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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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May 10, 1994

94-79

LIBERIA -- A new day might be ahead, says Liberian Baptist leader.
BURUNDI -- Mission house stripped bare; tension persists in Burundi.
NASHVILLE -- Bill Henry named to direct National Student Ministry.
TEXAS -- Abilene pastor mulls offer of CBF western coordinator.
OKLAHOMA CITY -- Joe Ingram, dead at 74, known for Cooperative Program support.
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NASHVILLE -- Corrections.

**A new day might be ahead,
says Liberian Baptist leader**

By Wendy Ryan

Baptist Press
5/10/94

MONROVIA, Liberia (BP)--The civil war that devastated Liberia from 1989 until very recently should cause Baptists there to trust God more for the resources to share the gospel, rather than rely on outside help, a Liberian Baptist leader told fellow Baptists in their first meeting since 1990.

"Could it be that we have been brought to this time in the life of our convention when we must, instead of partnering with others, get into a partnership with God?" asked Emile D.E. Sam Peal, executive secretary of the Liberia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention, during the LBMEC's April 13-17 meeting, the 80th in its history.

"For too long we have looked for foreign aid and when it has not come, we are left crumbling," Sam Peal said of Baptist work which was severely disrupted during the bloody conflict.

"I am of the conviction God is about to start a new day with us as Baptists," said Sam Peal.

"Instead of panicking, hating and being discouraged because foreign support is not as forthcoming as before ..., let us totally depend on God," he said.

"(We) must believe God is who he says he is and that he will do what he says he will do; adjust our lives and programs to God, his purposes and his ways and totally depend on God and his working and his resources."

Sam Peal encouraged Liberian Baptists to be bold as they evangelize and rebuild the church in Liberia.

"As a convention we find ourselves at the crossroads," Sam Peal said, "at a time when it seems we have been abandoned, forgotten, forsaken and pursued by the evil one. Like Elijah we are tempted to say, the future is bleak, let us fold up our tents and go home.

"Either we sit and pine over the present situation, continuously blaming our forefathers for lack of vision, foresight, wander in our wilderness or we must boldly go in and possess the land.

"Our total dependency on God will lead us to accomplish far more than we can plan for," Sam Peal said.

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Sam Peal thanked the BWA for its help in aid and evangelism. BWAid has a \$100,000 goal for reconstruction in Liberia, and Paul Montacute, BWAid director representing the Baptist World Alliance at the meeting, saw firsthand some of the needs. Already BWAid has sent agricultural and hand tools and currently is working on a medical relief package. Tony Cupit, BWA director of evangelism, also has sent and promised more money for evangelism in Liberia.

"Evangelism is the focal point of our convention," said Sam Peal who encouraged Liberian Baptist churches to "join together to support an evangelist."

"Last year our president, Jeremiah Walker, sold vegetables and gave the money to evangelism," Sam Peal said.

Sam Peal also thanked Southern Baptists for their help for evangelism, rebuilding churches and office equipment for the LBMEC office.

Among Liberian Baptists' work is evangelism of refugees in various parts of Liberia and West Africa. Montacute said Baptist leader Joseph Kemokai reported 138 people were baptized, including two soldiers, after Kemokai visited two refugee centers last February for services.

During the convention, Sam Peal reported many of the Baptist buildings were not repaired and the convention could not afford to repair or perhaps even keep them.

"We must now decide whether we want to operate educational institutions or close them down," Sam Peal said.

Addressing the unsettled conditions in his country, Sam Peal called for Liberians to "put up our swords and extend a hand of peace."

While Liberia is enjoying some peace since the unified government was installed March 7, there is still fighting among the various rebel factions, and there are still parts of Liberia the Baptist leadership has been unable to visit.

"Over the ages, Baptists have stood up for justice and respect for human life and dignity," said Sam Peal. "This cause we will continue to cry for."

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Mission house stripped bare;
tension persists in Burundi

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
5/10/94

BUJUMBURA, Burundi (BP)--Thieves stripped bare a house belonging to Southern Baptist missionaries in tense Bujumbura, Burundi -- taking even windows and light fixtures.

Missionary Jeff Polglase expected the house would be looted since buildings all around it had been emptied earlier. But the morning after he loaded his car with his family's most important possessions, he found the house totally cleaned out.

Polglase's wife, Mary, had left Burundi earlier for Kenya to put their children in school in Nairobi and get ready for an upcoming furlough. Polglase, who has since joined them, had been spending nights with other missionaries gathered for safety at a mission guesthouse in Bujumbura and working out of his home during the day.

Burundi, tense for more than six months, has experienced some heavy fighting in recent weeks as the army, dominated by the Tutsi tribe, has attempted to disarm civilians of the Hutu tribe in the ongoing ethnic conflict. Violence between the two groups has turned neighboring Rwanda into a killing field.

Southern Baptist missionaries John and Sharon Pond and Dennis and Margaret McCall, who have spent almost a month at the Bujumbura mission guesthouse, have made periodic visits to their homes in northern Burundi.

Everything appeared calm in their area, they reported. They expressed a hope they could soon resume their work.

Three other Southern Baptist missionary couples assigned to Burundi have temporarily left the country on vacations.

The official U.S. Embassy position remains that American missionaries who remain in the country should stay at the guesthouse in Bujumbura to facilitate any necessary evacuation.

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**Bill Henry named to direct
National Student Ministry**

NASHVILLE (BP)--Bill Henry, associate director of the Baptist Sunday School Board's National Student Ministry, has been named director of the department, according to Roy Edgemon, director of the discipleship and family development division.

Henry, 47, will succeed Charles Johnson who will retire July 1. Edgemon said Henry and Johnson will work together during June to ensure a smooth transition of leadership.

Meanwhile, as part of ongoing efforts to streamline operations for financial stability in the division and the board as a whole, Edgemon said four National Student Ministry positions have been eliminated. These include three professional and one support staff position. Affected employees will receive career transition and outplacement assistance, along with severance pay based on years of service.

"These have been difficult decisions and we deeply regret the impact on these four employees," Edgemon said.

"However, our need to allocate resources for maximum effectiveness is a priority throughout the division. This in no way diminishes our support for the program of student ministry. We are absolutely committed to enhancing its effectiveness by working with state conventions, associations and campus and church leaders," Edgemon said.

Concerning Henry, Edgemon said, "We have had the opportunity to observe Bill's leadership ability as associate department director. He knows student ministry and his selection assures continuity for this vital program.

"Bill's entire career has been spent in student ministry. He is absolutely committed to helping students come to know Christ and find their calling in Christ," Edgemon continued. "He understands the heritage of student ministry and can use this to guide us into the future."

Henry joined the board in 1984 as supervisor of the program section of NSM. Earlier, he served 13 years as associate director of the student department of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. He also directed the Baptist campus ministry at Peabody College (now part of Vanderbilt University) of Nashville for one year.

A Nashville native, Henry holds a bachelor's degree in business and administration from Belmont University of Nashville and master's and doctorate degrees from Vanderbilt. He also attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Housed in the discipleship and family development division, Edgemon said the department will continue to report to him. Henry, like Johnson, will be on the administrative leadership team for the division.

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**Abilene pastor mulls offer
of CBF western coordinator**

**Baptist Press
5/10/94**

ABILENE, Texas (BP)--Bill G. Bruster, pastor of First Baptist Church in Abilene, Texas, has been asked to become western regional representative for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

According to a May 10 report in the Abilene Reporter-News, Bruster is thinking it over but hasn't made a commitment yet.

The position, created at the recent CBF meeting in Greensboro, N.C., would do in states west of the Mississippi what CBF coordinator Cecil Sherman is doing in the east. Sherman is the CBF's chief executive officer and travels extensively promoting the CBF.

"I have to emphasize that it is at the consideration stage," Bruster told the Reporter-News. "No decision has been made on my part." The position, with a salary of \$84,000, was approved effective July 1.

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Bruster said he was disappointed Associated Baptist Press released the news early but said he would "prayerfully consider" the offer, just as he has a number of other offers -- but never publicized -- during his nine years at First Baptist.

Sherman told the CBF's coordinating council at the Greensboro meeting that growth, both in the number of churches and in contributions, was slowing in the western states. They include Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Louisiana, primarily, but also states further west. Texas has more than 4,000 Southern Baptist churches but only 165 forwarded contributions to the CBF in 1993.

According to the Reporter-News report, Bruster and Sherman were among the founding directors of the CBF, an organization of moderate Baptists critical of SBC leadership.

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Joe Ingram, dead at 74, known
for Cooperative Program support

Baptist Press
5/10/94

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Joe Lynn Ingram, 74, former executive secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, died May 8 at Baptist Medical Center in Oklahoma City. He had been hospitalized since April 10 after becoming ill while touring England. His ailment was diagnosed as Legionnaire's Disease.

Funeral services are scheduled May 11 at Quail Springs Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, with burial in Oklahoma City.

Ingram was Oklahoma Baptists' chief executive from 1971 until his 1986 retirement. Since then he had been president and CEO of Baptist Healthcare of Oklahoma, which owns or leases and manages 14 hospitals in the state.

One of his longtime goals as BGC0 executive was to lead Oklahoma Baptists to dividing Cooperative Program gifts 50-50 with the Southern Baptist Convention. This step was accomplished in 1985, but the oil industry bust which hit Oklahoma later forced a retreat from that high-water mark.

Ingram joined the state convention staff as assistant to executive secretary T.B. Lackey in 1961.

His primary responsibility as Lackey's assistant was in promotion of stewardship and the Cooperative Program. He wrote numerous tracts on the subjects for the SBC Stewardship Commission.

In 1983, the BGC0 became the first in the SBC to earmark CP funds to provide retirement contributions for both ministerial and other church employees. That same year a ministerial crisis committee was formed to assist pastors and staffers terminated or forced to resign.

Ingram was a leader in campaigns against liquor-by-the-drink, which was defeated in 1972 and 1976, but which voters approved in 1984. He also led a successful fight against pari-mutuel betting in 1974, but again voters reversed their stand and approved the betting issue in 1982. In 1985, lottery supporters blamed opposition from state pulpits for defeat of a lottery bill in the state senate.

In 1977, Ingram and the BGC0 board of directors applied pressure on the Baptist Medical Center in Oklahoma City and forced the termination of sex-change operations at the facility.

Before joining the state convention staff, Ingram was pastor of churches in North Little Rock, Ark.; Rio Vista, Texas; and Okemah, Tulsa and Shawnee, Okla.

Born the son of a Cumberland Presbyterian minister in Russellville, Ark., Ingram graduated from East Texas Baptist College in Marshall, where he became a Baptist, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. Oklahoma Baptist University

trustees named the school of Christian service in his honor in 1986.

Ingram is survived by his wife of 54 years, Jacque; a daughter, Krista of Tulsa; a son, Stephen of Austin, Texas; five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

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Genesis Records signs Brent Lamb
as 'positive' country singer By Charles Willis

NASHVILLE (BP)--Brent Lamb will tell you he is an unlikely candidate to spread God's message through music.

He cannot read music; as a left-handed child, he learned to play right-handed stringed instruments upside down; and he stutters.

Yet Lamb has just signed a contract with the Baptist Sunday School Board's Genesis Records as a recording artist, songwriter and producer.

"I'm not special, and I'm not qualified," he said at his private recording studio in Nashville recently. "I'm obedient. It's just about showing up for work."

Born 34 years ago in Nashville to working-class parents, Lamb grew up around a family of singers and pickers who loved to sing gospel. But he recalled never having considered music as a career.

"I wanted to be an architect," he said. "Sure, we sang all the time, but I thought it was like football. A lot of people play football, but never think about going pro. I just thought music was something you do like football or wood working, you know. Kind of like a hobby."

But through an advertisement posted on a bulletin board at a Nashville grocery store, Lamb connected with another musician who wanted to sing and travel. With the idealistic enthusiasm of a recent high school graduate, Lamb pursued music, postponing further education. After a year and a half, his musical partner filed for bankruptcy, and Lamb was back home.

While working for his father welding door frames, Lamb said he first heard God tell him he wanted him to sing and speak for him full time. Following marriage, Lamb recorded an album in 1983. Since then, he has worked almost nonstop, never having to solicit engagements or recording opportunities.

His first contract came from a producer who heard him sing in a country church.

"I didn't have to go to anybody. He came and heard me and signed me."

In the intervening years, Lamb and his wife, Laurie, have become parents of twin boys, Hunter and Hayden, 8, and daughter Haley, 4. The challenges and events of marriage and parenthood have become topics for many of his musical works.

He has been an artist for the former "Milk and Honey" label, as well as for Benson Music and Diadem Music Group. His original music has been sung by "Harvest," "Truth," Rex Nelon and Steven Curtis Chapman. Lamb's "This Is America" is the title song for Walt Disney World's patriotic show at Epcot Center.

He has been nominated twice for a Dove Award, once for "Country Song of the Year" and once for "Video of the Year."

For Genesis Records, Lamb's first release in July will be a collection of "positive country" and Christian songs.

"In the past, I didn't listen to a lot of country music because I didn't like what it said," he recalled. "All this new country music is called 'positive country' by people in the music industry. We didn't label ourselves. They labeled us. My first thought is, if you call what we are doing positive, then is what you are doing negative?"

"Our dog doesn't get hit by a train; our dog comes home," he jokes to illustrate the difference between some forms of country and positive country. "After work, we don't go down to the bar and get drunk. We go home to be daddy and husband."

Lamb said the shift in his musical direction from messages aimed at teenagers to lyrics about family came in 1989 when he began to realize the weighty responsibility of parenthood.

"God changed my heart. The boys were 4 years old, and I was getting into being Dad. I was finding out quickly that you have to learn to be a dad, and there isn't a manual that comes with your kids to tell you this is what you do.

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"My whole thought process was about being dad and husband, so I started writing about that. A lot of the songs came to be what is now called positive country. It's just about what I want to be as a husband and what I want to be as a daddy. And if you know me and you know my heart, you can understand that it comes from the Lord."

Lamb said the message he would like to give other men is, "Guys, love your wives. Dads, Michael Jordan shouldn't be your kids' hero. You ought to be your kids' hero."

Despite a lifelong struggle with stuttering, when Lamb stands before a crowd to speak or sing, he does not stutter during that time.

"I used to pray to the Lord to heal me, and God always said, 'My grace is sufficient.' That's not what I wanted to hear. Knowing what I know now about his grace, not stuttering on stage is my walking in his grace in obedience. I don't just trust him to help me play the right notes or to sing the right words. I have to trust him for every syllable. I no longer pray to be healed. It would scare me to death to know I was on my own. He's there, and he just takes over."

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

**BSSB exec advocates principles
to undergird church growth**

By Linda Lawson

**Baptist Press
5/10/94**

NASHVILLE (BP)--Principles, not methods, should be the foundation of a church's efforts to grow, according to Gene Mims, vice president of the church growth group of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Before church leaders consider the best methods for their situation, they must have a firm grasp of the principles, said Mims, who is the author of a new book, "Kingdom Principles for Church Growth," to be released in June.

The book is based on Mims' "1.5.4" growth concept that begins with Christ's Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. From that, Mims identified five church functions -- evangelism, discipleship, ministry, fellowship and worship. When a church carries out the five functions, it experiences four results -- numerical growth, spiritual growth, expansion of ministries and missions.

"The book actually begins with the kingdom of God, not with growing a church," said Mims.

"I think the most important message is that God is building his kingdom. He is using churches to do that, but it is God's work. The point for church growth is, how do you join him," he continued.

"I think most people over the years have kind of gotten the idea that the Lord gave us the Great Commission and then it left for us to work out the details. That is not true. The Lord is working and providing the conviction of the Spirit, working in the fields, making them white unto harvest. Church growth is joining God at what he is doing," Mims said.

When growth is defined to include numerical increases but also spiritual growth, expansion of ministries, and missions, Mims believes every church can grow. Numerical growth may not come first.

"You might get spiritual growth first. You might get growth in missions offerings, education and giving first," he said. "Now if you are not growing numerically after a period of time, you ought to ask yourself why."

"My feeling is if you do the five functions, you are going to have the four results. But they may not be sequential," Mims said.

When a church grows, a variety of things happen, Mims said.

1) Members become increasingly aware of the presence, nature and person of God.

2) Testimonies of what the Lord is doing in the church and in the lives of people become more common.

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- 3) Clear evidence is seen of lives being changed -- people being saved, Christians making deep spiritual commitments, marriages being healed.
- 4) People have a new desire for God's Word and for becoming more Christlike.
- 5) A sense of excitement builds "that God is doing something and we are experiencing it and discovering it. It's not planned and it's not programmed, but it doesn't discount our plans and programs."
- 6) There is a growing sense of unity in the church.
- 7) Church members respond to God's activity with an intense desire to meet the needs they encounter.
- 8) Opposition arises -- "real satanic opposition in various forms, and sometimes there are just enemies that rise up."
- 9) While being tested and pushed "beyond the limits of your imagination and resources," members of growing churches find repeatedly that God provides for their needs.

In churches not now experiencing growth, Mims devotes a chapter to preparation actions leaders should take, including:

- Get in touch with the heart of God for your community.
- Revisit the Great Commission.
- Spend time in soul searching, prayer, communion and fellowship with God.

"Someone told me one time when I was asking about something I wanted to do as a pastor, 'Go and pray about it for two weeks. Then when you get your answer, go and pray about it for two weeks.' Don't get in a hurry to go and do something for the Lord," Mims said.

"I hope no church looks at these principles as a method of church growth planning," he said. "They are principles, not methods. Methods should always come from principles -- a clear vision of what needs to be done and how to achieve that vision."

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EDITORS' NOTE: The following feature on Fred Rogers, creator of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" and an ordained Presbyterian minister, is offered by Baptist Press as a help to parents with young children.

'Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood'
is his place of ministry

By Lisa Belcher-Hamilton

Baptist Press
5/10/94

PITTSBURGH (BP)--There's one minister who consistently attracts a far larger TV audience than either Robert Schuller or Pat Robertson. Each weekday, "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" reaches about 8 million children between age 2 and 5. No wonder Bob "Captain Kangaroo" Keeshan calls Fred Rogers "the patron saint of children's television."

This year, Rogers, an ordained Presbyterian clergyman, marks his 40th year in public television. In 1954, he and Josie Carey, a secretary at Pittsburgh's fledgling WQED (the nation's first community-supported public television station), began "The Children's Corner." Carey was the host, while 27-year-old Rogers worked behind the scenes, playing the organ and giving life to the puppets, including Lady Elaine Fairchilde and Daniel Striped Tiger. Carey and Rogers wrote the scripts and songs on a weekly budget of \$150.

Rogers is now 66 and the recipient of two Emmys and countless other awards as creator, host, songwriter, scriptwriter and principal puppeteer of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood.

He is still in Pittsburgh, an hour or so from his hometown of Latrobe, Pa. When asked why the program isn't produced in New York or Los Angeles, he replies: "Living and working here offers a pace that allows me to be open to a creative spirit."

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Inst ad of a desk in his office there's living room furniture, including a small rocker Rogers calls "Margaret's chair," in honor of Margaret B. McFarland, the diminutive and distinguished child-development professor from the University of Pittsburgh. McFarland discussed the themes and plots of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood with Rogers every Wednesday for more than 25 years until her death in 1988. As you visit with Rogers you realize nearly everything in his working living room represents a person important in his life.

Among various items on the wall is a plaque in Hebrew, which Rogers translates as "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine," and one with the Greek word "agape." Rogers studied Hebrew and Greek at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary during eight years of lunch breaks from The Children's Corner. He was awarded an M.Div. in 1963.

"One of the most important people at PTS was my Greek professor, William F. Orr. I studied with him 30 years ago. For the last years of his life, Dr. Orr was bedridden and living in a nursing home, but he and his wife, Mildred, continued to be powerful ministers in my life. She took the bus every noon to visit him and stayed until 8:00 p.m., when a friend picked her up. The love between them seemed to deepen every day. To feel so much love in such a small room, for me, is truly sensing the presence of God."

Rogers visited Orr weekly until his death in 1993. A "gift" that Rogers carries with him daily is Orr's conviction that in this life, evil is the accuser and Christ is the advocate. Evil wants us to look at ourselves and others with accusing eyes and hearts, while Christ encourages us to look at ourselves and others with the eyes and hearts of love. "Dr. Orr not only preached that, he lived it," says Rogers.

On the opposite wall from the Hebrew and Greek plaques is an oil painting of a little boy with a fish. "There's something in that child's eyes that I find so inviting, and that helps me think about how Jesus invited children to be with him. The fish, too, is an important symbol for me, as it has been for so many Christians."

The significance of symbols in Rogers's life is perhaps expected from one who works in TV. More unusual is his "healthy disdain" for the medium. His distrust was born during his senior year at Rollins College in Winter Park, Fla., where he majored in music composition. At home for spring break in 1951, Rogers was watching television and happened to tune into a program for children. "People were throwing pies at each other," he remembers, "and I thought it was terrible. The whole country was buzzing about this brand-new novelty, and the people who made that program weren't showing any respect at all for each other or for the people who were watching."

His dark blue eyes twinkling, Rogers continued: "And when I told my family I wasn't going to seminary that fall after all, but thought I'd look for a job in television instead, they said, 'But you've seen hardly any television.' And I said, 'Well, I've seen enough to know it could be a lot greater than it is!'"

Shortly after graduation, Rogers found work at NBC in New York, where he worked with the floor crew of programs such as "The Lucky Strike Hit Parade" and "The Kate Smith Hour."

The years have sharpened Rogers's zeal. As he explains: "Children see television much the same way they see a refrigerator or a stove -- it's something that parents provide. In a young child's mind, parents probably condone what's on the television, just like they choose what's in the refrigerator or on the stove. That's why we who make television for children must be especially careful with what we produce, with the people we present and with the attitudes we show in television relationships: attitudes of respect, kindness, healthy curiosity, determination and love."

Is there a theology in this conviction? Rogers pauses. "1 Corinthians 1:25 pretty much sums it up as far as my most influential theologian is concerned." He quotes Paul: "'For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.' I can't imagine more surprising places for God to appear than a manger or a cross. Yet all through his life and resurrection, Jesus demonstrates the power of showing and sharing God's love. Every time I write a script or a song or walk into the studio, I pray: 'Let some word that is heard be Thine.' That's really all that matters."

Occasionally a sermon finds its way to Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. Some claim Rogers serves a priestly function; some label Rogers a liberation theologian for the young.

How does Rogers feel when his spirituality is discussed? Characteristically, he answers with an anecdote. "Last spring I was invited to visit with students at Yale, and one of the most moving moments for me was when a student told me that the Neighborhood of Make-Believe reminded him of what he imagines heaven to be. Well, first of all I was impressed by the young man's courage to make such a statement with so many of his peers there. And then I prayed for a way to respond that would be inclusive for all the people gathered in that large place. Finally, I thanked the student for letting me know that our program had been important for him in that way and talked a little about the importance of hope and peace for all of us."

Reminded of another story, Rogers continues, "I wanted to be especially careful about the way I responded because I remember so keenly one of the times I learned how individually the Spirit can work. It was years ago, and Joanne (the concert pianist who married Rogers in 1952) and I were worshiping in a little church with friends of ours, another husband and wife. We were on vacation, and I was in the middle of my homiletics course at the time. During the sermon I kept ticking off every mistake I thought the preacher -- he must have been 80 years old -- was making. When this interminable sermon finally ended, I turned to my friend, intending to say something critical about the sermon. I stopped myself when I saw the tears running down her face. She whispered to me, 'He said exactly what I needed to hear.' That was really a seminal experience for me. I was judging and she was needing, and the Holy Spirit responded to need, not to judgment."

Perhaps this experience is behind Rogers' commitment to making the needs of children the starting point of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. "The question is not ... 'What can we give them?' but rather 'Who are they?' and 'What do they bring to the television set?'"

Rogers's attention to children's needs has brought him praise from psychologists. According to Dorothy Singer, child psychologist and co-director of Yale University's Center for Families and Television, Rogers' respect for children's inner dramas is rare on television.

"Fred knows that trust is the most important thing in a preschooler's world. When Sesame Street's Mr. Hooper died, they told viewers that 'Mr. Hooper went away.' When Mister Rogers's goldfish died, he said the dead fish could be a memory. Fred talks real-life issues and puts them in a language a child can understand."

Often that language is music. Rogers himself writes the lyrics and melodies before the show's musical director arranges them. Not unlike the ways psalms embrace the full range of human emotion, Rogers' songs address concerns such as anger ("What do you do with the mad that you feel when you feel so mad you could bit?"); sexuality ("Some are fancy on the inside; some are fancy on the outside"); and sibling rivalry ("When a baby comes it can never be exactly like you"). During the week of programs about making mistakes, puppet Daniel Tiger and human Lady Aberlin sing a duet, and in answer to Daniel's longings in "S metimes I Wonder If I'm a Mistake" ("I'm not like anyone else I know") Lady Aberlin sings, "I do like the person who you are becoming."

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Children's television advocate Peggy Charrin recalls washing dishes the first time she heard Mister Rogers' Neighborhood coming from the living room, where her children were watching TV. "I thought, 'It's a singing psychologist for children!'"

Singer praises the way Rogers approaches one theme from many different angles for five days: "Children need repetition because they can process only a little at a time, and Fred seems to be about the only person in children's television to understand this. Likewise, he speaks slowly and sets a slow pace even in the language of television. Cuts are used judiciously, and zoom shots are not used to surprise or shock but to look more intently, for instance, at a pebble in Mister Rogers's hand."

If you mention all this to Rogers, you sense that he's a little uncomfortable with the attention. "I certainly remember how good it felt to be ordained with a call to work with families through the media, because that could bring together many of the interests God had given me."

He extends his hands and uses his slender fingers to represent roads. "I don't think God has said, 'Fred, this is the path for you, now stay on it or else.' I think God is at the junction of every choice we make and knows the consequences before we do and is with us as they unfold. You know, when I decided to look for work in television, I couldn't possibly have known how I would be used. I've simply tried to be open to the possibilities God has made available to me."

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled, "Southern Baptist family joins stream fleeing Yemen," dated 5/9/94, please make the following corrections:

In the sixth paragraph, the phrase, "Forty-two Southern Baptist workers ..." should be changed to read: "Forty-one Southern Baptist workers"

In the eighth paragraph, the phrase, "The three remaining ..." should be changed to read: "The two remaining"

Also in the eighth paragraph, the names Roger and Marge Lewis should be omitted. They do not live in Sanaa, Yemen.

In the 10th paragraph, the Lewises' names and hometowns should be omitted.

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled, "Key SBC committee appointments made," dated 4/28/94, please correct the spelling of one of the Michigan appointees' names: Mike Nolen, not Nelson.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

HOUSE MAIL

(BP)

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Southern Baptist Library and
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