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Rainer, Mims named
deans at Southern

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
2/1/94

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has named an Alabama pastor and a current faculty member to deanships at the Louisville, Ky., school.

Thom S. Rainer, senior pastor of Green Valley Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., will head the seminary's new Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth, and Lloyd Mims, associate professor of church music, will lead the School of Church Music.

Southern President R. Albert Mohler Jr. announced the appointments during the seminary's founders' day service Feb. 1 which opened the school's spring semester classes. Both Mims and Rainer hold doctoral degrees from Southern.

Rainer, 38, has been senior pastor of Green Valley since 1990. His previous pastorates include Azalea Baptist Church in St. Petersburg, Fla.; Hopewell Baptist Church in Louisville; and Hopewell Baptist Church in Madison, Ind. Rainer also has taught as an adjunct professor at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School, Tampa Bay Theological Seminary (branch of Dallas Theological Seminary) and Southern Seminary. He is a director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

A native of Union Springs, Ala., Rainer graduated summa cum laude from the University of Alabama in 1976. He earned the master of divinity degree from Southern in 1985 and a doctor of philosophy degree in evangelism in 1988.

Rainer, a widely known writer and speaker on church growth and evangelism, has authored or edited four books and several articles. His books include "Evangelism in the Twenty First Century" (Harold Shaw Publishers, 1989), "The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology and Principles" (Broadman Press, 1993); "Eating the Elephant: Leading a Traditional Church to Growth" (Broadman & Holman, forthcoming) and "God Gave ... Evangelists: Biblical Standards" (World Wide Publications, forthcoming).

The Billy Graham School, which was announced last fall as the seminary's fifth graduate school, will welcome its first students this fall. Rainer will assume responsibilities as dean March 1.

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Prior to entering the ministry, Rainer worked as a vice president and manager of corporate lending at SouthTrust Bank in Anniston, Ala. Rainer and his wife, Nellie Jo, have three children.

Mims, 43, joined the seminary faculty in 1984 after completing requirements for the doctor of musical arts degree. He has served on the church staffs of Highland Baptist Church and Kenwood Baptist Church, both in Louisville; Collins (Miss.) Baptist Church; and Bethany Baptist Church in Prentiss, Miss. In addition to his degree from Southern, Mims earned the master of music and the bachelor of music education degrees from the University of Southern Mississippi and has done post-doctoral study at the Julliard School and the America/Italy Society.

The Bradenton, Fla., native also has been a consultant for youth, adult and instrumental music with the church music department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and has sung numerous opera and oratorio roles with several companies, including the Kentucky Opera, Louisville Bach Society and Louisville Orchestra.

Mims, who has been serving as acting dean, succeeds Milburn Price who left the seminary last summer to become dean of the school of music at Samford University. Mims' appointment is effective immediately. He is married to Marilyn Mims, a professional opera singer.

Mohler said both Rainer and Mims bring "rich experience in ministry and a full measure of conviction" to their duties.

"Dr. Rainer has an impressive background as a pastor of growing churches, a scholar of church growth and evangelism and a widely noted author and consultant," Mohler said. "Most especially, he is a consecrated minister of the Word who will provide leadership to the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth that combines evangelical theological substance and evangelistic zeal.

"The naming of the first dean marks a historic day for Southern Seminary. It is fitting that this announcement be made on a day that honors the seminary's heritage."

Mohler called Mims "a highly gifted musician and a committed minister." As interim dean, Mims demonstrated strong administrative abilities and a love for students, Mohler said. "I have come to know his bold vision for the School of Church Music and his determination to lead that school in training and educating God-called ministers for service in Southern Baptist churches," he said. "I look forward to a new era under the leadership of these two new deans."

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30 days of prayer for
Muslims starts Feb. 11

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--There's only one way to scale the towering walls of Fortress Islam with the Christian gospel, say experts on the Muslim world -- with prayer.

Christians may spend 30 days doing just that Feb. 11-March 12 -- coinciding with Ramadan, the annual Muslim period of prayer and fasting -- as they join other Christians in praying for Muslims around the world.

For the second year, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board is asking missionaries, churches, individuals, Women's Missionary Union groups and denominational leaders to set aside a month for prayer, using the booklet "30 Days: Muslim Prayer Focus."

The booklet, published by Youth With a Mission, contains information provided by numerous evangelical groups committed to Muslim ministry. It explains the basics of Islam, identifies major Muslim populations and focuses each day on a different subject of prayer -- Muslim leaders, cities, trouble spots, refugees, converts to Christianity and the like. It may be used by individuals or groups.

Free copies of the booklet may be obtained from the Foreign Mission Board's customer services office. Call toll-free at 1-800-866-FMB1 or write FMB Customer Services at Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230.

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Lewis Myers, FMB vice president for strategies to reach World A, stressed the first and most important evangelism strategy is prayer.

"One of the first efforts we want to put in place in the new World A strategy role is to find a way to call on the global Christian community to join in prayer for Muslim ministries," Myers said. "This is one of the ways we're going to get at World A" -- the least-evangelized portion of the globe.

Last year's 30 days of prayer for Muslims "greatly heightened awareness of who Muslims are, where they live, how we might relate to them both here and around the world and how our personnel are trying to minister to and among them," Myers added.

The Foreign Mission Board also has declared 1995 a "Year of Prayer for the Muslim Peoples."

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SBC Cooperative Program gifts
continue trend for fiscal year

Baptist Press
2/1/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program receipts for January, although down slightly from January last year, continue the trend of monthly increases for the fiscal year, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

The CP gifts for January 1994 totaled \$14,254,071 compared to January 1993 of \$14,292,208 or a decrease of \$38,137 which is .27 percent, said Chapman. But the year-to-date figures, October through January, showed the CP receipts at \$48,621,957 compared to the previous fiscal year-to-date of \$47,764,007 which is an \$857,949 increase or 1.80 percent.

"The January figures continue the trend we hoped we would see," Chapman said. "The figures are a testimony to the faith and support of Southern Baptists in our cooperative mission endeavors."

Another key, Chapman said, was that for the 1993-94 fiscal year, the totals were above the budget requirements. The monthly budget requirement is \$11,519,561 which was surpassed in January by \$2,734,510 or 23.74 percent.

The four month totals, fiscal year-to-date, show \$48,621,957 compared to that period's budget requirement of \$46,078,245 or 5.52 percent above the requirement which is \$2,543,712. The year-to-date totals show receipts above the budget requirement for the first time this fiscal year.

Designated gifts for January 1994 were down slightly compared to January 1993: \$21,655,020 compared to \$21,986,820 or 1.51 percent decrease. For the year-to-date, 1993-94 has \$28,113,779 compared to 1992-93 of \$29,560,263 or 4.89 percent decrease.

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.

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**Brotherhood leaders examine
new program options, revisions By Steve Barber**

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Brotherhood leaders representing 29 state Baptist conventions got a review of a number of new and revised program offerings at a meeting termed "historic" by Brotherhood Commission President James D. Williams.

"I am evermore convinced there is a host of Southern Baptist men and boys out there who have not yet been touched and reached, and who can be," Williams said, through "new approaches" that include Challengers for young men, the EZRA method for leading Royal Ambassadors and men's ministries.

Williams' comments were made during the Jan. 26-29 Brotherhood Leadership Conference in Memphis.

Challengers will combine the agency's Pioneer Royal Ambassadors (grades seven through nine) and High School Baptist Young Men programs and offer materials designed specifically to meet the needs of male youth in grades seven through 12. They can be adapted for other youth according to individual church needs.

"Our intent is that this program be primarily for boys, as our (agency) mission statement implies," Williams said. "However, we cannot tell a church what to do with our curriculum, or predict what churches will do with it. I can tell you that we've been bombarded by people from all across our convention telling us to make (the program) user-friendly and more generic, leaving options open for co-ed use. But this program is designed for young men."

Resources for Challengers will include Challenge magazine, a leader edition of the magazine, the existing Express Missions resource kit and a reference and resource book, "Leading Challengers." The program centers around meetings with a monthly cycle of weekly topics: foreign missions, home missions and personal missions, with use of Express Missions during the fourth week of every month.

The state leaders also examined plans for EZRA, an acronym for "Easy Royal Ambassadors," a leadership method introduced last year in a pilot experiment in Ohio. Of the 30 churches signing on, 22 started new Royal Ambassador units.

EZRA relies on shared leadership of the boys involved, a simplified meeting plan and multiple options for grouping of the boys, according to Tim Seanor, director of Royal Ambassadors at the Brotherhood Commission.

"We did not set out to rewrite the existing RA materials, but to make them easier for the leaders to use," Seanor said. "Boys need adult leadership, so that's what we focused on. Our existing materials are very, very good ... but if we don't have an adult to lead these boys, they're not going to benefit."

Both Challengers and EZRA will be offered starting in October.

The agency's involvement in men's ministry also was reviewed by the state leaders. Williams said the "Men Making A Difference" rally concept, first announced to state convention executives last December, continues to develop.

"We want to be sure that those involved with Men Making A Difference are inspired to turn outward, to give of themselves in missions and ministry, rather than turn inward, which sometimes happens in similar programs if the focus is only on personal development," Williams said.

The leaders also were asked by Williams for ideas and recommendations regarding the "future direction" of programs and personnel responsibilities in the area of men's work.

"I want and need your input as we consider the future direction of the adult area, structuring adult missions education and making the personnel decisions we need to carry us into the 21st century," Williams said, who offered several possible organizational structures for the department and expressing a desire to have a proposal ready for the agency's trustees at their April 22-23 meeting.

In other action, the state leaders:

-- Heard a report on Families Making A Difference, the agency's pilot program for directing entire families into direct missions involvement. Thus far, the two-hour seminars have been offered in six local churches, with a total of 500 participants.

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-- Chose Bob Dixon, director of Texas Baptist Men, as co-convenor-elect of the Brotherhood Leadership Conference. He will begin a two-year term in 1995, succeeding Rob Carr of Illinois. As co-convenor, Dixon will represent all state Brotherhood directors and associates in planning the agenda and presiding over the annual leadership meeting.

-- Honored retiring state Brotherhood director Ron Martin of Ohio.

-- Welcomed new state Brotherhood leaders Ray Allen, New England; Tom Bacon, Nevada; Jess Fairbanks, Michigan; Gary Floyd, Northwest; Evans Griffith, Canada; Harry Kinchen, West Virginia; Rick Lucas, Kentucky; and Tom Vance, Utah/Idaho.

The next Brotherhood Leadership Conference is scheduled Jan. 25-28, 1995, in Memphis.

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(BP) photos of state leaders with Williams will be mailed to corresponding state Baptist newspapers by the Brotherhood Commission.

Churches adding new meaning
to 'Power in the Blood'

By Bob E. Mathews

Baptist Press
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OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--In church, "There's Power in the Blood" is sung, referring to the shed blood of Jesus on the cross.

But in a different context, there is "life in the blood" when the need for a blood transfusion arises.

To help supply life-sustaining blood, many churches participate in volunteer blood donor programs conducted by the American Red Cross Blood Services and other blood banks.

The critical blood shortage nationwide is actually improving somewhat, according to the Red Cross. The Red Cross centers across the country need to keep a minimum of 66,000 units on hand every day to serve the demands from all the hospitals they serve, and now about 53,000 units are available each day.

"The crises seem to be more seasonal than anything," said Frank Hutchison, public relations specialist for the Tennessee Valley Region of the Red Cross.

"The winter months are toughest. You have all the holiday travel with families coming in. And this winter there is the flu, which keeps people from being able to donate. In the summer there are vacations and people just don't think about the need, that is until an emergency comes up."

While commending the churches which sponsor blood drives, spokespersons at two Oklahoma blood banks indicate there is a need for greater participation by churches in promoting the blood donations.

In the area serviced by the Tulsa Red Cross, members in 12 church-sponsored drives donated 747 units in an 18-month period ending in December. Also, about 90 churches were represented by donors at both mobile blood drives in churches and by members giving at several Oklahoma City-area centers operated by the Sylvan N. Goldman Center Oklahoma Blood Institute. These donors contributed more than 4,200 units.

Since each unit (pint of blood) can be separated into red cells, plasma and platelets, the "Baptist" donations may have helped as many as 15,000 patients needing blood products.

The figures do not indicate the whole picture of "Baptist" participation since many church members donate in drives conducted at their places of employment or by organizations of which they are members.

Volunteer coordinators of blood drives in three churches cite the advantages of participating in the blood donor program.

Jim Neely, coordinator at Tulsa's Eastwood Baptist Church, told how his wife, Evelyn, was a direct beneficiary of the church's very first blood drive. In the mini-physical given before donating, his wife was "deferred from donating" because she was feeling ill. She was encouraged to see her doctor.

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Tests showed a heart condition that resulted in a six-bypass operation within six days of the blood drive. "I stood before the church and told them that we didn't know of her condition, but within a few days of our blood drive, she was in the hospital, receiving blood ... perhaps donated by some of her fellow church members," he said.

Neely said Eastwood has conducted five drives and averages receiving 50 units per drive.

As to the safety of both donating and receiving blood, Neely said he is convinced "it's as safe as possible." When his wife needed blood, he said he had no hesitancy in her receiving units from the Red Cross blood bank.

After her husband, Eddie Critchfield, pastor of Canaan Baptist Church near Minco, Okla., had a heart attack and then bypass surgery requiring blood products, Barbara Critchfield decided to coordinate volunteer donor drives at the church.

"I think such drives are appropriate in the church because it is serving mankind," she said.

Since the blood banks have a goal of 25 units from a drive and Canaan is a small church, Mrs. Critchfield involves two other churches in her drives.

Members of Hazel Dell Baptist Church, also near Minco, and a nearby Methodist church, participate in the Canaan church's efforts.

She said she believes many people hesitate to donate because of lack of information and an unfounded fear of "catching something" by donating. "When they have a need for blood, maybe they'll change their minds," she observed.

At Henderson Hills Baptist Church in Edmond, Okla., the blood drives are held on Saturday mornings with the deacons preparing and serving breakfast to the donors. Members usually donate 50 units in each of the three drives per year.

Henderson Hills coordinator Ken Summar said through blood donations Christians are giving of themselves to provide indirect help to their fellow man. "It is a form of community service," he noted.

In addition to the regular drives, Summar gave an example of a need for a rare type and the person needing it wanted it to be from a fellow church member, so a direct donation was arranged. The experience was reassuring to the patient and encouraging to the donor, Summar said.

One church, Lawton Baptist Church in Cameron, Okla., emphasizes the blood donor program by listing an honor roll of donors on the front page of its newsletter.

Officials at both blood banks stressed the safety of both the donation procedures and the resulting blood products.

The AIDS scare has affected blood donations needlessly, the experts asserted. As with any medical procedure, receiving blood transfusions is not without risk, the blood banks' literature admits. The OBI in Oklahoma City says the risk of receiving a unit of blood affected with the AIDS virus is 1 in 225,000 nationally, but less than 1 in 500,000 in Oklahoma. "On the other hand, the risk of dying under general anesthesia is 1 in 30,000 or 17 times greater than being infected with AIDS from a blood transfusion in Oklahoma," an OBI release stressed.

Measures taken by blood centers to ensure a safe blood supply include educating donors before they donate and giving opportunities to confidentially indicate their blood might not be safe. Additionally, blood centers never pay for donations, relying only on volunteer donors, and they perform 11 tests on each unit of blood donated.

The blood centers, whether at the centers or at mobile sites, take a two-pronged approach to safety: the pre-donation screening, including an in-depth health and personal history questionnaire, and the post-donation testing.

As to a danger of "catching something" while donating, the centers stress that only one-use, disposable needles are used and procedures are done only by certified, trained professionals.

"All donors through the two state centers donate out of a moral obligation and a sense of responsibility to maintaining a healthy community blood supply," the literature states.

The Red Cross center's release notes that since 1985, there has not been a documented case of HIV infection from a blood transfusion in its service area.

A fringe benefit to donating blood is the pre-donation mini-physical. The OBI also gives a free cholesterol test for each donor, a program the Tulsa blood center plans to add.

"We appreciate the support of our Baptist friends as we work together to maintain a safe and ample blood supply for the communities," a blood center release stated, adding it is to the churches' advantage to include this ministry to others as well as ministry to self and to family in their ongoing programs.

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Polly House contributed to this story.

Church seeks to reach
cross-cultural community

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
2/1/94

HOUSTON (BP)--When Wilcrest Baptist Church members approached Rodney Woo about being their pastor, the predominately Anglo church in Houston laid all its cards on the table.

"They said, 'We know you're young. We know your last name is Woo, and we know that in our past we have been prejudiced,'" said Woo, 31, who has been at the church 20 months.

Woo, who is one-quarter Chinese and whose wife is Hispanic, said the church recognized it had to do something to reach an increasingly diverse community. Half the 180,000 residents in a four-mile radius around the church are Hispanic, Asian or African American, he said.

"In the '80s there was a tremendous shift, and this church never did catch up," he said. "Something had to give."

Jim Herrington, director of missions of Houston's Union Baptist Association, said Wilcrest proves what a church can accomplish if it develops a strategy for reaching people based on the identity of its surrounding neighborhood.

"Both (Woo and the church) have an equal desire to reach the community that the church has been planted in," Herrington said.

The church has sponsored two congregations, increased attendance by 50 percent and become more missions-minded, Woo said.

Wilcrest also is attracting a more diverse audience, as an average Sunday service of 300 now includes about 30 African Americans, 15 Asians and 30 Hispanics.

Members doubled their foreign missions offering and recently called an African American as youth minister. "We've changed directions, but we're not there yet by any stretch," Woo said. "It's going to take time."

Herrington credits the diversity in leadership with signaling the community that Wilcrest was serious about being inclusive.

"What we're learning about our leadership is you have to symbolize your commitments," he said. "There's a congruency between what they say and what they do."

While many churches gauge their success by the number of people they can bring in, Woo said he wants to see how many people he can send away.

"We are training our people to become missionaries," he explained, crediting a monthly prayer meeting and the "Experiencing God" Bible study with helping refocus the congregation toward reaching others.

Woo hosts the prayer meetings on the first Saturday of each month at his house. "That whole meeting is for prayer for spiritual awakening," he said. "Honestly, I think that has gotten our people ready for change."

About 100 people took the "Experiencing God" course, Woo said. "It was very, very moving to see that many people get excited about God."

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After completing the study, a member became convinced last year God wanted the church to prepare a Thanksgiving meal for the needy.

"We had 20-25 turkeys, pounds and pounds of dressing and nobody showed up," Woo said. Rather than get depressed, however, someone called a local shelter and found they and their food were needed by a downtown mission that had many people but no food.

Woo credits that experience with "getting our people ready for awakening." The church learned God can use it in ways members might not anticipate, and members now rejoice when other congregations are successful, he said.

"There's that mentality that God is greater than a denomination and God is greater than a local church," he said. "It alleviates competition, which is a pretty big thing to alleviate in most Southern Baptist churches."

Woo said he advises other churches that find themselves in changing communities to get to know their new neighbors. Wilcrest sponsors about a half-dozen multi-cultural events each year.

"Personally, I would tell them to get into their homes and become friends with them," he said. "A lot of prejudice is based on ignorance and unfamiliarity."

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

First black Mercer student
recalls difficult years

By James Dotson

Baptist Press
2/1/94

MACON, Ga. (BP)--Sam Oni remembers being shocked at the dichotomy. In his African homeland of Ghana, white Southern Baptist missionaries and black nationals interacted well in worship and friendship. Yet in the United States, strict segregation was the rule.

But with the help of Harris Mobley, a missionary sympathetic to his concern for racial harmony, Oni became one of the trailblazers in the struggle. In 1963, he was the first black student to register at Mercer University.

Oni was keynote speaker for Mercer's founder's day convocation Jan. 12, marking the 30th anniversary of integration at Mercer -- and including as special guests the three students who helped break the color barrier. Oni was the first to actually register, but two other students from Macon, Cecil Dewberry and Bennie Stephens, also began classes in the fall of 1963.

Oni is now managing director of TYN Ventures, an import-export company in Nigeria, and executive director of Project Ploughshare for Africa, an organization committed to self-help and community development initiatives in rural areas. After completing his bachelor's degree in sociology from Mercer in 1967, he attended the University of California at Berkeley where he received a master's degree in journalism and worked toward a doctorate in political science and African studies.

Oni, in his address, detailed the course of events that led him to choose Mercer and weather the less-than-encouraging atmosphere he found when he arrived.

Oni was led to faith in Christ by Mobley, who himself was a Mercer graduate. He attended a Baptist secondary school, and with Mobley's help applied to "a number of Southern Baptist universities in the United States." All turned him down except Mercer.

"My role, as we conceived it, was by breaking the color bar at Mercer, I would be challenging our Southern Baptist brothers and sisters in America to confront the gross contradictions in their Christian witness at home and abroad," Oni said.

"It was our conviction that I, an African Christian, converted by Southern Baptist missionaries, provided the most compelling and unassailable argument against the continuation of racial segregation as practiced in Southern Baptist churches, schools, colleges, hospitals and other establishments across southern United States."

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Rufus Harris was president of Mercer at the time.

"He (Harris) said segregation was headed toward oblivion, but not fast enough," according to Joe Hendricks, men's dean in the early 1960s at Mercer, as quoted in an article in The Macon Telegraph.

The Georgia Baptist newsjournal The Christian Index spoke on Oni's behalf when the university was considering his application, arguing the issue of his admittance should not be directly tied to the larger integration issue.

"Can Mercer afford to boast of its alumni who are missionaries and deny their converts admission?" argued editor John J. Hurt. "We either admit him or we should have the courage to call home all of our missionaries and go out of the business."

Oni was an active student at the university, involved with the campus newspaper and active in Macon's black community.

During his freshman year, Oni joined Vineville Baptist Church, becoming the first black person to become a member of a Southern Baptist-affiliated church in Georgia, according to Don Baxter, Oni's roommate at Mercer. He also brought national attention to Macon when he was refused admittance to another Southern Baptist church because of his race.

Oni said his four-year stint as a "missionary" at Mercer was not entirely successful, however. "Instead of being a missionary in reverse, I was actually hampered by far too many reverses," he said. "I became a victim of crass racism. The racial mountain proved for me too formidable and insurmountable ... It was in the end a faith-shattering experience."

Ultimately, Oni said it was his "guardian angels" to whom he owed his sanity. "I refer ... to the handful of women and men, black and white in this place ... who cared for me, nurtured me, protected me, consoled me and, above all, loved me," he said.

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(BP) photo available upon request from The Christian Index newsjournal. This story was compiled from materials from Mercer University and articles in The Macon Telegraph.

This preacher named King
senses Ala. racial progress

By Mark Baggett

Baptist Press
2/1/94

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--As a Baptist preacher named King in Birmingham, Ala., who spends his time advocating racial reconciliation, John E. King Jr. knows his name will be linked to his more famous namesake.

And while John King, 40, is not related to Martin Luther King Jr., the younger King always has admired his predecessor, even in person.

He was a 10-year-old boy living in the Kingston housing community in Birmingham in 1963 when Martin Luther King came to fight the city's segregated society. Even though his mother limited his time in the marches, John King said he remembers attending some meetings and hearing the well-known preacher at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.

"I don't remember his words so much as I do the rightness of it, that his arguments were so convincing," said King, who is inter-Baptist director at the Birmingham Baptist Association. "We were caught up in the passion of the moment, feeling that some change was about to come, that something historical was under way."

Until then, as a diligent Lincoln Elementary School student who dutifully practiced his alto sax at home, King couldn't understand the import of the "white" and "colored" signs at the drinking fountains: "I could never fully grasp how one race of people could feel superior to another race based on the color of their skin. None of us is responsible for the way we look." Then came the September Sunday morning when the Sixteenth Street church was bombed.

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"Something shook," he recounted, "and everybody stopped and wondered, 'What was that?'"

After the news came that the church was bombed and four girls -- just about his age -- had been killed, he remembered "the fear of what would happen next. I remember wondering why. At 40, I still grapple with that: Why is it so difficult to relate to each other?"

As inter-Baptist director at the Birmingham Baptist Association, he's still pursuing the question. But he disputes some recent reports that progress in race relations is largely a myth. He said his five years at the association have been overwhelmingly positive and significant progress has been made in race relations. He said he wants to continue the dialogue started between the leaders of the three predominantly black Baptist conventions and the leaders of the Alabama Baptist Convention, including King's predecessors at the association, Bill Perkins, James Dixon and Rickey Armstrong.

"There has been an improvement in relationships among the conventions," he said of the covenant agreement between three black convention presidents and Alabama Baptist leaders. "And locally, this association has opened its doors and made its resources available to the community."

Without many of the old barriers, King said he believes the Birmingham association, with seven predominantly black congregations as members, can realize the potential of Mission Hope, a partnership project between black Baptist conventions and the SBC that emphasizes inner-city ministry.

"We still need to find ways to work cooperatively and to address the issue of fulfilling our mission as Christians," King said. "The churches in the suburbs have a lot to offer inner-city churches, and I would encourage those churches to consider ways they can positively impact the community, not in paternalistic efforts, but in genuinely recognizing the inner-city pastors and members as equals. At the same time, the churches of the inner city have a lot to offer churches in the suburbs. It's important for us to get to know each other and to appreciate our cultural differences."

King said white church flight into the suburb does not necessarily signal a dangerous trend.

"I don't have anything negative to say about the moves," he said. "I know they have been prayerfully considered, responsive to what those churches see as God's leading. I'm glad to see a church like Hunter Street, for instance, doing well, and to see Sardis (the black congregation now housed in Hunter Street's old building) also doing well."

Yet as a native of Birmingham and former pastor at Galilee Baptist Church near the association building, King is very much aware racial prejudice is still alive. He addresses the problem through his frequent preaching and speaking appearances and through individual counseling and workshops.

"Unfortunately, still in the Christian community there is fear, suspicion and apprehension," he said. "I know of no churches that have a closed-door policy, but as I interact with both communities, I still find individuals with prejudices. My approach is to remind believers of the high ethical standards God has called us to hold. God is no respecter of persons, and we should find ways to build bridges and to learn about each other. When that is done, we will find that we have more in common than our differences. My fear is that if we as people of good will don't address the issue, we could see the same kind of ethnic conflict we see in other parts of the world. That need not happen."

King -- whose father died when he was young and who was raised in a single-parent home by a mother who "who demanded respect and who instilled a sense of determination and hard work" -- said he also sees changes occurring in the black community.

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"When I grew up here in Smithfield," he said, "it was not only my mother raising me, but my community raising me. We grew up under the idea that right is right, wrong is wrong, and that's just it." Asked to comment on J ss Jackson's and others' calls for renewed efforts to strengthen the black family, King said he sees a recognition that Christians must do more to address issues such as urban violence, despair and the breakup of the family.

"One thing that is happening is a greater acceptance of our own responsibility to address many of the problems that exist," he said. "I see a recommitment to the basic, traditional, biblical values that have always existed in the black community and a realization that more needs to be done to instill those values."

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(BP) photo available upon request from The Alabama Baptist newsjournal.

COMMENTARY

Christians in athletics play
key role in touching society

By Grant Teaff

Baptist Press
2/1/94

I had been the head football coach at Baylor University for one full year. Our football team had won five games, while losing six -- not exactly a championship season. However, for a team that had won only three games the previous three years, five victories seemed like a national championship. Because of that perception, I suppose, I was named Southwest Conference coach of the year.

Another incident that year at the Texas A&M-Baylor game cast me into the limelight as a "Christian coach" throughout the state of Texas. In late August, some Baylor students approached me, asking if I would be willing to help them make an impact for Jesus Christ at a Baylor football game. I said, "OK." They chose the Texas A&M game. I was new to Baylor and didn't really realize how important the A&M game was to Baylor students and fans.

After brainstorming with the students as to what might be done, it was determined I would design a tract to be handed out by the students at the game. A crowd of over 50,000 was expected. I decided the tract would be titled "The difference at Baylor." For the inside of the tract, I took the Four Spiritual Laws and divided them into four quarters, significant of a football mentality. I concluded with a simple statement: "Winning a football game is not as important as knowing Christ." I signed it Grant Teaff, head football coach, Baylor University.

I had not discussed this tract with my coaching staff, so on the night of the game, they saw it for the first time, along with the students and fans. Shortly before we were to take the field to play the Aggies, one of my coaches mustered up enough courage to complain that the Baylor students and fans might think my statement was an excuse for losing. I had never thought in those terms and quickly answered him by saying, "We won't lose. We will win." And we did in the last minutes of the game, as our field goal struck the left upright, bounced straight up in the air, dropped down on the crossbeam, bounced up again and fell over the goal post, for three points and a one-point victory over Texas A&M.

A few sportswriters who had seen the tract questioned me after the game about their perception that we had won the game because I was a Christian and had placed the tract in the hands of everyone in the stadium.

One question was very pointed: Did I believe that God had let us win because I was a Christian coach at a Christian institution? My answer was simple. I said, "I don't believe God takes sides in a football game. I happen to know that the coach of the A&M team is a Christian also. I believe God cares about the individuals who play the game and the coaches who coach the game and not about the outcome of the game."

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I concluded by saying, "I believe that a strong faith in God allows anyone to be better at whatever they are doing. God knows our commitment to Him, and when athletes or coaches publicly thank God for a victory, they are really saying they believe God gave them the talent and ability they have, and in that particular event they utilized that talent and ability to achieve success. Christian athletes and coaches learn to pray, not for victory, but for opportunity, strength and courage to utilize the God-given talents to achieve victory."

The perception that athletes and coaches are strong role models in our society is more than a perception, it is a fact of life. Coaches and athletes who realize the influence they have can become strong Christian witnesses and the kind of role models our young people need. However, some modern athletes shun that responsibility to be a role model.

The more committed to Christ a coach or athlete becomes, the more they understand the impact a Christian coach or athlete can have. Forty years ago, a young coach in Oklahoma recognized the power of the influence coaches and athletes have off the playing field, as well as on. He dreamed that someday coaches and athletes could speak up for and promote the person of Jesus Christ as strongly as they promoted razor blades, soft drinks and chewing tobacco. That belief crystallized into a movement that in 40 years has become the most influential para-church youth movement in America. A recent study listed the Fellowship of Christian Athletes as the leading youth ministry today. The reason has to do with our society's infatuation with athletics and, simply put, athletes and coaches have as much or more influence as anyone in the schools, colleges and universities of America.

Let me share a couple of examples.

In 1990, a sophomore football player at Baylor University, John Karkoska, died from heat stress related injuries.

Although his life was short, it had impact in a very powerful way. From the day that John was injured until he died 10 days later, his friends and teammates began to reveal the powerful Christian influence he had had on all of them. On the field, in the dormitory or in the classroom, John was a role model and a friend others wanted to emulate.

Three days after his injury, John was in a coma, fighting for his life. In a team meeting, 23 of his teammates committed their lives to Christ because they knew, through his actions and his life, that John Karkoska was a Christian and they wanted what he had. Two days after John's death, two more teammates accepted Christ. Twenty-five young men are now having a Christian influence on others through their daily lives and their athletic endeavors. The influence continues.

Recently, in Anaheim, Calif., at the American Football Coaches Convention word went out that funds were needed in Orange County, Calif., to help send high school students to a summer athletic camp where Christian coaches and athletes could work with young men and women from the troubled streets of Los Angeles. There was to be a meeting where 100 men and women who were financially able to help were gathered to hear Christian coaches speak. Responding to the call were some of the greatest head coaches in America today. These coaches could have gone out with their influential alumni or could have made corporate speeches for thousands of dollars, but they chose to give their time and their Christian influence so young people they did not know could have a chance for a better life.

Bobby Bowden, the head football coach at Florida State University, whose team just one week earlier had defeated Tom Osborne's Nebraska Cornhuskers, volunteered to go, as did Osborne; Gene Stallings from the University of Alabama; Ken Hatfield of Rice University; Fisher DeBerry of the U.S. Air Force Academy; Charlie Weatherbie of Utah State University; Lou Tupper of University of Illinois; and Ken Sparks of Carson Newman.

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After each coach had told in his own words of his own Christian commitment and how each had been influenced by coaches and athletes, a young wrestling coach from Santa Ana High School was introduced. Santa Ana High School has a tremendous problem with drugs and gangs. This young Christian coach had gone in to a terrible situation, athletically, at the high school and used his influence as a Christian to begin to change the lives of the students.

The coach introduced a young Hispanic wrestler, who the coach said was a car thief and an incorrigible until he got interested in athletics, went to a Christian summer camp, accepted Christ and completely turned his life around.

When the young man's turn came to speak, you could hear a pin drop. The young man looked at the high school coach and said, "When I first met you, man, I hated your guts" and with tears welling up in his eyes, he said to the coach, "But now I love you and if it were not for you, I might be at this hotel tonight, but I would be here to steal your car."

In one evening's time, the caring Christian concern of big-time college coaches, the love of a high school wrestling coach and the life of a young man were all intertwined. That night more than \$50,000 was given to send other young men and women to a summer athletic camp to have a chance to be influenced, impacted and changed through Christianity and athletics.

The Christian perspective of athletics should be that our churches should embrace the Christian athletic movement and support and use the opportunity that is afforded the cause of Christ in this athletically oriented nation.

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Teaff, former long-time head football coach at Baylor University, is executive director of the American Football Coaches Association. This article first appeared in Texas Baptists' Baptist Standard.

~~EDITORS' NOTE: Please substitute this update for (BP) story with the same headline dated 1/31/94.~~

Christian leader slain in Iran;
some blame government for death

Baptist Press
2/1/94

BRUSSELS, Belgium (BP)--A Christian leader in Iran, earlier reported missing, has been killed.

The body of Haik Hovsepian-Mehr, 49, superintendent of the Assemblies of God churches in Iran, was found with several stab wounds in the chest in the Tehran area, police told his family Jan. 30. One of his sons identified the body from a photograph.

Hovsepian-Mehr, who had been working to stop a campaign by the Iranian government against evangelicals, is survived by his wife, Takoosh, and four children.

The Tehran Office of Investigation told the family Hovsepian-Mehr had been killed and buried 10 days earlier. Family members said the picture showed stitches on the abdomen, indicating an autopsy had been performed.

Christians inside Iran released the information through Iranian Christians living in Europe and the United States.

Hovsepian-Mehr was reported missing Jan. 19 when he went to the airport in Tehran, Iran's capital, to meet a visitor. Christians in Iran initially delayed publicizing the disappearance for several days, since he had been detained by police at least twice in the past. In each case he was released in less than a week.

One observer familiar with the case openly blames the Iranian government for Hovsepian-Mehr's death.

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"There is no shadow of doubt that Haik Hovsepian-Mehr was in the hands of government security forces. They wanted him to withdraw his invitation to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva and New York to visit Iran," charged Patrick Sookhdeo, director of the International Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity in London.

Iranian Christian leaders in Europe had hoped prominent church leaders from around the world could attend Hovsepian-Mehr's funeral in Tehran as a show of support. But a Feb. 1 report quoted authorities as insisting the funeral be conducted by Feb. 2 because he had been dead 10 days.

Christians in Iran are asking Christians to send messages to Iran's embassies protesting Hovsepian-Mehr's death, continuing to ask that the anti-church campaign in Iran be stopped and continuing to urge that Mehdi Dibaj, an Iranian evangelical who won a recent death-sentence reprieve, be cleared of all charges.

Hovsepian-Mehr's efforts to stop the campaign against evangelicals included detailed reports to the United Nations of evangelical church closings, police brutality against evangelicals and other incidents. Before Jan. 19 he had invited representatives of the U.N. Human Rights Commission to visit Iran to discuss religious persecution there.

Hovsepian-Mehr, also chairman of the Council of Protestant Ministers in Iran, led a campaign during December and January to secure the release of Dibaj, an Assemblies of God evangelist. Dibaj spent nine years in prison because he converted from being a nominal Muslim to Christianity.

Dibaj, a member of Hovsepian-Mehr's church, was tried in December and later sentenced to death. But he was abruptly released Jan. 17 after many organizations, including the U.S. State Department, intervened with the Iranian government.

Dibaj was not fully cleared, however, and is subject to recall by police at any time. "Mehdi Dibaj is expecting to return to the Islamic Court later this year," said Sookhdeo.

~~had not actually~~ Iranian authorities have said Dibaj had not actually been subject to a death sentence, a statement rejected by Iranian Christians who have followed Dibaj's case for years.

Hovsepian-Mehr also led the Assemblies of God churches in Iran to resist pressure to sign a letter stating they have full constitutional rights as Christians in the country. Some churches in Iran signed such a statement under government pressure. The government then faxed copies of the statements to the U.N. Human Rights commission in Geneva and New York "in an attempt to demonstrate that Iran's religious minorities enjoy full protection and fair treatment," Sookhdeo said.

Asking church groups to sign such statements apparently was an effort by the Iranian government to reduce international scrutiny of its systematic anti-church program, according to observers.

Some observers see a general plan behind the religious persecution in Iran. A "deliberate campaign" against evangelical churches in Iran, Sookhdeo charged, is being led by the government's Ministry of Islamic Guidance for Minorities and is endorsed by Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The plan, Sookhdeo said, was drawn up by the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council sometime in 1991.

Christian Solidarity International, a watchdog group on human rights, quoted a U.S. Congressional Research Report issued in January that says some Islamic governments have formulated a worldwide plan to deal severely with Christianity and the church at large.

The escalation apparently is tied to the recognition of Israel by the Roman Catholic Church. One key Iranian leader warned in a Jan. 7 speech that "this year might be the last Christmas celebrated in Tehran." According to the Congressional report, the government leader "had in essence predicted a marked escalation in the Islamist's holy war (against the Christian world)."

Some Christians gathered at the Iranian embassies in Washington, London and Oslo, Norway, Jan. 30 to protest Hovsepian-Mehr's disappearance. Word of his death arrived just before the demonstration in London.

Police reportedly found the body, still warm, on Jan. 20, a day after Hovsepian-Mehr disappeared. They said they found only two addresses on him, one of which was a church worker. They apparently could not locate the worker's house, although the address was complete, and said they were unable to identify Hovsepian-Mehr.

After performing an autopsy and keeping the body for several days, police reportedly buried Hovsepian-Mehr in an Islamic cemetery just outside Tehran. Authorities reportedly since have turned the body over to the family.

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National conference on recovery,
spiritual awakening set in March

Baptist Press
2/1/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Church leaders seeking instruction for guiding their members to spiritual awakening and recovery from painful pasts can find it during a national conference March 17-19 in Euless, Texas.

"Fresh Encounter" and "Experiencing God" author Henry Blackaby and Baptist Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr., will be among the keynote speakers at the National Conference on Recovery and Spiritual Awakening, to be held at the First Baptist Church of Euless.

The conference will train church leaders to help individuals who struggle with critical life issues such as painful pasts, low self-worth, codependency, eating disorders, chemical dependency, life's losses, divorce and sexual abuse recovery. The conference is sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Other program personalities will include Robert S. McGee, author of Search for Significance LIFE Support Edition and president of RAPHA, a hospital-based recovery program; Ron Dunn, minister and Bible teacher from Irving, Texas; and Christian artist Cynthia Clawson.

"Churches across our nation are experiencing revival as a result of principles communicated through 'Fresh Encounter' and 'Experiencing God,'" said Johnny Jones, project coordinator for the LIFE Support Group Series, the BSSB materials to help churches start and maintain support groups.

"If a church experiences spiritual awakening, many hurting people will show up at its doors. This conference will help church leaders reach out to these hurting people by meeting the deepest needs in their lives."

The conference also will feature seminars overviewing such courses as "Search for Significance LIFE Support Edition," "The Search," "Making Peace with Your Past," "Moving Beyond Your Past," "Untangling Relationships: A Christian Perspective on Codependency," "Shelter from the Storm: Hope for Victims of Sexual Abuse," "Conquering Eating Disorders: A Christ-Centered 12-Step Process," "Conquering Chemical Dependency: A Christ-Centered 12-Step Process," "Experiencing God" and "Fresh Encounter."

Conference fees, which include registration and conference materials, are \$35 per person. To register write National Conference on Recovery and Spiritual Awakening, P.O. Box 24001, Nashville, TN 37203, or call (615) 251-2294.

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Legendary Kentucky school
president Barkley Moore dies By Mark Wingfield

ONEIDA, Ky. (BP)--Barkley Moore, a Kentucky Baptist layman who became a legend both in Iran and in the mountains of Appalachia, died Jan. 25 at age 52.

Moore died of apparent heart failure in his apartment on the campus of Oneida Baptist Institute, the boarding school from which he graduated at age 16 and returned to serve as president for 22 years.

In between his graduation from Oneida and return as president, Moore served six years in Iran through the U.S. Peace Corps. His extraordinary service in the Peace Corps foreshadowed the notable career he would have as Oneida's president.

Oneida Baptist Institute is a school for middle school and high school students located in southeastern Kentucky, near Manchester. Founded in 1899, it is affiliated with the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Moore was a native of Clay County, and his great-grandfather served on Oneida's first board of trustees. His grandparents were among Oneida's first 100 students.

He graduated as valedictorian of the class of 1958. After completing a bachelor's degree and one year of law school at the University of Kentucky, Moore returned as assistant to the president at Oneida in 1962.

Two years later, he left Kentucky for Iran, where he earned the recognition of the Shah and prime minister, as well as U.S. Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon.

At the time of his return to the United States, Moore held the distinction of the longest term of service for any Peace Corps volunteer.

In Iran, he started one primary library and 31 smaller ones among the people of Gonbad-e Kavus, a small city 50 miles from Russia in northern Iran. He also started a kindergarten that grew into eight schools enrolling 1,000 students.

An article in the Peace Corps News dated Feb. 1, 1971, said Moore "was able to move people to accomplish what they said was impossible. In the process, he changed from a quaint curiosity to a brother in the Iranians' eyes."

The news account noted Moore "inspired villagers who had no school to build one themselves, bringing education to them for the first time."

Further, the writer said, Moore "worked 18 to 20 hours a day, seven days a week. He was more than just a teacher to his students."

"Once he heard that a boy was about to leave school. Barkley walked to the boy's village -- 12 hours each way -- and persuaded him to stay. In all, he talked 43 different youths out of quitting, or else got them to return."

In Iran, Moore was lauded for taking in a group of orphan boys and becoming their substitute father. He spent all of his \$150 monthly Peace Corps salary on these boys.

And this is only a small fraction of the larger-than-life stories Moore brought home from Iran. His adventures were reported widely at the time, in the New York Times, the Associated Press, the Christian Science Monitor and numerous other publications.

The same legendary status he developed in Iran surrounded Moore as Oneida's president, a post he assumed in 1972. In fact, many of the deeds attributed to Moore as a Peace Corps volunteer he replicated in larger form at Oneida.

Moore brought the Oneida school from the brink of closing to national acclaim. Today, the school boasts an enrollment of 600 and annual income of \$4 million. The school's academic program offers virtually everything to be found in the largest public schools in the state, plus a strong dose of Christian faith and work ethic.

Oneida has developed a reputation as a school of miracles, a place where children with all kinds of behavioral difficulties become model students.

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Moore also was known as a miracle worker in his administration of the school -- inspiring hundreds of people to work as teachers and administrators for virtually no compensation and raising thousands of dollars with his folksy, down-home appeal.

Moore devoted his life to the school, working virtually around the clock and seldom leaving the campus for outside engagements. He lived a thrifty life, taking little in the way of compensation from the school.

The president not only knew every student by name but knew detailed stories about each student's journey -- stories he could rattle off to visitors at the mention of a name or the sight of a student walking across campus.

To most Kentucky Baptists, Oneida Baptist Institute and Barkley Moore were one and the same.

"In many ways, Barkley Moore was the Albert Schweitzer of eastern Kentucky," said Bob Browning, pastor of First Baptist Church in Somerset and president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

"He was one of the finest servants Kentucky Baptists have ever produced. His life was consumed with taking care of and strengthening Oneida Baptist Institute. ... All Kentucky Baptists owe him a debt of gratitude and will miss him greatly."

Moore is survived by his parents, Elwood and Evelyn Moore, and a sister, Gloria Bowling, all of Oneida. A memorial service was held Jan. 28 on campus, with burial in a family cemetery nearby.

A.B. Colvin, retired missions director with the Kentucky Baptist Convention, has been named acting administrator of the school by the board of trustees.

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