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May 25, 1994

94-89

NASHVILLE -- Correction.

NASHVILLE -- Southern Seminary's Mohler sees new denominational era.

GEORGIA -- Staying at home with baby spells challenge and joy.

FLORIDA -- Convention will offer prayers for President Clinton, others.

TEXAS -- Trustee asks SBC leaders to support Dilday firing.

ATLANTA -- 'One-touch' approach hinders evangelism, HMB leader says.

ATLANTA -- Os Guinness recommends 'subversion by surprise.'

ATLANTA -- School participants report 19 professions of faith.

NASHVILLE -- Humor, hats, prayers boost BSSB editor in cancer battle; photo.

MISSISSIPPI -- Pastor/barber 'blessed' in 40-year dual careers.

MISSOURI -- Ferguson urges MBTS grads to internal spiritual freedom.

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "SBC to be challenged to adopt racism repentance statement," dated 5/24/94, please add the word June in the first paragraph so it will read:

WASHINGTON (BP)--A document calling for the Southern Baptist Convention to repent of its involvement in racism will be presented at the June 13 Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Directors of Missions ...

Thanks,
Baptist Press

**Southern Seminary's Mohler
sees new denominational era**

By Chip Alford

**Baptist Press
5/25/94**

NASHVILLE (BP)--While many mainline denominations continue to experience decline, Southern Baptists need not enter the "post-denominational era," R. Albert Mohler Jr. told employees of the Baptist Sunday School Board May 24.

"I believe with all my heart that God has put before this denomination an unparalleled and unprecedented opportunity to move in faithfulness to his mission, in faithfulness to his call, into a future that only God knows," Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said.

Mohler was the featured speaker for the BSSB's 103rd anniversary celebration. The theme for the event, which also will carry over to this year's Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Orlando, was "Building Bridges for a Changing World."

Scholars, pundits, sociologists, historians and "persons with all sorts of agendas" have said the age of denominations has passed, Mohler said, admitting evidence exists to suggest their assertion is true, at least in part.

"As a matter of fact, the decline of the Protestant mainline denominations is one of the most amazing facts, one of the most remarkable patterns of American religion, especially since World War II," he said.

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As evidence of the decline, Mohler said Presbyterians "in spite of their merger, have lost one-third of their membership since 1960, falling from 6 percent of the American population to less than 3 percent." American Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists and Congregationalists also have experienced "dramatic decline and seem unable to retain their own young, much less reach out to the unchurched," he said.

Why is it happening?

Mohler said several explanations have been given, including the idea that the denomination itself is a "relic of the 19th century that has been dragged kicking and screaming into the 20th century." Other excuses include financial constraints, the individualistic and "time stingy" baby boomers and the breakdown of denominational loyalty.

Offering a contrary view, Mohler said the main reason denominations decline is a loss of faith.

"So many of these denominations have moved to the theological left and as they have moved they have abandoned not only their denominational distinctives, but they have abandoned basic issues of Christian orthodoxy, issues such as the substitutionary atonement, the full deity and humanity of Jesus Christ our Lord, the confession of God as three persons in one and the abandonment of the total truthfulness and veracity of the Bible as the Word of God.

"As such, I want to submit to you that these denominations deserved to decline because I do not believe God will shower his mercy, nor will he reward a denomination that abandons the faith (which was) once for all delivered to the saints," Mohler said.

Other reasons for the decline of denominations, Mohler said, include a "failure of nerve" to confront moral relativism and an "abdication of missions."

The decline in mainline denominations, however, does not have to be a death sentence for the SBC, Mohler said. Instead, he predicted the emergence of a new denominational era for Southern Baptists.

What will this "new denominationalism" look like? Acknowledging there is no way to give a complete answer to that question, Mohler suggested six "shaping principles" which must form its foundation.

First, he said, the new denominationalism will be marked by the victory of conviction over compromise.

"There is a tendency among denominations to try to find the lowest common denominator of theological conviction -- a safe place, a non-controversial place where the denomination can find refuge," Mohler said. "But we cannot take theological issues and put them off to the side. They are the reason we are here.

"I believe as we look forward to the future of the Southern Baptist Convention it will be a future that is shaped by a theological consensus ... that is a robust recovery of the faith that we have received ... not only from our Southern Baptist forefathers and foremothers, but from the saints of old, from the text of Scripture itself."

Secondly, Mohler said the new denominationalism will be characterized by a victory of principle over program.

"The future of the Southern Baptist Convention, I believe, is dependent upon the fact that we call on our churches and we call on individual Baptists to be loyal not to programs, because they will pass, but to Baptist principles, because they must be enduring," he said.

The new era of denominationalism also will be marked by the victory of mission over marketing, cooperation over competition, flexibility over fixation, and ministry over management, Mohler said.

While he said it might sound like a "radical idea" for the 1990s, he believes the Southern Baptist denomination does not have a mission.

"I believe by our Baptist ecclesiology it is the local church that has the mission," he said, adding one of the "great tasks" of this generation is "to de-institutionalize the SBC and re-congregationalize the denomination."

"The new d nominationism is nothing more and nothing less than faithfulness to the task God has plac d before us and fid lity to the gospel by which we have been redeemed, the faith in which we stand," he said.

Mohler thanked BSSB employees for their contribution to the denomination and reminded them of the impact Sunday school literature and other materials have on churches.

"You are the front-line theological, biblical, doctrinal educator for our churches," he said. "What you publish, what you release, what you send out will frame the understanding of Southern Baptists in this generation and for generations to come. ... My prayer for you is that every piece of literature, every periodical, every magazine, every book, every article which is released will be infused with the intensity of evangelical conviction."

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Staying at home with baby
spells challenge and joy

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
5/25/94

VILLA RICA, Ga. (BP)--To work or not to work? Recently Lonell Camp answered "no" after 12 years with the same employer.

After the birth of her daughter in July 1993, Camp had returned to her full-time job as shipping and invoicing clerk at Golden City Hosiery in Villa Rica, Ga.

But the tension between being a good employee and effective mother was frustrating, so in March she quit her job to stay home with her daughter, Alexandra ("Alex" for short).

Camp, 31, and her husband Mark, 32, are examples of a new societal trend: a declining number of two-paycheck households, reported by a recent article in Barron's financial weekly.

Economist Richard Hokenson identified a "demographic sea change" in the March 21 Barron's story: "The traditional one-paycheck family is now the fastest-growing household unit."

In the 1990s, Hokenson said households with "more time than money" are replacing families who formerly had "more money than time," as women leave the work force to spend more time with their children.

Likewise Lonell and Mark Camp say they value time more than the income provided by her former job. There is now more time for Alex and for volunteer church responsibilities.

As members of the First Baptist Church of Villa Rica, Lonell serves as a nursery worker and member of the finance and budget committee. Mark is a deacon, choir member and Sunday school ministries coordinator. Both are substitute Sunday school teachers.

Th Camps' most keenly felt relief has been from their once- hectic schedule on weekday evenings, which Lonell said are a lot more pleasant now.

"It's made a world of difference," she said. "I used to have to pick up Alex from day care, rush home, feed Alex, make sure supper was ready for Mark and me, and give Alex a bath. By that time, it was Alex's bedtime. We didn't get to spend much time together. I would be ill and frustrated -- both at home and work."

The Barron's article said women 20-24 are "driving the trend" of retreat from th workplace. "Among women 25-34, the percentage engaged in the labor force has flattened," the article said. "And even among older baby-boomers, those hard-core careerists who came of age in the late sixties and mid-'seventies, participation continues to climb, but at a much lower rate."

One factor driving the exodus from the workplace is an aversion by some parents to day care. One woman, identified as Annette P., was quoted by Barr n's as saying, "I don't want to go to w rk so that my daughter can go to day care -- or so I can support a baby sitter."

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Mark Camp experienced a similar feeling when one day he picked up Alex from day care and saw for himself the number of children she stayed with -- anywhere from 7 to 15, Lonell said.

"He said, 'This is it'," she recalled. "The day care was OK. It was licensed, but she wasn't being held or played with, and she needed more individual attention."

Eventually, Lonell said she had to decide that Alex is "more important than that job and that paycheck. We thought about it, prayed about it and cried about it, and I quit."

She considers the value of being home with Alex well worth the financial and vocational sacrifices. "I just don't want someone else raising her," Lonell said. "I want her to learn right and wrong the way I learned right and wrong -- from her own parents.

"I don't think I had this child for someone else to raise," she said. "I had her for us to raise and that just has to come first."

The Barron's article noted the "average working woman's real wages" are actually lower than her net pay: "After paying for child care -- not to mention lunches, bus tokens, and a working wardrobe -- she may well find herself laboring for free."

"We actually buy more groceries now," Lonell said, "because we don't eat as much take-out food or eat out as much. It's less expensive."

Though the Camps' income dropped by 30 to 40 percent when Lonell quit her job, the financial adjustments have been challenging but not impossible, she said, adding "the Lord has provided for us."

Before quitting work, Lonell had planned to buy herself a new car but now feels "it's not really that important. Being home with Alex makes up for all the material things."

Lonell works outside the home just a little now -- from 5 to 7 hours weekly at cleaning her mother's house and every other weekend cleaning the office supply store in nearby Carrollton where Mark is store manager.

"Mark says I'm in a much better mood now. He and I spend more time together and more time with her. Life is smoother and more peaceful," she said. "Now I have Alex fed before Mark gets home. I have dinner for us just about finished when he arrives. He watches her while I work in the kitchen, and after dinner the three of us go for a walk together or lay in the living room floor and play."

Lonell knows other young couples struggling with the same issue. "Several couples I know want to quit," she noted. "Many feel they have to have two incomes, that they can't quit."

"You have to have faith. You just make that step, and God has a way of providing for you," she said.

Lonell's voice brightens when she speaks about Alex. "She's into everything, very curious. She likes to hug and kiss. We sing songs together, and she likes to hear people sing," said Lonell. "She also likes Barney."

Alex also likes Belliard, a silver tabby cat who doesn't stay in the house as much as he used to. "Belliard is unsure about Alex," said Lonell, with a laugh. "When Alex brings her walker into the kitchen, Belliard runs."

"I could be sitting at work at a computer," she said, "not knowing what she is doing. Being home with her is enough for me. It's so satisfying."

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Convention will offer prayers
for President Clinton, others

By Louis Moore

Baptist Press
5/25/94

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--For 20 minutes on the opening day of the annual Southern Baptist Convention, thousands of Southern Baptists will pray for President Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, members of the U.S. Congress and U.S. Supreme Court justices.

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The mass prayer rally, scheduled for 7:20 to 7:40 p.m. on Tuesday, June 14, in the Orange County Convention/Civic Center, will be sponsored by two SBC agencies, the Christian Life Commission and Brotherhood Commission.

The basis for the prayer meeting is Romans 13, which urges Christians to pray for their government leaders.

During the prayer time, Southern Baptist messengers and guests attending the convention will be asked to form small prayer groups of no more than 10 people and pray for Clinton, Gore and other leaders by name. They also will pray for Southern Baptist denominational leaders, pastors and churches as well as specific needs, such as those of the homeless, the hungry, the unborn, the elderly and the sick.

Wherever they are at that time, other Southern Baptists not attending the convention are being asked to join in the prayer time.

While they are praying, photos of the president, vice president, members of Congress, Supreme Court justices as well as hungry people, the homeless, victims of illegal drug usage, the elderly and others will be shown on screens throughout the convention center.

Richard Land, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, said, "God has commanded us to pray 'for all that are in authority' and 'for all men' (1 Timothy 2:1-2). I can think of nothing which would be a greater blessing for Southern Baptists and for America than for 25,000-plus Southern Baptists to unite on their knees in prayer for our nation's leaders and people.

"Everywhere I go in the country today I find a pervasive sense both of national crisis and spiritual opportunity," Land said. "People from all segments of American society realize we are in a spiritual crisis, and they are seeking desperately for answers. We know that Jesus is the only sufficient answer. I pray that as we call our convention to this season of prayer we will pray that God will send revival and will use Southern Baptists as his instrument to usher in a nationwide spiritual renewal."

James Williams, executive director of the Brotherhood Commission, noted the prayers also will focus on Southern Baptist leaders, churches, pastors and lay people as well as people to whom Southern Baptists either minister or need to minister.

"One of our roles at the Brotherhood Commission has been to match the volunteer with the need through Disaster Relief, church building, World Changers and any number of other avenues for service," he said. "It's truly a source of joy for us to see how God is already moving tens of thousands of Southern Baptists to give of themselves in personal, hands-on involvement, seeking to demonstrate what it means to be 'salt and light' in the world. They are meeting needs in the marketplace and doing it in Christ's name. And many others are coming to know Christ because of it."

Williams also urged Southern Baptists to begin praying now for the convention prayer time, that it might make a significant impact on the nation.

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Trustee asks SBC leaders
to support Dilday firing

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
5/25/94

WATAUGA, Texas (BP)--The firing of Russell Dilday March 9 as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary reflected the wish of SBC leadership but was not requested by them, according to a SWBTS trustee.

But the "strange silence" from the SBC leaders following the firing drew a protest from Ollin E. Collins, pastor of Harvest Baptist Church in Watauga, Texas. Collins is acting chairman of the trustees' search committee for a new president.

Collins sent a letter to eight SBC leaders, six of them former SBC presidents, objecting to the lack of support from them for SWBTS trustees following the firing.

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"I say strange silence because it just seems strange that when we finally did what you men had been leading us to do, and saying needed to be done for some 10 years now, and yet once it was done it was as though we had leprosy and nobody wanted to touch us or be associated with us," wrote Collins.

"We really feel like we have been hung out and left by our self and nobody that we have respected has stepped forward" to support the trustees, Collins wrote.

Collins' May 9 letter was sent to former SBC presidents Jimmy Draper of Nashville; Adrian Rogers of suburban Memphis, Tenn.; Bailey Smith and Charles Stanley of Atlanta; Jerry Vines of Jacksonville, Fla.; current SBC president H. Edwin Young of Houston; and pastors Homer Lindsay of Jacksonville and James Merritt of Snellville, Ga. All SWBTS trustees received copies of the letter, Collins said.

The lack of positive response to the trustee action by the SBC leaders could signal to rank and file Southern Baptists coming to the SBC annual meeting in Orlando in June that the firing was not supported by the leaders, Collins told Baptist Press. His letter, written "with a broken heart and humble spirit," urged them to speak out publicly.

"I truly feel that because of the lack of this type of leadership by ANY high-profile national conservative pastor, that our conservative constituency is fragmenting," Collins wrote. "I would urge you on behalf of my fellow trustees to prayerfully consider making some kind of public statement saying that you trust us, believe in the trustee process and urge conservative Southern Baptists to trust us to be making a decision that is right for Southern Baptists."

Vines did just that, Collins said. Less than a week after the letter was sent, Vines publicly voiced his support for the firing, a "decision which, in my personal judgment, was long overdue." The statement was in Vines' church newsletter which was mailed to 8,000 pastors who had attended the church's annual ministers' conference, plus the church's membership.

Vines said the statement also had the support of Rogers, Smith and Stanley. Vines is co-pastor of First Baptist Church in Jacksonville; Rogers is pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in suburban Memphis; Smith is an Atlanta-based evangelist; and Stanley is pastor of First Baptist Church in Atlanta.

Ralph Pulley, Dallas attorney and chairman of the trustees, said Collins' letter was an encouragement more than a complaint. The idea of "being abandoned" by SBC leaders, Pulley said, has not been a major subject of discussion among trustees he has talked to. He said he has received support and encouragement from SBC leaders.

Following the firing several SBC leaders did ask for prayer for the trustees, Dilday and the seminary. Collins said he has since received supportive letters from some SBC leaders and received a phone call from Draper, now president of the Baptist Sunday School Board, who told Collins that as an SBC agency head he could not comment on another agency's situation but expressed his concern and prayer.

Since the firing trustees have said Dilday was critical of the SBC conservative resurgence and opposed trustees' new directions for the seminary. However, the firing by a vote of 27-7 has drawn criticism from students, alumni, faculty, an accrediting agency and many Texas Baptist pastors.

"We want to move on and find a president, but in all honesty we feel that w 27 who voted to terminate Russell are in this all by ourselves when we receive over 450 letters, are bombarded from every news media, Baptist included, telling us what reprobates we are, calling us ecclesiastical bigots and told that there are special places in hell reserved just for us," Collins wrote.

Collins began his letter by noting how "much I love, respect and support you in your ministries. I thank you for your leadership in our Southern Baptist Convention over the past year."

'One-touch' approach hinders evangelism, HMB leader says

By Sarah Zimmerman

ATLANTA (BP)--A "one-touch" approach to vangelism keeps Southern Baptists from leading more people to Christ, the Home Mission Board's vice president for evangelism said during a May conference.

"We are afflicted with a style of evangelism that results in few converts. Not often do people accept Christ on our first visit. We must keep touching them, keep saturating them," Darrell Robinson said during an HMB-sponsored school of evangelism and church growth in Atlanta.

Churches constantly must use multiple approaches to sharing Christ, including media promotions, phone campaigns, door-to-door surveys and revivals, Robinson said.

Southern Baptists' evangelism efforts also are hindered by too many Christians "living in perpetual disobedience" to Christ's command to witness, Robinson said.

Rather than a mandatory duty motivated by guilt, witnessing should be the natural overflow of Christ dwelling within Christians, Robinson said. That results in personal evangelism efforts that are bold and confident but not characterized by browbeating or arm-twisting, he said. Throughout the four-day conference, speakers offered other reasons for decreased evangelism results:

-- Few role models. "We teach and preach evangelism, but how many of us actually do it?" asked Larry Wynn, pastor of Hebron Baptist Church in Dacula, Ga. "I have not fulfilled my responsibility to my church if I don't model evangelism."

Wynn estimated at least 50,000 people serve Southern Baptist churches in professional ministerial roles. If each of them led one person a month to make a profession of faith, Southern Baptists would set a record for baptisms in one year.

-- Lack of worship. "The starting point of church growth is to worship th Lord," said Bryant Wright, pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga. "We hope the Sunday morning worship is the highest moment of the week for those who come."

Johnson Ferry has grown from 55 people meeting in a doctor's office in 1981 to become one of Atlanta's suburban mega-churches. The church's vision is to "love God and worship him as we reach and disciple people for Christ," Wright said.

-- Straying from the purpose. Many Christians are so involved in religious activities, focused on themselves or blind to others' needs they forget that their purpose is to proclaim the good news, said Dellanna O'Brien, Woman's Missionary Union executive director. "Jesus was consumed by the fact that he was the sent one," she said.

-- Misunderstanding the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a comforter, but too many people think of the Holy Spirit only as an emotion, said Emmanuel McCall, pastor of Christian Fellowship Baptist Church in College Park, Ga.

The Holy Spirit was sent to give Christians strength for the Lord's work, "not so you can have a spiritual orgasm," McCall said.

-- Assumptions. "We take for granted the world understands what we're saying," said evangelist Kelly Green. Instead, the world is full of biblical illiterates who must have the gospel simplified before they will understand or accept it, he said.

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Os Guinness recommends 'subversion by surprise'

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
5/25/94

ATLANTA (BP)--"Subversion by surprise" is the best way to present the gospel to truly unchurched people, Os Guinness told participants in a May school of evangelism and church growth.

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Subversion by surprise is a method of teaching that guides listeners in one direction but ends unexpectedly, said the executive director of Trinity Forum, a business consulting company. It leads to a "truth-triggered turnaround of heart and mind."

"Seeker-friendly" services will attract people looking for God, but they will not reach the truly unchurched, Guinness said. He described the truly unchurched as people who never think about attending church, such as people whose families have been unchurched for generations.

The prophet Nathan used subversion by surprise when he rebuked King David about committing adultery and murder, Guinness said. Many of Jesus' parables are examples of this tactic, he said.

Asking questions is another way to reach unchurched people with the gospel, Guinness said. Questions involve the listener more than statements, Guinness noted.

Biblical examples are God asking Adam and Eve, "Where art thou?" after they sinned and God asking Job questions such as "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?"

"In this approach, people come to conclusions themselves, making it the least manipulative approach there is," Guinness said.

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School participants report
19 professions of faith

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
5/25/94

ATLANTA (BP)--An afternoon of door-to-door witnessing resulted in 19 professions of faith during a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board school of evangelism and church growth.

Of 486 people who registered for the May conference, 130 participated in the evangelistic effort, said Stan Clark, HMB volunteer evangelism consultant. Working in teams, they presented the gospel 109 times, enrolled six people in Bible study and discovered 160 prospects for local churches.

Rene Houle, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Henderson, Nev., led two foreign exchange students to professions of faith in Christ. One student was from Poland and the other from Australia, he said. They told Houle that the gospel had never been explained to them.

Jerry Pipes, HMB associate director of personal evangelism, led three high school students to Christ. After one girl made a profession of faith, Pipes asked if she knew anyone else who needed to make the same decision. At that time, two of her friends came to the house and they also made professions of faith.

"If we had been five minutes later it would have been too late," Pipes said. The students were on their way to a high school activity when Pipes met them.

Ten professions of faith were reported by volunteers working with Mount Zion Baptist Church in Snellville, Ga. Church members started follow-up with the new Christians less than 48 hours after their conversion, said Herb Long, associate pastor.

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Humor, hats, prayers boost
BSSB editor in cancer battle

By Janis Whipple

Baptist Press
5/25/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--These last several weeks have been difficult ones for many employees at the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Two employees have died of cancer recently, adding emotional turmoil to the normal stress of everyday life. Both women were young, leaving behind husbands and daughters, and their deaths made even the strongest Christians question the "fairness" of life.

--MOR --

In addition to dealing with these difficult deaths, BSSB employees are working side by side with several others who are battling cancer or other life-threatening diseases.

One of these others is me.

I was diagnosed with breast cancer last October. As a 35-year-old, I'd felt fairly invulnerable to threats to my mortality. Oh, I couldn't do things as easily as when I was 25, and I seemed to be more forgetful now and then, and I needed to drop a few pounds; but I certainly never thought I'd be a "cancer victim." It was definitely a shock.

Since my diagnosis, I've had major surgery and six months of chemotherapy. I should complete my treatments and tests sometime this summer. It's been a hard road to travel, an emotional, physical and spiritual roller coaster ride.

You never know how you'll respond to a personal crisis until you're in one. And because I've been on the other side of crisis more often, I know how difficult it is to see a friend or co-worker go through it. Many people don't know what to do or say. They're in shock, too. But I've discovered that God has a way of using those same people in miraculous ways when you suddenly find yourself in need. One of the things God's used in my life through my crisis is the people here at the Baptist Sunday School Board.

I've certainly understood the value in working for a Christian organization. I know there are times many of us may not feel working here is any different from working anywhere else. But when times get rough, the difference is obvious.

One of the greatest things BSSB employees have done for me is pray. I know my situation has been offered up in prayer by individuals, in meetings and in our Tuesday chapel services. And I can testify to the power of that prayer. It makes a difference not only in my physical recovery, but in my spiritual and emotional status.

Another thing employees have done for me is talk with me -- in the halls, in the cafeteria, by phone, cards, voice mail or e-mail. I've heard their concerns, their prayers and I've known I was missed on the days and weeks I was out. It's amazing how much that means. It feels good to know people care. I will never take for granted another "You look great!" as I pass a friend in the hallway.

People also have understood. I have a supportive supervisor and department. They understand when I have a bad day, help pick up the slack at work and remind me to go home on time when I'm tired. Other folks offer to meet practical needs or give a shoulder to cry on and a chance to get out of the house now and then.

I have not only been surrounded with understanding, prayers, cards, messages and good old conversation, but my colleagues have allowed me to be myself. I haven't felt pity, but heartfelt concern. I haven't heard whispered comments as I pass by, but honest questions about how I'm doing or what I need or even a "I like your hat!" (I have singlehandedly brought back the hat fad at the BSSB. I now have more hats than most people have shoes!)

I believe it's crucial for cancer patients to be able to be themselves. In my case, that's a willingness to talk about what's happening with my situation, to answer questions, to occasionally make jokes about my cancer and to honestly reveal what God has taught me through it all. For others, it may be something different. And though I believe that being willing to talk openly about cancer is a positive thing, I know other cancer patients aren't comfortable doing so. Whoever they are, they need to feel like themselves because there are enough times when they feel like their lives have become completely abnormal.

Normalcy is extremely important to me now. I want to feel as normal as possible, as often as possible. After all, my cancer is not the only thing going on in the world. Fortunately I know some employees don't know me, don't know I have cancer and sometimes that helps me feel normal. (As do the days when I feel as stressed as usual about how far behind I am at work!)

--more--

Normalcy also is feeling like I can give som thing back to my co-workers, even in the middl of my treatment. I can give you the assurance that prayers are answered. I can be an example of God's presence. I can make you more comf rtable around me so you're freer to ask questions or offer assistance. I can offer myself to those who follow beside or behind me in their own personal crises, because I've walked in their shoes.

I wasn't the first BSSB employee to have cancer and I won't be the last. There will be other times when employees must support someone through a similar trial -- someone they see across the cafeteria or in the office next door. If you aren't sure what to do when that moment comes, I suggest the following:

-- Understand. Cancer patients have good days and bad days. They need understanding. They'll miss some days and weeks and feel fine on others. You might have to help pick up the slack of their workload or understand when they're so tired they can hardly walk down the hall.

-- Be sincere. They'll need to know you're glad to see them, or you're sorry they're going though a rough time or you want to know if they need anything. But they'll also know if you really mean it.

-- Be positive. One of the most frequent comments I've heard through my experience is how important it is to keep a positive attitude. Even doctors will t ll you how significant this is in recovery. Cancer patients need people around them to help reinforce a positive attitude, not burden them with a lot of negativity. When they're afraid, they may need someone to remind them again of God's presence and of the love of others around them. You might be able to h lp a pessimistic patient turn into a positive one.

-- Be normal. There is life outside of cancer. Let the person talk about their cancer when they need to. Don't be afraid to ask questions. But sometimes they need to talk about something else! They (we) want to know how you are, what your kids are doing, what's new in your world.

-- Let them be themselves. People going through cancer have to be themselves, whether it's angry, gregarious, joking, afraid or quiet. They're dealing with a new thing and they're learning how to get through it. You can help them by allowing them to be themselves, even if you also need to give them a gentle nudge now and then if they begin to dwell in anger or depression. I believe there's a time for feeling down or angry, but too much of it accomplishes nothing.

-- Laugh. I think a good sense of humor is great medicine. It's also a wonderful relief. I know some people don't understand when I tell "cancer jokes." But it's one of the ways I cope. (One of my favorites is to tell people how I'v be n pulling my hair out over my job lately.) You'll do a friend a world of go d if you'll just laugh with them and have a little fun.

-- Be practical. I know how much it's meant to me to have friends and co-workers helping me in practical ways. If you know someone going through a similar experience, you can visit him or her in the hospital, take some food, send a card, pick up mail, take care of a pet or just drop by for a quick visit and some conversation (call first). Even the most seemingly insignificant things will mean so much.

-- Pray. I will never underestimate the power of prayer again. I know in my most difficult times literally thousands of people have prayed for me by name. Those Wednesday night church prayer lists work! But don't offer to pray unless you really mean it. The recipient is counting on it.

All in all, I've learned a great deal through the most difficult challenge I've faced in my life so far. I'm thankful for the way God has strengthened me, comforted me and given me peace. I'm thankful for my friends here who've supported me, listened to me, prayed for me and loved me. With my family all out of town, in many ways BSSB employees have been my family through these days.

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None of us ever know when we'll need one another. As Christians we're all part of the same family and God has given us to one another for the good times and the bad. Even though it's hard emotionally on us all to watch any of these family members suffer, we can do a lot to help them through. So keep on giving of yourselves. It means the world to those of us who need you right now. And let me know if you need to borrow a hat. I may start renting mine out!

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Whipple is an acquisitions and development editor, trade books, Broadman & Holman editorial department. This article originally appeared in "The Circle," BSSB monthly magazine for employees. In response to the article, several hundred BSSB employees wore hats to work on May 20 as a statement of support for Whipple. (BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Pastor/barber 'blessed'
in 40-year dual careers

By William H. Perkins Jr.

Baptist Press
5/25/94

RIDGELAND, Miss. (BP)--Lamar Burkes has spent most of the last 40 years searching for lost souls and folks needing a haircut.

The 64-year-old bivocational pastor/barber wouldn't have it any other way.

"I've always done (bivocational work). I met my wife through a pastor friend. I was doing it when we got married, and I was doing it when our son was born. They've always gone along with me," the Ridgeland, Miss., resident said.

Burkes and his wife, Nell, have been married nearly 38 years and have a 32-year-old son, Gregory, who is married with two children.

Burkes is presently pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in northeast Leake County. He also owns Burkes Barber Shop on U.S. 51 in Ridgeland, which most mornings has a steady stream of people seeking his services.

Burkes, who a few years ago was featured in a Mississippi Magazine article on bivocational ministers, has served as many as four churches at one time.

"I couldn't do that now," he joked.

The month of May has marked Burkes' 34th anniversary at Bethel, a church that holds special meaning for him.

"I was raised in the Bethel church area. My parents, grandparents and great-grandparents are buried in the church cemetery. I graduated from Marydale School here and went on to Clarke College," he explained.

The concept of pastors with multiple careers, Burkes pointed out, has a long and honorable history in Southern Baptist life.

"Years ago, preachers taught school, farmed and did things like that. 'Bivocational' is a new word for what we used to call quarter-time or half-time preachers, but I never felt part-time," he said.

Matt Buckles, who works with bivocational ministers as part of his duties in the church administration/pastoral ministries department at Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, agrees with Burkes.

"A lot of small, rural churches in Mississippi have a good ministry because of bivocational pastors. There are many biblical bivocational pastors, and the history of our denomination is full of bivocational pastors. As a matter of fact, the 'fully supported' pastor is a post-World War II phenomenon," Buckles said.

Approximately 800 bivocational pastors work in Mississippi, according to statistics cited by Buckles, which means fully 40 percent of all Southern Baptist churches in the state are staffed by bivocationals.

The Southern Baptist Convention bivocational church average is about 30 percent, Buckles said, while Alabama has the highest number in the convention at around 50 percent.

Burkes can talk about the demands and hardships of bivocational work, but he chooses to concentrate on the positive aspects of his work.

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"Many Sunday mornings, after a week of working so hard I hurt all over, I wanted to turn over and go back to sleep, but when we'd get to the church I'd be rejuvenated," he said.

"A lot of people mess up in life when they don't do what they're called to do. Do what you're called to do, and it will be a blessing, not a burden," Burkes said.

What is the most important motivation for Burkes when many of his contemporaries are looking to retire?

"When you give love, it comes back to you, too," he said.

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Ferguson urges MBTS grads
to internal spiritual freedom

Baptist Press
5/25/94

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Although external circumstances may impose limits on personal freedoms, Christians have an internal spiritual freedom that can only be denied when an individual fails to grow under God's leadership, said Milton Ferguson, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Ferguson conferred 105 degrees on the seminary's 1994 graduates during commencement services May 21. He also presented the commencement address, titled "Free Indeed."

"It is true that other people's behavior and actions can block your way or change circumstances so much that all of your best plans and dreams are rudely changed and radically altered," he acknowledged.

Throughout all the events and circumstances one may experience in the "adventure of life," Ferguson said, "You will face many, many challenges. You will be confronted with situations in which you have very few options. You'll be called on to deal with people and events over whom and which you have very little or no control."

He urged graduates to remember, "Christian freedom is more than the absence of external restraints. It is the actualization of the human person. It is the realization of the person God created us to become, through establishing appropriate and meaningful relationships with the living God, with oneself and with other persons.

"Now these relationships are established and developed through a life of ongoing and positive commitment to the will and purpose of God," Ferguson continued. Such a life is characterized by repentance, faith and love, he said.

"My concern for myself, for you ... and for the larger family of faith ... is that we may be losing our freedom, being robbed because of our own internal default," Ferguson said. "My concern is what you and I may do to deny ourselves of the most precious freedom of all, the freedom within, which issues from ... daily coming to see things from God's perspective."

He warned, "If we lose that freedom, it matters not how broad and inviting the vista around us; it matters not what church may be calling you, to which position you may go. If we lose that internal freedom and if we fail to grow and flourish in the freedom which only Christ gives us, then we shall be forever slaves -- slaves to our own internal fears, slaves to the intimidation of external events."

Ferguson encouraged graduates to "embrace, celebrate and set loose the life of God in Christ, which is true freedom."

"You can never be robbed of the ultimate freedom of being a person fully free in the image of God, growing in the likeness and stature of Jesus Christ," he affirmed. "You can never have that freedom taken from you by any person or event on the outside.

"Learn how to celebrate your spiritual freedom, no matter how difficult the external circumstances may be," Ferguson advised. "For when we see life from God's perspective, it truly changes everything!"

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