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Chastity: Making a comeback?
Is the media playing a role?

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
3/18/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Crime. Sex scandals. Government corruption.

The print and broadcast media provide the American public with a daily diet of all of the above, making thumbing through the newspaper or watching the nightly news an uncomfortable, if not painful, experience.

But another, more positive subject has been making headlines in recent months, offering a stark alternative to the usual media fare.

The subject matter? Sexual abstinence. More specifically, teen-agers and college students choosing to remain chaste until marriage as part of the Baptist Sunday School Board-sponsored "True Love Waits" campaign.

Tens of thousands of young people from across the United States and a few foreign countries already have signed covenant cards pledging to remain sexually pure until their wedding night. Campaign organizers predict up to 500,000 young people representing 20 denominations and religious groups will sign cards by mid-summer.

Initial media reports following the campaign's introduction last spring focused on the novelty of teens signing abstinence pledges in a moral climate that seems to encourage sexual activity among young people. But as the campaign unfolded, many reporters and editors began to see larger implications.

News stories describing abstinence as a "trend," "movement," or "sexual counterrevolution" in America began to emerge.

"Virginity Is New Counterculture Among Some Teens," a headline in the Nov. 21, 1993, edition of The Washington Post asserted. The related article reported on "a growing chorus of teen-agers calling themselves 'vocal virgins' who have taken on chastity with a new attitude." In an age of AIDS and alarming teen-age pregnancy rates, some teen-agers "have banded together -- with the help of school counselors, community groups and churches -- to maintain and even proclaim their sexual status," the article said.

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In a Dec. 30, 1993, article carried in newspapers across the country, Associated Press writer David Briggs reported "the great American teen-age sex-out is gathering steam." He quoted church officials who predicted the abstinence movement "may herald a new sexual revolution among teens, and help convince government policy makers of the value of teaching abstinence to prevent disease and teen-age pregnancy."

If a page one headline in the Jan. 16 edition of The New York Times is any indication, abstinence is already re-emerging as an important, if not preferred, educational emphasis.

Appearing under the headline "Sex Educators for Young See New Virtue in Chastity," the article reported young people "in classrooms, community centers and church basements ... are being encouraged to resist the messages of rap lyrics and the bullying of their peers and to prepare for success rather than settle for pregnancy and poverty.

"These programs, which emphasize abstinence rather than contraception, were scoffed at until recently by most family planning experts, who assumed teen-agers were going to have sex whether adults liked it or not so the grown-ups should stop preaching and pass out condoms." In fact, the article continued, one pro-abstinence program carried out by the Urban League in California "showed impressive results nearly a decade ago, but drew hardly a ripple of interest from elsewhere in the nation until recently."

Chastity, the article concluded, "appears to be making a comeback."

Richard Ross, a spokesman for the "True Love Waits" campaign, said he believes the media is playing a key role in the turnaround.

"There's no way the campaign could have reached the national and international audience it has without the media's help," he said, pointing out that, as of late February, reports about "True Love Waits" had been carried in more than 400 media outlets with a potential reading, viewing and listening audience of approximately 200 million people.

Campaign media coordinators have tracked stories about the campaign in a variety of sources, including small-town newspapers and radio stations and national outlets like NBC's Today show, the New York Times, Washington Post, CNN Radio Network and the Associated Press news service. Among foreign media covering the emphasis are British Broadcasting Corporation's World News Service radio program, German Public Radio, the French Press News Agency and The Daily Telegraph in London.

Baptist and other Christian media also have provided heavy coverage of the campaign with reports appearing in almost all of the 39 Baptist state newspapers as well as on national programs like the Focus on the Family radio show and The 700 Club, a television show produced by the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN).

Some newspapers, both Christian and secular, are going beyond merely reporting on the campaign by carrying editorials supporting its message.

"Baptists' sex ed: Bravo!" the headline of a July 3, 1993, editorial in the Miami Herald, said. The piece praised Southern Baptists for the pro-abstinence campaign and the Sunday's School Board's release of a series of Christian sex education resources for children, youth and married couples.

The "True Love Waits" campaign, the editorial stated, reminds young people "biblical teachings can help them resist peer pressure and, important to teens, that they are not alone."

A July 1, 1993, Washington Times editorial said years of sex education and condom distribution in schools, as well as often unrestricted access to abortion, have had "no noticeable effect on pregnancy rates or on the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases.

"The attitude behind such programs, moreover -- that adolescent sexual activity is only to be frowned upon when it produces a baby or a case of herpes or worse -- has left teen-agers afloat on a sea of impulse, with no moral compass to guide them," the editorial continued.

"Teaching them -- whether in a religious context like the Baptists' or not -- that they have certain moral responsibilities in this life, and that sex is for married people, surely seems like an idea whose time has come again."

An Oct. 30, 1993, editorial in The Palm Beach Post in West Palm Beach, Fla., said one of the greatest values of "True Love Waits" is that it offers teens "relief from pressures that insist everybody does it, and support from those who declare that everybody doesn't."

"The pledge may be only a promise, but we need such promises these days," the editorial stated.

Nationally syndicated columnist Cal Thomas wrote in an October 1993 article that the "flames" of the "True Love Waits" campaign "could be fanned into a bonfire in which virginity and purity would become the 'in' thing, and the Madonnas and Janet Jacksons of the culture would quickly fade into oblivion. Such a movement would give an entirely new and different meaning to 'like a virgin.'"

"The overwhelmingly positive news coverage of the campaign has been an enormous help in encouraging other denominations and religious organizations to participate," Ross added. "I think it also is beginning to prompt many Americans to re-examine their thoughts on abstinence and sex education."

A few months ago, Ross made a visit to the Washington Mall -- the location in the nation's capitol where hundreds of thousands of signed "True Love Waits" covenant cards are expected to be displayed at a July 29 celebration.

"I grieve for teen-agers who are paying such a terrible price for their sexual mistakes," Ross told nationally syndicated columnist Michael McManus shortly after the trip. "The thought that 'True Love Waits' might prevent several tens of thousands from making those mistakes moved me to tears."

For more information about "True Love Waits," call the campaign's toll-free hotline, 1-800-LUV-WAIT.

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Reprinted by permission from the March 1994 issue of Youth Ministry Update, a newsletter for youth ministers published by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Baptists worldwide to join
True Love Waits campaign

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
3/18/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Baptist youth around the world soon will be hearing the message "True Love Waits."

At a meeting earlier this month, the youth executive committee of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) voted to take the Baptist Sunday School Board-sponsored abstinence campaign to its membership which includes 165 Baptist groups representing more than 38 million Baptists in 150 countries.

"I believe 'True Love Waits' can be a powerful and important program for helping young people around the world with difficult decisions regarding sexuality," Ronald Bobo, president of the BWA youth executive committee, said. "Through a positive approach which encompasses love rather than legalism, this campaign can help them make commitments to God and keep them."

The American "True Love Waits" campaign which will continue through the summer calls for teen-agers and college students to sign covenant cards promising to remain chaste until marriage. Local church, state and national events promoting the campaign's theme also are being held.

To take the same message around the world, a subcommittee of the BWA youth executive committee is preparing a packet of campaign guidance materials in four languages (English, Spanish, German and French). The materials will be sent to regional BWA vice presidents and national leaders around the world. They, in turn, will interpret the materials and organize the campaign according to their cultural settings.

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The covenant cards signed by young people from around the world will be collected and displayed Aug. 1-6, 1995, during the Baptist World Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The BWA endorsement of "True Love Waits" comes at a time when the campaign is generating international media interest. Recent inquiries have come from reporters in Brazil, Argentina, Great Britain and Australia. Media in Germany, France and Canada also have carried reports.

"I now believe God always intended 'True Love Waits' to be a challenge to the youth of the world," Richard Ross, spokesman for the American campaign and chairman of the BWA 'True Love Waits' subcommittee, said. "He has just chosen to reveal the complete plan one step at a time. Southern Baptists should be honored and humbled that he allowed us to be a part of the first step."

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Brotherhood to coordinate
True Love Waits 'Stake Out'

By Susan Watt

Baptist Press
3/18/94

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Lending its support to the True Love Waits campaign, the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission will play a major role in creating the True Love Waits "Great Stake Out" display in Washington July 29.

The Brotherhood Commission's youth department will coordinate the Great Stake Out, an effort to display an expected 500,000 signed covenant cards on the Mall in front of the United States Capitol. Southern Baptist youth, along with members of other participating denominations and organizations, are being enlisted to stake the covenants.

True Love Waits, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, gives teen-agers the opportunity to sign a covenant card that expresses their commitment to abstain from sex until marriage.

More than 380 youth and leaders already are registered to participate in the effort. Registration will close at 1,000.

Brotherhood representatives obtained permission from the National Park Service to stake the covenants in the Mall area between 4th and 7th streets. Youth will begin staking the covenants early Friday morning and expect to be finished by 2 p.m.

"The Brotherhood Commission is grateful for the opportunity to join with the Sunday School Board in support of this remarkable event," said James D. Williams, president of the agency.

Josh McDowell, a representative of Campus Crusade for Christ and a speaker and author, is confirmed to speak to Great Stake Out participants during lunch on Friday.

On Friday evening, 20,000 participants in Youth for Christ's DC '94 event will join those involved in the Great Stake Out for a prayer vigil around the covenants. This will be followed by a concert and rally sponsored by Youth for Christ. Concert performers will include Petra, DeGarmo and Key, and Steven Curtis Chapman.

For more information on registering a group for the Great Stake Out, write or call the Youth Department, Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104, (901) 272-2461.

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(BP) photo available upon request from the Brotherhood Commission.

Decreased income means
HMB budget cuts in 1995

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
3/18/94

ATLANTA (BP)--The Home Mission Board is projecting a 1995 budget that is 6 percent less than this year's budget, requiring reductions in missions projects and personnel, officials said.

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"The revenue flow has just not caught up with the costs," said Ernest Kelley, HMB executive vice president for planning and finance.

The estimated income from all sources in 1995 is \$4.1 million less than 1994's total budgeted income, Kelley said. Much of the reduction reflects a decrease in surplus funds carried over from previous years, he said.

President Larry Lewis said the cuts must come both at the Atlanta office and in cooperative missions funding with state Baptist conventions. "We're all going to have to bear that burden."

Reductions initially will target unfilled positions and projects that are low on the priority list, Lewis said. "To me, taking money from missionaries and congregational support funds will be my absolute last choice."

Nevertheless, HMB officials said they are not optimistic all cuts can be made without eliminating some filled positions.

Veryl Henderson, director of missions for the Hawaii Baptist Convention, said the cuts will impact missions work there.

"We will need to pull back on some of the pledges that we made two years ago," he said. A silver lining, he added: "We may get more lay people involved, which would be a nice change anyway."

Lewis said all options will be explored and HMB planners will negotiate reductions with state officials. "Nothing will be done unilaterally from Atlanta. Everything will be done cooperatively."

He repeated his call for Southern Baptists to redouble their efforts in support of the 1994 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. "If the home missions offering this year is significantly above our projections, we can considerably reduce the impact of these budget reductions for next year."

Kelley said some state officials have asked if the reduction is linked to the cost of the new HMB office building, but he said there is no connection.

"There is nothing in the budget having to do with the new building," he said. "If we were staying where we are for eternity, we would still have a budget problem."

The board sold its property in Midtown Atlanta for \$14.5 million in 1990 and is renting the buildings until the new location is finished in spring 1995.

The remainder of the estimated \$19.9 million cost is to come from the following sources: \$2.3 million from HMB reserve accounts, \$150,000 from the Southern Baptist Convention capital fund and \$3 million from a capital fund-raising campaign, said Danny Moore, director of the board's business division.

Lewis said the net construction cost of a new, more efficient office building will be less than renovations that would have been necessary to remain at the current location.

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WMU taking vote on receipt
of \$100,000 gift from CBF

Baptist Press
3/18/94

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin has denounced rumors the Southern Baptist agency will distance itself from Woman's Missionary Union if the WMU accepts a \$100,000 gift from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

"We are still partners with them," regardless of the decision WMU makes, Rankin said in a telephone interview with Word & Way, Missouri Baptists' newsjournal. "We still appreciate all that they do in missions education and promotion and prayer support.

"It would be unthinkable for us to sever that relationship regardless of what they do," Rankin continued. "We are very dependent on their partnership."

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Meanwhile, FMB trustee second vice chairman Leroy "Skip" Smith, associate pastor of spiritual development at Sagemont Baptist Church in Houston, said, "Individual board members, perhaps, have stated individual opinions on this subj ct. But, in discussions I've had with other trustees, the feeling is that we should wait for our president to evaluate the situation and make a recommendation and that, additionally, we should take no action until the Executive Committee completes its study on the question of gifts from CBF."

The SBC Executive Committee approved a motion at its February meeting for its officers and staff to study the impact of CBF funds received by SBC entities and recommend "the acceptance or rejection of said funds" at the Executive Committee's June meeting just prior to the annual SBC meeting in Orlando.

Smith added, "Of course, we would have to discuss any motion made by a trustee at a board meeting (of the FMB trustees). But I feel we shouldn't address this until we know all the facts and the ramifications. We don't want simplistic answers."

According to WMU board policy, the finance committee of the WMU executive board has the authority to receive any undesignated gifts on behalf of the board. However, since several board members have been elected to their positions since January 1993, the committee felt they should have the opportunity to voice their opinions.

Small-group discussions have been held by telephone conference calls among the board members. The board, made up of state WMU presidents, is using mail ballots to take action on the matter. Their decision is expected by the end of March.

In the weeks since the Feb. 21-22 Executive Committee meeting, rumors have circulated that the FMB would cut WMU out of Lottie Moon Christmas Offering promotion if the women's group accepted the CBF gift.

During a Missions Education Council meeting held in conjunction with the Executive Committee meeting, Rankin expressed concern about the gift and suggested that WMU refuse to accept it.

"I asked them to consider not accepting the funds and thereby send an unequivocal message to Southern Baptists of their commitment to the Foreign Mission Board and the Home Mission Board," Rankin said.

The gift was a one-time gift of \$100,000 approved by the coordinating council of the Baptist moderates' CBF in appreciation for WMU's contribution to world evangelization. The gift was not requested by WMU and was made without WMU's knowledge according to Keith Parks, CBF missions coordinator.

Rankin said he felt that accepting the funds would undermine the spirit of cooperation and mutual support in missions education that exists among the SBC mission agencies. Accepting the gift would send "a mixed signal of what we are all about" in the Missions Education Council, he said.

Since expressing that opinion in the February meeting, Rankin said he had not talked to WMU executives about the topic.

WMU Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien said Rankin's comments came as a surprise to her since the FMB accepts money channeled through the CBF. Last year, the FMB reported receiving more than \$1.6 million through the CBF.

"Not knowing the nature of Jerry Rankin's intent," she said, "we were surprised by the extent of his concern, in light of the fact that larger gifts have been received by not only the FMB and the HMB but other agencies of the SBC. Receiving this gift would have precedent among the agencies of the convention."

Still, WMU leaders have taken Rankin's suggestion seriously and, in the telephone conference calls, have discussed the gift and the impact of accepting or rejecting it.

A WMU spokesperson said the gift is consistent with present WMU policy which allows WMU to provide missions education material for Christian groups. Other financial gifts have been received since the expanded policy was adopted but the CBF gift is the largest yet offered.

The gift falls within the guidelines adopted by the WMU board in January 1993 concerning undesignated gifts, when the board voted to accept contributions to be used for WMU and related missions needs. While WMU has always accepted gifts in the past, the board's 1993 decision simply recognized that they would not be quite so shy about accepting them in the future.

All undesignated gifts to WMU must be contributed to the organization's VISION Fund. The VISION Fund was established in 1993 to be used for WMU missions activities and projects not funded through other channels.

Rankin said he "would certainly regret if reporting on the WMU decision picked up on the rumors" about the FMB distancing itself from the WMU. "That would be almost as disastrous as if we did," he said. "People would believe it and that would be another disaster for Southern Baptists.

"The rumors are absolutely untrue," he repeated. "My goal is to strengthen the relationship with WMU. I would do nothing to weaken it."

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Bob Terry, Art Toalston, Robert O'Brien and Susan Doyle contributed to this story.

Southwestern supporters
protesting Dilday firing

By Toby Druin

Baptist Press
3/18/94

DALLAS (BP)--A number of contributors and people involved in raising funds for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary have condemned the firing of President Russell H. Dilday Jr. and indicated their support of the school will be halted or reduced.

Spokespersons for three West Texas foundations, which have channeled hundreds of thousands of dollars to the seminary, said the funds will be halted, are under review or will be given only for specific purposes.

Two leaders of fund-raising efforts at the seminary announced they were terminating their efforts, one permanently and the other at least for the time being.

Kelley Brown, president of the Tom and Evelyn Linebery Foundation and vice president of the Scarborough Foundation of Midland, told the Dallas-based Baptist Standard newsjournal no more funds will be given by the foundations to the seminary because of the dismissal of Dilday.

In the last few years, Brown said, the foundations have given \$700,000 to \$800,000 to Southwestern and more than that in years past. And recently consideration had been given to contributing \$6 to \$10 million in honor of Mrs. Lineberry's uncle, Lee Scarborough, president of the seminary from 1914 to 1945.

Before any money is given to any institution now, Brown said, "we will take the position that we want to know who are serving on the boards of trustees and how they stand on the controversy."

The Panhandle Baptist Foundation, which has given almost \$370,000 to support seminary projects over the past 25 years, contributed \$20,000 for the 1994 spring evangelism practicum in honor of Dilday. But with the check came notice that "In light of the trustees' action concerning Dr. Dilday ... the Foundation will advise you, later, concerning stewardship of Foundation resources as it relates to your programs in the future."

The letter from the foundation's president, Donny Mason, said Dilday was a "trusted friend of present and past students" and his "capable leadership" had "greatly enhanced both the program and the stature of the seminary."

The foundation's gifts have funded the spring "practicum," evangelistic trips all over the United States by students. The foundation was established by C.J. and Ophelia Humphrey of Amarillo, who were to have been honored with the B.H. Carroll Award by the seminary on Founder's Day, following the meeting of the trustees. However, the observance was canceled following the dismissal of Dilday by the trustees on March 9.

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Kenneth Cooper, director of The Aerobics Center-Cooper Clinic in Dallas, resigned his life time membership in the seminary's Southwestern Council (formerly Advisory Council), a 135-member group which he said had been the "backbone of any financial campaign" at the school.

Cooper, who also canceled a \$30,000 pledge to the seminary, had sent word of his decision to the other members of the council -- "not to coerce them but to ask prayer about it" -- and said he had been told that at least 10 more had resigned.

"It is a sad day as far as the seminary and Baptist denomination are concerned," Cooper said of the trustees' action. "It was unwarranted, a very embarrassing thing to happen for one of our distinctive Baptist statesmen. If Russell Dilday was guilty of anything, it was of trying to make peace in our denomination."

Jack Graham, Cooper's pastor at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas, in an article prepared for the church's worship guide and shared with the Baptist Standard, acknowledged his support of the "conservative resurgence" in the Southern Baptist Convention and said he affirmed the denomination's new direction. Its leaders, he wrote, are "dedicated to the cause of Christ."

Graham preached the campus revival at Southwestern last spring. Dilday, he wrote, has been a friend and encourager to him and his wife and "is a gentleman with a Christ-like spirit."

The seminary has prospered under Dilday's leadership, he wrote, but noted the president and trustees were in an "adversarial relationship ... which took a natural course in the termination of the president."

Another widely known seminary supporter, Frank Pollard, pastor of First Baptist Church in Jackson, Miss., told the Standard he had notified the seminary he could not "in good conscience" be involved in raising money for the school at present.

Pollard had chaired a committee to contact alumni about support of the seminary's Vision for Excellence campaign, an effort to raise \$36 million.

He said he was "not stomping out forever," but felt "it is not a good time to be asking for gifts from Southwestern alumni."

"I am personally hurting because a friend I loved has been wronged, the seminary abused and the denomination once again embarrassed," Pollard said.

First Baptist Church of Carrollton, where Southwestern trustee Wayne Allen is pastor, passed a resolution asking that Dilday be reinstated. If that is not done, the resolution stated, the church, which is one of the leading supporters (\$236,000 in 1993) of the Cooperative Program, "may be forced to a designation of these Cooperative Program dollars."

To fail to take such action if the trustees do not reinstate Dilday "would be to condone their conduct," the resolution stated.

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Mack Roark to remain at OBU,
declining Southwestern slot

By Marty O'Gwynn

Baptist Press
3/18/94

SHAWNEE, Okla. (BP)--C. Mack Roark, Oklahoma Baptist University's vice president for religious life, has accepted a full-time teaching position at the university, thus declining the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary theology faculty position to which he was elected by trustees at their March 7-9 meeting.

The Southwestern trustee meeting also was when Russell H. Dilday Jr. was fired as president of the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary.

Roark was unavailable for comment March 18. A news release from the school did not mention whether the Dilday dismissal had played a part in Roark's decision but said Roark had cited the opportunity to work with biblical studies students in their formative years as OBU's Ruth Dickinson Professor of Bible.

The news release also noted that in early March OBU President Bob R. Agee had asked Roark to consider a full-time teaching post in the university's school of Christian service.

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Roark will move into the faculty position Aug. 1, with the start of the 1994-95 academic year. He has served on the OBU administration since 1984.

"Even as the door was opening at Southwestern, the door opened here for the possibility of going to the faculty," Roark was quoted as saying in the news release. "I feel my primary call is to be in the classroom, working more closely with students. That opportunity has come at OBU. Having spent 10 years on this college campus, I have seen the importance of these formative years.

"My personal and professional commitment to Southwestern Seminary is still strong," Roark said in the news release. "We have 120 students this year in the seminary's satellite campus at OBU and for 10 years I have directed that program. I am committed to the seminary and its future."

"We had a critical need for Dr. Roark to stay," Agee was quoted as saying. "His decision enables us to take a giant step forward in biblical studies."

OBU's school of Christian service has grown from 200 students in 1982 to an enrollment of 662 in the fall of 1993. While 421 students are enrolled in off-campus Ministry Training Institute courses, with 241 on-campus students, OBU has the largest number of on-campus undergraduate religion majors of any Southern Baptist college or university.

A 1958 OBU graduate, Roark earned master's and doctoral degrees from Southwestern Seminary.

Roark has been coordinator of OBU's China studies program since it began in 1987.

Agee said the OBU administration will be addressing structural issues in the religious life offices created by Roark's move to the classroom, and he hopes to have those issues resolved by the end of the spring semester. Roark will continue in his role as vice president for religious life through July 31.

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CLC staffer Mitchell urges
biblical effort for hungry

By Louis A. Moore

Baptist Press
3/18/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists may differ on how much the government ought to do to meet the social-welfare needs of hungry children, but no Christian can escape the biblical admonition to care for hungry children in some way, says a Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission ethicist.

C. Ben Mitchell, director of biomedical and life issues for the CLC, made the comments in light of a national hunger program's campaign to secure guaranteed government funds for the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children, known as WIC.

Bread for the World, based in Silver Spring, Md., launched its "A Child Is Waiting" campaign in early March. The campaign is called an "offering of letters." It urges Christians to write letters to members of Congress calling for expanded federal funding for WIC.

Bread for the World press releases herald Southern Baptist involvement in the program. Nathan Porter, hunger consultant with the SBC Home Mission Board, is quoted as saying "Jesus calls us to respond to the needs of poor and hungry people. Bread for the World's A Child Is Waiting campaign can help transform our faith into action and make a lasting difference in the lives of hungry children and mothers. I encourage all Southern Baptists to actively and prayerfully support this life-saving 'Offering of Letters.'"

Mitchell pointed out Southern Baptists differ on what the extent of government involvement in social issues should be.

"Starvation and chronic hunger are evils," Mitchell said. "Chronic hunger and malnutrition of children are particularly malicious evils. Childhood undernutrition detrimentally impacts the cognitive development of a child for the rest of his or her life.

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"Jesus' call on his disciples to be Good Samaritans demands that we do what we are able to rescue these children," he said. "What we do for them today will help them every day.

"Southern Baptists may differ on how this is to be done," Mitchell said. "Some will favor expanded welfare programs like WIC. They will want to participate in the A Child is Waiting campaign. Others will feel less comfortable with WIC and Head Start, but should by all means urgently find ways to feed children. One's political philosophy is no excuse for letting the children suffer. The children are waiting."

Mitchell said the upcoming World Hunger Convocation at Ridgecrest N.C.) Baptist Conference Center May 13-15 will bring together Southern Baptists from throughout the convention who are concerned about world hunger and will provide a number of opportunities to learn how the denomination is and can more effectively battle poverty and chronic hunger."

For more information on that convocation contact the CLC offices at (615) 244-2495.

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Athletic conference sues
N.C.'s Campbell University

Baptist Press
3/18/94

BUIES CREEK, N.C. (BP)--The Big South Conference has filed suit against Campbell University in Buies Creek, N.C. for \$300,000 in damages because the Baptist college plans to leave the athletic conference.

According to Jerry M. Wallace, Campbell vice president of academic affairs and provost, Campbell was a charter member of the Big South Conference with an agreement not to play athletic contests on Sundays.

Although there have been ongoing discussions between Campbell and Big South officials, the conference filed suit March 17 asking the court to force Campbell to remain in the conference until June 30, 1996. A Big South Conference constitutional article requires a member school to file a two-year notice with each conference member when it intends to resign.

Campbell told the conference it intends to resign effective June 30, 1994, and Big South officials contend that will result in the conference's loss of the automatic bid to the NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament.

Campbell officials said the conference's decision to play conference championships on Sunday left the college with "no choice but to leave the conference." Campbell contends action taken by the league in May 1993 requires play on Sunday in spite of repeated objections by the North Carolina Baptist college.

The May 1993 action, Campbell officials told Baptist Press, clearly permits Sunday post-season competition as early as the 1994-95 academic year, "ignoring prior agreements to the contrary and the understanding that has existed since 1983."

Six schools, including Campbell and Charleston (S.C.) Southern University (then Baptist College) met in 1983 and formed the Big South Conference.

"It was clearly understood by all who took part in (the formation of the league) that Campbell's joining and participation ... was conditioned on acceptance of the university's policy prohibiting Sunday competition," officials said.

Big South officials contend they agreed to prohibit Sunday play for two years after being advised of Campbell's reasons for resigning.

"Campbell University refused the overture, leaving the (conference) no choice but that of a resort to judicial intervention," the league said in a news release March 17 from conference offices in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

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Campbell University was founded in 1887 and was known as Bui s Creek Acad my. It became affiliated with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina in 1925. It is North Carolina's third-largest private college with an undergraduate enrollment of more than 5,000 students.

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New Orleans trustees
affirm president, staff

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press
3/18/94

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary trustees approved a budget of \$8.3 million, 9 percent over the current fiscal year, during their March 15-16 meeting in New Orleans.

Trustees elected Edward D. Johnson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Ocala, Fla., chairman. Re-elected to vice chairman and secretary-treasurer positions were Morris L. Anderson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Pigeon Forge, Tenn., and Charles Glynn Rhinehart, a survey engineer for Chevron in New Orleans, respectively.

W. Keith Huffman, two-term chairman and director of missions for Shoal Creek Baptist Association in Neosho, Mo., handed the gavel to the new chairman during the final session Wednesday night. He said he appreciated "the great spirit" during the meetings, as well as "the attitude of cooperation evident" throughout the tw days.

Seminary President Landrum P. Leavell II received a resolution from the b ard of trustees, who expressed "unanimous and sincere appreciation" to the president "for his dynamic and creative leadership ... (which) has resulted in over \$18,000,000 in endowments to the seminary, the establishment of 17 endowed faculty chairs, and a substantial increase in student enrollment; ... and ... has been resp nsible for the enlistment and recruitment of an administrative staff and faculty that is second to none."

Furthermore, "The entirety of his service has been characterized by faithfulness and integrity," and "his spirit of cooperation has fostered unity and lov within our trustee board."

Leavell, 67, is in his 20th year of service at the seminary. Trustees also presented a resolution for the seminary's administration, faculty and staff, expressing "heartfelt thanks and appreciation for an outstanding job. Our trustees are unanimous in this expression of gratitude for the Christ-like example and godly leadership which is evident in the lives of our administrators, staff and faculty."

Three faculty accessions were approved: Charles L. Register as assistant professor of evangelism in the division of pastoral ministries, effective immediately; Francis X. Kimmitt as assistant professor of general studies in the School of Christian Training, effective immediately; and Allen Jackson as assistant professor of youth education in the division of Christian education ministries, effective July 1.

T nure was granted to seven faculty members: Sidney L. Buckley, associate professor of voice; Philip A. Coyle, assistant professor of psychology and counseling; Benjamin L. Harlan, assistant professor of church music; Charles A. Ray Jr. associate professor of New Testament and Greek; Thomas S. Roote, associate professor of church administration; Paula A. Stringer, assistant professor of childhood education; and William F. Warren Jr., assistant professor of New Testament and Greek.

Trustees also approved four faculty promotions: L. Clay Corvin to professor of administration; Jimmy W. Dukes to professor of New Testament and Greek; Benjamin L. Harlan to associate professor of church music; Charles S. Kelley Jr. to professor of evangelism; Gerald L. Stevens t associate professor of New Testament and Greek; and William F. Warren Jr. t associate professor of New Testament and Greek.

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Three professors were approved to fill endowed professorial chairs, two of which are newly created. Argile A. Smith, assistant professor of preaching, will occupy the J.D. Grey Chair of Preaching. D. Waylon Bailey, professor of Old Testament and Hebrew and chairman of the division of biblical studies, will occupy the new J. Wash Watts Chair of Old Testament. J. Terry Young, professor of theology, will occupy the new McFarland Chair of Theology.

Sabbatical proposals were approved for two professors during the 1994-95 academic year: Harry L. Eskew, professor of music history and hymnology; and Gerald L. Stevens, assistant professor of New Testament and Greek.

Approval also was given for construction of three more faculty townhouses on campus, with construction to begin immediately.

Two trustees rotating off the board were recognized for their "loyal and faithful service" to the seminary: George F. Webb, pastor of Brown Road Southern Baptist Church in Mesa, Ariz.; and Charles R. Dampier, pastor of First Baptist Church in Herrin, Ill.

The board of trustees set Sept. 12-13 as their next regular semi-annual meeting, with the board's executive committee scheduled to meet June 23 and Dec. 13.

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Train lines and deadlines span
four decades for Theo Sommerkamp By Robert O'Brien

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COLUMBUS, Ohio (BP)--Legend has it Theo Sommerkamp knows the middle name of the engineer in every passing train. And it's said, in hushed tones, that if there's no way to get there from here, Sommerkamp can -- by train.

That only slightly exaggerates the railroad expertise Sommerkamp has meticulously and methodically accumulated since he was a child in Tampa, Fla.

Meticulous and methodical describe his lifetime hobby as a "railfan" who has built an encyclopedic knowledge of schedules, traffic patterns, models, engine numbers and equipment of all kinds.

They also describe his four decades as a Southern Baptist journalistic pioneer who has quietly left a lasting mark on his profession.

Somewhat of a paradox, he's so precise and bulldoggedly determined that he won't back off until he's made his point or gained the information he seeks, but he's also fun-loving and quick with a pun.

While focused and somewhat set in his ways, he's also deeply sensitive, an encourager of others, a mentor to young journalists, open to ideas and a faithful follower of God's call.

That call won't change when Sommerkamp, 65, throws the switch April 30 and heads -- not onto a siding or into the engine roundhouse to rest -- but onto a track toward life after he retires as the Ohio Baptist Messenger's longest-tenured editor.

Sommerkamp had already had an impressive 21-year career when he left the Southern Baptist Annuity Board in 1976, where he had been associate public relations director for five years, to join the news publication of Ohio Southern Baptists in Columbus.

Under his 18-year-leadership as the first journalist and layman to serve as its editor, the Ohio paper reached its highest circulation before skyrocketing postal costs forced it to cut back.

By then, "firsts" were commonplace. Sommerkamp already had pioneered a professional journalistic approach to news coverage at Baptist Press (BP), news service of the Southern Baptist Convention.

And he went on to become the first professionally trained journalist assigned by Southern Baptists to serve overseas in that specific role when he left BP in 1965 to direct European Baptist Press Service (EBPS). It foreshadowed a system of overseas correspondents to develop two decades later.

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In 1955, Sommerkamp joined the 9-year-old BP news service at the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville. He had been a daily newspaper and radio reporter editor in Florida and had earned bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism at Oklahoma Baptist University and Florida State University.

Immediately, he put his professional imprint on the coverage of BP and the newsroom at annual SBC meetings, which would grow to be the nation's finest.

"All of us have built on the foundation of professionalism Theo laid," said Jim Newton, who succeeded Sommerkamp as BP assistant director (now called editor). "He encouraged younger journalists like me and then was one of my strongest supporters during my years at BP." Succeeding editors echo that.

Meanwhile, Sommerkamp and his wife, Jean, accompanied by their three children, set out for Ruschlikon, Switzerland, as missionaries assigned by the SBC Foreign Mission Board to the European Baptist Federation.

From that base, he traveled in Europe -- on trains, of course -- covering news for six years as EBPS director. Those years brought Sommerkamp the closest to simultaneous fulfillment of two great loves -- the calling of Christian journalism and the sight and sound of the outward bound.

At BP he could watch trains pass his office window. At EBPS he lived in a railroad heaven where 250 trains a day ran on precise schedules that gave new life to his penchant for photographing trains and recording engine numbers.

Sommerkamp's travels over four decades have brought more than train lore. They have led him on a path through the annals of Southern Baptist journalism characterized by integrity and faithfulness despite adversity.

"My best achievement in Ohio has been to help keep the state stable in a volatile denominational political controversy," he reflected. "I've tried to do that and also be honest and fair in news coverage and editorials."

He steps down as editor with a continuing concern that trends in Southern Baptist life toward repressing open and honest reporting will not go too far -- and with a historical perspective that this era is not the first in which SBC journalists have had to struggle to keep open information flowing.

"Even without the present controversy, there's always danger," he said. "Each generation must protect its freedoms; each editor must fight for a free press. Fair, honest and unfettered reporting is important to Christians because 'Christian' journalism doesn't remove the responsibility to be fair and honest, it increases that responsibility. Christians shouldn't live in a spirit of fear about telling the truth.

"When Biblical prophets went through terrible times -- even threats to their lives -- God said keep faithful; keep on prophesying," Sommerkamp said.

"God tells Christians today to keep faithful; keep on writing the truth. There's no substitute for it."

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Robert O'Brien, managing editor and overseas correspondent director at the SBC Foreign Mission Board, has known Sommerkamp since 1965, when Sommerkamp helped him as a young journalist get his start in Southern Baptist journalism. He was later one of Sommerkamp's successors as editor of BP news, 1973-80. Leonard Hill contributed to this story. (BP) photos (one mugshot and one horizontal) mailed to Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outlines available on SBCNet Newsroom.

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Vietnam's open markets stop at church doors," dated 3/17/94, please change the last sentence in the third paragraph to read:

... Today only one Baptist church exists in the country: Grace Baptist Church in Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

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