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March 1, 1995

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'Activity of God' produces renewal
in Texas city's churches, campus By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
3/1/95

DALLAS (BP)--Something unusual started in Brownwood, Texas, on Jan. 22. Participants say it's "the activity of God."

The 8:30 a.m. worship service at Coggin Avenue Baptist Church began typically enough that day -- "pretty dead," according to pastor John Avant. But when the invitation to commitment was extended, a Howard Payne University student, Chris Robeson, asked to share a public testimony.

"He cried. He read from the Book of Joel. He shared his burden. And people just started streaming down the aisles. Half of the people in that service never made it to Sunday school. They stayed on their knees at the altar," Avant said.

Keith Clark, vice president at a Brownwood bank and a member of the church, said, "I didn't even know the Holy Spirit moved at 8:30 in the morning. I've never experienced anything like it. There was weeping and confessing of sin. It was a mighty movement of God."

The 11 a.m. worship service at Coggin Avenue church started with an invitation to pray at the altar. And at the evening worship service, the sanctuary was packed. When the invitation was given, 22 people came forward to make professions of faith or to express a calling into vocational Christian service.

That same day, at Brownwood's Rocky Creek Baptist Church, pastor Mark Bryant challenged his people to make a commitment to "live outside the lines." Church members lined the front pews to pray that morning, and the response continued into the evening worship services and for two or three weeks afterward.

Also on Jan. 22, about 25 miles west of Brownwood in a one-day evangelistic "harvest" service at First Baptist Church, Santa Anna, 41 people made public commitments to Christ, including 21 professions of faith. The church averages about 100 in Sunday school attendance, according to pastor Waid Messer.

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"And I heard later about another church, that same day, that spent the whole worship service praying for other churches here in this area," Avant said.

Clark, of Coggin Avenue church, said, "I don't know why it's happening at this particular time and place. Brownwood is a good place to live and all that, but there's nothing special about it that I can think of, except maybe for Howard Payne."

In fact, observers of what appears to be spiritual awakening on the Howard Payne University campus already have compared the atmosphere of revival there to "another Asbury" -- a spontaneous spiritual movement in the 1970s that started on the Wilmore, Ky., campus of Asbury College and spread to many colleges throughout the United States.

At Howard Payne, renewal seemed to begin at a "celebration" service Jan. 26 as students praised God in song and shared their testimonies. Students then started scheduling all-night prayer meetings in dormitories.

A couple of weeks later, Henry Blackaby, prayer and spiritual awakening leader with the Home Mission Board, visited the campus to speak during five evening worship services. On Tuesday, more than 600 came to the service which lasted until 11 p.m. as student leaders came to the platform to confess publicly their secret sins. About 200 stayed afterward to continue praying.

"Once we saw the Spirit move, we didn't want to leave," said Andrea Cullins, a junior from League City, Texas.

Students confessed moral impurities, God healed broken relationships and Christians bonded together as they yielded in obedience to the Lord's direction, Cullins said.

"There was no pressure, no manipulation. The anointing of God was just so evident," said Don Newbury, president of Howard Payne University.

Three Howard Payne students spoke at an evangelism class at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, on Feb. 28 to report on "the activity of God" in Brownwood. Other students have spoken at Houston Baptist University and Samford University, Birmingham, Ala., and many have been invited to testify in services at their hometown churches.

"God has given us a real boldness and a burden to share," Cullins said.

James Hahn, a Howard Payne senior from Schulenburg, Texas, said, "I had grown somewhat cynical about revival. I'd heard it so much since I came to college. But when God started moving, there was no doubt about it."

"Accountability groups" have sprung up on campus as Christian students pledge to support each other in prayer and hold each other responsible to keeping commitments to Christ. New Bible study groups have started in dormitories. Tensions between different racial groups have eased.

"I would say this has taken many of us to a higher plane in our prayer life and our Christian walk. In general, there has been an upsurge of prayer and service, and interest in spiritual matters has stepped up several notches," Newbury said.

A number of guests drove up to 200 miles to attend the services at Howard Payne with Blackaby, author of the "Experiencing God" discipleship curriculum, Newbury noted. And in the services and luncheons at Coggin Avenue in which Blackaby spoke, representatives from more than two dozen churches attended.

Experiencing God is a common denominator among several of the Brownwood-area churches that have been revived in recent weeks.

About 300 members of Coggin Avenue church completed the study. Of the active members at First Baptist, Santa Anna, roughly half enrolled in Experiencing God and more than one-third completed it. At Rocky Creek church, more than two-thirds of the adult members signed up for the course, and nearly 90 percent completed it.

"I thought God would do something in our church right after our people went through Experiencing God, but it didn't happen then. God was preparing us for what's happening now," Avant said.

"He is making our people more available and open. And Experiencing God probably kept some of our folks from having coronaries at the thought of the e-hour services and one-and-a-half-hour invitations."

**SBC Cooperative Program receipts
up nearly 20 percent in February**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program receipts for February increased nearly 20 percent over that month a year ago, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

For February 1995, receipts totaled \$12,437,257, which is 19.30 percent, or \$2,012,148, over February 1994 of \$10,425,108.

"I am personally very grateful for the continued faithfulness of our Southern Baptist people and for the encouragement they receive from their pastors and state convention leaders," Chapman said.

After five months of the SBC's fiscal year, October through February, the total is \$60,878,340 which is 3.10 percent (\$1,831,274) over the same period in the previous year, \$59,047,066.

Those encouraging figures, Chapman said, also brought Cooperative Program receipts 7.01 percent over the year-to-date requirement of the SBC program allocation budget. The monthly budget requirement is \$11,378,310, with the February 1995 total 9.31 percent above that requirement.

Designated gifts were also up, 4.63 percent for February: \$36,727,593, compared to a year ago of \$35,103,734. For the year-to-date, designated gifts are 1.03 percent ahead of that period in the previous year: \$63,866,420 compared to \$63,217,513.

The SBC Cooperative Program total includes receipts from individuals, churches, state conventions and fellowships for distribution according to the 1994-95 program allocation budget as well as restricted funds received from state conventions which identify them as Cooperative Program.

The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. Designated contributions include the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions, world hunger and other special gifts.

State and regional conventions retain a percentage of Cooperative Program contributions they receive from the churches to support work in their areas and send the remaining funds to the Executive Committee for national and international ministries. The percentage of distribution is at the discretion of each state or regional convention.

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**Brotherhood trustees respond
to SBC reorganization proposal** By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
3/1/95

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The Brotherhood Commission's trustee executive committee, meeting via conference call Feb. 27, reviewed the "Covenant for a New Century" proposal to restructure Southern Baptist agencies, formed a transition team and affirmed the work of the commission's staff.

The restructuring proposal includes a call for the eventual move of the Brotherhood Commission's functions to Atlanta as part of a new North American Mission Board. The new board also would include responsibilities functions currently assigned to the Home Mission Board and Radio and Television Commission.

The Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee approved the proposed restructuring during its Feb. 20-22 meeting in Nashville, Tenn., thus placing the proposal before messengers to the June 20-22 SBC annual meeting in Atlanta. A majority messengers to two consecutive SBC annual meetings must approve the changes. The proposal was drafted by a seven-member study group created by the Executive Committee in response to a motion referred from the 1993 SBC annual meeting in Houston.

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"With the formation of the transition team, we are not presuming anything about the will of the Southern Baptist Convention," said James D. Williams, Brotherhood Commission president. "We are simply taking a proactive step to be prepared to respond to whatever we are called upon to do. We want to be ready to lead a transition process with dignity and direction, and move into our new, expanded role empowered by God's Spirit."

According to trustee chairman Donley Brown, the consensus of the board is to accept the recommendations in the "Covenant for a New Century" proposal and "proceed with an orderly transition, based on the will of the Southern Baptist Convention."

"We do have questions about the impact of these recommendations on the laity in the local churches and about the potential loss of the entrepreneurial spirit of the Brotherhood Commission," added Brown, a retired military management analyst from Jefferson City, Mo. "We're also concerned about the staff and their families. But we commend Dr. Williams for the positive leadership he is giving."

"The Brotherhood transition team will be chaired by Michael S. Day, the agency's executive vice president. Day will be joined by two other members of the Brotherhood Commission's executive staff: Douglas Beggs, vice president for program services, and Jack Childs, vice president for support services. The team also will consist of two Brotherhood Commission trustees, two state convention Brotherhood leaders and two members of the agency's Memphis staff to be approved later.

The group's assignment includes:

- monitoring and reporting the progress and impact of the recommendations contained in the "Covenant for a New Century" proposal.

- identifying issues and questions to be addressed by the agency's staff, trustees and state leadership during the transition period.

- participating cooperatively in developing a transition plan for consolidating the work of the Brotherhood Commission with the newly formed North American Mission Board.

- coordinating the development of a public relations/communications plan related to the Brotherhood Commission's current work and future directions.

- consulting with appropriate persons and groups with regard to legal and denominational issues posed by the transition.

The transition team will report to the Brotherhood Commission's president and trustees.

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Homosexuality clear cultural sign
of man's worship of man, Mohler says

By Dwayne Hastings

Baptist Press
3/1/95

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Homosexuality is the first offspring of a people who have corrupted the knowledge of the one true God, said R. Albert Mohler Jr. during the of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's annual seminar.

"The first, foremost and clearest example of what happens when a people worship the creature instead of the creator is homosexuality. This is the human creature corrupting and perverting the knowledge of God," said Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, Ky.

"Homosexuality is the creature shaking his fist in the face of God and saying, 'I do know best, I will do what I want.'"

It does not take an astute person to sense the ground has shifted, Mohler said Feb. 28 on the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary campus in Wake Forest, N.C. "We are living in a time of great confusion: a collision between the worlds that is unfortunately not the figment of some science fiction imagination."

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Yet, Mohler said the "homosexualization" of culture has occurred while the church has slept: "The church has hardly responded to the homosexuality issue with a certain sound. If the church of Jesus Christ is not now the most powerful countercultural force in the midst of society, we are not true to the gospel and we are not true to our Lord."

The evangelical community is charged with homophobia and homo-hatred when it responds to the issue of homosexuality in scriptural terms, Mohler noted. "If the evangelical church has a hangup on homosexuality, then so did the apostle Paul."

Citing the first chapter of the Book of Romans, Mohler said, "Each of us has within ourselves, implanted by God himself, a knowledge of God. Paul makes it abundantly clear the problem is not that we do not know, it is that we have corrupted that knowledge."

"Paul says, 'If you want to see what happens when a people pervert the knowledge of God -- the tangible impact it has in their lives -- look at man giving up the natural use of the woman and burning in lust for one another.'"

Despite the efforts of revisionist Bible scholars, the text is as unambiguous as it can be, Mohler insisted. "Paul has left no interpretative space. There is nothing ambiguous or unclear in the text."

When a people accommodate themselves to the sin of homosexuality, they also are accommodating themselves to the perversion of the knowledge of God, Mohler said.

"A people who grow tolerant and comfortable with homosexuality are a people who have grown distant from this holy and righteous God who reveals himself in both love and wrath. In that day, God will give them up -- not only as individuals, but as a society as well. That is what Sodom and Gomorrah are all about," Mohler warned.

The people of God must speak the truth in love and speak it plainly, Mohler said. "We may be labeled as intolerant, but we must be intolerant of sin as we seek to preach the gospel to sinners."

And believers must be genuinely compassionate. "The first act of compassion is telling the truth. How is it compassionate to tell sinners they are not sinners? How is it compassionate to tell persons who are in peril that there is no danger?" Mohler asked.

It is critical believers realize homosexuality is not just another sin among others, he said. "As a fire department arriving on the scene must determine which blaze is burning the hottest and is the most threatening to the structure, likewise Christians must look to where the most dangerous fires are burning in culture."

"And while there are many sectors of sin, the issue of homosexuality is not an ancillary issue. It hits at the heart of what is wrong in our culture," Mohler said.

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Racism renders church ineffective
in struggle for cities, Frost says

Baptist Press
3/1/95

By Dwayne Hastings

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--The reality of racism has made the struggle for the soul of the inner city an almost unwinnable fight, said Gary Frost, pastor of Rising Star Baptist Church, Youngstown, Ohio., during the annual seminar of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"The paralyzing sin of pride manifested in racism has in many cases rendered the witness of the corporate church almost totally ineffective," said Frost, an African American who was elected second vice president of the SBC in 1994. "Until this racism is biblically and publicly dealt with amongst believers, there is no hope of a sweeping revival of the magnitude that is necessary to save our cities."

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There are no easy answers to the urban crisis: "New programs, more money, larger staffs, by themselves, are not going to win the day. There are foundational issues that must be addressed in believer's hearts before we will see victory in the city.

"It is racism which is holding back the winds of revival from the inner city," Frost said Feb. 28 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Bitterness among black Americans is rooted in the injustices of the past and can only be remedied spiritually, said Frost, pointing to the outbreak of vengeance and violence which followed the original verdict in the Rodney King trial.

"This incident reveals that just below the surface of civility there is the volcanic potential for hostility. There remains some unfinished business among the body of Christ regarding the injustices of the past," he said.

The source of this bitterness is corrupted hurt, said Frost, the former president of the State Convention of Southern Baptists in Ohio. It is just as when a person has an injury which does not receive proper medical care. The area becomes sore and infected, he explained.

"There is some hurt in black America, and the wound has never properly been cleansed," he said. "We've put Band-Aids on it, tried to cover it up, talked about it, but it has not been cleansed. I don't believe politics will cleanse this wound. I believe the people of God alone can cleanse it."

Frost said a measure of bitterness stems from the cold indifference white evangelicals displayed when black Christians sorely needed their support in the 1960s. "When African Americans were struggling to gain an identity and a voice, their evangelical brothers did not answer the cry for help. Yet liberal religionists were right on the scene."

The result was an unequally yoked marriage between Bible-believing blacks and liberal social activists who denied the foundations of the faith, Frost said. He said society now is witnessing the offspring of that unholy matrimony.

"We have inner cities full of angry, young black Americans who are spiritually alienated and, after all these years, still socially isolated," he said.

Frost noted the efforts of several SBC directors of missions in larger metropolitan areas who have proposed declarations of repentance. Frost said these directors come directly in contact with the bitterness black Americans harbor, and they are convinced the declarations are a necessary first step in dealing with the issue of racism.

"Satan has a handle in the black community," he said. "It is a handle that was placed there by past injustices. If revival is going to come to urban America, this ammunition must be removed from Satan's arsenal. We must disarm him."

The calls for this broad-based repentance have prompted some debate, Frost acknowledged. "Some are arguing that corporate repentance is unbiblical. Yet I read in the Old Testament of three great leaders, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, who in their return from Babylonian captivity all offered prayers of repentance for national sins they had not committed."

As Southern Baptists anticipate the planned celebration of the 150th anniversary of the SBC, Frost suggested, "If we can rejoice in our corporate successes, should we not also repent of our corporate sins. If we can celebrate our forefather's love for Jesus, should we not also lament the fact that they rendered certain human souls as inferior to their own?"

Frost said his visits with black and ethnic Southern Baptists have uncovered a form of systematic racism within the denomination itself. "There is a need for healing in the body of Christ. I have found a recurring concern being voiced by some: that while ethnic communities are being impacted by decisions made by SBC leaders, these communities feel extremely isolated from the decision-making process," he said.

Some decisions are being made which do not reflect their needs, Frost reported. There are ethnics in the convention who need to be a part of the decision-making process.

"If there is to be a serious commitment to reconciliation and inclusion in the Southern Baptist Convention, it is imperative that blacks and other ethnics be brought to the table," Frost said.

Compounding the struggle in the cities of America, the sin of pride has also manifested itself in denominationalism in the battlefield, Frost said.

"To win the war in the cities we must implement two things: ecclesiastical unity and spiritual authority. These are indispensable elements in our strategy to win the city."

The war cannot be won until John 13:35 becomes more than a cute catch phrase but is embraced as truth by the body of Christ, said Frost, reading the passage, "Jesus said: 'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.'"

"The unity that Christ desires for his church is not one that denies him but is rather a unity that relies upon him," said Frost, noting he was not calling for ecumenism as it is commonly practiced.

"True ecumenism requires that we eliminate all theology that would be divisive. That is not what I'm talking about -- I tell you I'm not willing to give up my Jesus."

He labeled false the fears of evangelicals who say they will lose their identity by joining in work with other denominations: "My experience has shown me that laboring together with other Bible-believing saints does not inhibit my ministry but instead enhances my ministry."

The biblical account of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem under the supervision of Nehemiah clearly shows what believers, unified in kingdom work, can accomplish in the urban arena, he said. "The people had a mind to work together. Nehemiah's plan is a picture of Christ's plan for the city," Frost said.

"I believe our inner cities can be saved if we come together: dropping our denominational barriers, rejecting racism, standing together in Jesus' name. But we all have to come to the place where we recognize that only God can do it."

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Frost draws distinction between
political, biblical conservatism By Dwayne Hastings

Baptist Press
3/1/95

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--There is a distinction between political conservatism and conservatism in one's view of the Word of God, warned Gary Frost in a Feb. 28 address at the annual seminar of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"As conservative believers, we must recognize that there is something different between political conservatism and biblical conservatism," said Frost, who serves as second vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Relating that he is most often opposed to the positions of black Americans such as Jesse Jackson and Jocelyn Elders, Frost, the first African American to serve as a national officer of the SBC, said, "But just as Louis Farrakhan is hitting on a nerve on one side, folks like Rush Limbaugh are hitting at a nerve on the other side. We have to make sure that we are not listening to the voice of political conservatism but are listening to the voice of Jesus Christ."

Frost, pastor of Rising Star Baptist Church, Youngstown, Ohio, noted the Southern Baptist Convention's shift back to the right in the early 1980s was atypical of most mainline denominations: "I know there's been a lot of controversy in the convention over the past several years, but I believe that God is in the midst of it and has allowed there to be a turning back.

"When the pull came to the left, the Southern Baptist Convention turned back to the right. Now I'm not talking about the right of political conservatism but about the right of conservatism in the Word of God.

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"God has allowed us to be rescued, but the war is not over. The fight still continues," Frost said at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., host of this year's CLC conference.

Frost also took the occasion of his address to speak to activity on Capitol Hill which seeks to disable affirmative action programs. Agreeing it might be time to examine the equity of affirmative action guidelines, Frost said he was uneasy about the attitude behind the motivation of those seeking to scrap the federal government regulations.

"Brothers and sisters, if you are going to be so vocal against affirmative action, also be vocal against discrimination in the workplace. Let's balance this thing out," Frost said.

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'94 retirement, relief benefits topped \$166 million, board told By Thomas E. Miller Jr.

Baptist Press
3/1/95

DALLAS (BP)--Retirement and relief benefits paid by the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention rose 18 percent in 1994, to \$166 million. The future of the board's relief ministry was enhanced by gifts and commitments that totaled \$8,824,473 over the last three years.

Those were among the reports given to the agency's trustees during their Feb. 27-28 meeting in Dallas.

Harold D. Richardson, the board's treasurer, showed graphs that demonstrated steady growth in enrollments, contributions and benefits paid. Contributions to participants' accounts reached \$238.5 million. Total assets remained essentially flat for the past year at \$4.402 billion due to financial markets that suffered losses in both stocks and bonds.

Annualized earnings for the board's three investment funds were 5.72 percent for the Fixed Fund, a loss of 0.98 percent for the Variable Fund, and a loss of 2.51 percent for the Balanced Fund. In his report to trustees, John R. Jones, who heads the board's investment program, said 1994 was the first time in 20 years when both the bond and stock markets ended in a negative earnings position. Despite the 1994 figures, 10-year average returns for the three Annuity Board funds are 8.87 for the Fixed Fund, 10.57 percent for the Balanced Fund and 12.04 percent for the Variable Fund.

Annuity Board President Paul W. Powell presented his annual report and told trustees of ongoing conversations with the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention. He reported the Executive Committee recommendation to the convention that the Annuity Board be granted a 3 percent increase in its Cooperative Program allocation for the 1995-96 fiscal year. Powell said the expected \$1,077,994 would be supplemented by \$100,000 from earnings on the board's Retired Ministers Support Fund. The latter fund is raised by the board's endowment department to supplement inadequate or nonexistent retirement benefits of ministers and their widows.

All Cooperative Program funds received by the Annuity Board are spent in relief ministry, and all operating expense of the board is paid from earnings on assets.

Also in his report, Powell noted retirement benefits paid totaled \$164.38 million, with 25,948 persons receiving benefits on Dec. 31. In the past year, 3,885 new benefits were established. The average age of 3,096 new retirees was 64. There were 94 people retiring on disability (average age of 53) and 683 survivor benefits were established. Twelve new education benefits were established for surviving children.

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Relief benefits of \$1,097,550 were paid to 502 individuals or couples in 1994, with most of the money going to retired ministers or their widows who receive no regular annuity benefit. Another 1,497 people were receiving an extra \$50 every month, paid from the board's Adopt An Annuitant program. This program paid out a total of \$874,645 during the year.

The relief committee of the board considered 37 new relief requests. Trustees approved 22 two-year monthly grants, one eight-month monthly grant, four two-year expense grants and a single one-time grant. Ten requests were declined for being outside guidelines. A one-time emergency grant of \$2,000 was paid to a flood victim in Georgia.

Richard C. Scott, dean of the Hankamer School of Business at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, was elected to a second one-year term as chairman of the board, and Thomas A. Shaw, pastor of Red Fork Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla., was elected vice chairman. Shaw presently is chairman of the relief committee.

Trustees elected five new members to the board's endowment development council to assist in fund-raising activities: Anita Anderson, Tyler, Texas; W. Everett Bennett, Tucker, Ga.; Steve Fowler, Atlanta; Robert Sheldon, Houston; and Patsy Smith of Colleyville, Texas.

The next meeting of the Annuity Board trustees will be July 31-Aug. 1 in Colorado Springs, Colo.

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EDITORS' NOTE: The following story updates one with the same headline in Baptist Press 2/28/95.

Dispute in Louisiana erupts over
evangelical-Catholic document By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
3/1/95

THERIOT, La. (BP)--A year after two Southern Baptist Convention leaders signed an affirmation of evangelical-Roman Catholic relations, the issue has erupted in a small Louisiana community.

So far, the dispute has encompassed:

-- a public confrontation of Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis by the pastor and several members of Bayou DuLarge Baptist Mission Church, Theriot, La., urging Lewis to repent of signing the widely publicized document, "Catholics and Evangelicals Together." The confrontation took place during a Feb. 10 missions rally of the 36-church Adolphe Stagg Baptist Association based in nearby Houma, La. The meeting was held at the Bayou DuLarge mission, which had just completed a new auditorium.

-- the subsequent firing of the mission pastor, Jerry Moser, a Southern Baptist home missionary, by the sponsoring church, Christ Baptist in Houma.

-- the intention of Moser and the 100-member mission he has led 11 years for him to continue as their pastor.

"I plan to continue to be missionary pastor on Bayou DuLarge, not as an act of rebellion but as an act of obedience to the Lord who called me to be here," Moser said Feb. 28. "That call was ratified by this mission church and has been confirmed over and over again in our hearts and minds."

Moser continued, "We are determined to remain associated with our sponsoring church, our association of churches here, the Louisiana Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention."

Still, the evangelical-Catholic document, also signed by Richard Land, executive director of the SBC Christian Life Commission, "grieves us and hurts our witness ... in an area that's 98 percent Roman Catholic and Episcopalian," Moser said.

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Moser's stated intention of remaining Southern Baptist was disputed by Lynn Fontenot, pastor of the sponsoring church, Christ Baptist. Fontenot quoted Moser as saying at the Feb. 10 meeting that Lewis' decision on removing his name from the evangelical-Catholic document would determine whether the mission remained in the SBC.

Fontenot said Moser's firing is a local church matter involving Christ Baptist as the mission's sponsor taking action against Moser for a history of insubordination over several years, climaxed by the confrontation with Lewis. Fontenot, who came to Christ Baptist in 1993, added he sought counsel from the church's previous pastor, as well as pastors of the mission's other co-sponsoring churches and the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

"Without fail, ... those pastors are in 100 percent support of what we've done. And the Louisiana Baptist Convention missions division is in support of the action taken," Fontenot told Baptist Press March 1.

Lewis and Land have weathered criticism for compromises critics contend the evangelical-Catholic document makes to Catholic doctrine. Foreign Mission Board trustees voted unanimously in April 1994 to express concern that the document "is subject to interpretations harmful to the work of foreign missions." The Southern Baptist Convention, however, adopted a resolution in June 1994 affirming dialogue with Catholics and upholding Baptist beliefs about evangelism. The HMB board of directors embraced the SBC resolution the following August, although 11 directors signed a "statement of dissent" in September listing six areas of concern over the document. CLC commissioners unanimously affirmed Land's signing of the document the same month.

Moser received his termination notice from Christ Baptist Feb. 23. The letter, signed by Fontenot, said the church in a Feb. 22 business meeting had approved the unanimous recommendation of its missions committee for Moser's immediate resignation as Bayou DuLarge's pastor. "The underlying reason for this action," Fontenot wrote, "is your continued insubordination" to the authority of Christ Baptist as the mission's sponsor.

The letter promised Moser \$2,000 per month in salary and rent for three months contingent upon him not attending any meeting of the mission church, not holding any public meeting at the building, not attending Sunday services of the mission prior to his family vacating their living quarters in the back of the building by March 8, and not soliciting any funds.

Moser reported he and the Bayou DuLarge congregation intend to respect Christ Baptist's wishes, except for "disobeying God" by abandoning the pastor-church relationship they believe God has ordained for them. The congregation will meet in members' homes until its relationship with Christ Baptist is settled, Moser said. The mission is 60 years old, predating Christ Baptist, and once functioned as a church with a mission of its own, he noted. He added that Christ Baptist did not consult with the mission in its vote to request his resignation.

Moser, in a nine-page letter addressed to "associated churches" after the Feb. 10 missions rally, said his church unanimously approved a confrontation with Lewis after three meetings, encompassing more than 12 hours, to pray and discuss the matter.

"We decided that we were supposed to confront Dr. Lewis and not allow him to speak until he had a chance to hear us and consider how he is hurting us with this heretical document," Moser wrote.

Included in the rationale Moser gave for the mission's action were the autonomy of the local church and 1 Timothy 5:19's instruction that an accusation against a church leader is to be brought by two or three witnesses and, "Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning."

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"We maintained control of the meeting and gave permission to no others to speak but Dr. Lewis, four of our men; and myself," Moser recounted, acknowledging, "Most of the innocent congregation from other churches were shocked, stunned, or steaming mad at us. . . . We are not prideful about what we did; we are sad that it had to be done. . . . Common decency would have caused us not to act in this way. We are convinced that biblically defending the faith sometimes supersedes what man considers proper."

Moser said Lewis "conducted himself well and was respectful of the authority of the church," but "steadfastly refused to repent."

Fontenot recounted that he twice stood up at the meeting and asked that the confrontation cease but was told by Moser that he had no authority at the Bayou DuLarge mission -- an assertion Fontenot disputed as pastor of the sponsoring church.

Fontenot said he also wishes Lewis would remove his name from the evangelical-Catholic document but described the confrontation as "outright rude and insulting."

Lewis issued a statement March 1, recounting, "When I was introduced, Brother Jerry Moser, the host pastor, went to the pulpit and refused to allow me to speak despite repeated requests to do so from both the director of missions and the pastor of the church which sponsors Brother Moser's mission. For more than half an hour, he verbally assaulted and opposed me and called several of his church members to the pulpit to do likewise. When finally given an opportunity to respond, I was told I was not worthy to speak from the pulpit and was directed to speak from the floor, which I did. I thank God that he gave me the graciousness to endure these attacks and respond in a Christlike spirit.

"I regret that Brother Moser has so misunderstood the issues involved that his actions have forced the sponsoring church to fire him," Lewis continued. "The document he used that evening, and apparently based his objections on, was an early draft of the document 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium,' and not the final version. He did not have copies of my comments on the document nor the clarifications made by the directors of the Home Mission Board."

Lewis said he attempted "to intercede on his behalf and requested that he not be fired," which Fontenot confirmed, citing a letter he received from Lewis with the request.

"I pray God's will be done," Lewis said, "in the life of this brother, the mission fellowship and the sponsoring church."

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SBC, Atlanta, child care
now accepting registration

Baptist Press
3/1/95

ATLANTA (BP)--Registration for on-site child care for preschool children of out-of-town messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta, June 20-22, is now being accepted.

A registration form is available by writing to: SBC Preschool Child Care, c/o Briarlake Baptist Church, 3715 LaVista Road, Decatur, GA 30033. Included with the registration form will be sessions available, fees and a medical form.

Cost of child care is \$10 per person per session. Each registration form must be accompanied by a non-refundable deposit of 50 percent of the anticipated cost.

Child care registration will be confirmed on a first-come, first-served basis. Parents are urged to write for registration materials immediately, SBC officials said.

The SBC annual meeting will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the creation of the convention. The meetings will be held at the new Georgia Dome and its adjacent World Congress Center in downtown Atlanta.

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Susan Ray's vocabulary didn't include word 'handicapped'

By Orville Scott

GEORGETOWN, Texas (BP)--Although Susan Ray, who died Feb. 25, was a quadriplegic and dependent on an iron lung, she wrote a widely used book on Baptists and was coauthor of three others during her 47-year pilgrimage.

Stricken by polio at age 4, Susan lay at the brink of death for more than six months, gasping for every breath.

"But we refused to accept the doctor's reports that there was nothing we could do," said her father, Cecil Ray, then pastor of Arnett-Benson Baptist Church, Lubbock, Texas.

Ray, who later served as director of missions for San Antonio Association, director of the Texas Baptist stewardship division and executive director of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, invented a unique motor chair, portable iron lungs, a mechanical desk and other equipment to brighten Susan's life.

About eight months after Susan's attack, she was to return to Houston for a checkup. Portable car-travel iron lungs hadn't been developed yet, but with the help of his church members and other friends Ray built a miniature, battery-powered lung.

About 50 miles into the trip, the lung suddenly stopped.

Knowing that little Susan could not live more than 10 minutes without it, Ray began frantically tearing the mechanism apart to find the trouble.

Nothing was amiss with the lung itself. Panic-stricken, he checked the wiring. Then he found it. The lung had merely come unplugged.

Thereafter, Ray always carried at least three breathing units on every trip. Once two of the three units quit working.

Susan was able to move only one arm and leg slightly, but her father developed a miniature keyboard connected to a typewriter so she could write with her arm in a sling.

With the help of the special typing system, she wrote the book, "The Baptist Way," and was coauthor of "Baptists Working Together," "Cooperation, the Baptist Way" and "The Witnessing Giving Life."

She wrote numerous articles for newspapers and magazines and scripts for filmstrips and a movie.

Using the special equipment invented by her father, Susan was able to paint and embroider. Under the tutelage of her teacher mother, Charlene, Susan graduated from high school.

In churches where she and her families were members, Susan worked with children. As a member of First Baptist Church, Grand Prairie, Texas, she helped begin Primera Mission which grew into a self-supporting church.

At her memorial service Feb. 27 at Crestview Baptist Church, Georgetown, Texas, Roy Smith, executive director for North Carolina Baptists, called Susan a "missionary extraordinaire."

Recalling Susan dedicated her life to missions while attending a summer program at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist assembly, Smith said, "The word, 'handicapped,' was not in her vocabulary. She faced all of life with courage and faith in God.

"She was particularly interested in conservation, the environment and issues concerning the dignity and worth of the individual. She wrote more letters to decision-makers than any person I know."

Smith said Susan was part of a family whose lifestyle included investing in the lives of people from foreign countries who received an education in the United States and returned home to be effective ambassadors for Jesus.

One of these, Kenyan pastor Douglas Waruta, head of the religion department at the University of Nairobi, participated in Susan's funeral service.

Waruta earned his bachelor's degree at Hardin-Simmons University with the aid of the Rays, and Waruta's son, James, is now studying there.

FIRST-PERSON

Corrections officer's faith nudged by ancient jailer

By Glen A. Land

GREEN BAY, Wis. (BP)--Dan Bozich is in daily close contact with some of the vilest people in northeastern Wisconsin.

A corrections officer at the maximum security state prison in Green Bay, he spends his days in the company of murderers, rapists and drug dealers. Some days, he is assigned to the segregation unit, where he deals with child molesters and others deemed unfit even for the general prison population.

The work of a corrections officer isn't for everyone; it requires both physical and mental toughness to a degree not found in most people. Dan more than meets the necessary criteria; he has the build of a football lineman -- broad shoulders, huge biceps and a thick, muscular neck. Slap him on the back and it's like slapping a shoe sole.

Matching his physical condition is his mental toughness. Like others in his profession, Dan has learned to suppress the instincts of compassion and tenderness that are part of normal human interaction -- for there is nothing normal about the prison environment. The very qualities that make life worth living on the outside can cost your job or even your life when you work in a prison. Anyway you look at him, Dan Bozich is a hard man.

His wife, Jill, has been a member of Green Bay's Valley Baptist Church for some time. A few months ago, the couple's twin daughters, Erin and Erica, professed faith in Christ and were baptized. Dan attended the baptism and was deeply moved by it. He started attending an occasional church service. His interest grew. Finally, after a worship service early last December, he made an appointment to meet with me.

The following Thursday afternoon, as we talked in my study, it quickly became obvious Dan was under conviction. A part of him wanted to follow Christ, but another part had real fears about how that could be possible in the work environment he faced each day. How could he be a Christian without hypocrisy, given the way he felt about some of the people he was charged to watch?

Dan was ever so close to making a commitment, but it appeared that he was not going to be able to take that last step of faith. With growing desperation, I silently prayed that God would not let this opportunity pass -- that somehow God would give me the words to secure for Christ the soul of Dan Bozich.

And then, in a glorious moment of divinely inspired insight, God showed me the key that would release this jailer from the prison of sin. And at the moment the insight was granted, I knew Dan's life was about to be forever changed.

"Dan," I asked, "do you know that there's an account in the New Testament about a corrections officer who gave his life to Christ?"

"No!" he replied, with obvious interest.

"Would you like me to read that story to you now?" "Yes, I would."

I opened my Bible to Acts 16:22-34 and read the story of the conversion of the Philippian jailer.

Before that moment, I had never connected the terms "jailer" and "corrections officer." As I read that text, I also read in Dan's face the clear evidence that the last line of resistance had just dissolved. Dan and I knelt together and asked Jesus Christ to be the Lord of his life.

That passage in Acts has long been a favorite of mine, but I will never again read it without rejoicing in the way a corrections officer in ancient Philippi showed a corrections officer in Green Bay the path to Jesus.

On Sunday, Feb. 26, 1995, Dan Bozich presented himself as a candidate for baptism and membership at Valley Baptist Church on the basis of his profession of faith. He is scheduled to be baptized on Palm Sunday, April 9.

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Land is pastor of Valley Baptist Church, Green Bay, Wis.

**Church's computer offers
varied resources to members**

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--It probably will never replace the church newsletter, but a computer bulletin board service is giving members of Walnut Grove Baptist Church in Mechanicsville, Va., faster access to information about their suburban Richmond congregation.

One year ago, minister of education Marty Canady made the BBS available on his office computer. Since then only about 20 of the church's nearly 1,000 members have actually signed on. But interest is growing and that number may increase.

"We use the service in a lot of different ways," Canady says. "The primary way is messaging back and forth."

Messages can be sent between Canady and members concerning a wide range of discussion topics. But the BBS also offers specific dialogue forums for the church's Sunday school council; for teachers using the Life and Work and Formations curriculum lines, as well as for more general teacher training; for upcoming church studies; and to offer ideas about church life.

"Teacher training is the need most often expressed," says Canady.

The BBS also has approximately 25 bulletin areas, ranging from stewardship updates to prayer requests to hospital and shut-in lists -- the essentials of a church newsletter.

Also available are directories of key church committees and organizations.

In addition, Canady has provided hundreds of shareware files, such as Bible study programs and personal information managers, available for downloading. The program is designed to permit members to download any file simply by pressing one key.

All it takes is a computer and modem to access the BBS, says Canady. "I was surprised to know how many in the church have computers and modems."

The computer service is available 24 hours and members can access it at their convenience. "That's the beauty of it," he says. "People can read and respond at their leisure."

Each member is allotted a certain amount of time on the system to permit as wide an access as possible.

Although the cost to the church is minimal -- \$18 a month for a dedicated phone line to which the computer is attached -- Canady doesn't know how long the BBS will be maintained.

"Some weeks it's more strongly used than others. I don't know how long we'll continue it."

On the other hand, it may expand. Canady has considered making the service available to all churches in the surrounding Dover Baptist Association and even the state.

For now, however, only Walnut Grove members are lucky enough to access the varied resources.

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Polish Baptist women's leader

ready to go again after surgery By Orville Scott

Baptist Press

3/1/95

TYLER, Texas (BP)--A 30-year journey of pain and life-threatening medical problems has been transformed into a new lease on life for a Baptist leader from Poland by Texas Baptist volunteers and doctors in Tyler.

An appendectomy when she was 15 began an incredible string of 24 operations for Ewa Gutkowski who, nevertheless, went on to become president of Baptist Women's work in Poland.

Also, despite her almost constant health problems, she and her husband, Richard, general secretary of the Baptist Union of Poland, adopted three children.

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But eventually, due to accumulated scar tissue and an intestinal fistula (leak), her health had regressed to the point that she couldn't live more than two years without complex surgery.

Polish doctors confessed they lacked the equipment to correct her problems.

Then last fall, her condition came to the attention of two highly regarded Tyler, Texas, physicians: Sam Houston, a surgeon, and Kerfoot Walker, Smith County public health supervisor. Walker, a member of Tyler's Green Acres Baptist Church, has done medical missions in countries across the world.

The doctors were serving in Poland in conjunction with the Michael Gott Evangelistic Association of Jacksonville, Texas, which has ministered in Poland for about 15 years.

Houston was confident Gutkowski's life could be saved through the laser technology and skills of surgeons at East Texas Medical Center in Tyler. He and Walker volunteered their time and talents for the mercy mission.

Gott and his wife, Jan, arranged to fly the Baptist Women's president from Poland to east Texas where she would live in their home in Jacksonville while recuperating from surgery.

Texas Baptist churches and individuals, along with the benevolence department at East Texas Medical Center, helped defray the costs of the highly expensive procedure.

Among the donors were the Gott Evangelistic Association and members of Green Acres church; Tyland Baptist Church, Tyler, and First Baptist Church, Arlington.

In a five-hour operation Jan. 30, Houston and other surgeons at East Texas Medical Center removed a massive buildup of scar tissue, along with Ewa's gall bladder, and repaired the leak in her intestines.

Within a few days, she was able to "go home" to the Gott residence in Jacksonville where she is recuperating and regaining strength.

As she looks forward to returning to her family and Christian leadership responsibilities in Poland, Ewa searches for the words to adequately express her gratitude "to God and her new friends" who joined hearts and hands in a mission of love and mercy.

"I hope to be useful in the women's work in our churches in Poland," she said. "I believe it's God's plan for my life. I'm so happy."

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Education partnership seeking
recommendations for director

By Dan Nicholas

Baptist Press
3/1/95

NORTHBOROUGH, Mass. (BP)--The Northeastern Baptist Education Consortium (NeBEC), a Southern Baptist partnership, is accepting recommendations for a new director to promote contextualized theological education from Maine to Maryland.

As NeBEC's administrative officer, the director will collaborate with committees and ministry partners to manage and lead an array of theological education programs.

The programs offered include seminars, conferences, seminary classes, small-group studies, ethnic ministry training, research projects and tutoring.

The director will also "build effective relationships" for NeBEC, represent the partnership at meetings and conventions, establish a "service-oriented ministry culture," publicize and evaluate the consortium's programs and regional centers, supervise personnel and oversee the finances.

The NeBEC executive committee said it will consider recommendations of a "mature Christian" active in a Southern Baptist church, a people-oriented communicator with at least five years of ministry and administrative experience and someone acquainted with theological education. A master's degree is required and an earned doctorate is preferred.

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"The director will serve as the catalyst for coordinating, facilitating and encouraging ministry training of all kinds, shaped by the context of the Northeastern United States," said NeBEC chairman Ken Lyle, executive director of the Baptist Convention of New England, Northborough, Mass.

The Northeast Baptist School of Ministry, a NeBEC program in partnership with Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, offers theological education degrees for 160 students at centers in suburban Boston, New York City, Pittsburgh, Baltimore and Silver Springs, Md. The Silver Springs program is for Koreans. A sixth NEBSM center will open later this year in Harrisburg, Pa., said NEBSM director Andrew Y. Lee.

Doran C. McCarty retired as NeBEC director in December. NeBEC is a partnership of the Baptist Convention of New England, the Baptist Convention of New York, the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey and the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware.

The consortium also partners with Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the Home Mission Board and Southern Baptist Seminary Extension.

Recommendations for the NeBEC director should be mailed by April 1 to Ken Lyle, NeBEC Chairman, Baptist Convention of New England, 5 Oak Avenue, Northborough, MA 01532.

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