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Virginia conservative group
to form 'state convention'

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
12/9/94

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist conservatives in Virginia took an unprecedented step Dec. 8 with the announcement they will study the "procedures and requirements for the establishment of ... a separate state convention."

The action came during a meeting in Richmond of the group's executive committee which, according to a news release, unanimously passed a resolution starting the process.

Bob R. Melvin, the organization's president and pastor of Spotswood Baptist Church, Fredericksburg, will appoint a special committee to study the procedures and requirements and then recommend the action to the executive committee "not later than its May 1995 meeting."

The conservative group also invited Virginia Baptist churches, "who wish to do so," to channel their Cooperative Program gifts for the Southern Baptist Convention budget through the "Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia" group. The organization listed a Virginia Beach address.

The news release advised Virginia churches the SBCV "is not yet a state convention and has no annuity plan agreement with the SBC Annuity Board.

"Consequently, all churches should continue to send \$35 per month per annuity plan participant to the Baptist General Association of Virginia."

Baptist Press contacted the office of Reginald M. McDonough, executive director of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, for comment but McDonough was out of the office and not available for comment at the time.

The Virginia conservatives' plan would be a historic and unprecedented step. Apparently, conservatives in Texas also are considering a new state convention and a charter for a new Texas Baptist convention was filed with the state of Texas by a Houston conservative, Walt Carpenter. In both states, moderates have generally controlled the state organization, while conservatives have controlled the Southern Baptist Convention.

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T.C. Pinckney, spokesman for the conservative group, said the action "represents a course of action forced upon conservatives, not a choice sought by most conservative leaders." Pinckney, a retired Air Force officer from Alexandria, Va., and a member of the SBC Executive Committee from the state, defended the group's action in a commentary in the December issue of the Virginia conservative publication, "Baptist Banner."

"As long as the Baptist General Association of Virginia constitution provided a level playing field where conservatives had a fair chance through education and inspiration to bring about change in Virginia through voting at the annual BGAV convention, conservatives around the state counseled that we should hang in there and work toward a voting majority. Achieving a majority vote is no longer possible," Pinckney said.

Pinckney said the BGAV constitution was amended some years back to permit conservative churches, "which could not in good conscience contribute to the official state budget," to design their own giving plan, to decide for themselves what proportion of their Cooperative Program dollars should be kept by the state and what percentage should be sent on to Nashville, Tenn., the SBC budget.

"That change permitted conservative churches to remain supportive of the BGAV to the extent compatible with their consciences," Pinckney said.

"The BGAV constitutional amendment passed last month in Salem (Va.) reduces messengers authorized to conservative churches and only to conservative churches. It does this by changing the historical provision that all money contributed by a church to the Cooperative Program counted toward authorizing messengers to the annual state convention," Pinckney said. "That is no longer the case"

Michael J. Clingenpeel, editor of the state convention's newspaper, The Religious Herald, in an editorial in the Nov. 24 edition, described "What Happened in Salem -- And Why?" Clingenpeel said Virginia messengers felt the changes were fair, regardless of motivation, and "in the future, churches that pay the band will name the tune."

Regarding implications of the Salem vote, Clingenpeel said the change does not make a "takeover of the BGAV impossible, though almost certainly it will dilute the potential voting strength of the conservative minority in the BGAV (Any) future takeover will be accomplished only by individuals and churches who financially support the BGAV, which is altogether proper."

There were 202 conservative churches who had remained supportive of the BGAV by designing their own giving plan (under the old constitution), Pinckney said, representing 13.03 percent of the total number in the state. "But they (were also) faithful to the Cooperative Program, giving 18.78 percent of the CP dollars contributed in 1993" by Virginia churches.

Using the new constitutional formula passed this year, Pinckney said 195 of those 202 churches would have their messenger representation cut.

In his commentary, Pinckney added a consoling note.

"If we must go, let it be with prayer for God's leadership. Let it be with sorrow and regret. We loved the BGAV. At one time the BGAV was a great, leading state convention. It is sad now to see it dwindling and atrophying under no doubt sincere but drastically misguided, divisive, anti-SBC and counterproductive policies. So let us carefully and temperately seek a new way. With sorrow and regret. Without rancor or hard feelings. With best wishes and sincere prayers for those left behind."

ANALYSIS

Cooperation-representation questions
seen in creation of new convention

By Herb Hollinger

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--If a conservative group in Virginia forms a new state Baptist convention, as announced Dec. 8 in Richmond, at least two areas of relationships between state organizations and the Southern Baptist Convention will be in the spotlight: cooperation and representation.

Observers of the SBC scene say two competing state organizations would be a first, although there have been instances where churches in one state have affiliated with another state convention. But the relationship between state conventions and the SBC is fulfilled basically in cooperation and representation.

Cooperation is in areas like support and promotion of the Cooperative Program, which historically has been a church/state convention/SBC pipeline for supporting missions. Also, state conventions have formally and informally cooperated with the various SBC agencies in receiving financial assistance for mission work, assistance in training and resources.

Representation is in the area of boards of trustees and directors of the various SBC entities. Here, the SBC constitution gives a formula -- based on the number of members in cooperating churches -- for which agencies the state will have representation and how many it will have on each board.

The question as to how the SBC will relate to two organizations in a state via these two channels is not easily answered.

"If a second convention is organized within a state, it will obviously require more study because all of the questions have not yet been determined, much less the answers," said Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

"While I see the need to rethink how the SBC would work in an environment in which there are two state Baptist general bodies, my opinion is that cooperation with a second state convention is not legally outside the parameters of the constitution and bylaws of the Southern Baptist Convention," Chapman said.

Roy J. Smith, executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, is president of the national group of state convention executive directors. He said he believes the proposed Virginia action would cause fragmentation, frustration and conflict.

"The action ... reflects the continuing fragmentation in Southern Baptist life," Smith told Baptist Press. "The contemplated action to organize a separate conservative state convention will no doubt generate frustration and conflict among many of the churches as they seek to decide how to relate to mission responsibilities and opportunities in the state of Virginia."

The SBC Executive Committee is, traditionally, the first contact point for a new state convention in representation at the national level. But the process probably was not designed with the thought there would be two competing organizations in a state.

Even though the SBC constitution does have an article titled "Definition of a State," (Article 13), it simply says the District of Columbia "shall be regarded as a state for the purpose" of the SBC.

Elsewhere in the SBC constitution and bylaws, there appears to be an assumption that there would be one (state) convention for each geographical state, except where two or more states form a regional convention.

SBC bylaw 32 speaks to "representation from qualified states and territories." This bylaw governs the number of trustees, commissioners, directors and even members of the SBC Executive Committee which will come from each "state." However, the bylaw doesn't define what it means by a "state or defined territory."

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As a first step, a "state" can have representation on the SBC Executive Committee, the Committee on Committees and the Committee on Nominations when it has 15,000 members. The "state" files an application with the SBC Executive Committee, "prior to its February meeting," which triggers a study by the Executive Committee of the request. The committee then makes a recommendation to the SBC "at its next annual meeting."

But James Guenther, Nashville attorney and the SBC legal counsel, sees the representation process not having a connection with a state convention per se. He said the representation called for in the SBC bylaws is based on the total Baptist membership in the state. Thus the total number from a certain state on SBC boards and agencies would be based on the total number of members in cooperating churches, regardless of which state organization their churches were affiliated or even if they affiliated with more than one.

That could mean a record-keeping burden for the SBC which, for its representation purposes, is ultimately responsible for determining how many members are in the state. In essence, it has left that chore up to the state conventions, heretofore.

It may be that "Southern Baptist" history is in the making.

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Survey reveals teens pray,
read Bible, lie and cheat

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
12/9/94

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A recent survey of Southern Baptist teenagers revealed 68 percent lie to their parents, 29 percent would lie for a friend to keep him out of trouble and 44 percent cheat on tests.

Of the nearly 5,000 teens surveyed at 1994 winter and summer youth conferences, one-fourth (24 percent) indicated they had at some time considered suicide, 21 percent reported they drink alcoholic beverages and 65 percent admitted to saying "bad things about people behind their backs."

"We conduct these surveys each year as a basis to format future curriculum and resources," said Clyde Hall, manager of the Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division youth section. "However, some of the answers we are seeing are startling."

Hall presented the survey findings to state discipleship and family ministry leaders at the Sunday School Board in early December for annual meetings.

Of the 4,959 youth who participated in the survey, a sample of 500 was analyzed, according to Hall, who said the findings cannot be projected to all Southern Baptist youth, but only to those who participated in the survey. Fifty-five percent of the sample group were female and 45 percent were male.

"In previous years, our surveys have focused on specific issues such as anger and violence or the New Age movement," Hall said. "The 1994 survey was more of a general survey involving personal beliefs and practices. We asked them questions about suicide, their feelings toward homosexuality, how often they read the Bible and their beliefs about pregnancy and premarital sex."

Sixty-eight percent said they believe sex before marriage is wrong, but 17 percent indicated they were unsure of their beliefs about premarital sex.

"That 17 percent added to the 6 percent who said sex before marriage is OK and the 8 percent who said sex is OK if they love each other adds up to 31 percent who are unwilling to believe what the Scripture says about sex," Hall said.

The largest portion of males (39 percent) answered yes to the question, "Would you marry a girl if you got her pregnant?" Twenty-four percent answered, "it depends," and 3 percent answered, no. Thirty-two percent said they would not have sex before marriage.

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Of the females who were asked if they would have an abortion if they got pregnant, 57 percent responded no, 11 percent said it depends, and 2 percent said yes. Twenty-one percent said they are choosing to wait until marriage for sexual intercourse.

On the issue of homosexuality, 80 percent of the sample survey of teens indicated they felt the alternative lifestyle was wrong; 9 percent said it was OK for someone else, but not for them; 8 percent were unsure about how they felt; 2 percent said it was OK; and 1 percent did not indicate an opinion.

Of the 21 percent who said they drink alcoholic beverages, four out of five said they do so "monthly or less."

Ninety-three percent of the sample group surveyed reported they are Christians; 5 percent were not sure. Forty-one percent indicated they read their Bible weekly, and 73 percent said they pray daily.

"This is where some of the confusion comes in for me," Hall said. "We have these teen-agers, the majority of them are Christians, they read their Bible and they pray. So why are some of these answers so dismal?"

That's the same question Josh McDowell posed before launching his "Right from Wrong" campaign recently.

McDowell, a widely known speaker and writer from California, told state directors at the same annual meeting the No. 1 problem facing America today is that "evangelical, fundamental church kids no longer believe in biblical moral absolutes."

"Kids and adults today know no truths apart from themselves. When it comes to ethics and reality, everything is negotiable. There is no objective standard. What might be right for you isn't right for me" is the prevalent belief in society today, he said.

McDowell based his comments on the results of a survey commissioned by the Barna Research group which revealed youth are living on the edge of morality.

"Large proportions of our youth -- a majority of whom say they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ -- are involved in inappropriate, immoral, even illegal behavior."

McDowell said youth who do not accept biblically based moral absolutes are posing giant threats to the church.

The Sunday School Board is working with McDowell and other publishers to release a full line of curriculum in June 1995 which supports McDowell's "Right from Wrong" campaign.

Meanwhile, Hall said the discipleship youth area has resources now available and some soon to be released to help young people deal with troubles posed them in today's society.

Some of the resources presently available, Hall said, are "Killers: Alcohol and Other Drugs," a support and recovery group resource; "Trauma Center Plus," a youth issues portfolio that deals with abortion, dating, AIDS, school, home, occult, media and suicide, among other issues; and "Violence, the Desensitized Generation," which deals with Christian ethics and beliefs about various issues of violence.

"Fake Answers," a compilation of lessons revealing real answers to falsehoods with which youth are bombarded, will be released in April 1995. Hall said youth can get real answers to the New Age movement, alcohol and drugs, the occult, suicide, music, reincarnation, homosexuality and pornography.

Youth materials can be ordered by calling 1-800-458-2772.

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Baptist money feeding
victims of Yugoslavian war

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press
12/9/94

MOSTAR, Bosnia (BP)--When a truckload of food sent by Southern Baptists pulls up outside a church in an apartment complex riddled with bomb holes, word spreads through the neighborhood and people quickly line up.

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In moments, \$10,000 worth of flour, cooking oil, sugar and other food is carried away by residents of Mostar, Bosnia. The money that bought the food began its trip in offering plates of Southern Baptist churches in America. At the receiving end, church workers personally hand out food to those needing it.

Diplomacy's failure to stop the Yugoslavian war means such money is more important than ever. About 90 percent of Mostar's people -- who numbered some 120,000 before the war -- are out of work. Many buildings, especially on the Muslim side, have been bombed into rubble. Factories and agricultural fields alike sit idle.

Over the past year, Southern Baptists have poured more than \$500,000 worth of food and medicines into this ravaged region -- in a ministry to physical and spiritual needs which has preserved life and brought hope amidst destruction. The support has helped Serbs, Croats and Bosnians alike.

By buying most foodstuffs in the area, Southern Baptist missionary Bill Steele has made the money go as far as possible. Steele, who coordinates Southern Baptist work in southern Europe, including the former Yugoslavia area, has traveled almost non-stop over the past three years to coordinate the massive aid program.

Steele routinely passes United Nations checkpoints and bombed out buildings as he skirts the war zones to visit Southern Baptist missionaries or Baptists in isolated areas. At one point between Split, Croatia, and Mostar, Bosnia, he crosses over a temporary pontoon bridge thrown up to replace the one destroyed by bombs.

He has worked closely with evangelical Christians, mostly Baptists, who reside on all sides of this fractured and bloody field. Baptist pastors in Belgrade have said outside donations of food, mostly through the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, are all that is keeping many Baptists there alive.

In Mostar, Steele has worked with a small evangelical congregation of about 200 members thought to be the only active evangelical congregation in Bosnia. Mostar is encircled by high, rocky mountains and divided into three warring factions -- virtually a smaller copy of better-known Sarejevo. United Nations troops have been keeping the sides apart. If those troops pull out, open warfare could return soon afterward.

The face of Mostar pastor Nikola Skrinjaric is lined with stress that comes from being a bearer of peace in a land where there is no peace. The church meets in several crude rooms of an apartment complex whose walls have several holes from artillery shells.

Skrinjaric, Croat by birth, was working in Rijeka, Croatia, in 1992 as a truck driver for the relief work of Croatian Baptists. On Christmas Day 1992 he drove his first truckload of food to Mostar. "It was a dead city when I arrived," he recalled. He saw the bombed out buildings, streets covered with dirt and garbage. He was afraid, he admitted.

But he stayed four days anyway, working with a handful of older members of a defunct Pentecostal church to distribute food. The experience moved him and he sensed God leading him to return. He did in January 1993 and stayed as a relief worker. Mortar rounds were being fired into the city each day.

Once a grenade landed near him. "I thought I was dead. I was in shock for a week," he recalled.

When Peter McKenzie, now pastor of Zagreb Baptist Church, came to lead a church service, Skrinjaric gave his testimony and a boy who heard him dedicated his life to Christ. From that simple beginning Skrinjaric began organizing a church which soon grew to more than 200 members. There would be more members but many have fled the country.

"It was very easy to share the love of Christ with these people. It was obvious we loved them because we were sharing the bad times with them and we didn't have to," he said.

A major test came when he and some members visited a village in the mountains that surround Mostar. They were pinned down there for a week when fierce fighting broke out nearby. At one point a Croatian soldier handed Skrinjaric a rifle and ordered him to shoot.

"If I hadn't taken the rifle, they would have considered me a traitor," he said, weeping as he recalled the scene. As he prayed for guidance, a clear message came to him from God that he would not have to fire even one bullet. Eventually they were able to return to Mostar -- without having to shoot.

Skrinjaric has developed a 15-member leadership team to guide the congregation and has developed house churches to improve the fellowship and Bible study of members. For the past two years they have led members in MasterLife, the Southern Baptist program of Christian discipleship used around the world. More recently Skrinjaric has also opened new work south of Mostar.

But for now relief work remains their central focus. Skrinjaric hopes to begin delivering food into the hard-hit Muslim community soon -- a risky venture because many Croats will not approve of helping their Muslim enemies.

But the pastor is adamant. "Because of Christ, we have to do it," he said.

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet News Room.

**N eds still great
in Yugoslav war zone**

By Mike Creswell

**Baptist Press
12/9/94**

ZAGREB, Croatia (BP)--As another grim Christmas nears in the former Yugoslavia, the need for food in Croatia continues to be as great as ever.

An estimated 300,000 Bosnian refugees are in Croatia alone, aid workers say. Numbers fluctuate constantly as Bosnians come and go, depending on how close troops are to their homes.

"What would you do if you were my age and lost everything? There are no easy answers," said Zicanovic Hloprioedor, 51. A former defense department worker, he and his wife, Dika, live in a rented apartment in suburban Zagreb.

He now works with Zavicajua Zajedlhucal, a humanitarian organization he said has helped resettled 3,500 Bosnian, Croat and Muslim refugees in private homes in the Zagreb area. "Donations have dwindled and we have had to turn to the Red Cross for help," he said with translation help from Nela Williams, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionary in Zagreb.

Often men send their wives and families to Croatia or elsewhere while they try to stay and protect the family home from looters. But if troops arrive, the men sometimes are forced to leave as well, just to keep alive. Hloprioedor guesses at least 50 Bosnians are driven from their homes each week, based on the numbers of refugees they see.

Kika Hloprioedor spent two months in a concentration camp before the Red Cross helped get them out, she said. "I could see people killed every day," she said. Physicians or educated people were singled out for death or ill treatment, she said.

For now, the fiercest fighting continues to be in eastern Bosnia. Fighting continues in Prijedor, her hometown, she said.

The harsh realities of war have led to many psychological problems and a high rate of suicide among Bosnian refugees, she said.

That view is supported by Enisa Curtovic, president of the Women's Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an aid organization aimed mostly at helping women -- especially Muslim women driven out of Bosnia.

"They have inescapable problems," she said of the Muslim women. Many have been raped or hurt in fighting. Because of their religion, they are looked down on by others in the area, even if they are university-educated professional workers.

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Using funds primarily from humanitarian organizations in Western Europe, the organization helps provide counseling, therapy and jobs skills training to refugee women, said coordinator Emsuda Mujagic. "We aim to keep the dignity and integrity of Bosnian women," she said.

"There's less food coming in now but the needs are still great," said Ivan Vacek, who works with Duhovha Stuarmost, which was a Baptist publishing house in Zagreb until the war. Now it's a relief agency which distributed some 5,000 tons of food during 1993.

A Baptist layman, Vacek has driven trucks into Bosnia several times to deliver food, sometimes taking four days to cover just a few miles because of war conditions.

This Christmas he's helped distribute more than 140,000 Christmas gift boxes for children.

Like many outside observers, Vacek worries about the long-term consequences of the war. "We should be sending English teachers into Bosnia now," he said. "If we do not, Muslims will teach Arabic and that will be a long-term problem."

Southern Baptists have provided more than \$500,000 in food and medicine for the Yugoslavian region in the past year alone. But they have expressed long-term interest in other ways as well. This fall two new career foreign missionary couples arrived in Zagreb to begin ministry. They will join with Williams, already there, to share the gospel and minister in the city.

One couple is Richard and Beverly Bell, parents of three children ages 9, 4 and 2. Bell has worked as a veterinarian in Ohio and Texas and earlier as a volunteer on a Southern Baptist-backed cattle project in Croatia.

Jeff and Brigitte Ritchey will focus on theological education and discipleship training. Jeff is from Texas, where he served as pastor. Brigitte is the daughter of missionaries and grew up in Zimbabwe, Africa. The Ritcheys have three children, ages 6, 4 and 1.

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Brotherhood Commission partners
with Dad the Family Shepherd

By Bob Carey

Baptist Press
12/9/94

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Seeking to provide Christian men with positive spiritual role models and training, the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission has announced a new partnership with Dad the Family Shepherd ministry of Little Rock, Ark.

"I believe that missions begins at home. Dad the Family Shepherd targets one of America's critical needs -- positive male spiritual leadership in the home," said James D. Williams, Brotherhood Commission president. "We want Baptist laymen to humbly accept this important role of servanthood and become the father and husband that God intends."

"We are excited about partnering with the Brotherhood Commission," said Norm Hoggard, Dad the Family Shepherd president. "We have ministered for years in Baptist churches and want to continue to be a servant to them, training their men to be champions in the home and in their church."

"We see the absence of the father in the home, be it physically or spiritually, as the root of many of the problems facing Americans," Hoggard added.

As part of its newly defined role of equipping men's ministries in local churches, the Brotherhood Commission has been traveling to various parts of the country listening to men.

One of the major requests has been to provide training in men's issues and fathering skills as men seek to follow the Great Commission, beginning in their home. For that reason, Brotherhood began to look at programs providing those services.

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Dad the Family Shepherd has been offering both live and video conferences around the country for 10 years and to 80,000 men. Many of the sponsoring churches have been Southern Baptist. With the new agreement, the Brotherhood Commission is endorsing Dad the Family Shepherd seminars and encouraging churches to host one for their men.

"As our role has expanded to teaching men more gender-specific topics, we are looking to partner with other ministries that we see as biblically based and sound theologically," Williams said.

For churches, this agreement means pastors and staff can hold a seminar knowing it is based upon Baptist belief and builds upon the foundations of the local church.

"This is an example of our continuing desire to enrich a man in his Christian walk," said Jim Burton, Brotherhood Commission Men's Ministries director. "Dad the Family Shepherd is committed to challenging men in their spiritual roles as husbands and fathers. We believe firmly that if a program is doing an excellent job of ministering, there is no reason to go out and reinvent the wheel."

Dad the Family Shepherd seminars begin on Friday evening and continue through Saturday afternoon. Among the topics covered are: Father Power, Love Unchained, The Master Plan, Honor Thy Wife, 3-D Sex, and Child Management. They also offer small-group accountability helps.

"We want to equip men to be leaders and servants in the church," Hoggard said. "We believe through these seminars men can be more of the man God intends them to be."

For more information on how a church can host a Dad the Family Shepherd seminar, contact the Brotherhood Commission at 1-800-727-6466.

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RTVC to offer CD ROM
about its work, mission

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
12/9/94

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission plans to take a place on the information superhighway in the spring of 1995. It is producing an interactive CD ROM (CDI) about its work and mission.

Project leader is Glenn McEowen, RTVC vice president of engineering, said the CD would be both a teaching and learning tool for those interested in the commission.

"There are many facets to the work of the Radio and Television Commission, many of which aren't as visible as others," McEowen said. "The value of this CD ROM technology is that a person can use his or her computer to learn about all or a portion of the work being done by the commission. He or she can go behind the scenes and discover all that is involved in producing a program or in keeping ACTS and FamilyNet on the air."

ACTS is the RTVC's cable television service that reaches into more than 20 million homes. FamilyNet is its broadcast television service that reaches into more than 50 million homes nationwide.

"This multi-media CD ROM presentation deals with more than television," said Jack Johnson, RTVC president. "It also showcases the history and continuing work of our radio ministry. 'The Baptist Hour,' for example, began in 1941 and continues to be a flagship program. And in 1994, 'MasterControl' was 35 years old; 'Country Crossroads' and 'Powerline' were 25 years old."

"The Baptist Hour," broadcast now on both radio and television, features Frank Pollard, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss., who provides insight on living the Christian life. The program is rebroadcast in Russia as "Word of Life" and reaches a potential audience of almost 100 million.

"MasterControl" is an around-the-world total talk, magazine-style program with features on travel, health and lifestyle. It also features best-selling authors interspersed with messages on Christian living.

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Adult contemporary music from the '70s, '80s and '90s with Christian messages is the format for "Powerline."

"Country Crossroads," now on both radio and television, is a country music program that includes Christian testimonies from various artists. However, the weekly radio and TV versions do not follow the same script.

In explaining why he authorized the CD ROM project, Johnson said, "It's important that the Christian community be involved in multi-media because of the interactivity associated with it. The nature of our message is interactive. When Christ spoke, the Bible shows that he expected a response.

"Interactive TV isn't just coming, it's here. And by entering this one arena, the development of a CD ROM, we're learning what is involved and how to produce this technology. We need to understand what we can and can't do."

McEowen said he thought of the CD ROM about the RTVC as a hyper-media tour.

"We're providing something a person couldn't get by simply touring the RTVC facility," he said. "We're showing how all the personnel here interact together and with other Southern Baptist agencies. For me, however, the driving force all along has been the prospect of interactivity in our immediate future. It's critical that the RTVC be on the cutting edge of all communications technologies."

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Philip Newberry: no hands,
no feet, but all heart

By Jan Johnsonius

Baptist Press
12/9/94

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Philip Newberry boasts a mean soccer kick.

So mean the impact sometimes sends his leg sailing a good 10 feet. No problem, though. He just sticks it back on and keeps right on going.

Not having hands and feet is just a minor inconvenience as Philip tackles the world of a typical 10-year-old. There are baseball games to win, dodgeball and soccer victories to claim and trampolines to conquer.

Such simple childhood accomplishments seemed unreachable eight years ago. The furlough of then-Southern Baptist missionaries to Brazil Randy and Jan Newberry had turned into a nightmare.

On Easter Sunday 1986, they sat by their 2-year-old's bedside watching his limbs grow black and life ebb from his tiny body. The prognosis was meningitis and inevitable death. Their only hope was prayer and God's grace.

The disease resulted in the amputation of Philip's left arm almost to the elbow, the right hand at the wrist and both legs halfway to the knees. But it didn't remove Philip's determination and I-can-do-anything outlook on life.

"I wouldn't have chosen this for my son, but it happened," said Randy, pastor of First Baptist Church of Briar, Azle, Texas. "I don't understand all of it, but God has a plan. He assured me that he will get more glory this way than if he'd healed him. God can take what Satan intends for evil and use it for good. That's what God has done with Philip."

Philip may not totally realize it yet, but his family knows that his life is a ministry to others. His arena of service is his fifth-grade classroom at Hoover Elementary School in Azle, the soccer field and Scottish Rite Children's Hospital in Dallas, where he's featured in a video to encourage other children who have lost limbs.

"It's amazing how many times the Lord has allowed us to minister to people going through similar situations. Philip shows them that you may have some amputations but it doesn't have to slow you down," Randy noted.

His latest ministry opportunity took him to the acting platform in December for the Christmas production of "Baby in Bethlehem" at First Baptist Church, Peaster, Texas. The re-creation of that biblical city features a walk-through tour, complete with the shops, hotel, barn, shepherds, wise men and the leper colony outside the city gate.

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A couple of years ago, when the family first saw the production, Philip said, "Gee, Dad, I can be a better leper than any of those guys."

This year he's got the part and can hardly contain his excitement about a new way to use his "handicap" positively. "I'm going to use a crutch on one side and take my leg off the other," he said with 10-year-old enthusiasm.

Randy noted Philip accomplishes something new every day. "Just last week he put on his shorts, zipped and buttoned them, put on his belt and buckled it." He can also throw a spiral football pass, swing a bat, operate a computer and bound skyward on a trampoline.

No small feat for someone without hands! Philip darts agilely on prosthetic legs but refuses the artificial arms because they get in his way.

Not having hands does have a major advantage. Philip's soccer coach said it makes him perfect in a sport that prohibits their use. But Philip still giggles about the time a referee penalized him for use of hands.

"I just turned to the crowd and said, 'They called hands on me! What are you going to do?'"

Philip, who also excels academically, has his sights set next on playing in the school band. "I'm thinking about doing the drums, tying something around my arm and sticking the drum stick in there and playing like that."

His parents say Philip is always positive and figures out how to adapt. "He doesn't think there's anything he can't do, and his attitude has helped us cope," Jan said. "He's very outgoing and has never met a stranger. That was Philip from the day he was born. God knew he'd need this kind of personality -- to be outgoing and strong-willed to survive and make the best of this."

Yet there are times when Philip says, "What if"

"If I had hands and feet, I'd be better than (Dallas Cowboy running back) Emmitt Smith," he sometimes laments. "Man, I've got the moves."

Although they resigned as missionaries so Philip could receive treatment in the United States, the Newberrys' call remains strong. "That's been the hardest thing to deal with," said Randy. "God called us to missions. Just because we've been home for seven years doesn't mean the call's not still there."

What does the future hold? "We're looking into the possibility of missions again, whether here in the U.S. or overseas," Randy said.

One of the family's prayer needs, he said, is not only God's guidance about missions service, but also about the possibility of a physical setback for Philip.

The growth plate in his left knee is damaged. The leg isn't growing correctly. "We're praying for healing that will make the legs the same length, and for wisdom for the doctors as they deal with it," Jan said.

Jan also requests prayer for the family as they minister to parents of limb-deficient children, witness to them about Jesus Christ and encourage them about making it through life's trials.

Philip is a living testimony to God's grace and sufficiency, and perhaps he sums it up best:

"I'm the same as everybody else, because it doesn't really count what's on the outside."

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(BP) photos (two vertical and two horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines available on SBCNet News Room.

Chaplain who questioned force
retires with full benefits

Baptist Press
12/9/94

ATLANTA (BP)--A Southern Baptist chaplain who challenged the use of military force in the Persian Gulf in 1991 has been forced to retire, but he will receive full retirement benefits.

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Garland Robertson's retirement was effective Dec. 1, said Lew Dawson associate director of the Home Mission Board's chaplaincy division.

Robertson was stationed at Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene, Texas, in 1991 when he wrote a letter to the local newspaper questioning the use of military force to evict Iraqi soldiers from Kuwait.

Robertson was reprimanded for public disagreement with the military action. Robertson later said chaplains "must be allowed to speak out on legitimate concerns."

Air Force officials recommended an honorable discharge without pension and benefits. The secretary of the Air Force made the final decision that forced Robertson to retire but allowed him to keep his benefits.

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**Recycled materials aid
church's building plans**

By Elizabeth Young

**Baptist Press
12/9/94**

RIMROCK, Ariz. (BP)--To a passerby, the lumber and other building materials stacked behind a chain link fence at the future site of Beaver Creek Baptist Church, Rimrock, Ariz., may seem unremarkable.

But to church members and numerous other volunteers, those materials represent a gift from God and a lot of work -- a massive recycling project that will turn a former forest company office into a church building.

The building materials lived their first life in Flagstaff, Ariz., as a building owned by Southwest Forest and then by Stone Forest Industries. But the materials were about to become a big junk heap, with demolition of the building just days away.

That's when Arizona Southern Baptist Builders rode into town and suggested the building materials could be recycled as a church building.

A volunteer working on the renovation of the Baptist Student Union center in Flagstaff last summer first told M.C. Chancey, state Arizona Southern Baptist Builders coordinator, about the building.

Chancey then contacted Ken Miller, pastor of Beaver Creek. The church's building committee, to a person, originally balked at the idea when they saw the large size of the office building, about 6,000 square feet. But the price was enticing and volunteers offered to help.

Between mid-August and the end of September, volunteers from Arizona Southern Baptist Builders, Beaver Creek and several Flagstaff churches tore down the building to a clean slab and hauled needed building materials to Beaver Creek. Unneeded building materials were donated to ASBB and to East Valley Baptist Church, Flagstaff, which will soon be constructing its own building.

The median age of the volunteer labor force, according to Miller, was 70.

Beaver Creek paid Stone Forest \$2,000 for the privilege of salvaging the materials. Technically, the \$2,000 was paid for office equipment still in the building, including 14 filing cabinets and seven desks. Total cost to the church for the project, including rental of dumpsters and a crane, was slightly more than \$7,000, Miller said.

Experienced ASBB volunteers estimate the materials salvaged will save Beaver Creek between \$25,000 and \$50,000, Miller said.

"It was definitely of the Lord," the Beaver Creek pastor said. "Even the walls were the right width that we could use the trusses on our building." Windows from the office building are also the right width for the Beaver Creek plans.

The church hopes to occupy the new building by Easter, Miller said. The 45-by-122-foot building will have a sanctuary at one end and educational space at the other.

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And even the steeple has been acquired at a reduced price. First Southern Baptist Church, Prescott, Ariz., offered the steeple to Beaver Creek at a significant savings. The Prescott church had purchased the steeple as a replacement, but before the steeple was installed, the church decided to consider relocation, with the new church plans calling for a tower rather than a steeple.

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Vines delivers Old Testament
prescription for walk with God By Dwayne Hastings

Baptist Press
12/9/94

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--If Enoch could do it in his day, so can followers of Christ in the 20th century, advised Jerry Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.

Speaking from the book of Genesis in chapel at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., Nov. 30, Vines said Enoch lived in a culture with alarming corruption, yet in the midst of this carnality he was known as the man who walked with God.

"We are living in a culture very much like that -- a society that is in open rebellion against God," said Vines, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention. "We are living in a day in which that which once slinked along the back alleys of life now parades down the main streets of our nation's capital and demands to hear approval from the pulpit."

Although this giant of the faith is only briefly on the stage of Bible history, Enoch was a remarkable exception in a day when the people did not desire the presence of God, Vines said.

"Enoch came to God the way anyone comes to God; he found grace in the eyes of the Lord," Vines said. "The only way to describe what Jesus does in a believer's heart and life is to call it the amazing grace of God."

Enoch had the opportunity to walk with God because he experienced that amazing grace. "He evidenced the fact that we cannot truly live horizontally until we are living vertically, personally experiencing God."

Vines acknowledged believers are not able to please everybody, but they should focus on pleasing God and walk with him in obedience.

"It is possible to walk with God even in our wicked world. To walk in communion with God is to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. It is pleasing unto God," Vines said.

To walk with God on a daily basis, a believer must understand the concept of biblical separation, Vines said, noting Christians must be willing to give up the things of the world that prevent a full embrace of God's ways.

"We are called to a life of separation. If you're in step with God, you're going to be out of step with this old world," Vines said.

One's walk with God must begin in Scripture, Vines said. "You can't walk with God unless you have a daily meeting with him in his Word. The Bible tells us we are to digest Scripture -- to assimilate it into our life."

The most exciting news is that the faithful will never leave God's side, Vines said. "If you walk with God in this life, you can be assured, like Enoch, you will walk with him forever."

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Wheelchair-bound evangelist
notes Jesus' power, authority By Dwayne Hastings

Baptist Press
12/9/94

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Calling abortion an American holocaust, David Miller, director of missions of the Little Red River Baptist Association, Heber Springs, Ark., said the church needs to be reminded human conception has its origin in the sovereignty of the Creator.

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Miller, who was diagnosed with a progressive muscle disorder at age 16 that left him confined to a wheelchair, said, "It was a high water mark experience for this country preacher when I discovered I was not an accident or the result of happenstance."

Despite his physical condition, Miller travels the nation as an itinerant evangelist, having recently announced his intention to resign as director of missions, a position he has held 25 years, to begin full-time evangelistic work.

Speaking during chapel services at Southeastern Theological Baptist Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., Miller said Scripture indicated creation came according to the purpose and pleasure of Jesus.

"All things were created by him and for him," he said, quoting from Colossians 1. "In practical terms, let me remind you that in him you live and move and have your being."

Miller pointed to the union of Ruth and Boaz in the Old Testament as scriptural evidence God himself ordains human creation: "In the book of Ruth it says Boaz took Ruth and she was his wife and he went unto her. The Lord gave her conception and she bore a son. It was God who wrought the child. Clearly each of us was conceived by divine direction. And we have no greater purpose in life than to bring pleasure to him who created."

Against the notion the Lord created the heavens and earth and then simply backed away, Miller said Scripture reveals all creation is governed by the providence of Jesus.

"We live in a cosmos rather than in a chaos. The Lord is actively involved in maintaining the unity, harmony and balance of the created order. All things are held together in him."

He is Lord of creation, Miller continued, saying all the presidents and princ s and prime ministers are reputed to be nothing in his sight; Jesus possesses all the divine attributes and authority of God.

"Jesus Christ is the visible manifestation of the invisible God," Miller said, noting the combined strength and power of all the kingdoms of this world in comparison to Jesus is like the scant dust on a scientist's balance. It is so minute he would not even bother to wipe it away were he about to make a meticulous measurement, Miller said.

"Jesus is Lord not so much for what he has done, but because of who he is," Miller said. "He is God in human flesh."

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