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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

October 28, 1994

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Peace treaty evokes memories
and hope for former classmates By Robert O'Brien

Baptist Press
10/28/94

WADI ARABA, Israeli-Jordanian Border (BP)--John Anthony and Bill Clinton had come a long way from kindergarten days together in Hope, Ark., to a historic moment together in a scorching Middle Eastern desert Oct. 26.

Surrounded by 5,000 others, dressed in everything from black Hasidic suits to white Arab disdashas, Anthony watched his former kindergarten classmate take center stage with King Hussein of Jordan and Prime Minister Rabin of Israel.

The scene at Wadi Araba, on the Israel-Jordan border, held great promise for regional peace as leaders from the two nations signed a peace treaty pledging to end 46 years of war and forge a lasting peace.

Anthony, a Southern Baptist representative to Israel for 21 years, flashed back 43 years to Arkansas, and the day when he, Clinton and future presidential advisor Mack McLarty posed for a kindergarten class picture. Today, that picture adorns a postcard sold in Hope.

"What a long way we've come from that picture to the signing of a treaty which could affect the whole world," Anthony said in a telephone interview, describing his day at Wadi Araba. "I've known this guy all my life, now he's here doing this, and I'm witnessing it."

But Anthony knows that Israel and Jordan, struggling to break out of fierce Middle Eastern conflict dating back many generations, had to come a lot further than he and his former classmate.

And he knows they have a long way to go in actually bringing peace to the troubled region.

But his adrenalin was still pumping hours after the event.

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"I was awed. I was thrilled. I was overwhelmed. I was happy. I was hopeful," said Anthony after attending the signing ceremony. His wife, the former Connie Goble of Mt. Ida, Ark., joined him afterwards for a special luncheon and a reception with first lady Hillary Clinton.

The invitation came jointly from Hussein and Rabin through the influence of the White House and McLarty, with whom Anthony has kept close contact over the years. Anthony was the only Baptist in the Middle East invited to the signing. Southern Baptist Convention President Jim Henry of Orlando, Fla., also attended and sat at the Anthonys' table at the subsequent luncheon.

"In our 21 years working in Jerusalem, we've seen what it's like to live amidst war, fear and pain," Anthony said,

The week before the signing, he said, at least 27 people died in terrorist attacks in Israel.

"One of the guys who grew up in our church (in Jerusalem) had to lie down on the floor and play dead. He was seeing the terrorist changing his (ammunition) clips and shooting people. They shot one of his friends. Killed him! See how close things are to us?"

The Anthonys' daughter, Allison, dates an Israeli believer in Jesus who served in the Israeli army. They have empathized both with the stress and tension the young man experienced in dealing with terrorists -- and with the stress of Arabs who have found themselves in conflict with the Israeli military.

"We know families (on both sides) who have children who have had to be in a state of war ... with each other," Anthony said. The Anthonys have raised their own three children, Allison, 21; Tyler, 17; and Mark, 12, in Jerusalem, where Tyler and Mark were born.

They think back on the terrorist attacks which nearly took their lives over the years, including a time when Connie, carrying Allison -- then a child -- was knocked back by the force of a bomb that killed 13 people right in front of them.

They have had to recover from the burning in 1982 of the Narkis Street Baptist Church in Jerusalem by Jewish radicals.

"We've lived through the whole thing for the past 21 years and we love Israel and all its people," said Anthony, who works in general evangelism, serves on the pastoral staff of Narkis Street church and coordinates an effort to get the "Experiencing God" book translated into Russian.

"We've been in the homes (of Arabs and Israelis). We've seen the hurts. We've felt the fears," added Anthony, who hopes the peace treaty will help establish a new environment for his work.

"Anytime you focus less on fear and terror and when the next war is coming, you have more emotional energy to turn toward reading your Bible instead of dodging bombs or terrorists. You've got more time to concentrate on the Lord."

He said he hopes the treaty also will pave the way for more joint events between Arabic and Jewish believers to re-establish relationships which ruptured during the Intifada, the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. The Intifada began in 1987 and died with recent accords that brought Palestinian self-rule in those areas, although extremists on both sides have continued terrorist attacks.

The Anthonys have studied both Arabic and Hebrew, lived in both Muslim and Jewish neighborhoods and worked with both Arabic and Israeli churches over their years in Jerusalem.

"People say: 'Are you pro-Arab or pro-Jew?' and I say, 'I'm pro-Jesus,'" explains Anthony.

The Anthonys and other Southern Baptist workers in the region proclaim the message that the peace that comes through belief in Jesus Christ transcends tensions that divide people.

Amidst the clamor of political and religious conflicts that have characterized Arab-Jewish-Christian relations over the years, that message may be taking hold.

Words about peace, emanating from the different religious traditions, flowed freely at the peace treaty signing.

But words about peace -- inscribed in Hebrew and Arabic on commemorative white commemorative baseball caps distributed at the treaty signing -- came from a sermon by Jesus, as recorded in the New Testament passage of Matthew 5:9.

"Blessed are the peacemakers," the caps proclaimed.

The full passage takes it a step further: "... for they shall be called the children of God."

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(BP) photos (two mug shots) mailed to state Baptist newspapers 10/28/94 by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outlines available on SBCNet News Room.

Montana church requests prayer
for kidnapped S.C. children

By Polly House

Baptist Press
10/28/94

GARDINER, Mont. (BP)--Gardiner Baptist Mission in Gardiner, Mont., has requested a national day of prayer for two South Carolina children kidnapped during an armed carjacking.

The two brothers, 14-month-old Alexander Smith and 3-year-old Michael Smith, were last seen Oct. 25, when they were trapped in their mother's car as the carjacker/kidnapper sped away after forcing their mother out at gunpoint.

Gardiner Mission member Galen Warren, a native of Oklahoma City, said, "It just seems like the people of the United States put so much emphasis on the needs of people in foreign countries like Rwanda, Haiti and Cuba -- and certainly we are concerned about these people and their needs too -- but sometimes we overlook what is going on here in our own backyard.

"I know that God is in control of what is happening to those two little boys and he is going to take care of them."

Warren said the church has requested that people pray every night at 8 (Eastern time) for the boys' safe release.

Warren said the church has sent faxes concerning the request for national prayer for the children to senators, congressmen, President Clinton, television networks, major newspapers and churches across the country.

The response to the proposal has been "incredible," he said. So far Warren has been interviewed by USA Today, CBS Radio, several television stations and a number of newspapers.

Pastor Brent Smith said, "We hope that everyone, no matter where they are, will fall on their knees before God and pray for the safe return of these two boys.

"We also encourage everyone to post fliers, posters and bumper stickers reading 'Pray for the Smith boys,'" he added.

People interested in assisting with Gardiner Mission's worldwide effort may contact Smith at (406) 848-9450; Warren at (406) 344-7460; or Julie Harvey at (406) 848-7952.

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Jimmy Carter joins Billy Graham
for Atlanta crusade's kickoff

By Jon Walker

Baptist Press
10/28/94

ATLANTA (BP)--Billy Graham and Jimmy Carter, two of the best-known Southern Baptists in the world, shared the stage Oct. 26 during the opening night of the evangelist's Atlanta crusade, where 57,000 people filled the Georgia Dome amidst media speculation it would be the last, great Graham event in the city.

Carter said it was Graham who encouraged his peacemaking efforts in Haiti and North Korea, adding the evangelist sent him two letters this year, the first telling him how much the people of Haiti wanted peace and urging Carter to help them, the second asking Carter to be the honorary chairman of the Atlanta crusade but also detailing North Korea's desire for peace.

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"Of those who bring this message of peace from the Prince of Peace, Billy Graham is at the forefront," Carter said.

Although Graham spoke of world peace, he quickly moved to his familiar focus on eternal peace through Jesus Christ. Noting how much the world has changed since 1950 when he held his first crusade in Atlanta, Graham said back then no one had run a four-minute mile, CNN was just a dream, Martin Luther King Jr. was only 21 and Graham was only 32 years old.

"This was supposed to be the Christian century," said the silver-haired 75-year-old, "but it's been anything but the Christian century It seems every time we solve one problem, another one breaks out."

However, Graham said God does not change. "God was the same a million years ago as he is today, and he'll be the same one million years from now as he is today."

The way of salvation has also not changed, Graham noted. "In the last generation, (the cross) was the only way of salvation. The only way of salvation today is Jesus Christ, and he'll be the only way of salvation a hundred years from now."

Graham closed with a story involving the crash of U.S. Air 427. As the rescuers rooted through the wreckage, one of them discovered a pair of severed hands: one female; one male.

"The hands were clasped together in a last and lasting human bond," Graham said. "We don't know if they were husband and wife or lovers making a trip together or just strangers chanced by fate to be sitting next to each other -- but that doesn't matter.

"The lesson is that whoever they were, they drew strength and courage and support from a human touch. Holding hands they went out into eternity," Graham said. "You are going to go out into eternity too, and Jesus has his hand outstretched to take yours.

"The question for us tonight is this: Who's holding your hand?"

Approximately 2,400 people came forward to gain assurance that the hand they clasped going into eternity was the hand of Jesus Christ.

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Graham, HMB leaders discuss
ways to evangelize America

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
10/28/94

ATLANTA (BP)--Billy Graham met with evangelism leaders at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board Oct. 25 and discussed ways to share the gospel with every American by the year 2000.

"I appealed to Dr. Graham to convene a meeting of evangelism leaders from each denomination and each para-denominational group to see if we couldn't work together to develop a unified strategy," said HMB President Larry Lewis.

"I shared with him my feeling that no one denomination, even the Southern Baptist Convention, could achieve that goal alone, but I do believe that all of us together could," Lewis said, adding Graham appeared receptive to the idea and promised to prayerfully consider it.

The meeting occurred one day before the 75-year-old Graham began his third Atlanta crusade, scheduled for Oct. 26-30 at the Georgia Dome.

"I was very impressed with Dr. Graham. Although his health is faltering, he was strong in mind and very articulate and seemed to be strong in body also," Lewis said.

Visiting with Graham was his son, Franklin, as well as associates T.W. Wilson and Henry Holly. HMB evangelism leaders at the meeting included Darrell Robinson, vice president for evangelism; Richard Harris, director of mass evangelism; and Jim Coldiron, who is with the HMB's planning department and has helped organize Graham's Atlanta crusade.

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(BP) photos (vertical and horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

**Baptists and Orthodox meet
to discuss European tensions**

By Wendy Ryan

ISTANBUL, Turkey (BP) -- In an attempt to help Baptists and Orthodox Christians understand each other and peacefully coexist in Eastern Europe, representatives of the two groups began exploratory discussions Oct. 22-24.

Both sides agreed there was an "excellent spirit" at the meeting in Istanbul, formerly Constantinople, the sacred home of the Orthodox faith. They expressed hope future conversations will occur. The Orthodox leaders promised to convey this to their 15 self-governing national churches, whose approval is needed for the talks to continue.

A 13-member Baptist World Alliance team from England, Germany, Bulgaria, the former Soviet Union and the United States was led by BWA President Knud Wumpelmann of Denmark and General Secretary Denton Lotz from the BWA office in McLean, Va.

The Orthodox team was led by His Eminence Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Chrysostomos of the Senior See of Ephesus, head of the Orthodox Synodical Committee of Inter-Christian Affairs of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

"We were overwhelmed by the kindness and respect our delegation received," said Tony Cupit, BWA's director of study and research.

The meeting could be described as "one small step" towards religious understanding, since it's uncertain if the talks will continue, and "one giant step" because it's thought to be the first in the history of Baptists.

The talks couldn't have come at a better time. Baptist leaders in Eastern Europe -- especially in Bulgaria -- are being erroneously described by local Orthodox leaders as a "heretical sect" and charged with such bizarre acts as killing babies.

Theo Angelov, president of the Baptist Union of Bulgaria, described the suffering of Bulgarian Baptists. He was encouraged to hear the Patriarchal vicar, His Eminence Metropolitan Ioachim, greet Baptist leaders as "our esteemed and dear brothers in Christ."

BWA president Wumpelmann appealed to Chrysostomos to do whatever can be done to ease the situation of Baptists in Bulgaria.

In the theological discussions that followed, Baptist leaders learned much about the ancient Orthodox faith, with its emphasis on mysticism, prayer and unswerving commitment to the orthodoxy or right beliefs of Christianity.

"Baptists like the Orthodox because you are Orthodox," Lotz told the leaders. Baptists and the Orthodox agree, he said, on great theological issues like the Trinity, the person of Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures, and have shared a common suffering under communism.

Other Baptist leaders spoke about Baptist distinctives, theology, history and "issues that have the potential to divide."

Chief among the divisive issues: the Baptist commitment to evangelism, which the Orthodox describe as "proselytism" or "sheep stealing" in areas they consider their national territory or religious soil.

But in the good spirit of this first meeting, the leaders tried to understand each other and lay the groundwork for possible future meetings.

William Brackney, principal of McMaster University, Ontario, Canada, and chairman of BWA's study and research committee, gave an overview of Baptist history. James Leo Garrett, professor of systematic theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, spoke on major emphases in Baptist theology.

Russ Bush, dean of the faculty at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., spoke on "Distinctives of Baptist Polity and Practice." Gerald Borchert, professor of New Testament at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., gave an outline of previous conversations involving Baptists.

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Wiard Popkes, professor at the Baptist Evangelical Seminary, Hamburg, Germany, spoke on the origins of Baptists in continental Europe, and Michael Quicke, principal of Spurgeons College, London, spoke on the origins of Baptists in Great Britain. Karl-Heinz Walter, secretary of the European Baptist Federation, spoke about Baptists and the Orthodox in Europe.

"It's our hope and understanding we will come even closer together in the spirit of theological dialogue and Christian fellowship," Metropolitan Ioachim said.

Ioachim warned the way ahead to reaching common goals will be "long and painful." He asked that hearts "be opened to the reception of the power of the Spirit of truth, which is nothing less than the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter."

The Baptist World Alliance delegation included Wumpelmann, Lotz, Cupit, Walter, Garrett, Brackney, Angelov, Bush, Borchert and Quicke. Other members were Roy Honeycutt, chancellor, Southern Seminary; Paul Fiddes of Regents Park College, Oxford, England; and Walter Miskaevitch, general secretary, EuroAsiatic Baptist Federation.

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Floodwater recede in Texas;
Baptist efforts just beginning By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
10/28/94

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--As floodwater in Texas receded along with most coverage by national media organizations, a Southern Baptist disaster official said Oct. 27 the denomination's relief efforts are just beginning.

"We're going to need volunteers for a long time," said Bob Dixon, director of Texas Baptist Men who served as Texas off-site response coordinator the week of Oct. 24. "There will be lots of cleanup to do. The damage estimates I've seen are astronomical, close to \$700 million. I've been doing disaster relief in Texas for 27 years, and this is the worst flooding event ever."

Dixon said he had received an "excellent" response thus far from Southern Baptist volunteers trained to do mass feeding and child care in disaster situations. Over the weekend of Oct. 22, units from Oklahoma and Louisiana arrived.

In all, Texas has five feeding units and three child care units operating at locations across southeast Texas. Oklahoma has one feeding unit and one child care unit, while Louisiana is operating a feeding unit. A Tennessee unit was scheduled to begin feeding at Angleton Oct. 27, with a Mississippi child care unit expected in the same community Oct. 28.

Dixon said meal counts had risen to an average of 20,000 per day. He expected the number to increase over the Oct. 29 weekend as residents returned to their homes and volunteers arrived to assist in the cleanup. Child care units were welcoming about 100 children per day.

The total meal count for all Southern Baptist units as of noon Oct. 27 was 100,317, not counting those served by individual churches.

Officials at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission said prospective volunteers for the cleanup and rebuilding phases of the relief effort should contact their state convention's Brotherhood department.

The Brotherhood Commission coordinates initial, multi-state disaster responses on behalf of Southern Baptists from its Memphis headquarters. Units for feeding and child care are owned by the Brotherhood departments of state Southern Baptist conventions and by local associations and churches.

Those wishing to make donations for disaster relief may send contributions to the Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis TN 38104 or to the Home Mission Board, 1350 Spring St. N.W., Atlanta, GA 30367. Designate the gift for flood relief.

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Nevada Baptists elect layman,
hike Cooperative Program giving

By Michael B. McCullough

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Messengers to the Nevada Baptist Convention elected a layman as president and hiked the percentage of their Cooperative Program budget for national and international missions by one-half percent.

Churches sent a total of 161 messengers to the meeting, focusing on the theme "Here's Hope For Nevada: Share Jesus Now," at Foothills Baptist Church, Las Vegas.

Messengers elected Keith Minty as the new NBC president without opposition.

A layman and member of Nellis Baptist Church, Minty has been a member of the convention's executive board five years and was chairman of its program, plans and policies committee.

Messengers also elected Russ Daines, pastor, First Baptist Church, Tonopah, first vice president and Rene Houle, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Henderson, second vice president.

The 1995 NBC budget adopted by the messengers, totaling \$1,808,940, anticipates \$613,000 Cooperative Program income. Messengers voted to raise Cooperative Program giving to Southern Baptist Convention causes from 25.5 percent to 26 percent of the CP budget.

Other key income items include \$894,588 from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and \$51,352 from the Baptist Sunday School Board.

The 1995 budget includes a 3 percent raise for convention employees.

A new NBC purpose statement was adopted by messengers as a part of several constitution and bylaw revisions. The statement reads: "The Nevada Baptist Convention exists to assist and encourage churches and associations in accomplishing the Great Commission in partnership with the Southern Baptist Convention and its agencies."

Messengers also passed three resolutions, one expressing support for the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' financial support system for missions and ministry. The others expressed thanks to the Foothills Baptist Church for hosting the meeting and voiced appreciation of David Meacham, NBC executive director-treasurer, for 25 years in ministry.

The convention's historical committee, led by Rudy Duett, retired NBC staff member, brought special recognition to LaVern and Elva Inzer for their 35 years of service in Nevada. The recognition noted the Inzers were responsible for most of the churches located between Reno and Salt Lake City. A plaque of recognition was given to the Inzers, followed by a standing ovation.

Inzer is now retired as a Home Mission Board missionary but serves as pastor of First Baptist Church, Carlin.

The 1995 meeting will be South Reno Baptist Church, Reno, Oct. 24-25.

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Leader pleased, not satisfied
with SBC student ministry

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
10/28/94

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The current state of Southern Baptist student work leaves Bill Henry both pleased and dissatisfied.

He's pleased almost 190,000 college students were reached through Southern Baptist campus ministries this year. He's also excited about an increase in student conversions and missions involvement over 1993.

But Henry, who took over July 1 as director of the Baptist Sunday School Board's national student ministry (NSM), is far from satisfied.

"I believe we're better than anybody else at what we're doing, but I'm not even happy with that. I want us to do more," the 48-year-old Nashville, Tenn., native said in a recent interview with Baptist Press.

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"I think the numbers show that Southern Baptist student ministry is alive and well, that we've done more with less. But I don't think we've reached the maximum of our potential in terms of how many students we can reach. And we are not going to reach larger numbers of students if we don't become a team."

The Southern Baptist student ministry team, Henry believes, must include the following members: Baptist Student Union directors, church ministers to college students, pastors, associational leaders, state student directors and associates, and NSM staffers. He would like to see a student advisory council in every association and positive working relationships between campus directors and church ministers to students in every community.

"I also want to encourage churches to make student ministry a priority," Henry said, echoing the philosophy of his predecessor, Charles Johnson, who retired earlier this year. "I'm interested in getting to know the folks in the churches and for the folks in the churches to know us."

"When they see me coming, everybody tends to think BSU. And I love talking about BSU. It has a great 75-year history. But I also want to talk about what churches are doing and help those who aren't already involved to get into the student ministry business."

"Every study the Sunday School Board has made about the future and what needs to be done shows that transition periods are the things we have got to do a better job with," Henry said, adding the transition from youth to young adult represents "a key window of opportunity that we have to take advantage of."

Henry said churches must realize there are likely more college students in their Bible study classes and worship services than they think.

"The large majority of college students today are commuters and many still live at home," he explained. "They can be reached by the local church if some special things are offered that meet their unique needs."

"But churches must be intentional in their ministry. What attracted youth to the church is not going to attract a college student. This isn't the 13th grade."

Henry and the NSM consultants promote a philosophy called "Three Hours of Student Ministry." The emphasis encourages churches to offer a student-sensitive worship service; a Bible study program intentionally designed for students; and a "third hour" of discipleship, missions and ministry involvement.

"These three things have got to happen," Henry said, "but I don't want to be in the business of telling churches how to do them. We want to share quality models and find others."

Henry, himself, realized the value of Southern Baptist student ministry during his freshman year at Tennessee Tech University in Cookeville. An active church member as a youth, he had begun to distance himself from his faith during his first year in college.

"It was my first time away from home so I was cutting the apron strings, experiencing new things. But that fall, a couple of guys knocked on my dorm room door and invited me to BSU."

"I saw something there that was very special, different. There was a kind of warmth, support and sharing that I'd never experienced before."

During a late-night conversation with one of his new friends from BSU, Henry realized he had never made a sincere profession of faith in Christ.

"When I went back home and shared with my church, they were shocked. Here was a guy who had been very active in their program who they knew very well and were proud of what he stood for all these years. But my faith wasn't real to me then. My BSU experience helped me realize that."

Henry later transferred to Belmont College (now Belmont University) in Nashville, where he was BSU president and, eventually, as state BSU president for Tennessee. After earning a B.S. degree in business administration and management, he attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., for a short time before returning to Nashville to become part-time BSU director at Peabody College (now part of Vanderbilt University). He later earned an M.A. in student personnel services from Peabody and a Ph.D. in higher education from Vanderbilt.

Henry joined the Sunday School Board staff in 1984 after serving 12 years as associate director of student ministry for the Tennessee Baptist Convention. Before assuming the NSM director's post in July, he served as associate director and supervisor of the department's program section.

In the wake of reorganization and staff cutbacks at the Sunday School Board during the last two years, Henry said he and his staff have been encouraged by "the number of folks who are coming out of the woodwork and are offering their help and support."

"This is the greatest job in the world, getting to meet and getting to know these people," Henry said. "When it comes to the folks who work with college students, you're talking about some of the sharpest folks in the convention."

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(BP) photo (horizontal) posted in the SBCNet News Room and mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press. The cutline is posted in the SBCNet News Room. Filename is henry.txt.

Conversions, missions activity
up among SBC college students

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
10/28/94

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The Southern Baptist student ministry program reported several gains in fiscal year 1994, including an increase in conversions and missions involvement among college students.

The total number of students reached, however, was down following an increase the previous year.

According to the 1994 Student Ministry Information Report, compiled by the Baptist Sunday School Board's national student ministry, 7,528 college students made professions of faith during the year, up significantly from the 1993 total of 6,389.

The number of students involved in missions (including summer, semester, short-term and other mission projects) increased from 27,152 in 1993 to 28,217 this year.

Gains also were reported in internationals involved in student ministry (10,193, up from 9,901); ethnics involved in student ministry (7,534, up from 6,809); campuses with evangelistic outreach projects (512, up from 469); and established churches, Sunday schools or missions which students helped start (4,842, up from 4,088).

In addition, several financial categories also showed increases, including current budget for student ministry, and capital for student centers (\$21,012,401, up from \$20,527,742); local expenditures for student ministry during current budget (\$7,270,673, up from \$6,157,041); and total expenditures for student missions (\$2,737,732, up from \$2,599,808).

Among categories showing decreases were total number of students reached (188,323, down from 192,304); number of college students baptized (9,742, down from 10,411); blacks involved in student ministry (11,603, down from 13,422); students involved in Bible study groups (39,619, down from 40,647); students preparing for church vocations (17,356, down from 18,302); and gifts to world hunger (\$74,025, down from \$81,412).

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The Student magazine offering
new Sunday school lessons

Baptist Press
10/28/94

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Beginning in January, The Student magazine will offer a new Bible study curriculum specifically targeted to the needs and schedules of today's college students.

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The new curriculum will replace the Life and Work Series lessons currently appearing in the magazine, but will appear under the same title, "Collegiate Bible Study." According to Gina Howard, editor of The Student, the new lessons "will be even more focused on topics of interest to students."

"College students have unique needs and their time schedules aren't like the rest of the adult world's," Howard explained. "We want to have timely lessons that will impact current decisions they're making or problems they're facing."

The September issue, for example, will focus on issues related to beginning a new school year, she said.

The first seven lessons of the new curriculum are being written by current or former staffers from the Baptist Sunday School Board's national student ministry. Among topics to be addressed are spiritual gifts, self-discovery and "contagious Christianity" or the joy of sharing your faith.

In November, Howard will convene a curriculum development group composed of church ministers to college students, campus ministers and college students. They will plan a year's lessons which will begin appearing in print in August 1995.

"Eventually, we hope to develop a multi-year curriculum plan so that college students can complete a comprehensive Bible study program during their college career," Howard said.

The new curriculum will make its debut in the premiere issue of the redesigned Student magazine, which will include bolder graphics, more photographs and a pull-out devotional section. Also included will be more standard features, such as stories about lifestyle evangelism and personal profiles on students and student workers.

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Chaplaincy reaches deep into Las Vegas casinos

By Michael B. McCullough

Baptist Press
10/28/94

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--World-class poker players, casino general managers, stage hands and managers, exotic dancers, a bivocational youth minister and parking valets all have something in common. During a 24-hour period in early October they were all touched by the Southern Nevada Casino/Resort Chaplaincy in Las Vegas.

Six months ago, the Southern Nevada Baptist Association launched the new ministry to the Las Vegas casinos with a part-time director. Tommy Starkes, pastor of Tropicana Christian Fellowship, was elected to the post and has not slowed down since.

Starkes began the ministry by visiting the casinos in the greater Las Vegas area. He started building relationships with the chiefs of security. In most cases, this opened the door for him to have great freedom of movement and presence in the casinos. Starkes also has a personal relationship with many of the casino owners and general managers. This, too, has opened doors for the ministry.

Starkes' efforts penetrate into every area of casino life. A recent trip to one of Las Vegas' new and luxurious casinos began in the poker room, where he spent 10 minutes talking with the manager. They shared their mutual concern for a world-class poker player bottoming out with cocaine addiction. Starkes told of his desire to help the player and asked the manager for his insights into the man's situation. The conversation ended with a commitment from the manager to call Starkes whenever he had a player or employee needing any kind of help.

Starkes left the poker room floating on air. He had made a major breakthrough with a gaming manager in a position to broaden Starkes' chaplaincy ministry.

A midday visit to a small casino missed the general manager, a member of Starkes' church, who had gone home ill. His casino is full of locals, many based in from area retirement homes. Starkes departs after leaving his card and a word of encouragement with the office employees. Such visits are common for Starkes and he knows they build relationships for future ministry.

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Time of day seems not to matter to Starkes as he seeks opportunities to minister. The MGM, a large casino on the Las Vegas strip, is the site for a Wednesday 10:15 p.m. Bible study in the show room control booth. Fourteen people attended a recent study on suicide, a subject of concern to the regular members of the group. Two dancers, engaged to be married, sat on a couch, snuggling close while listening attentively to the study. They are both new believers, having accepted Christ under Starkes' leadership two weeks earlier.

After the study, Starkes spent another 15 minutes with individuals eager for personal words of hope. Starkes then left for the Flamingo, an adjacent casino.

While talking with the stage manager he learned the headline show would be closing at the end of the year. He promised the stage manager he would come back each week to minister to those whose dreams and careers are in jeopardy.

On the way out of the casino, Starkes stopped to visit with a bathroom attendant. He prays the growing relationship will one day see the man accept Christ as his Savior.

Starkes went back across the street to the MGM and entered the bakery kitchen. It was nearly midnight when he found Philip Williams making sweet rolls. Williams is the bivocational youth minister at Highland Hills Baptist Church in neighboring Henderson. After 10 minutes of conversation with Williams, another Christian employee joined them for prayer requests and then a time of prayer. Usually there are four or five people in the group.

Despite the late night, the next morning began early for Starkes with a counseling session followed by a drive to Caesar's Casino for a midday Bible study and prayer time. The show room, where the group of 10 or more usually meet, was not available because of a special filming. An empty bar became the new meeting site for the prayer group.

The study group included Chija Yoon, a Christian who works as a sales clerk in the casino. Clearly, her love for the Lord and her enthusiasm serve as an encouragement to Starkes.

Leaving Caesar's, two parking valets greeted Starkes with friendly smiles. Both are regulars of Starkes' chaplaincy ministry.

One of Starkes' great joys is the 6:30 a.m. Bible study he conducts each Saturday morning at the Luxor, a new pyramid-shaped casino on the south end of the strip. Fifteen employees regularly attend the study. He describes it as one of his best ministries.

Starkes has some dreams for the developing Southern Nevada Casino/Resort Chaplaincy. "I want some lay Bible study leaders who are already employed in casinos," he notes. "I want the Christians who are working in casinos to take the initiative and have a little Bible study with their fellow employees."

This is not too unusual a request. Starkes claims there are 131,000 persons working in the casinos in Las Vegas. He believes at least 1,500-1,600 are members of Southern Baptist churches.

"Largely, I want to find more ways to network between Christians. I'd like for born-again Christians to discover who their peers are under the same umbrella," he states. At the Caesar's Bible study, he explains, there are Christian maids, gift shop employees, maintenance workers, parking valets and others who need each other. "I want these Christians to find themselves and each other and to encourage one another."

"I also want to see some more pastors get involved on a one-on-one basis with a casino," Starkes states. He has a goal of at least five pastors becoming chaplains in local casinos. He recognizes the needs for casino chaplaincy are beyond his part-time responsibilities.

Starkes is also out telling his story. He speaks at local Baptist churches on Sunday nights whenever invited. As he tells the story of his chaplaincy ministry, he is looking for others who will fulfill the dream and join him in the work.

And Starkes is the author of "Developing Ministries to Gaming Communities," a new Break-Out Module published by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. The free module is available at HMB Customer Services, 1-800-634-2462.

**Surviving divorce opens
doors for casino chaplain** **By Michael B. McCullough**

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Tommy Starkes knows about the hurt and pain faced by the casin employees he ministers with each week.

While a professor of missions and world religions at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Starkes experienced a divorce. Today, that experience is a formative part of his ministry.

"One can recover from divorce and still be a productive minister," Starkes says. "I think this is a real issue for a few of the brethren who are struggling. They are selling insurance or pumping gas somewhere and have given up."

But Starkes did not give up. He is now serving as both a pastor and a chaplain to thousands who work in the casinos of Las Vegas.

Starkes moved to Las Vegas in 1984 to pastor Tropicana Christian Fellowship. He remarried a year later and now has a 3-year-old son, Jessie. His wife, Donna, works for the Clark County Fire Department as a fire marshall and inspector. Seven months ago he became the chaplain for the Southern Nevada Casino/Resort Chaplaincy, a ministry of the Southern Nevada Baptist Association.

Starkes is in and out of Las Vegas casinos all week long, meeting, greeting and ministering to dozens of people each day.

"These are people like you and me. They have trouble at home, they have problems making ends meet financially," he explains. "Some are even grandmothers. Even the tall show girl that most people focus on may be 40 years old and a grandmother. They have kids in school, relationships that are just like all other relationships -- some good and some not so good."

Starkes explains Las Vegas draws all kinds of people to its casinos. "Entry-level jobs, with the hope of promotion, bring many people to Las Vegas," he says. Entry-level employment may be \$6 an hour. Many hope for quick promotion to better paying jobs. The construction industry draws others to the city. When they can't find a construction job, they end up working in the casinos.

Las Vegas now has more than 1 million people and is the fastest-growing city in America. Starkes says there is a net gain of 100 people every week in Las Vegas, or nearly 3,000 people a month.

These are the people Starkes has a burden to minister with in the casinos. "The need for forgiveness and the experience of grace and the removal of guilt and shame may be slightly higher in the casino industry," Starkes says, "but the needs are universal. These are personal needs. People need to feel OK about themselves because God loves them."

Starkes said he believes there is a relationship between God's grace and forgiveness and the local church. "If we are going to be the church, it is important for us to dispense grace more than once," he explains. "Most of the churches are excellent at dispensing grace once." The church, Starkes emphasizes, must be about the business of caring for the hurting and wounded.

Starkes' own experiences come into play at this point. "My personal divorce has multiplied and amplified it (his chaplaincy ministry) and given it depth. People come to me in this Las Vegas culture because of the nature of my church and my ministry.

"You can see the body language suddenly relax when they learn that I have been divorced. It's like 'Hey, I can tell this guy anything. He's a divorced minister who listens well. If he can get through it, maybe I can get through it, too.'"

When involved in chaplaincy, Starkes says he has a set theme to share with people. "I say 'God loves you, and that helps you love yourself, and that helps you to live in this crazy world.' Everybody can relat to those three statements because everybody thinks we live in a crazy world."

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How has Tommy Starkes gotten through this crazy world and a divorce? "A loving congregation at large. A loving, caring, confrontive therapy group that has met in my home since I've been in Las Vegas. A small group of friends that have stuck by me no matter what. They never have doubted my motives, my behavior. They were there.

"I think the emphasis is on the word 'small.' That group was much smaller than I believed it would be. I ended up with four or five that got me through it."

He also tells about those who not only believed in him personally, but believed in him vocationally. They gave him speaking and writing assignments and called him to pastor Tropicana Christian Fellowship.

He knows that having to divide his ministry between the church and his chaplaincy at casinos has caused his congregation to suffer. "Our church has suffered from this because I don't have the time to do some administrative details. But our church benefits from it because on any given Sunday morning you don't know who is going to be there.

"Is it a dancer? Is it a big-name entertainer? Is it a guy in the light booth? Or is it somebody who works the serving line at a local casino? Our church benefits from this."

In the few months since Starkes began working the casino/resort chaplaincy ministry, already there are people who have been touched and are now a part of the church.

Starkes says he believes the biggest part of his effectiveness in the casinos is a ministry of presence. "When I don't make my rounds, like when I'm out of town, it's the guy who would never come to a Bible study who misses me first. He will ask, 'Where have you been, Reverend? I needed to talk to you.' Or 'I needed to see you.'

"That's a good sign, in the biblical sense, that God cares about people who work in casinos and that he has a representative here who's visible.

"That's why I wear my cleric collar. It has opened a multitude of doors and never closed any doors."

He says at times the collar leads someone to think he is Catholic. He tells them a simple message. "You don't need me for direct access to God. You can talk to Jesus right here while you are working. You can take your needs to him."

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Perseverance urged
in battling gambling

By William H. Perkins Jr.

Baptist Press
10/28/94

PASS CHRISTIAN, Miss. (BP)--Christians must find ways to minister in communities that have been radically altered by legalized gambling, said speakers at a "Ministry in a Gaming Community" conference at Gulfshore Assembly in Pass Christian, Miss.

Randal Cowling, director of Atlantic City Ministries in Atlantic City, N.J., described how 36 million people flocked to Atlantic City's casinos last year, generating \$3.2 billion and more visitors than Disney World.

"You cannot minister in a gaming community without going into a casino. It is a long-term ministry; you have to invest for a long, long time," he said at the early October conference.

Cowling also cautioned Christians not to be overwhelmed by the seemingly unstoppable march of gambling into their communities.

"Overcome the anger that you have. It becomes a seedbed for resentment," he said.

Cowling, whose 5-year-old ministry will shut down Dec. 31 due to budget cuts, said two of the most difficult issues faced by Christians ministering in a gambling community are:

-- How do you measure success?

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-- You may be all alone .

"Don't be afraid to fail; don't be deterred by your critics," Cowling said.

Gulfport police chief George Payne utilized local crime statistics to point out problems communities must confront when gambling is legalized.

Calls for police service in Gulfport increased 53 percent in one year, Payne said, forcing him to cut back successful programs like DUI enforcement just to have enough cops on the street to answer all the calls.

The 21-year law enforcement veteran cited a 101 percent increase from 1993-94 in alcohol-related accidents, due in part to liberal use of alcohol in casinos.

"Every crime that is alcohol-related is going through the roof," he said.

Alcohol-related sexual assaults in Gulfport have skyrocketed with a 200 percent increase from 1993-94, according to statistics provided by Payne.

In a single recent weekend, Payne said, three rapes involving drunken female casino patrons were reported.

Gamblers Anonymous chapters on the Mississippi Gulf Coast have grown from zero to six and "they've got all the business they need," he said.

Payne also said Gulfport is beginning to experience more problems with violent panhandlers, Oriental gangs specializing in credit card fraud, embezzlement among trusted employees, and prostitution.

Payne predicted the large increase in money-related domestic abuse cases foretells dangerous family trends for gambling communities.

"Has the social impact hit us yet? I don't think so; we are truly yet to see it," he said.

Emotional testimony of gambling's destructive power was provided by a successful Gulf Coast businessman whose craving for self-worth led him on a 21-year odyssey of legal and illegal gambling.

The businessman, who wished to remain anonymous, said the lure of gambling for many of those suffering addiction is the driving need to "be somebody."

"Addicted gamblers think very little of themselves," he said, recalling how he drank heavily before gambling to remove feelings of guilt.

"You need salve on your conscience, so you drink," he said.

Even though he lost gambling-addicted friends to suicide, was visited by the FBI and was robbed of several thousand dollars at gunpoint during an illegal dice game, he didn't stop gambling.

Finally, confronted by the pastor of the small Southern Baptist church his family joined after the church took in his two young sons for Vacation Bible School, he accepted Christ and put his past behind him.

"It was May 8, 1980," he vividly recalled.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Alleged apparitions of Mary making news in the Bible Belt," dated 10/27/94, please correct the 12th paragraph to read, "... three kinds of worship -- one for God, one for a saint and one for Mary ...," not martyrs.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

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