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BSSB trustees set \$250 million budget;
Draper cites reasons for optimism

Baptist Press
9/28/94

By Charles Willis

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Baptist Sunday School Board trustees approved a 1994-95 budget exceeding \$250 million during their semiannual trustee meeting Sept. 26-27. Terming the budget aggressive but achievable, President James T. Draper Jr. cited his optimism for the agency's future despite financial challenges.

A record 1994-95 budget of \$250,480,000 in total revenue was approved, including \$3,374,000 in funds above operating expenses to reinvest in the board's operations.

Ted Warren, business services group vice president, said while financial data for fiscal 1993-94, which ends Sept. 30, will not be available for several weeks, projections are for a \$3.7 million loss. He said total revenue of \$223,882,000 is anticipated, compared to total expenses of \$227,606,000. The loss has been expected, he said, because of expenditures designed to improve sales over the long term. He said a financial plan is in place for the next three years, with a goal to pay back loans and to operate out of cash flow by the end of 1997.

As part of the 1994-95 budget recommendation, trustees approved a quarterly review of financial operations for each of the board's strategic business units. The review would result in a written report to Draper specifying plans to reduce expenses if a strategic business unit were to be under budget for its contribution to the board.

"Profit is not our objective," Warren said. "Ministry is number one. But we must have funds to pay for ministry."

Draper said despite the financial challenges and "constant change" that have characterized his first three years as the agency's president, he is optimistic about the future.

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Among specific reasons he cited are a solid customer base, a dedicated employe force, progress toward a goal of generating adequate cash flow from operations, cost containment and budgeting at a more realistic level, positive feedback from customers, progress toward a goal of freeing employees to do their jobs and to identify and implement new ideas.

He pointed trustees to examples of materials and services which also represent reasons for optimism, including the response to the "Experiencing God" discipleship course and early response to "The Mind of Christ;" release of a new "Experiencing God" magazine as well as a new Broadman & Holman "Experiencing God Study Bible" and a new B&H trade edition of "Experiencing God."

He also cited improvements in adult and youth Life and Work Sunday school curriculum; awards given a number of Broadman & Holman products in recent months; and a best-seller chart single by Genesis recording artist Amy Roth.

Draper said the board is nearing completion of the process of major organizational and structural changes that have resulted in reductions and changes in personnel. As of Sept. 15, the agency had 1,646 employees, a reduction of 121 or 6.8 percent from Aug. 15, 1991, when 1,767 persons were employed full time. That number will further decrease as recently announced reductions become effective.

"We recognize that organizational fine-tuning will be a continuing fact of life as we seek to meet the changing needs of churches and individuals," Draper observed.

"We have been in a 13-year trend of flat to declining sales of church literature," he said. "That is a major concern. We have invested heavily in the last year in conducting research and making changes to meet the stated desires of users and non-users of our curriculum. The adult and youth Life and Work curriculum for the October-November-December quarter of Sunday school literature was redesigned in response to customer requests and produced in about six months.

"We have invested heavily in other areas as well -- such as a point of purchase computer system for Baptist Book Stores, remodeling and relocating stores, and development of the children's video series 'Secret Adventures.' These and other investments have created stress in the area of cash flow. We are managing our rate of investment and are confident these investments will pay off in the future."

Draper said the board has borrowed money, with trustee approval, for some of those investments.

"We elected to borrow rather than use reserves because we could borrow money at a lower interest rate than our reserve funds were earning," he explained.

Reserve funds stand at \$49.9 million, he reported.

In a related matter, trustees approved an increase in the short-term borrowing limits of the board from the current \$12 million to \$15 million through Sept. 30, 1995. Such loans are made when the board experiences a shortfall in working capital funds due to slow receipt of funds and when a bank line of credit loan provides a more attractive rate than borrowing from the board's reserve fund.

Charles A. Wilson, vice president of the board's trade and retail markets group, said record September sales of more than \$2.5 million are expected for Broadman & Holman and that 15 titles have been released in September. The "Experiencing God Study Bible" and the trade edition of "Experiencing God" have generated sales of more than \$600,000 for the month. The fourth episode of Secret Adventures has generated sales of approximately \$250,000. A total of 60 B&H trade products will be released in 1994-95, he said.

In the retail division, Wilson said relocated and new Baptist Book Stores are generating increased sales volumes. For example, the relocated store in Fort Worth, Texas, has increased its sales volume by 173 percent.

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Trustees approved a recommendation to close four Baptist Book Stores in Vancouver, Wash.; Phoenix, Ariz.; Columbus, Ohio; and the Atlanta-South store in Forest Park, Ga., due to long histories of poor financial performance. The Vancouver, Columbus and Atlanta-South stores will cease operation by Dec. 31, 1994; the Phoenix store will close by April 1, 1995.

Eligible store employees will receive retirement benefits. Others will receive career transition and outplacement assistance along with severance pay based on years of service.

Customers served by the stores will continue to have access to mail order service through the toll-free number, 1-800-233-1123.

Trustees also approved setting prices of church literature for the April-May-June 1995 quarter at an increase of approximately 3 percent above current prices. At the same time, they approved prices for the short transition quarter of July-August 1995 to reflect a decrease of approximately 25 percent below the regular price for session-oriented materials. Monthly and administrative materials will keep the same price per issue.

They approved sale of Nashville property purchased in 1985 as a potential site for a warehouse/distribution center. Subsequent approval in 1987 of a master plan for Nashville properties released the land for disposition.

Trustees heard reports on a variety of subjects, including Glorieta and Ridgecrest conference centers. Mike Arrington, executive director for corporate affairs, said the two national conference centers are expected to finish the 1993-94 budget year in the black.

Trustee Tommy French, pastor of Jefferson Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, La., presented a proposal to reduce the trustee board from its current 93 members to 55 by the year 2000. Each state with 20,000 church members is entitled to one trustee under the current plan and additional trustees are allowed for each additional 250,000 members. French said raising the required number of church members to qualify for a second trustee on the board to 500,000 would reduce the cost for travel for trustee meetings and provide smaller states "more strength in voting."

The plan, which will be considered in the board's meeting in February 1991, would need subsequent approval by the SBC Executive Committee and by messengers to an annual meeting.

Southern Baptist Convention President Jim Henry, an ex-officio member of the board, told trustees most of what he is hearing from Southern Baptists is encouraging.

"What I'm hearing is a great love in Southern Baptist life. Basically, people deep down want to see us make it," said Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla. "Somehow, if we can keep our focus on who we are and what we're about -- sharing Christ and building churches -- I believe our best years are ahead and not behind us."

Henry, a Nashville native who was baptized in First Baptist Church of Nashville, said as a boy "people at the Sunday School Board were my teachers and leaders." While pastor of Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville, Henry served as a trustee of the board.

Trustees and BSSB employees attending the closing session contributed \$712 for Cuban refugee relief after an appeal by Rafael de Armas, a pastor and attorney from Orlando.

De Armas cited needs of refugees in Miami and Guantanamo Bay for a Christian witness as well as material goods such as food, clothing and housing. He said Baptists have set up a ministry, Cuba Para Cristo where contributions may be sent. The address is 2381 W. Flagler St., Miami, FL 33126.

In other matters related to publications, trustees approved:

-- The addition of "Special Education Today," a magazine for church leaders and families of persons with handicaps and disabilities, effective September 1995, and a change in "Special Education Teacher" to "Special Education Teacher Packet."

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-- Specification changes for "Church Administration," "Proclaim," "The Deacon," "Growing Churches," "Sunday School Leader: Larger Church Edition," "Sunday School Leader: Smaller Church Edition," "Special Education Bible Study," "Extended Session for Babies and Ones," "Extended Session for 2's and 3's," "Extended Session for 4's and 5's," "Preschool Bible Teacher A," "Preschool Bible Teacher B" and "Preschool Bible Teacher C."

-- A title change for "La Fe Bautista to Discipulado Cristiano," pending approval of the trademark, and a title change for "connection," the youth leisure reading piece to replace the monthly magazine "Event" and the quarterly "encounter!" to "essential connection," for trademark and name recognition purposes.

-- Deletion of "Special Education Resource Kit," "Baptist Youth" and "Baptist Youth Kit for Leaders."

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Taylor named to lead
SBC Sunday school work

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
9/28/94

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Bill Taylor, executive pastor of North Phoenix Baptist Church in Phoenix, Ariz., is the choice of the administration of the Baptist Sunday School Board to become director of the Bible teaching-reaching division, Gene Mims told trustees Sept. 27 during their semiannual meeting.

Taylor, 55, who has held his present position since January, was minister of education and administration at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas for 11 years, 1982-93. Earlier, he served as minister of education and administration at University Baptist Church, Coral Gables, Fla.; Roswell Street Baptist Church, Marietta, Ga.; and Memorial Baptist Church, Metairie, La.

"We conducted a national search for the best person to fill this key post and came to see through Bill's life, ministry and work that he met all the criteria we needed," Mims, vice president of the church growth group, said. "We are looking to him to become part of a dynamic team we're building in the church growth group to communicate our message that church growth begins with Bible study."

Mims said Taylor will join a "distinguished line" of leaders of Southern Baptist Sunday school work that began with Arthur Flake followed by J.N. Barnette, A.V. Washburn and Harry Piland who retired from the board in June to become associate pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas.

While the position does not require trustee approval, Mims said trustees are given 10 days to give input concerning Taylor's selection.

Taylor, who was 1993-94 president of the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association, also has served as a conference leader and speaker in Sunday school conferences sponsored by the board and numerous state conventions. He also served as a BSSB trustee, 1976-77.

A Texas native, Taylor holds a bachelor's degree from Howard Payne University, Brownwood, and a master's in religious education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

BSSB President James T. Draper Jr. called Taylor the "premier minister of education in America today. He is a man of vision and creativity. He is solidly a biblical conservative who shares the ideals and dreams of our vision and our commitment to serving our convention as we endeavor to reach our world for Christ."

Dan Yeary, pastor of North Phoenix who also worked with Taylor at University Baptist Church in Coral Gables, said he "is a gifted, gracious, enthusiastic encourager. He is the most talented minister of education I have ever known. If Southern Baptists are going to have someone in that position, it belongs to Bill Taylor."

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Taylor called the decision to leave a church staff "the most difficult struggle I've ever had."

However, he added, "I've come to have a sense of rightness about this. I have felt strongly that Southern Baptists have the best Sunday school curriculum and can continue to make it better.

"I have a great commitment to helping Southern Baptists accept the challenge to carry out the entire Great Commission. Training workers and making disciples will be a hallmark of the ministry I hope to bring.

"Harry Piland is my mentor, my friend, one of the most trusted people I've ever known," Taylor said.

Taylor and his wife, Rose, have two sons.

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Baptist relief team to Haiti:
hurry up and wait for go-ahead By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
9/28/94

DAVIE, Fla. (BP)--President Clinton said Sept. 26 he will lift U.S. travel and trade sanctions against Haiti, but that hasn't yet cut the red tape tangling the start of a major Southern Baptist relief project there.

That's the word from Mark Rutledge, Southern Baptist missionary to Haiti, who's been trying for several weeks to get U.S. government permission for Southern Baptist relief planners to travel to Haiti.

The planners will assess human needs in the island nation, paving the way for a relief project sponsored by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va., and the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn.

So far, the Foreign Mission Board has pledged \$386,000 in hunger and relief funds to meet immediate needs. The board also contribute more than \$400,000 for a two-year water well project there, officials said.

The public "thinks this is a great thing," said Rutledge of Clinton's announcement that he will suspend the U.S. embargo. But the missionary is getting a different view from U.S. government officials who call the shots about who and what goes into Haiti.

"They are saying, 'Don't believe it until the executive orders (signed by Clinton) actually go out,'" said Rutledge, who has been staying temporarily in south Florida since leaving Haiti in June. "The real bottom line is that, legally, nothing has been done. It's only been talked about."

Meanwhile, Rutledge spends his days calling officials to try to find the fastest way to get the Southern Baptist team into Haiti.

Until commercial flights to Haiti resume, the U.S. Treasury Department must grant permission for a private plane, passengers and supplies to travel there. Then permission must be granted by the United Nations. Then the request goes back to the Treasury Department, which issues the necessary licenses. The process could take at least four weeks, Rutledge said.

Another option is for team members to travel to Haiti on already scheduled humanitarian aid flights allowed into the country by the U.S. military. Rutledge and other project leaders are trying to find such a flight. Nothing has developed so far.

The team will include Rutledge and his wife, Peggy, from Murfreesboro, Tenn., and Glendale, Calif., respectively; International Service Corps workers Ed and Mary Brentham, from Belton, Texas; and journeyman Todd Lowe, from Belton-Honea Path, S.C. Other members include Foreign Mission Board and Brotherhood officials and some leaders from state Baptist conventions experienced in relief projects.

"The (survey) team have their bags packed and ready to go," said Russell Griffin, assistant vice president at the Brotherhood Commission. "But we're on hold until the (U.S.) government says we can go."

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Once they finally get into Haiti, planners will determine how Southern Baptists volunteers who follow them can best meet needs. The first project likely will be food distribution, lasting about seven weeks. Additional volunteer teams may work in medical care, water well repair, water purification and construction.

The relief projects will involve at least 150 Southern Baptist volunteers enlisted by the Brotherhood Commission.

Qualified Southern Baptists who want to volunteer for these projects should call the Brotherhood Commission at 1-800-280-1891 or (901) 722-3787. Financial contributions for the Haiti project may be sent to the human needs department of the Foreign Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230-0767 or to the Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104.

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Baptists jailed in Saudi Arabia

Baptist Press
9/28/94

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (BP)--Two Baptists and at least one other Christian from the Philippines reportedly remain in prison in Saudi Arabia after being arrested for holding a Christian home meeting.

The three, along with five others, were arrested Aug. 26 for conducting a home Bible study. The Muslim kingdom forbids Christian meetings -- public or private.

All eight Christians are Philippine contract workers. Four or five reportedly were released and are being watched by Saudi Muslim "religious police." But Joel Cunanan, identified as the group's leader, and at least two others remain in detention. Cunanan reportedly is being held for interrogation in solitary confinement.

Cunanan, a member of Magalang Baptist Church in the Mount Pinatubo area of the Philippines, had plans to study for the pastorate on returning to his homeland.

Another Philippine prisoner, held on different charges and released Sept. 19, reported Cunanan had preached boldly in the prison and led other prisoners to faith in Christ.

"I know that Jesus is alive after what I saw take place in that prison," the released prisoner said.

Seeing the effect of Cunanan's preaching, prison officials reportedly transferred him to solitary confinement in mid-September.

Sentencing likely will come during the first week of October. Christians in the Philippines are praying the Saudi Arabian government will reconsider the charges against the Christians.

Religious prisoners in Saudi Arabia -- especially those from developing nations -- have suffered physical and psychological torture, according to Christian Solidarity International and other human rights groups. Saudi Arabian Muslims who convert to Christianity can face death.

Two Philippine Christians arrested in Saudi Arabia in 1992 were sentenced to death by beheading on Christmas Day that year. After a personal appeal for clemency from Philippine President Fidel Ramos, they were released and deported on Christmas Eve.

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Dallas' W.A. Criswell stays busy on his 50th anniversary at FBC By Toby Druin

Baptist Press
9/28/94

DALLAS (BP)--At 85, most Southern Baptist pastors have folded their tents and called it a career. W.A. Criswell will be 85 on Dec. 19, and chances are if you put up a tent anywhere in his vicinity, he would show up to preach in it.

That is one way of saying the venerable senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, is still doing what he does best -- preaching.

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"I thought that when we got another pastor to help me here at the church that I would be at such leisure," he said recently in his 32nd-floor office in the Lincoln Plaza across the street from the church.

"But I am doing more now than I have ever done in my life."

For instance, he noted, he recently has preached in San Diego, in Jackson, Tenn., and in several Dallas-area churches, most of the time on behalf of Criswell College.

"I used to rarely accept any invitations outside the church," said Criswell.

"Now I am going all over creation."

"This is what I call retirement," he said with a laugh. "I never dreamed it would be like this."

Criswell observes his 50th anniversary at First Baptist on Oct. 2 and will preach the Sunday evening message. It will climax a week-long series of events marking the milestone.

It was kicked off Sept. 25 with a box supper and parade featuring '40s-vintage cars, a precious memories time and an appearance by SBC President Jim Henry at the evening service.

The week's activities included a Monday banquet at the Fairmont Hotel honoring Criswell and his wife, Betty, with special guests to include Sen. Phil Gramm; a Thursday evening worship service with guest speaker Charles Swindoll; a Friday evening musical tribute to the Criswells led by former ministers of music and choir members; and a day of prayer and commitment Saturday with baptisms and the Lord's Supper. Sunday, Oct. 2, will be "Happy Anniversary" day for the Criswells and new pastor O.S. Hawkins and his family.

Criswell was 34 years old and the pastor of First Baptist Church, Muskogee, Okla., when he was called to succeed the Baptist legend, George W. Truett, who had been pastor at the Dallas church 47 years.

That was the highlight of his ministerial career, he said.

"Hardly anything could ever happen in the life of a preacher like their choice of me to follow Dr. Truett," he said. "Can you imagine a boy in Muskogee, Okla., being called to follow that great man?"

Criswell is a native of Eldorado, Okla., the son of a cowboy-turned-barber, but was reared in Texline in the northeast tip of the Texas Panhandle. He felt called to preach when he was six, made his public profession of faith at 10 and began to preach when he was 17. He is a graduate of Baylor University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., where he earned a doctor of philosophy degree in 1937.

While at Southern, he was pastor of rural churches and at one of them met and married a young school teacher, Betty Marie Harris, who was the church pianist. The Criswells have a daughter, Mabel Anne.

Criswell's honors are too lengthy to list. He has been president of the Southern Baptist Convention (1969-70), has written 54 books, has spoken in Baptist meetings all over the world and counted several presidents of the United States in his Sunday morning audiences.

But ask him what will be his enduring legacy, what he will be remembered for and he unhesitatingly says the college which bears his name.

He didn't plan it that way, for it to become a college, he said. He began the school as a Bible institute that at one time had more than 1,200 students for weekday classes. Leo Eddleman was brought in to head the school and led it to accreditation as a college. The accrediting agency demanded it be named a college and the men who had backed it demanded it bear the Criswell name, he said.

"They said if we called it 'Criswell' no one would doubt what it stands for," he said. Once housed at the church, the college is now in the former facilities of Gaston Avenue Baptist Church and has an enrollment of more than 300 aspiring young ministers.

Studying has made it possible for him to survive, Criswell said. He has never run out of material.

Throughout his ministerial career Criswell has kept his mornings free of appointments so he could devote the time to study and sermon preparation, and he advises young preachers to do the same.

When he goes to a new church, he said, a young preacher should tell the congregation he will do anything in the afternoon to further the church or attend any kind of meeting or conversation in the evening, but that he will spend the mornings alone with God.

"If you will do that, I say, the following Sunday when you stand up there at the pulpit the people will know where you have been and honor it," he said.

"Prepare that message, study, pray, pore over it and then pour your whole life into it. Love the people; be good to them."

In his early days, he said, his priority list was God first, then the church and family.

"If I had it to do over again I would change it to God, then family and then the church," he said.

He has gained the most pleasure over the years from being able to preach, he said. "Preparing the sermon and delivering it has been the No. 1 happiness of my heart and life. I love trying to bless the people."

He has seen many changes over his career and observed that today's church is "increasingly impotent in secular society."

The decline, he said, is "because the preachers have turned aside from preaching the gospel. Instead of preaching the gospel and calling men to repentance and teaching the infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of God, they are talking about social issues, economic confrontations, political issues, headlines, travelogues, book reviews, God only knows what all.

"They have dismissed their prayer meetings on Wednesday nights and some have dismissed their Sunday night services.

"I think the preacher has just fallen away from the truth of God and has become a pawn in whatever social interest might invest his attention for the day."

Nevertheless, he says he has great hope for the future of his church under the leadership of O.S. Hawkins and for the Southern Baptist Convention.

He is proud of his Southern Baptist ties, he said, denying the oft-repeated rumor that had he to do it over again he would be an independent Baptist. He might have said that "just trying to be sarcastic," he said, "but if you mean by independent that I would not be in the Southern Baptist Convention, that is not true."

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'La Solution' film debut was glitzy,
but real action was behind the scenes

Baptist Press
9/28/94

By Marty Croll

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (BP)--As the simplicity of the gospel confuses the skeptic, so the action of God in everyday life is viewed as a coincidence by those who pass off prayer as superstition -- or use it as a last-ditch effort to preserve something they want to keep.

But for believers, God still responds to those who dare to act as if he will make a difference.

Recent events surrounding the premiere of a French-language evangelistic film in Ivory Coast proved the effectiveness of Southern Baptists' prayers beyond a doubt to firsthand observers.

Those who took note included Ivory Coast Baptists and Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionaries working in the western African nation -- and Randy Sprinkle, director of the board's international prayer strategy office.

Sprinkle put out a call for prayer Aug. 26 for the Sunday, Aug. 28, premiere of the film, "La Solution" (translated "The Solution") via the Foreign Mission Board's toll-free PrayerLine (1-800-395-PRAY).

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Top personalities, government leaders and leading Muslims were invited to the premiere in Ivory Coast's capital, Abidjan.

The premiere was unquestionably a success, but what followed told more of the story for Sprinkle. Late into the night after the film's showing, and again the next morning, people moved by the film were knocking on the doors of Baptist leaders in Abidjan. They were seeking spiritual answers, said media missionary Barbara Whittington, director of "La Solution."

Abidjan is between four and eight hours ahead of U.S. time zones. So just before the scheduled 3 p.m. film premiere preliminaries got under way, Southern Baptists along the east coast were gathering for worship. As the premiere and events following it progressed, other Southern Baptists were waking up and heading to church services.

About 675 Southern Baptists called the PrayerLine during the weekend.

"That prayer request went with them to churches on Sunday for sharing in Sunday schools and prayer groups," said Sprinkle. "People continued to call in to the PrayerLine Sunday evening, and at night services they were still praying."

Meanwhile, people in Ivory Coast affected by "La Solution" seemed "compelled to come for counsel all night long and into the next day," he said.

More than 1,000 people viewed "La Solution" on its debut in the Congress Hall of Abidjan's Hotel Ivoire. "A steady stream of people entered the hall for more than an hour after the doors were opened," said Whittington.

One Muslim businessman told Baptist pastor Santos Faustin the film was "made for him." Although he makes lots of money, the businessman spends so much of it on idol sacrifices each month he can barely feed his family, he said. He decided to trust Jesus Christ that day.

The businessman was one of 20 people who responded to a low-key invitation for those who wanted to make spiritual inquiries.

Whittington provided transportation to and from the premiere for two other Muslims. "Both were highly animated after the film," she said, "and repeated time after time in French: 'It is a very strong message.'"

"Prayer should be a response to God, not just a plea for help in crisis," Sprinkle said. "The prayer of faith is an echo of the revealed will of God A crisis, a need, or even a film premiere is an opportunity to listen to what God's plan is and then pray it into being.

"God always answers the prayer he authors."

Sprinkle is no stranger to the power of prayer. When he and his wife opened the southern African nation of Lesotho to Foreign Mission Board work, he started a prayer network with Missouri Baptists in 1986, using video reports filmed on location.

In 1988 when the couple came to the United States for medical emergencies, that prayer network was in place and working -- serviced by the state's Woman's Missionary Union. In fact, more than 1,000 WMU members were meeting for their annual convention and focusing their prayers on Lesotho as Sprinkle was awaiting back surgery in a Texas hospital.

Doctors still have no medical explanation for the herniated disk that was healed by the time a neurosurgeon prepared to cut open Sprinkle's neck. He never had the surgery.

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Author cites great potential
for laity in 21st century

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
9/28/94

DALLAS (BP)--Churches in the coming century can unleash incredible, transforming power by equipping the laity for ministry in society, according to author and pastor Leith Anderson.

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"The 21st century may be the greatest era for lay ministry since the first century," Anderson, author of "Dying for Change" and "A Church for the 21st Century" told participants at the 1994 Texas Baptist Sunday School/Discipleship Training Convention.

With "A Heart for the Future" as their theme, more than 3,000 people attended the Sept. 22-24 convention at Prestonwood Baptist Church, Dallas.

Building for the future means teaching the laity how to "live Christianly," said Anderson, who has served since 1977 as senior pastor of Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie, Minn., a suburban congregation affiliated with the Baptist General Conference. Wooddale Church has grown from 1,000 to 3,000 members and spawned at least a half-dozen other congregations during his tenure.

Reflecting societal trends toward decentralization and breakdown of hierarchy, Christians entering the 21st century are less interested in key committee positions within the church structure and more excited by the prospect of exercising their spiritual gifts in everyday life, he said.

"Lay people are not particularly looking for jobs at church," Anderson said. "They are looking to live the Christian life outside the church."

Church leaders in the 21st century must be comfortable with complexity, change and conflict, Anderson told pastors and ministers of education during a seminar for church staff and general Sunday school/discipleship officers on "Investing in the N xt Generation of Leaders."

"At the end of the 20th century, nothing has a simple explanation," he said. "Beware of those who offer simple explanations. Prepare leaders to get comfortable with complexity."

Emerging church leaders are those who know how to "maximize the mix" of spiritual gifts within their congregations and who know how to build relationships, he said.

Leaders not only know the core values of their specific churches, but also are able to articulate and apply the values to the church's vision.

"The leader has an overarching vision that brings the other visions together," Anderson said. "Vision sees things the way they will be when they are finished."

In equipping leaders for the future, present-day instructors need to teach by example and give potential leaders a variety of hands-on opportunities for service, he said.

"Leaders never have a shelf life," Anderson said. "Continue to give them experiences."

Baby boomers in particular -- people born between 1946 and 1964 -- respond well to high expectations, calls to excellence and multiple options for service, he noted.

Boomers place a low value on membership, he said, but a high value on participation and responsibility.

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Karate class offers launching point
for pastor's outreach to community

Baptist Press
9/28/94

By Julie Jenkins

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Jim Bethany literally twists arms when he invites people to attend church on Sundays. A first-level black belt in karate, he teaches the ancient art to a class of 38 children and adults at Fairfields Baptist Church, Burgess, Va., where he has been pastor for 10 years.

"This karate class is a natural launching point for teaching Christian principles, in a low-key manner, to those who may not be receptive in a traditional worship service," he says.

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The class is free and open to the public, on the condition each participant brings two signed church bulletins per month. "I want to encourage them to be in worship," Bethany explains, "and that's the reason for the requirement." He says the class has created friendships among people of both Christian and non-Christian backgrounds. "People who were not active in the church at all have become active here as a result of the class.

"In addition to building the self-esteem of students, karate also teaches discipline, respect for others, self-control and the avoidance of conflict. This complements in many ways the teachings of the Bible."

Bethany says the sport "has allowed us to build a bridge to the community" and has encouraged families to do things together. Several father-daughter and mother-son teams attend.

On Friday nights, karate students ranging from age 5 to 45 gather to begin a series of "katas" -- choreographed movements which teach balance and coordination. A kata is an imaginary battle with more than one opponent. The class practices Shorin Ryu, a style of Okinawan Japanese karate.

Karate history traces back to the southern tip of Japan and the island of Okinawa, Bethany recounts, where during ancient times the government outlawed the use of weapons. "The people began to develop means to defend themselves when they couldn't carry swords and spears," says Bethany. The word "karate" actually means "empty hand."

"It seems like a violent thing, but what you see in the movies and on TV is not what karate is all about," Bethany continues. Karate is a defensive strategy meant to "subdue the enemy without fighting." It promotes non-violence and builds self-esteem. Bethany says children with self-confidence learn "you don't have to fight."

The modern master of karate, Funakoshi Gichin, taught the art as a character-building exercise within the Zen Buddhist philosophy. But Bethany approaches karate from a Christian perspective. "My own teacher is a Christian, and he didn't get into any of the Eastern philosophy." Whereas American instructors may flavor their classes with Eastern theology, Bethany says his class focuses strictly on karate techniques.

"At the close of the class we always kneel and bow with our heads to the floor as we pray in the name of Jesus," the pastor notes. Bowing is a traditional Japanese way of showing courtesy to others.

"I appreciate the people of Fairfields Baptist Church for making this innovative ministry possible through their support," Bethany says. He has received no negative feedback from his congregation concerning the course and is pleased that they invite "new ways to reach out to our community in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Since the class started last October, Bethany has seen some of his students become more involved in church. "Men quite often are not as active as women in the church," but by reacquainting these men to the church through the karate class, "we have several men who have become very regular attenders. They are participating in the life of the church more fully than they were before."

Bethany said one man who had rejected Christian fellowship for a long time now is thinking about attending Sunday school in addition to the worship service. The man's family "never thought they would see him sitting in church." Bethany says the karate class allows Christian men to show non-Christian men that having faith in God "doesn't mean you are a sissy."

The class also provides a "creative alternative" for youth whose peers often cruise the roads on Friday nights, with little entertainment available in that rural area.

Karate requires "hard work and discipline, which is part of what we're trying to teach our young people," says Bethany. "It's not about beating people up. It's mainly about training your body and getting into shape."

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Jenkins, a recent graduate of the College of William and Mary, was an intern this summer at the Religious Herald, Virginia Baptists' newsjournal.

ANALYSIS

Film 'Natural Born Killers'
pummels viewer with vileness By Phil Boatwright

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. (BP)--This Movie Reporter column has not been designed to promote movies. But since the entertainment industry is a multi-billion-dollar-a-year business, it cannot be ignored. Even if you do not believe in movie attendance, it is necessary for Christians to be informed. By giving the synopsis and content of each release (plus video alternatives), The Movie Reporter is attempting to aid both moviegoers and those who wish to combat Hollywood's influence over our society.

NATURAL BORN KILLERS. Woody Harrelson, Juliette Lewis. Brutal drama -- R (it didn't miss being NC-17 by much -- horrific amounts of profanity, obscenity, cruelty, perversion, violence, nudity, incest, murder and sexual situations). Oliver Stone's attempt to rightfully berate America's preoccupation with the underbelly of society. Here he castigates the media's glamorization of a serial-killing couple that, as one critic puts it, "makes Bonnie and Clyde look like Ozzie and Harriet." However, Stone beats you over the head with his sermon. His work assaults, pummeling the viewer with vileness, rather than exposing the problem. He doesn't just place the viewer in the middle of the carnage, he makes us a part of it.

Not wishing to get off to a confusing start with the inclusion of this review, let me assure the reader that I will rarely include R-rated material in this column. Occasionally, I will discuss an R-rated film due to its significant influence upon the movie-going public. I am in no way suggesting anyone attend this feature. It rapes the mind and leaves the viewer with lasting negative images.

So why have I acknowledged it? I learned a great lesson with the release of "The Last Temptation of Christ" in 1988. When detractors took a stand against the blasphemy of that film, the so-called "liberal" or "open-minded" supporters asked, "Have you seen it?" That one query was used to rightfully silence those who knew nothing of its content. How can we censure a film if we know nothing of its substance? That is my reason for including this review. With the synopsis and content, you can legitimately discuss the film and give credible arguments as to why we shouldn't patronize such efforts. The first step in fighting any battle is to be informed.

PRINCESS CARABOO. Phoebe Cates, Wendy Hughes, Kevin Kline, Stephen Rea. Fantasy. PG (3 or 4 expletives). A misplaced person in the 1800s is taken in by a British couple who come to believe she is a princess. Charming, witty, delightful. Video Alternative -- the '56 version with Ingrid Bergman.

A SIMPLE TWIST OF FATE. Steve Martin, Gabriel Byrne, Catherine O'Hara. Comedy/drama -- PG-13 (2 or 3 obscenities, drug use -- but it is definitely an anti-drug theme -- brief violence, drinking -- but it shows that alcohol is not the solution to a broken heart). This is not a typical Steve Martin comedy. In rare form, he portrays a bitter, miserly carpenter brought out of his hermit-like existence by an infant girl who toddles into his house -- and heart -- after her mother overdoses in his front yard. Occasionally forced, but replete with perception, humor and pathos. Perhaps a little heavy for young ones, but a true pleasure for those wishing more from a movie than car chases and exploding buildings. Martin, who wrote the script, pays homage to George Eliot's Silas Marner. The most delightful surprise I've had at the movies in a long while. Vid. Alt.: SILAS MARNER -- the British '85 version with Ben Kingsley.

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TERMINAL VELOCITY. Charlie Sheen, Nastassja Kinski. Action/adventure. PG-13 (profanity and obscenity sprinkled throughout, a couple of crude sexual comments, violence -- including murder). A sky-diving instructor gets involved with a beautiful Russian spy in this unsuccessful attempt to one-up this past summer's hit, SPEED. Some great action sequences and a few memorable lines are sunk by bad photography, lackluster performances and a preposterous story. The latest trend in this genre -- forget character development or plausibility, simply make the soundtrack deafening, add one or two never-done-before special effects and voila - instant money-maker. If you would like action and substance, try these Video Alternatives: LAWRENCE OF ARABIA, SPARTACUS, INDIANA JONES & THE LAST CRUSADE (Caution: Contains a profanity, but the culprit is reprimanded for using God's name in vain) or THE GUNS OF NAVARONE.

Coming to video stores:

JURASSIC PARK (Oct. 4) Non-stop prehistoric adventure. PG-13 (2 or 3 curse words and many frightening scenes that may be too intense for small children, with the heroes being chased by extremely real-looking dinosaurs).

MY FAIR LADY. 1964's Best Picture has been fully restored for its 30th Anniversary. (Oct. 19)

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The Movie Reporter is a periodic feature provided by Baptist Press. Boatwright, a Southern Baptist, is editor & film reviewer for The Movie Reporter Newsletter and author of "How To Choose A Good Video Every Time," volumes 1 & 2.

EDITORS' NOTE: The following may be inserted into the 9/26/94 (BP) story "Baptist colleges, 2 SBC agencies to strengthen 'World A' efforts" after the 11th paragraph:

FMB President Jerry Rankin, in a statement after the meeting, said, "This consortium vastly expands the potential for impacting parts of our world for Christ that largely restrict missionary presence. We're thrilled to launch this partnership with the Education Commission to facilitate students and professors from our Baptist colleges being involved in overseas witness and ministry. This development reflects the commitment of the Foreign Mission Board to mobilize Southern Baptist resources and personnel in our missions task."

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "NOBTS trustees accept Ga. site; respond to motions from SBC," dated 9/23/94, please correct the third paragraph to read, "Roswell Street Church in Marietta," not Roswell.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

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