

# (BP)

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93-201

- ATLANTA -- Decline in baptisms pondered by Baptist evangelism leaders.
- ATLANTA -- Study shows 6,001 churches baptized no one last year; list.
- ATLANTA -- 'Here's Hope' planning material available.
- ATLANTA -- Christians must overcome fear, apathy, pride to reach cities.
- ATLANTA -- Henry Blackaby to broaden work in prayer, spiritual awakening.
- ATLANTA -- HMB OKs new partnership, names research director.
- NASHVILLE -- 'Experiencing God' teleconference set; list.
- TEXAS -- Amarillo Baptist hospital derails Nativity challenge.
- NASHVILLE -- The Baptist Hymnal released in Home & Family version.
- NASHVILLE -- True identity found in Bible, Draper tells church leaders.
- NASHVILLE -- Swindoll announces move to Nashville.
- FLORIDA -- Baptist student directors plan for '95 evangelism involvement.
- NASHVILLE -- Hope offered in 'Dodge City' by BSSB employee, LIFE course; photo.
- BRAZIL -- Missionary Sherry Akins dies of heart attack in Brazil; photo.
- GEORGIA -- Dorothy Williams dies after battle with cancer.
- NASHVILLE -- Ed Young to be featured on Dobson radio broadcast.
- GEORGIA -- Smyth & Helyws 3-year mark: 38 titles, 23 employees.

Decline in baptisms pondered  
by Baptist evangelism leaders

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press  
12/8/93

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (BP)--Confronted with two consecutive years of decreased baptisms, Southern Baptist evangelism leaders called for intentional soul winning to be every church's priority.

The estimated number of baptisms for 1993 is 350,000, down 5 percent from 367,000 baptisms in 1992. Steve Whitten, director of the Home Mission Board's program research department, presented the statistics during a Dec. 2-5 meeting of state evangelism directors in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

"My heart is deeply burdened, grieved and broken because of what (the estimate) reflects," said Darrell Robinson, Home Mission Board vice president for evangelism. "It is indicative of a desperate need for revival."

The two years of decline follow four years of increased baptisms which peaked at 397,000 in 1991.

Whitten based his estimate on interviews with state directors of evangelism. The official baptism count, based on Uniform Church Letters, will be prepared by the Baptist Sunday School Board and presented early next year.

Every church needs an intentional strategy for evangelism and a goal for baptisms, Robinson said. Without a focus on the biblical doctrine of salvation, churches can become more interested in creating a climate of warmth and friendliness than approaching people about their need for Christ, he said.

Churches also need structures that underscore evangelism. "Use of time, money and personnel reveal priorities," Robinson said. "We've got to get evangelism in the church calendar."

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Evangelism must be relational and intentional yet confrontational, said John Sullivan, executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention. He said Southern Baptists must deliberately reach out to others, even people who seem religious, such as members of cults. But he said Christians can't evangelize without confronting people with their need to repent.

Terms such as target audience, niche marketing, homogenous churches and user-friendly churches indicate Southern Baptists are in danger of developing a theology of exclusion, Sullivan said. Rather than market the church, he said, "We ought to church the market."

Larry Lewis, Home Mission Board president, offered five suggestions to increase baptisms:

1) Start satellite units. Lewis recommended the "key church" concept as a model for churches to use to start other congregations. First Baptist Church of Dallas reported more than 900 baptisms in 1992, Lewis noted, and more than 600 of those were from its 31 off-campus congregations.

2) Soul-winning modeled by leaders. Lewis cited Ed Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston and president of the Southern Baptist Convention, as an example because of Young's commitment to spend two nights a week in evangelistic visitation.

3) Learn from other denominations and para-church groups reporting increases in professions of faith.

4) Have a major evangelistic thrust every year. Southern Baptists sponsored simultaneous revivals in 1991, the last year Southern Baptists reported an increase in baptisms. Another simultaneous evangelistic effort is scheduled for 1995.

5) Use Sunday school as the major outreach force in the local church. Since nearly every church has Sunday school, it is counterproductive to create an evangelistic focus that circumvents Sunday school, Lewis said.

Other suggestions from state evangelism directors were to:

- Follow-up on prospects discovered through ministry projects.
- Increase preaching and teaching on baptism.
- Provide specialized assistance for churches that report no baptisms.
- Conduct "celebration baptism services" away from the church building.

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Study shows 6,001 churches  
baptized no one last year

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press  
12/8/93

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (BP)--A study of 1992 baptisms in Southern Baptist churches shows 6,001 churches baptized no one, while less than 3 percent of the churches accounted for nearly 24 percent of the baptisms.

Produced by Steve Whitten, Home Mission Board director of program research, the study was based on Uniform Church Letter data. It was presented during a Dec. 2-5 meeting of state evangelism directors in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Other figures from the report include:

-- Half the churches reporting no baptisms had fewer than 100 members, yet 18 percent of the churches with no baptisms had 200 or more members.

-- Most churches reporting no baptisms are rural, although 14 percent of the churches without baptisms are in communities of 10,000 or more.

-- Churches reporting no baptisms are typically older than churches with baptisms. The average age of churches reporting no baptisms was 70 years.

-- Churches baptizing no one were 16.5 percent of all Southern Baptist churches. Churches which baptized two to four people were 30.7 percent of all churches.

-- There were 910 churches with at least 50 baptisms; 239 churches with 100 or more.

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-- Ninety-seven percent of churches reporting 100 or more baptisms had at least 500 members; 87 percent had at least 1,000 members.

-- Almost half the churches, 47.2 percent, accounted for 7 percent of the baptisms.

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List of baptism statistics by state mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

'Here's Hope' planning  
material available

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press  
12/8/93

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (BP)--To encourage advance planning for the 1995 "Here's Hope" evangelistic emphasis, \$60 worth of training and resource material is available free to every Southern Baptist church.

The material includes guidelines to increase promotion, prospect cultivation and church member participation. It also includes sample products for adults, youth and children, guides for conducting a 60-day soul-winning thrust, suggestions for follow-up revivals and how to start churches through evangelistic efforts.

"Any pastor who will review this material will find a tremendous help for his whole ministry, not just Here's Hope," said Gene Jorgenson, retired Oklahoma and Texas pastor who helped develop the material.

Produced by the Home Mission Board, the material is being distributed in cooperation with state evangelism directors.

The theme to encourage church members to participate is "Here's Hope. Share Jesus Now." The theme to reach the public is "Here's Hope. Jesus Cares for You."

The plan calls for churches to train members in soul-winning in 1994 and celebrate soul-winning commitment day Jan. 8, 1995. Church members will be asked to share Christ at least 60 times in 60 days from Jan. 9 to March 9. Churches are encouraged to have a harvest revival between March 12 and Sept. 30.

Ten churches participated in a pilot project for the 60-day soul-winning commitment this spring. They reported 733 professions of faith and 359 baptisms.

"The 'hope' in 'Here's Hope' is that Jesus Christ is alive today, not a prophet who lived one day in history but a living Savior," Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis said during a meeting of state evangelism leaders when the material was introduced.

Lewis urged Southern Baptists to participate in "Here's Hope" because "the love of Christ constrains us," not because it is another strategy or program.

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Christians must overcome fear,  
apathy, pride to reach cities

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press  
12/8/93

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (BP)--Just as Jonah "ran as fast as he could in the opposite direction" when God called him to Nineveh, Southern Baptists are fleeing the cities, said David Fuller.

Christians avoid ministry in urban areas because of high crime rates and potential danger, said Fuller, home missionary and director of urban strategy in Cleveland. Like Nineveh, today's cities are wicked, evil places, he said.

"Fear is a hurdle we've got to overcome," Fuller told state evangelism directors during their Dec. 2-5 meeting in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. "Either we believe God is sovereign or we don't. The same God who parted the Red Sea can throw a couple of drug dealers off the street."

Another reason Christians avoid working in inner cities is "there's no glory in it. Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh because all the good jobs for priests were in Israel," Fuller noted. "We've got to redefine what glory is and whose glory we're seeking."

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Pride also can derail urban ministry, Fuller said. Christians who think people in poverty are inferior should remember "without the shed blood of Jesus, we are the same."

In addition, apathy can keep Christians from becoming involved in cities. Jonah didn't care if the people of Nineveh repented or not, Fuller said. Changing lives of people in inner cities is not the federal government's responsibility, he said. "It is our responsibility. We are the problem, not people in the city."

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Henry Blackaby to broaden work  
in prayer, spiritual awakening

By Martin King

Baptist Press  
12/8/93

ATLANTA (BP)--Henry Blackaby, director of the office of prayer and spiritual awakening for the Home Mission Board, will begin a joint assignment with the HMB, Foreign Mission Board and Baptist Sunday School Board Jan. 1.

At the request of the presidents of the three Southern Baptist agencies, the HMB executive committee voted Dec. 7 to allow Blackaby to broaden the scope of his ministry and develop a global response to prayer and spiritual awakening.

Blackaby is one of the most sought-after speakers and conference leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention. He co-authored a study course titled "Experiencing God" published in 1990 by the Sunday School Board and follow-up materials released in 1993 called "Fresh Encounter" which have been used around the world.

A joint agreement among the three agencies calls for Blackaby to maintain his role with the HMB but allows him to serve as a special consultant to the presidents of the other two boards. All three agencies will evenly share his salary and benefits.

"We believe God is moving across the United States and around the world and that Henry Blackaby is on the crest of that movement," said Larry Lewis, HMB president. "God is expanding Henry's role beyond the Home Mission Board, and we must not wrest him away from that."

BSSB President Jimmy Draper agreed, saying, "The winds of revival and spiritual awakening are blowing across the country and around the world. Henry Blackaby has been uniquely used to find where God is working and become involved." He characterized the partnership as "working in league with the Holy Spirit."

FMB President Jerry Rankin said he is excited at the prospect of using Blackaby to "bring people to renewal and spiritual awakening."

"He will be a valuable asset to our missionaries and staff as we seek to remain focused on God and appropriate his power for evangelizing a lost world," Rankin said.

Blackaby told Baptist Press the agreement by the three agencies "shows the urgency of the hour in our nation. I can't think of any area more significant for them to function together in than prayer and spiritual awakening.

"The three agency presidents came to this decision with one heart and one mind. We must respond together to the moving of God, and I believe this partnership is a clear indication that the Spirit is working among Southern Baptists and wants to use us to be a catalyst to touch the world with the gospel," Blackaby said.

Commenting on the new challenges the agreement presents, Blackaby said, "The task is of such a magnitude only a sweeping of God could ever be adequate."

He requested prayer to determine God's priorities as he addresses a larger scope of responsibilities. "I know I will have to concentrate on those activities which are most strategic. We must train key leadership because revival comes from the leadership. We must learn how to multiply ourselves. I want to be a good steward of the opportunities God gives me." Blackaby said he is in the process of re-ordering his appointment calendar.

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Blackaby, 58, is a native of British Columbia, Canada, and a graduate of the University of British Columbia and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif. He served as pastor of churches in California and Canada, as president of Canadian Baptist Theological College and, prior to joining the Home Mission Board in 1988, was director of missions for Capilano Baptist Association in Canada. Blackaby and his wife, Marilyn, have five grown children.

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HMB OKs new partnership,  
names research director

By Martin King

Baptist Press  
12/8/93

ATLANTA (BP)--Members of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board executive committee approved a new partnership for prayer and spiritual awakening, elected a new department director and appointed new missionaries Dec. 7.

A proposal to share Henry Blackaby's ministry with the Baptist Sunday School and Foreign Mission boards received enthusiastic support. HMB President Larry Lewis said, "We must not be territorial or protect denominational turf when God is moving in a mighty way across our land and around the world. We want to share Henry with these agencies." Blackaby, director of the board's office of prayer and spiritual awakening, is in demand as a speaker and conference leader across the Southern Baptist Convention.

Although Blackaby will maintain his relationship with the HMB, he will be free to serve as a special consultant to the other agencies. The three boards will share equally in his salary and benefits beginning Jan. 1.

The executive committee also elected Steve Whitten as director of program research. The department coordinates research services for the evangelism, extension and ministry sections and provides planning information for state directors of missions. Whitten has been associate director of the department for two years.

He is a native of Alabama and has earned degrees from Furman University in Greenville, S.C.; the University of Illinois; and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Whitten worked several years as analyst in the banking industry and as a church planter in New York for two years.

The executive committee also appointed 16 new home missionaries and endorsed 24 new chaplains. There are now 2,339 Southern Baptist-endorsed chaplains serving around the world.

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'Experiencing God'  
teleconference set

Baptist Press  
12/8/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Satellite technology and biblical principles for knowing and doing the will of God will be paired for a nationwide teleconference sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

The seven-hour "Experiencing God" teleconference will be broadcast by satellite Saturday, Feb. 12, beginning at 10 a.m. Central Time to at least 145 sites across the country.

Henry Blackaby and Claude King, authors of "Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God," will lead the teleconference.

"As of now, nearly 150 churches and associations have signed contracts to be host sites for the teleconference, but we expect more to sign on before the broadcast time," said Jay Johnston, teleconference coordinator. "We anticipate being able to involve more people less expensively by way of this teleconference than we could through national or regional conferences. They will have the added benefit of a local facilitator."

States with the largest number of viewing sites include Texas with 19; Georgia, 14; Alabama, 11; and Tennessee, 10.

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The teleconference will be broadcast live from Nashville's Two Rivers Baptist Church.

"There will be time for small-group discussion and prayer throughout the teleconference. Participants are expected to bring their own lunches," Johnston said.

A \$25 registration fee for the teleconference includes an "Experiencing God" members book and a three-hole punch notebook, Johnston said.

Each viewing site will have "Experiencing God" resources for purchase, he added.

Resources presently include a LIFE course, a leader's guide, a video and audiocassettes.

A similar "Fresh Encounter" teleconference featuring Blackaby will be broadcast on April 23 at many of the same sites, Johnston said.

"Fresh Encounter," also by Blackaby and King, seeks to spearhead national revival by challenging churches to identify and overcome self-defeating habits and renew relationships with God.

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A list of sites by states have been uploaded in SBCNet News Room under the file "EG sites."

Amarillo Baptist hospital  
derails Nativity challenge

By Michael Hughes

Baptist Press  
12/8/93

AMARILLO, Texas (BP)--High Plains Baptist Hospital will sponsor the Christmas manger scene traditionally located in front of the Amarillo Civic Center and owned by the Texas city, the chairman of the hospital board said Nov. 26.

"What we've agreed to do is that High Plains Baptist Hospital will actually own the manger scene, purchasing it from the city and leasing the ground where the Nativity will be on display," said Don Mason, chairman of the Baptist General Convention of Texas-related institution.

John McKissack, assistant vice president for community relations at High Plains and a member of the Amarillo City Commission, said the hospital has paid fair market value for the 15-year-old display -- \$350.

"We understand this agreement will be the same thing as leasing a building or room in the Civic Center for a program or meeting," Mason said. "Amarillo will be able to continue to have the manger scene as it has been done in the past, without getting the government involved in religion."

Mason said the American Civil Liberties Union has challenged municipally sponsored Nativity scenes in other communities and that High Plains Baptist wanted to help prevent such an occurrence in Amarillo.

"We take pride in letting people know that High Plains Baptist Hospital is a Christian organization," he said. "We're always interested in being involved in something that is good for Christian health care."

"This is just a way for us to say thank you to the people that have supported High Plains Baptist Hospital."

Amarillo Mayor Kel Seliger said that ACLU threatened to sue the city over its Nativity display last year.

"They (ACLU) are doing this all over the country," Seliger said. "At about the point where we decided not to do the Nativity scene, High Plains Baptist Hospital jumped in and asked if they could buy it from us and display it."

"Our answer was yes."

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Used by permission of the Amarillo Globe-News. Hughes is the newspaper's medical writer.

**The Baptist Hymnal released  
in Home & Family version**

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Baptist Hymnal, released in 1991 for use in churches, has been unveiled with a new title and supplementary materials for use in family worship.

Publication in December of "The Baptist Hymnal for Home & Family" was announced during annual planning meetings for Southern Baptist state and national church music leaders, Dec. 1-3 in Nashville.

Wesley L. Forbis, editor of the hymnal and director of the Baptist Sunday School Board's church music ministries department, said the new version is designed to help make "those great hymns which you sing in church each week an even more important source of strength and assurance in your home and family worship."

Content of the hymnal is identical to the pew edition, which has sold almost 2.5 million copies since its release. The usage guide for the "Home & Family" edition provides suggestions for use by one or several people including hymns in devotional time, enrichment helps in using features and indexes of the hymnal and other resources.

Forbis said he believes "it is through the singing of hymns that God's Word is thrust deep into our spiritual memory banks. It is there that those hymns and songs reside as a portable gold mine of God's Word. In times of stress, failure, challenge, triumph and joy, they call forth the words that illuminate God's promises for you."

"The Baptist Hymnal for Home & Family" is priced the same as the pew edition at \$7.95.

Other worship-related publications announced for release through Convention Press include "The Creator's Hand: The Prophet, the Poet, the Psalms," available now as the first in a series of worship services by Ragan Courtney with choral music and hymns by Don Schlosser, Buryl Red, and Lee Turner. Subsequent releases include "Cross with Crown of Thorns," available in January 1994, by Courtney, Cynthia Clawson and Bruce Greer and "Three Voices -- Poetry in Worship" by Courtney, Wes Forbis and Terry York for release in May 1994.

All Convention Press products may be obtained through Baptist Book Stores and Lifeway Christian Stores and through the Sunday School Board's toll-free order number, 1-800-458-2772.

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**True identity found in Bible,  
Draper tells church leaders**

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press  
12/8/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Christian leaders, like all human beings, often find themselves asking the question, "Who am I?"

Where they go to find the answer to that question is crucial, Baptist Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr., told state Sunday school directors and associates attending annual planning meetings in Nashville.

"It's very easy to begin to think of ourselves in light of what we've done or accomplished," Draper said, referring to the often flowery and long-winded introductions given to denominational leaders or well-known pastors about to deliver a speech or sermon. "But if we do, then we probably won't have a very good view of who we really are."

Depending on the views of others to determine our true identity is also dangerous, Draper said, saying he receives from BSSB customers both positive letters of praise and angry letters which criticize him personally.

Instead, Christians must look to Scripture to help them understand who they are as children of God, Draper said, adding the writings of the Apostle Paul are especially helpful.

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In his epistles to New Testament churches, Paul introduces himself as an apostle (one who is sent out with a message), a slave or servant and a prisoner of Jesus Christ. He also describes himself as a minister and steward responsible for administering the grace of God.

All of the references "refer to someone who is under authority" -- God's authority, Draper explained.

"I think one of the great tragedies of our day is that we've forgotten what it was like to be lost," he said. "Paul could never get away from that. He viewed himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

"Ladies and gentlemen, none of us is of any inherent importance and, frankly, God can do without us. The point that Paul makes is that God's using us is a gift of his grace.

"It would behoove us to remember we're not superstars. We're not super saints. ... We're servants, ministers according to God's grace." Remembering that fact, Draper said, helps him "keep from being overinflated or overly deflated from the myriad of opinions that I hear (about myself). ... I can attest to you that if I don't keep this in my mind, I can't do this job and I don't think you can do yours.

"But if we remember who we are, it doesn't matter what our circumstances are, we belong to Jesus Christ. ... Our task is to be servants."

Draper said that philosophy also should apply to the way denominational leaders and agencies view their relationship to churches. "We exist for the churches, not the other way around. They don't owe us their loyalty," he said.

"If the Sunday School Board flourishes and we don't assist churches in what they are called to do, then we have failed."

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Swindoll announces  
move to Nashville

Baptist Press  
12/8/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Popular author and speaker Charles R. Swindoll has resigned the pastorate of the First Evangelical Free Church of Fullerton, Calif., effective April 15, 1994, and announced plans to move to the Nashville area.

Swindoll, 59, who will become president of Dallas Theological Seminary on June 30, 1994, said he "eventually" plans to move to the suburban Nashville area of Brentwood and Franklin but did not specify a date.

Stating his "firm commitment" to the seminary, he said after new directions there are established, he hopes to begin a nondenominational church near Nashville.

"The details of that remain sketchy, yet I have continued to feel my gifts are best utilized in pastoral responsibilities," Swindoll said in a Nov. 28 statement to the church where he has been pastor since 1971. "I still believe that one of the best places to train students and graduates of Dallas Seminary is in and around a local church I am pastoring. How and when that will take shape remains to be seen."

Swindoll said the decision to leave the church came "after months of soul-searching, prayer, counsel with numerous friends, mentors and fellow ministers."

"My wife and I have become increasingly aware of our need to invest more of our time and attention in our adult children's lives as well as in the lives of our grandchildren," said Swindoll, who has a son living in Nashville. "We are determined to break long-standing habits that have kept us too busy and to form new habits that will enable us to maintain the right priorities for our marriage, our home, our family and our continuing ministries."

While plans are indefinite, Swindoll said he hopes at some point to move his radio ministry, Insight for Living, to the Nashville area.

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Baptist Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr., a high school classmate of Swindoll, said he looks forward to renewing their longtime friendship when Swindoll and his wife, Cynthia, move to Tennessee.

"No one has higher integrity or a greater desire to minister to people than Chuck Swindoll," Draper said. "He has a unique ability to make the Bible simple and relevant. Living in the Nashville area will provide a wonderful opportunity to express his creative gifts in writing and teaching."

Draper said he enlisted Swindoll several months ago to speak at the board's 1994 spiritual emphasis days, April 20-22. Swindoll also was the closing speaker at the Southern Baptist Convention last June in Houston.

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Baptist student directors plan  
for '95 evangelism involvement

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press  
12/8/93

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (BP)--State student directors meeting in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Dec. 2-5, launched plans for student participation in the 1995 "Here's Hope. Share Jesus Now." evangelism emphasis.

The directors, attending annual planning meetings sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's national student ministry, received a planbook to guide student involvement in the program through witness training, personal soul-winning, special evangelistic events and other opportunities. Several options for involvement are included, such as plans for "60 in 60," a program to encourage college students to share Christ with 60 of their peers in 60 days, and "1-2-1," a relational evangelism program which encourages students to cultivate a relationship with and witness to a non-Christian friend.

The planbook, which will be mailed to campus directors, was developed by the National Evangelism Task Force (NET Force) in cooperation with NSM and the evangelism section of the Home Mission Board.

"We want every college student in America to have the opportunity to hear the gospel and accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior," Charles Johnson, NSM director, said.

"It could well be that our college campuses are the source for revival ... for God moving across our country in these days," Darrell Robinson, HMB vice president for evangelism, said. "If our students get involved in witnessing for 60 days, it won't stop. It will continue."

At the meeting, state student directors also were updated on plans for "Mission 95," a nationwide missions conference scheduled for Dec. 27-31, 1994, at the Commonwealth Convention Center in Louisville, Ky.

"That All Peoples Might Sing His Praises" is the theme for the event, which is expected to attract up to 5,000 college students, high school seniors, directors of Baptist student ministry, church ministers to college students, college Sunday school teachers, pastors and missionaries.

Among speakers for the conference committed to date are Erwin McManus, senior pastor of Church on Brady in East Los Angeles, Calif., and Sammy Tippit, director of God's Love in Action, a ministry to the unreached cities of the world.

In addition to general sessions and seminars, conference-goers will have the opportunity to visit a missions fair, talk with home and foreign missionaries, share and pray in small groups, study the Bible and participate in other mission-related activities.

A student ministers workshop for campus directors and church ministers to students will be held at the same location and on the same dates as Mission 95. A series of seminars designed to enhance the professional and spiritual development of student ministers and workers is planned. Plenary speakers for the workshop will include Calvin Miller, professor of worship at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; Denton Lotz, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance; and Dan Bagby, pastor of Seventh and James Baptist Church in Waco, Texas.

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During their annual planning meetings, state student directors also:

-- heard from Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin who pledged the support of his agency to international student ministry on college campuses and in local churches. He also said he would like to see an enlargement of the summer and semester student missions program to allow more overseas missions opportunities for students.

-- learned about "Global Student Involvement," a project to facilitate student awareness of and participation in global missions. NSM consultant Brad Gray said the project hopes to involve 1,000-2,000 students from Southern Baptist churches and Baptist Student Unions in short-term missions projects in the United States and overseas by 1993, and 5,000 students in short-term projects by the year 2000. "We want our students' worlds to be bigger and we want the Foreign Mission Board and Home Mission Board to have the problem of not having a big enough budget to send all the student missionaries who are interested in serving," Gray said.

-- learned that BSUs across the country had donated more than \$120,000 in 1993 to support student work in newer convention areas as part of the "East-West Challenge." The program currently focuses on supporting work in Boston, Chicago and th state of California.

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Hope offered in 'Dodge City'  
by BSSB employee, LIFE course

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press  
12/8/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--While living in a Nashville public housing project known as "Dodge City" for its high rate of crime and violence, Barbara Larkins has taken steps to deal with problems in her past and move toward a brighter future.

Larkins, a resident of Cumberland View housing project, was involved in a drug and alcohol recovery program several months ago when she met Olivia Cloud, a coordinator in the Baptist Sunday School Board's black church development section. But she now acknowledges she had not given up either addiction.

Her biggest problem was spiritual, Larkins said.

Four months after beginning a study of the course, "Making Peace with Your Past" led by Cloud on Tuesday evenings, Larkins is drug and alcohol free. She is continuing to participate in daily therapy through a community program.

"When I first met Olivia, I was active in my use of drugs and alcohol. I was spiritually bankrupt," said Larkins, the mother of four children. "I got the spiritual foundation here. I learned how to deal with my dysfunctional childhood."

Another participant in the Life Support course produced by the board's discipleship and family development division, Cherry Walker, said it "makes me want to talk about things that are bothering me. It's very uplifting."

An average of two to three women attend the weekly sessions led by Cloud at the community center operated by Temple Baptist Church of Nashville. Cloud, who earlier took the course at First Baptist Church of Nashville, intersperses discussion questions with illustrations from her own life.

Experience as director of a community center and a burden for the needs of women living in public housing combined to lead Cloud to offer the course at Cumberland View. Nashville Baptist Association contributed funds for materials, refreshments and child care during the course sessions.

"I know there's a lot of substance abuse, physical and verbal abuse (in the projects)," Cloud said. "That motivated me to help. I have a particular concern about helping women. Most households in public housing are headed by women."

Cloud emphasized the principles of the course apply as effectively to public housing residents as to those in a middle-class setting. At the same time, some of her teaching methods are different.

For example, Cloud said the materials call for participants to sign a participation commitment contract. She elected to omit that part of the process.

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"I'm working on building the trust factor," she explained. "I just got to the neighborhood. As I work with them, others are watching. I'm still having to prove myself. I've had to be more lenient with people about coming."

Cloud has found some of the illustrations in the material and from her life are not appropriate for life in public housing where one resident described the difficulty of learning to sleep amid gunfire in the neighborhood.

"I have to get out of my world and try to be in their world or we'll never meet," Cloud said.

During the Tuesday evening sessions, she is at times more direct and confrontational than other course facilitators might be.

"There's a tendency in what we call the culture of poverty to look for authority figures," Cloud said, describing her role more as teacher than facilitator. She has not hesitated to challenge the women very directly about living out of old patterns from their past. They have responded with appreciation and a desire to break entrenched habits.

For Cloud, the rewards of her investment of time and self have come in seeing lives touched.

"If I can help one woman, that's worth it," she said. "Instead of looking for huge numbers, I'm looking for relationships."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press.

**Missionary Sherry Akins dies  
of heart attack in Brazil**

**By Mary E. Speidel**

**Baptist Press  
12/8/93**

BELO HORIZONTE, Brazil (BP)--Southern Baptist missionary Sherry Akins, 47, died of a heart attack Dec. 4 at her home in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

Family members believe her death was related to complications from scleroderma, a disease that can cause chronic hardening of the skin and organ systems. Akins was diagnosed with scleroderma in 1992. An autopsy was being performed in Brazil.

Nearly 1,000 people attended a memorial service for Akins Dec. 5 in Belo Horizonte.

Several Brazilian Baptists and Southern Baptist missionary David Campbell spoke during the service, describing Akins' "positive testimony and ministry -- never complaining, always happy, always desiring to glorify the Lord Jesus," said missionary Elizabeth Gwynn.

Akins' husband, Wade, shared the gospel at the close of the service and invited people to accept Christ as Savior. A young woman approached him afterward and said she had accepted Christ.

Akins, the former Sherry Deakins from Johnson City, Tenn., and her husband, from Bastrop, La., were appointed missionaries to Brazil in 1982. Following Portuguese language study, the Akinses lived in Belo Horizonte, where she was a church and home worker. She was a leader in MasterLife discipleship training and worked with her husband in church planting and leadership training.

The couple also filled a temporary assignment in 1986 teaching Portuguese-speaking students at the Baptist seminary in Gweru, Zimbabwe.

Before missionary appointment, Akins was a Foreign Mission Board journeyman in Nigeria from 1968-70. She taught children of missionaries in Oshogbo. She met her husband, a journeyman in Vietnam during those years, in the Foreign Mission Board's journeyman training program.

Later she ministered alongside her husband, who was pastor of Southern Baptist churches in Bastrop and Wilson, La., and director of missions for Prince Georges Baptist Association in Oxon Hill, Md. She also was a public school teacher in Winston-Salem, N.C.

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Akins received the bachelor of science degree in elementary education from East Tennessee State University in Johnson City. During college she was a student summer missionary to Ohio and South Dakota through the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Akins is survived by her husband; three children, Christy, 21, and Timothy, 19, both students at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., and Jason, 16; her parents; and two sisters.

Funeral services are scheduled for Dec. 10 at Sulphur Springs (Tenn.) Baptist Church. The family requests memorial contributions go to the Sherry Akins Memorial Fund through the Foreign Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, Va. 23230-0767. Interest from this fund will be used to assist in the board's work of evangelism and church planting and to train missionaries and overseas Christians in these areas.

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(BP) photo (mugshot) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Dorothy Williams dies  
after battle with cancer

Baptist Press  
12/8/93

LITHONIA, Ga. (BP)--Dorothy "Dottie" Williams, wife of Luther Rice Seminary Chancellor Gene Williams, died Dec. 6 at a Decatur, Ga., hospital of congestive heart failure after a three-year battle with bone cancer.

Mrs. Williams, of Lithonia, Ga., was involved in her husband's Gene Williams Evangelistic Association since its founding in 1959 as an administrator, bookkeeper and, during the 1960s, producer and director of its TV ministry. Her husband also was president of Luther Rice Seminary from 1982-92, when he became chancellor.

A book about her life is being written by her daughter, Sandra, a psychology professor at Luther Rice, and Jeanne Todd of Hannibal, Mo. Tentatively titled "This Is a Day for Living," it is scheduled for a spring 1994 release by Hannibal Books.

"Thousands have been saved because of her," Williams said. "I could never have done all I did without all she did."

In addition to her husband and daughter, survivors include two sons, Randall, pastor of First Baptist Church in Tampa, Fla., and Tim, an evangelist based in Callahan, Fla. The funeral will be Dec. 9 at Horis A. Ward Funeral Home in Conyers, Ga.

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Ed Young to be featured  
on Dobson radio broadcast

Baptist Press  
12/8/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Keeping romance in marriage will be the theme of a nationwide radio broadcast Jan. 11 featuring Southern Baptist Convention President Ed Young.

The program, titled "Keep the Home Fires Burning," will be broadcast by Focus on the Family's radio network which is carried by approximately 2,000 radio stations across the country.

During the program, Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Houston, discusses his book, "Romancing the Home: How to Have a Marriage That Sizzles," released last summer by Broadman & Holman Publishers. He is interviewed by Focus on the Family President James Dobson and Mike Trout, Focus' vice president for broadcasting.

Those interested in hearing the program should check with local Christian radio stations for broadcast times.

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Smyth & Helwys 3-year mark:  
38 titles, 23 employees

MACON, Ga. (BP)--Smyth & Helwys Publishing has grown from eight books in print during its inaugural year, 1991, to 38 titles this year, according to a news release marking the Baptist moderate publishing house's third anniversary.

And, according to publisher Cecil P. Staton Jr., Smyth & Helwys next year will construct a \$1 million, 20,000-square-foot facility in Macon, Ga., where the publishing house has been based since its founding.

Smyth & Helwys did not disclose any financial data in the news release. However, Staton told Baptist Press Dec. 8 that Smyth & Helwys, in 1993 to date, had income of \$1,680,000 and expenses of \$1,790,000, for a deficit of \$110,000. The 1992 figures were \$1,149,700 in income and \$1,337,500 in expenses, for a deficit of \$187,800, Staton said. Both deficits have been covered by loans and cash-flow adjustments, he said.

Staton said Smyth & Helwys plans to sign a contract for land in Macon this month and break ground in February for the new office and warehouse complex.

According to the news release, Smyth & Helwys has grown from one full-time employee in July 1991 to 23 currently, including a recently named first state "director of church relations," for the state of Texas.

Its "Formations" Christian education materials, launched in 1992, are used in 1,300 churches, counting any church where one Sunday school class or the entire Sunday school program uses the adult, youth or children's four-month curriculum, Staton said.

Listed as Smyth & Helwys' best-selling books to date are "What Happened to the Southern Baptist Convention?" (1993) by retired Sunday School Board President Grady Cothen, with 5,000 sold; "Don't Cry Past Tuesday" (1991) by Charles E. Poole, 2,750 sold; and "The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms" (1993) by Walter B. Shurden, 2,500 sold.

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