

(BP)

-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee

901 Commerce #750

Nashville, Tennessee 37203

(615) 244-2355

Herb Hollinger, Vice President

Fax (615) 742-8819

CompuServe ID# 70420,17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522, CompuServe 70420,250

DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232, CompuServe 70420,115

NASHVILLE Linda Lawson, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300, CompuServe 70420,57

RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151, CompuServe 70420,72

WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223, CompuServe 71173,316

August 26, 1994

94-143

TEXAS--Missionaries visit today's Cuba, recall decade of service there.
WASHINGTON--Coalition briefs to defend RFRA's constitutionality.
NEW MEXICO--Rankin 'twice as optimistic' after year at helm of FMB.
DALLAS--Texas Baptist paper devotes entire weekly issue to youth.
DALLAS --Teens face challenge over growing use of illegal drugs.
DALLAS--Churches can do what gangs do: Offer youth a sense of family.
NORTH CAROLINA--Fear often stops parents from drug-proofing kids.
NEW MEXICO--Change can be accomplished, SBC church leaders told.
NEW MEXICO--Allowing fear to prevent witnessing is misplaced faith, consultant says.
NEW MEXICO--Reclaiming chronic absentees takes evaluation, effort, skill.
NEW JERSEY--N.J. pastor helps Ga. woman get papers needed to go to Ukraine.
NORTH CAROLINA--Chaplaincy? No problem!
GEORGIA--Former Truett-McConnell President Fulbright dies.
ATLANTA--See You At The Pole set for Sept. 21.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

EDITORS' NOTE: Additional photos supporting Bob Carey's on-scene coverage of Southern Baptists' relief efforts aiding Rwandan refugees in Zaire and (BP) story titled "Volunteer team helps bring new life to Rwandan children," dated 8/25/94, will be mailed to state Baptist newspapers as early as possible next week.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Missionaries visit today's Cuba,
recall decade of service there By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
8/26/94

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--When Ester Valdivieso opened her door in Havana, Cuba, she saw a face she hadn't seen in 25 years.

The Cuban woman had no trouble recognizing the unexpected callers outside her home -- Margaret Caudill Fite, her North American neighbor for nearly a decade, and her husband, David.

The Fites had just returned to Havana, the Cuban capital, for the first time since being deported in 1969. They arrived shortly before thousands of Cubans fled the country by boat.

"It was a very emotional experience, probably in some ways the most emotional" of the trip, said David Fite after their return to their home in Fort Worth, Texas. The Fites were missionaries to Cuba from 1960-69. She is the daughter of former missionaries to Cuba, the late Herbert Caudill and his wife, Marjorie, of Decatur, Ga.

During their years in Cuba, the Fites lived across the street from Valdivieso and her late husband. But they were more than neighbors.

--more--

When the Cuban government held Fite as a political prisoner for nearly four years, the Cuban couple were "like family" to Fite's wife and three sons. The Fites' youngest son, Mark, now an engineer in Atlanta, was just a month old when the missionary was jailed in April 1965. Fite, Herbert Caudill and about 50 Cuban Baptist leaders were charged with "counterrevolutionary activity, illegal currency exchange and ideological diversionism."

During Fite's years in prison, Valdivieso's husband "provided a male image to Mark," said Fite, now director of continuing education and off-campus programs at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. "Mark was almost his son."

The return to their old neighborhood was the Fites' first stop after arriving in Cuba July 30. In Havana they stayed in the same apartment where they spent their last night in Cuba in 1969. Then it was the home of Mrs. Fite's parents, missionaries to Cuba for nearly 40 years.

"Some of the same furniture was there, some of the same pictures on the wall. ... We were flooded with memories," said Fite.

Many more memories were yet to come. The couple spent about 10 days in Cuba, July 30-Aug. 8, leading conferences on pastoral care and family relationships in several churches of the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba. Fite also preached in four Baptist churches, including the Buena Vista Baptist Church in Marianao, where he was pastor.

"It was very encouraging to see the result of the seeds we had sown there," said Fite, who also taught in the Baptist seminary in Havana while a missionary.

The Fites were "really impressed with the focus of the churches on the very essence of the gospel -- a person's relationship with the Lord" and its effect on all other relationships and decisions. "So many people are just coming in off the streets who have had no connection with the church before. They may never have been in a church in all their lives."

Many new Christians were among 175 Cuban Baptists who attended conferences led by the Fites.

"I've spent my life looking for that which makes people happy," said a Baptist psychologist who attended a conference. "I've found it now in the church."

Fite was impressed by Cuban Baptists' "absolute reliance upon the Lord. Every time we went somewhere the driver would ask someone to lead us in prayer," he recalled. "There was no put-on or pious attitude ... It was a basic awareness that we are completely in the hands of the Lord and whatever happens to us will happen to us. ... It was a stark contrast with how we (U.S. Christians) take so many things for granted. Or we wear our piety so we can make an impression on people."

Fite observed the same attitude at meals shared with Cubans. "I saw them putting on the table all the food they had in the house for the meal, not knowing where food for tomorrow was coming from," he said. "We knew they later would be out scrounging like everybody else trying to figure out where they would get food for tomorrow."

But Fite saw a marked difference between how Cuban Christians and non-Christians faced that challenge. Christians "did it without anxiety, fully confident that God would provide."

While in Cuba the couple witnessed riots which erupted along the Malecon, a seawall lining Havana's waterfront. Demonstrators were protesting poor living conditions and demanding access to boats to go to the United States, according to news reports. Cuban President Fidel Castro blamed the incident on the United States and later announced that Cubans fleeing by boat would not be thwarted by government officials, according to The Miami Herald. The U.S. government responded by overturning its 28-year-old policy of granting asylum to Cuban refugees.

The Fites viewed the riots from across the bay at La Cabana Fortress, now a museum that had been a military prison for decades. It was one of the prisons where the Cuban government held Fite. The former missionaries watched the demonstrations from the porch of what had been the courthouse where Fite had been tried by a revolutionary tribunal.

While at La Cabana, Fite was able to peer into the building that housed the cell where he was jailed. "I wanted very much to see it from the outside. I felt this would bring some closure to that experience. But I don't know if you ever close those things off," said Fite, who harbors no resentment about his imprisonment.

"Remembering those times was not necessarily pleasant, but remembering them was helpful to me."

The trip also helped the Fites put into perspective the years they spent as missionaries in Cuba. "When we left 25 years ago, we left at a time when the future of the (Baptist) work in Cuba hung in balance. It was a very difficult time for the church and the Christians," he said.

"Going back and seeing the churches packed ... the faithfulness and enthusiasm of the Christians, the explosion of the gospel and how it's changing people's lives was a very, very thrilling and satisfying experience. It was a confirmation that God's work continues."

--30--

Coalition briefs to defend
RFRA's constitutionality

Baptist Press
8/26/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--The diverse coalition which successfully pushed for passage of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act last year is working now to defend it in the courts.

The state of New York has challenged the landmark religious liberty measure in six cases, and the coalition recently announced it has filed or will file a friend-of-the-court brief in each.

RFRA, which was signed into law by President Bill Clinton in November, requires any government body, before limiting the free exercise of religion, to demonstrate that a policy serves a "compelling interest" and is the "least restrictive means" in fulfilling the government's interest.

In the cases, New York argues Congress lacks the authority to restrict powers reserved to the states.

In its briefs, the coalition says Congress enforced "a right with firm roots in constitutional text and history" in passing RFRA. In support, the briefs use the Supreme Court South Carolina v. Katzenbach decision, which said Congress had the authority to legislate in the arena of voting rights.

Congress "has the power to create lesser burdens of proof or to prohibit constitutionally innocuous behavior, in order to offset the difficulty of proving constitutionally condemned behavior," the briefs argue. "RFRA fits neatly under this power."

The 67-member coalition includes such diverse groups as the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Christian Legal Society, National Council of Churches, Concerned Women for America, People for the American Way, National Association of Evangelicals, American Civil Liberties Union, American Association of Christian Schools and Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Marc Stern of the American Jewish Congress prepared the briefs, with assistance from attorneys with the BJC, NCC, CLS, PAW, Home School Legal Defense Association, American Jewish Committee and Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America.

--more--

RFRA reversed the Supreme Court's 1990 Employment Division v. Smith opinion. In Smith, the court ruled government no longer has to demonstrate a "compelling interest" before restricting religious freedom. After Smith and prior to the passage of RFRA, it was easier for the government to limit individuals' religious expression. More than 60 cases after Smith and before RFRA were decided against people making religious claims, the coalition said.

--30--

Rankin 'twice as optimistic'
after year at helm of FMB

By John Loudat

Baptist Press
8/26/94

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (BP)--Describing his first year as president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board as "a whirlwind," Jerry Rankin said he is more optimistic about the cause of foreign missions than ever.

Rankin shared his optimism during a recent visit to Albuquerque, in preaching at Del Norte Baptist Church July 31 and in an interview with the Baptist New Mexican.

Upon his election to his new post a year ago, Rankin said he was optimistic about the FMB's future because of what he had seen God do in the part of the world where he had been working as an area director.

"I really am twice as optimistic now," he said, now that he is able to see God's activity all over the world.

Rankin mentioned several indicators of God's activity, including a record number of appointments during the past year -- 498. The previous appointment record was 425.

He also pointed out how the board had broken the 4,000-mark in missionary personnel. In addition, the FMB currently is working with more than 3,000 foreign mission candidates.

A record Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions and another record in overseas baptisms last year also are indicative of God's working during Rankin's first year at the helm. Last year saw a record 262,000 baptisms; the previous record was 251,000.

Rankin also pointed out that in 1992 there were 1,609 new churches overseas -- the most ever. That record also was surpassed by 25 percent in 1993, with more than 2,000 new churches.

Rankin said the number of churches overseas has doubled in just the past six years. After 141 years of Southern Baptist mission outreach, there were 17,000 churches overseas. Today there are 35,000.

Bold Mission Thrust, Rankin believes, is reachable. Of the 12,000 missionaries appointed in the history of SBC, half of them have been appointed since BMT was adopted in 1976.

In respect to his new responsibilities as FMB president, Rankin said, "It's been an awesome experience of seeing the sufficiency of God's grace this past year. ... There has not been one day to go by that I am not consciously aware there must be thousands of people praying for me."

According to Rankin, "There's a new sense of enthusiasm and high morale" at the board. "You just sense people having a vision of being a part of what God is doing rather than, 'We're out there with our strategy, our methods, trying to make it happen.' We've moved beyond that. We're just an instrument, we're just available. God is doing it. Just tremendous testimonies are coming back from the field."

The new perspective, Rankin said, seems to be related to Henry Blackaby's new relationship to the board. Blackaby, director of the office of prayer and spiritual awakening at the Home Mission Board, has been helping the FMB intensify its focus on prayer and spiritual renewal since late last year.

--more--

Decentralization, streamlining and consolidation at the board in recent months has enabled the mission organization to get a more global perspective, Rankin continued.

"We must recognize we can't have one common strategy for the whole world." Changes at the board are giving the missionaries on the field "more empowerment and latitude" to determine strategies and methodologies, "rather than controlling it from Richmond."

A key perspective Rankin is trying to communicate is, "It is not the responsibility of the Foreign Mission Board to do foreign missions on behalf of Southern Baptists." Instead, it is the responsibility of every church and believer. "We exist to serve the churches and the convention to facilitate their fulfilling God's purpose in missions, the Great Commission."

Rankin said Southern Baptists are entering a new era of partnership with other SBC agencies, state conventions and churches. He expects 65 partnership projects with state conventions by 1995. Rankin said recent study of churches in South Carolina demonstrated churches involved in partnership projects overseas increased their Cooperative Program giving by 16 percent. Those that had not participated in partnership projects increased their CP gifts by only 2 percent. Also, Rankin said, nearly all career appointees today have already had overseas experience through partnership projects.

Examples of the FMB working together with other SBC agencies include the recent partnership agreement signed with the Brotherhood Commission, which will be the primary recruiter for the FMB's overseas voluntary force. The FMB is talking with the Baptist Sunday School Board about translating and marketing materials overseas, while the Radio and Television Commission is broadcasting programs in Russia. The Woman's Missionary Union is examining new dimensions of foreign mission education and promotion, Rankin said, and the board is even working with the Home Mission Board -- primarily in the area of reaching internationals.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., has asked the board to help design a curriculum that will be consistent with what the FMB is doing. The seminary also has asked the FMB to put a staff member on their faculty on a revolving basis, Rankin said.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., is developing a new master of divinity program which involves two years on campus and two years studying and working with the FMB overseas.

Rankin said he did not believe the decision of the SBC to reject money given through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship will hurt the work of the FMB. Saying, "Any gift given for missions through any channel or cause is holy unto the Lord," Rankin refused to call CBF funds "tainted money," as some have.

At the same time, Rankin said, "I believe very strongly that we have got to seek to strengthen and unify our cooperative channels of giving to missions as Southern Baptists." Voluntarily cooperating together in "the way the convention has determined we're to cooperate" is the only thing that holds autonomous Southern Baptist churches together, he added.

Rankin called it "unrealistic" to presume the FMB will lose any of the \$1.6 million they received last year through the CBF. He said he assumes people in churches have supported the FMB "because they're led of the Lord to do. If he has led a church or individual to give to the Foreign Mission Board, I would assume they're going to continue to be obedient to what the Lord is leading them to give to, regardless of how they need to do that.

"That decision (of the SBC) won't hurt us. We are about a kingdom purpose and the King has all the resources we need to accomplish that purpose," Rankin said.

Rankin said he wanted to tell Southern Baptists, "Don't allow yourselves to develop a myopia and fail to see God's total kingdom purpose of reaching the whole world."

Referring to a tendency of local churches, associations and state conventions to focus on their own needs, he said there is a real danger in postponing mission involvement until all the local needs are met.

"Show me a church that's keeping a lost world before the people ... and I'll show you a church that G d is blessing with an effective local ministry."

--30--

Texas Baptist paper devotes
entire weekly issue to youth

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
8/26/94

DALLAS (BP)--"We need to do some things differently in Baptist communication."

That thought, confirmed by an in-depth study of the weekly Texas Baptist Standard, prompted editor Presnall Wood to turn over an entire issue of the paper to youth.

No regular Sunday school lessons. No regular features. The Youth Baptist Standard, dated Aug. 10, was 24 pages of youth-oriented and youth-directed reading.

Even the timing of the issue was youth-related, Wood said. Texas Baptist youth begin the school year about mid- to late August.

The staff of the Standard, which is the largest of the 39 Baptist state papers with more than 200,000 circulation, had planned the issue for a year.

Longtime observers of state Baptist papers said it was the first time an entire regular issue of any state paper has been devoted to youth.

"It's the first time we (the Standard) have done this," Wood said. Baptist papers often devote entire issues to missions and some have had extensive coverage of news in Spanish or other languages but an entire issue for youth may be a first for Baptist journalism.

But why, you might ask?

"Because the directors, editor and staff of the Standard want youth to know they are important to the Baptist Standard and want them to read the Baptist Standard and be informed Baptist youth," Wood wrote in a short editorial in the issue.

The first reaction, Wood said, was "very good." The paper printed extra copies and a number of churches have ordered extra copies.

Following an extensive study of the paper by a consultant, Wood said he was surprised that apparently less than 1 percent of the Standard's readers were under 20.

When the Standard asked for letters to the editor from youth, however, the paper was swamped with the response. Although nearly two pages of youth letters were printed, space restrictions prevented many from publication, Wood said. Most were from 12- to 15-year-olds, he said.

"That may mean we do have more than the 1 percent readership who are youth," Wood said.

Wood said he did not know whether the paper will do another youth issue and will await more response before making that decision. The Standard is producing a special college issue for the fall but that will be a special edition, used by Baptist students on the campuses, and not a regular issue.

--30--

EDITORS' NOTE: The following two stories were among those appearing in the special youth editor of the Baptist Standard.

Teens face challenge over
growing use of illegal drugs

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
8/26/94

DALLAS (BP)--When it comes to using drugs, some teen-agers believe, "Everybody's doing it."
They're not.

--more--

But a recent study showed that the number of teens using illegal drugs is growing -- a trend that disturbs Texas Baptist youth leaders.

A 1993 University of Michigan study revealed that illicit drug use among American teens is rising after an 11-year decline.

More young people are using LSD, marijuana, inhalants and stimulants. Cigarette use also is up, and use of alcohol -- the most widely abused drug by teen-agers -- remains steady.

Texas Baptists may be appalled, but they shouldn't be shocked by the trend, according to Chris Liebrum, youth consultant in the Sunday school/discipleship division of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. "Given the environment in which so many youth live, with broken homes and the absence of any moral value system being taught to them, it should come as no surprise that drug usage is up," Liebrum said.

"Even during the good years -- when studies showed drug use was declining -- it was a good news/bad news story. The bad news was there had been a flood and we had been up to 10 feet over flood stage. The good news was that we were getting down to nine-and-a-half feet. Even the good news wasn't that great."

And just getting teens into church is not enough. He pointed to a study revealing that young people who regularly attend evangelical churches are less likely to be involved in immoral or illegal activities such as drug use. But the difference between the churchgoing youth and the general teen population is less than 10 percent.

"A lot of the kids who are active in church and who seem to have their lives together are the same kids who are struggling with issues of drug use and addiction," Liebrum said.

Kelly, a 14-year-old from the Fort Worth area, was among the churchgoing young people who started experimenting with LSD last year.

"At the end of the school year, it was like everybody was doing it. It was a really big thing," she said.

Eventually, her parents realized what she was doing. Demonstrating what Kelly now sees as "tough love," her parents called school officials who searched her locker and discovered LSD. She was suspended from school for three months, arrested and released into her parent's custody.

"They turned me in because they wanted me to get better," Kelly said. "I never was mad at them. I needed a way out. I was scared, and I didn't know where to go."

Kelly went into rehabilitation. And she went to church.

"My church was what helped me," she said. "Everybody was so accepting and forgiving. I was even asked to serve on a senior high planning team. I couldn't believe they were willing to put their trust in me."

Although she has never used illegal drugs herself, 16-year-old Ann from east Texas has been touched by them on several fronts.

"I have a lot of friends who've tried drugs," she said. "I've never tried them, but I've been approached real often. Everybody thinks I'm some kind of goody-two-shoes who doesn't do anything."

"I've always known it's not right and it's not good for you. Besides, I've seen what's happened in my family and to my friends. I promised God I'd never do that."

A cousin whose mother abused drugs was victimized when "her mom gave her acid (LSD) through her baby bottle, in her orange juice," Ann said.

"Later on, when she was 14 or 15, it really started affecting her. She thought nobody loved her, and she finally ran away from home. She's in New York now. She has two kids of her own, and they're living on the streets."

One of her Ann's best friends also has been an on-again, off-again drug user, she said.

Her friend grew up in an abusive home and has "no self-esteem at all," she said. On one occasion, Ann had to intervene to prevent her friend from committing suicide.

"She started using drugs in the sixth grade. She's 18 now," Ann said. "She tried to stop for awhile, but she's started back again. It hurts me to see her like that."

Texas Baptists who work with teens point to a number of causes for the increase in drug use: lack of moral instruction, popular culture, poor self-image and peer pressure.

Some people are trying to make a difference. For 25 years, Glenda Bailey tried "every kind of drug you can think of." After a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ, she not only quit using drugs, but also devoted her life to giving young people the self-esteem and moral foundation to resist the lure of drugs.

"When I came to Jesus, he cleaned me up and gave me a new name. I was born Glenda Sue. He changed my name to 'Miz Bailey.' He gave me respect," she said.

"Miz Bailey" serves as president of residents at Turner Court Development, a low-income housing project in south Dallas, and she works as an administrative assistant at Drug Prevention Resources, Inc., an agency supported in part by Texas Baptists.

The mother of four and grandmother of 13 children helps Drug Prevention Resources and the Dallas Housing Authority establish resident student councils in low-income housing projects.

"I want to let the children know that they are somebody. I want to let the youth know that they have a voice, and any dream they have can be fulfilled. I want to let them know they are loved, because it takes a whole community to raise one child. And I want them to get to know Jesus, because there's nothing they're going to accomplish without him," she said.

But drug use is not limited to youth from low-income housing.

Sandi Black, an adolescent crisis counselor who works with two schools in Arlington and with a private Christian counseling agency in Bedford, Texas, sees plenty of drug use among teens from upper-income homes.

"These are highly programmed, very busy kids who are involved in all kinds of activities. Some are under a lot of stress. Many are from single-parent homes," said Black, a member of Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth.

Many parents who were products of the 1960s and who experimented with drugs themselves need help in parenting, said Black, whose husband, Wesley, is associate professor of youth education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

Two "Parenting by Grace" discipleship courses -- "Christian Self-Esteem" and "Discipline and Spiritual Growth" -- are available through the Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry department.

Other resources available through the Sunday School Board include the "24-Hour Counselor" tape series and "Trauma Center PLUS," a youth discipleship equipping center. "Ministry to Youth in Crisis" by Richard Ross is a Convention Press book recommended for youth ministers and volunteer youth workers. For more information on ordering these materials, call 1-800-458-2772.

About 800 churches, associations and school systems in at least 40 states and three foreign countries have found help in combatting drugs through "On Trac," a drug education curriculum for junior and senior high school youth developed by the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"On Trac" provides information about drugs and alcohol and a biblical perspective on substance abuse, teaches decision-making and coping skills, and helps to build self-esteem and interpersonal relationships.

Program materials include a videotape, teacher's guide, audio-visual aids, an instructional board game and fact sheets. Information about the program is available from the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, TX 75246-1798; (214) 828-5187.

Another resource available from the Texas Christian Life Commission is "Drugs and Drinking," a four-week Bible study for junior high and middle school students developed by Group Books in Loveland, Colorado.

Apart from involvement in programs such as "On Trac," Black suggests churches could respond to the problem of youth and drugs by providing a more welcome environment to teens who have struggled with substance abuse, offering them adult role models who have conquered drugs or alcohol dependencies and opening up opportunities to discuss "real life, everyday issues" in Sunday school.

"Maybe what we're discussing in Sunday school aren't the real problems they are facing every day," Black said. "We need to meet their real needs. As churches, we need to be helping the hurting. After all, that's what Christ did."

--30--

Churches can do what gangs do:
Offer youth a sense of family

By Mike Gonzales

Baptist Press
8/26/94

DALLAS (BP)--The presence of gang activity in our neighborhoods today is a real thing. More and more, gang activity hurts and mars our neighborhoods and makes us feel unsafe. Drive-by shootings, robberies and break-ins are commonplace and occupy a large amount of space in all the media. Innocent people are affected and many lose loved ones just because they happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Why do young people join gangs?

Possibly one of the main reasons is that gangs today appear to fill the gaps that our families have left open due to the changing values and traditions of our times. Young people today find acceptance and importance as a member of a gang.

Broken and dysfunctional homes often help breed gangs. Ex-gang members admit joining a gang has made them feel wanted and respected. They enjoy the power and feeling of control over others. In return, the teen renders complete loyalty and all allegiance to his new family.

Soon a gun becomes a symbol of power, and killing people becomes a way of life for many. On a well-known talk show recently, gang members were interviewed and asked if they had killed anyone. A 16-year-old girl admitted to killing about 30 people and never once batted an eye even though she was on national television.

The first level is the fantasy level. Teens may learn about gangs through TV, movies and newspapers. They are attracted to the gang lifestyle and admire their members. They may know some gang members but do not associate regularly with them.

The second level is called the risk level. At this level the young person may live in an area where gangs are prevalent. He may have casual contact with them and may even decide to take on some characteristics of the gang. He may want to copy the dress or speak their language. School absences and truancy become frequent while anti-social behavior is displayed in school. Low levels of self-esteem and high levels of self-contempt become evident.

The third level is called the wanna-be associate. By this time the young person has had contact with law enforcement agencies and may even have a record with them. Now they personally know and admire gang members and accept their lifestyle. They begin to see the gang as a source of power, money and prestige.

The fourth level is called the gang member in training. He or she is now officially a member who has been duly initiated and may own a gun and use it upon the consent of the gang. The use of intimidation becomes a source of pride, power and ego enhancement.

The fifth level is called the hard-core gang member. The young person is totally committed to the gang and the gang lifestyle. He or she totally rejects anyone or any other value system. By this time the person is usually a convicted felon. They do not accept any authority other than the gang.

Our churches today can provide a way out for a person who wants to break away from the gang. The church is the body of Christ here on this earth, and it is a true picture of the family. We must project this model for the gang member.

--mor --

Once I talked with a gang member who had become a Christian and began coming to our church. I asked him how he felt about our congregation. Unfortunately his answer was not surprising. He said he felt little acceptance and very few church members made it a point to make him feel welcomed. His dress and appearance kept many people away.

If we talk about love in our churches, we must start there and practice it right within our own four walls. Christ came to this world to save that which is lost. There is nothing impossible for Christ; he can save gang members. But as the transformation takes place in the life of that gang member, we must understand that discipling that person is part of the process and that takes time and much patience.

If a gang member comes to know the Lord in your church, please be sensitive to that person and stay close to them. Remember they need a lot of love and attention. They need to feel part of the family of God.

--30--

Gonzales is an associate in the evangelism division of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Fear often stops parents
from drug-proofing kids

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
8/26/94

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Fear, guilt, denial and ignorance often prevent parents from talking frankly with their children about drugs and alcohol, a home missionary said during a home missions conference.

Parents and the church often avoid such sensitive subjects fearing it will encourage teen-agers to experiment, said Tobey Pitman, director of the Brantley Missions Center in New Orleans.

"The church, which recognizes the problem and probably has more of an opportunity to do anything about the problem, has done the least," Pitman said during the conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

"Many churches have the attitude that if they talk about drug abuse or teenage pregnancy it'll tempt young people," he said.

"The thing we don't realize is they are already involved in it," he said. "Studies show there's really very little difference in the use of drugs between church kids and non-church kids," he said.

Pitman cited a 1987 Gallup survey showing more church youth (47 percent) had tried marijuana than unchurched youth (38 percent). The survey also found 11 percent of church youth had tried cocaine, compared to 14 percent of unchurched youth.

"We've always had this idea that being a church member somehow protects us from the problems of the world, and that's not true at all."

Pitman outlined why parents are often unwilling to "drug-proof" their children or address drug use in the family:

-- Fear. "Out of fear of losing our children, we'll tend to negotiate or bargain with them about their drug use, but we end up losing them anyway," he said.

-- Ignorance. "People simply do not believe that drugs and alcohol are a real problem to their children," he said. "They have not personalized that threat."

-- Denial. Parents in denial often delay action or avoid the pain of addressing drug use. "We see the symptoms, but deny the seriousness of it."

-- Guilt. "Parents tend to blame themselves when there's a problem with their children," he said. Guilt results in parents encouraging a child to do better instead of taking actions to immediately stop the activity.

Likewise, churches often fail to see drug and alcohol use as a serious problem in their congregations and do not address it properly, Pitman added.

--more--

He cited the same Gallup poll, which found 92 percent of pastors said drug abuse is a major problem in their community, but only 13 percent of those pastors said drug abuse was a problem among the youth in their congregation.

"The typical approach is there's one Sunday a year that we give attention to alcohol," he said. "Too often that's all they ever get. It's preaching, and that doesn't allow any interaction."

Such an attitude leaves churches ill-prepared to help a young person who develops a drug problem, Pitman said. "They never feel the freedom to come back to the church because the church has said, 'We warned you about that and told you to leave it alone.'"

Pitman recommended churches offer quarterly drug education with opportunities for dialogue, not just lectures.

"Young people can make good choices if they're allowed to process the information, ask questions and allowed to make the decisions rather than being told what they will do and won't do."

--30--

Change can be accomplished,
SBC church leaders told

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
8/26/94

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Change requires vision, abilities, motivation, resources and strategy, a national consultant told participants in Small Sunday School Leadership Conference, Aug. 22-26, at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

Jerri Herring, a consultant in the Baptist Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division, said any one missing element results in something other than change.

Without vision, the result is confusion; without abilities, the church will get anxiety; without motivation, the result is gradual change; without resources, frustration results; and without strategy, only false starts are achieved.

If a change did not work for a church in the past, she observed, all of the necessary elements may not have been present on the first attempt.

"The more you do of what you've done, the more you get of what you've got," is a philosophy Herring said she likes to relate to the subject of change.

In planning to present an opportunity for change to the church, she suggested leaders ask themselves:

-- How can I lead the change and the reaction to it so I can minimize the pain for people and the organization?

-- What happens if we don't do this? Is it essential to the growth and ongoing renewal of this organization or will it just be frustrating?

-- Are today's leaders and workers the right ones for tomorrow? How can I ensure I have the right people enlisted for the future?

-- How can I help the church learn to manage its ongoing changes so that the turmoil subsides?

Herring said phases that lead the church through acceptance to change include seeing the need, letting go of the past, wandering (seeking a vision or strategy), wondering (communicating with each other) and starting fresh.

Change agents need to build trust and relationships; ask "heart" questions, such as "What would you really like to see happen?"; define the issue; affirm tradition; build on strengths; and concentrate on one-at-a-time efforts, she said.

Other aids to effecting change are to identify the legitimizers -- those who are the people others look at before the vote is taken. Also, identify potential support groups, identify opponents early, give people time and avoid surprises.

Herring said leaders need to distinguish between permission and approval, knowing when the church supports a proposal and when a vote has provided only permission for the person bringing the proposal to try to make the change work.

She recommended employing repetitive communication, declaring "you cannot NOT communicate."

--more--

"Begin with winners," she suggested, "citing change that is most urgent, essential for implementation, of long-term strategy and most likely the easiest to implement."

Use temporary systems, when necessary, she urged. "Not everything has to be ongoing forever and ever."

Affirm stability zones, she added.

"Do not accept defeat as final. Failure is not fatal. When necessary, change the players," she suggested, reminding conference participants "it works both ways. If the church and the leadership want change, and the staff is not willing, the staff may be the players that are changed."

Small Sunday School Leadership Conference was sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division.

--30--

Allowing fear to prevent witnessing
is misplaced faith, consultant says

Baptist Press
8/26/94

By Charles Willis

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Allowing fears of Christian witnessing to prevent people from following Christ's command is misplaced faith, a national consultant told church leaders at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

Speaking to participants in Small Sunday School Leadership Conference Aug. 22-26, Keith Lowry said church leaders "need to help people place their faith in the Word of God, and help them to do what the Word of God says to do."

Lowry, a consultant in the Baptist Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division, said, "Believers are to be about the task of sharing what they have in Jesus Christ. If we have faith in God's Word, we will act on it."

Among the barriers or excuses cited in conferences Lowry has led are:

- "I won't know what to say."
- "I'm tied down with children at home."
- "Witnessing is not my spiritual gift."
- "It's the pastor's job."
- "I don't know enough Scripture."
- "I don't have enough time."
- "I can't drive at night."

Lowry said he believes some Christians fail to understand commitment to Christ calls for involvement in witnessing, citing numerous Bible passages that hold believers accountable for individual witness. And evangelism is a task, he said, not a spiritual gift.

Fear of rejection can be overcome with experience and self-confidence, he said, and a marked New Testament can provide inexperienced people with the resources to lead others to Christ.

While witnessing is one of the responsibilities of the pastor and other church staff members, Lowry said, "the Bible says all of us ought to be about it."

He said pastors should never go witnessing alone, but should take someone else along to show them how to witness.

Some people fear a verbal witness indicates a spiritual boastfulness, he said, agreeing Christians "don't have a thing to boast about themselves, but they can boast in Christ. It doesn't matter who I was, but I can boast about whose I am."

Likewise, he said some fear their personal lifestyle disqualifies them for witnessing.

"I'm not perfect, but Jesus is," he reminded conference participants.

Lowry said he believes people talk about what brings them joy, and people who witness can generate excitement by example.

--mor --

He recommends encouraging others to witness by testimonies and recognitions of those who do participate in outreach and evangelism; providing good training for people through print materials and by pairing new people with experienced ones; providing a nursery, a meal or a variety of visitation times to meet the life needs of members; and to having a variety of activities to help people progress from phone calls, cards and letters, visits to absentees, visits to prospects, ministry visits and door-stop visits.

Not everyone visited is hungry for the gospel, Lowry said.

"Switch gears to build a relationship with the person. Learn about them and look forward to the day that person is hungry.

"If our motivation is right, and if we will discover the barriers to our witnessing and remove them, we'll reach people for Christ," he maintained.

Small Sunday School Leadership Conference was sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division.

--30--

A resource list of 25 ways to discover prospects is posted in the SBCNet News Room under the filename 25.txt.

Reclaiming chronic absentees
takes evaluation, effort, skill By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
8/26/94

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Reclaiming chronic absentees from Sunday school requires evaluation of the probable causes and a conscious effort to reclaim those people, a conference leader told participants in Small Sunday School Leadership Conference, Aug. 22-26.

Ed Hinkson, associate director of adult work for the Arkansas Baptist Convention, said while it is easiest to get people to visit a Sunday school class for the first time, subsequent participation may be more of a challenge "depending on what happens during that first visit."

And for those who have been members and who become chronic absentees, the reasons for failure to return may be more significant. Among possible causes of chronic absenteeism he cited are poor Bible teaching, lack of organization, little or no fellowship, failure to meet ministry needs, physical environment, conflict within the church or class, unrealistic expectations, lack of assimilation and involvement or lack of spiritual growth.

Hinkson said he believes poor Bible teaching may be one of the leading reasons persons quit participating in a class, admitting that "we enlist our trouble."

He encouraged appropriate training opportunities for all leaders and an organization of care group leaders who check on absentees promptly rather than waiting until the person has been away "for six years."

Hinkson also encourages monthly fellowship events for classes or departments to provide an opportunity to develop personal sharing and intimacy.

When chronic absentees are contacted, Hinkson recommended "accepting total responsibility for people who are absent. We should never put the person down," he continued, "and we shouldn't put persons on the defensive by beginning with we've been missing you at the church."

Providing training during church-wide outreach events can prevent mistakes in visiting chronic absentees and provide those who are visiting with the confidence to do a good job, Hinkson said.

Be positive, bring a (Sunday school) quarterly, talk enthusiastically about what is going on in the class and ask what the class can do to get the person back, he recommended. When appropriate, try to straighten misunderstandings or gain insights that may help others meet needs.

And Hinkson offered his personal philosophy that when dealing with people churches want to reclaim, "Attitudes are more important than fact."

Small Sunday School Leadership Conference was sponsored by the Bible teaching-reaching division of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

--30--

N.J. pastor helps Ga. woman get
papers needed to go to Ukraine By Randal K. Cowling

TOMS RIVER, N.J. (BP)--Before Alexis Karpinecz were missions opportunities in the Ukraine in the former Soviet Union.

Blocking her way in Ocean County, N.J., her birthplace, however, was a holdup in getting paperwork to clear the way.

Her pastor, Randy Darnell, of New Providence Baptist Church in Smarr, Ga., decided to try for help from fellow Southern Baptists in Ocean County.

He first called the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey office and was referred to Robert Tallent, director of missions for the South Jersey Baptist Association.

"He very graciously directed us to Scott Minnich of Ocean County Fellowship," Darnell said. "Through his special efforts, we received the paperwork needed just before the deadline.

"Without the cooperation of the state convention office, Rev. Tallent and Rev. Minnich, this dream of serving God in the Ukraine could not have been realized," he said.

Minnich, pastor of Ocean Community Fellowship, had worked in state government before entering the ministry as a legislative assistant for a Pennsylvania state senator from Reading.

Being familiar with the web of state bureaucracy, he called his state assemblyman for assistance. After several telephone calls, he was able to set up a conference call between himself, Darnell and the New Jersey Bureau of Vital Statistics.

Through this network of north and south, Karpinecz was able to receive her documentation in time to make the trip to the Ukraine.

"A lady needed her birth certificate in two weeks. She had tried unsuccessfully for several months to get it," Minnich recounted. "I just tried to help like I would any of my own church members."

--30--

Chaplaincy?
No problem!

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
8/26/94

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--As a law enforcement chaplain, Lowell Lawson regularly encounters rejection and suspicion. So when he's met with open arms, he's quick to give God the credit.

"It's kind of exciting when you get to a place and find God already there," said Lawson, former Detroit City Police chaplain who recently joined the Home Mission Board staff as director of law enforcement chaplaincy.

Lawson said when he moved to the Atlanta area he wanted to continue as a volunteer chaplain for a local agency. He had been rejected by a county sheriff's department when he called the Canton Police Department's chief to offer his services.

"He said these three words that I will never forget, 'This is amazing,'" Lawson said. The chief explained that he and his assistants recently had discussed the need for a police chaplain.

"For one of the very few times in my life, I was speechless," Lawson said. "You don't usually get that kind of receptiveness. Usually you get a lot of hesitancy and a lot of suspicion."

Law enforcement officers often think ministers are too naive, he explained.

"They assume that the minister doesn't understand what's going on in the world," he said. "When I was in Detroit, it took six months before one officer would begin to introduce himself."

Lawson also has experience with chaplaincy in such creative settings as United Auto Workers at car production plants. "Wherever two or more people are gathered together, there ought to be a chaplain."

--30--

**Former Truett-McConnell
President Fulbright dies**

CARROLLTON, Ga. (BP)--H.M. Fulbright, president emeritus of Truett-McConnell College, died Aug. 25 at St. Joseph Hospital in Atlanta following complications following heart surgery. He was 71.

He led the Baptist-affiliated college in Cleveland, Ga., from 1986 until his 1992 retirement.

A native of Stephens County, Ga., Fulbright was recognized throughout the state for his leadership in public education. Following years as teacher and principal in Georgia schools, he became superintendent for the Carrollton City Schools, a position which he served from 1966-81, when he was elected executive director of the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders. He served in that full-time position until August 1986 when he was elected president of Truett-McConnell.

According to TMC President T. Clark Bryan, who succeeded Fulbright, "It was under H.M. Fulbright's leadership that the college experienced increased student enrollment, following a period of decline. Under his leadership the college also saw rapid growth and development of the off-campus program," Bryan said.

Fulbright is survived by his wife, Norma Cowart Fulbright of Carrollton, Ga.; children Norlydia Fulbright-Smith and Max Fulbright; and four grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements will be announced by Almond Funeral Home of Carrollton.

--30--

**See You At The Pole
set for Sept. 21**

**Baptist Press
8/26/94**

ATLANTA (BP)--Sept. 21 is the nationwide date for the See You at the Pole youth prayer emphasis this year.

The rally had been held on the second Wednesday after Labor Day, but it has been moved to the third Wednesday in September, said Dean Finley, youth specialist in the evangelism section of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Begun in Texas four years ago, See You at the Pole has become a national event. Last year, more than a million students participated, Finley said.

Students gather at their school flag pole before school to pray for fellow students, teachers and other youth concerns. The event is supported by a number of organizations and denominations.

See You at the Pole has generated other ministries, such as school clubs that encourage Christians to witness and weekly or monthly prayer meetings, Finley said.

For more information on See You at the Pole, contact Finley at (417) 862-1111.

--30--

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, TN 37234

F
I
R
S
T

C
L
A
S
S

Southern Baptist Library
and Archives