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November 1, 1994

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**Texas Baptists' vote redefines  
Cooperative Program giving**

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press  
11/1/94

AMARILLO, Texas (BP)--Texas Baptists voted to expand the definition of their Cooperative Program during the Oct. 31 session of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

The change broadens the definition of Cooperative Program giving to include "Texas only" gifts or church-directed gifts to non-Southern Baptist Convention worldwide causes such as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship or Baptist World Alliance.

The expanded CP giving plan approved by messengers to the 109th BGCT annual convention was a key part of recommendations of its Cooperative Missions Giving Study Committee.

The convention rejected both a minority report from five members of the committee and a substitute amendment from the floor.

Cecil Ray of Georgetown, Texas, chairman of the study committee, urged adoption of the committee's recommendations as a way to give "breathing room essential to keeping Texas Baptists working together."

The committee recommended the BGCT recognize and distribute as "Cooperative Program" contributions from churches given in any of three ways:

- to the adopted BGCT and SBC budgets according to annually adopted percentage allocations;
- to the adopted BGCT budget only; or
- to the BGCT budget and other worldwide Baptist causes as directed by any individual church.

Ray hailed the recommended approach as a way to "match the method" of cooperative giving to the prevailing spirit within the Baptist family. The Cooperative Program could best be preserved by adapting it, he said.

"Texas Baptists will shape and reshape the system, or risk diminishing their effectiveness," Ray said.

John Hatch of Lake Jackson presented as a substitute a minority report from five members of the study committee, recommending "all gifts to the Baptist General Convention of Texas and/or the Southern Baptist Convention shall be recognized as Cooperative Program gifts."

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Saying 94 percent of Texas Baptists give in undesignated fashion to the Cooperative Program, Hatch said there was "no mandate from the churches" to change the Cooperative Program to the degree suggested by the majority.

Any "radical change" in the Cooperative Program could result in diminished missions giving, he said.

"Rhetoric about coercion and local church autonomy is misplaced," Hatch said. "Any local church may give money to any organization -- Baptist or otherwise. The majority's proposals do not confer that right. Every church has that right already."

Joining Hatch in speaking in favor of the minority report were John Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church, Houston, and Henry Adrion III, pastor of First Baptist Church, Texas City.

Terming the Cooperative Program, "God's golden gift to Southern Baptists," Bisagno urged the rejection of any radical change in the unified budget plan.

"The grass roots of Texas Baptists are saying, 'Keep the Cooperative Program intact,'" he said.

Approving the full committee's recommendations for an expanded definition of Cooperative Program giving would "send shock waves across the Southern Baptist Convention," Bisagno said.

Adrion, former director of the BGCT church services division, said the majority proposal would create "a proliferation of designated giving" and set the wrong example for members of local churches in giving to their own church budgets.

Three members of the Cooperative Missions Giving Study Committee -- Dean Dickens, pastor of Cliff Temple Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas Woman's Missionary Union President Mary Humphries of San Marcos, and Charles Davenport, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tulia -- spoke against the minority report.

Former foreign missionaries Dickens and Humphries disputed Hatch's contention that the full committee's approach would result in a drop in missions giving.

"It is neither an attempt to bring confusion nor confrontation that is unnecessary. Confrontation has been with us in the Southern Baptist Convention for the last umpteen years," Dickens said.

Humphries said she joined many messengers in longing for the days when all Southern Baptists gave gladly to a unified budget, but she said that does not reflect the present reality.

Davenport said the minority's view that there was "no mandate" for serious change was untrue.

"There may not be a numerical mandate, but there is a mandate for fairness," he said.

After the chair ruled on a show of ballots that the minority report failed, Michael Dean of Fort Worth offered an amendment to the full committee's recommendations.

Dean, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, moved that the proposed definition of Cooperative Program giving be replaced with the recommendation: "That the BGCT will recognize and distribute as Cooperative Missions Giving those gifts to any other causes associated with Southern Baptists according to the instructions of the local church."

Dean termed the amendment a way to create more broad-based support for the committee report, crossing "political lines."

Dean maintained under his approach all gifts would be recognized as "cooperative" and treated the same way.

Russell Dilday, also a messenger from Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, spoke against his pastor's amendment, saying it "institutionalizes a divided approach" to recognizing missions support.

Dilday was fired last March after 15 years as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He now is distinguished professor of homiletics at George W. Truett Theological Seminary and special assistant to the president at Baylor University, Waco.

On a show of ballots, the amendment failed by a larger margin than the minority report.

The unamended full committee report was then approved by a show of ballots. The decision to proceed without a ballot count was quashed from the floor. But Ralph Smith, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin, and a supporter of the minority report, affirmed the chair's ruling.

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Alabama board refuses proposal  
to shift convention site, date

By Mark Baggett

Baptist Press  
11/1/94

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP)--The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions came to the brink of declaring the convention in a state of emergency Oct. 28, finally rejecting a proposal to cancel the upcoming convention and move it from Mobile to Huntsville.

By a 44-29 vote, the board turned down a recommendation by the executive committee, which had voted 11-7 earlier in the day to postpone the convention until Nov. 29, move it to Huntsville and hold a "solemn assembly" in place of the scheduled convention meeting in Mobile.

Executive Secretary Troy Morrison pleaded for the proposal to be adopted, saying a memorandum by University of Mobile President Michael Magnoli caused a crisis that threatened the convention's integrity.

Magnoli's memorandum, to the university's staff, faculty and students -- along with a letter to pastors sent by two UM officials -- praised presidential candidate Fred Lackey as a friend "who is worthy of our consideration." The memo also urged students to attend the convention and promised to provide "a fact sheet noting the crucial issues and the times they occur on the program."

Lackey, pastor of First Baptist Church, Athens, apparently will face former Executive Secretary A. Earl Potts for president.

"It is our opinion that this is the most potentially destructive instrument that has ever occurred in the history of the Alabama Baptist State Convention," said Morrison, who said he had received hundreds of phone calls and letters. "I have never heard such venom, hatred, bitterness and anger that comes from the lips and hearts of pastors."

But Magnoli said his memo wasn't intended to make a political statement and that convention officials had created a crisis that didn't exist.

"Can you validate in your heart that the University of Mobile has created a emergency in this convention that justifies moving the convention more than 600 miles away?" Magnoli asked. "Where is the emergency that exists? Why are we tilting at windmills? Why are we shooting at ghosts that don't exist?"

Magnoli said the specially called session was an example of the convention's "double standard" in treating Samford University and the University of Mobile. Earlier in the month, the state board had voted to hire an attorney and appoint a committee to deal with the actions of the Samford board of trustees, which voted Sept. 13 to elect its own successors.

"You cannot create a crisis based on internal memos and use them to turn the light and heat off of one institution and onto another," Magnoli told the board. "If either of the two candidates is destined to be president and it is God's will for it to happen, it will happen. Moving the convention would deny us visibility, but it has caused more of a focus on who we are and what we believe."

Morrison, however, insisted moving the convention would help defuse the crisis and a "solemn assembly of prayer," which he proposed for Nov. 15 in Mobile -- the day the convention is scheduled to begin -- would help fulfill the convention's obligations to Mobile's hotels and meeting halls. Morrison proposed all convention-related events go on as scheduled, including the pastors' conference on Monday, Nov. 14.

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Morrison said Magnoli's memorandum raised three concerns: that the budget process for funding of Christian higher education would be manipulated; that an institutional endorsement of a candidate is unprecedented; and that the implications of an institutional "block vote" would be disastrous.

"No entity head has ever endorsed a candidate or threatened to organize its employees or student body in an attempt to disrupt the orderly process of a state convention by voting as a block or by changing the budgeting process on the floor of the convention," Morrison said.

Morrison, who said the bylaws allow an "emergency state" to be declared, said he consulted only with board of missions chairman Leon Ballard, convention President Dewey Corder and Education Commission chairman James Moebes in making the proposal.

His voice breaking at times, Morrison said his life had been threatened by one caller.

"You must take whatever action is necessary, however drastic," he said. "I cannot express the urgency of your action. Any wavering can create havoc. It would be totally disastrous to try to have the convention in Mobile. We can go to Mobile to pray. Let's go to Huntsville for our business."

Corder, pastor of First Baptist Church, Trussville, and Timothy Lovett, pastor of First Baptist Church, Scottsboro, and a member of the state board's executive committee, agreed with Morrison.

"Because of a variety and multiplicity of concerns that lay heavy on my heart, I believe it is in the best interests of the convention to do its business in another locale," Corder said.

"If we vote this motion down, it will be like building a fence at the bottom of the hill," Lovett said. "We'll take the remnants of an Alabama Baptist Convention and bury them somewhere."

At one point, Magnoli's pastor, James Walters of First Baptist Church, Mobile, who also has been a trustee of the University of Mobile, spoke in favor of moving the convention.

"It's a precarious situation, but as a person who tries to look at issues objectively, I support the recommendation. We must agree to disagree. Let's not be vindictive and ugly," Walters said.

But the opponents of the measure predicted equally dire consequences if the convention moved its meeting.

"I doubt if one-half of 1 percent of all Alabama Baptist churches are affected by this memo," said Harry Circle, pastor of Camp Ground Baptist Church, Ozark. "What we're calling a crisis is not really a crisis at all. If we move the meeting, it will dictate the death of the convention."

Circle and pastor Joe Godfrey of Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, also supported Magnoli's description of a double standard between Samford and Mobile, saying Samford had hired two people to win support for Samford across the state.

"I lived here under the naive mind-set for 10 years that all institutions were looked on in the same favorable light," Circle said. "But until I came on this board, I was not aware of the double standard."

Godfrey said the memorandum was not inflammatory because it contained no direct endorsement of Lackey and said nothing about changing the funding structure of the convention.

"There is a perception that this has been a political choice in order to shift the attention away from Samford University," said Godfrey, who cited a newspaper article that described Samford as "mobilizing" for the state convention.

Lackey, a member of the executive committee, raised a point of personal privilege and was permitted to speak to the proposal. Lackey said he knows of no attempts to organize a campaign on his behalf and disputed newspaper articles that implied "severe consequences" for Samford if he were elected.

"I love the institution and would not do anything to harm it in any way," said Lackey, a Samford alumnus. "Check my track record. You won't find that I have ever done anything to disrupt the progress or procedures of the convention. I love th convention and all its entities."

After the meeting, Magnoli said he was disappointed that the meetings were called but relieved with the outcome. "I'm confident of the sincerity of those who presented the motion and their commitment to the convention. In the typical fashion of a Baptist democracy, the people spoke to the issue and made the decision. We embrace our leaders and commit ourselves to making this the best convention ever."

Morrison was also conciliatory: "I support the State Board of Missions and pledge to try to facilitate the business of the convention and to make it a unified, spiritually motivated convention. Discussion may not be all bad. Some underlying things have surfaced, and the result will have a positive impact."

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Ministry launched to house  
families of Olympic athletes

By William Neal

Baptist Press  
11/1/94

ATLANTA (BP)--A newly created Christian organization, Atlanta Host, has unveiled its plans to provide hospitality during the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta for the families of participating athletes.

Southern Baptists are among the 28 denominational groups supporting Atlanta Host, and Georgia Baptist families are expected to provide a large percentage of the Christian homes that will be "opened" to these international visitors.

This is the first time in Olympics history such a large-scale effort has been made to provide complimentary housing for athletes' families.

Speaking at Atlanta Host's Oct. 20 kickoff at Atlanta's Fox Theater, Leroy Walker, president of the U.S. Olympic Committee, told the denominational representatives, "You have embarked upon what will become a tradition for the Olympic games.

"I know what it means to have family near," Walker said. "The Olympic games are very great, but a very trying time for the athletes."

Olympic organizers have noted it would be a great source of encouragement and emotional support to have as many of the family members present in Atlanta as possible. Most of those spouses, parents, brothers and sisters could not afford to come without the availability of free housing.

The idea for the Atlanta Host ministry came out of discussion within the Quest organization, the ecumenical Christian group planning various ministries related to the Olympics. Christian leaders wanted to take advantage of the "opportunity of a lifetime" to show Southern hospitality in the biblical spirit of entertaining "strangers" who may be "angels in disguise."

Co-chairs of Atlanta Host are former Georgia Gov. Joe Frank Harris; former Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young; Atlanta businesswoman Deen Day Smith; and Georgia businessman Truett Cathy. On a special promotional video produced by Atlanta Host, Young described Atlanta as "a faithful city ready to be used by God" and said Christians here "can make a difference."

AT&T, a major corporate sponsor of the Olympics, is providing major funding in the effort to house the visiting families. AT&T in partnership with Atlanta Host is providing hospitality facilities and backup services and will be recruiting host families from among its own employees.

Atlanta Host plans to enlist thousands of Christian families within the metro Atlanta area to provide bed and breakfast for five to seven days for one to three family members of an Olympic athlete. The host families will be asked to participate in an orientation program and will be assisted by a support group providing interpreters, medical services and other emergency assistance.

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Packets of materials have been sent to every metro Atlanta church seeking assistance in conducting a preliminary survey to determine how many families are interested in helping with the ministry. Churches are being asked to report back to Atlanta Host by Nov. 23 so some indication of the response can be reported to the meeting of national Olympic organizations when they gather in Atlanta this December.

Baptists who need further information may contact Sid Hopkins, housing chairman for AIM '96, the Baptist Olympics ministry organization, at Gwinnett Metro Baptist Association, 1648 Lawrenceville Highway, Lawrenceville, GA 30244, or Ray Johnson, Baptist representative on the Atlanta Host board, who may be contacted through the Georgia Baptist Convention's education division, 2930 Flowers Road, South, Atlanta, GA 30341.

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Graham Atlanta crusade draws record crowds, 17,259 responses By James Dotson

Baptist Press  
11/1/94

ATLANTA (BP)--The Atlanta Billy Graham Crusade is history, but the results of the fall harvest in Georgia will be felt possibly for generations.

The average evening attendance -- at 62,500 -- was a record high for a Billy Graham Crusade in the United States and Canada, according to a Billy Graham Evangelistic Association official quoted in The Atlanta Constitution. An overflow crowd of more than 78,000 for the Saturday youth night was the largest ever for a single event at the Georgia Dome.

The response at the close of each service was equally strong, with thousands filling the stadium floor each night after Graham gave his simple invitation. A total of 17,259 commitments were registered at the regular crusade services, plus another 1,800 at the children's crusade on Saturday morning.

On the final night of the crusade, Graham also commented on the impact he has seen in the city regarding racial reconciliation -- a key crusade theme.

"We've seen racial barriers broken down this week and expressions of love that have caused tears to roll down our cheeks," he said. "We call it the 'Spirit of Atlanta,' when black and white will live together in peace and look after the poor, the hungry, the naked and the homeless."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

#### FIRST-PERSON

Hard work fuels evangelism, not just Billy Graham's name By Ronald W. Johnson

Baptist Press  
11/1/94

ATLANTA (BP)--Heroes. All of us have them growing up. Mine was Billy Graham. As a young boy I read everything I could about his life. You see, for a kid who had grown up in church and had been raised in a family that never missed a Graham crusade broadcast on radio or television, he was just a part of my life -- part of my family.

I never thought in a million years I would get to attend a crusade, much less meet the man. But it has happened. Twice. I met Dr. Graham when I served on his staff in Amsterdam during Amsterdam 86, a worldwide conference for itinerant evangelists. Now I have met him a second time, as I have served on the executive committee of the Atlanta Billy Graham Crusade.

On Oct. 27, I had the opportunity to sit on the platform with Billy Graham and others. What a thrill. And I thought about the crusade. What it meant to me. What it meant to Atlanta. What it means to Georgia.

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Graham is 75 years old. But the huge screens at the Dome did not seem to betray his age. He is still a striking image. His voice was strong even in spite of the fact that he told some of us that he hadn't preached since July.

But he preached, as a friend of mine characterized it, like a 35-year-old. The message was simple. The prophet seemed to pick us all up and lift us so we could see over the fence into the game of life where most of us live. And what we saw sobered us. But the presence of this character, who seems larger than life, drove home the impact of the gospel. With piercing sensitivity Graham pointed to the crowd and told them they were sinners. And most there admitted to it. In fact, thousands responded.

I noticed that when the invitation ended and when Graham asked those who had come down front to pray the sinner's prayer with him, across the huge Dome, people who knew they were Christians prayed again the sinner's prayer. They did it maybe just to reaffirm their faith in Jesus or maybe to say to God, "I have drifted. I need to come back home. I want to be all yours, God."

Even the downtown was changed. Hundreds packed MARTA. But instead of pushing, shoving and cursing, there were smiles. Peace had invaded the downtown. Black and white, Hispanic and Asian walked together toward the Dome. Street people took notice of the crowds. And many in the crowd took notice of them. Tracts were handed out. One crusade attendee had his Bible open. I heard him telling a street person that Jesus cared for him in his loneliness. Even a security agent barking instructions to the crowds over a megaphone ended his instructions with, "God loves you all, and I do too."

The Graham crusade is a top-notch production. The music, the special guests all add to the impact of the program. It is as well-done as ever. Being a part of the executive committee I can tell you firsthand how much work has gone into the event. Hundreds of people have been involved. And it is all done with the utmost attention to integrity. Even the offering that is taken up each night is audited by an independent firm. Graham does not get a dime of the offering. He is paid a salary from the board of the evangelistic association.

The flavor of the crusade has changed little since Graham began preaching nearly 50 years ago. In a sense it is part of the American religious landscape, even though that landscape is fading in the harshness of secularism. I cannot help but wonder if my grandchildren will ever experience anything like a Graham crusade.

I know this: The future of evangelism is cultivating and reaching neo-pagan America. It is not just hanging out a sign announcing a revival meeting or a crusade. Dan Southern, executive director of the Atlanta Billy Graham Crusade, once remarked to me that even Billy Graham cannot draw today's culture to a crusade. That's why it takes over a year of hard work to get people to come and to bring lost friends with them each night.

I long to see America awakened spiritually. There was a fresh breeze that blew across Atlanta. God grant that it will continue to blow and that our churches will fan the flame ignited at the Dome.

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Johnson, director of the Georgia Baptist Convention's evangelism department, penned this reflection after the Oct. 26-30 Billy Graham crusade in Atlanta.

Minn.-Wis. Baptists adopt  
new name, vision statement

By Gomer Lesch

Baptist Press  
11/1/94

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. (BP)--Messengers to the annual meeting of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Southern Baptist Convention changed the name of the convention, dropping the word "Southern," in an action that received significantly more than the two-thirds vote necessary to pass a bylaw change.

Fewer than a dozen of the 219 messengers voted against the action, according to observers.

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"We want to emphasize that this action is an enabling action, not a reaction," said Grant Hignight, convention president and pastor of Brown Deer Baptist Church, Milwaukee. The action included a reaffirmation of "our present cooperative relationship to the Southern Baptist Convention . . . ."

In a related matter, messengers adopted a vision statement, strategies and actions to move the convention toward the year 2010, aiming at establishing by that year "more than 400 healthy, growing, reproducing congregations . . . 75 percent of whom are led by upper-midwestern natives with 15 averaging more than 200, 12 averaging more than 400 and three averaging more than 1,000 in attendance, a total membership in excess of 40,000, total attendance more than 25,000 and 4,000 baptisms per year." At present, there are 123 congregations, with one church averaging over 200 and none over 400.

Executive Director William C. Tinsley, in his report to the convention, compared the vision to the occasion when Jesus called upon Simon to "put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch" (Luke 5:8 NASB). He emphasized Jesus moved through people who are part of the people he wants to reach, underscoring the need for Minnesotans and Wisconsinites to catch and implement the vision.

All five convention officers were elected without opposition: Hignight as president; Glen Land, pastor of Valley Baptist Church, Appleton, Wis., first vice president; Jeff McBeth, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pewaukee, Wis., second vice president; Becky Dodson, member of First Baptist Church, Wausau, Wis., recording secretary, and Paul Berthiaume, pastor of Superior (Wis.) Baptist Church, assistant recording secretary.

A total budget of \$1,611,329 was passed, \$68,659 less than last year. Of this total, \$300,000 is expected to come from state convention churches. The Cooperative Program portion remained the same, at 26 percent.

Nine resolutions were adopted without dissent, including one citing the Great Commission and calling on churches to respond to this call and to affirm the Cooperative Program as the primary means of support; one against war; and one encouraging people to vote.

The 1995 annual meeting will be Nov. 2-4 at Highland Crest Baptist Church, Green Bay, Wis.

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Research psychologist says  
strong families still possible

Baptist Press  
11/1/94

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Despite the changing nature of American families, "strong, life-shaping families are as possible today as they were 50 years ago," according to research psychologist and Lutheran minister Merton P. Strommen.

"The one difference is that today parents must become more intentional in their desire for a Christian family, more intentional with respect to what is done or not done as family," said Strommen in a recent address at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Strommen, founder of the Augsburg Youth and Family Institute and Search Institute, both in Minneapolis, spoke to a conference on youth and family ministry sponsored by the seminary's Gheens Center for Christian Family Ministry.

In recent years, family life in America has gone through a drastic transition, Strommen said. For example, Strommen noted the percentage of American households consisting of a working father, a housewife mother and two or more children dropped from 60 percent in 1955 to 7 percent by 1985.

Churches can help build closer family relationships amid the changing demographic patterns, Strommen said. He cited four "ingredients" necessary for close family relationships which churches can help nurture -- parental harmony, communication, parental discipline and attitudes of love.

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Strommen said his research has shown "where there is love and affection adolescents are less likely to be involved in drug and alcohol use and in sexual activity." Youth who grow up in caring environments usually make friends easier and are more likely to be involved in service activities and take matters of faith seriously, he said.

In addition to encouraging solid family relationships, churches must focus on shaping "close God relationships," Strommen emphasized. "One side encourages bonding between parents and children," he explained. "The other side encourages bonding with Jesus Christ. Our research shows that when these two relationships characterize a family, you have a strong, life-shaping family."

However, Strommen said one recent survey of youth whose parents are members of mainline Protestant denominations revealed 75 percent of the youth came from families that rarely, if ever, talk about faith in the home.

Churches can no longer conduct "business as usual" when it comes to family ministry, said Strommen. "The time has come to make family ministry a focus of our congregations."

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Pastor without a car finds  
help from family, church

By John Roberts

Baptist Press  
11/1/94

VARNVILLE, S.C. (BP)--A pastor needs a Bible, a pulpit and an automobile. He might get by without a car in some areas, but not in Varnville, S.C.

Church members are scattered widely through the community, and they like for the pastor to visit.

They especially look for his visits when they are in the hospital. And the Varnville people use hospitals in half a dozen cities -- Charleston, Augusta, Savannah, Columbia. Even "nearby" hospitals in Beaufort and Orangeburg are 50 miles away.

Don Turner has been pastor of Sand Hill Baptist Church, Varnville, the past 10 years. Transportation became a critical problem for him in April 1990, when he surrendered his license and stopped driving.

Turner had been troubled by temporal lobe seizures, a rare form of epilepsy, most of his adult life. Medication worked fine until four years ago; then the seizures got out of hand. The seizures locked him in a trance for 15 to 20 seconds, mild by comparison to epilepsy's "grand mal." But that was long enough to cause a driving accident.

So Turner stopped driving.

He prayed for a call to a church in a city where he could ride the bus, but God let him stay at Sand Hill. While he was wondering if his ministry was over, the people of the church rallied around him. Somebody was always available and ready to "drive the preacher."

His wife, Toni, and two college-student children, Dusty and Keri, did part of the driving. So did deacons and a long list of church members. "They were great," he says, "always there and eager to help."

It took three years for new medication to bring the seizures to an end, and another six months of good health for the Department of Motor Vehicles to approve a new driver's license. He received it Oct. 6, 1993. That was such an important day, he celebrated a year of renewed driving this past October.

Neurologists think his illness comes from a mild concussion at some point during his youth. They also think medication will keep the seizures from coming back.

Reflecting on God's goodness in his experience, many members of Sand Hill say it has drawn the church closer together as they shared in ministry.

Turner, meanwhile, says it has shown him how people feel who do not drive, what it means to be dependent on others. "It was a humbling experience," he says, "but also enriching."

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