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February 21, 1995

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SBC panel proposes reduction  
in denominational agencies

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press  
2/21/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A Southern Baptist study committee's recommendations would reduce the number of SBC agencies from 19 to 12, including a merger of the SBC's current Home Mission Board, Radio and Television Commission and Brotherhood Commission into a "North American Mission Board."

An array of changes in the denomination's structure will result if recommendations of the seven-member "Program and Structure Study Committee" are approved by the SBC Executive Committee during its Feb. 20-22 meeting in Nashville, Tenn., then by messengers to two consecutive SBC annual meetings, as required by the convention's bylaws.

The Executive Committee created the study committee in September 1993, acting on a motion referred to it from the SBC annual meeting that June in Houston.

As proposed by the study committee, the new SBC organizational structure would be implemented by June 1998, while ministries under the new structure would reach implementation by June 1999.

Underlying the proposed changes is a shift from the program statements currently guiding the convention's agencies to ministries each agency would be assigned in service to SBC churches, noted the study committee in its report, titled "Covenant for a New Century."

The new North American Mission Board, to be located in Atlanta, would be charged with evangelizing North America through three thrusts: church planting; mission technologies and communications; and mission volunteers and education. The study committee recommended that the new agency be led by a president and, then, a vice president over each division. The current Home Mission Board is building a new facility in Atlanta; the RTVC is based in Fort Worth, Texas; the Brotherhood Commission, Memphis, Tenn.

Other key changes recommended by the study panel include:

-- dissolving the SBC Stewardship Commission and dividing its ministries between the Baptist Sunday School Board, which would assist churches in capital fund-raising and stewardship education, and the Executive Committee, which would promote Cooperative Program funding of SBC national and international ministries.

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-- assigning the work of the Southern Baptist Foundation to the Executive Committee.

-- dissolving the Historical Commission and dividing its ministries between the Council of Seminary Presidents, which would coordinate the SBC archives and library in Nashville, Tenn., and the Sunday School Board assigned the task of helping churches as they study denominational history.

-- dissolving the Education Commission and the Southern Baptist Commission on the American Baptist Theological Seminary. Education Commission programs can be assumed by the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools, if that organization so chooses, the study committee stated.

-- giving sole responsibility for the American Baptist Theological Seminary to the National Baptist Convention, Inc., an action recently begun by Southern Baptist Commission on the American Baptist Theological Seminary.

-- renaming the Foreign Mission Board as the International Mission Board, not only to modernize the name, but also to reflect the change in mission orientation from national boundaries to people groups.

-- creating a Great Commission Council of seven representatives from each mission board to increase communication and coordinate the sharing of resources.

-- assigning the Council of Seminary Presidents with coordinating theological education within the SBC. Otherwise, no changes would be made in the six SBC seminaries.

-- assigning the Sunday School Board with growth ministries for men and women and church growth for established churches.

-- renaming the Christian Life Commission as the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, reflecting the agency's expanded religious liberty role in recent years.

The study committee made no estimate of the number of employees who would be affected by the various changes.

★ } --Another key recommendation stated only in an endnote to the report would shift primary responsibility from the Woman's Missionary Union auxiliary to the two mission boards for promoting the SBC's national missions offerings, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions.

Otherwise, the Woman's Missionary Union would remain an auxiliary of the Southern Baptist Convention, the committee stated.

Also, the Annuity Board's programs, while not targeted for revision by the study group, would be "limited to (1) church employees qualified by state conventions, (2) employees of qualified Baptist associations, (3) employees of state conventions and their subsidiaries, and (4) employees of the entities of the Southern Baptist Convention and their subsidiaries." Currently, the board also provides services to the Baptist moderates' Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and to the conservative Criswell College.

In a prepared statement, SBC President Jim Henry, said: "To be sure, there are major changes, but Southern Baptists have been on the cutting edge of innovation for over 150 years of history. It's crucial to our future. If we don't, we will fossilize and become a denominational dinosaur in the sands of time. If we do, we will continue to be spiritual pioneers . . . ."

Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., also said, "I had the privilege to meet the committee, to hear their hearts and to observe the deep sense of concern with which they approached this important work. . . . If we approve these proposals, they will assist us in sharpening our focus; streamlining our institutions; serving our people; supporting our churches; simplifying our structure; stretching our dollars; and in the long run, securing our place as spiritual leaders in evangelism, missions and church planting."

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The committee's chairman, Mark Brister, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, La., said in a prepared statement: "The Program and Structure Study Committee has navigated every turn of this journey with prayer. Southern Baptists issued the tall assignment to study our denomination's structure and programs. We have. Now, we trust and invite Southern Baptists to study this exciting report and understand its mission passion and possibility."

The committee said in its report that it developed its recommended changes by measuring all SBC programs and structures against a mission statement it adopted for its work: "The Southern Baptist Convention exists to facilitate, extend, and enlarge the Great Commission ministries of Southern Baptist churches, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, upon the authority of Holy Scripture, and by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit."

"The mission statement is drawn from our theological convictions and rooted in Baptist polity," said R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and a member of the study committee. "The statement served as the critical stackpole against which every question was asked and every proposal was evaluated. The mission was our constant, and it allowed us to look to the structures with flexibility while never losing sight of the founding purpose of the Southern Baptist Convention."

From this mission statement, the committee said five basic areas of ministry emerged:

- world missions, encompassing the International Mission Board, the North American Mission Board and the Great Commission Council.
- theological education, encompassing the six SBC seminaries, the convention's historical library and archives, and theological education by extension.
- church enrichment, entailing the ministries of the Sunday School Board.
- Christian ethics and religious liberty.
- facilitating ministries, encompassing the work of the Annuity Board and the Executive Committee.

The study committee noted it worked under SBC bylaw 20, which says the Executive Committee "shall present to the Convention recommendations required to clarify the responsibilities of the agencies for programs and other functions, to eliminate overlapping assignments of responsibility, and to authorize the assignment of new responsibilities for programs or functions to agencies."

Brister, in his presentation of the recommendations to the Executive Committee Feb. 20, noted the committee work was akin to studies and recommendations by an SBC Efficiency Committee in 1913 and a Branch Commission in 1955.

In addition to Brister and Mohler, members of the Program and Structure Study Committee are Ronnie W. Floyd, pastor, First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark.; Bill Hall, financial strategist, San Clemente, Calif.; W. Gregory Horton, founding partner in Quincy's and Ryan's Family Steakhouse chains, Simpsonville, S.C.; R.L. "Bob" Sorrell, associate pastor, Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tenn.; and Rex M. Terry, attorney, Fort Smith, Ark.

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SBC mission education, offerings  
would be boards' responsibility By Art Toalston

Baptist Press  
2/21/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Shifting primary responsibility for the Southern Baptist Convention's foreign and home missions offerings to the SBC's mission boards doesn't inherently eliminate Woman's Missionary Union from involvement in the offerings it founded, according to members of a study committee recommending a series of changes for th SBC.

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The boards also would have primary responsibility for missions education to stir Southern Baptist church members to share the gospel nationally and internationally, said Mark Brister, chairman of the Program and Structure Study Committee and pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, La., in a news conference Feb. 21 after the panel's recommendations were reported to the SBC Executive Committee Feb. 20.

But both the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board -- as they would be named in a new SBC structure -- "are free to partner with whomever they wish" in promoting the missions offerings and in missions education, said R. Albert Mohler Jr., one of seven study committee members and president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

The boards must have the authority they need to educate and motivate their constituencies, Mohler said.

WMU founded the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions in 1888 and seven years later the home missions offering, initially called the Week of Self-Denial and, later, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

The committee's 18-month study, which recommends a reduction in the number of SBC agencies from 19 to 12, is to be voted on by the Executive Committee during its Feb. 20-22 meeting in Nashville, Tenn., and then by messengers to two consecutive SBC annual meetings, in order to enact the proposed changes in accordance with the SBC's bylaws. Formal implementation of the plan would begin after the planned second vote by the SBC in 1996 and conclude by mid-1999.

Perhaps the most sweeping recommendation would create the North American Mission Board through a merger of the current Home Mission Board, Radio and Television Commission and Brotherhood Commission.

Committee members refused to speculate on the cost savings that would result via the merged NAMB and the proposed elimination of the smaller SBC Stewardship, Education and Historical commissions, with a number of their responsibilities assigned to ongoing SBC agencies.

Personnel decisions will rest with the new NAMB trustees, committee members said.

"Our primary focus was on structure and coordination," said Bill Hall, a financial strategist, San Clemente, Calif. "We would anticipate certain efficiencies ... I am confident there will be a number of dollars saved."

Neither did the committee speculate on the number of jobs to be lost. But, Brister said, the changes will not take place "instantaneously," but over a period of years, giving affected employees as much time as possible.

In other comments, study committee members noted:

-- Responsibility for Mexico still would reside with the International Mission Board, while the North American Mission Board's work would encompass Canada and the U.S. territories. Much of the NAMB's focus will be on states where Baptists comprise less than 10 percent of the population. The 74-member NAMB trustee board would be made up of second-term trustees from the merged agencies, reducing by half the number of trustees currently serving in the three agencies.

-- Although the Executive Committee's list of proposed ministries does not include one of its current program assignments, of Baptist World Alliance and North American Baptist Fellowship support, the list of new ministries is not intended to be exhaustive, and nothing is intended as a severing of the SBC's ties to both bodies.

-- The process of gathering input included an initial letter sent to all SBC agency heads asking various questions about their agencies' duties and vision for the future; committee interviews with each agency head; followup correspondence, along with conversations and questions as needed; several site visits; input from state convention executive directors and individual Southern Baptists.

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In answer to a question about whether the committee's proposals constitute an effort at "consolidation of power," Fred Wolfe, Executive Committee chairman and pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala., told state Baptist newspaper editors at the news conference, "... we realize that the key to this document, if it's of God, and we believe it is, is that pastors, staff members and wives and lay people understand it. We think once they understand it, they will go for it. We really do. We welcome a scrutinization of this document. We welcome the pointing out of any weaknesses or flaws. We know it's not a perfect document. However, this document was not borne in crisis. It was not borne out of a political agenda whatsoever. All I can say to you, and you can do exactly what you want to, is let's don't couch this in terms of this is another attempt to concentrate power, because guys and ladies, it isn't. And let's don't couch this as a part of a 'theological agenda.' It really isn't. It is honestly an effort on the part of this committee to ... say to Southern Baptists, 'This is how we can get the most for our money in people and resources.'"

Committee member Ronnie W. Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark., added, "If the facts of this document reach the homes of the Southern Baptist family, I am very confident that Southern Baptist families will embrace this document. And you can help us in this, to just get the facts out. And you can editorialize however you choose. But help us get the facts out. We believe it will stand. We believe this is not 'our deal,' we don't believe it's the Executive Committee's 'deal.' Quite honestly, we believe it's what God wants us to do. And so I would just encourage you to bathe prayerfully every word you write, every comment you make, because the kingdom of God is what we're trying to advance across the world."

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SBC executives pose questions  
related to proposed changes

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press  
2/21/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Commendations for hard work and yet-to-be-answered questions were among initial reactions of several Southern Baptist Convention agency executives to recommendations from a study committee that would restructure the denomination for the 21st century.

One exception, however, was Lynn E. May Jr., executive director of the SBC Historical Commission, which is recommended for dissolution by the Program and Structure Study Committee.

"Although the proposal calls for the seminaries to maintain the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, the concerns of history will not have the priority they should have and must have in order to preserve the total history and heritage of Baptists in general and Southern Baptists in particular.

"An even greater concern is the proposal's lack of adequate priority being given to the area of communicating the heritage of Southern Baptists," May said.

Others' reactions:

"Although I still have a number of questions about the Program and Structure Committee's recommendations, I commend the committee members for their hard work and the sense of mission with which they went about their task," said Larry Lewis, president of the Home Mission Board, which is recommended for merger with the Radio and Television Commission and Brotherhood Commission.

"It appears the new North American Mission Board would address the areas of work now assigned to the Home Mission Board and certainly has the potential for improved efficiency and effectiveness," Lewis said in a prepared statement Feb. 21. "I look forward to understanding better the details and ramifications of the recommendations."

James D. Williams, president of the Brotherhood Commission, based in Memphis, Tenn., said he was completely surprised by the proposed merger with two other SBC agencies to create an Atlanta-based North American Mission Board. Otherwise, Williams did not protest the report.

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"I commend the Program and Structure Study Committee for its commitment to a very difficult task," Williams said. "Change is not easy and the committee was faced with tough questions and issues. I was completely surprised by the recommendation to dissolve the Brotherhood Commission as an agency of the Southern Baptist Convention. However, I am gratified that significant emphasis was placed on the cutting edge of our work, like volunteerism and missions education.

"There are a lot of questions yet to be answered," Williams said. "For instance, our trustees have insisted that there be strong linkage between men's ministries and missions education/involvement and I am concerned that the report appears to separate the two. Neither would we want gender-specific missions education to be lost. Other questions relate to change of location, new organizational structure and the merging of three agencies with distinct identities. Our trustees, staff and state leadership will process these.

"Rest assured," Williams noted, "when the final vote is taken on this recommendation, we will come down on the side of what is best for helping Southern Baptists carry out the Great Commission."

Jack Johnson, president of the Radio and Television Commission, Fort Worth, Texas, had not forwarded a reaction to Baptist Press by press time Feb. 21.

Dellanna O'Brien, executive director of the Woman's Missionary Union SBC auxiliary, noted, "In the absence of a clear statement about WMU's proposed involvement in the missions endeavors of the SBC by the (study committee), we are assuming that WMU's role will not change. Our age-level organizations will continue and our support for Southern Baptist missions causes will remain. We are poised for meeting the needs of women, girls and children through the changes in our age-level organizations which will be implemented in October 1995."

The study committee recommended, however, that the SBC's International Mission Board (a proposed new name for the current Foreign Mission Board) and North American Mission Board be assigned primary responsibility for promoting the SBC's key home and foreign missions offerings and for organizing missions education in the churches. Those responsibilities to date have been key components of WMU's role in SBC life.

Said O'Brien, "While WMU started the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions, we have never benefited monetarily from these offerings; they have always been given directly and exclusively to the Foreign Mission Board and Home Mission Board for use in sharing the gospel at home and overseas. We have considered ourselves full partners in the missions team along with the mission boards and Brotherhood Commission and anticipate that cooperative relationship in the future. Throughout the history of the SBC, women have fulfilled unique places of leadership in mission action and education. The need for women's involvement and participation is no less important in today's world."

Stephen P. Carleton, executive director of the Education Commission, one of three smaller agencies that would be eliminated under the study committee's recommendations, said, "The Brister Committee has produced an impressive and far-reaching plan for the reorganization of the Southern Baptist Convention. The leaders of the convention have expressed strong support for the recommendations. As the executive director of the Education Commission which is to be completely dissolved, I do feel a deep personal regret that the 51 Southern Baptist-related colleges have no place in the national ministry strategies of the new Southern Baptist Convention."

Carlton, who came to the Education Commission post in 1993, continued, "After a year and a half working with the colleges and universities, one of the most personally and vocationally satisfying years of my life, I am confident that the colleges and universities will continue to work within their various state conventions. They provide for the churches of this denomination thousands of new lay and clerical leaders each year. While they may no longer feel a part of the national structure, they can all take comfort because of their place in the hearts of the people called Southern Baptists who founded and continue to support them."

Ronald Chandler, executive director of the Stewardship Commission, had not issued a statement by Baptist Press' press time Feb. 21.

Jimmy Draper, president of the Baptist Sunday School Board, stated, "I believe the Sunday School Board can do what the committee has asked us to do. We will do it enthusiastically and give it our full energies and resources."

New BSSB duties would include addition of stewardship education and capital fund-raising; assistance to churches with Christian schools and home school ministries; and development of resources for churches with ministries to men and women.

"I applaud the committee's attempt to structure the Southern Baptist Convention for the challenges of the 21st century," Draper said. "They have attempted to maximize the resources in mission. I favor the report and support the committee."

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Sherry Walker contributed to this story.

Nobles suffers stroke after  
surgeries in California

By William H. Perkins Jr.

Baptist Press  
2/21/95

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Former Mississippi College president Lewis Nobles apparently has suffered a stroke while recovering from two surgeries performed at a San Francisco hospital after he allegedly swallowed poison Jan. 26 when FBI agents attempted to arrest him.

"Dr. Nobles was very disoriented and his condition had deteriorated significantly from yesterday. The doctor concluded ... that Dr. Nobles had suffered a stroke," reported Amy Whitten of Oxford, one of Noble's attorneys, in the Feb. 17 edition of The Clarion-Ledger newspaper in Jackson.

Nobles, 69, has been in the intensive care unit of St. Francis Hospital in San Francisco since he fled to a hotel in that city just days before a Jan. 26 pretrial hearing in Jackson. When Nobles didn't show up for the hearing, U.S. District Judge William Barbour declared him a fugitive and issued a bench warrant for his arrest.

He is accused in a multi-count federal indictment of using millions of dollars in donations intended for the Baptist-affiliated college in Clinton to commit mail fraud, wire fraud, income tax evasion and immoral interstate acts. His trial in Jackson was to begin Feb. 7. FBI agents took only 13 hours to track him from Clinton to Memphis International Airport and ultimately to San Francisco, where Nobles collapsed in his hotel room while being arrested.

He was rushed to St. Francis Hospital, where emergency stomach surgery was performed because he allegedly swallowed an undisclosed poison when FBI agents knocked on his hotel door. Additional surgery was later required for damage to his esophagus.

Asked about widespread reports that Nobles intended to plead guilty to at least some of the charges against him during the Jan. 26 pretrial hearing, U.S. Attorney Brad Pigott of Jackson said as a matter of policy he neither confirms nor denies ongoing plea bargain negotiations.

In other developments, Hinds County Judge L. Breland Hilburn on Feb. 17 ordered OmniBank in Jackson to pay Mississippi College more than \$2 million plus interest for allowing Nobles to open bank accounts not authorized by the Mississippi College board of trustees -- accounts the FBI alleges were part of Nobles' complicated scheme to divert money from the school.

The college has filed property liens and asked the court to void transactions involving property owned by Nobles and his wife. College attorneys also have asked the court to revoke a deed of trust executed by Nobles granting property as collateral for payment of attorney fees.

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Missionary shot in Guatemala  
experiences painful recovery      By Mary E. Speidel

QUETZALTENANGO, Guatemala (BP)--Southern Baptist missionary Keith Stamps -- who "looked death in the face" during an attempted highway robbery -- is on the road to recovery from shotgun wounds.

Stamps underwent a skin graft Feb. 16 to repair a wound in his upper right arm, injured in the Jan. 20 attack. Surgeons at a Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, medical clinic grafted skin from Stamps' upper right thigh to replace damaged tissue on his arm. The grafted area measures about four by five inches. Physicians also removed about six shotgun pellets from his right armpit.

So far, physicians have removed about 20 of 120 pellets which entered Stamps' body. X-rays show the remaining shot lodged in his right arm, shoulder, thorax and abdomen. One pellet seems to be wedged behind his heart.

On Feb. 10 Stamps underwent surgery for physicians to do deep cleaning of the gunshot wound. Because he was healing so well, they performed the skin graft two weeks ahead of schedule. Doctors later may have to remove more pellets if any start to migrate toward the surface.

"If the injury (from the shotgun blast) had been any higher or lower, I might have been killed," said Stamps in a phone interview from his home in Quetzaltenango, where he is recovering. "I'm extremely grateful for life."

Surprisingly, the pellets caused no internal injuries. "We saw the hand of God that none hit an artery, a bone or vital organ. It wasn't just happenstance," said Stamps' mother, Glenna. She and her husband, Stanley, Southern Baptist missionaries in Honduras, visited their son in Guatemala.

Meanwhile, if no infection sets in and the skin graft takes, "we may just about have this thing whipped," said Keith Stamps, 38.

But it's been an excruciating fight for Stamps, a missionary in Guatemala since 1986.

Every day for nearly a month, his doctor has surgically scrubbed and trimmed the damaged flesh from his main wound. One scrubbing was done in the hospital under general anesthesia. But the other times the cleaning, trimming and scraping usually were performed without much -- if any -- anesthesia. Sometimes Stamps' wife, Penny, daughter of retired missionaries Ray and Betty Turner, and missionary nurse Vicki Grossmann, have assisted the doctor during the hour-long procedure in the Stamps' home.

Stamps said the painful process -- performed to prevent infection and facilitate healing -- is similar to "debreeding" the skin of a burn patient. "I was in almost unbearable agony," he said.

Since undergoing plastic surgery, Stamps said he's still in some pain. But "it's nothing compared to what I've been through," he said.

Stamps' ordeal began Jan. 20 when he was shot in the right arm and shoulder while returning from teaching at a Baptist church about an hours' drive from his home in Quetzaltenango. He was driving alone at night on an isolated stretch of road when someone tried to flag him down. He kept driving. Suddenly, a man stepped onto the road's shoulder, raised a shotgun and fired point-blank through the window on the passenger side.

"I realized that my hand wasn't on the steering wheel," said Stamps, "and that I was driving down the road screaming."

Stamps managed to maintain control and keep driving for about six miles until he reached the next town. Local rescue officials gave him first aid and drove him in his vehicle to the hospital in Quetzaltenango where he underwent further treatment. He was released Jan. 22.

After his skin graft heals, Stamps will probably undergo physical therapy. He already had regained use of his right arm, but since the surgery his arm has been immobilized while the area heals. Some numbness he felt in his right hand also has subsided, except for slight loss of feeling in the little finger on his right hand.



He also has experienced some muscle loss and weakness. "My arm muscles should return close to full mass," Stamps said, although there probably will be some scarring on some tendons.

But he knows he's fortunate to be alive. "I looked death in the face that night," he said.

Stamps said he's grateful "for divine protection and healing." He marvels that the shooting happened just a month after he and his wife were featured in the Woman's Missionary Union magazine, Royal Service, during the 1994 Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions. The magazine published a prayer request for protection of missionaries as they travel in western Guatemala.

"Pray for continued safety for me and my family and for our other missionaries in Guatemala," he said.

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Stanley Stamps, Southern Baptist missionary to Honduras, contributed to this story.

Here's Hope: Updates  
can encourage others

By David Winfrey

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2/21/95

ODESSA, Texas (BP)--While "Here's Hope. Share Jesus Now" encourages Southern Baptists to share their faith regularly for 60 days, a Texas church is encouraging members to share their experiences regularly with each other.

First Baptist Church, Odessa, has added 60-second testimonies to their worship services for members to talk about their witnessing encounters, says pastor Ernest Easley.

"We have updates Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night -- anytime we get together," he explains. "We're using it as a way of keeping it in front of our folks in a positive way of showing what God's doing through our people."

Called a "60 second update for 60 days of sowing," Easley says he hopes the testimonies encourage members to be more active in sharing Christ but not feel like their arms are being twisted.

A recent Sunday spotlighted the work of teen-agers in the church who had led classmates to become Christians during the soul-winning emphasis.

Easley says he wanted their testimonies to inspire adults. "I'm sure that inside their hearts they were thinking, 'If our kids can do it, surely I can do it.'"

More than 400 members were trained to share the gospel story using the "Romans Road," a series of verses from the Book of Romans, Easley notes. "We've seen people reached for Christ every week."

"Here's Hope. Share Jesus Now" is a 60-day concentrated effort to encourage Southern Baptists to share their faith 60 times between Jan. 9 and March 9.

During a Monday night visitation, Easley recounts, a group visiting an apartment found no one home. Unprepared to leave a card or note, a member named Harold said he would come back after they finished.

When he returned he found someone home, but the resident was not the prospect he thought lived there. The church member went ahead and asked what church the man attended.

Within 20 minutes, the 38-year-old resident, who was standing in his bathrobe, invited the church member in, heard the gospel presentation and prayed to receive Christ, Easley notes.

"Harold thought he went to the wrong address and the wrong guy. He really went to the right apartment and the right guy," Easley says, adding the new Christian was baptized Feb. 12.

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Youth workers offer ideas for reaching teens, helping parents By Dan Nicholas

ANDOVER, Mass. (BP)--If Sean Tanner has his way, next year he will shave the letters "YEC," the initials for "Youth Evangelism Conference," into his hair.

The attention-getting advertisement will mean that the youth minister at Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, Groton, Conn., has met his attendance goal for the annual Baptist Convention of New England event.

Tanner nearly took that hair-raising action at the Jan. 27-29 conference in Andover, Mass. He had pledged in writing to shave the message if at least 50 people from his church attended. Forty-four persons, including 11 adults, were present from Pleasant Valley.

"Next year I might be shaving. I hope I will," Tanner said.

Similarly, Kurt Andre, youth minister at Grace Baptist Church, Marlboro, Mass., said he was willing to shave his hair into a Mohawk style if 100 attended the conference from his church, but his wife, Marsha, was resisting the idea. Ninety-eight, including 20 adults, attended from Grace Baptist.

These humorous attendance challenges demonstrate the high level of commitment that Tanner, Andre and, in fact, many of the adult leaders attending the youth evangelism conference evidence for the spiritual well-being of their charges.

If done correctly, youth ministry can become a full-time responsibility, as was evident from a seminar Tanner and Andre led on "Becoming Part of a Team That Will Make a Difference."

They highlighted several levels of commitment for adults: from providing refreshments for youth events to being an occasional chaperon at events like YEC, from teaching a Sunday school class for teen-agers to leading a weekly youth-oriented small group in their home.

"There is a need for leaders who are committed to youth as their primary ministry," Andre stated. At the same time, churches ought to "allow people to be a part of the youth ministry team without having to be a leader," he added, suggesting adults be allowed to get involved gradually with youth.

Andre said youth leaders should be recruited in private conversations and not with church-wide announcements from the pulpit, because youth ministry is a major commitment not suited for everyone and because quality involvement counts.

Pastors should "raise the level of commitment" they expect from volunteer leaders and "stick to it."

Youth "need some kind of relationship. Young people want to know and be known . . . Leaders should become a part of their world" and stay in touch with youth, even if it is just with a brief, encouraging postcard assuring them of prayer, Andre commented.

Youth appreciate and grow spiritually from direct involvement in ministry. "If I could do one thing and only one thing with youth, I'd take them on a mission trip," Andre told the seminar attendees.

He also encouraged pastors and youth leaders to be patient as they organize their ministries. "It will take years to develop a youth leadership team," Andre noted from his own experience.

A little creativity will always attract and hold the attention of youth. Last year, to illustrate a lesson on what happens when one strays from God's path, Andre swallowed a goldfish. "The kids still remember that one because it's weird and gross," Andre commented.

The bottom line of youth ministry is simple, according to Andre. "You have to love God and you have to love teen-agers" to be an effective youth leader.

In another seminar, Allyson Clark, youth minister at First Baptist Church of Sudbury, Mass., told a group of pastors and church youth leaders that "parents are our peers in ministry."

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Speaking on "Ministry to Parents of Youth: The Missing Link in Your Ministry?" Clark urged youth ministry leaders to "get counsel from the parents with whom you have a good relationship."

Clark, former news editor of The New England Baptist, suggested youth leaders "use parents as a resource to know when you're expecting too much and when you're expecting too little from the kids." Youth leaders can also have a ministry to parents. "You can be a support person to a parent with whom you have a strained relationship. Parents will use you as a resource," she said.

Sometimes parents need youth leaders as a liaison with social service agencies, Clark noted.

It is important for youth leaders to consider that parents have their own issues to work through, such as some who are in the midst of a midlife crisis at the same time their child is entering adolescence, she observed.

Clark recommended informational group meetings with parents before implementing a new program such as the True Love Waits sexual abstinence campaign or before any major event is announced to the youth.

She also suggested parents and their teens be invited to casual picnics, progressive dinners, retreats and other outings that "help interaction."

Clark reminded those present "youth ministry is more than fun and games."

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Southern students find renewal  
in prayer & Bible study groups      By Rob Plummer

Baptist Press  
2/21/95

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Amid academic, family and church demands, students at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary are flocking to prayer and Bible study groups in search of renewal and respite.

"Prayer is a definite necessity," said Shawn Merithew, who began a group at the Louisville, Ky., seminary that focuses on prayer. "We are all in times of stress here, and it's important to seek that peace that passes understanding."

The prayer group meets once a week and normally includes 10 to 40 participants. The concerns of the prayer time are four-fold; the group prays for seminary President R. Albert Mohler and his family, the faculty and administration, revival in the student body and individual concerns.

"The spiritual climate on campus is definitely in a state of improvement," said Merithew, a first-year master of divinity student from Orlando, Fla. "God is working."

Merithew added, "There's a need for as many prayer groups as possible on campus. In Thessalonians, we are told to pray continuously. I think this campus would spiritually blossom if all the students would get down on their knees and pray."

While Merithew's group is co-ed, other prayer groups are composed exclusively of men or women. Richard Richie, a second-year master of divinity student from Arlington, Va., leads a group for men.

Four to eight students meet weekly in Richie's dormitory room for a time of fellowship, accountability, prayer and Bible study. The members take turns leading the Bible study portion of the meeting.

"This group of brothers has been a major encouragement to me," said Richie, who is pastor of Beargrass Baptist Church in Louisville. "A lot of times, seminary life breeds an individuality and a remote feeling that you have to deal with everything on your own. Students are like ships that pass each other in the night. We need groups where we can come together to support and encourage each other under the centrality of Christ."

Michael Goodwin, another member of the group, shares Richie's assessment. "I think it's great that the guys in the dorm get together," said Goodwin, a second-year master of divinity student from Spanish Fort, Ala. "We pray for one another and get to know each other better."

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Paula Cunningham, a first-year master of social work student from Little Rock, Ark., leads a weekly women's Bible study of six to eight participants. The group recently has been doing an inductive study of Philippians.

"This group meets my need for a deeper study of the Bible without the overly academic focus," Cunningham said. "We just started the group in January, and so far, the meetings have been great."

In addition to Bible study, the group spends time in prayer for individual needs, seminary concerns and foreign missions. Each week the group prays for a different country.

Cunningham explained her background in a para-church ministry at the University of Arkansas gave her a desire to minister in a similar way at Southern. "In college, I was always involved in Bible studies. However, until I started this group at Southern, I didn't feel that I had a ministry here yet."

To those interested in starting a Bible study group, Cunningham recommends prayer, explaining, "I advise people to pray, look at their circle of friends, and find out if there's any interest."

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Plummer is associate editor of Towers, the weekly campus newsletter of Southern Seminary.

Illinois editor named press  
association president-elect

Baptist Press  
2/21/95

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (BP)--William R. Webb, editor of the Illinois Baptist newsjournal, was named president-elect Feb. 16 of the Southern Baptist Press Association, the trade group of state Baptist newspaper editors.

Webb's election came during the annual meeting of the press association in Asheville, N.C, which also celebrated the group's 100th anniversary. His one-year term of service begins in 1996.

Toby Druin, associate editor of the Texas Baptist Standard weekly newsjournal, became president of the group for 1995 at the conclusion of the Feb. 15-17 meeting. He was elected at last year's meeting and succeeds James Watters, editor of the Northwest Baptist Witness, newsjournal of the Northwest Baptist Convention.

Bob S. Terry, editor of Missouri's Word and Way weekly newsjournal, was elected executive secretary/treasurer. The position is a part-time salaried position recently created by the association. Lynn Davis, Brentwood, Tenn., resigned as executive director last year following a heart attack. The association revised the position's job description to include the secretarial duties. Terry has been the group's secretary-treasurer for several years.

The status of non-paper membership was discussed at length when a motion was made for Associated Baptist Press to become a member of the association. Baptist Press, the news service of the Southern Baptist Convention, has been a voting member of the press association for years. ABP is an independent news service funded in part by the moderate Baptist group, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Since its birth in 1990, ABP has attended the meetings of the press association but has not been a member.

During the discussion of the ABP motion, a substitute motion was made to withdraw the membership of Baptist Press, making the press association membership limited to state Baptist newspapers.

After discussion, the matter was tabled.

The site of the 1996 meeting, San Juan, Puerto Rico, was affirmed following a discussion of its costs and San Francisco was named the site for the 1997 meeting.

Jack Brymer, former editor of the Florida Baptist Witness newsjournal, led three "spiritual pilgrimage" sessions, under the titles of "Your Calling... Your Profession... and Your Ministry..."

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In other business, the association of the 39 state Baptist newspapers: approved job descriptions for its various committees; discussed constitutional changes; noted through resolutions of appreciation several members who are retiring; heard committee reports; and heard the synopsis of a book being prepared on the association's history.

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CBF council OKs \$10 million  
budget, new mission statement

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press  
2/21/95

WESTLAKE, Texas (BP)--The coordinating council of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship approved a \$10 million budget for fiscal 1995-96 and the group's first comprehensive mission statement.

Those and other actions were taken at the council's regular meeting, Feb. 15-18, at the Marriott Solana Hotel in Westlake, a Fort Worth, Texas, suburb. The CBF is an organization of moderate Baptists, formed in 1991, in protest of the leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The budget and mission statement will be presented to the fledgling denomination's annual meeting in Fort Worth, July 20-22.

After three years of rapid financial increase, the new budget reflects an apparent stabilizing of the CBF's growth. The recommended \$10,062,252 budget applies to a new fiscal year adopted by the CBF, July 1 to June 30. Prior years had been calendar year. The CBF's transitional six-month budget, Jan. 1 to June 30, 1995, is \$5.6 million.

The budget compares to the group's \$10,955,212 in contributions received from 1,337 churches and individuals in 1994. The CBF received \$10,944,328 from 1,210 churches and individuals in 1993. The slight increase of \$10,884, or .1 percent, is a sharp reduction from the 50 and 60 percent increases in 1993 and 1992.

Also, comparing all dollars received by the CBF in 1994 -- \$11,164,848 -- there was an actual decrease from 1993 -- \$11,214,961 -- of \$50,113.

In his report to the council, CBF coordinator Cecil E. Sherman called the 1994 small total increase "deceiving," because the CBF part of the budget gained "19.72 percent over last year (1993)." The CBF benefited by the SBC mid-1994 decision not to accept funds channeled through the CBF causing a larger part of the receipts to be used in the CBF budget.

"This year, 1995, will define where we stand in the affections of the churches," Sherman told the council in his report.

The 1995-96 CBF budget was adopted by the 79-member council with only three negative votes following two attempts to revise it.

James W. Lacey, layman from Midland, Texas, brought an amendment which would have put the global missions portion of the budget at a minimum of 60 percent of budget receipts. Lacey said the global missions portion of the proposed budget was 58.99 percent (including \$21,875 to the Baptist World Alliance) but two years ago it was 70 percent. He said the SBC budget allows for nearly 70 percent for home and foreign missions from the Cooperative Program.

Lacey called it a potential "perception" problem for the CBF. However, his amendment failed, 19-29.

Another amendment would have moved the BWA line item out of the global missions budget division but that motion was overwhelmingly defeated.

The new budget presupposes approval in July of a new four-division structure of the CBF: 1) global missions, 2) Baptist principles (theological education, Associated Baptist Press, Baptists Today and Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs), 3) church resources (ministry to ministers, Christian education, ethics and public policy and laity), 4) and administrative.

The approval of a mission statement for the CBF indicated the group's latest attempt to define itself in a comprehensive statement.

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The statement begins with a paragraph called "Our Mission," stating: "We are a fellowship of Baptist Christians and churches who share a passion for the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and a commitment to Baptist principles of faith and practice. Our mission is to network, empower and mobilize Baptist Christians and churches for effective missions and ministry in the name of Christ."

Listed in the four-page document as statements of commitments the group shares are: soul freedom, Bible freedom, church freedom and religious freedom.

The council also approved a "transitional framework" document which included the hiring of coordinators for the church resources, administration and Baptist principles divisions and the initiation of a "strategic planning process."

However, the needed changes in the CBF's constitution and bylaws for the transition drew intense debate and the recommendations were finally tabled until the council meeting prior to the CBF annual meeting in July.

In other action, the council approved: a contingency fund "for emergency and or other extraordinary opportunities which may arise" of \$200,000 for the administrative budget; the position of associate of communications coordinator and several administrative assistants and secretaries; and a CBF coordinator search committee process for the personnel policy.

It was also announced Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University and Mercer University's school of theology would receive \$90,000 each for the "purpose of employing a professor of Christian education." Receiving capital expenditure funds from the CBF were Central Baptist (American) Seminary, \$50,000; Mercer's school of theology, \$25,000; and Baptist Theological Seminary of Richmond, \$40,000.

The council also received missionary card decks recently produced by the CBF staff. The cards, similar to baseball cards, have photos and information of the 52 CBF missionaries. The Woman's Missionary Union, SBC will handle the card inventory and process the orders.

Twelve new missionaries were appointed and introduced at the meeting: one couple to a three-year term with a Kurdish people group in Iraq; a couple on a two-year assignment to the Czech Republic; and eight others as missionaries to Albania, to Arabs in Dearborn, Mich., to Caucasus region in former Soviet Union, with Wycliffe Bible Translators, and to internationals in Brussels, Belgium.

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Sherman: CBF not denomination,  
not a protest, but different

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press  
2/21/95

WESTLAKE, Texas (BP)--"We are not a denomination. We are not a protest movement, either. We are something different, other."

Cecil Sherman, coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, gave that assessment of the four-year-old organization at its coordinating council Feb. 15-18 meeting in Westlake, Texas, a suburb of Fort Worth.

"And God, who sees the futures quite clearly, is guiding us. I have ideas where the path will lead, but my vision is through a glass darkly . . . . The future is bright for us all and the little house where we live called CBF."

Sherman and other CBF officials often have denied the CBF is a new denomination although they agree it was started when moderate Baptists, disenchanted with the Southern Baptist Convention's leadership, met in Atlanta in 1990 to start the process. Critics contend the CBF is a "shadow" of the SBC and a fledgling denomination trying to persuade SBC churches and individuals to support CBF.

The outspoken Sherman, who considered an offer to be a church's pastor last year, gave no indication during the meeting that he was considering stepping down anytime soon.

As the group's first and only chief executive officer, called "CBF coordinator," Sherman gave an end-of-the-year report to the 79-member council and said the CBF continues to grow.

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But, as the figures show, maybe not as fast as it did in the beginning.

Sherman cited figures of 391 churches contributing in 1991, 841 in 1992, 1,210 in 1993 and 1,377 in 1994. Of the 1994 total, probably about 800 were "CBF churches," Sherman said. Others are churches which allow members to channel gifts to the CBF but don't include CBF in their budgets. There are about 38,000 churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Also, 2,308 individuals contributed to the CBF in 1994, accounting for 15 percent of the total receipts, he said.

CBF reported \$10,955,212 in contributions in 1994 compared to \$10,944,328 in 1993, a sharp reduction from the 50 and 60 percent increases in 1993 and 1992.

Sherman said the CBF actually had a nearly 20 percent gain in the CBF part of the budget, due in part to the mid-1994 decision by the SBC to refuse funds channeled through the CBF.

"This year, 1995, will define where we stand in the affections of the churches," Sherman said.

Sherman also gave a report on church participation in CBF from each state.

"We lost ground in 8 states, did not change in 13 states, and gained in 16 states," Sherman said. "I believe CBF can and should gain in church participation for another five years. If we plan and work to grow, we will grow."

He cited the gains, primarily from North Carolina, Texas and Virginia. "In these states we have a favorable state convention."

"Gains in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Oklahoma are significant. The climate is harsh; our people did good work," Sherman said. He cited Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee and South Carolina "in need of special care/work."

Of the totals, 287 churches in North Carolina contributed, 243 in Virginia, 194 in Texas and 124 in Georgia. Those with 20 or more churches: Kentucky had 87, South Carolina had 81, Tennessee had 62, Missouri had 49, Alabama had 38, Mississippi had 25, and Arkansas had 20.

Sherman said the principal reason for the CBF is "mission sending" but also "partnering" with other friend groups; e.g., state and regional CBF groups, several theological seminaries, Associated Baptist Press, Baptists Today, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Baptist Center for Ethics.

Sherman said CBF is also finding "friends" among American Baptist Churches, USA.

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Scripture memory fuels  
his ministry distinctive

Baptist Press  
2/21/95

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. (BP)--Music evangelist Jim McNeil felt impressed to perform the Book of James as a monologue during a Bible conference eight years ago.

McNeil smiled as he recalled thinking at the time, "Lord, I don't know how this is going to work. After all, it's just your Word."

He committed the book to memory and recited it at Tower Grove Baptist Church in St. Louis, where he grew up. His invitation that night was James 4:11, and 12 people made public professions of faith.

"I said, 'Lord, that was pretty good so I think I'll do some more.' So I committed myself to memorizing the New Testament," said McNeil, a biblical dramatist and music evangelist from St. Louis who gave interpretations and recitations of Holy Scripture through the characters of Matthew, Peter, Paul and John the Baptist during the recent Missouri Baptist evangelism conference in Springfield.

McNeil said he sees the greatest response when he performs the Sermon on the Mount. But, at first, people did not respond.

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"One day, the Lord said to me, 'Son, you are not worthy to portray me.' He said if I will tell the people that, he would start blessing the result publicly when I did the Sermon on the Mount. So when I do it, I never say I'm portraying Jesus but that I would like to share some of the emotions that must have been felt when Jesus preached the great sermon."

Although he now has most of the New Testament memorized, he still opens the pages of the Bible every day. "Every time you read it you get something special, something new. It's inexhaustible and it's his love letter."

Before McNiel steps to the platform to portray a biblical character, he prays for God to anoint him. "I'm an evangelist, not an entertainer -- I go for a purpose so I pray for God to revive his church and save the lost. And the message is already anointed, so if I have his anointing, I have it all."



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