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-- 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) 742-8919
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

September 23, 1994

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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Trustees alter Miss. College
ties to state convention

Baptist Press
9/23/94

CLINTON, Miss. (BP)--Mississippi College's board of trustees amended the college charter Sept. 22 to alter the selection of trustees for the 168-year-old Baptist-related institution.

Trustee spokesmen likened the action to moves by other Baptist universities like Baylor in Texas and Furman in South Carolina and most recently Samford in Alabama making trustee selection a board responsibility.

Prior to the charter change, the 15 members of the Mississippi College's board of trustees were selected by the Mississippi Baptist Convention at its annual meeting each fall.

Under the charter change, effective immediately, the board will have 24 members, all of whom must be Baptists, with six of them being named by the Mississippi Baptist Convention. Terms will be staggered by appointments to three-year terms.

A meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board executive committee was called for Sept. 23 after the trustees' announcement. At press time, no reactions had been issued to the media by either Bill Causey, convention executive director-treasurer, or Rex Yancey, convention president and pastor of First Baptist Church, Pascagoula.

Board chairman Harry Vickery of Greenville, Miss., acknowledged in a prepared statement the trustee vote "was not unanimous," but contended denominational politics weighed as the primary factor in the trustee takeover of the trustee selection process.

"For several years, we as trustees have felt the uneasiness among Baptist institutions and Baptist churches that unfortunately are affected by denominational politics," Vickery said.

"Our charter did not protect the institution sufficiently from outside influences. The trustees felt that it was our responsibility to provide the necessary insulation for Mississippi College from the potential actions of various factions that could compromise our ability to serve all Baptists."

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Vickery described the legal side of the trustee action by saying, "Mississippi College was organized in 1826 as a self-contained, legal, non-profit corporation. Consistent with Mississippi law applicable to nonprofit corporations, the board of trustees exercised its power to change the charter of the corporation to modify the selection process for the board of trustees."

College President Howell Todd was not appraised of any trustee selection discussions prior to his hiring March 15, Vickery acknowledged in his statement.

"He was informed of the board's interest only in recent days, when we asked him not to take a position," Vickery stated. "We did not want anyone on any side to be critical of him, since this decision was not his and he had no part in it. He indicated he would abide by and support whatever action the board approved."

Among other reasons Vickery cited for the trustee takeover of their selection process were financial pressures and an interest in expanding its influence in adjacent states.

Fund-raising is crucial to any college, Vickery said, and the trustee board must have "the leading Baptist business people ... to leverage the much needed support for the College.

"Our support from the Mississippi Baptist Convention has been steadily dwindling as a percentage of our general budget," Vickery continued, "and this has required our aggressive pursuit of outside finding to keep the cost to the Mississippi Baptist student reasonable."

Vickery devoted several paragraphs to his contention that the action "was taken to ensure that Mississippi College can remain true to its Baptist heritage and tradition of serving all Mississippi Baptists and their churches by distancing the college from denominational politics."

He also asserted, "We hope that no one will interpret that action as distancing us from the Mississippi Baptist Convention -- nothing could be further from the truth. ... We are no less Baptist by this action, and no less committed to Baptist churches and their pastors. Anyone observing campus activities, or classroom sessions, will see no difference in operations or policies, because there will be no difference."

And: "The lay members of Mississippi College's board have not engaged in any of the denominational politics in the national or state convention. We do not consider that our role as trustees."

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Compiled by Art Toalston

EEOC pulls harassment guidelines,
ends struggle over religion for now

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
9/23/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has withdrawn proposed guidelines on workplace harassment in response to congressional orders and widespread public protest of their potential impact on religious expression.

When the commissioners recently voted 3-0 to pull the guidelines, it ended for the time being a controversial battle which began with their proposal in October 1993. When concerns were raised about their effect on religious freedom on the job, the EEOC received more than 100,000 comments in four months' time, the largest volume in the agency's history.

In August, Congress passed legislation directing the EEOC to remove religion as a category from the guidelines. The commission's response was to withdraw the entire guidelines.

The public protest and overwhelming Senate opposition "helped the EEOC to decide that these one-size-fits-all harassment guidelines were not a very good idea -- at least not right now, just before election time," said Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

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"But there's always next year. The EEOC will be back, no doubt, with new proposed guidelines. Our view is that Title VII (of the 1964 Civil Rights Act) already protects employees from religious discrimination in the workplace, and we would rather not invite the EEOC to numerate what religious speech is acceptable or unacceptable to Caesar. Religious liberty watchdogs must keep barking that we won't accept Caesar's muzzle in the workplace."

Sen. Howell Heflin, D.-Ala., who led congressional opposition to religion's inclusion in the rules, also welcomed the EEOC decision.

"The EEOC's move indicates that, once and for all, these guidelines will 'rest in peace,'" Heflin said in a prepared statement. "I credit the American people for seeing the importance of this issue and responding with a record-breaking number of comments to the EEOC."

The commissioners did not give a reason for pulling the entire guidelines instead of removing religion, an EEOC spokesperson said after the Sept. 19 action.

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

The Christian Life Commission and other organizations 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 covered race, color, gender, national origin, age and disability, could have resulted 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.

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 then-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.

In an 88-12 vote in mid-August, 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.

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.

The H flin-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.

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Justice Department half right
in tithing case, Whitehead says By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
9/23/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Clinton is to be commended for ordering the Department of Justice to abandon arguments in favor of a church returning tithes given by a couple before they filed for bankruptcy, but the action falls short of what the federal government should do to protect religious liberty, a Southern Baptist church-state specialist said.

The Department of Justice announced it was withdrawing its brief at the request of the president, who "concluded that it adopted a narrower view of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act than his understanding of the meaning of the new statute."

Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, said, "The president has our praise and gratitude for calling off Janet Reno's assault against RFRA. This proves that the president does not want RFRA to become a dead letter at the hands of his own Justice Department.

"However, we had asked the president to go further," Whitehead said of Clinton's Sept. 15 announcement. "Rather than just withdrawing from the case, Justice should have stayed in the case and supported RFRA.

"The Department of Justice is no longer fighting against RFRA, but it doesn't deserve the Medal of Honor just for being AWOL at the battle for religious freedom," he said. "RFRA is under attack, and we hope the White House will actively engage the effort to rescue and revive RFRA."

In the case before the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, a federal bankruptcy judge in Minnesota had ordered a church in Minnesota to return \$13,450 in tithes given by a couple in 1991, the year before they filed for bankruptcy. The Crystal Evangelical Free Church was required to surrender the tithes, the judge said, because the couple, Bruce and Nancy Young, had not received an equivalent value for the contributions. The Youngs could have spent money on alcohol, gambling or prostitution without it being considered fraudulent. A federal judge upheld the decision.

Earlier this year, the Department of Justice filed a brief supporting the action, arguing it violated neither the First Amendment nor RFRA.

In May, the Christian Life Commission joined six other organizations in a friend-of-the-court brief opposing the government's arguments. Others on the brief were the Christian Legal Society, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, National Association of Evangelicals and Traditional Values Coalition.

Clinton signed RFRA into law in November 1993. RFRA, which was enacted in response to a 1990 Supreme Court ruling, restores the compelling interest test in cases involving free exercise of religion. The test requires the government to prove it has a compelling interest before restricting religious freedom.

Oral arguments were heard by the court of appeals Sept. 15, the same day the Department of Justice withdrew from the case.

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**NOBTS trustees accept Ga. site;
respond to motions from SBC**

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary trustees voted to accept the gift of an entire church complex in Decatur, Ga., Sept. 13 to house its north Georgia theological program.

Seminary administrators told trustees that declining membership at Columbia Drive Baptist Church had made maintenance of the church's sizable property difficult and the congregation was willing to donate the property with the understanding they be allowed to continue worshipping there.

The seminary's north Georgia center has been meeting at Roswell Street Church in Roswell since 1978, seminary President Landrum Leavell said.

School officials said the Columbia Drive property is debt-free, with estimated annual upkeep costs to the seminary of \$75,000-\$100,000.

In other business, trustees addressed a motion referred from the June 1994 Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando calling upon the convention's seminaries not to use Cooperative Program (CP) funds to educate students whose churches do not contribute through the Southern Baptist funding channel.

Trustee chairman Ed Johnson of Florida reported the seminary already was in compliance, and trustees affirmed the motion as seminary policy.

Trustees also acted on a recommendation from the SBC Executive Committee concerning accepting funds contributed to SBC agencies through the Baptist moderates' Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Johnson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Ocala, Fla., drafted a statement of compliance and stated, "We have ceased accepting funds from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship."

Trustees also elected Robert L. Hamblin as professor of evangelism and named Hamblin to the new Max and Bonnie Thornhill Chair of Evangelism, the seminary's second fully funded chair of evangelism.

Darryl K. Ferrington was named assistant professor of music education, while Claude L. Howe Jr. was appointed professor emeritus of church history.

Hamblin, 66, had 25 years of pastoral experience before he started teaching. He was an associate professor of evangelism at New Orleans Seminary from 1980-82, when he resigned to become the vice president for evangelism at the SBC Home Mission Board in Atlanta, where he worked until 1988. After serving a year as guest professor of evangelism at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., he became the director and evangelist for the L.D. Hancock Foundation based in Tupelo, Miss.

Born in Hamilton, Ohio, Hamblin received the bachelor of arts degree from Union University in Jackson, Tenn., in 1950 and finished three post-graduate degrees at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas: the bachelor of divinity in 1954, the doctor of theology in 1959 and the doctor of philosophy in 1979. He and his wife, Mary Ruth, have three grown daughters.

Ferrington, 40, a native of Ruston, La., has been music coordinator and has taught music classes at Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College, Moore, Okla., since 1991. He has served as a bivocational or interim music minister at Southern Baptist churches in Oklahoma, Louisiana and Texas for 16 years. He was a missionary journeyman with the SBC Foreign Mission Board in Oi Baptist Church, Tokyo, Japan, 1975-77.

Proficient as a choir director and stringed instrument instructor, Ferrington received the bachelor of music education degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1975 and the master of arts degree in music education from Louisiana Tech University in 1988. He will be finishing a doctor of philosophy degree in music education at the University of Oklahoma by the end of the year. He and his wife, Mary Catherine, have three teen-age children.

Howe, originally from Senatobia, Miss., retired at the end of July; he taught church history at New Orleans Seminary from 1959 to 1994.

Trustees set March 14-16, 1995, as the dates for their regular annual meeting and Sept. 12-13, 1995, as their next semiannual meeting.

**SBC president's roots run deep
in rich soil of Mississippi Delta**

By William H. Perkins Jr.

SLEDGE, Miss. (BP)--For Jim Henry, the road to the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention includes a stopover in Hollywood -- church, that is, in Mississippi, not California.

Henry, elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention at the denomination's annual meeting this past June, is currently pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., one of the largest, fastest-growing churches in the convention and an annual leader in giving to the Cooperative Program.

Many Baptists are unaware, however, that Henry's first pastorate fresh out of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary was tiny Hollywood Baptist Church, carved from the rich Delta soil of the Jenkins' farm field about seven miles northwest of Sledge in Quitman County.

Henry began his ministry there in June 1963 and departed for the pastorate of Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn., in February 1965.

"Some of my greatest spiritual experiences occurred in Mississippi," Henry recounted. "The people there loved us and adopted us."

The rural, agrarian setting was quite a change for Henry, who grew up in Nashville.

"For a city boy, I was wondering, 'What am I doing here?' It was a whole new world, but we (Henry and wife, Jeanette) fell in love with it," he said.

"We knew he was going places. There was a special glow about him," said Shelia Pollan of Longtown, a lifetime member of Hollywood church.

Henry baptized Pollan, her father and her sister. It was a special day when the church called Henry as their pastor, Pollan said.

"The deacons took a farm truck down to the seminary and loaded up their things. They drove all the way back up here with their possessions on the back of that truck," she recalled.

Henry remembers moving day, too.

"They said they would move us, so we were waiting at the seminary and this bean truck pulled up. They told us not to worry because they had a tarp if it started raining. We didn't have a whole lot, but we didn't want it ruined in the rain.

"Well, it started raining several times that day, but it always seemed to stop before we got up to it," he said.

It didn't take long after Henry's arrival for the church to quadruple in membership to around 200 people, Pollan said. The church was bursting at the seams.

"They had Sunday school in their living room. That's the type of people they are; they mixed with the highest and the poorest and ministered to everybody," Pollan pointed out.

The warm relationship between Hollywood church and the Henrys has endured more than three decades.

Pollan said the Henrys have been back to visit the church, and church members often filled a bus and drove to Nashville to hear him preach at Two Rivers church.

"We were thrilled when he was elected president of the convention. We sent him a letter of congratulation signed by all the congregation," she said.

Henry recalled leaving Hollywood Baptist Church was harder than he could have imagined.

"As we pulled away and crossed those big drainage ditches for the last time, I felt like we were crossing the Jordan River. We cried, because we left family," he said.

Pollan already has a quick answer when asked if Hollywood church would like to see their favorite son return to his ministerial roots in the Mississippi Delta.

"Lord, yes. You know we would!" she said.

Mississippians' influence
undergirded Jim Henry

By William H. Perkins Jr.

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--The new president of the Southern Baptist Convention credits Mississippi Baptists for many pivotal roles in his spiritual development and ministry career.

Jim Henry's first full-time pastorate after graduating from seminary was Quitman County's Hollywood Baptist Church, a fertile training ground for the young minister who would go on to pastor First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla. -- one of the convention's leading churches.

In addition, Henry has maintained close ties for more than 30 years with Julius Thompson, director of church administration/pastoral ministries for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

Thompson served 10 years as the Henry family's pastor at Dalewood Baptist Church in Nashville, beginning in 1961. Henry's mother was Thompson's secretary most of that time.

"Julius is more than a pastor to me; he's my friend. The esteem I have for him and for Caroline (Thompson's wife) cannot be measured," Henry said.

Thompson's mutual affection for Henry was manifested in May of this year, when Henry's father died just a few weeks before Henry was elected president of the convention.

Thompson, still recovering from surgery earlier in the month, made the long trip from Jackson to Nashville to conduct the elder Henry's funeral.

Thompson said he has watched Henry's leadership build over the years.

"He was very active in student life as an undergraduate at Georgetown College in Kentucky. He went on to New Orleans Seminary, where he was elected president of the student body. I observed that everywhere he went, he emerged as a natural leader with strong personal relationships," he pointed out.

Thompson said Henry met Mississippian Chester Swor, a giant in Southern Baptist student life, while a Georgetown student.

"Chester had an overwhelming impact on Jim, and he was a strong influence in shaping Jim's Christian life as a college student. Jim had great admiration and awe for Chester," he said.

Thompson was still pastor at Dalewood when Henry was called from Hollywood church to pastor Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville.

They shared many ministerial duties over the next six years as Henry built the fledgling congregation. Thompson even helped Henry ordain his first deacons at Two Rivers.

Thompson was eventually called to pastor First Baptist Church, Rockville, Md., and Henry went on to First Baptist in Orlando.

Thompson has continued to track Henry's career, and he has high hopes for his tenure as Southern Baptist Convention president.

"Jim Henry is one of the most pious, God-filled persons of our time. Divisions and controversy are not part of his nature; he's a unifier. He will reach across barriers and divisions, and make a strong effort to bring about healing and reconciliation. Jim loves our denomination," he said.

The new leader of Mississippi College is thankful his path crossed Henry's at Two Rivers church in Nashville.

Howell W. Todd, in his first semester as president of the Baptist-related college in Clinton, describes Henry as "singly the most influential pastor I ever had."

Todd, who was working for the Tennessee public university system at the time, was a Two Rivers deacon and frequent racquetball partner of Henry's.

"Jim exemplifies what it means to live a godly life. He genuinely cares for human beings, and he is so approachable. At Two Rivers, there was an excitement that I had not experienced before or, frankly, since then," Todd said.

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"I was afraid to miss a service because I knew I would miss a blessing. I attribute that to Jim's leadership, his dutifully studying the Word, praying for the church and seeking God. In this earthly realm, I have him on a pedestal, and J anette (Henry's wife) is close behind," Howell said.

"Jim uses simple, very forceful preaching that is readily applicable to life in today's environment. People feel so good about him because of the type of individual he is that they perhaps overlook what a terrific preacher he is," Todd said.

Henry, characteristically humble, pointed out it was Todd who had the greater influence.

"Howell had more impact on my life than I had on his. He is a cherished friend, a teacher who is so teachable. Nothing delighted me more than when he went to Mississippi College," Henry said.

Todd is reminded of one of Henry's defining characteristics every morning when he looks in the mirror.

"Jim is very competitive and so am I. We were playing racquetball at the church, and he caught me right between the eyes with his racquet while trying to return a low shot. I have a little scar there. I probably should have had stitches, but we kept on playing. Worst of all, he won -- and I was one of his deacons!" he said.

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Pay attention to discover
spouses' special needs

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
9/23/94

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Want to know how to shower your spouse with tenderness and affection and do it just the way he or she wants it?

Then pay attention to how your spouse shows you love, a couple leading a marriage enrichment workshop said.

"Many of us give tenderness and affection in the way we receive it best," Marilyn Foley told a group of couples attending a Fall Festival of Marriage at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Sept. 16-18.

Foley, a fifth-grade school teacher, and her husband, Mark, an administrator at New Orleans Seminary, taught the seminar, "Tenderness and Affection," at the conference sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

In a class poll, wives said they like it best when their husbands display tenderness with hugs, patience, focused attention, genuine concern, closeness and respect.

Husbands said their wives show affection best when they initiate sexual encounters, when they are thoughtful, considerate and use soft and gentle words and touches.

"Men are more sexual in their orientation. They like to be touched and held," Mark Foley said. "Women receive tenderness and affection in a more romantic sort of way.

"As we look at tenderness and affection, we see it really is different strokes for different folks. It doesn't matter how we intend to show tenderness, it matters how the other person receives it.

"If I'm not showing tenderness to Marilyn in a way that she can receive it, then it's not working," he said.

Words, tones of voice, volume, posture, gestures, eye contact and facial expressions all serve to convey or hinder expressions of tenderness, Mark Foley said.

"Guys, if you want to be tender and be believed, then you need to make eye contact and have an open body posture as well as say the right words," Foley said.

He said facial expressions used in communication count for 55 percent of whether one is believed or not. Tone of voice rates 38 percent and actual words only 7 percent.

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Husbands and wives interested in learning each others' needs when it comes to tenderness and affection should sit down alone, with no children present, make eye-to-eye contact and talk about it, he said.

They should be honest enough with each other to communicate the following:

- You are most tender when you ...
- When you do that, I feel ...
- When I hurt, I appreciate it when you ...
- My prayer for you is ...

"When you have these kind of encounters, you can discover how you are best received by your mate," he said.

The Foleys listed 12 ways spouses can show tenderness and affection to their mates.

1. Say something good about your partner to another person when your partner is present.
2. Answer with positive, loving words, no matter what.
3. Do something kind for your mate.
4. Surprise him or her with a gift or a thoughtful act.
5. Do things you know are important to your loved one.
6. Say thank you and mean it.
7. Be consistently courteous.
8. Thank God for your mate, and be specific.
9. Pray for his or her blessing.
10. Choose to forgive if he or she hurts or offends you. "That's hard sometimes because I confess I enjoy being angry," he said.
11. Avoid proud behavior and never try to get even.
12. Study more ways to bless your partner.

The theme for the 1994 Fall Festival of Marriage conferences is "Husbands and Wives: The Best of Friends." A book with the same title can be purchased at Baptist or Lifeway Book Stores. For more information about the location of other conferences, call (615) 251-2277.

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Hemphill urges compassion
for those without faith

By Susan Simko

Baptist Press
9/23/94

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Christians must have a passion for lost people or they will never tell anyone about Jesus, Ken Hemphill, president, said in chapel Sept. 22 at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He preached from Matthew 9:35-38, recalling a time he heard the same passage preached at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center.

"It hit me the same way it's hitting you. 'I've heard that text before. I've preached on that,'" Hemphill said. "Then I had to ask myself a question. If God's pattern is so plain before us, then why am I doing so poor?"

He realized he had to gaze on a lost world like Jesus did -- with compassion. In biblical times, sheep without a shepherd were doomed to become "bear bait. They were dead," Hemphill said. Likewise, non-Christians are "headed for hell. There is no hope for them without Jesus Christ. They are dead," he said. "That reality begs a response."

Many Southern Baptist churches are missing evangelistic passion, he said. One in six convention churches didn't baptize anyone last year, and according to Home Mission Board statistics, 94 percent of Southern Baptist church members have never shared their faith. Laymen need to watch church leaders who model the Great Commission for them, Hemphill said.

"You will never teach your people to be evangelistic if you as a pastor, as a minister of education, as a counselor and R.E. person or as a music director don't have an evangelistic heart," he said. "If they don't see you doing what you are asking them to do, they'll never do it."

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Witnessing is vital today because people are hungry, Hemphill said.

"I have never seen a day in which people were more open to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ," he said. "The harvest is plentiful. The Word of God settles it."

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Little Southern Baptist Church
on the Lot reaches homeless people By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
9/23/94

DALLAS (BP)--Most Sunday afternoons, John Shelton leads a rather unusual worship service for at least 60 homeless people on a vacant lot near Fair Park in southeast Dallas.

Following several songs and quite a few prayers, Shelton brings a brief, simple gospel message to the ever-changing congregation that makes up the Little Southern Baptist Church on the Lot, an open-air mission of Cliff Temple Baptist Church, Dallas.

The mission grew out of an experience about two and a half years ago when Shelton wanted to teach personal evangelism to several of the high school students in his Sunday school department at First Baptist Church, Bedford, Texas.

One cold winter day, he brought four or five youth to downtown Dallas to share their faith on the city's streets. But few dared to venture out on the ice, so Shelton loaded the teens into his car and began looking for a place where people were gathered.

He soon found a group on a vacant lot not far from Fair Park. Several men were huddled around a barrel of burning trash trying to warm themselves.

"One of them came to meet me, wanting to know what we were doing there. He said we obviously didn't know where we were," Shelton recalled. "I told him, 'We're where God sent us.'"

Shelton and the teen-agers began sharing their faith, and within a half-hour, about 20 homeless men joined hands with the young people as they all prayed together.

That prayer meeting around the barrel birthed the Little Southern Baptist Church on the Lot. Since joining Cliff Temple's staff more than a year ago as catalytic missionary, Shelton has served as pastor of the outdoor church.

Shortly after noon each Sunday, Shelton begins walking the streets and alleys of the neighborhood, distributing oranges from his backpack and inviting people living on the street to a worship service on a vacant lot.

"Most are people who grew up in the community, not transients," Shelton said.

Some have been turned away from their homes because they abuse drugs or alcohol. Some have AIDS. Most are either unemployed or underemployed. And all of them need Jesus, Shelton believes.

"This area has the heaviest concentration of crime, murders and drugs and the lowest income in all of the Metroplex," he said.

But God is changing lives, Shelton insists. In its first two years, 400 people at the Little Southern Baptist Church on the Lot made professions of faith in Jesus Christ.

In addition to serving the homeless population in south Dallas, Shelton also serves as pastor of The Upper Room -- a congregation made up of clients served by Cliff Temple's care center, meeting each Wednesday evening in the church's chapel.

Cliff Temple serves more than 15,000 Oak Cliff residents each year through the care center benevolence ministry, according to Tim Ahlen, minister of missions.

In the near future, Cliff Temple plans to launch a youth outreach center about three blocks from its church facility. The church wants to provide neighborhood youth an alternative to gangs and drugs, Ahlen said.

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Cliff Temple is designated as a Key Church -- a strategic congregation committed to starting new work and supporting multiple congregations.

Through gifts to the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions, Texas Baptists this year will provide up to \$122,000 in training and salary support for ministers of missions in Key Churches.

And the largest single allocation of the Mary Hill Davis Offering is \$1.5 million for new mission/church support. Since 1990, about 700 new congregations -- like the Little Southern Baptist Church on the Lot and the Upper Room -- have received financial supplements through this fund.

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EDITORS' NOTE: In (BP) story titled "Former Miss. College president faces 20-count federal indictment," dated 9/22/94, please update the final paragraph with this substitute:

Nobles was arraigned Sept. 22 before U.S. Magistrate Judge Alfred G. Nicols Jr. A trial date of Nov. 7 was set, and Nobles was released on a \$15,000 personal recognizance bond and ordered to continue seeing a psychiatrist.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

(BP)

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