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BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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June 29, 1994

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Accused attackers of American
find Christ in Guatemala jail

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
6/29/94

COBAN, Guatemala (BP)--Eleven Guatemalan men arrested in the near-fatal attack on an American woman have found freedom behind the bars of a Coban, Guatemala, jail.

The men are among about 130 Guatemalans awaiting trial before a Guatemalan judge for nearly beating June Diane Weinstock to death March 29. Weinstock, an environmental consultant from Fairbanks, Alaska, was assaulted during a Holy Week procession in San Cristobal Verapaz, near Coban.

The attackers reportedly struck Weinstock with machetes, clubs, sticks and stones after a peasant woman accused the American of trying to steal her 8-year-old son. The child later showed up unharmed.

Within a month of their arrests, 11 of Weinstock's accused attackers accepted Jesus Christ as Savior at the Coban jail where they are imprisoned. They and 20 other prisoners -- also new Christian believers -- formed the Maranatha Baptist Church in April with the help of Guatemalan Baptist leaders.

"One thing they don't lack is enthusiasm in the Lord," said Southern Baptist missionary John McLaughlin of the new converts.

In fact, the prison church members already have started a building fund, McLaughlin said. They currently worship in a prison courtyard.

Meanwhile, Weinstock still can't walk or talk because of injuries sustained in the beating. The attack, and assaults on two other Americans, stemmed from rumors circulated in Guatemala that North Americans steal children for body parts for organ transplants. The unfounded rumors have circulated in the area for years, particularly among Guatemala's indigenous people.

After the beating Weinstock lay in a coma for six weeks. She reportedly remains in an Anchorage, Alaska, nursing home in stable condition, but her prognosis is uncertain.

The 11 suspects who have become Christians are committed to telling the truth about what they did throughout the crime's investigation, according to McLaughlin. But that has created some tensions both for them and for Guatemalan Baptists working with the new congregation.

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Many of those arrested were working on a road construction crew at the time of the attack, the missionary explained. Their bosses, who some crew members say gave orders to collect rocks for the stoning, "are trying to pressure the ones who have made professions of faith not to tell the truth," he said. "But (the new Christians) are determined to do so now that they belong to Christ."

McLaughlin doesn't work with the jail congregation. But he and his wife, Bambi, from Symrna, Ga., started the Baptist church that does. Members of Coban's The Light Baptist Church, which began in the McLaughlins' home and meets in a sanctuary built by Arkansas Baptist volunteers, played a key role in planting the prison church.

It all started when Reynaldo Mazariegos, a Guatemalan Baptist, was arrested earlier this year after a dead body was found on his property. In Guatemala suspects are considered guilty until proven innocent, so he was jailed in Coban while the case was under investigation. Mazariegos, a member of another church north of Coban, later was cleared of any wrongdoing.

While in jail, Mazariegos started a Bible study for prisoners. After the Holy Week incident, he began to minister to some of the suspects arrested in the attack on Weinstock. He discussed the idea of beginning prison worship services with Jorge Cerritos, pastor of The Light Baptist Church.

With permission from prison officials, Cerritos and some other Guatemalan Baptists conduct services and discipleship training in the jail several times a week. So far, 39 prisoners have been baptized after becoming Christians, said Cerritos. Another 19 new Christians await baptism.

"It was awful what happened in that town," said McLaughlin of the Holy Week stoning. "But the Lord used it to bring some folks to a saving knowledge of him."

Meanwhile, the McLaughlins and other missionaries in Guatemala are coping with their own pressures related to the widespread child-snatching rumors. The U.S. State Department has advised North Americans in Guatemala to take care not to be seen alone with Guatemalan children, lest someone jump to wrong conclusions.

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Mercer board approves plan
to launch school of theology

By Larry D. Brumley

Baptist Press
6/29/94

STOCKBRIDGE, Ga. (BP)--Mercer University's board of trustees in a special called meeting June 28 approved plans for the eventual establishment of a school of theology at the 160-year-old Baptist institution.

"On the basis of the founding purposes of Mercer University, and the virtually unanimous affirmation within the university community that a school of theology would be consistent with the historic mission of the university, the board of trustees today authorized the establishment of a school of theology at Mercer," said President R. Kirby Godsey.

The target date for opening the school will depend on how quickly the necessary funding can be secured, although Godsey said "the school should aim to enroll students in September 1996." The approved timetable calls for the immediate appointment of a development officer and the hiring of a dean and admissions director in the fall of 1995.

The trustees expressed a non-binding preference that the school be located on Mercer's Cecil B. Day Campus in Atlanta. The university's main campus in Macon houses the college of liberal arts and schools of law, business and economics, medicine, and engineering. The Cecil B. Day Campus in Atlanta includes Mercer's school of pharmacy, undergraduate and graduate programs in the school of business and economics, graduate teacher education programs in the college of liberal arts, graduate programs in engineering and non-traditional course offerings through University College.

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Financial conditions set for the establishment of a school of theology include "firm commitments" of at least \$600,000 a year for annual operating expenses, in addition to a minimum beginning endowment of \$5 million. If the school is to be located in Atlanta, another \$3 million will be needed for the construction or renovation of facilities, expansion of library holdings and other capital needs. An additional \$750,000 beyond the \$5 million endowment will be needed for these items if the school is located in Macon.

The university has received approximately \$1.3 million in gifts and pledges for the new school as of June 27. Godsey emphasized that no revenues currently designated for academic programs would be diverted to support graduate theological education at Mercer.

The president said Mercer's motivation for considering a school of theology has been strongly influenced by "friends, alumni and other constituents of the university."

The university has been studying the issue for the past year and has engaged consultants to conduct in-depth marketing and fund-raising research efforts to determine the school's feasibility. In addition, a 22-member feasibility study committee, made up of faculty, staff, trustees, alumni and pastors, has met throughout the year to discuss the merits of establishing graduate theological education at Mercer.

Current plans call for the school to admit 50 students each year for a total enrollment of approximately 150. In addition to the dean, the school will have five to seven faculty members at peak enrollment.

"At its founding, Mercer University was established for the purpose of preparing persons for the ministry," Godsey said. "In fact, theological education was the specific purpose for which Jesse Mercer left his \$40,000 estate to the university in 1841.

"Jesse Mercer's intense commitment to an educated clergy sprang, in part, from this conviction about the importance of missions," Godsey said. "He believed that the mission enterprise could not be sustained without education and that the protections of civil and religious liberty would disintegrate without an educated clergy and citizenry. Consequently, this decision today to proceed with plans to establish a school of theology strengthens the purposes for which Mercer University was established more than 160 years ago."

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Brumley is assistant vice president for university relations at Mercer.

Trustees list principles
for Mercer theology school

By Larry D. Brumley

Baptist Press
6/29/94

STOCKBRIDGE, Ga. (BP)--In approving plans for the eventual establishment of a school of theology at Mercer University, the board of trustees also approved 10 founding principles for the new venture:

1) The school should be founded upon the belief that Jesus Christ is the Word of God, the center and the focus of faith.

2) The school should spring from the university's conviction about its own vocation as an institution, borne and nurtured by Baptists and Baptist churches and committed to undergirding the work and witness of the church as a community of faith.

3) The school should seek to educate students who are:

- literate and disciplined in the study of sacred Scripture;
- articulate in understanding the historical and theological issues of faith;
- effective preachers and interpreters of the Christian gospel;
- wise and compassionate in personal and social ministry.
- prepared to integrate faith and life in the spiritual formation of congregations.

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4) The school should be devoted to the preparation of men and women who combine the call of God's Spirit with the intellectual gifts, the emotional maturity, and the spiritual discipline to become effective and responsible pastors and leaders in ministry.

5) The school should be inclusive in spirit and practice, affirming the open search for truth, and fostering tolerance for religious and intellectual diversity.

6) By underscoring both scholarly discipline and the experience of ministry, the school should seek to break through the dichotomy of theory and practice, claiming both reason and compassion, the mind and the heart as gifts of God and conceiving ministry as bringing the sacred to bear upon every dimension of human experience.

7) The school should hold steadfastly to the high and defining traditions of Baptists, including the priesthood of believers, the separation of church and state, the autonomy of the local congregations as the context for mission and ministry, the centrality of Scripture to the life of faith, and the resolve that neither creeds nor human affirmations of faith should stand as tests of orthodoxy.

8) While holding firmly to its high calling and to its specific responsibility for theological education among Baptists, the school should also accept its responsibility to embrace the whole world as the creation of God and to serve the wider Christian community as the people of God who are called to live out God's purpose and presence in the world.

9) The school should embody the historical traditions of Mercer University, valuing both intellectual freedom and the affirmation of faith as the foundations of the university.

10) The school should serve as a continuing resource to churches, pastors, and professionals in ministry for their continuing education and as a reference and placement service for churches, pastors, and other church leaders.

The target date for opening the school will depend on how quickly the necessary funding can be secured, although President R. Kirby Godsey said "the school should aim to enroll students in September 1996."

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Scalia, SBC lawyer disturbed
by Stevens' comments on faith

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
6/29/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Supreme Court justice and a Southern Baptist church-state lawyer expressed dismay at what they interpreted as a justice's criticism of parents' attempts to transmit religious beliefs to their children -- or at least the government's indirect involvement in any such concerns.

In a concurring opinion in a recent church-state case, associate justice John Paul Stevens said the New York legislature wrongly supported a religious sect's separationist beliefs.

"The isolation of these children, while it may protect them from 'panic, fear and trauma,' also unquestionably increased the likelihood that they would remain within the fold, faithful adherents of their parents' religious faith," Stevens wrote. "By creating a school district that is specifically intended to shield children from contact with others who have 'different ways,' the State provided official support to cement the attachment of young adherents to a particular faith."

In his dissenting opinion, associate justice Antonin Scalia responded:

"So much for family values. If the Constitution forbids any state action that incidentally helps parents to raise their children in their own religious faith, it would invalidate a release program permitting public school children to attend the religious-instruction program of their parents' choice, of the sort we approved in (a previous case); indeed it would invalidate state laws according parents physical control over their children, at least insofar as that is used to take the little fellows to church or synagogue.

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"Justice Stevens' statement is less a legal analysis than a manifesto of secularism. It surpasses mere rejection of accommodation, and announces a positive hostility to religion -- which, unlike all other noncriminal values, the state must not assist parents in transmitting to their offspring."

Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, said Stevens' opinion "seems to criticize parents for hoping that public schools would not undermine their children's religious faith. ... It is frightening to think that the (court) would in any way oppose these parental concerns."

In a June 27 opinion, the Supreme Court ruled as unconstitutional a New York law establishing a school district in the village of a Jewish sect. The court, with associate justice David Souter writing the opinion, voted 6-3 to affirm lower court decisions which rejected as an impermissible government establishment of religion the formation of a school district for the physically and mentally impaired children of the Satmar Hasidim, an Orthodox Jewish group.

It was the first indication of the church-state leanings of Ruth Bader Ginsburg since she took her seat on the court last fall. Her position could not have been encouraging to those urging the court to accommodate more religion expression in establishment of religion cases.

She not only sided with the majority but also signed on to Stevens' concurring opinion. In joining Harry Blackmun on Stevens' concurrence, she signed on to "arguably the most separationist opinion filed," said Brent Walker, general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee.

Three other concurring opinions were filed.

In addition to Souter, Stevens, Ginsburg and Blackmun, Sandra Day O'Connor and Anthony Kennedy also were in the majority. Joining Scalia in his dissent were Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Clarence Thomas.

Members of the Satmar Hasidic Jewish sect practice cultural separation, have special dress and grooming, and speak Yiddish.

Before the special school district was formed, handicapped and learning disabled children from the village attended public schools in the surrounding school district. Their parents withdrew them, citing "panic, fear and trauma" suffered by the children in leaving the village and in being in school with people who were so different culturally.

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Think you've got car problems?
Ask missionaries in Africa

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
6/29/94

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--Thieves, hijackers and road accidents are threatening to slow Southern Baptist mission work in parts of Africa to a walk -- literally.

In recent weeks missionaries in eastern and southern Africa have seen five vehicles stolen -- two at gunpoint -- and four wrecked with major damage. And that doesn't include five vehicles missionaries in Rwanda had to abandon when they fled that country's bloodshed in April.

The good news: No one was seriously hurt in any of the incidents. However, the Foreign Mission Board is self-insured, so the losses must be absorbed by the Southern Baptist agency.

The replacement cost of the nine stolen or wrecked vehicles could exceed \$250,000. The 1994 mission board budget for replacing such losses worldwide is only \$400,000.

"We almost always have to purchase new vehicles in this part of the world," said John Faulkner, director of Southern Baptist mission work in the area. "Used cars and trucks are either not available or are not dependable enough for the kind of places where our people live and work."

Here's a quick African automotive disaster tour:

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-- Angola -- Veteran missionaries Curtis and Betty Dixon were robbed at gunpoint of a two-month-old, four-wheel-drive pickup in Luanda. In mid-afternoon, in full view of about 10 bystanders, the Dixons were forced off the road by a car that drove up behind them, horn honking and lights flashing. Mrs. Dixon's purse was yanked from her grasp and Dixon lost all his personal papers and documents, which were in the hijacked truck.

-- Kenya -- Missionary Steve Glass had been driving his new car less than two weeks when a car in front of him stopped on a main highway on the outskirts of Nairobi in late afternoon. An oncoming car kept him from passing, so he too stopped. The driver of the vehicle in front jumped out and ran to Glass' door, pointing an automatic weapon at him. He was forced to kneel behind his car, with the gun pressed to the back of his head, while a nicely dressed, briefcase-toting passenger from the robbers' vehicle got into Glass' car. The men then drove away, taking Glass' checkbook and documents with them and abandoning their own car.

-- South Africa -- A gang of thieves slipped into the mission office-guesthouse compound in Johannesburg in the middle of the night, removing the side of a metal cage and several anti-theft barriers from around a van. Then they pulled the van sideways, knocked down the security gate with a heavy truck (judging from the tire tracks left behind) and towed the vehicle away. The van had approximately 20,000 miles on it.

-- Zambia -- International Service Corps volunteer Jeff Brockman drove from Zambia to Johannesburg in his mission van, parked it in a lot protected by four guards, engaged all the anti-theft devices and went shopping. When he returned the van was gone.

-- Tanzania -- Thieves stole a four-wheel-drive vehicle from Iringa. It's the only one of the five stolen vehicles that has been recovered -- but it had been driven at high speed into a herd of buffalo and is either totaled or will require thousands of dollars of repair work.

-- Kenya -- A truck hauling building materials for a church in Mombasa had a blowout. Pipes in the back came crashing through the back window, hitting the Kenyan driver in the head as the truck rolled out of control. The driver was treated and released; the truck was a total loss.

-- Tanzania -- A four-wheel-drive mission pickup with less than 20,000 miles on it was hit head-on by a 10-ton truck that came around a curve on the wrong side of the road. No one in either vehicle was seriously hurt; the pickup, however, did not fare as well.

"First of all we're overwhelmingly grateful that no one was hurt in any of these events," Faulkner said. "And we will recover some money from the wrecked vehicles when we sell them. But the jolt to our capital budget is severe. We simply cannot afford to replace nine vehicles in two months.

"Certainly there's no way to prevent an armed gang from stealing a car, and nothing you can do except pray when an out-of-control truck slams into you," he acknowledged. "But we are reminding missionaries of precautions they can take" against robberies and hijackings.

Precautions range from using anti-theft bars that lock steering wheels to leaving large dogs in cars (where the climate allows) to keeping a healthy distance from cars in front and behind on the road.

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Bird, a missionary and Baptist Press correspondent for Africa, knows whereof he speaks when it comes to road hazards. He was the driver of the pickup hit by the 10-ton truck in Tanzania during a recent coverage of Rwandan refugee ministry. Back home in Kenya after that trip, Bird was nearly forced off a rural road outside Nairobi one day by a truck. A gunman in the truck fired a pistol at him from less than six feet away -- but missed -- as he sped by.

Reformation scholar joins
Southeastern's faculty

By Dwayne Hastings

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Reformation scholar David Lee Puckett will join the faculty of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., as professor of church history, Aug. 1.

Puckett holds a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, with areas of concentration in Renaissance and Reformation thought, the Enlightenment, and English Puritanism. His teaching experience includes 10 years as assistant professor of historical theology at Dallas Theological Seminary.

Southeastern Seminary President Paige Patterson said, "Dr. Puckett is known as a highly intelligent, competently skilled historian. He comes to us greatly respected and admired by his colleagues at Dallas Theological Seminary."

Patterson, noting Puckett's work in Reformation thought, said, "We are delighted to be able to bring a man of his caliber and interests to Southeastern." The president added that Puckett will fill a critical need on the seminary's faculty.

Puckett said he is "thrilled" to be coming to Southeastern. "One of the things I am most excited about is the location of the seminary. Southeastern is uniquely situated and poised to serve churches up and down the nation's eastern seaboard for the cause of Christ," he said.

Concerning his teaching style, Puckett remarked, "I think of myself as teaching theology through church history. I love to use the history of the church to raise questions that address current issues. In asking questions in the classroom, I hope to prompt the students to think." He added, "I am afraid in theological education we start giving answers before we are even aware of the issues."

Puckett expressed concern over what he calls the problem of "theological illiteracy in our evangelical churches." He said, "I trust that in my classes we work toward developing theologically literate pastors who then can go out and effectively serve Christ in the church."

Russ Bush, dean of the faculty, said of Puckett, "I am particularly impressed with his scholarly credentials and his love for the church. Every person with whom I have spoken who knows him gave him a strong recommendation, especially with regard to his commitment to students and academic excellence."

Puckett is the author of "John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament," which is scheduled to be published early next year as part of the Columbia Reformed Theology Series. He is working on an anthology of reading in the history of biblical interpretation for use as a textbook in courses on hermeneutics and the history of exegesis.

Puckett earned a master's degree in theology from Dallas Theological Seminary in 1978 and his bachelor's degree from Mississippi College in 1973. He and his wife, Tandi, both natives of Jackson, Miss., have two daughters, Amy, 11, and Dori, 6.

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Choir members capture thief
in Sunset Boulevard chase

Baptist Press
6/29/94

HOLLYWOOD, Calif. (BP)--Choir practice at First Southern Baptist Church in Hollywood, Calif., was just breaking up at about 1:30 on a sunny June 5th Sunday afternoon. Eight members had stayed for practice after the worship service. The church is located at the Sunset Boulevard off-ramp of the busy Hollywood Freeway.

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Suddenly from the sidewalk, soprano Chiyoko Ishiki, 68, raised alarm. Soprano Argelia Tibbs, 33, the pastor's wife, had encountered a man lying on the front seat of the '83 Toyota of choir director Beverly Galvao, 63. When the man hurriedly exited the car clutching a duffle bag, the women noticed the car radio was missing. The man ran toward Sunset Boulevard with choir director Galvao screaming for help in hot pursuit.

The rest of the choir, strung out behind her, soon joined in the chase. The man ran through the adjoining Shell station and disappeared east on Sunset. A passer-by across the street gestured toward the nearby Dunes Motel. As bass singer John Medford, 52, ran into the large motel courtyard, two motel employees who had been changing sheets pointed toward the canopied restaurant entrance in one corner. Confronted, the suspected thief emerged, swearing he had not taken the radio.

Just then a motorist who had been at the gas station screeched his car to a halt in the courtyard. Leaping out, he demanded a search of the man's duffle bag, which produced no radio.

By this time several other choir members, all talking at once, arrived. The suspect swore that someone gave him permission to lie down in the car and he only ran away when he became frightened. However, one of the choir members soon emerged from the bushes near the locked restaurant entrance with the radio.

The thief agreed to wait for the police but suddenly bolted away. He ran back to Sunset with the choir members trailing behind. Tenor Ken Golding, 70, severely handicapped in one leg since infancy, had progressed only as far as the gas station. As the 5'11" 175-pound thief ran toward him, Ken made a valiant run at him, but the man eluded Golding. As the thief ran across a street toward the freeway, a motorist in a van crossed three lanes and drove toward him, blowing his horn, to no avail.

The Hollywood Freeway passes under Sunset Boulevard at that point. Down the slope, through knee-deep vines, the thief plunged, with bass singer Medford close behind. As the chase continued alongside the busy freeway, suddenly the thief dashed into five lanes of heavy traffic toward the center median, to a chorus of honking horns and braking cars.

At this point a young Hollywood punk rocker who had been walking on Sunset appeared beside Medford on the freeway shoulder. Without hesitation the young man dashed after the thief. Dodging the traffic, he reached the center median and chased the thief back into the waiting arms of Medford. Exhausted and outnumbered, the bandit had finally had enough. He was escorted up the off-ramp back to the church to wait for police.

"The guy was intelligent," Medford said. "All the way back he told me I wasn't showing him unconditional love. But I told him the way to help someone doing wrong was to help him stop doing wrong. I told him my own life, years earlier, began to turn around upon the application of police handcuffs and jail cells."

Police took the 37-year-old thief into custody for burglary from a vehicle, a felony.

Said choir director Galvao after the chase, "Three of us had car windows broken just this last Friday night at my building. I covered the small window temporarily with tape. My car was an easy target for a predator."

One officer gave a customary warning to the choir members of the possible danger which had been involved. However, they all remained unrepentant.

"We're the old fashioned types. We're like those people you read about in the papers who fight back against criminals," one said.

Soprano Tibbs, the pastor's wife, added, "People helped people today because people are being cruelly victimized."

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John Medford supplied information used in this story.

EDITORS' NOTE: The following five stories can be used in a series on coping with burnout and stress in the ministry.

A minister's toughest battle
is self-care, says pastor

By K ith Hinson

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Self-care for ministers means "changing some of your most destructive, deeply ingrained patterns of behavior," a Southern Baptist pastor told church musicians and their spouses at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

The most valuable tool in ministry is the person, said N. Keith Smith, senior minister of University Baptist Church in Charlottesville, Va., since 1987 and a minister at the church for 14 years.

Speaking during Church Music Leadership Week, June 18-24, Smith said, "In horse racing, the most valuable asset is the racehorse. You are thoroughbreds," he told the musicians, "and you need to take care of yourselves."

But Smith warned the group that caring for oneself is not easy. "Self-care is the toughest work you will ever do," he said. "It's not a soft, easy thing. It's not propping up on a pillow and eating grapes."

Four kinds of self-care are needed, Smith said:

1) Physical. "We are the temple of God and we need to care for our bodies," said Smith, who runs 35-40 miles weekly. "Our bodies are taking in food and creating energy that needs to be let out. Take the time to exercise. Many ministers are susceptible to heart disease, insomnia and ulcers."

Long-distance running isn't for everyone, Smith admitted, but he added ministers should find some kind of exercise they enjoy.

"Exercise for 30 minutes, at least three times a week," he urged. "Get your heart pumping, and do deep breathing."

He said ministers need to get adequate sleep and rest and eat the right kinds of foods.

"Carbohydrates are good energy foods," Smith noted. "It's amazing how much energy you'll get from the right food. Watch your diet, and get plenty of vegetables and minerals."

"Plan for daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly diversions," he suggested. "Don't wait until you're burned out. If you'll plan diversions, you'll be less likely to burn out. But if you are already burned out, start taking care of yourself physically."

Smith said many ministers think they're invincible. "We keep going and going and going," he said. "We think God will take care of us. Eventually we fall apart."

"Ministry is an incarnational job. It is done through our bodies, and we need to take care of them," he said.

2) Emotional. "Being around the same old people can be a drain," Smith said. "Meet creative new people. Hang around people who are positive and encouraging. Find people you can be humorous with, and laugh a lot."

"We've taken ministry far too seriously," he said. "Ministers and their spouses often do not have hobbies, because we are vocationally tied into the church full time. We really ought to find an avocation outside of church."

A minister should also practice "self-differentiation," Smith said. "Sometimes you can get so involved in ministry that you cannot tell the difference between you and the choir," he told the music ministers. "If someone criticizes the choir, it hurts you. If you lose a choir member, it's like losing a part of yourself."

"Keep some distance between you and the church," Smith advised. "But I'm not talking about aloofness."

He said ministers should develop a few close friendships. "We relate to a whole lot of people," he said, "but often we don't have any close relationships."

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Also, develop a "non-anxious presence," Smith said. "Go into a business meeting and don't be anxious. Learn to relax emotionally in the face of conflict."

Smith recalled his meeting many years ago with a search committee. Many of the usual questions had been asked, but one woman had remained quiet most of the meeting.

"Finally she asked me a question that caught me off guard. She said, 'Are you a patient person?' I considered whether I should lie and say yes," Smith said, with a grin, "but I told her, 'No, ma'am, I'm really not.'

"We need to know ourselves and work on character virtues."

3) Intellectual. "You need to read and study constantly," Smith said. "Buy books. Study burnout. Work on your area of incompetence. We're all incompetent in some way. Don't let the cogwheels of your brain get rusty."

4) Spiritual. "Take time to be holy," Smith said. "Take time for prayer and personal Bible study that is not related to teaching or preaching. Take a couple of hours per day to pray and study."

Smith told a parable of a man in the woods trying to cut down a large tree with a dull saw. Another man asked him why he didn't stop and sharpen the saw. The first man said, "I don't have the time."

Taking the time to nurture oneself spiritually will make it easier to meet the demands of ministry, Smith said.

"I've come to believe that half our time ought to be spent in ministry and the other half strengthening the minister," Smith said. He urged the group to spend no more than 50 hours and no more than three nights each week in church work.

"It's God's ministry, it's Christ's church and it will be here long after we're gone," Smith said. "Realize you're not going to do all the ministry in one year."

Church Music Leadership Week was sponsored by the church music ministries department of Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville.

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Pastor compares burnout
to dry or polluted wells

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
6/29/94

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Burnout in ministry is like trying to draw water from a dry or polluted well, according to N. Keith Smith, senior minister of University Baptist Church, Charlottesville, Va.

"Burnout is when you go to the well for water -- and you dip and you dip -- and there is none. Or you find that the water is bad," said Smith, who spoke to ministers of music and their spouses at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center during Church Music Leadership Week, June 18-24.

"A person can't live without water. In the ministry, you can't function without resources and energy," Smith said. "If you're simply tired, then you may become reenergized by taking a nap or playing golf, but burnout is not so simple. Your energy has been expended, and it's not easy to do something about it."

Using a metaphor of wells and water, Smith made four suggestions to the group on how to prevent burnout:

-- Cut off the leaks and drains. "You may find that a particular area of your ministry is too draining," Smith said. "Wisdom would tell you to cut it off or at least slow it down.

"As ministers of music, you are often under pressure to produce the world's best cantata at Easter," he observed. "My suggestion would be to cut back on other areas of ministry during those times."

-- Tap new sources. "The sources of energy that used to prevent burnout may not work for you anymore," Smith said. "You don't have to resign your church or leave the ministry to sell insurance or computers."

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Smith recalled how preaching used to be the area of ministry he found most fulfilling. But after several years, he began to feel unchallenged.

"How many times can you preach through the Ten Commandments?" he asked, recalling his solution to preach on the more unusual passages of the Bible and then move more into teaching.

"Think of ways you can branch out," he told the group, suggesting they might cultivate areas of ministry outside music, such as pastoral care or the discipling of college students.

-- Tap the very sources that are now empty, but tap them more deeply. As an example, Smith noted that even though the task of leading choir rehearsals is necessary for most music ministers, the minister could lead a choir through a study of the theology of worship.

"Come at your ministry from a different perspective," Smith said. "Ask yourself, 'What can I do differently?'"

-- Find appropriate outlets for your energy as well. A minister of music who enjoys working with senior adults might consider starting a senior adult choir, Smith observed.

"Where is your ministry being blocked?" Smith asked. "If you have energy and don't let it out, it will dissipate. If your energy is blocked, you've got to do some blasting or dig new channels."

Church Music Leadership Week was sponsored by the church music ministries department of Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville.

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Ministers commit adultery
when church comes first

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
6/29/94

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--"You are committing adultery with the church when you spend too much time with the church and not enough time with your spouse," a Southern Baptist pastor told ministers of music attending Church Music Leadership Week at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, June 18-24.

A minister's priorities in order should be God, neighbors and self, said N. Keith Smith, senior minister of University Baptist Church of Charlottesville, Va.

"Who is my neighbor? The people who are closest to me -- first, my spouse, then my children and finally my friends and the church," Smith declared.

"If we put things in priority, we won't sacrifice our families," he said. "A minister of music is to have a love life grounded in God first."

Many ministers give both first and second place to "church and ministry," Smith said, with family and self ranking a distant third and fourth in importance.

"God and the church are not the same thing," Smith said. "Keeping good priorities is hard to do because we're married to our churches."

Sometimes a ministerial spouse feels like the minister is being unfaithful to the marriage when church responsibilities take lots of time away from family.

Smith warned that ministers should not bring problems home from the office. "Don't take church conflicts home," he said. "Your spouse will sometimes take it harder than you.

"You may eventually work through the resolution of conflict in deacons and committee meetings, but your spouse doesn't get to do that," he said, "and they're left stewing in their own juices."

Smith cautioned ministers about discussing problems with their spouses on the way home from church.

"Be careful about talking about church problems in front of your children," he said. "Don't debrief in the car on the way home from church. Your children need a positive image of the church."

Even small children can often understand comments made about church members, Smith said. He noted that problems can be created if a child breaches confidentiality with a comment to a playmate, such as: "My daddy doesn't like your mom."

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Ministers should be careful to nurture relationships with their children, Smith said. "Develop an activity with each of your children separately," he suggested. "You'll be surprised how much talking you get done."

One conferee in the class said his 12-year-old son won't talk much at the dinner table, and the meal is often finished in six minutes. But once a week, during a family walk, "My son starts talking. I learn more in that hour than in the rest of the month," he said.

Smith told the group to allow their children to be human.

"Let them rip and roar through the halls and crawl under the pews," Smith said. "There are limits, of course, but they should feel comfortable at church. Don't pile too many pressures and expectations on them or on your spouses either, for that matter."

Family rituals are important, Smith said. "Take time monthly and yearly for family trips, and do what is best for your spouse and children, no matter what others think or say."

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Learn to negotiate ministry,
pastor tells music ministers

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
6/29/94

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Ministers of music should learn to say "no," even to their pastors, said N. Keith Smith, senior minister of University Baptist Church in Charlottesville, Va.

"You need to negotiate the kind of ministry you want and are called to," said Smith, who spoke to ministers of music and their spouses at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center during Church Music Leadership Week, June 18-24.

Smith said a music minister is sometimes asked to assume responsibility for youth ministry, even after serving the same church for years.

"You need to say, 'Whoa! This is my ministry, and I need to have some input on it,' when they try to push it on you," Smith said. "You may say, 'I'm not good at it,' and still eventually agree to do it.

"You should say, 'Here's the kind of youth ministry I will lead. I will be an overseer, and I need plenty of workers, more money for the youth ministry, and three more days off per year.' After all, they're doing it to save money, and you shouldn't be asked to run a youth ministry on \$100 a year," Smith observed.

"There's nothing good about someone who is willing to do ministry that they're not good at with no money," Smith said.

When confronted by pastors or personnel committees who won't negotiate, Smith told the music ministers, "Sometimes you hit a brick wall and have to leave. But I really believe most of us could stay where we are if we're willing to do the hard work of negotiating."

Smith said negotiating is the "toughest job. Some people are going to stand in your way. But over the course of time, the church changes, and your interests and abilities change. Renegotiate to make it possible."

Smith said there are three kinds of pastors that music ministers work with:

1) Warlords. "They are aggressive and authoritarian," he said. "They have no flexibility and no openness. Some pastors think the way to be assertive is to be aggressive -- hands on everyone else's ministry, including the minister of music."

2) Wimps. "They are passive and have trouble making decisions," Smith said. "They change their minds every time the wind blows. Three people may say one thing to them, and they'll make a decision. Then they'll reverse the decision after a few others express an opposite opinion."

3) Wonderful. "They're assertive and know where they're going. They give the right kind of leadership," said Smith.

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To be a "wonderful" pastor, Smith suggested:

-- Clarify your vision and values. "Don't do it just one time," Smith said.

"Look ahead to see what God is calling you to do. A vision will last no more than seven years. That's biblical. Know where you're going. What is God calling you to do next? Ninety-nine percent of us don't know."

-- Set goals. A minister of music may need new goals, for example, when a handbell choir reaches a previously set goal or a plateau, Smith said. He suggested exploring new possibilities of ministry, such as a senior adult choir.

One way to encourage goal setting among ministers, Smith said, is for churches to use "bottom-up" staff evaluations instead of "top-down."

In top-down evaluations, a church follows a model from the business world, and staff ministers are evaluated by the pastor or a committee. Bottom-up evaluations are better, Smith said. At the beginning of the church year, the personnel committee meets with each staff member and asks for their visions and goals for the year. At the end of the year, each minister is evaluated on the basis of the goals set at the beginning of the year.

Smith advised the music ministers to avoid becoming involved in conflict between the pastor and the church membership.

"Never get between the pastor and the congregation," Smith said. "You shouldn't turn the conflict into a triangle. The pastor and the congregation will both end up hating you."

He also urged the ministers' spouses to avoid serving as a messenger between quarreling parties.

"If someone comes to you with a complaint," he told ministers' spouses, "ask the person to discuss it with the minister directly."

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Don't resign with burnout;
recover, pastor tells musicians By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
6/29/94

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Should a minister who is suffering burnout change churches or resign from the ministry? Not necessarily, according to one pastor.

"Burnout usually leads to fall out, but it doesn't have to," said N. Keith Smith, senior minister of University Baptist Church in Charlottesville, Va., and a conference leader during Church Music Leadership Week at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, June 18-24.

"Changing churches can't solve the problem," said Smith. "There will be a honeymoon period if you move to a new church, but after that you're still the same burned out person."

Quoting from church consultant Lyle Schaller, Smith told the group, "The war department in the church is the music department. When you start messing around with people's hymnals, the choir, and the music they sing, you could be in for a battle."

In times of conflict with church members or other ministerial staff, a minister may choose "fight or flight," Smith observed.

"We can choose flight, to retreat and lick our wounds," he said. "Yet sometimes we need to stay and fight -- not necessarily the deacons or the choir -- but sometimes an internal fight to change ourselves."

In some extreme situations, a job change may be the only answer, Smith said, "but usually, when you burn out and your well runs dry, it is not the time to leave the church or leave the ministry.

"It's better to stay and recover from burnout. Then you can consider moving, and the new church will have a refreshed minister. The most valuable asset God has is you as a person," he said.

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Drawing from authors John A. Sanford and William Willimon, Smith urged the ministers to realize that vocational ministry has several unique characteristics that promote burnout:

-- The job is never finished and the minister often cannot tell if his work is having any results. Though attendance, baptisms and offerings can be counted, other areas of ministry such as counseling and discipling are not as easily measured.

Smith said he reached a point a few years ago where he felt like Sisyphus -- a figure from Greek mythology who was consigned for eternity to push a boulder up a hill, only to have it roll down again, endlessly repeating the cycle.

"I mean, how many Easter cantatas can you do?" Smith asked, as several music ministers in the group groaned and laughed. "I finally started choosing a few tasks I could finish and not have to go back to them. They were tough to find, but I did."

-- The work is repetitive and sometimes boring. There is a sameness about ministry from week to week and year to year, as weekly schedules and seasonal emphases are constantly repeated. Smith suggested branching out into new areas of ministry to break the monotony.

-- The minister must deal constantly with people's expectations, which is difficult because many churches are diverse. As a result, multiple, and often conflicting, expectations are laid upon the minister and his family.

"But you do what is best for you and your children," he said, "no matter what others may think or say."

-- Ministers feel they must spend a great deal of time in a public persona. Smith told of a ministerial colleague who was told by a search committee he could not wear shorts if called to that church.

When Smith graduated from seminary, he was advised he should shave his beard to succeed in ministry, but he refused.

"I'm not shaving my beard for anyone," he said.

-- Ministers may become exhausted by failure, and the minister and the church are not valued by surrounding culture.

"As ministers of music, you would be expected by others to meet the high standards of the local symphony to be accepted," Smith said.

-- The minister must work with the same people year in and year out, listening to the same complaints from people who are volunteers.

"They know they don't have to be there," Smith noted, "and at the slightest problem, they're often gone."

-- Ministers work with people in need, so there's a drain of personal energy because of ministries such as marriage counseling and grief counseling.

-- There is a consumer mentality in the church today, creating people who are "church shoppers."

"I may have a family visiting my church for several weeks, seemingly good candidates for membership, and suddenly they're gone," Smith said. "Then I'll see them in the grocery store months later and find out they joined another church that they say has a better youth ministry."

-- Many clergy are ill-prepared both professionally and personally for the kinds of challenges they face in ministry. Smith urged the ministers to find help and training in areas of professional incompetence.

Some pitfalls of ministry cannot be eliminated, Smith said, but he urged the group to nurture themselves physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually as a way of dealing with and preventing burnout.

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