilvie, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Hollywood, Calif. Other widely known names include Brian Harbour, Peter Rhea Jones, Richard Melick, Joel Gregory, John Killinger, Wayne E. Oates, Nelson Price, William Hinson, Ken Hemphill and William E. Hull.

Duduit said the volume, 18 months in the making, can provide the average pastor who has been out of seminary for several years up-to-date issues related to preaching. Narrative preaching, for example, is a topic that may not have been dealt with in seminary several years ago, he said.

"Here are some of the best preachers in America walking the preacher through from preparation to the evaluation after the sermon has been preached," Duduit said. "Outstanding biblical scholars who are active, effective preachers in their own right share their insights into preaching from that genre."

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A list of additional books on preaching is posted in the SBCNet Newsroom.

Sermons must be prepared  
for the ear, consultant says

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press  
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NASHVILLE (BP)--For all those pastors who have composed a beautiful sermon on paper that, frankly, didn't "preach" from the pulpit, Harold Bryson has a suggestion.

"Preachers need to speak through their sermons before they ever preach them and see how they sound," said Bryson, preaching and worship consultant in the Baptist Sunday School Board's church growth-Sunday school division.

"So many times preachers prepare a sermon in beautifully written paragraphs but they just don't communicate from the pulpit on Sunday. Sermons are heard, not read. They need to be prepared for the ear, not the eye," Bryson said in an interview with "Facts and Trends," a monthly newsletter for church leaders.

Bryson, formerly professor of preaching at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, said the first step a preacher must take in preparing a sermon is to prepare himself spiritually.

"It's called spiritual formation. The pastor must be devoted to a lifestyle of prayer, Bible study and meditation. He must be involved in intercessory prayer for his members and in petition for his sermon. I think a lot of times we set aside time for the preparation of the sermon, but we set very little time aside for meditation and prayer."

Bryson, who still finds time to preach almost every Sunday in addition to his consulting work, said he gets his sermon ideas in one of three ways: through Bible study and academic reading, prayer and meditation or from hearing people discuss their inner needs.

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"It is very important for a preacher to understand the audience he is preaching to -- the specific needs of his congregation," he said.

He said preachers should ask themselves three questions when preparing their sermon manuscript:

1) Am I true to the biblical text?  
2) Have I related my sermon to human needs and to the audience I am speaking to?

3) Will people get my point the way my sermon is organized?

Bryson suggested several tips for improving sermon organization and content:

-- Keep a notebook for recording sermon ideas and illustrations.  
-- Work to understand the ancient meaning of the biblical text, its historical context and its contemporary relevance today.

-- Choose some "selected critics" in your church -- preferably members who are not active leaders -- to evaluate your sermons. Invite them into your office for dialogue and discussion. This can help you identify strengths/weaknesses and generate ideas of how to better communicate ideas.

-- Develop a habit of disciplined academic reading.

-- Use "picture preaching" to help the congregation visualize what you are preaching about. For example, describe the images of the historical scene and make listeners feel they are there watching the event happen.

Preachers must realize the learning process in sermon preparation and delivery will never end, Bryson said.

"Preaching is a pilgrimage not to be punctuated with a period. It always has commas in it," he said.

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California church, pastor  
find new life together

By Mark A. Wyatt

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7/2/93

THREE RIVERS, Calif. (BP)--Alice Butler's index finger slices through the air as she describes years of alternating growth and decline at First Baptist Church in Three Rivers, Calif.

Located near the entrance to Sequoia National Park, the church was organized in 1958. Within four years the church averaged 150 in attendance with a 20-voice choir. But its condition has been erratic, especially in recent years, according to Butler.

"It's been like this," Butler said, moving her finger sharply up and down, "but mostly like this," as she dropped her hand suddenly toward the floor.

Just over a year ago, First Baptist Church was on the verge of disbanding. With only an interim pastor, the church had dwindled to a half dozen members. Fewer than that attended Sunday school.

There was no money to pay a full-time pastor and little hope of finding one willing to take on what seemed to be an impossible task -- resurrecting a dying church.

Today, visitors and a host of new members notice an unmistakable spirit of excitement and growth at Three Rivers. It is apparent even before entering the quaint, A-frame sanctuary. As if to underscore the new pastor's statement that the church is "hurting for parking space," cars and pick-up trucks crowd around a newly acquired double-wide portable classroom being set up next to an existing education building.

The excitement also was evident during a recent Sunday morning worship service even when the pastor announced a visiting vocal group's performance scheduled for the next night.

"You'd better get here early if you want to get a back seat," quipped Mannon Wallace.

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At 61, Wallace may not fit a particular image of the dynamic young pastor one might expect to tackle such a challenge. But church members declare what he lacks in youth, he more than makes up for in energy, enthusiasm and love for the growing congregation.

That's because like the church he serves today, Wallace knows what it's like to come back from the brink.

For years Wallace enjoyed a rewarding ministry as pastor of First Baptist Church in Crescent City. Before that he was a pastor in Wyoming, Montana and North Dakota. He was an executive board member and two-term president of the former Northern Plains Baptist Convention.

But seven years after he arrived in northern California, something happened that rocked his life and ministry. After their five children were grown, Wallace's wife left him. "She didn't want to be a pastor's wife anymore," he said.

After his wife moved out the marriage was dissolved. Wallace found support and encouragement from many in his church and community. But others spurned him.

Soon it became too painful for Wallace to continue, so he resigned his pastorate and began attending another church. When the pastor of that church resigned, Wallace agreed to fill in as interim pastor.

Still, Wallace knew it was a temporary position and by Easter 1992 he was ready for a change in his life.

"I had decided I wasn't going to pastor anymore," Wallace told The California Southern Baptist newsjournal. He paused, smiling gently, before adding, "But the Lord had other plans."

Those plans involved Hooper Campbell, retired director of missions for Sequoia Baptist Association and three-time interim pastor at First Baptist Church of Three Rivers. Campbell had been an early encourager and mentor to Wallace after Wallace became a Christian while serving in the United States Army at Fort Bliss near El Paso, Texas.

Some 40 years later, Campbell decided to pay Wallace a visit while vacationing in northern California. During that visit Campbell told Wallace about the Three Rivers church and asked him to go see it.

"I didn't intend to pastor anywhere else," Wallace said. Reluctantly, however, he agreed to visit Three Rivers and when he did Campbell invited him to preach.

Within a few weeks he was back again, preaching in view of a call. Afterward, the church voted unanimously, 6-0, and Mannon Wallace became their pastor. But even as he began the new pastorate, Wallace could not tell how he would be accepted.

"I'm divorced. I wasn't sure how to handle that. I didn't know how the people would handle that," Wallace explained. "The old-line, traditional Southern Baptists who are extra-conservative would simply say this is not scriptural."

But Wallace said his own painful experience has become something of an asset in his ministry. "I think I have a greater compassion and understanding. Many people have been attracted (to First Baptist)" after hearing about Wallace. "They're looking for someone who can minister to them. I tell them, 'I know where you've been.' I don't condone it, but people need to be ministered to.

"God doesn't always put us on the shelf," Wallace said.

Despite the church's once-strong Southern Baptist roots, Wallace arrived to find First Baptist was no longer "steeped in the traditions of the Old South." As a result, Wallace said, "I've been able to do things here I couldn't do in another church."

For the first five months he lived in his 19-foot travel trailer parked on church property. "It didn't cost the church anything for rent and I had a telephone so it worked out fine," Wallace recalled.

Uncertain how wary residents of the small mountain community would receive uninvited visits from an outsider, he began calling them on the phone. He also placed an ad in the local newspaper. On his first Sunday as pastor, church attendance soared to 30.

In his sermon that Sunday, Wallace pledged "to build a New Testament church." He said it would be "Bible-based, Christ-centered, Spirit-led, prayer-supported and people-oriented."

Even though there were not enough trained workers, last October Wallace led the church to start four new Sunday school classes. By January, Bible study attendance had grown more than tenfold and worship attendance passed the 125 mark.

One year after Wallace's arrival the church is still growing, thanks in part to a strong emphasis on evangelism.

"Christianity is personal ... it's a personal relationship with Jesus Christ," Wallace told the congregation in a recent sermon. Then he added, "It may be personal, but it is not private."

Wallace and other church members had demonstrated that the day before by visiting 85 homes in the community, telling residents about Jesus and inviting them to church.

When Steve and Christy Wood went forward to join the church, they were not surprised by the warm reception they got. Christy's mother, Marge Seeberger, a member of the church, had invited them to come. But they credit Wallace's open, welcoming style with helping them feel like they belonged.

"We were praying for a church like this for five or six years," said Christy, one of the top horse trainers in California.

"We were searching and, boom, we found it," added Steve, an arson investigator for the California Department of Forestry.

"It's unbelievable what's happened in the past six to eight months," Christy said. "It happened real fast. People started hearing about this man who's preaching the Word of God. They know it's Christian love, not a social gathering.

"It isn't a facade, not like a lot of churches," she added.

Steve Wood said others also are seeing the impact the church's dramatic turnaround is having on the community. "It's touching the lives of a lot of people."

Soft-spoken Carl Wheeler, a self-employed auto body repairman, said the "miracle" his family experienced is just one example.

"When I came (to First Baptist) my wife and I were split up and our daughter was living somewhere else," Wheeler said. Now the family is back together, attending Bible study and worship, and enjoying the weekly church fellowship and other activities.

"It feels like a church," Wheeler explained. "The main thing is the spirit of the church" and its pastor, Wheeler continued. "He seems anointed."

"There's no telling how many people have been saved," added Alice Butler.

Five new converts awaiting baptism will have to wait a little longer. A new baptistry, the church's first, is being installed. Previously, baptisms were held in a nearby river or at another church in the area. When Wallace arrived, however, installing an indoor baptistry became a "top priority," according to Alice Butler.

Wallace expects the baptistry "will bring our fellowship together" and "help the church identify with what it means to be Baptist."

That includes supporting missions, he said. First Baptist gives 10 percent of its undesignated offerings to the association and the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention.

A new baby grand piano graces the sanctuary where additional pews have been brought in to accommodate the past year's growth.

And instead of having plenty of time to write, as he initially expected, Wallace keeps busy with ministry, outreach and training. Recently he was named church growth director for Sequoia Baptist Association and he is a state consultant for Great Commission Breakthrough, a Southern Baptist church growth program.

"It's amazing," Wallace said. "The community thought this church was dead, but it has come alive. Now Three Rivers is talking about First Baptist Church."

What is the key for the dramatic change? Wallace said "ministering to people where they are" and "doing some things outside the lines" made a difference.

Adapting worship and music to meet people's needs is important, he said.

"People want praise and worship," said Wallace, who involves church members in preparing the order of worship. He stresses the need for order but added, "Worship needs to be loose for most people."

And most importantly, Wallace said, "Let the people know the church is there for ministry."

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Earl Guinn receives annual  
outstanding educator award

By Tim Fields

Baptist Press  
7/2/93

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (BP)--The recipient of the Education Commission's annual Charles D Johnson Outstanding Educator Award told presidents and deans of Southern Baptist-related seminaries, colleges and schools that their hardest task will be to chart their institutional ships through troubled waters.

G. Earl Guinn, 81, president emeritus of Louisiana College, was presented the award June 28 in Riverside, Calif. during the annual meeting of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools at California Baptist College in Riverside.

Guinn warned educators they will be pressured by people and issues. "However," he said, "an institution betrays its character and its purpose when it succumbs to anti-intellectualism and offers billiard ball mentality that refuses to receive the truth, whatever its source."

Guinn said that, on the other hand, "The college does not have a place for self-appointed intellectual snobs who see no place for the Christian faith in higher education and who do not have high regard for the sacred Scriptures."

Guinn, 81, said his reaction to being named as recipient of the award was one of surprise, puzzlement and gratitude.

"I suppose my greatest achievement has been to survive," he said. "I know of no educator whose service has always been a grand and glorious time. It was my lot to be the president of a Baptist college located in a highly prejudiced community at the time of the integration crisis.

"I made my position known long before the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court. It was significant to integrate a Baptist college when Baptist deacons were standing at the doorways of their church to keep people from another race from entering to worship God," Guinn recalled.

"It was my lot to serve during the turbulent '60s when many felt that authority existed only to be deposed and they were born for the sole purpose of undermining constituted authority and deregulating behavior.

"I have known hard times, but they were no worse than yours promise to be," Guinn told the educators.

"You are faced with the responsibility of maintaining the classical and Christian ideal while liberating and enriching individuals, at a time when greater emphasis and value are being placed on technology and when success is measured by the masses in terms of productivity and consumption.

"You are charged with the responsibility of maintaining the democratic and social ideal in a time when political correctness is abroad in the land and you are having to deal with a new kind of segregation due to the multiculturalism on the campuses."

Van Quick, Education Commission chairman and vice president for student affairs at Mississippi College, said, "Guinn is one of the great Southern Baptist teachers and has taught at five of our Southern Baptist seminaries. He has given more than 60 years of his life to Baptist education."

Quick said Guinn had served on the Southern Baptist Education Commission on three different occasions and was chairman of the commission from 1973-74.

Guinn, who received a bachelor's degree from Louisiana College in 1937, attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and earned the master's and doctor of theology degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

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He served as senior professor of Christian preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., president of Louisiana College from 1951-1975, chairman of the department of preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, from 1948-51 and pastor of churches in Louisiana from 1937-48.

During the meeting, the presidents and deans also recognized Arthur L. Walker Jr., for his 15 years of service as executive secretary of the association and executive director of the Education Commission. Walker will retire from both positions September 1.

The educators also recognized Juanita Wilkinson, who retired March 31 as administrative assistant of the Education Commission after 17 years.

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CORRECTION: In the 7/1/93 (BP) story "FMB plugs financial gap, postpones organization study," substitute the following for the fifth paragraph:

In other action, trustees voted to eliminate planned capital expenditures overseas and shift some funds to plug a \$3.2 million gap left in this year's budget by a shortfall in the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions.

(Explanation: The phrase "dip into the board's assets" was removed. The action merely changed the way the funds would be spent and did not dip into assets.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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EDITORS' NOTE: Please insert the following in the 7/1/93 (BP) story "House passes 'Hyde' version" after 15th paragraph, which ends with "... outlining the strategy to his colleagues."

Before the bill reached the floor, Natcher received a letter from 56 Southern Baptist ministers in Kentucky supporting the Hyde Amendment and asking the 21-term congressman to go to the Rules Committee to protect the amendment against a point of order. All the signers were from Natcher's district except Charles Stewart, president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention and pastor of Rose Hill Baptist Church in Ashland.

The CLC's Smith delivered the letter to Natcher in a personal meeting June 28. Natcher reiterated his refusal to go to the Rules Committee. On the floor, however, he asked House members to vote against the "motion to rise" so the abortion issue could be considered.

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