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**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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EDITORS' NOTE: The following seven stories deal with challenges facing religious education in the 1990s.

**Religious educators' president
sees SBC churches struggling**

By Ken Walker

Baptist Press
5/23/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--The trend is worrisome. During the 1950s, a net of 3 million Southern Baptists enrolled in Bible study, for a total of 7 million. But it took 30 more years for the next increase of 1 million.

The question is whether the convention is failing to emphasize training or using outdated methods that place more emphasis on organizational growth than spiritual development.

Bill Taylor, president of the Southern Baptist Religious Educators Association, said he believes the convention's historic emphasis on training has faded.

Taylor, minister of education at North Phoenix Baptist Church, used the early 1900s as an example of what can be done through education.

Although many Baptists lacked more than an elementary school education, he said, they formed great evangelistic movements because pastors and lay members taught church study courses.

"Historians outside our convention refer to that as 'The Baptist Miracle,' that we could take uneducated people, give ourselves to the ministry of education and help those people accomplish unbelievable things," said Taylor, who last year released a nine-hour video series, "Teaching to Make a Difference."

"Some of those old study books left nothing to chance as they equipped people for the work of ministry," Taylor continued. "Some (books) gave a whole chapter on how to be class secretary."

While corporations like IBM have highlighted training over the past 20 years, Southern Baptists have done the opposite, he said. The lack of focus on training is seen in dwindling numbers of churches with "aggressive" weekly workers' meetings, Taylor said; others have reduced training sessions to once a month or a couple times a year.

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"There needs to be a return to training and equipping people and leaders," Taylor said.

Openness to commitment is a question concerning today's "baby boomer" and "baby buster" generations.

In essay-style responses to a Baptist Sunday School Board survey last fall of approximately 750 ministers of education, 32 percent of the ministers said their greatest challenge in working with volunteers is lack of commitment in such areas as teaching and ministry outreach.

However, Ron Pratt, BSSB church leadership consultant -- who recently compiled the results -- said the problem is not commitment. Instead, he said he believes it is the tasks church members are asked to undertake.

When he brought up the survey results to his adult Sunday school class, Pratt said members reacted strongly. They told him they are committed to parenting and a multitude of other tasks they feel God has called them to do, not just to the things the church thinks are so highly important.

"My own opinion is lay people are very committed," Pratt said. "The boomer-buster generations may be over-committed. But many are not yet willing to commit themselves to traditional church organizations, programs or structures. They're interested in personal spiritual growth and development, in committing themselves to something that they believe will make a significant difference."

Two popular BSSB courses demonstrate this, according to Pratt. "Experiencing God" is a 13-week study course and "MasterLife" runs for 26 weeks. Despite their length, he said, they have been well received.

Experiencing God has been successful because it deals with individual spiritual growth and has nothing to do with organization, he said.

"Too often, we're still trying to enlist people to organizations rather than enlisting people to be instruments of God to change lives."

Although they differ on the extent of the convention's educational shortcomings, both Pratt and Taylor agree too many educational leaders in the church are being saddled with administrative chores.

Taylor said he realized the depth of the problem when he served as president of the Metro Religious Educators Association, a group encompassing the nation's 50 largest SBC churches.

At a meeting he asked how many had effective leadership development programs. Only four people raised their hands. If that was the state of affairs in so-called mega-churches, he said, then the SBC was "missing the boat."

"Southern Baptist educators have gotten into the stance where they're promoters, organizers, party presenters and administrators, seeing themselves as everything you can imagine except educators," Taylor said.

"We've allowed everything under the sun to squeeze out education. Promoting programs, high attendance days ... there are all kinds of things you can do to take up your time on a church staff.

"Most of them are getting caught in doing administrative things," Pratt added. "That takes away from training teachers to be effective Bible study leaders and training Sunday school teachers who change lives through the presentation of the Word."

Taylor said the implications of failing to emphasize education can be seen via statistics for the last half of the 1980s. Over that period, 6,000 Southern Baptist churches (of approximately 37,000 at the time) did not baptize anyone. Another 13,000 baptized less than five people.

To the SBREA president that says, "We're not getting the job done in carrying out the Great Commission" (of Matthew 28:18-20).

While Southern Baptists baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Taylor said, they must not neglect the second half of Jesus' command to teach people to observe his commands.

"I think that's where we have a responsibility today in the churches, seminaries and denominational agencies," Taylor said. "We need to see ourselves differently than we have in the last 25 years. We've got to see ourselves as educators."

While Pratt recognizes the need for education, he said educators have a challenge, too.

"Some members haven't been challenged to see that what they do for God in teaching someone the Word of God is critically important," Pratt said. "It's not just a job. We have the opportunity to be instruments, to allow the Spirit of God to change someone's life. That's exciting."

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Christian education survey
reveals needs, opportunities

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
5/23/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Results of the first comprehensive Christian education survey conducted by the Baptist Sunday School Board with Southern Baptist ministers of education have been released, helping to evaluate future Christian educational needs and church staff support opportunities by the board.

According to Ron Pratt, consultant in the board's church leadership department and survey coordinator, the project, completed a year from its inception, will serve as resource material for the board as well as the basis for measuring changes in planned surveys for the future.

Responses came from 752 ministers of education who serve in full-time church staff positions in 33 states. Some participants, Pratt said, serve dual roles in music, youth or administration, along with education.

From an initial mailing to 4,000 ministers of education, identified through the denomination's Annual Church Profile, the 752 were timely respondents out of a group of 1,300 who indicated by return mail they would be willing to complete the multi-page, open-ended survey.

All questions required answers in sentence form, Pratt said. No fill-in-the-blank or multiple choice questions were included. Consequently, Pratt said, compilation of the answers was difficult, requiring two months of reading all answers and manually grouping similar responses.

States were grouped in four instances because of small numbers of survey participants and geographic or demographic similarities. Combined in the charts are Alaska and Hawaii; Kansas and Nebraska, which already share a state Baptist convention organization; Maryland, Delaware and Rhode Island; and Nevada, New Mexico and Montana.

While Pratt said he began the project feeling a response of 150 to 200 people would be good, the surprising 752 usable responses represent what he believes to be "a high level of interest in dialogue about Christian education trends and needs."

Some figures obtained from the survey provide information that conflicts with widely held perceptions, Pratt continued. In an effort to validate or dispute his conclusions related to written survey results, Pratt conducted a series of eight face-to-face sessions with Christian educators in a variety of geographic locations to invite dialogue on conclusions he has drawn.

For example, Pratt concludes the average age of 41.7 years indicates "a younger group of Christian educators" than many might assume and helps to explain the "baby boomer" tendency of many ministers of education "to pursue educational solutions that meet needs rather than those that simply follow tradition."

The average number of years in full-time Christian service of 11.4, coupled with 5.6 years as the average tenure at the respondents' present churches, contradicts a previously held belief that ministers of education have a tenure of less than 24 months.

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While Pratt acknowledges the sample he has used may not be scientific, the results, he said, lead him to believe ministers of education are earning the right to leadership.

"If this is a trend, it is a positive direction," he observed. "It is difficult for ministers of education to know needs, assess strategy and to work out of the relationships required to accomplish strategies in short-term ministry service.

"Certainly, this causes us to think leadership is an earned privilege. Trust, fellowship, direction and influence appear to increase with tenure. Longer tenure strengthens the possibility of influencing the church to develop educational vision statements, educational mission statements and educational strategies to lead the church to fulfill the Great Commission."

Annual salaries, averaging at \$38,241 in the survey, may be a less significant figure, Pratt said, because salaries tend to relate to church size, location, congregational demographics, size of church staff and numbers of ministries being supported.

"Some think the larger the congregation, the higher the salaries," Pratt said. "More staff persons in large churches sometimes will indicate lower salaries than those of smaller staffs in smaller churches. Many churches operate off of minimal cost-of-living adjustments, and in the past year I have found many who have not had strong salary adjustments over the past two to five years."

The greatest number of respondents, 32 percent, indicated they are graduates of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. The second largest group, 17.8 percent, earned degrees at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., followed by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 13.5 percent; Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., 6.6 percent; Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminar in Kansas City, Mo., 5.6 percent; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., 3.7 percent; Mid-America Baptist Seminary in Memphis, Tenn., 2 percent; and "other" seminaries, 1.4 percent. Seventeen percent indicated they did not graduate from a seminary.

In a related matter, participants indicated seminary least prepared them for business administration/budgeting, 22 percent; administering Sunday school, 21 percent; relationships, 21 percent; conflict resolution, counseling and computers, 5 percent each; church growth, 4 percent; and training leaders, 1 percent.

Among the greatest needs cited by survey respondents are time management, 37 percent; focus on education, 30 percent; communication skills, motivation skills, relational skills and delegation skills, 10 percent each; developing vision, 7 percent; training leaders, 7 percent; and planning, 2 percent.

The 10 most-often cited books read by respondents are "The Body" by Charles Colson, "Experiencing God" by Henry Blackaby, "The User Friendly Church" by Barna, "The Power of Vision" by Barna, "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen Covey, "Bonsai Theory of Church Growth" by Ken Hemphill, "The Frog in the Kettle" by Barna, "Dying for Change" by Leith Anderson, "Developing the Leader Within You" by John Maxwell and "7 Laws of the Learner" by Bruce Wilkinson.

Ministers of education responded in a variety of subject areas, creating their own categories as appropriate. Not all responses total to 100 percent, due to the flexible format of some questions. The following response percentages resulted from averaging similar responses among states:

-- In describing their churches, 51.6 percent used the term "traditional;" 31.1 percent, progressive; 3.6 percent, creative; 2.3 percent, plateaued; 5.4 percent, transitional; 2.3 percent, suburban; and 1.4 percent, evangelistic.

-- Assessing whether their church is experiencing growth in both Sunday school enrollment and attendance, 72 percent said yes, while 28 percent indicated no.

-- Average hours spent each week at the computer was set at 6.6. Oklahoma and Arizona participants averaged on the high end at 14 hours, while Alaska/Hawaii users logged an average of 2 hours.

-- Describing themselves as the only full-time, paid educational persons on staff were 66.8 percent of respondents.

-- Evaluating pastoral involvement in a variety of programs, "high participation" was the ranking given 45 percent of pastors related to Sunday school, while the lowest percentag of pastors rating "high participation" tied for missions education and support groups.

Average participation in the Sunday school program described 40.7 percent of the participants' pastors, while 14.3 percent were rated "low."

Respondents rated their pastors' involvement with discipleship at 27.2 percent, high; 39.6 percent, average; and 33.2 percent, low. Missions education, which tied for low score on "high involvement," 13.7 percent, was viewed as having average participation by 48.6 percent of the pastors, and low participation by 37.7 percent. Vacation Bible School participation was viewed as high for 31.3 percent of pastors; average for 45.3 percent; and low for 23.4 percent. Winter Bible Study was almost evenly divided among 35 percent of pastors at high participation; 34.7 percent, average; and 30.3 percent, low. Support groups, another category with the fewest number of pastors rated at "high participation," 13.7 percent, ranked 47 percent of pastors at average participation and 39.3 percent at low participation.

-- In another area of evaluation, ministers of education were asked their greatest challenge in working with pastors, other church staff and volunteers.

Topping the list among challenges in working with pastors was "support" at 25.2 percent. Other categories and percentages are communication, 16.7 percent; vision, 15.8 percent; planning, 10.5 percent; teamwork, 8.9 percent; leadership, 7.3 percent; and ego, 3.1 percent. Only 10.9 percent described their relationship with their pastor as "good."

In relationship to challenges with other church staff people, ministers of education cited "turfirm"/teamwork as the greatest hurdle at 38.5 percent. Other challenges cited were planning, 25.5 percent; communication, 17.5 percent; conflict resolution, 4.2 percent; supervising, 1.2 percent. Describing their relationships with other staff persons as "good" were 9.7 percent.

Working with volunteers seemed to present a wide range of challenges, with the largest number citing commitment at 32 percent. Other topics listed are motivation, 14.5 percent; enlistment, 14.4 percent; training, 14.3 percent; communication, 7.7 percent; vision, 7.7 percent; expectation/delegation, 4.3 percent; and time, 4 percent.

-- A small percentage -- 14.4 percent -- indicated their church has multiple Sunday schools, compared with 85.6 percent that offer only one.

-- More than one-third -- 38.4 percent -- offer more than one worship service, compared with 61.6 percent that provide only one Sunday morning service.

-- While 56 percent describe their Sunday school organization as "traditional," 27.4 percent characterized their organizations as progressive, and another 16.6 percent said they feel their organization is creative.

-- Slightly less than half -- 47.9 percent -- have weekly workers meetings for Sunday school.

-- Among all respondents, the average number of growth or conference meetings attended each year is 1.7. Of those, the most helpful were state meetings at 40 percent; conference centers, 29 percent; associational meetings, 8 percent; and church growth conferences, 4.5 percent. A variety of other types of meetings and conferences received 3 or fewer percentage points each.

-- On an average, ministers of education spend their office hours in administration, 21.4 percent; program maintenance, 16.4 percent; ministry, 12.6 percent; outreach/evangelism, 7.7 percent; staff relations, 6.9 percent; worker training, 5.9 percent; spiritual growth, 5.5 percent; worker enlistment, 5.3 percent; personal growth, 4.9 percent; family, 4 percent; recreation, 2.3 percent.

Pratt said no specific year has been set for a comparison survey. Meanwhile, data will be available to a wide range of denominational program personnel for their us in evaluating needs and planning services and products.

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Survey charts, providing state-by-state r sponses to specific questions, mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Survey suggests transition
in Christian education's role By Charles Willis

NASHVILLE (BP)--Results of a recently tabulated survey among a sampling of Southern Baptist ministers of education seem to indicate a shift in the role of Christian education from the primary entry for the unchurched to an assimilating role after persons first attend worship.

Ron Pratt, a consultant in the Baptist Sunday School Board's church leadership department and coordinator of the survey project, said descriptions of the participants' churches include a significant percentage of congregations that are not traditional in their church programs. Further evidence of a changing role for Christian education programs is a greater percentage of churches offering multiple worship services than those that offer multiple Sunday schools.

The "traditional" description was selected by 51.6 percent of respondents who were asked to characterize their church's program. A significant 42.4 percent chose words such as "progressive," "creative" and "transitional." Another 6 percent selected other words which did not parallel descriptors applied to church programs, such as "suburban" or "plateaued."

Multiple worship services were indicated by 38.4 percent of participants while, by comparison, multiple Sunday schools were indicated by only 14.4 percent.

Pratt said: "This would seem to indicate a strong move to reach the unchurched person through the offering of multiple worship services. Recent data seems to indicate that most unchurched persons attend the worship service prior to their commitment to join a Bible study group.

"We haven't lost our value for the necessity of assimilating unchurched people into small-group Bible study classes," he observed. "But we have recognized the need to tap into the worship service and identify those present who need to become involved in a further study of God's Word.

"The greater anonymity factor for many adults making a transition into church has led to the worship service as a comfortable entry point. That same factor has led a number of educators to evaluate and assess the need for some adult classes to be slightly larger to offer the same type of anonymity for the unchurched, until relationships of trust and acceptance have been formed.

"Educators have to ask themselves, how far can you go with innovative, progressive, creative approaches until you weaken the organizational structure to the point that it no longer accomplishes its intended purpose and objective?"

Pratt said survey responses indicate 56 percent of participants characterize their Sunday school as "traditional," compared to 44 percent who used terms such as "creative" and "progressive."

"There is still a lot of value, validity and relevance in a Sunday school that focuses on reaching people for Christ and teaching the timeless truths from God's Word into the context of where and how people live their lives today," he continued. "No matter how creative or traditional we may be, our primary focus as educators must continue to be on the priority of the Bible being taught.

"To be either creative or traditional is our judgment call in the context of our understanding of our biblical mandate to lead the church to fulfill the Great Commission, of our call from God into full-time Christian service, of our relationship with the pastor and other church staff and of the demographics of the community in which the church is located," Pratt said. "Neither is better than the other. To be creative, it is not necessary to be non-traditional, nor is being traditional necessarily lacking in creativity. Our efforts, whether they are either of those, must be to please the Father."

**Relationship challenges evident
in minister of education survey By Charles Willis**

NASHVILLE (BP)--The need for improved relationships between ministers of education and their pastors, fellow staff persons and volunteer leaders is evident, according to data compiled from a comprehensive survey among 752 ministers of education in Southern Baptist churches.

According to Ron Pratt, consultant in church leadership for the Baptist Sunday School Board and coordinator of the survey project, three concerns emerged as trends in communications needs between ministers of education and their pastors.

"One out of four respondents feel the need for stronger support from the pastor for the educational ministry of the church," Pratt said. Areas where pastoral support could be most beneficial to educators are:

- providing leadership that sets the vision, mission, purpose and direction for the church;

- developing a sense of community, family, belonging between pastor and educator in staff planning;

- promoting from the pulpit, newsletter, bulletin and in committees the importance of educational ministries; and

- providing public support of educational functions by the pastor's attendance and participation in key training events.

"One of my concerns as an educator is that we don't abandon our responsibilities educationally," Pratt said. "I believe pastors want educators who are self-starters, competent in their field of expertise and capable of dealing with problems that surface. Pastors don't want educators who rely on them to make all of the educational decisions."

Ways ministers of education can work with pastors to strengthen relationships, Pratt observed, "also include setting educational goals that lead the congregation to help fulfill the pastor's goal, vision, mission and direction and produce both measurable and immeasurable results. Measurable results could include numerical gains, increased leaders in service and enlarging the educational organizations. Immeasurable results would be observed in relationships built through the educator's commitment to personal spiritual growth and development and personal evangelism."

Representative of comments made by respondents was the cited challenge of "getting them (pastors) to see the 'big picture,'" then to empower the rest of the staff to accomplish tasks."

Another educator wrote of the challenge of "understanding the pastor's vision and expectations."

Pratt said "an overwhelming majority of respondents to the survey indicated a strong desire to serve with their pastor in leading their church to fulfill the Great Commission."

In the area of relationship with other church staff persons, ministers of education cited challenges related to breaking down the barriers of "turfism" and developing a greater sense of teamwork among the staff. Of the respondents, 38.5 percent cited turfism or lack of teamwork as the greatest challenge they face in working with other staff. Another 25.5 percent mentioned their greatest need in working with staff related to planning together a coordinated calendar of events.

"This seems to indicate a recognition on the part of ministers of education that coordinated planning around regular staff meetings could begin the process of strengthening staff relationships."

Relationships with lay people who serve in volunteer roles took "a surprising turn," Pratt observed, "in the sense educational ministries in the church involve more lay people in leadership than most other organizations. Yet data indicates educators identifying lay leaders who seem to display lack of commitment (32 percent), a low motivation to serve (14.5 percent), who are difficult to enlist (14.4 percent) and train (14.3 percent). These statistics are surprisingly high in a ministry that depends so strongly on lay leader participation and support."

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When one adult Sunday school class was given the data on volunteer relationships, Pratt said, their responses confirmed the perception of survey participants.

"The class members indicated they believe they are very committed, very motivated, very willing to train to improve their ministry skills, but only in areas they perceive to have significant impact. Most objected to the impression that the church's program is more significant than ministries they have committed to individually.

"This tells us Christian educators need to approach persons to serve out of their giftedness and the significance of our ministries. The emphasis needs to be on involving lay people in significant, life-changing ministries -- not commitment to facilitate or maintain existing programs," he said. "The lay people feel committed; they just don't feel committed to the same things the staff feels are important."

One question from the survey asked ministers of education what their seminary education least prepared them for in the local church. Twenty-one percent of the respondents identified relationships as their major concern.

Pratt said he believes educational ministries "are transitioning from a strong program emphasis to a stronger relational emphasis. The future success of educational ministry may very well lie in the minister of education's ability to relate effectively with pastor, staff and lay people."

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Professional training tension
evident in education survey

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
5/23/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Practical ministry skills have emerged as an area of need expressed by seminary-trained Southern Baptist ministers of education who participated in a comprehensive survey conducted by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

A failure on the part of some to take full advantage of classroom training, combined with some perceived gaps in seminary class offerings, have been cited as potential handicaps to practical ministry by respondents who participated in the survey.

Among the areas many of the 752 total respondents wrote they feel they were least prepared for by seminary training are: personal time management, interpersonal relationships, conflict management, legal issues, personnel management, property management, facilities management, food service management, marketing, vision casting, long-range planning, leadership transition management and crisis ministry and counseling.

One respondent may have summed up the comments of many in writing, "Nearly everything about my seminary training was good -- even great. But by its very nature, it misses on the practical side. The best improvement in seminary training would be several required courses on developing relational skills."

As further evidence of the interest of Christian educators in continued training are responses from survey participants who indicated the numbers of professional conferences they attend annually.

Some respondents indicated they have attended as many as eight training events in the previous two years, with the average professional training event participation among all responding ministers of education at 3.4 every two years.

Types of training ranged from the Baptist Sunday School Board's two national conference centers (29 percent) and state meetings (40 percent) to associational meetings (8 percent) and a wide variety of other growth meetings, convocations and seminars tallying the remaining 23 percent.

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Ron Pratt, a consultant in the board's church leadership department and coordinator of the survey, said the responses indicate "Christian educators consider themselves learners as well as leaders of learners. They are role models for those they try to encourage to grow in volunteer Christian education service.

"Southern Baptist seminaries, national agencies, state conventions and associations continually evaluate the training they offer in light of developing ministry trends. While no one entity can realistically meet every person's educational needs, together we provide an amazingly strong and varied range of subject offerings."

For the 17 percent of survey respondents who said they do not have seminary training, Pratt said seminary extension classes, short-term seminars and self-guided reading programs provide support in specific subject areas.

A tension that exists, in addition to those in the content of seminary classes and professional meetings, also is apparent in the source of books ministers of education say they have read. Titles range from volumes on spiritual growth and development to those dealing with secular leadership skills and church growth techniques.

"There is a need to stay abreast of both kinds of reading," Pratt said, "and to pull together those ideas that, once they have been applied to a congregation's needs, can contribute significantly to the spiritual development and overall health of the church."

"A word of caution to ministers of education who continue their formal and informal training is that they exercise wisdom in implementing suggestions from secular sources," Pratt observed. "All of our strategies need to be prayerfully considered in the broader context of teaching God's Word and the wise counsel of mature Christian leaders."

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Despite positive survey stats,
prof says education needs boost

By Ken Walker

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NASHVILLE (BP)--While Southern Baptist educational enrollment may not be keeping pace with past years, the SBC ranked first in a 1993 survey of faith and spiritual maturity in five major evangelical denominations.

The Search Institute of Minneapolis credited Southern Baptist training and education ministries for those results, said Daryl Eldridge, associate professor in the school of religious education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

However, Eldridge said he agrees with Bill Taylor that improvements are needed. Taylor, who has voiced a concern for strengthened religious education in SBC churches, is president of the Southern Baptist Religious Educators Association and minister of education at North Phoenix Baptist Church.

Said Eldridge, "If we are going to develop a denomination of spiritually mature involvement, it's going to be through an investment in Christian education. Not through worship or other kinds of things."

Participation in Christian education was the one element that characterized all mature believers in the Search survey, Eldridge said. That means if the church is to fulfill its mission, he said it has to offer more than a weekly Sunday school class: "It involves a growth and discipleship process."

Part of the challenge for Southern Baptist educators is reaching the influx of new members without the "rich heritage" of SBC education, he said. That includes believers coming from other denominations and adults making salvation decisions.

Another concern, Eldridge said, is the large number of seminarians taking jobs in Christian education without adequate training in the field.

"Their background is a master of divinity or a degree in theology, which qualifies them for pastoral ministry," said Eldridge. "But they have no skills to administer an organization. They are missing the educational experience."

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However, the professor sees two positive developments in SBC educational life:

-- A concern for better training at the seminary level. Southwestern's Scarborough Institute, opened less than two years ago, aims to effectively train leaders to mobilize and equip lay people to do the work of the church.

"A lot of our courses are aimed at things like training volunteers," he said. "Another we teach is the 'Teaching Ministry of the Church.' We give students background on why we teach and how to strengthen the church's teaching ministry."

-- High levels of concern among pastors about what the church is doing to train members, how to go about it and helping believers discover their spiritual gifts.

Bellevue Baptist Church in suburban Memphis, Tenn., is taking inventories of each member's spiritual gifts, reflecting a belief among church leaders that more of this type of activity is needed, Eldridge said.

How to carry out that task in a changing world presents the tallest hurdle, he said, noting the slowing numbers of SBC members in Bible study over the past 30 years is a reflection of our culture.

In his own church, he used to offer teacher training courses that lasted six months. Now interest drops if the class runs more than four to six weeks, because most members aren't willing to make long-term commitments, he said.

"People are dealing with a lot of problems and the No. 1 issue is time," Eldridge said, "and training takes time. If you want them to come, it better be very good for them to walk away and say, 'I'm glad I came.'"

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**Jerry Stubblefield: balancing
educational theory, practice**

By Scott Valentine

Baptist Press
5/23/94

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Jerry Stubblefield has a lifetime of learning to back up his philosophy of education and his concern for training church leaders in educational ministry.

The J.M. Frost Baptist Sunday School Board professor of Christian education at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., has written a new book to help Christian leaders bridge the gap between educational theory and ministry practice, "The Effective Minister of Education," released last year by Broadman & Holman Publishers.

When Stubblefield surrendered to God's call at 17, his only thought was to be a pastor. He said it never occurred to him he could be anything else. After receiving his master of arts degree from Peabody College (now Vanderbilt University), he added teaching or denominational work to his options. Serving as a minister of education was not an avenue he considered.

A Peabody professor taught him to evaluate research and its application using the critical approach -- investigating the author's credentials and ability to write in a particular area of expertise, identifying the purpose for the particular work being studied and analyzing the degree to which the purpose was achieved.

Stubblefield continued studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., earning the bachelor of divinity, master of religious education and doctor of education degrees.

At the seminary, he matured through the example of his professors, a group of men and a woman who took a personal interest in him. They "brought me along," he said, by spending personal time with him and encouraging the potential they saw in him.

These situations not only stimulated Stubblefield's interest in education, but also his personal theories on the subject. He saw the emptiness of too much theory and not enough practical principles applied to the everyday ministry setting.

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As minister of education, author and seminary professor, Stubblefield espouses the importance of teaching the principles of educational ministry so they apply to a church of any size. He said he also emphasizes the role of the educator as equipper-enabler.

The minister of education must multiply him- or herself by training others who in turn accomplish the tasks of the church, he commented.

Today, Stubblefield noted, his former students are doing in their ministry settings everything he did years ago, but accomplishing more. One of the reasons is Stubblefield's emphasis on the strong link between the theory and the practical aspects of educational ministry in the church. He has studied theory and applied it through a church staff role.

Stubblefield was minister of education at First Baptist Church in Greenville, S.C., from 1970-75. Since coming to Golden Gate Seminary in 1977, he served three years as part-time minister of education at Tiburon (Calif.) Baptist Church.

"Theory is useless if one cannot put it into practice," Stubblefield said. "Yet, you have to know the theory in order to know how to practice or carry out the tasks of the minister of education."

Stubblefield said he wrote *The Effective Minister of Education* from both the theoretical and practical viewpoints because he believes practitioners need familiarity with foundational theories and the practical aspects which give life to the ministry and aid in carrying out the daily responsibilities of the minister.

No single handbook has been readily available to ministers of education on today's market, Stubblefield said, so he has sought to pull together a large amount of helpful, theoretically based information into a single-volume handbook.

With this guidebook, a person can read either sequentially to get an overall view of educational ministry or one chapter at a time to quickly read about specific concerns, Stubblefield noted.

Although the book is written primarily for the minister of education, many of the principles and concepts can be used by people in different types of ministry.

He said he hopes it will also be useful to those who are contemplating or studying to be ministers of education, to pastors who supervise those in the educational ministry and to personnel committees who call ministers of education.

While his new book is not "the last word" on educational ministry, Stubblefield said he hopes it will stimulate thinking and questioning.

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Baylor regents vote to expand
Truett Seminary across Texas

Baptist Press
5/23/94

DALLAS (BP)--Baylor University's board of regents voted overwhelmingly May 20 to increase enrollment and add satellite centers for its new George W. Truett Theological Seminary, which begins classes in August in Waco's First Baptist Church.

The regents voted to increase the enrollment cap at Truett from 150 to 300 students in Waco and to explore setting up satellite campuses this year at Baptist churches in the Dallas-Fort Worth, San Antonio and Houston metropolitan areas, all with 50-student enrollment minimums and 300-student ceilings.

A key factor in the move, according to Baylor President Herbert H. Reynolds, is the March 9 firing of Russell H. Dilday Jr. as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

"I don't think there is any question that subsequent to March 9, the climate in Baptist life changed substantially," Reynolds said in a May 20 news conference.

Dilday himself may join the venture. "We have had some substantive talks," he told the Waco Herald-Tribune. "I'm having to consider my position here and what my best options are." However, in a Baptist Press interview the day after his firing by SWBTS trustees, Dilday said he would not consider employment with Truett or the Baptist moderates' Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

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Reynolds, in the news conference, would not say whether Dilday, a Baylor alumnus, might join the Truett faculty. The Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported Dilday was in Dallas May 19 for part of the two-day regents' meeting.

Reynolds said Baylor was encouraged to broaden its Truett plans via "telephone calls and contacts" it received, including prospective students and donors. "We have no idea practically what the actual need will be in relation to the perceived need," he said.

The regents, in their annual session at the Baylor Medical Center in Dallas, approved a plan to accommodate as many as 1,500 first- and second-year students at locations across Texas. The regents also expressed a keen desire to explore seminary locations elsewhere in the U.S. and in key international locations, according to a Baylor news release.

Baptist Press has learned trustees of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth have approved a satellite center for the church. Other potential sites were not announced by Baylor. However, a report in the Waco Tribune-Herald noted a center would be housed at Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio.

Reynolds, who presented the expansion proposal to the board, was quoted in the news release as saying, "Baylor and Truett Seminary are moving forward to be boldly responsive to God's will in the preparation of future Baptist ministers for Texas, America and the world. ... What we are offering represents an innovative and significant response to what we perceive as an unprecedented need in Baptist life."

Reynolds noted, "We will establish as many satellite campuses of approximately 250-300 students and offer as many seminary programs wherever highly capable faculty and adequate financial resources permit." Estimated cost per student is \$10,000, officials said.

"In order to plan more specifically for this coming fall semester, we need to know by June 20 what level of financial support we can count on and thus hire the appropriate faculty. We must then carefully assign faculty and students to the several possible locations," Reynolds said.

The Dallas Morning News quoted Southwestern trustee chairman Ralph W. Pulley Jr., a Dallas attorney, as voicing optimism over summer and fall enrollments at Southwestern and the work of the committee searching for a new president.

The newspaper also quoted trustee secretary T. Bob Davis, a Dallas dentist, as saying, "It's interesting how politically driven, power-playing, administrative people like the Baylor crowd will paint with such a broad brush about Southwestern being different to their own advantage." Davis said the seminary "is as strong as ever."

Dallas pastor Jack Graham of Prestonwood Baptist Church, who publicly agonized after the March 9 action against Dilday, was quoted by the Dallas Morning News as advising students considering Truett to take into account the "overall record of Southwestern and its commitment to excellence and conservative biblical theology and world missions and evangelism." Said Graham, "Southwestern is going to rebound."

Dilday, meanwhile, told the Waco Tribune-Herald, "I think a lot of Baptists feel that what has happened at Southwestern ... seems to have had an adverse effect on ministerial training. There's a certain lack of trust in the Southern Baptist Convention. I don't think what Baylor is doing is altogether selfish."

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Art Toalston and Herb Hollinger contributed to this article.

Jim Henry's father dies
from heart complications

Baptist Press
5/23/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--James W. Henry, father of Orlando, Fla., pastor Jim Henry, died in Nashville May 22 following complications after heart surgery.

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The elder Henry, 76, underwent heart surgery seven weeks ago and never fully recovered, according to family members.

Services will be May 25 at 11 a.m. at Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville.

Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church in Orlando, is a candidate for president of the Southern Baptist Convention which meets in annual session in Orlando June 14-16.

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State paper association
executive hospitalized

Baptist Press
5/23/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Lynn M. Davis Jr., executive director of the Southern Baptist Press Association suffered an apparent heart attack May 22 and was rushed to a Nashville hospital where he is undergoing tests.

Davis, 63, had been doing yard work at his Brentwood area home when he began suffering chest pains and family members rushed him to St. Thomas Hospital in Nashville.

As of late May 23, Davis was scheduled for an arteriogram but doctors told family members they had brought him to the hospital "in good time."

Davis was elected as the first paid staff member of the state Baptist newspapers' association in 1993. He is a former editor of a state Baptist newspaper and longtime employee of the Baptist Sunday School Board where he retired in 1992.

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Abilene pastor resigns, accepts
CBF western coordinator post By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
5/23/94

ABILENE, Texas (BP)--Bill Bruster, pastor of First Baptist Church in Abilene, Texas, resigned May 22 to become western regional coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

According to the Abilene Reporter-News, Bruster said he didn't make his final decision about the CBF offer until May 20 although earlier news stories indicated he had been offered the new position.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is a fledgling denomination created by a group of moderate Southern Baptists who are critical of SBC leadership.

In the Abilene newspaper's May 23 edition, Bruster, 54, is quoted as telling his church he was resigning "reluctantly" because of his love for the church and because of the success of a just-concluded capital needs campaign.

"I am resigning to help create tomorrow denominationally for our children and grandchildren," he said, adding "the firing of Dr. Russell Dilday (as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Bruster's alma mater) helped push me over the edge."

"I am under the profound conviction that we must build a fellowship within the SBC which will provide future generations of Baptists with a positive way to work together in missions and theological education. I intend to commit the rest of my life and energies to that end," he said.

Bruster's last day will be June 12 at the church where he has been pastor since 1985. He will continue to reside in Abilene but travel throughout states west of the Mississippi River, primarily in Texas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana. CBF officials earlier had approved the \$84,000-salaried position in the organization's annual meeting in Greensboro, N.C.

CBF's executive officer, Cecil Sherman, said at that meeting that only 165 Texas Baptist churches were forwarding contributions to CBF causes -- out of more than 4,300 in the state -- and gifts from churches in the western states had slowed.

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