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**Promise Keepers meeting says
it's OK to be a godly man**

By Art Toalston

**Baptist Press
6/7/94**

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Finally, applause and cheering that rocks a stadium, not for a touchdown in a championship football game, but for Jesus.

It happened in Indianapolis June 3-4 when 62,000 men filled the Hoosier Dome for a Promise Keepers meeting.

The men, from an array of denominations and nearly every state, frequently roared approval of to-the-point statements by featured speakers and rousing music conveying the message that a real man can, among other things, learn to ask his wife's forgiveness when he's wrong and unapologetically love Jesus.

"Men today in our culture are in such jeopardy," said Joseph Stowell, president of Chicago's Moody Bible Institute, during a noon news conference June 4. Men have been stripped of their identity and of a cause they can give their lives, he said.

The national Promise Keepers men's movement, Stowell said, is helping men recover the "greatest identity in the world" -- being a follower of Christ -- an identity involving "a cause that we can give our lives to" in the family, church and community.

Promise Keepers rallies in Indianapolis and five other cities are scheduled this year, to encompass an estimated 200,000 men. The movement has been building momentum nationally since an initial meeting in 1991 in Boulder, Colo., initiated by University of Colorado head football coach Bill McCartney.

The goal for Promise Keepers gatherings in 1995 is 500,000 men, said Randy Phillips, president of the organization.

Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, called Promise Keepers "one of the most significant movements of our time," involving laymen in the cause of Christ like nothing else he's ever seen. Promise Keepers, he said during the news conference, could be the prelude to a national revival for which he and countless others have long been praying.

"Males are right at the heart of most of the social ills of our country," said Gary Smalley, nationally known marriage and family speaker. A movement is long overdue aimed at changing "the hearts of men and the heart of the country."

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Meanwhile, Jeffrey A. Johnson Sr., pastor of Indianapolis' Eastern Star Baptist Church, said Promise Keepers needs to be more than just "men coming together" in various meetings. "It needs to be something that takes place in our heart," he said, citing especially the Christian church's and America's ongoing need for racial reconciliation.

In opening the weekend celebration of Christian manhood, Bob Horner, a Campus Crusade speaker from Boulder, Colo., noted, "As far as we know, this is the greatest number of men who have ever gathered in recorded history for the purpose of honoring Jesus Christ," occasioning the first of many rounds of reverberating applause and cheering.

"Probably many of us who are married were sent here by our wives," Horner quipped a few moments later, prompting round.

What, exactly, is a "Promise Keeper"?

The movement has stated it in seven promises men are urged to make:

- "1) to honor Jesus Christ through worship, prayer and obedience to his Word.
- "2) to pursue vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that I need brothers to help me keep my promises.
- "3) to practice spiritual, moral, ethical and sexual purity.
- "4) to build strong marriages and families through love, protection and biblical values.
- "5) to support the mission of my church, by honoring and praying for my pastor and by actively giving my time and resources.
- "6) to reach beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.
- "7) to influence my world, being obedient to the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20)."

To keep such promises, "the power of God working in your life" is vital, said Bill Hybels, one of the featured speakers and pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Ill.

Otherwise, "the chances of keeping your promises are nil and none," Hybels said, and within a few weeks of announcing such lofty intentions, "our spouses and children will say, 'He did it again.'"

Many men, Hybels cautioned, make virtually no effort to find a "moral benchmark" and they vastly overrate how good they are in the eyes of a holy God.

But ask yourself, Hybels said, how you stack up against Mother Teresa and Billy Graham. A little below them? Or a lot?

Both individuals have squarely stated they fall far short of God's standards, Hybels noted. So, what about everyone else? he asked. And what will bridge the gap between God's standards and holiness and people's sins -- their "cosmic treason" -- against God in their daily lives, their marriages, their ethics at work, their thought life?

God sent Jesus, Hybels answered, so that people's sins can be transferred to his shoulders, to his sacrificial, substitutionary death, his voluntarily bearing of their death penalty. To make it real in their lives, Hybels said, people must make "a personal transaction" with God, admitting their foulups and sins to him, abandoning all other outside help, asking for Christ's work on the cross to be applied to their need, calling out for Jesus to become their Lord and Savior.

At that moment, Hybels said, their sins will be forgiven, the Holy Spirit will take up residence in their lives and begin transforming them; and their eternal destiny will be secured.

After Hybels' message, an estimated 3,500 men responded to an invitation to invite Christ into their lives or rededicate their lives to Christ.

Smalley, in his address, targeted anger, noting anger is "shutting down the flow of God's love in our country."

"Anger is a good emotion. ... It's a God-given emotion" and can cause people to achieve good things, Smalley said. But there's an unhealthy side of anger, and the question is, when offenses between people occur, "What do we do with them ...? What should we do with them?"

"No one who knows Jesus Christ should let the sun go down on their anger," Smalley said, citing Ephesians 4:26-27 in the New Testament.

The "No. 1 consequenc " of continual, unresolved anger is that it "closes down the light of God, we can't know the love (of God)," Smalley said, citing 1 John 1:5 and 1 John 2:9-11. "It puts us into spiritual darkness, " he said.

Anger also creates "an instant distance" between husbands and wives, Smalley said, noting the greater the anger, the greater the distance.

Also: "Hostility ruins our body. It weakens our immune system," he said. "We're not what God wants us to be when we harbor anger.

"We need to humble ourselves," Smalley said, and ask, Who do we need to forgive? and Who do we need to seek forgiveness from?

John Maxwell, another featured speaker and pastor of Skyline Wesleyan Church in San Diego, Calif., defined success as "having those who are the closest to me love and respect me the most."

Of men who excuse their marital infidelities and other sins with the notion "God loves to forgive," Maxwell said, "Men listen: That kind of thinking ... breaks the heart of God. We ought to have a heart that loves righteousness and hates evil."

In overcome the temptation to sin sexually, Maxwell said men need to "stay as close to the cross of Jesus and stay shoulder-to-shoulder in helping one another to be godly men."

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Frost to be nominated
for first v.p. of SBC

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MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP)--Gary L. Frost, a member of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee and former president of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio, will be nominated for second vice president of the SBC during the June 14-16 SBC annual meeting.

The announcement was made by Dennis Mitchell, secretary of the African American Fellowship within the SBC and pastor of Central Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala.

No public announcement has yet been made of who will nominate Frost, Mitchell said.

Frost, 40, is pastor of Rising Star Baptist Church in Youngstown, Ohio. He and his wife, Lynette, have four children and have cared for more than 40 foster children during the past 13 years.

"I am inspired by the tremendous work he (Frost) is doing in his ministry as well as his commitment to building relationships within the entire SBC family," Mitchell said. "I believe he would be a voice of reconciliation and healing."

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Ministers' Wives Luncheon
moved to Clarion hotel

Baptist Press
6/7/94

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Ministers' Wives Luncheon is among 14 events scheduled in tandem with the Southern Baptist Convention being relocated after the Orlando, Fla., Peabody Hotel ballroom ceiling sustained water damage May 31.

The Ministers' Wives Luncheon, slated June 14 as part of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, now will be held in the Clarion Plaza hotel.

Among other events being relocated are is Rapha luncheon June 13 to a portion of Hall B in the Orange County Convention/Civic Center.

New sites for the June 13 SBC Executive Committee meeting and the June 15 Southern Baptist Theological Seminary breakfast had not been determined June 6.

Participants in the affected events should check with the respective sponsors about new sites.

A Peabody spokesperson said it has not yet been determined whether heavy thunderstorms in the Orlando area caused the ballroom damage.

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**Spiritual gifts studies prompt
Christians to tap their talents** **By Ken Walker**

NORFOLK, Va. (BP)--When First Baptist Church in Norfolk, Va., started helping members discover their spiritual gifts, many never knew how talented God had made them.

But over the past four years the church has saved thousands of dollars because a retired auto mechanic now oversees the lawn care committee. A horticulturist helps senior citizens with their flower beds -- and loneliness. Several terminally ill patients and their families found personal comfort in crisis through First Baptist's ministry care team.

"With spiritual gifts, a lot of people think the only thing you're talking about is glossolalia -- speaking in tongues -- and many are scared to death of that," said Gail Motley, the church's director of women's ministries and volunteers.

"The church has chosen for so long not to give people instruction on it, but we felt strongly that it needed to be taught. To be the church God intended for us to be and help people grow, this was the only way to go."

Many Southern Baptist churches are now tackling the topic of awakening members' spiritual gifts, reflected by the steady stream of inquiries to the Norfolk staff.

One of the leaders of this movement said it can help revitalize the convention by getting people in tune with who God created them to be.

"I think one of the difficulties with a lot of our churches is people don't have very high self-esteem," said Wayne Jones, minister of education at First Baptist Church in Franklin, Tenn.

"If they can get in touch with the fact that God has created them, they have a great understanding of ministry and are more confident about becoming involved. I think there are a lot of people sitting on the sidelines because they don't think they have much to offer."

Jones, who led the Norfolk church's effort to develop training materials before moving to Franklin, has written two books on the subject. "Using Your Spiritual Gifts" was published by Broadman in the mid-1980s. "Discovering Your Christian Personality" will be published this fall.

He introduced the Tennessee congregation to spiritual gifts two years ago. About 100 members have taken the six-week class, called "Gifted Connections." Many have gone on to some kind of ministry, including one woman who established an intercessory prayer team.

While most have come from the ranks of new members, Jones has offered it to Sunday school classes and on weekend retreats. But the new members appear to be the most fertile ground, which Jones said lines up with research in this area.

"The person who isn't connected to some type of ministry in the first three to six months isn't likely to be assimilated," he said. "There's an excitement about becoming involved when members first come into the church. The longer a person stays the more they can take on the aspect of a spectator, rather than a participant."

Jones said the biggest challenge is moving beyond talking about spiritual gifts to practical application. Unless members get plugged into ministries, discussion is fruitless, he said.

Just finding a way to attract present members is difficult in the church at Norfolk. The staff is not "completely happy" with progress to date, said Motley, who joined the church when it began developing its emphasis.

Since First Baptist hasn't attracted many existing members, it is thinking of using its "First Serve" instruction as adult Sunday school curriculum, she explained.

Nor do all new members come through the class, which is optional. "First Connections" is the only one required for new members; it is followed by "First Steps," which looks at growing in faith. By the time of "First Serve" an original enrollment of 50 may dwindle to 20, Motley said.

Despite these setbacks, a majority of those who complete it become involved in ministry, she added. One of the advantages of stressing individuals' gifts is its biblical base, she said, noting it inspires people to get involved without the use of guilt or intimidation.

"Once people understand what God has created them to be and how their gifts can be used, they come alive," Motley said. "God puts gifts in our lives for a purpose. We're trying to help people celebrate their gift."

As part of its instruction, the Norfolk church takes a look at controversial gifts like prophecy and tongues. While it teaches that the latter is valid for private edification, the material spells out the reason First Baptist does not allow its use in public worship.

Tongues caused such a problem in the Corinthian church the apostle Paul wrote an entire chapter (1 Corinthians 14) of guidelines about this gift, the material explains. Saying we are to focus on building up others, one lesson quotes verses 19-20, where Paul said he would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than 1,000 words in a tongue.

"We've had people who are very fearful of tongues and others who are open to it," Motley said. "But there's complete agreement when we go along the guidelines. We look at it instead of trying to skirt the issue or not talk about it."

Another of Paul's instructions the Norfolk church emphasizes is that believers are all a necessary part of a functioning body of Christ. It is important to let new members know they have been placed at First Baptist for a reason, said Motley, with growing in understanding of life and faith only the beginning.

She uses her own experience as an example of growth and change that accompanies a Christian's walk. Until she came to Norfolk, Motley was involved in preschool ministry; 1994 will mark the first summer in 11 years that she will not teach a preschool leadership conference at Glorieta or Ridgecrest.

It is freeing for people to see that because they work in a particular area doesn't mean they are obligated for life, she said. However, people need to be open to the Lord's direction as he guides them in using their spiritual gifts, she added.

While it may sound easy to encourage members to get involved, Motley warned that churches expecting a quick fix will be disappointed.

"If you think you can have this in place in six months, you're going to be discouraged," she commented. "We're four years into this and are still redefining how best to do it."

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Ken Walker is a free-lance writer in Louisville, Ky.

Tapping their spiritual gifts,
they found fulfilling ministry

By Ken Walker

Baptist Press
6/7/94

NORFOLK, Va. (BP)--While not all church members active in ministries at First Baptist in Norfolk came out of the spiritual gifts class, they agree on the primary benefit of serving: joy.

After selling his auto repair and paint shop, Marty Martin was looking for a way to serve the Lord full time. He found a niche when associate pastor Dick Baker told him the church spent more than \$8,000 a year for lawn care. Martin became the volunteer coordinator for grass cutting and landscaping every weekend.

"It's a joy for me to get out and meet these people every Saturday," says Martin, 73. "I was in the Kiwanis, Moose and Masonic lodge. I gave up all of that when I saw the joy I got out of serving the Lord. It keeps me going."

The retiree's mechanical abilities immediately benefited the church, which only owned two lawn mowers. He suggested running an announcement in the bulletin asking for donations of old mowers so he could rebuild them for church use.

Today he maintains a fleet of about two dozen machines, always keeping 15 to 20 in running order. Adult Sunday school classes rotate grass-cutting duties. When they show up for work, Martin has the machines oiled and gassed up, with coffee and doughnuts set out to fuel the volunteers.

In addition to Saturdays from 6:30 to noon, he spends another 20 hours at church during the week, lending a hand to the maintenance crew. Once a month he leads a church group to a shelter in Virginia Beach, where they cook and serve dinner to about 125 homeless people.

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Although he hasn't completed the spiritual gifts class, Martin has taken Evangelism Explosion witness training. He says he tries to witness whenever he can, inviting various acquaintances to the weekly Baptist Men's breakfast.

"I tell others what the Lord is doing in my life and how he's blessed me," Martin says. "I try to take it slow and let them see the joy in my life."

Denise Maples is a homemaker who rededicated her life to Christ four years ago.

On the 45-question test to help determine some of her spiritual gifts, she scored high in evangelism and miracles. But she helps teach an eighth-grade Sunday school class, does discipleship training for ninth- and 10th-graders and is a regular at youth group activities.

"I love it," Maples says. "We have socials about once a month, too, going to movies or whatever. We had a lock-in at our home recently. My kids (boys 9 and 5) know all the teens and enjoy playing with them."

She initially resisted the idea of working with youth, recalling she never knew how to relate to a teen-age nephew. When she agreed to help, it was with record keeping, but after three weeks she felt ready to teach.

Denise thought she lacked abilities for the task. Yet her interests in art, dance and photography help her relate to teens and are useful for teaching and group outings. Her success makes her grateful for the instruction she received in the spiritual gifts class.

"When I started (First Serve) I didn't know what a spiritual gift was," says Maples, who received Christ as a youngster but then backslid for years. "I thought it was just a talent. I didn't understand that it was something God would enable you to do."

Virginia Bagby got involved in helping care for a young mother with cancer five years ago. That led her into chairing the church's ministry care team, which assists individuals with terminal illnesses.

Though it's a very emotionally challenging task, she is grateful she reached out: "I've been able to do all kinds of things I had never been able to do before."

She got involved after an elderly lady at the women's Bible study shared about a 27-year-old-woman dying of cancer. The victim's husband had left her and their child. Suddenly Bagby heard the Lord say, "Get up and go."

"I literally turned around and looked to see if he meant someone beside or behind me," she recounts. "I kind of ignored him, but the longer I sat, the more I felt God pushing me out of my chair."

She said although she feels the Lord gave her the same gift of caring her mother demonstrated, Bagby says she was reluctant to go because she had never cared for a seriously ill person.

Despite those misgivings she felt the Lord impressing on her he would lead her through it. She became one of nearly a dozen members who took care of the woman's needs and sometimes brought her meals.

Bagby says she received a great blessing during the five-month task. Although weak and bedridden, the victim had spent a lot of time reading and studying the Bible. They would read Scripture and pray on many of the visits, which proved uplifting. But there were times of agony, too.

"When she asked why God allowed her to keep living with the pain, or why he didn't heal her, it was very sad," Bagby says. "None of us had the answers."

That was the beginning of the ministry care team that was officially formed three years ago. When Gail Motley, director of volunteers, asked her to lead the group, she hesitated because of the demands. But after a break, Bagby decided she was ready to resume.

Because of jobs or spouse transfers, the team has dwindled from a dozen to about five women. Yet Bagby said she knows when a need arises the Lord will provide exactly what is needed for the situation.

She has been helping a woman with a degenerative bone disease that is worsening and could form the team's next assignment.

Bagby knows there will be great benefits from it. Like the family of mostly unsaved people who were deeply touched by First Baptist Norfolk's care providers. For a year, they showed up five days a week to help a woman dying of lupus.

"God is showing me the importance of every minute we live," she says of the ministry's rewards. "I know that through what I'm doing I'm having an impact on someone else's life that could have an impact for eternity. That's why God put us here, to share his love and demonstrate it to others."

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4 years at Brigham Young
tested student's witness

By Jerry B. Pierce

Baptist Press
6/7/94

PROVO, Utah (BP)--For Ritchie Ellis, a Southern Baptist who knew little about Mormonism, Brigham Young University required some adjustment.

"It was pretty scary the first few days I was here," said Ellis, a Houston native who arrived at the Provo, Utah, university four years ago on a gymnastics scholarship.

This summer he'll graduate with a communication studies degree and take with him the spiritual mettle of a battle-worn soldier.

While Ellis was in high school, BYU gymnastics coach Mako Sakamoto watched him work out at Houston Baptist University and was impressed enough to offer him a scholarship.

"It was one of the first big decisions I made," Ellis said about choosing BYU. "A lot of prayer went into it."

Ellis said Sakamoto, who helped coach the 1984 U.S. Olympic team to a gold medal, is a big reason he chose BYU.

Ellis finished his collegiate gymnastics career this spring with an eighth-place finish in the pommel horse competition at the NCAA championships.

He'll return to Houston this summer and continue training in hopes of making the U.S. national team during trials next February.

Six of the 18 national team members are chosen for the Olympic team, which has Ellis thinking about the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

One of about 15 Baptists on campus, Ellis said his conversations with Mormons have changed since his arrival.

"When I first came here I was very reactionary and more argumentative," said Ellis, a member of Second Baptist Church Houston. "That didn't last very long, though."

Ellis said he has become well-grounded in his beliefs and is still eager to share his faith, but he has learned to nurture spiritual conversations through building relationships instead of head-on debate.

In addition to being a highly visible athlete, Ellis is president of the BYU Baptist Student Union, comprised of 8 to 10 students who meet weekly for Bible study and prayer in the dorms.

Although the group usually keeps a low profile, Ellis said they've had pizza fellowships and other activities on or near the campus while being supported by Provo's First Baptist Church -- the only Southern Baptist church in town.

However, only a few students have accepted Christ since he's been there, he said.

"When you're here, you don't see a lot of fruit. You may never see the fruit," Ellis said. "It's a sad thing. These people are so deceived and they don't even realize it. The thing is, they're very sincere about what they believe."

The highest concentration of non-Mormon students is in the athletic department, Ellis said. Two of his closest friends are swim team members who also are Christians.

Students must pass 14 credit hours of Mormon religion classes to graduate, which includes courses on the Book of Mormon and other standard Mormon doctrinal works.

"They consider these to be better than the Bible," Ellis said.

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The most difficult class to weather was New Testament, which emphasized Mormon doctrine while skipping portions of Scripture that didn't fit their ideology, he said.

"They know a lot of what they believe. And it all sounds v ry Christian."

In addition to pursuing further gymnastics competition, Ellis said he plans to enter Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, this fall.

"I'm not real sure at this point (about a specific ministerial call)," Ellis said. "I'm eager to see what direction God leads."

"It's just been a tremendous blessing to be out here," he said about BYU. "God has really taught me a lot about his grace. It's almost like a foreign mission field right here in the United States."

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Pierce is a Baptist journalist in Oklahoma City.

Golden Gate moving ahead
with expansion in the West

By Cameron Crabtree

Baptist Press
6/7/94

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Working with the New Mexico Baptist Convention, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary will offer master's-level degree programs in Albuquerque this fall.

The executive committee of the seminary's board of trustees unanimously approved the effort June 1.

"The goal of expanding Golden Gate to growing centers of mission outreach in the West is well known," said seminary President William O. Crews. "This will enhance ongoing efforts of New Mexico Baptists to develop Christian leaders in their own ministry context."

Founded in 1944, Golden Gate is one of six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries and the only SBC agency in the West. It currently operates three campuses along the Pacific Coast and 25 ethnic leadership development centers in the western states.

"Golden Gate's philosophy of tying theological education closely to the ministry setting rather than centralizing it at a 'main' campus has proven itself at our various sites," Crews said. "Our faculty, staff and trustees are committed to demonstrating that in New Mexico and other areas as well."

Golden Gate acquired the Albuquerque center from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"We will continue at least to operate the program begun by Southwestern last fall until a tailored plan developed by Golden Gate and New Mexico Baptists is fully established and growing toward maturity," noted Rick Durst, the seminary's new vice president for academic affairs. The program will be developed in a manner consistent with accreditation standards, he added.

The seminary will offer courses so that students at the Albuquerque site can earn a master of divinity in four years or a master of arts in Christian education in three years.

In addition to the New Mexico center, Golden Gate Seminary intends to open a center in Phoenix, Ariz., in conjunction with Grand Canyon University next spring and a center in Denver, in conjunction with Denver Theological Seminary in the fall of 1995. The seminary's board of trustees endorsed expansion efforts last year.

Since Golden Gate Seminary already exceeds the funding limitations imposed by the SBC seminary funding formula with its existing campus network, Cooperative Program money is unavailable to help pay for the new centers. Nevertheless, Durst said, the seminary is committed to establishing campus centers in state conventions where local Baptist leaders invite the seminary to come and can supply sufficient numbers of students and supporting resources.

"These partnerships depend both on the vision of the seminary and the vision and generosity of Southern Baptists in state conventions," Durst said.

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Computers making church stats
ready with less toil, time

By Charles Willis

NASHVILLE (BP)--Computer software has significantly reduced the time required for annual reporting by Southern Baptist churches and associations, and the number of reports filed electronically is increasing dramatically, according to a denominational statistician.

The Annual Church Profile (ACP), successor to the former Uniform Church Letter, offers a redesigned reporting process with a more logical sequence of information and a free software package developed by the Baptist Sunday School Board and Home Mission Board to improve the speed and accuracy of reporting, according to Tom Carringer, BSSB denominational statistics specialist.

Of the 1,218 Southern Baptist associations, 49 percent reported electronically in 1993, providing 53 percent of all data received, Carringer said. The percentage represented an 82 percent increase in electronic reporting compared with 1992. He said he expects the trend to continue with more than 70 percent of reports provided electronically this year, between October and December.

Janet Lopes of Fort Pierce, Fla., used the software in 1993 to report data from the Indian River Baptist Association.

"I thought it was great," she said. "I've been here 22 years and it was the easiest compiling I have ever done. I only had one or two churches in the association that didn't have computers, and I invited them in to the association office to complete the form. One or two others sent me the information and I entered it into the computer. It was beautiful. No way would I go back to the old way."

Lopes also praised the software's mathematical feature, which notifies the user when totals do not add correctly. She said this eliminated her need to call churches for corrected figures.

Danny Zickefoose of the West Kentucky Baptist Association in Hickman, Ky., another of the 600 associations reporting electronically in 1993, said by using the software "I saved about 50 hours of work.

"Under the old method, I worked four or five hours each night for three weeks. Now I spend four and a half to five hours in an afternoon to do the entire association," he continued. "We enter everything into the computer and then print all the charts. It prints all the charts, tables, digest of letters and every list you would need at the associational level. In fact, we send our tables to the printer to do our annual associational minute book. You just can't believe how much faster it is than the old, manual way of typing everything in on a typewriter."

Dora Neighbors of the San Diego (Calif.) Baptist Association agreed, "It's so easy to use. You can't go wrong on it. It will tell you when you have made a mistake.

"We send out disks to the churches, and when we bring those back in to combine reports for the associational totals, all we have to do is press a button! Comparing the electronic version with the manual version is like comparing a new Cadillac with a Model-T Ford. There is no limit to what you can do. I can wait until the very last minute to run the associational digest of letters, and it is all updated."

The ACP is designed as an instrument to help a church in evaluating its growth and ministry rather than serving only as a means of denominational reporting, according to Carringer.

"The new name reflects the new purpose," Carringer said. "The ACP should be used as a church growth tool for churches, associations, state conventions and SBC agencies. Strategy software is provided for associations to look at multi-year trends of data. The completed profile can help a church assess its strengths and weaknesses and plan for attaining goals."

Carringer said 1994 associational clerk's packets will include a 3.5-inch diskette. A 5.25-inch copy may be ordered at no charge on the ACP order form also included in the packet. In turn, churches may acquire the 1994 ACP church module from the association without charge.

Training for associational clerks is offered at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center July 24-26 and at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center Aug. 20-23. Sessions will focus on the new Annual Church Profile and detailed instruction on using the 1994 ACP software.

Reservations may be made by calling Glorieta at 1-800-757-4222 or Ridgecrest at 1-800-588-7722. Registration for the conference should be made by calling Cheryl Moore at the Sunday School Board at (615) 251-2207.

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**Generation X stereotypes
too early, Hemphill says**

By Jon Walker

**Baptist Press
6/7/94**

NASHVILLE (BP)--They are a misunderstood generation, those born during the post-baby boom era, roughly 1965-1983. Commonly called "baby busters" as an acknowledgment that any generation born after the baby boom will probably be a bust, they also are labeled "Generation X," meaning they are an unknown variable.

Despite their name, and their distinction as the most aborted generation ever, their numbers trail closely behind the boomers, making them the second largest generation in American history.

For the most part, they have been pegged as a generation seriously deficient in traditional values, yet Generation X-ers are acting no differently toward religion than their parents or grandparents did at the same age, reports the Princeton Religious Research Center.

In addition, Ken Hemphill, director of the Southern Baptist Center for Church Growth in Atlanta who currently is researching trends among the X-generation, says it's way too early to assess the group as a whole, because most of them are still in a "very formative stage, a lot of them are still in college or freshly out." He cautions pastors to be careful about the stereotypes surrounding this generation.

"All busters are different in some ways; they are going to be their own unique person," Hemphill says.

"We need to remember the power of the Holy Spirit to transform lives. When a buster receives Christ, he is no longer a buster: He is a believer. That doesn't mean his whole lifestyle immediately changes overnight, but it does mean, at that point in time, he is a transformed creature."

Hemphill adds busters are very interested in "life questions."

"Who am I; where did I come from; how did I get here?" Hemphill says. "We are going to have to answer the questions they are asking," while remembering the X-generation was raised in an atmosphere of religious plurality.

"I think Christian apologetics could be critical for this generation," Hemphill says. "We need people who are able to think and dialogue with this generation on an apologetic basis that says, 'You don't have to park your brain to be a believer; there are credible answers in the Christian faith.'"

Eddy Gilly, college minister at Westside Baptist Church in Gainesville, Fla., agrees, saying students at the University of Florida are more spiritually interested than students from a few years ago. However, he cautions not to translate spirituality into Christianity.

"They understand the world better than most other generations because of CNN and other quick news coverage," Gilly says, adding the students he works with "want to make a difference."

This is a trend among them, says Ken Hemphill.

"I have found them very interested in ministry, the hands-on aspect of caring for people," Hemphill says. "One of the trends we are already seeing in the church, accelerated by the buster believers, is ministry-based evangelism where there is a combination of social gospel and evangelical witness. They have a hunger to do ministry as well as evangelization."

Jeff Long, youth pastor at Parkwood Baptist Church in Gastonia, N.C., and, at age 27, a member of the baby-buster generation, says busters, once saved, become very "compassionate believers, excited to share their faith."

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.However, he adds, busters do not respond "to an appeal from the pulpit just because there is a need. If they are equipped and called, they will respond, but not just because someone is needed in GAs."

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This article first appeared in the June/July issue of SBC Life, publication of the SBC Executive Committee.

Pay-per-view playoff gives
church chance to be friendly

By Elizabeth Young

Baptist Press
6/7/94

PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)--The Phoenix Suns played basketball in the worship center of North Phoenix Baptist Church May 19.

Well, actually the playoff game with the Houston Rockets was projected on a big screen inside the church, but it still drew a crowd of 2,500 screaming fans.

The day before the game, Dimension Cable approached the church as a possible pay-per-view site.

For Dimension, North Phoenix offered an atmosphere suitable for families. Most public pay-per-view locations are bars and sports clubs. For the church, it was a match made in heaven.

With thoughts of all of the people who would be there who would otherwise never go through the church doors, plans were quickly made to ensure a pleasant experience.

North Phoenix members volunteered on Wednesday night to be on hand. They had no assignment other than to be Christlike, to be friendly and helpful.

During time outs, the church showed slides advertising its ministries, including singles activities and preschool child care.

Pastor Dan Yearly welcomed the crowd at the start of the game and at the end thanked them for coming. There was no high-pressure sales pitch, just his final words of, "Remember, win or lose, North Phoenix Baptist Church is here for you."

Reflecting on the experience the following day, Yearly said he enjoyed the fact that a local radio station was now calling North Phoenix "The Papal Palace," after America West Arena's nickname of "The Purple Palace."

"I'm glad," he said. "The name of our church is on the lips of more people, and they had a good experience last night."

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Southern Seminary celebrates century of doctoral work," dated 6/2/94, please eliminate "1941 graduate Harold K. Graves (Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary)" from paragraph four. Graves was not the first president of GGBTS, but the third.

Thanks,
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