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Liberia peace talks collapse;
missionaries ask for prayer

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press
11/30/94

MONROVIA, Liberia (BP)--An urgent call to prayer for the battered and bloody nation of Liberia has been issued by Southern Baptist missionaries there.

Peace talks between the west African country's warring factions have been suspended indefinitely, according to a Nov. 29 report from the British Broadcasting Corp. The collapse of negotiations dashes slim hopes for peace and raises the specter of intensified fighting in the country, which has been ravaged by civil war since 1989.

"This is a disappointing and ominous development," said Bradley Brown, one of 11 Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionaries still assigned to Liberia.

"The mood here is very somber. Everybody hoped the sides would hammer out a peace agreement because we knew this was the end of the road. Now we are doing the best we can day by day and waiting on the next word."

The Liberian capital, Monrovia, has been under the control of a west African peacekeeping force since 1990, but rural areas have been torn by fighting between various factions. The war has been marked by large-scale civilian massacres. Nearly half of Liberia's 2.5 million people have fled to Monrovia or to neighboring Ivory Coast.

Liberia has been more receptive to the gospel over the years than many African nations, said Felix Greer, a Southern Baptist missionary to Liberia now on furlough in Jackson, Miss. American blacks who founded the nation constituted a Baptist church on the ship over and Liberian Baptists formed a convention in 1880. Southern Baptists, who had placed missionaries there in 1846, returned to work alongside Liberian Baptists in 1960. By 1990, 73 Southern Baptist missionaries were assigned to Liberia, and 248 churches reported 1,184 baptisms.

Four years of civil war have driven many pastors and missionaries from the country, however. Currently only 11 Southern Baptist missionaries are assigned to the country, and the number of Baptist churches has been reduced to 226.

Yet suffering has opened people's hearts to the gospel, Greer said.

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"A lot of good things are happening in the midst of tragedy and war," he said. "In northern Liberia, we are seeing growth and baptisms in churches where the people haven't left. In Monrovia the churches are growing and people are growing spiritually."

The evidence abounds:

-- Liberian Baptists reported 1,750 baptisms over the past year, an increase of almost 50 percent over pre-civil war numbers.

-- Southern Baptist missionaries continue to play a significant role in United Nations relief efforts in Monrovia. The city has taken in about 900,000 refugees over the past four years.

-- The Baptist seminary enrolled 93 students this semester -- the largest number ever -- despite being forced into temporary quarters when peacekeeping troops occupied the campus.

-- Theological education by extension classes enrolled 560 students in 63 centers in Liberia, and 210 students in 11 centers among Liberian refugees in Ivory Coast.

-- A recent workshop on ministering to Muslims drew 150 people from 44 churches.

While intensified fighting could jeopardize missionaries in the country, prayers should focus on Liberia's needs, Brown said.

"It would be a mistake to put missionaries above the human suffering of Liberians, whose last, best hope for peace has been dashed," he said. "Pray for us that we will glorify God in our lives and service as we face a very uncertain future."

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**Annuity Board, Executive
Committee officials meet**

**Baptist Press
11/30/94**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Officials of the SBC Executive Committee and the Annuity Board met in Nashville Nov. 29 for discussions regarding proposed Annuity Board matters scheduled for a special meeting of the board's trustees Dec. 5 in Dallas.

Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee, hosted the one-day meeting held at the SBC building in Nashville.

Chapman said the discussions were informative and constructive but he could not provide any further details.

About 20 top officials of the two SBC agencies were at the meeting, including Fred Wolfe, chairman of the Executive Committee, and the Annuity Board's president, Paul Powell, and board chairman Richard C. Scott.

The Annuity Board's trustees will meet at 10 a.m. Dec. 5 at a special called meeting at a hotel at the Dallas/Fort Worth airport.

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**Man, travel trailer bank on
success of no-sex message**

By Terri Lackey

**Baptist Press
11/30/94**

HOUSTON (BP)--Four years ago, 38-year-old Charlie Maxwell chose to give up sex until he married. Today he carries the message of abstinence via a 24-foot Coachman travel trailer.

"I'm 38, single and never been married. I've been abstinent for four years because sex destroyed two of my relationships with two fine Christian sisters. I realized sex before marriage was certainly not God's intention for my life."

For Maxwell, believing so strongly in abstinence meant more than forfeiting sex. He also surrendered himself to austerity by giving up his home and a secure job last year to promote True Love Waits campaigns nationally.

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His passion for promoting abstinence started when he left his construction job in Houston and moved to Nashville in early 1994 to work with Interl'inc, the music company that co-produced the True Love Waits audiocassette and CD. Maxwell set up temporary residence in Nashville by plugging his trailer into an electrical outlet at the Interl'inc headquarters.

"I was allowed to be part of the national committee" which promoted the True Love Waits celebration in Washington in July 1994. The Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, headquartered in Nashville, is sponsor of the True Love Waits message.

Today, Maxwell runs his own company, Destiny Entertainment, producing and promoting True Love Waits nationally. He said he hopes to complete 25 rallies by the end of 1995 and reach 1 million more teenagers than the 211,000 commitment cards represented in the Washington celebration. His audiences are primarily teenagers, but he also wants single adults to heed the abstinence message.

"Many of us baby boomers have been sexually active because we are products of the 60s. When sex is the first leg instead of the last leg of a relationship, it can destroy all relational abilities," Maxwell said. "This campaign can offer sexually active single adults a chance at second virginity."

Maxwell's travels have taken him back to Houston where he is working with a committee of "dedicated" interdenominational church leaders who are planning a True Love Waits celebration and rally Feb. 13, 1995, at Houston's Summit Arena. He said plans are to base subsequent rallies on the Houston prototype.

The group, chaired by Ann Mather of Second Baptist Church, Houston, is holding the rally in coordination with the annual True Love Waits emphasis, which has been placed on the Southern Baptist denominational calendar in February, beginning in 1995.

Maxwell estimates 15,000 teenagers will attend the event.

The annual emphasis and rally are designed to show support for teens who already have made the commitment and those who want to make it, Maxwell said.

"We want to be able to visibly show kids in Houston who are thinking, 'I'm the only virgin,' that there are at least 15,000 who have made the same pledge," Maxwell said. "When the kids who have just made the pledge see all these other kids choosing to wait for God's perfect mate, it reinforces their own decisions."

One Houston youth leader doing his part in making a success of the February rally is Thomas Walker. Formerly a youth minister at Brentwood Baptist Church, Walker is taking the True Love Waits message to youth who attend inner city churches.

"Check yourself before you wreck yourself" is the creed Walker, a member of the Houston TLW rally steering committee, is presenting youth. Recently, Walker motivated more than 200 teens at his church, Windsor Village United Methodist, to sign pledge cards vowing abstinence. He said he plans to take 500 youth to the Feb. 13 celebration and rally.

"That's the type of work God has led me to do. I go into churches who are having youth nights, youth revivals or lock-ins and articulate the message from a youth perspective. I give them good, worldly and biblical reasons to say 'no' to sex."

To order Christian Sex Education Resources or True Love Waits planning kits, complete with suggestions on how to conduct the February emphasis, call 1-800-458-2772. Spanish or French language materials can be ordered by calling (703) 790-8980. For general information about True Love Waits, call 1-800-LUV-WAIT.

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(BP) photos (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press. They also are posted in the SBCNet News Room.

BSSB suspends Genesis Records

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Genesis Records, the recording label formed by the Baptist Sunday School Board in 1993, will be discontinued, effective Jan. 1, 1995, due to budget considerations.

Mark Blankenship, director of the board's music department, announced the decision on Nov. 29 "because of budget constraints for new ventures."

He said Genesis, which had signed vocal artists Amy Roth, Brent Lamb and southern gospel singing group Friends IV, would have required "three to four years to be a viable production entity."

The position of artist and repertoire consultant for Genesis, filled by Nashville booking agent Dan Mann, was the only fulltime job eliminated in the discontinuation of Genesis.

The print trade music imprint, Genevox Music Group, created by the board in 1986, will continue to produce music products for sale through trade outlets to churches and individuals. Print music under the imprints of Broadman Press, Van Ness Press and McKinney Press, is published by Genevox to meet non-curriculum needs of churches, as well as the leisure interests of individuals.

In a related announcement, Blankenship has realigned the music department's organization into sections of consultants and literary design, production, sales and marketing and office/music design.

One management position, vacant following the October retirement of Bill Leach, was eliminated in the reorganization.

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ACTS, FamilyNet and Dino team up for television world premiere

Baptist Press
11/30/94

By Shawn Switzer

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A televised world premiere featuring Dino Kartsonakis' latest longform video, Miracles, will be broadcast on ACTS (the American Christian Television System) and FamilyNet on New Year's Eve at 10 p.m. ET as a special feature on the Family Showcase series.

The longform Miracles video is companion to Dino's recent album release of the same name published by the Benson Music Group. The video, produced by Ken Berg, captures the progression and emotional impact of the Bible's greatest miracles like the Great Flood, Israel's flight out of Egypt and the New Testament's first recorded miracle of Jesus turning water into wine.

Shot on location from historic sites in the Holy Land, the video adds a unique quality to the musical interpretation. Much of the video was filmed in David's Tower otherwise known as the Citadel in the old city of Jerusalem. David T. Clydesdale, who is responsible for writing and arranging most of the pieces in the Miracles volume, conducts a full orchestra on the steps of David's Tower as depicted in the video.

Berg dramatically interprets the Bible's miracles on video and choreographs it with Dino's instrumentals. Berg depicts the Exodus out of Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea in such a way that leaves nothing to the imagination.

The miracle of God breathing life into Ezekial's dead bones is illustrated artistically with the use of musical instruments.

The musical series of Miracles has been acclaimed "one of the most powerfully orchestrated records of Dino's career." Dynamic instrumental sounds and miracle interpretations are played by the Royal London Orchestra.

"This project came into being through my desire to present the great miracles of the Bible. Beginning with creation, to the greatest of all miracles ... salvation!" Dino said.

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Deborah Key, vice president of network operations at the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, accompanied Dino and the production team on their recent trip to Israel. "Miracles has an extremely powerful message through its descriptive music," Key said.

"The fact that the video was shot in the Holy Land is going to give the film a timeless quality that will never grow old," Key said. "Each song in the Miracles album is very classical in nature. It doesn't have a kind of pop sound that 10 years from now might sound out dated."

"The Miracles album is best enjoyed when you read the lyrics to each song because it helps to visualize the scene taking place," Key said. "The video gives a visual interpretation of the music and this is one reason why the video is so incredibly powerful."

ACTS and FamilyNet are major sponsors of Dino's 1995 Miracles World Tour kicking off Jan. 3 in Shanghai, China. The 165-plus city tour will showcase Miracles with a multi-media presentation which incorporates the longform video presentation projected onto two 12-by-14 foot screens.

For the first 60 days of 1995 the Miracles longform video will be offered exclusively to ACTS and FamilyNet viewers. The cost for each video is \$19.95 plus \$3 shipping and handling. The Miracles video will not be sold in stores during this time.

Miracles will repeat on ACTS and FamilyNet on Easter weekend. FamilyNet stations are urged to carry the program live, but have the option of tape delaying the premiere at another time. Check local FamilyNet station for date and time.

Dino Kartsonakis' musical talent has taken him down a 30 year path of success. He has won a Religion in Media Award, a Grammy nomination and seven Dove Awards for Instrumental Album of the Year and Instrumentalist of the Year.

ACTS programs eight hours a day on the Faith and Values Channel and is available on more than 1300 cable systems with 20.7 million subscribers. FamilyNet provides programming for 160 broadcast stations with a potential audience of 49 million people.

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(BP) photos available upon request from the public relations office of the Radio and Television Commission, SBC at (817) 737-401.

**Baehr says Hollywood
changing for the better**

By C.C. Risenhoover

**Baptist Press
11/30/94**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--When one asks Ted Baehr what motivates him, he replies, "God's call, a passion for cleaning up media, and a passion for families and children."

Baehr recently received a "Covenant" award from the SBC Radio and Television Commission. He is founder and CEO of the Atlanta-based, The Christian Film and Television Commission.

He said he grew up in the movie industry as a pagan, but his life was turned upside-down when he came to Christ in 1975.

"Until Christ came into my life, I didn't seriously object to the pornography and violence in movies and television," he said. "Like a lot of people, I considered much of it artistic license."

Baehr's father and mother were actors. His father was a star in western movies who performed under the stage name Bob "Tex" Allen. His father, however, left Hollywood for the New York stage because he didn't like what was happening in the industry.

Baehr does not approach the Hollywood community with condemnation but with the message of Christ.

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"My time is dedicated to changing the lives of top Hollywood talent and executives," he said. "The way to change media for the good is to change the lives of those who produce it. And the only way to truly change a person's views is for them to have Christ in their life. They have to be changed from the inside out."

Baehr said the perception of many in Hollywood is the church is trying to bludgeon them.

"A redemptive process has to take place before a person can truly understand," he said. "Christ has to come into his or her life."

Baehr said he is greatly encouraged by what is happening in Hollywood.

"Ten years ago only two family films were produced in Hollywood," he said. "And in 1992 there were six, only three of which measured up to our biblically-based standards. But there was a real breakthrough in 1993 and 1994. In 1994 there were 75 family films produced, and we were able to recommend 32 of them."

A list of recommended films is printed biweekly in MOVIEGUIDE, the official publication of The Christian Film and Television Commission.

"In 1990 we did a survey of films produced in the '80s and found that 81 percent were PG-13 or R-rated, yet 90 percent of the top money makers were family films."

His findings surprised some movie makers, Baehr said. Others were appalled or angered by them. No matter what the reaction to his revelation, he thinks there will be tremendous positive changes in Hollywood in the future.

"First, as the population gets older, there will be an even greater movement toward family films," he said. "Teens may want rough, slasher-type movies, but a recent Gallup Poll shows that 80 percent of the people over 50 want family films. Until at least 2009, I think the movement will be toward family films. I think there will be a growing moral mood in the country."

"Second, many of the decision makers in Hollywood have children. How movies and television influence their own children is causing many of them to change their attitudes."

"The third and most important influence is the growth of Christianity in Hollywood. There has been dramatic growth."

Baehr said a 1979 poll of the media elite showed only seven percent associated with a church or some form of religion. By 1989 that had grown to 36 percent, and in 1994 it was 60 percent.

"There are 60 prime time TV shows," he said, "and 45 to 46 producers for those shows. Nine years ago only one producer of a prime time TV show was a Christian. In 1993, there were 19. And in 1994, there are 21."

Baehr said one of the major problems within the church is that "we love the theology of fear." The major need, he said, is for more grace in the Christian faith.

"I just know that when Christians take a stand, God will move. And one of the stands we should take is to be more active in educating our children about media. We must teach our kids how to use media the right way. We need to be more active in teaching our values, more engaged."

In addition to publishing MOVIEGUIDE, Baehr is host/producer of the daily syndicated USA Network radio program "MOVIEGUIDE: A Biblical Guide to Movies and Entertainment." The program is aired weekly on "Family News in Focus."

The MOVIEGUIDE television program is broadcast nationwide by FamilyNet. Baehr also writes a weekly column published in newspapers and magazines throughout the country. In addition, he hosts a weekly news analysis/interview radio program, "The Ted Baehr Show."

Baehr graduated summa cum laude in comparative literature from the Ivy League Dartmouth College (New Hampshire) and earned a Juris Doctor from New York University School of Law. He also studied at the University of Bordeaux and Toulouse, University of Munich and Cambridge University, and completed his theological studies at the Institute of Theology.

Author of a number of books, Baehr lectures and speaks extensively. He is also often a guest on Christian and secular radio and television shows.

Baehr and his wife, Liliana, have four children.

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Northwest Baptists mark
passing of an era

By Donald J. Sorensen

Baptist Press
11/30/94

WENATCHEE, Wash. (BP)--Messengers to the 47th annual meeting of the Northwest Baptist Convention reaffirmed support of the Cooperative Program, protested closing of a Baptist Book store, reacted to the recent vote in Oregon approving doctor-assisted suicide, and spent an evening in tribute to Cecil Sims, who is retiring after 14 years as executive director.

Elected president was Mitch Martin, pastor of Quinault Baptist Church, Kennewick, Wash. He had finished the term of the previous president who resigned. Elected first vice president was Mark Bradley, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Pullman, Wash., and second vice president is Terry Little, pastor of Pines Baptist Church, Spokane, Wash.

The 450 messengers approved a budget of \$2,022,406, a 9.9 percent increase over the previous year. The percentage forwarded to the Cooperative Program remains at 31 percent.

A highlight of the convention Nov. 15-16 was the recognition given Sims for his 40 years as a pastor and convention leader in the Northwest. "We mark the retirement of one of the most effective and influential leaders in our history," read a resolution of appreciation. "It is with deepest gratitude and recognition of all he and Jeannine (his wife) have done that we are privileged to honor them."

Also resolved was a "request that the Sunday School Board reassess the closure of the store in the Northwest and we request that the Baptist Book store (in Vancouver, Wash.) remain open to continue to effectively meet the needs of the churches in the Northwest."

Another resolution, in response to the recent Oregon vote, stressed Northwest Baptists "affirm the sacredness of life and find doctor-assisted suicide morally reprehensible."

Other resolutions asked the convention to "support generously the Cooperative Program" and going on record as opposing "any legal influence to set out homosexual relationships as having the status of special protection as a civil right."

The 1995 annual meeting will be Nov. 14-16 in Eugene, Ore.

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D.C. Baptists voice
repentance for racism

Baptist Press
11/30/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--The District of Columbia Baptist Convention unanimously affirmed a "Declaration of Repentance" for racism during its 118th annual meeting, Nov. 17-18 at East Washington Heights Baptist Church in the nation's capital.

The declaration voices "public repentance and apology" to "all persons of African descent for condoning and perpetuating individual and systematic racism in our lifetime." The convention's executive director/minister, Jere Allen, is one of four authors of the document, which was adopted by several state conventions this fall.

An operating budget of \$996,424 was adopted for 1995. Of this total, \$388,000 is expected to come from DC convention churches. The dually-aligned convention will forward 27 percent of its contributions to the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program and the American Baptist Churches' United Mission Offering, an increase of 2 percent over last year.

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A white layman, Jerold "Jerry" Williamson of suburban First Baptist Church, Bethesda, Md., was elected president; an African American woman, Mattie Robinson of Shiloh Baptist Church in the inner city, was elected vice president. The outgoing president, Ishmael Shaw, is an urban, African American pastor. All committee appointments strove for racial and gender inclusiveness, convention officials said.

Special music was multicultural: choirs from Iglesia Bautista de Washington, a Hispanic congregation, and Paramount Baptist and Israel Baptist churches, African American congregations; and soloists Marilyn Dunn and Michael Miller from predominantly white congregations.

As a sign of the strength within the convention, Allen in his report indicated the number of "covenanting churches" has increased from 10 to 29. These churches entered into a special relationship, pledging at least 2 percent of their undesignated budgets for global mission. Allen and Shaw's visits to these churches helped bring about that increase.

Featured speakers were Henry Blackaby, director of prayer and spiritual awakening for the SBC Home Mission Board; Emmett Johnson, national coordinator for the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A.; Suzan Johnson Cook, pastor, Mariner's Temple Baptist Church, New York City; and Clarence Newsome, dean, Howard University School of Divinity.

The convention's 1995 annual meeting will be Nov. 16-17, a Monday-Tuesday, instead of Thursday-Friday as has been customary, at suburban Vienna Baptist Church.

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Religion, schools guide provides
new solutions to 'culture wars'

Baptist Press
11/30/94

ARLINGTON, Va. (BP)--In the midst of a burning political and ideological debate about prayer in school, The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University has released a new publication, Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion.

"The guide was designed to help school officials across the country as they deal with religious issues," said Charles Haynes, who edited the guide while working as a Visiting Professional Scholar at The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at the Nashville, Tenn., university.

"It proposes bold new strategies for resolving conflicts over the role of religion in public education and is built on consensus guidelines agreed to by a broad spectrum of religion and educational organizations," said Haynes, recognized as one of the nation's leading authorities in this field.

The guide was released at a conference at The Freedom Forum World Center Nov. 28 in Arlington.

"The role of religion and the First Amendment in public schools is an area that needs to be addressed. This guide deals with those issues," said John Seigenthaler, chairman, The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center.

Haynes said, "The guide demonstrates that the religious liberty clauses of the First Amendment can provide a civic framework for negotiating even our deepest differences."

Several church-state attorneys from all sides of the dispute about the role of religion in schools lauded the guide. They include Bob Peck, American Civil Liberties Union; Steve McFarland, Christian Legal Society; Forest Montgomery, National Association of Evangelicals; and Rabbi David Saperstein, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Haynes has worked closely with First Amendment attorney Oliver Thomas, who served as legal editor of the guide, over the past decade. They have developed successful strategies, which are included in the guide, for addressing religion and school questions in communities across the country.

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The guide addresses, within the framework of the Constitution, such issues as:

- prayer in school.
- religion in the curriculum.
- protections for the religious rights of students.
- religious holidays.
- equal access.

"Public schools must be places where Americans forge a common vision for the common good," said Haynes, "not the storm center for conflict. The aim of the schools must be fairness to citizens of all faiths or none. We can take religion seriously in public education while simultaneously protecting the conscience of every parent and student.

"Failure to do this threatens the future of public schools and calls into question the vision of America as one nation of many peoples and faiths," said Haynes.

The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University is an independent operating program of The Freedom Forum. The Center was established by The Freedom Forum, one of the nation's largest foundations, on Dec. 15, 1991, the 200th anniversary of the ratification of the Bill of Rights to the U.S. Constitution.

The First Amendment Center's mission is to foster a better public understanding of and appreciation for First Amendment rights and values. Including freedom of religion, free speech and press, and the right to petition government and to assemble peacefully.

The Freedom Forum does not accept unsolicited grant applications and makes limited grants only in connection with its programs and at the direction of its trustees. Neither does it solicit or accept contributions. Its work is supported by an endowment established by Frank E. Gannett in 1935 that has grown to more than \$700 million in diversified, managed assets.

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**Change, vision seen as
factors in mission starts**

By David Winfrey

**Baptist Press
11/30/94**

ATLANTA (BP)--Change, vision and diversity are key factors facing local churches starting mission work, according to a group of directors of missions, pastors and state Baptist leaders meeting with Home Mission Board officials.

The board's office of missions development sponsored the November conference to discuss ways to encourage local congregations to plant new churches, sponsor new ministries and take the gospel to people outside the church walls.

The conference also promoted "Start Something New," an emphasis in 1995 for churches to sponsor new missions work, said Nelson Tilton, director of the missions development office.

Christians face a variety of changes both in the church and in society Tilton said. From the secularization of America to greater ethnic diversity in the Southern Baptist Convention, churches and directors of missions are looking for new answers, some said.

"When I started preaching, man, there was no discussion about approving abortion or homosexuality as a lifestyle," said Don Brent, state director of missions for Oklahoma.

"The prominence of the pastor in the community was a real situation then, and now he's not accepted as the professional who is looked up to by the whole community," he said.

Loren Mead, founder of the Alban Institute for improving congregations, compared the church today to the Jews who were defeated and moved to pagan Babylon.

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Rather than being discouraged, Mead noted it was then the Jewish community incorporated their faith into their family customs and celebrations.

"It was in the years in Babylon that the people of the Jewish faith had their most creative years," he said. "In Babylon, they wrote the Bible, built synagogues."

Conferees discussed several general topics while leaders offered specific examples of Christians trying new ideas.

Robert Chochran of the Palm Lake Baptist Association in Florida said the association there attempts to overcome ethnic diversity between Anglo, Hispanic, African-American and Creole Baptists.

Rather than having one contact person in each program for each ethnic group, the association had formed "trans-cultural" committees with representatives of each group to work with churches in missions, discipleship and WMU.

Regarding vision, Tilton said the challenge is to encourage local congregations to adopt their own vision for reaching their community while being prepared to help them achieve that vision.

"Many of them will not buy into someone else's vision until they have decided it's their own," he said. "We don't want to superimpose one on them."

Discussion about diversity was not limited to ethnic differences, Tilton said. Other differences affecting Baptist associations and churches include worship styles, missions management or the types of people being reached.

"Some of them are dealing with diversity of social lifestyles, which are causing more situations than ethnic diversity," he said.

Tilton said afterwards a goal for the conference was to encourage directors of missions and pastors to risk trying new things.

"They feel like they've gotten some freedom to try some things," he said. "We certainly wanted to move them out of some old traditions that may or may not be working and dare them to take on some brand new stuff."

Conferees also discussed the importance of empowering the laity to get involved in missions, he said.

"They (laity) are wanting to take leadership," Tilton said. "Turn them loose and let them do it. It's risky, but we've got to."

While some pastors may see lay leadership as a threat, others will be relieved to have help doing missions work, he said.

"It's got pluses and minuses," he said. "Some people will goof it up and some people will do it well. But if we don't empower the laity we don't have a ghost of a chance."

Tilton touted Start Something New as an opportunity for churches and directors of missions to respond to the local, unique needs.

Rather than impose one brand of evangelism, church starting or ministry, Start Something New allows churches and associations to try whatever members see needed in their communities, he said.

"Start Something New is going to allow these people to do anything to meet those challenges," he said. "It's going to allow them to take on any challenge out there that they think is important."

More information about Start Something New is available from associational directors of missions, the state convention office or the Home Mission Board's office of missions development.

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(BP) photo of local leaders attending the meeting mailed to state Baptist newspapers in Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Nevada, New England, North Carolina, and Texas.

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