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901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
John Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
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Landrum Leavell to retire
Dec. 31 from New Orleans

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press
12/14/94

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Landrum P. Leavell II, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary since January 1975, announced his retirement to the seminary's trustee executive committee Dec. 13.

He said he will retire Dec. 31, 1994, but subsequently agreed to the committee's request to remain as interim president until a successor is chosen.

"Twenty years ago today I made the most strategic decision of my ministerial calling," Leavell said in his retirement statement to trustees. "I decided on the best evidence I had that it was God's will for me to leave the finest and friendliest Baptist church on earth and the ministry of being pastor of the local church to become president of my alma mater, the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. It was a decision that God has confirmed every day of these 20 years." Describing his seminary tenure, he said, "I have been privileged to work with some of the godliest and most generous Christians on earth."

Now, Leavell said, he will "once again change the focus of my ministry."

"You have known for three years of my intention to retire before age 70. You sent a committee to ask me to stay till age 70, and then go on a year-by-year basis. I was deeply gratified by this encouragement, but I am presently convinced that I am making the right decision today. This retirement will be effective Dec. 31, 1994."

Leavell told the trustee committee he would be available "to continue as needed until you name a new president and will be pleased to help my successor become indoctrinated, if desired, for a stated period of time in his transition."

He said he and his wife, Jo Ann, plan to move to Wichita Falls, Texas, in retirement "and enter the doors of ministry God opens."

Leavell was pastor of First Baptist Church, Wichita Falls, when he was nominated to be the seminary's seventh president on Nov. 14, 1974. He accepted the position on Dec. 13, 1974. He moved to the campus and officially assumed the seminary presidency in January 1975.

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"Thank you is inadequate, but you have my heartfelt gratitude for twenty years of unparalleled support and cooperation with the administration," Leavell told the trustee committee. "You have never rejected an administrative recommendation or turned down a proposed new faculty member. The greatest proof I have that we have made excellent choices is that other seminaries and churches stand in line to hire our people.

"You have given me a free hand, within the trustee adopted guidelines, in the day-to-day administration of the institution. Together we have maintained a direction that has enabled us to become one of the world's largest, and maybe, the most efficiently run seminaries anywhere. It could not have been done without a united and cooperative board.

"I do not leave feeling the best days are past. It is my judgment that the future is as bright as sunlight, and that God has an ongoing purpose for NOBTS," Leavell said.

Leavell came to the seminary with an extensive ministerial and denominational background. He previously was the pastor of five churches, including the Wichita Falls congregation from 1963-74. A former first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1967-68, president of the SBC Pastors' Conference, 1970-71, and president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1971-73. He has also served on the boards of the SBC Home Mission Board and Baptist Sunday School Board.

Enrollment at New Orleans Seminary has increased more than 500 percent during Leavell's presidency. The seminary has expanded to include 12 extension centers across the Southeast, as well as an on-campus baccalaureate degree program with more than 500 students.

In 1991 he established on the main campus Southern Baptist's first Center for Evangelism and Church Growth, a specialized facility including seminar and conference rooms, offices, a library and a computerized research lab, as well as a resource center which is in the process of assembling a complete collection of all available evangelism and church growth books, resources and materials. The center also contains the latest computer software to provide churches with customized consultation and research to do demographic studies on their areas and personalized church decadal growth studies.

Leavell, a professor of evangelism, has taught at least one course every year since coming to the seminary. He earned a bachelor of arts degree in English from Mercer University in 1948 and completed two graduate degrees at New Orleans Seminary, the bachelor of divinity degree in 1951 and doctor of theology degree with a major in Greek New Testament in 1954. A native of Newnan, Ga., Leavell turned 68 in November.

His wife, Jo Ann, a graduate of Ward-Belmont in Nashville, Tenn., and Sophie Newcomb College in New Orleans, created and began a curriculum in 1976 specifically designed for student wives who were about to be ministers' wives. Through her leadership, a class has been offered free of charge to NOBTS student wives each academic term for the past 19 years; she has taught at least one of those courses each year.

The Leavells have four children: Landrum III, pastor of Royal Palms Baptist Church, Phoenix, Ariz.; Ann, whose husband, Finis Beauchamp, is pastor of First Baptist Church, Cameron, Texas; Roland II, president of Rives and Leavell, a church bond company in Jackson, Miss.; and David, pastor of First Baptist Church, Hobart, Okla.

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Politics, not just comment,
may have undone Elders

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
12/14/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--It may not have been what Joycelyn Elders said but when she said it which ended her tumultuous tenure as the country's surgeon general.

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When President Clinton learned Elders had endorsed possible instruction on masturbation in schools less than a month after his political party had been ravaged by a conservative backlash at the polls, he quickly asked for her resignation. The same day, Dec. 9, she obliged.

On Dec. 1, Elders said she thinks masturbation "is something that is part of human sexuality, and it's a part of something that perhaps should be taught." The comment came in response to a question at a World AIDS Day event in New York City.

Upon her resignation, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, the leading provider of abortions in the country, thanked Elders for bringing "to Washington a welcome dose of 'real world' wisdom that raised the stature of the office you held with such distinction."

Many observers, meanwhile, including conservative critics of Elders' positions, described the forced resignation as a concession to the political climate.

"Nothing focuses the attention of a politician like an election," said James A. Smith, the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's director of government relations. "We are pleased that the president has finally recognized that Joycelyn Elders cannot serve all of the American people given her highly radical views."

"One wonders what took so long. These most recent comments were par for the course and do not distinguish themselves in any quantitative way from similarly outrageous comments which she has made in the past."

On the day of Elders' resignation, White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta refused to concede the move was politically motivated. Her latest controversial comment was "one too many," he said.

The same day, Clinton praised Elders for her work on child health, teen-age pregnancy and AIDS but said her "public statements reflecting differences with administration policy and my own convictions have made it necessary for her to tender her resignation."

Two days later, the president denied his action was a reaction to the Republican takeover of the Senate and House of Representatives.

If "I wanted to do it for political reasons, it would have been done before the election, not afterward," Clinton said. A president "is entitled to have people in certain positions who agree with him and who don't depart from the policy positions and personal convictions that a president has. It's not political, it's what is necessary for a government to have coherence and integrity and direction."

As an example of other equally objectionable comments by Elders, the CLC's Smith pointed to her 1990 testimony citing a decrease in the birth rate of Down Syndrome children as a positive result of legalized abortion. In supporting the Freedom of Choice Act before a congressional committee, Elders said abortion has had an "important, and positive, public health effect." She cited a 64 percent decrease in births of Down Syndrome children in 1976 in the state of Washington to support her assertion. Elders then was director of the Arkansas Department of Health.

Other Elders' comments which have elicited criticism include:

- Abortion opponents need to "get over their love affair with the fetus."
- "We have driver's ed for our kids. We've taught them what to do in the front seat of the car but not what to do in the back seat."
- "I would hope that we would provide (crack-addicted prostitutes) Norplant, so they could still use sex if they must to buy their drugs."
- "Look who's fighting the pro-choice movement: a celibate, male-dominated church, a male-dominated legislature and a male-dominated medical profession."

In addition to criticizing those who opposed her policies, Elders has supported such controversial programs or proposals as condom distribution in public schools, comprehensive sex education in primary and secondary schools, the legalization of drugs, Medicaid funding of abortion and sale of the French abortion pill, RU 486.

Elders served as director of the Arkansas Department of Health from 1987 to 1992, when she was chosen by the newly elected president to be surgeon general. Clinton named her to the Arkansas post while governor of the state. She will return to Little Rock to teach and to do research at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, according to Associated Press.

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**Southern Baptists starting
volunteer missions fund**

By David Winfrey

**Baptist Press
12/14/94**

ATLANTA (BP)--A band of current and former home missions volunteers has established a trust fund to support future volunteer work.

"Its purpose is to create funding for volunteers and volunteer projects that are not funded through traditional means," said Irene Bennett of Augusta, Ga.

Earnings from the trust fund, to be managed by the Southern Baptist Foundation, will be used on a variety of projects, from student summer missions to Mission Service Corps, the Home Mission Board's volunteer program for adults serving four months or longer.

Organizers had independently considered a support fund for five years, said Bennett, a three-time summer missionary.

"The people in the group didn't know one another," she said. "It just took a while for all of us to recognize we were thinking about the same thing."

Don Hammonds, HMB associate vice president for ministry, lauded the fund as a way to get more volunteers onto the mission field and open up areas that have been financially prohibitive, such as expensive inner-city work.

"It may allow us to go to an area that we've never been to before for lack of funds," he said. "We are very grateful that they have done this."

The fund will have a variety of uses, from paying transportation costs to get volunteers to a mission site to buying support materials for the work to be done.

While the fund is independent from the Home Mission Board, directors of the three HMB volunteer departments -- student, volunteer projects and Mission Service Corps -- will submit an annual prioritized list of volunteer needs not funded by the board's budget, said Elmer Goble, HMB director of the volunteer projects department.

The Baptist Volunteer Mission Fund will be directed by its six founders. In addition to Bennett is her husband Phil, minister of education at First Baptist Church of Augusta, Ga.; Tom Logue, retired director of Baptist Student Unions for Arkansas; Ira Craft, vice president of the Cecil B. Day Foundation; Cliff Farmer, of Olympia Valley, Calif., an entrepreneur who has hosted several volunteers; and Glen Marshall, of Ellijay, Ga., a Mission Service Corps volunteer for the Baptist Convention of New York.

Bennett noted the fund was not a reaction to such recent events as the board's 6 percent budget reduction for 1995.

"We've always had more opportunities for volunteer projects than we've been able to fund," she said. "We've always got more places than we can afford to send students."

Hammonds agreed, saying the volunteer division annually fills 60 to 70 percent of requests for volunteers from home missionaries and mission churches.

The Baptist Volunteer Mission Fund will initially solicit donations from former volunteers, Bennett said. The first mailing will be sent to summer missionaries since 1984, she added.

Anyone wanting more information about the fund can contact Bennett in Augusta at (706) 737-2537.

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**'No room at the inn' for baby
until missionaries took him in By Mark Kelly**

MACAO (BP)--The baby's pitiful cry all but disappeared in the hubbub of a summer evening in Macao.

Cars sped up and down the narrow streets of the tiny Portuguese colony south of Hong Kong on China's coast. The rattle of mah-jongg tiles filtered out of the casinos into the humid night air, which was heavy with the odor of fish and garlic. A slight breeze carried the sounds of singing and laughter from the open doors of karaoke bars.

Only when the hour grew late and the revelry died down did anyone notice the crying. As the plaintive wailing persisted, people became curious. As the tiny voice rose in screams of pain, they became concerned.

They found the child -- a newborn boy -- lying in a trash can. The bone of his elbow lay exposed where rats had gnawed away the flesh.

At the hospital, social workers named the infant "Nicholas" and began the all-too-familiar search for a family to adopt him.

Abandoned infants are nothing new in Macao, according to Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionary Ruth Billett. Women from China come to the colony to work. When they want to return home, however, they have to leave their babies behind.

Finding adoptive parents usually isn't difficult, but Nicholas' deformed arm made him almost impossible to place, said Billett, who is from San Antonio, Texas. He had no place else to go; the local orphanage didn't take children under 3 years of age.

Then one of the social workers remembered Marjory Venderamini, a Brazilian Baptist missionary serving in Macao. Venderamini had applied for a government license to open a home for abandoned babies, but the approval process was endlessly complicated. She agreed to keep Nicholas in her own home until the orphanage could be opened.

What followed was a miracle.

Local newspapers and television carried reports of Nicholas' plight, and Macao took the baby to heart. Civic groups held toy drives. Garment factories donated clothes. Grocery stores sent food and diapers. Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries from many denominations formed a board of directors for the orphanage.

Most remarkably, layers of red tape fell away and a government license was issued.

Cradle of Hope orphanage opened in May 1994 with Nicholas, four other infants and a broad base of support in the Christian community.

Southern Baptist missionaries in Macao played key roles in organizing the project, and local Baptist churches help support the orphanage with volunteers and donations, reported missionary Mary Dickey, training coordinator for Hope Medical Clinic. The clinic, run by missionaries, provides medical supplies and vitamins to the orphanage. Dickey trains volunteers to care for the children.

Cradle of Hope is funded primarily by the Macao government, which also coordinates its adoptions, said Dickey, of Medford, Okla. She hopes the orphanage eventually will be able to handle its own adoptions.

"We need people to pray that these babies end up with Christian families," she said. "Right now we have to pray them into Christian homes."

That's what happened to Nicholas. A Chinese Christian couple living in Sweden adopted him. Three other children also have been adopted, and four more now wait in the orphanage.

Because of its wide public support, Cradle of Hope plans to relocate to a larger facility soon, Billett said. Another project, a home for unwed mothers, also is planned.

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"With abortion so readily available across the border in China, there must be some spark of hope and love in a mother who chooses not to destroy her child but give him up for adoption," she said. "We want to offer a safe haven to these mothers and share with them the message of the God of love."

Cradle of Hope, the missionary added, stands as testimony to a God who can break down all barriers -- denominations, prejudice, even government red tape.

"And yet, for all his awesome power, he cares for each of us in a very real and personal way, even for one tiny baby screaming alone in the darkness."

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(BP) photos (two horizontal, one vertical) mailed Dec. 14 by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines available on SBCNet News Room.

57-year-old grandparents
joyous over parenting again

By Julian Lukins

Baptist Press
12/14/94

TYLER, Texas (BP)--For Jim and Barbara Kilkenny the magic of Christmas will have extra sparkle this year -- as the 57-year-old grandparents celebrate as parents of a new generation.

The couple -- already grandparents six times over -- are excited at spending their first Christmas with their "new" children -- adopted daughters they rescued from Romania's poverty-stricken orphanages.

Barbara and Jim, members of Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas, amazed their six grown-up children when they told them they were going to start a new family.

As they approach the age when most people would be thinking of a peaceful, rosy retirement, the couple are relishing the challenge of raising adopted daughters Aghi, 14, and Alina, 7.

Jim, who is principal at Christian Heritage School in Tyler, operated by interdenominational Youth With A Mission, and Barbara, a teacher there, adopted the girls -- who were not blood-sisters -- from separate orphanages in northwest Romania.

Alina arrived in the United States in 1991 after Barbara and Jim visited her orphanage during a missions trip to the Eastern European nation, once ruled by communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.

But the couple had to battle in the Romanian courts for three years to get permission to adopt Aghi, who finally arrived in Texas in August.

Barbara and Jim admit their friends at first thought they were "slightly crazy" to start a new family so late in life.

But following three years of emotional tug-of-war over Aghi, the Kilkennys are overjoyed that at last their family will be complete for Christmas.

"We are planning a wonderful Christmas at home for the family," said Barbara, whose six grown-up children range in age from 27 to 36.

"This is new and exciting for Aghi and ourselves and we hope to do lots of fun things like caroling and games."

For the Romanian girls, Christmas in America is a far cry from previous Christmases in the orphanages where they were fortunate to receive a small toy or piece of fruit.

This Christmas, Aghi wants a camera while her younger sister would like binoculars.

"They both enjoy the atmosphere and the lights around people's homes," said Barbara. "This Christmas is a dream come true for all of us."

The couple's eldest son, Jamie, his wife, Peggy, and their four children will be joining the "born-again" parents for Christmas dinner.

Barbara says their "new" daughters have given them a new lease on life.

"People think kids sap energy from you, but our daughters are giving us a fresh boost. They are real extrovert fire-balls and they pull us along with them," said Barbara, who added she and Jim are planning to adopt a third orphan.

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"It is so exciting being with kids who want to do things. There is no time to feel old and decrepit. We get to be a part of their lives growing up and discovering America. It is such fun and such a blessing."

She urged other Christian couples in America to "open their homes to the abandoned children of this world" and share the love of Jesus.

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Lukins is a writer with Youth With A Mission's International Communications Network.

EDITORS' NOTE: This is the seventh article in "The Spirit of Southern Baptists, 1845-1995" series. The Southern Baptist Historical Commission will release one article each month through May 1995.

Red, yellow, black or white:
fact or fiction in SBC history? By Louis Moore

Baptist Press
12/14/94

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--After the Southern Baptist Convention was formed in Augusta, Ga., in 1845, numerous African Americans were members of the new denomination, because the people who owned them or once owned them were members of churches affiliated with the new SBC.

At that time, slaves usually were relegated to the balconies or backs of their masters' churches, but they worshiped with their owners nonetheless, according to historians.

Their presence underscored the raging debate among America's Baptists that had led to the schismatic beginning of the SBC -- the refusal of Northern Baptists to agree to the appointment of a slaveholder as a missionary. Southern Baptists maintained a person could own slaves and at the same time practice the Christian faith by making sure those slaves and others were introduced to Christ and disciplined through the church. Northern Baptists maintained the immorality of slaveholding negated other good that might come of it.

These early African American Southern Baptists were, in the words of one historian, "without real influence in the affairs of the churches."

John B. Boles, a professor of religious studies at Rice University in Houston and author of "Black Southerners: 1619-1869," says, "Even though to be sure there was discrimination and slaves were second-class members, they had gained more privileges and received more equal treatment (in the church) than anywhere else in Southern society."

Within 20 years after the convention was formed -- and after President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves and Union soldiers marched into the South to enforce the president's words -- these first African American Southern Baptists began pulling out of SBC churches to form their own independent congregations.

By the end of Reconstruction in the South, as Jim Crow laws stamped segregation into the social order, the SBC was comprised "mostly of white, Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking persons with a decided bias for southern culture," says Chan C. Garrett in his doctoral report on racial prejudice for the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta.

That ethnic description of the SBC reigned supreme for about 90 years -- until the civil rights movement and SBC missionary successes overseas started in the mid-1960s to break the Old South's vice-like grip on SBC culture.

Today, almost 150 years after the birth of the SBC, powerful social forces again are transforming the denomination, but this time from all-white to a representative rainbow of ethnic and racial groups.

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Despite the deep scars caused by the bitterness of slavery and segregation, African Americans are the largest minority group within the SBC, and their ranks are growing rapidly. But so too are the numbers of Spanish Americans, Asian-Americans, Native Americans and other ethnic minorities in the United States today.

The actual transition of the denomination from all-white to multiethnic dates to the turbulent 1960s when the SBC Christian Life Commission, SBC Home Mission Board and various pastors and leaders began working diligently for change.

A Nov. 2, 1963, Baptist Press report characterized the SBC as it was about to embark on the change from all-white to multiethnic. "Are churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention accepting Negroes as members?" that story asked. It answered its question with comments gleaned from Baptist state newspaper editors. For example, Alabama's editor responded: "I have not heard of any of our Baptist churches voting to receive Negroes as members Negroes visited and were seated at least in two Alabama churches." Florida's editor responded that no churches had accepted African Americans as members but that as many as 25 churches had adopted statements saying they would "if and when they come." Louisiana's editor reported, "No Negroes worshipping in white churches; none has joined any church and no Baptist school has desegregated."

Then in 1964 the SBC, meeting in Atlantic City, refused to endorse the historic 1964 civil rights bill only days before it was passed by Congress. The next year the convention in Dallas seemed to take a more conciliatory position. That year the convention also began its annual Race Relations Sunday observance, which now is held on the second Sunday in February.

In 1968, the convention took a stronger stand calling for more SBC work in behalf of positive race relations. Then in 1971, former SBC President W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, seemed to signal the shift in the convention's attitude when at a press conference he confessed to an about-face in his own personal attitude toward integration.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the number of ethnics within the SBC began to grow dramatically. By the mid-1980s, a national United Methodist survey showed that ethnic-minority membership in the SBC was growing at the fastest rate among American denominations. The survey also showed Southern Baptists were leading the nation's denominations in establishing new ethnic-minority congregations during the 1975-84 period.

Today, these new SBC minority groups are confronting the same issue that thwarted and eventually drove out the first African American Southern Baptists: lack of power and influence. But this time their attitudes appear to be optimistic that changes will come.

"Only a sprinkling of ethnics occupy teaching positions in our seminaries and institutions of higher learning," wrote Rafael de Armas, pastor of Primera Bautista Iglesia in Orlando, Fla., in a Christian Life Commission publication in 1990. "It will be a great day when churches learn to include all ethnics in their fellowships and separate Hispanic, Korean, black, Native American and other ethnic congregations are no longer needed," he said.

Three years later in 1993 a special SBC task force appointed by then-SBC President H. Edwin Young of Houston called for more minority representation on SBC boards and agencies and in positions of leadership throughout the denomination.

Although not directly related, the convention in 1994 elected both of its vice presidents from among minority groups -- one Asian-American and one African American.

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A longer version of this article is available in the SBCNet News Room under ETHNIC.HC. To receive free guidelines and to purchase resources to help celebrate the SBC's 150th anniversary, write the Historical Commission, SBC, at 901 Commerce Street, #400, Nashville, TN 37203-3630, or call toll-free 1-800-966-BAPT.

**Tree of Life offering hope
to residents in inner city**

By Mich Livingston

GARY, Ind. (BP)--The corner of 11th Avenue and Rutledge Street in Gary, Ind., is quiet now. Not like before, when gunshots and screams pierced the night and carried for city blocks. When a single shot produced a volley of slamming screen doors as area residents ducked back into their homes seeking cover.

But that was before Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church occupied the corner. Now doors close peacefully behind residents as they leave for church. And the pastor no longer weaves a serpentine path from his car "shielding his wife from possible stray bullets" to reach the front door of the church.

Inside, however, things are heating up. Again. In a building that once housed a nightclub so violent the community petitioned to have it closed, a pastor and congregation are teaming up to send a message to the community.

The message is not one of hellfire and brimstone. It's hotter than that.

The message Cato Brooks and his congregation are sending is that the church is absolutely going to make a difference in the community. They believe the people are worth it; the community deserves it; somebody has to do it; and the church can do it.

Cato Brooks Jr. -- the given name is Choctaw, he says, meaning statesman-warrior. Never mind the contradiction of terms. On the broad shoulders of the half-African American, half-Native American, the mantle sits well.

His gentle demeanor and sturdy frame were tough enough to endure the daily grind of athletics; he completed a college education and six years of professional football before answering a call to the ministry.

From the pulpit, his message is delivered in the crash-bam exhorting rhythms of a street preacher. Even as he wipes his face rapidly with one swoop of a towel-size handkerchief made especially for sermons, there is a desperate urgency in his eyes-on-the-prize exhortation. Before the service is over, his assistant will renew the stash of handkerchiefs three times.

When he steps back from the microphone and pauses to inhale before digging in again, the speakers rattle.

Brooks speaks about Job because his congregation can relate to that long-sufferer. Job suffered plagues for 10 years before being doubly blessed for his faithfulness to God. Many who take comfort from Job's story will suffer a lifetime of substandard housing, low-paying menial jobs, bankruptcies and overdoses, broken only by other self-inflicted agonies.

It's a message the congregation needs to hear. As they urge him on from all across the room, the service builds in a crescendo until their emotions and the pastor's energy feverishly intermingle and, finally, crash.

The faces of the congregation today are several gradations of black and hues of brown with a splash of red and two spots of white. He tells them what they fear but need to hear: "Heaven is on so high a plane that we're not ready for it; and hell, hot as it is, is being stoked as we speak. So mind what you say when you leave here."

When the sermon is over, Brooks sinks comfortably into a recycled executive desk chair in his office while worshipers come and go.

Soon the office loses all claim to quiet. Several choir members hang robes there and leave in search of another place to meet. The choir is full of kids who used to break out the church's windows.

Brooks not only has won respect from the kids, he has become the pastor-papa-preacher-daddy-father figure to the 560-member congregation. He knows them all by name, and if they are school-age he even looks at their report cards every six weeks.

"The Tree of Life ministries extend far beyond the church; we minister to the whole man." Brooks speaks as if understanding that is as simple to him as the game of football. "In football," he says, "only two things can happen. You hit or get hit."

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Out of the pulpit, the normal tone of his speech is ominous and weighty. "We want to hit," he says dryly. "If churches give up on the inner city then we've lost all hope."

With grit and determination to rebuild people's lives and rehabilitate the community they live in, Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church members launched the Tree of Life Community Development and Day-Care Center in 1991. An all-volunteer board of directors was recruited from every segment of the community, and Brooks's wife, Bettye, became the center's executive director.

Located in a once boarded-up building across the street from the church, the center has grown into a comprehensive, holistic ministry that includes such programs as Homes for Families, to help homeless families obtain decent, affordable housing; YouthBuild Gary, part of a national project targeting youth for job training and GED completion; Family Bound Education, a program teaching literacy and life skills in the home; and 21st Century Parents, which helps parents of prospective first-generation college students make informed choices about their children's education.

To date, more than 10 programs have been implemented for those needing help with a wide range of education, training and counseling. "In fact, we're not going to be able to start any new programs until sometime in 1995," says Brooks, who is sometimes amazed himself at how fast the program has grown.

Although some of the programs seem to have produced results quickly, many come from seeds planted earlier in Brooks's preparation for the ministry at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., and at his first pastorate, Friendship Baptist Church in Little Rock.

One of Brooks's proudest accomplishments is the adult basic education program begun at Friendship, from which 19 people graduated. All of them went on to college.

The success of that program and other early successes in his ministry, such as a week-long tent revival where 200 professions of faith in Christ were made by people from the tough streets of East Chicago, keep Brooks going when both the energy and funding for the programs run low.

"Sometimes Bettye and I go home after 16-hour days and almost drop to our knees when we open the front door to our house," says Brooks, who at 54 is no longer youthful. "But, you know, we can already see so many rewards from this work. So if we do fall to our knees, we'll just be ready to pray.

"We see God's hand on us through the 25 young men in the church who are preparing for the ministry," he continues. "We see it through the hundreds of people in the programs offered through the church and the center, and we see it on the streets of Gary."

All Gary, Ind., or any place with inner-city problems needs is for churches to believe they can absolutely make a difference in the community -- and do it.

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Livingston is a free-lance writer in Atlanta. Reprinted by permission of Missions USA, a publication of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Former Baptist pens assessment
of his charismatic experience

By Ken Walker

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ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--At first glance, J. Lee Grady's Southern Baptist credentials seem impeccable. He was born the same year his father was ordained an deacon in Alexandria, La., in 1958. Saved at age 6, as a teen he went on mission trips to Maine and Oregon. The summer after his freshman year of college he had an internship at his home church.

Soon after, however, Grady left Southern Baptist life for the charismatic movement, then rapidly spreading across his north Georgia college campus -- and the nation. He joined Maranatha Campus Ministries and after graduation became editor of its "Forerunner" magazine.

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However, the ministry disbanded in 1989 amidst charges its leader, Bob Weiner Jr., had abused his authority and governed in a dictatorial style. The experience became the seeds of a book Grady has written, "What Happened To The Fire?" published in mid-1994 by Chosen Books.

In it, Grady takes the Pentecostal-charismatic movement to task for turning a move of the Holy Spirit into a manmade distortion. This segment of the body of Christ has been plagued by such sins as arrogance, elitism, mysticism and greed, he writes.

"We cannot blame certain prominent television evangelists for our own pitiful attempts to control the Holy Spirit's agenda or regulate the people of God," he said. "Most of all, we have been left dry and fruitless by our own complacency and lack of desire for the presence of God's Spirit. We need revival desperately."

Grady recognizes "What Happened To The Fire?" could be interpreted by some Southern Baptists as justification of their fears of charismatics. But he draws a line between what he believes was a valid experience and the excesses he names in his book.

"In my opinion, the Southern Baptist church needs the baptism in the Holy Spirit," said Grady, now editorial director for "Charisma & Christian Life." The 220,000-circulation magazine is the largest independent publication covering Pentecostal and charismatic issues.

"It doesn't necessarily have to be taught the same way as down at the local First Assembly of God," he said. "Southern Baptists could get a lot closer to the Holy Spirit by studying Henry Blackaby's 'Experiencing God,' a popular discipleship course published by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

"Do Southern Baptists realize how many people they've lost over this issue? Many have left because they felt they weren't challenged to a deeper walk with the Holy Spirit in the Southern Baptist church. I meet former (SBC) members and pastors all the time."

Ironically, Grady spoke in tongues after a teacher at First Baptist Church of Avondale Estates, Ga., discussed it in Sunday school. Grady said he sought the spiritual gift because he wanted a fresh touch of God's power to enable him to be more faithful in his Christian walk.

While nothing happened the night he prayed, a day later he experienced "glossolalia." In his book, he tells of his faith coming alive, sparking a hunger for God and a deeper desire to pray, study the Bible and seek the fellowship of other Christians.

Grady said his misgivings about this spiritual gift were put to rest by Luke 11:11-13. In the passage, Jesus asks if a father would give his son a snake if he asked for a fish, or a scorpion if he asked for an egg. He concludes, "How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (NIV)

"God won't let you experience demonic forces if you are seeking him," Grady said, referring to some Southern Baptist pastors who have preached speaking in tongues is from the devil.

While the book hasn't made any best-seller lists, it has generated dozens of letters and comments -- none of them critical, Grady said. The author said they can be divided into two types: disenchanting charismatics who experienced similar difficulties and charismatic leaders who echo Grady's thoughts it is time for better scriptural balance.

"I'm not saying these are only charismatic problems," he said. "Separatism and elitism show up in a lot of places. And there's no question there's materialism everywhere. But I was preaching to my audience in particular. The prosperity doctrine and the idea of 'give to get' seem unique to our stream."

When Maranatha ended, Grady and his wife, Deborah, searched for a more traditional church setting. They found it in a charismatic Episcopal church in Virginia and joined a similar congregation when they moved to Florida.

Grady said he and his wife felt drawn to the deep spirituality in the Episcopal church and discovered its liturgical traditions were not "dead repetition." While their church has a praise band and enthusiastic worship, it is balanced with traditional hymns and formal worship practices, he said.

"We needed to get some roots," Grady said. "We don't feel cut off from the past. It's like we have a connection to our spiritual forefathers. After Maranatha, the realization hit us that God was moving in many different streams. It was real liberating to find he was moving in a vibrant way in many groups."

Grady's father, Jack, applauds his son's book as "refreshing." He said it was particularly helpful to his wife, Jean, to understand how their son had worked his way through an extended spiritual search. Raised a Methodist, Jack wasn't overly upset when Lee left the SBC, but said his wife, a lifelong Southern Baptist, experienced anxiety.

"I was a bit concerned but I knew him well enough and trusted the Lord enough that I wasn't completely upset," said Jack, a retired Boy Scouts of America executive and deacon at Germantown Baptist Church in suburban Memphis, Tenn. "I had the basic faith that he was going to work things out all right."

"I think he's stronger in his faith and a better man for having gone through it," he continued. "Just seeing how sweet his family is, how involved they are in the church and that they have a wonderful relationship with the Lord ... what more can you say?"

Despite his 17-year absence from the SBC, Lee is now teaching Blackaby's "Experiencing God" in his church and said he appreciates his youthful spiritual training. He said he hopes the future will bring down some of the walls that have divided Baptists from charismatics, saying he already sees signs of that happening.

"I know we have a long way to go," he said. "There's a lot of suspicions that need to come out in the open, a lot of things that need to be talked about."

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Walker is a free-lance writer in Louisville, Ky.

Profs say charismatic movement
needn't stir fear among Baptists By Ken Walker

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12/14/94

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--While it is difficult to generalize about the diverse group known as charismatic churches, two professors at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary agree Southern Baptists shouldn't fear the movement.

"We shouldn't feel defensive or threatened by an alternative experience, perspective or insights about the Holy Spirit," said William Hendricks, professor of theology and director of Southern's doctoral studies program. Churches shouldn't make a big issue out of it, he said, because "you could be in the position of fighting what is a legitimate experience of the Spirit."

"There are charismatics who are subdued and quiet, whose preachers are quieter than Southern Baptists," noted Tim Weber, professor of church history. "You can find charismatic Episcopalians, doctors, lawyers and college professors who don't fit the old stereotype of poor people in country shacks."

Biblical issues have long been a source of contention with Southern Baptists, Weber said, since some charismatic practices appeared to be going beyond the Bible. Others seemed to place more importance on their experiences, although some charismatics argue their experience can be interpreted by the Bible, he said.

While not all charismatics have moderated their stance, Weber said there are two important developments in this part of the body of Christ in recent years:

-- Some have become less judgmental and are willing to receive others who haven't experienced the same spiritual gifts.

-- Some are making fewer claims about the necessity of speaking in tongues as evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence; they still see tongues as a spiritual gift but not necessarily for everyone.

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The issue of the Holy Spirit is a key in past divisions, according to Hendricks. He said Southern Baptists should not shape their doctrine of the Holy Spirit in opposition to someone else: "We have recoiled from the charismatics and sacramentalists, such as Roman Catholics, who teach the Holy Spirit comes through the sacraments."

The theology professor believes Southern Baptists are long overdue a thorough examination of the Spirit's work in the convention. He said one of the SBC's strong points in recent years has been following the Lord's leading into social ministries, crisis ministry (such as disaster relief) and fertile evangelistic opportunities worldwide.

"This happened by the leadership of the Holy Spirit and the work of the Spirit and it needs to be pointed out," he said.

While exploring the work of the Holy Spirit, the professors said Southern Baptists shouldn't divide charismatics into a separate "camp," since their influence has touched the SBC. Weber pointed to vibrant worship styles, singing and reactions to preaching prevalent in some SBC churches. Hendricks said some Southern Baptists have adopted charismatic practices and should be welcomed to remain within the convention.

"I gave this advice to the Dallas Baptist Association 30 years ago: Leave charismatic churches alone as it pertains to fellowship and let people of charismatic gifts gravitate together," Hendricks said. "The association disfellowshipped a church (then), which proved to be one of the most divisive things that ever happened in Baptist life."

He added one reason to avoid overreaction is because all experiences of the Spirit deserve attention. However, when people claim a universal hold on the Spirit, "it must be disallowed. The biblical materials do not warrant any one avenue of receiving the Spirit as the exclusive one."

Despite past divisions, the professors believe the time has arrived for a more reasoned approach to charismatics and dialogue with them.

"Often we have caricatured charismatic communities without knowing them," Hendricks said. "It is of the spirit of the evil one that matters of the Holy Spirit have divided the church."

"Most charismatics take the Bible as seriously as Southern Baptists, although they read it differently," Weber said. "But in any kind of theological or church dispute, we characterize the movement by the worst examples we can find. That's never fair."

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**Police back Benin Baptists
against fetishists, snakes**

By Craig Bird

**Baptist Press
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ALLADA, Benin (BP)--Christians in Benin are celebrating a legal victory over hostile fetish worship leaders -- and running out of evangelical tracts because of the resulting interest.

Twice in one recent week a Baptist couple in Azoue'-Cada, a village in the west African country, found two pythons in their bed. Each time they released the snakes unharmed. But when the pythons were found a third consecutive day, the worried couple called Francois, the church leader, for advice.

The snakes, each about 3 feet long, weren't large enough to crush an adult. But the couple suspected local fetish priests -- angered by the Christians' refusal to join others in worshipping pythons as gods -- had another target in mind: their newborn child.

So Francois killed both pythons and threw them outside.

"If he had secretly buried them, the fetishers wouldn't have gotten so upset," said Southern Baptist missionary Jeff Hale, who lives in the nearby town of Allada. "But then we wouldn't have seen the power of God at work either."

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Enraged fetishists tore down the sign at Azoue'-Cada Baptist Church and publicly demanded that Francois reimburse them for the snakes. Failure to do so would mean his death and destruction of the church building, they threatened.

The Baptists reported the incident to the local police, who said they would convene a meeting if the issue couldn't be settled at the village level. Baptists spent an entire day at the Azoue'-Cada chief's house waiting to negotiate, but the fetishists never came. So the police scheduled a joint session in the government office Nov. 17.

Confident fetish priests sent invitations to surrounding villages to what they were sure would be a victory celebration. Instead, government officials told the fetishists they had no right to do the things they had been doing to the Christians or say the things they had been saying. They were ordered to return the church sign and warned any additional trouble would result in police coming to the village to enforce the ruling.

The elated Baptists returned home and went immediately to the mayor's office for authorization to publicly show Christian films. They had delayed the evangelism effort until the conflict with the fetishists was settled, since the mayor favored the fetishists.

To their surprise the mayor, who can't write, told them to write out the authorization themselves and he would sign it. He didn't even dictate conditions, but said they could write anything they wanted.

More than 250 people showed up Nov. 20 in the remote village, located in the bush more than four miles from the nearest road. After screening "The Return of Jesus to Nazareth," the Baptists were halfway through "Le Combat," a film about a confrontation between fetishism and Christianity in Ivory Coast, when the generator broke down. Another screening was scheduled.

The next day the church overflowed for a celebration of what God has done in the past year, which has seen the church grow from perhaps 40 members to more than 100.

Francois sent a message to missionary Hale Nov. 24 asking for more tracts.

"So many people have been coming to church members' houses asking for Christian literature that we have run out," he reported.

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Southwestern Seminary professor
Jesse J. Northcutt dies at 80

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Jesse Northcutt, preaching professor and former administrator at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, died Dec. 13 at age 80 at All Saints Hospital, Fort Worth, Texas, due to complications of Parkinson's disease.

Northcutt was a member of Southwestern's faculty from 1939 until his retirement in 1984. He served as the seminary's vice president for academic affairs from 1973-79 after 20 years as dean of the school of theology.

Northcutt was considered a leading authority in the Southern Baptist Convention on preaching and pastoral ministry. By some estimates, he trained more Baptist preachers than anyone else.

The annual Jesse and Fannie Northcutt Lectures on Preaching and Pastoral Ministry were established at Southwestern in 1976 in honor of him and his first wife to enable theological students to become more effective proclaimers of the gospel and more effective ministers to the needs of people.

One of Northcutt's Southwestern students was Doug Dickens, now an associate professor of pastoral ministries at the seminary. Dickens served as a teaching fellow and grader for several years under Northcutt and was Northcutt's pastor for two years at Gambrell Street Baptist Church in Fort Worth.

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"He (Northcutt) was a giant who touched the world through his teaching," Dickens said. "Dr. Northcutt had a pastor's heart, was the epitome of a gentleman, and his family always had first place in his life and ministry."

He earned a bachelor's degree in 1936 at Oklahoma Baptist University and the master of theology degree in 1939 and the doctor of theology degree in 1947, both from Southwestern.

In addition to his teaching and administrative duties at the seminary, Northcutt was pastor of churches in Eaves City and County Line, Okla., and Rio Vista and Abilene, Texas. His civic involvements included the Rotary Club of Fort Worth and was that organization's 1976-77 president.

At the time of his death, Northcutt was an active participant with his second wife, Nannie Don, in activities in Fort Worth at Fireside Lodge Retirement Center, their residence for over two years.

In addition to his wife, Northcutt's survivors are his brother, E.L. Northcutt of Buchanan Dam, Texas; two daughters and sons-in-law: Shirley and Jim Flammig of Richmond, Va., and Ann and Robert Cook of Owasso, Okla.; two grandsons; and six great-grandchildren.

Northcutt's funeral will be Dec. 17 at Gambrell Street Baptist Church. The eulogy will be delivered by Robert Naylor, president emeritus of Southwestern.

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