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94-140

FLORIDA--Florida proposal would alter HMB ties, drop CP percentage.
WASHINGTON--Congress orders removal of religion from EEOC harassment guidelines.
FLORIDA--Baptists scrambling to respond to human, spiritual needs of refugees.
KENTUCKY--Southern administration requests, receives Molly Marshall resignation.
LOUISIANA--Teacher getting reputation for 'random acts of kindness.'
NEW MEXICO--Family activities can have missions focus.
TEXAS--Sunday school lesson writer finds comfort in her own words.
NEW MEXICO--Parenting aging parents brings stress, choices.
NEW MEXICO--Drama has evangelistic power, BSSB worker tells conference.

Florida proposal would alter
HMB ties, drop CP percentage

Baptist Press
8/22/94

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--A Florida Baptist Convention committee has recommended an alteration in Florida's relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention Home Mission Board -- effectively giving Florida Baptists sole control over mission work in the state in 1996 by retaining \$1.3 million in funds that formerly would have been channeled to the HMB.

The Florida convention would be the first in the SBC to abandon the traditional method of undesignated giving through the SBC Cooperative Program.

The action would put Florida outside normal SBC practices, John Sullivan, executive director-treasurer of the state convention, acknowledged, but he said he "hoped" the designation could be counted as Cooperative Program money.

The Florida committee also proposed:

--a \$24 million 1995 budget with less money to the SBC Cooperative Program.
-- semiannual missions offerings in lieu of the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions, the Maguire State Mission Offering and the World Hunger offering.

HMB President Larry Lewis reacted Aug. 22 as "appalled and aghast that a budget planning committee would recommend that the state convention Cooperative Program allocation exclude the Home Mission Board or any major agency of the SBC."

"From my perspective, that strikes at the very heart of what the Cooperative Program is all about -- the states and the SBC cooperating together in the funding of our mission work around the world and at home," Lewis said.

Lewis said he talked with Sullivan the morning of Aug. 22 to express "my prayerful hope that they will reconsider this matter I think it would be a death blow to the whole Cooperative Program concept in Florida and would be equivalent to a severed relationship as far as joint funding and joint support of mission personnel."

"All we're asking is to follow their document to become self-supporting, self-sustaining," Sullivan said, referring to a HMB paper describing cooperative agreements between the HMB and state convention. "The only way we can do this is by the retention of funds" to finance mission work in the state.

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The recommendations, adopted by the state convention's budget-allocations committee Aug. 18, will be considered by the state board of missions Sept. 9 and, if approved, placed on the Florida Baptist State Convention Nov. 14-16 agenda in Daytona Beach.

The \$24 million budget proposes a decrease of less than 1 percent from the 1994 budget of \$24.2 million.

The SBC portion of Cooperative Program would receive 1 percent less -- 41 percent -- than in 1994. The remainder will be divided 50.75 percent for state convention; 5 percent for pastoral aid for new churches in Florida; and 3.25 percent for church annuity.

In 1994, the Florida Baptist Convention designated 42.2 percent of its budget to SBC causes. But action taken by this committee would reduce that portion to 40 percent in 1996. In the 1980s Florida was among the first state conventions to divide in half Cooperative Program money sent to the state convention -- 50 percent for SBC causes and 50 percent for state cases.

Soon after that 50-50 action was taken, Cooperative Program receipts fell. "We were sending too much out too fast," Sullivan explained to the committee, causing programs and ministries in the state to suffer.

"If the Cooperative Program turns around, we will take this back to 41 percent," Sullivan added. "It is not our intention to reduce financial support to Southern Baptist causes. When Cooperative Program funds start coming in from our churches in greater amounts" more will be sent to world wide mission causes, he said.

Sullivan noted even with the drop to 41 percent, only one other state (Georgia) is expected to give a higher percentage to the SBC.

The proposal to retain SBC Cooperative Program funds earmarked for the Home Mission Board was made by a special study committee and approved unanimously by the full budget-allocation committee. In 1993, Florida sent \$1.9 million in Cooperative Program funds to the HMB by way of the SBC Executive Committee. The HMB returned \$1.3 million to underwrite the work of jointly funded missions personnel -- numbering 15 state convention staff members and 17 field missionaries -- as well as missions projects in the state.

In the approved proposal, Florida will retain the \$1.3 million normally sent to the HMB and have sole control of home mission work in the state.

"We are capable of doing our own mission program in the state of Florida," Sullivan noted.

The proposed recommendation will allow the remaining portion of the \$1.9 million, about \$600,000, to be sent to the HMB as a designation to assist other pioneer state conventions. This process is not expected to affect funds going to other SBC agencies and will not touch another \$2 million given by Florida Baptist churches to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, officials said.

Sullivan cited two reasons for the proposed recommendation -- the "unilateral" decision by the HMB to cut by 6 percent missions funding to state conventions next year and the decision made by the HMB executive committee to investigate state conventions that forward -- at the request of their churches -- contributions to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

"They have no right to investigate us just like we have no right to investigate them," Sullivan said.

According to the chairman of the special study committee, Owen Bozeman, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Milton, the committee considered several ways to recoup the anticipated 6 percent cut in HMB funds. These included: reduce missions personnel or convention staff; reclaim money through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering; or adjust the Cooperative Program budget, which Bozeman said, would "eventually be a loss for all."

The committee also examined the 1973 HMB Cooperative Agreement, a document that governs the way the HMB relates to Florida in doing mission work. Florida is the only state convention that still operates under the 1973 cooperative agreement, all other state conventions operate under a revised agreement.

Bozeman noted the document states neither the state convention nor the HMB can take unilateral actions. The agreement also encourages state conventions to "assume full financial responsibilities for mission work as rapidly as possible."

Bozeman also noted the proposal would reduce duplication of administrative paperwork and produce better stewardship of funds.

Lewis disagreed with the characterization of the 6 percent cut as unilateral. "It's been a long, extended process of negotiating from the very outset, with 18 months of lead time" from when projections of HMB income necessitated planning for a budget cut, Lewis said.

"Our coordinators have been negotiating in every state how that might affect that state ... how we can (make funding cuts) without it hurting that state convention severely."

Concerning the HMB study committee, Lewis said, "I think it's a little presumptuous to be faulting the Home Mission Board for having a committee to study relationships with the state conventions when I know of a number of state conventions that have committees, including Florida, studying their relationship with the SBC -- and are even recommending, just as this very committee we're talking about, that they withhold the funding that has ordinarily gone to the Home Mission Board.

"We're living with the reality that state conventions are radically redefining what the Cooperative Program is," Lewis said. "The very future of the Cooperative Program is being threatened not just by CBF (the moderates' fledgling Cooperative Baptist Fellowship) but by an attitude of distrust and a lack of appreciation for what our agencies are about and a lack of appreciation for our missionaries abroad and at home and the vital importance of their work."

The proposed action will take place in 1996 and be reconsidered in three years. To compensate for the 6 percent HMB cut in 1995, Florida Baptists will draw \$76,620 out of reserves.

If approved by messengers during the state convention, the semiannual mission offerings will be held in the spring for home and state missions and in the fall for world missions and world hunger.

The proposal was offered because many Florida Baptist pastors have expressed concern over the proliferation of special offerings, Sullivan said. Because of this, many Florida Baptist churches have moved to an annual unified missions offering, it was noted.

Sullivan said, "This does not in any way affect the Weeks of Prayer. We hope it will enhance them."

After the committee finished their business, Ferrell Mills of Green Cove Springs asked the members to consider "the sweeping changes" they had approved. Although he said he supported each of the proposals "a few years ago if anyone had attempted these, they would have been branded as uncooperative."

"The perception of the man in the pew of the Cooperative Program is world missions. When you start chipping away at what you send to the Cooperative Program, some people will be willing to start chipping away at what they give."

Sullivan acknowledged his concern saying, "We're doing our best to win a foreign mission field in our state."

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Compiled by Art Toalston and Barbara Denman.

Congress orders removal of religion
from EEOC harassment guidelines By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
8/22/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--Congress has directed the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to remove the category of religion from proposed guidelines on workplace harassment after widespread criticism of their religious liberty implications.

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Several organizations, including the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, welcomed Congress' action as a victory for religious freedom.

"Congress has seen the light, because they felt the heat from the outrage of the American people," said Michael Whitehead, the Christian Life Commission's general counsel.

In an 88-12 vote Aug. 19, the Senate passed an appropriations bill which included an amendment deleting religion from the guidelines. Earlier in the week, the House of Representatives passed the same measure after work by a joint Senate /House conference committee. The Senate and House had passed different versions of the bill, including differing amendments on the EEOC guidelines, before they went to the committee.

"This amendment puts the final nail in the coffin for these flawed guidelines," said Sen. Howell Heflin, D.-Ala., a chief sponsor of the amendment.

The bill awaits the signature of President Bill Clinton.

Since the guidelines' content became well known early this year, the CLC and other organizations had charged the inclusion of religion in the proposed rules would result in a ban on religious expression on the job, largely because of employers' fear of lawsuits. The guidelines, which also cover race, color, gender, national origin, age and disability, could result in harassment charges against employees or employers for witnessing to fellow workers or subordinates, or for displaying religious art or literature, the CLC and others warned.

The response of evangelical Christians and others to these concerns produced the largest volume of comments in the EEOC's history. Between mid-February and mid-June, the EEOC received more than 100,000 comments, a commission spokesperson said.

"As I have said since the beginning of the debate over these guidelines, we all want to do whatever is possible to prevent harassment of any kind in the workplace," Heflin said in a prepared statement after the Senate vote. "However, we cannot do this as a tradeoff for religious freedom.

"The EEOC should realize that the Constitution, and now the Congress, requires them to go the extra mile to preserve Americans' religious freedom."

The Senate version of the amendment, introduced by Sen. Hank Brown, R.-Colo., as well as Heflin, was the one reported out of the conference committee for final passage. The House's version prohibited the use of funds for implementation of the guidelines if they were not changed.

The Christian Life Commission sent a letter to the conference committee members asking them to include the Senate language in the final bill.

In early June before a Senate subcommittee chaired by Heflin, the CLC's Whitehead called for religion to be handled separately from the consolidated guidelines.

A week later, messengers to the annual SBC meeting in Orlando approved a resolution requesting removal of religion from the guidelines and separate handling of rules on religious discrimination.

On the eve of the SBC action on the EEOC resolution, President Clinton sent letters to SBC President Ed Young and CLC Executive Director Richard Land assuring them of his commitment to religious liberty and his willingness to work with the CLC and others on such issues. Whitehead said the letter was not satisfactory, because Clinton did not commit to have religion removed.

A week after the SBC meeting, Whitehead expressed the same concerns to Clinton administration lawyers in a meeting at the White House. Among other religious liberty lawyers in the meeting were Brent Walker, general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, and Steve McFarland of the Christian Legal Society. Clinton attended the last portion of the meeting.

Groups such as the BJC, the National Council of Churches and Americans United for Separation of Church and State called for retention of religion in the guidelines but said revisions should be made by the EEOC to protect religious expression.

The Heflin-Brown amendment not only directs the EEOC to delete religion but calls for any new guidelines on religious harassment to be written in such a way as to clarify "that symbols or expressions of religious belief consistent with the First Amendment and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 are not to be restricted and do not constitute proof of harassment." The amendment also directs the commission to hold public hearings and receive additional comment on such guidelines.

The amendment was attached to an appropriations bill for the Commerce, Justice and State departments.

Although the guidelines were proposed last September, concerns about their impact on religious expression did not become widely known until February.

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Baptists scrambling to respond to
human, spiritual needs of refugees

Baptist Press
8/22/94

By Barbara Denman

CORAL GABLES, Fla. (BP)--"I do not know what desperation drives a family to put their children on a raft not knowing if they will make it or not," said Baptist official Bill Fulkerson. "But there are desperate people in Cuba, desperate to leave a situation where there is no hope, no future or no today."

These comments set the mood and agenda for a group of Southern Baptists who came to Coral Gables, Fla., Aug. 15 to develop a strategy for meeting human and spiritual needs for the scores of Cuban refugees pouring into the state from Cuba, a 90-mile-trip from Key West by way of the Straits of Florida.

Since January more than 7,500 Cubans have set sail in makeshift rafts across the treacherous, shark-infested waters of the Straits of Florida. The first half of August has seen more than the whole month of July.

The meeting drew Fulkerson, director of refugee resettlement, and Larry Martin, vice president for ministry of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, as well as representatives from the Florida Baptist Convention, Miami Baptist Association and Thomas Diaz, pastor of the White Street Church in Key West.

For days, Diaz had been greeting and witnessing to the refugees at the Key West Transit Center, which began as an outgrowth of the White Street Church and is directed by Arturo Cobo, a member of the church.

The weekend before the meeting, the number of rafters had climbed to 150 daily. By the week's end more than 500 Cubans were being processed daily by the center. Once they wandered ashore or were picked up by the U.S. Coast Guard, the rafters were processed and provided overnight shelter, immediate medical attention for exposure and dehydration, clothing, a Christian witness and a Bible.

The participants of the Aug. 15 meeting were aware the U.S. policy on accepting the refugees into the country could change at a moment's notice. Concern had been expressed that the wave of Cubans to Florida could be a repeat of the 1980 Mariel boatlift that brought 125,000 Cuban refugees to Miami. State government officials also were alarmed and held a similar strategy meeting the same week as the Southern Baptists.

"The situation changes from day to day," Fulkerson said. "With the threat of a Cuban flotilla and large number of Haitian immigrants, the immigration policies could change."

That change took place on Friday, Aug. 19 when President Clinton reversed nearly 30 years of U.S. policy to declare fleeing Cubans intercepted at sea would not be allowed to enter the United States.

Clinton ordered the Coast Guard -- backed by the Navy -- to intercept the refugees at sea and take them to the U.S. Navy base on Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Refugees who made it to the U.S. shores will be detained and have their cases reviewed.

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Almost immediately the 350 Cubans at the Key West Transit House were picked up by federal authorities and detained at a local Air Force base. Diaz has been granted permission to see the Cubans and was sent 1,000 Spanish New Testaments which had been earmarked for the 1995 simultaneous revivals.

The change in U.S. policy will dictate Florida Baptists "refocus our resources to people who are incarcerated," said Raul Vazquez, director of the language missions division of the Florida Baptist Convention. "We now need to concentrate on counseling and making this period more tolerable while being detained. These are not criminals, they are people trying to survive."

Vazquez said the state convention administration has offered him the use of its crisis response resources, including feeding and childcare units to minister to a new wave of refugees. "And there is a network of Cuban pastors in Miami interested in responding to the crisis situation. Many of them have been refugees themselves and identify with their fellow countrymen."

The Miami pastors will meet with government officials this week to determine which specific ministries will be allowed to the detainees in the Krome Detention Center and the base at Key West.

Vazquez said he plans to wait several days before determining a more comprehensive strategy. "The situation is so muddy right now legally and administratively that a comprehensive strategy will miss the mark as often as it will hit the mark."

The one thing that can be done immediately, Vazquez said, is to send refugee kits and Spanish Bibles to the Miami Baptist Association, 3520 SW 97th Ave., Miami, FL 33165.

Refugee kits should include towel, washcloth, deodorant, bar of soap, comb, toothpaste\toothbrush, shampoo, Band-Aids.

Vazquez said Florida Baptists also should focus their efforts on helping the scores of refugees who arrived before the Clinton policy was instituted.

Many of these Cubans are without relatives who are established in the American way of life. Although they are provided temporary housing, unless they can find jobs, many of the recent refugees will be out on the streets in 60-90 days, he explained.

"No orientation, no real immersion," said Vazquez. "We need to address the needs of not only those who are coming in, but those who have been in the country and have social and spiritual needs."

Fulkerson also expressed some concern over detaining the Cuban refugees at Guantanamo Bay, which is already crowded with Haitians. He said more sponsors are needed to assimilate the Haitian and Cubans.

Churches interested in sponsoring Haitian and Cuban refugees are being asked to contact Fulkerson at the Southern Baptist refugee resettlement office (404) 898-7395, or Don Otwell, community and migrant ministries department, Florida Baptist Convention 1-800-226-8584.

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Southern administration requests,
receives Molly Marshall resignation

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8/22/94

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Molly T. Marshall, the first woman to teach theology at a Southern Baptist seminary, has resigned her position at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary effective Dec. 31.

Marshall's resignation had been sought by the administration at the Louisville, Ky., seminary, according to seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. The administration had received complaints from students and others who charged Marshall's teaching fell outside the parameters of the Abstract of Principles, the seminary's statement of faith, Mohler said.

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Marshall, an associate professor of Christian theology, has drawn fire from conservatives in the Southern Baptist Convention throughout her decade of teaching. Yet Mohler said the current concerns were new and did not relate to previous criticisms of her. He said it would be inappropriate to publicly discuss the nature of the concerns about Marshall.

Marshall would have faced a formal dismissal process had she not resigned, Mohler said. That would have included a hearing before a panel composed of eight trustees and five faculty members. The panel's findings would have then been turned over to the full board of trustees for consideration.

Marshall, a tenured professor, and her supporters, however, contend her teaching was within the seminary's doctrinal guidelines.

In an interview with Baptist Press Aug. 22, Marshall said, "I was given an ultimatum by the vice president, David Dockery, in June -- but I must be very candid, David Dockery speaking on behalf of the president and the trustees -- that I could either resign or be fired in October.

"There have been no specific charges," she said. After the verbal ultimatum, she said she asked for "written charges, and I've received none."

"There is a process for dismissal at our institution," Marshall commented. "I became convinced that ... following that process to its conclusion would be a charade, given the intent of the administration and trustees. In other words, I believe the decision to terminate my employment here was made prior to any sustained inquiry into my theological views."

She said her plans are uncertain at this point.

Mohler stated Marshall's gender was not a factor in his decision to ask for her resignation. "The gender of the professor has absolutely nothing to do with this issue," he said. "The issue is not the gender of the professor, but the substance of what the professor teaches or advocates."

While Mohler said he believes the New Testament forbids women from serving as pastors of churches, he said he does not believe that prohibition applies to seminary teaching.

Early in her career, critics charged she espoused universalism, a belief that God would grant eternal life to everybody. Trustees cleared her of the charge and in 1988 she was given tenure by seminary trustees.

In 1992, an address Marshall gave in Danville, Va., related to gender issues and the Christian faith became the subject of controversy. A Virginia layman leveled several charges at Marshall based in part on a newspaper account of the address. A trustee committee reviewed a tape of the speech and found that the layman's charges and the newspaper report were in error.

Despite the controversies, Marshall is beloved by many students and former students. Her theology classes were frequently filled to capacity. In 1993, she won the seminary's Findley B. and Louvenia Edge Award for Teaching Excellence.

"Professor Marshall is a marvelously gifted person and throughout this process there has never been any question of her giftedness or of her ability to relate to colleagues and students," Mohler said. "But the bottom line is this: For a Southern Baptist theological institution that is not enough. We voluntarily teach and serve here on the basis of the Abstract of Principles and other formal commitments. It is not enough that we believe ourselves to be within these commitments if it is the judgment of the president and the board of trustees that one is in violation."

In her final semester at Southern, Marshall will teach no master's level courses, but she will lead one doctoral level seminar. She will also continue to supervise her current doctoral students until they complete their studies.

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Compiled by Art Toalston and Pat Cole.

Teacher getting reputation
for 'random acts of kindness' By Angel Allen

KEITHVILLE, La. (BP)--"What have you done to my kid?"

After coming home to a hot meal, clean house or well-behaved child, many shocked parents wanted to know what the sixth-grade science teacher at Keithville Elementary/Middle School had up her sleeve last spring.

Simply, Karen Rothell had become fed up with the "random acts of rudeness" she noticed among the students.

And she was doing something about it.

"Our kids today are not taught to respect others," Rothell says. "They honestly don't know how to be courteous to each other."

Rothell had grown tired of the rudeness -- tired of classmates being mean to each other, tired of them ridiculing other children for the clothes they wore, tired of their disrespect for authority.

So she assigned her 183 science students to commit "random acts of kindness."

The Baptist lay woman got the idea from a month-long campaign being sponsored by the Rotary Club of nearby Shreveport. At first, she scoffed at the city-wide effort, but eventually she changed her mind.

Or rather God changed her mind, she says. As the rudeness continued among students, Rothell says she felt God saying to her she could make a difference. As a teacher, she knew she was in a position to influence children positively.

She began by asking her classes for specific examples of "random acts of rudeness." Putting others down topped the list while slamming doors in faces, pushing in the halls and threatening others followed closely. Students also suggested solutions to the problem. Rothell says she was very surprised to find an overwhelming number of the sixth graders wanted the school's discipline policy to be stricter. Another suggestion from students was to offer a week-long class on how middle school children should behave.

That students were very eager to have stricter rules imposed upon them was apparent. "They didn't know what to do," Rothell says. "They didn't know where to go. They didn't know how to deal with the problems they were faced with at school."

The students were so happy to have someone to help them, they cheered at Rothell's announcement that she was sending their information to the administration. She explained the students' ideas to school leaders and explained how the children were willing to work to make the school a kinder place. As a result, the administration developed a discipline committee that currently is revising the school's discipline policy.

Meanwhile, Rothell was launching a campaign of her own. Each day for about a month, she wrote a "kind word of the day" or "kind act of the day" on the board. She started off with simple words such as "please" and "thank you." Carrying each other's books or opening doors were presented as kind acts. The students used the word or performed the act for the next 24 hours. The next morning, they wrote journal entries describing what they did and the responses they received.

Rothell says she could not wait to get home each day to read the journal entries. Sometimes the students would write that their parents asked them, "Why are you being so nice?" Other times, parents themselves would write in their child's journal, "What have you done to my kid?"

"They have discovered that some people are surprised at first," Rothell wrote in a letter to the Rotary Club of Shreveport while the program was underway. "However, as they continue to do kind things, they are realizing that it is contagious. Other people are becoming kinder to them."

On weekends, the students were on their own to commit kindness. Some students helped clean up a decaying cemetery in which tombstones had fallen over, Rothell says. Others visited with nursing home residents and pushed them in wheelchairs.

These acts of kindness "made the kids feel really good inside," Rothell says.

"We can't say that we've changed the world, our city, or our campus," she wrote. "We can say, however, that we are happier with ourselves. We are really trying to make our school a better place. I have no doubts that if my students are happier here, they must also be happier no matter where they are. If that is true, then they will help make Shreveport a kinder place."

The effort has impacted Rothell as well. "When I went into teaching, I said I wanted to make a difference." When the kids explained to her how good they felt inside as a result of her campaign, Rothell says she knew she had made a difference. And she says she knew the students would want to continue committing kindness on their own.

They do. In fact, the students want to continue committing kindness so much they asked Rothell to move up a grade to continue the program with them. This fall, Rothell says she plans to assign random acts of kindness throughout the entire school year with the seventh-grade science students. Several other teachers at the Keithville school also plan to implement the program.

Rothell emphasizes making a difference begins with only one person. She urges Christians to "start at the bottom and take one step at a time. If you never take a step towards solving that problem, it will never be solved," she says.

Rothell says churches can stress random acts of kindness as well. At many churches, people do not have concern for each other, she suggests. They do not drop by to visit prospective members. They do not say kind words to fellow members, she says. "Many churches do not reach out to the community, and that's sad," she says.

Likewise, Rothell says many children in churches do not want to participate in community services such as visiting at the nursing home. She says those children would be more apt to commit kindness if the actions are stressed at school where their peers are involved as well.

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Allen is an intern at the Louisiana Baptist Message.

**Family activities can
have missions focus**

By Susan Doyle

**Baptist Press
8/22/94**

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--When today's preschoolers grow up and have homes of their own, their homes will be a reflection of the homes they grew up in, said a preschool expert.

"It's scary to realize how much children notice what we do," said Kay Cassibry, Mission Friends consultant for Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union. "But we are modeling behavior before them whether we know it or not."

Cassibry recently spoke to a group of Mission Friends leaders and gave them tips on how to make the home a missions base. Mission Friends is the missions organization sponsored by Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union for preschool boys and girls.

"Little things may seem insignificant but they shape our children," she said.

Every day, memories are made and stored in the minds of preschoolers. Those memories can be based on things which will lead them to live Christ-centered lives, she said.

"Memories are such powerful things. We all have them. They may be good. They may be bad. They link us to our past and they influence our future."

Missions is probably not going to be the No. 1 priority of most families, Cassibry acknowledged. However, some of the activities which family members enjoy together can easily include a missions focus and can help build memories which will influence young children in a positive manner.

Cassibry used the following as examples of the types of things families can do to combine a missions interest with fun learning activities.

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- Using a plastic glob , play catch while talking about the different countries where Southern Baptist missionaries work.
 - Hid a small object under a hat while the children have their eyes closed. Give several clues about what is hidden under the hat for the children to guess what it is. Use objects that all relate to an area where Southern Baptist have missionaries. Talk about each object and how missionaries use them.
 - Use pictures or maps of the world to help children locate where Southern Baptists have missionaries.
 - Make Christmas ornaments with missionary's names and places of service on them.
 - Have a garage sale at home and give the proceeds to a special missions offering.
 - Use vacations to visit mission spots, especially those in your own community. Introduce children to various types of ministries.
 - Invite international neighbors to participate in activities such as family recreation, picnics and cookouts.
- "We're in such competition with the secular world for fun things," Cassibry said. "Those fun things should have a purpose."

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Sunday school lesson writer
finds comfort in her own words

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
8/22/94

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Following a miscarriage in 1992, Sharon Gritz wrote about the comforting presence of God through her own grief as part of a Sunday school lesson on ministering to those who suffer.

Two years later, Gritz' own words are helping her work through a second trauma.

"The Lord embraced us with his loving comfort and sustained us with a promise for the future and hope in him," Gritz wrote for the July 3, 1994, Sunday school lesson in Advanced Bible Study published by the Baptist Sunday School Board as part of the Life and Work Series.

Gritz, a homemaker, writer and member of University Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas, shared with readers how she was able to use her own experience of miscarriage a few months later with a friend who also had lost a child.

"I was able to offer comfort because the Lord had comforted me," she noted in the lesson introduction.

In late May 1994, after a difficult pregnancy and 14 weeks short of full term, Gritz gave birth to a son, Luke. Four weeks later on June 27, six days before Gritz' lesson on "Sufferers Yet Comforters" would be used nationwide in Southern Baptist churches, Luke died.

People who knew Gritz had written the lesson and who knew about Luke's death "found it providential I had written the lesson on comfort and now I needed comfort," she said in an interview.

"The Sunday School Board plans things in advance," she said. "They know the lessons will touch lives but they don't know how a particular lesson will be needed."

As Gritz and her husband Paul have dealt with their grief, she reflected: "I understand more the peace that passes understanding. I had quoted that verse quite a bit, but I had never understood it like this."

For example, in talking with friends, Gritz said many have commented on the peace they have heard in her voice.

Also, she said she has realized anew God "uses the body of Christ to comfort us."

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Friends from her church and others in the area as well as from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary where her husband teaches church history have offered comfort through their presence as well as with food, notes, calls and prayer, Gritz said.

In addition to peace and comfort, she said she has found assurance in her faith "that our son is in heaven and one day we'll be reunited. That's a manifestation of God's comfort."

In her Sunday school lesson on comforting those who suffer, Gritz offered a challenge to fellow believers and to herself:

"Are you willing to serve others by sharing God's comfort with them? We can comfort others in the midst of our own sufferings. Let's do it!"

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Parenting aging parents
brings stress, choices

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
8/22/94

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Parenting one's aging parents brings understandable stress and a wide range of decisions to people who may still be rearing their own children, a writer and consultant couple told participants in a session during the Bible Preaching Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

Neil Knierim, pastoral care consultant in the Baptist Sunday School Board's pastor-staff leadership department, and his wife, Vickie, a writer and conference leader, said the strain of additional responsibility weighs differently on church staff couples.

"You don't have weekends, since you have to be at the church," Neil Knierim observed, "and most of you don't minister where your parents live."

Yet in addition to meeting the expectations of other church staff people and the congregation, couples in ministry increasingly find themselves challenged also to meet the needs of their children, their parents, their spouse and themselves.

Needs vary among family members, conference participants confirmed. They cited common needs of love, encouragement, attention and time, but noted children need security, guidance and protection, among other unique factors.

Aging parents seek independence, service (transportation for food and medical services), contact, the need to be needed and help in planning for future life changes.

Spouses need time alone and together, recreation, support and physical needs met.

And individuals, they said, also need time alone for their own interests, time with their spouse and time with friends.

Vickie Knierim said key words related to those needs include responsibility, prevention, sacrifice, compromise, control, demand, guilt, burnout, balance, stress, priorities, limitations, understanding and expectations.

Participants suggested, out of their experiences, that responsibility means everyone in the home needs to have a job, including older members who may still be able to perform a task that they are known for, such as meal preparation.

Prevention comes into play when family members talk about how life will change as older persons need to be parented. Participants suggested talking with children specifically about those changes, pointing to joys as well as challenges.

Sacrifice and compromise are present in any situation involving more than one person, they agreed.

Control and demand issues surround all parties involved, including church members and the employer of a church staff member's spouse. Family members and employers expect to have first place in our lives, they agreed.

Guilt -- regretting acts or lack of action -- can affect health, participants noted, and burnout can happen to people who become "weary in well-doing."

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The words "balance" and "stress" led conferees to say, "you can't be all things to all people." They concluded people must rely on God to help them weigh choices to achieve balance in life.

Understanding and expectations are important among family members who need to be aware and acknowledge gratefully when some people carry a greater load in helping parents.

Neil Knierim said aging parents use techniques to manipulate for attention, particularly visits requiring travel time.

"We have a choice," he said. "There may be those who are nearby who can help us assess the validity of the need rather than our just reacting.

"Be cautious of emotional pull. We make decisions based on emotion differently from those we do based on fact," he continued. Distance and time may not be a luxury. Decide if an immediate trip is wise or if a visit later would be more helpful.

He suggested evaluating your ability to help, based on personal skills.

"There are some things we cannot do for our parents," he said, "but we can help determine who else can meet a specific need."

Communicate your intentions to everyone affected, he urged, and "pray for wisdom and direction. Distance is a barrier that can be overcome through God. He can comfort, encourage and heal our parents and he can guide me to know how to respond."

Bible Preaching Leadership Conference was sponsored by the pastor-staff leadership department of Baptist Sunday School Board.

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Drama has evangelistic power,
BSSB worker tells conference

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
8/22/94

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--In both urban and rural America, the dramas of life around the world come into homes on a daily basis through television and radio news and entertainment.

Matt Tullos maintains drama can teach the world about the good news of the gospel through many of those same sensory techniques persons have come to expect in other learning experiences.

Tullos, a worship drama consultant for the Baptist Sunday School Board, told participants in the Drama Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M). Baptist Conference Center, Aug. 13-19, drama has the ability to give Christian messages reality through the emotions of people.

As an evangelistic medium, drama works well, Tullos maintained, because it is visual, relational, interactive and powerful.

"Drama gets people emotionally involved in worship," he said. "And the parable style -- the teaching style of Jesus -- gets people to think about the real purpose of the gospel."

A variety of drama models lend themselves to communicating an evangelistic message, he said, among them the seeker service model, geared to reach non-Christians.

The environmental model, he said, is an audience-participation form, in which the audience soon wonders if the drama is drama or reality.

A worship model, which is aimed at a more traditional service than the seeker model, has as its goal to get the non-Christian into a worship environment.

Today, some churches offer an alternative to the traditional week of revival services by providing a "Festival of Faith" or "Celebration of Christian Arts" as a means to variety in sharing evangelistic messages.

Tullos said he feels one obvious value in this approach is the inclusion of multiple church member participants in a series of five drama services, as opposed to one person speaking from the pulpit for a week.

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"Lay persons are equipped to do the ministering," he said, "and they have the opportunity to make an emotional touch. It helps the worshipers think about eternity in a different way.

"In the ministry of pulpit proclamation, the appeal is more to logic than to emotion. A lecture is just that, whereas drama has emotional impact. Drama has the ability to change constantly," he continued, "as opposed to one person in a suit standing before the congregation for 30 minutes."

Tullos said the dramatic medium is not the total message, excluding proclamation.

"Drama doesn't always give the answer. It lets people decide for themselves," he acknowledged. "So drama works well coupled with a brief message at the end of the service that ties the drama to an evangelistic conclusion and an invitation."

For churches that have not tried drama as an evangelistic tool, Tullos suggests building a climate for drama, "slowly." And he urges "quality, rather than frequency," as a goal for beginning drama ministries so that the effort communicates the gospel well.

After a ministry is established and accepted, Tullos said, variety in dramatic forms can allow a growing drama group to provide evangelistic messages often.

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