

(BP)

-- BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420,17

**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Southern Baptist Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee**

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522, CompuServe 70420,250
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232, CompuServe 70420,17
NASHVILLE Linda Lawson, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300, CompuServe 70420,57
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151, CompuServe 70420,72
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223, CompuServe 71173,316

March 3, 1995

95-37

WISCONSIN--Experiencing God hits 1 million in sales.
TENNESSEE--3 evangelical scholars accept commentary writing assignments.
NORTH CAROLINA--CLC calls Bill Merrell, acts on D.C. building.
VIRGINIA--Lou Gehrig's Disease forces lifelong giver to receive.
PUERTO RICO--Black church-starting leader: Baptists must target cities.
PUERTO RICO--Black church starters study Nation of Islam.
CYPRUS--God is moving in Turkey, says Southern Baptist worker.
ATLANTA--Toronto renewal offers no 'blessing' to HMB observers.
TENNESSEE--BSSB's 'Marriage Savers' gains national attention.
GEORGIA--NewSong's new faces, new album generating new set of fans.
TENNESSEE--Editors' Note.

**Experiencing God hits
1 million in sales**

**Baptist Press
3/3/95**

PEWAUKEE, Wis. (BP)--Located about 1.5 miles north of Interstate 94 at the intersection of Highways G and SS, First Baptist Church, Pewaukee, Wis., has inadvertently placed itself on the map and in the history books -- at least at the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Pastor Jeff McBeth's recent order of 12 copies of "Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God" resulted in the church of 120 members being identified Feb. 23 by BSSB inventory specialists as the purchaser of the 1 millionth copy of the LIFE coursebook.

"I am excited about this milestone in the history of the study of Experiencing God," said Roy Edgemon, director of the BSSB's discipleship and family development division. "It is my prayer that this study at First Baptist Church, Pewaukee, will lead the church to a deeper walk with God. I'm grateful to the Lord for what he is doing with Experiencing God all over the world."

McBeth acknowledged spousal insistence was a major factor in leading him to place the order.

"My wife, Jane, had heard quite a bit about it and she told me, 'Honey, we're the only church in the nation who hasn't done this study,'" McBeth chuckled.

Another element in his decision to pursue the study was Henry Blackaby himself. Before placing the order, McBeth and his wife attended a pastors and wives retreat at Green Lake Baptist Assembly where Blackaby, coauthor of "Experiencing God," was keynote speaker. He was so impressed he decided to go directly back home and order the study.

McBeth said, through the course, he believes members of his church "will be able to come to experience the reality and presence of God and learn to know God better."

**3 evangelical scholars accept
commentary writing assignments** **By Linda Lawson**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Three evangelical scholars, all with proven track records as authors, have accepted writing assignments for "The New American Commentary" being published by Broadman & Holman Publishers, a division of the Baptist Sunday School Board, according to Charles A. Wilson, B&H publisher.

Douglas Stuart, professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Mass., will write the commentary on Exodus. He replaces the late T.V. Farris, a professor at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Memphis, Tenn., who died in 1993.

The author of eight books, Stuart is perhaps best known for his work on methods of biblical interpretation, Wilson said. He has written "How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth" and "Old Testament Exegesis."

David M. Howard Jr., associate professor of Old Testament and Semitic languages at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill., will write the volume on Joshua, replacing Steven Wyrick whose manuscript was withdrawn by mutual agreement between Wyrick and Broadman & Holman.

Howard has written "An Introduction to Old Testament History Books" and serves as book review editor of "The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society." He also has served as a visiting professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

David M. Garland, Ernest and Mildred Hogan professor of New Testament interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., will write the volume on 2 Corinthians. He replaces Richard Land who switched to writing the volume on 1,2,3 John when Joel Gregory, former pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, resigned. Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, will coauthor the volume with Daniel Akin, assistant professor of Christian theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.

Garland is the author of four books in New Testament studies, including "Reading Matthew." He is coauthor with his wife, Diana R. Garland, of "Beyond Companionship: Christians in Marriage."

"We are greatly pleased to have these outstanding biblical scholars as contributors to The New American Commentary," Wilson said. "Each brings widely recognized academic excellence to this work and each has a heart and a gift for communicating biblical truth."

The New American Commentary is a 42-volume commentary on the entire Bible. The first volume was published in 1991. More than 150,000 copies have been sold of the 16 volumes released to date. The final volume will be released in the year 2000.

"The commentary assumes the inerrancy of Scripture and is theologically focused -- interpreting each book around the theological themes of that book and with a view toward the theology of Scripture as a whole," Wilson said.

Commentary volumes have received positive reviews from American, Canadian, British and German biblical scholars, including Presbyterians, Methodists and Catholics as well as Baptists, he added. Three commentary volumes have been nominated for Gold Medallion Book Awards from the Christian Booksellers Association.

Wilson praised Ray Clendenen, general editor of the commentary, and his editorial team "for their excellent work which is being recognized increasingly by Southern Baptists and other Christians."

CLC calls Bill Merrell,
acts on D.C. building

By Tom Strode

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission trustees voted to call Oklahoma associational director Bill Merrell as director of media and product development in their semiannual meeting March 2 in Raleigh, N.C.

The CLC board also authorized the staff to resolve a dispute with a construction company concerning the agency's Washington, D.C., building renovation and to enter into an agreement with another contractor.

The board's actions took place one day after the CLC's annual seminar concluded at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in nearby Wake Forest. This year's three-day seminar focused on the culture war between Christianity and other world views.

The trustees voted unanimously in favor of Merrell, 51, to fill the media vacancy in the agency's Nashville, Tenn., office. Previous media director Louis Moore left the CLC in November to become associate vice president for communications and director of news and information at the Foreign Mission Board.

Merrell, director of the Comanche-Cotton Baptist Association with offices in Lawton, Okla., said he regularly addressed moral issues as a pastor and associational director. He has attempted to speak to a culture "that has lost its way," Merrell said.

In the CLC administrative committee meeting, two members asked Merrell and CLC Executive Director Richard Land about the nominee's media experience and job description. Land told the board the CLC needed not only a good communicator but someone who can handle some of the agency's issues in order to relieve the workload on other program staff members. Merrell also provides the CLC with a chance for "better communication with pastors and churches," Land said.

The CLC's director of media and product development maintains relations with news journalists, writes articles for Baptist Press and supervises the production of pamphlets, tracts, video tapes and other materials. It will be determined later what issues Merrell will have in his portfolio, Land said.

Merrell served as pastor of seven churches for 27 years before accepting the associational position in 1991. After serving in six Texas churches, he was pastor of Country Estates Baptist Church in Midwest City, Okla., 1982-91.

He holds a bachelor degree from Dallas Baptist University, a master of divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, and a doctor of ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Merrell was a founding board member of two pro-life crisis pregnancy centers. He also assisted in the early history of Southern Baptists for Life, a pro-life organization which existed when the CLC took a pro-choice position or did not actively oppose abortion. The CLC became fully pro-life when Land became its director in 1988. Merrell also has served on committees or boards in the national and state conventions.

Merrell and his wife, Sharla, have three children and four grandchildren.

His total salary package will be \$57,800.

The board went into executive session to deal with construction matters concerning the agency's Washington office. In December, the Washington staff moved from a suite in a large office building to a three-story town house the CLC had purchased. The staff has worked in the basement while awaiting renovation of the other two floors.

When the closed session ended, the trustees approved without opposition the following two-part recommendation:

"That the Board authorizes the staff to seek to resolve the construction dispute with Scott-Long Construction Company according to terms outlined in the Confidential Memo from the general counsel.

"That the Board authorizes the staff to enter an AIA Owner-Contract with C.H. Smith Services upon the terms generally outlined in the proposal letter, dated February 27, 1995, attached to the Confidential Memo."

--more--

Both construction companies are located in northern Virginia. The CLC's Washington office is at 505 Second St. NE, which is on Capitol Hill. The board went into executive session because of the "threat of potential litigation and the need to maintain the confidentiality of negotiation strategy," CLC General Counsel Michael Whitehead said afterward.

Trustees unanimously approved Chicago pastor Charles Lyons for the CLC's 1995 John Leland Religious Liberty Award. Lyons, pastor of Armitage Baptist Church, has led his church to take an active pro-life stance in inner-city Chicago. Members regularly have picketed outside an abortion clinic. Homosexual counter-picketers have disrupted Armitage's worship on at least one occasion.

The board also approved the recent report of the Program and Structure Committee of the SBC Executive Committee. The report calls for the CLC's name to be changed to the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and for a new ministry statement to be implemented by the board and staff. The report must be approved by majority vote at the next two meetings of the convention before taking effect.

Other actions taken by the trustees included:

Staff job descriptions are to be submitted to the administrative committee in September but Land and the CLC executive committee are to continue to review employees' performance because of the evaluation's relation to salary.

Trustee Rob Showers, a lawyer, is to write in cooperation with the CLC staff a pamphlet on defending churches against suits for publication by the agency.

The CLC staff is to review its "Pornography and the Law" pamphlet for possible revision in consultation with trustees with expertise on the issue.

The CLC board and staff expressed appreciation to Southeastern Seminary President Paige Patterson, the school's faculty and staff for their help in holding the 1995 seminar.

The name, "Christians in the Public Square: Faith in Practice?" was approved for the 1996 seminar in Washington, D.C.

The board voted to oppose the confirmation of Henry Foster as surgeon general. Acting in consultation with CLC executive committee members, Land had announced the CLC's opposition to Foster at a news conference Feb. 22 in Nashville, Tenn.

The trustees and staff expressed their appreciation and love for board member Vi Galyean of Virginia. Galyean, who has served four years on the board, has amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

The administrative committee voted to have the staff work with its members on three proposed bylaw changes related to the selection of committee chairmen and vice chairmen, to be presented at September's meeting.

The board met at a hotel in north Raleigh.

--30--

Lou Gehrig's Disease forces
lifelong giver to receive

By Julie Jenkins

Baptist Press
3/3/95

CHRISTIANSBURG, Va. (BP)--As an obstetrical nurse at Radford (Va.) Community Hospital, she has helped deliver 3,000 babies and as an Acteens leader throughout the state, she has wheeled 53,000 miles on her car. She is a wife, mother, grandmother and around-the-clock prayer warrior. Violet Galyean's husband says she has two speeds -- fast and off.

"Go, go, go, go!" she laughs. "You can imagine the difficulty it could be for me just to sit." But that's exactly what God is asking her to do -- sit and let others take care of her for a change.

Last October at the University of Virginia Hospital in Charlottesville, Galyean was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, named for the Yankees first baseman who died of the condition in 1939. With both arms now paralyzed and the disease spreading to her legs, the active servant must rest. But will she?

"Vi was always impatient," says husband Dixie Galyean. "She always wanted to do things right now."

--more--

As a professional caregiver for 30 years, his wife pulled long hours until her illness. Some weeks she worked five days at the Crisis Pregnancy Center of the New River Valley in Blacksburg, Va., and two days at Radford Community Hospital, fitting in an evening speaking engagement and still managing to make herself available to friends in need.

"She's spent her life doing for others. Now she's on the receiving end," her husband says.

But it's not easy for a longtime giver to receive. It's downright awkward.

Galyean's close friend Mary Joe La Parade of Christiansburg says, "The patience and grace the Lord has given her to adjust ... is nothing short of a miracle. She is just a super strong lady."

La Parade believes Galyean's giving spirit inspires others to become givers. When La Parade's 10-year-old son died in 1971, Galyean was there in the middle of the night pouring coffee. "She knew my needs before I even realized them myself," La Parade recounts. Galyean later encouraged her to organize a grief support group for parents who experience the death of a child.

A true friend like Violet Galyean is God-given, La Parade says. But now she begs her friend to "let the Lord help us bless you a little bit."

At the outset of her illness, Galyean struggled for the patience to receive. Denial was her first reaction to the October diagnosis. "When we got to the car we just hugged each other and cried," she recalls.

"After the initial shock, God really gave me the peace I needed to deal with this disease." Doctors have estimated her life expectancy from one to five years. "It shows how fragile we are," she says. "God keeps shaping and reshaping us."

Indeed, God has used Galyean to help shape others' lives. Krista Spence was 21 and in crisis when she first met the energetic nurse. Having had two abortions and two babies carried to term, Spence came to a teen center in Christiansburg to hear Galyean speak. With warm caring, Galyean asked if Spence was troubled by the abortions. "Nobody had asked me that before," Spence says. "I didn't know how much I was hurting."

The young woman said Galyean empowered her with encouragement and support. "She has been behind the prayer for me ... She's always out to help others, but she doesn't always ask help for herself." Spence says Galyean taught her that "it's easy to make mistakes, but you can pick yourself up, and you can lean on the Lord." Spence married last November.

Galyean says God must receive glory for everything in life. "Once you're confident in your relationship with him, you have nothing to fear," and that certainly includes death. "I'm just resting completely in the Lord ... I'm open to whatever the Lord wants."

Galyean's husband says her unselfish example has amazed him throughout their marriage. "Vi has been dedicated to following the Lord's leadership all of her life. She has been determined to do ... what the Lord was telling her to do against all odds."

Today, those odds are muscle deterioration, paralysis and the wait for disability insurance. Dixie Galyean says his early retirement thankfully enabled him to care for his wife's needs. "We have felt the power of prayer," he says.

The Galyeans' church, Cambria Baptist in Christiansburg, celebrated Sanctity of Human Life Sunday Jan. 22 as a day of prayer and fasting for Galyean. Many churches in the Roanoke Valley participated in the fast, particularly those Galyean touched personally through her Acteens work.

Pastor Maurice McCarthy says Galyean "has had a profound impact" on their Christian community. Cambria has established a benevolent fund to support Galyean's medical expenses. Information about the fund is available by writing the church at P.O. Box 2565, Christiansburg, VA 24068-2565.

"Vi Galyean has had the opportunity to interact with teens across Virginia," says Earlene Jessee, executive director of the Woman's Missionary Union of Virginia. As director of the crisis pregnancy center in Blacksburg the past five years and a trustee of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, Galyean has given herself wholeheartedly to fight teen pregnancy and encourage young girls to succeed.

"It was the act of obedience to God that gave Vi a zest for life," Jessee says, "and that opportunity exists for everyone."

"It's only through God," Galyean reminds. "He's the one who gives us the opportunity to do these things."

Now others who experienced Galyean's caring take joy in caring for her. "Over the years I've picked up some nursing knowledge from Vi," says her husband, who cooks and cares for his wife and granddaughter. Three-year-old Nikki gladly takes responsibility for her grandmother's vitamins, and friends pray with the Galyeans daily.

Galyean devotes many hours to intercessory prayer for missionaries, crisis pregnancy workers, family and friends. She wants women after her to "get busy" in the Lord's work. With newfound patience she thanks God for the opportunity to give and the blessing to receive.

--30--

Jenkins is public relations specialist for the Virginia Baptist General Board.

**Black church-starting leader:
Baptists must target cities**

By David Winfrey

**Baptist Press
3/3/95**

SAN JUAN, P.R. (BP)--The course for the Christian race in America must run through the cities if Southern Baptists are to reach African Americans for Christ, said the Home Mission Board's director of black church starting.

Willie McPherson also announced during the annual church-starting leadership meeting that Southern Baptists started 154 African American churches last year, two more than were started in 1993.

McPherson noted that the apostle Paul often compared the Christian life to running a race.

"The use of the metaphor 'race' indicates a sense of urgency, of commitment," he said. "For Southern Baptists, that race runs through the cities."

McPherson quoted HMB research that more than half of America's 31 million African Americans live in 17 metropolitan areas.

"There are also 25 cities with populations of 50,000 or more of which the majority is African American," he said. "While we run this course we must at least slow down long enough to let the great masses in the great cities of this nation know that God loves them and has provided a way out through his son Jesus Christ."

McPherson outlined nine actions he said would help Southern Baptists evangelize African American communities:

-- Pray for the cities. McPherson recommended a concerted effort in which pastors, missionaries and other leaders pray together at the same time for the same things.

-- Understand and be understood. Drawing from Steven Covey's book, "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People," McPherson said Southern Baptists must listen to and work alongside hurting people. "It means meeting the people where they are and then moving them to a meaningful relationship with God."

"Since the SBC is 95 percent Anglo and the greater percentage of our leadership is Anglo, there may be a tendency to try to impose white, middle-class standards on a black, inner-city culture, and that won't work."

-- Give African American communities the same priority in state church-starting strategies as is given to other groups. Many cities adopt existing black churches but aren't starting new ones, he said.

--more--

"That's not reaching the lost, that's what (former Sunday School leader) Harry Piland called 'reshuffling the saved.'"

-- Confront racism as a sin. He noted that several state conventions have already passed resolutions denouncing and repenting for racism.

-- Develop leaders from among the people that Southern Baptists are trying to reach. "It is much easier for someone who knows the people and the needs of the community firsthand to reach them than someone from the outside."

-- Challenge the stronger African American churches to become partners of new work by encouraging them to become involved in the "Key Church" strategy. In that strategy, churches have a minister of missions and attempt to start at least one new ministry or mission congregation every year.

-- Encourage and empower churches that are making an effort to reclaim their cities.

-- Develop a strategy to work with storefront Baptist churches in reclaiming the cities. "Most of the great cities of this nation are full of storefront churches that could help win the cities if they were trained in the principles of church growth and evangelism," he said.

"Some will never become Southern Baptist. So what? We can't do it all by ourselves anyway. The important thing is that people come to know Jesus Christ."

-- Invest the necessary resources to get the job done, both financial and human. "We must run that course whatever the cost, wherever it leads," he said. "Let's run, Southern Baptists, until every person knows the love of Jesus Christ."

--30--

**Black church starters
study Nation of Islam**

By David Winfrey

**Baptist Press
3/3/95**

SAN JUAN, P.R. (BP)--Southern Baptists must "do church" better than the Nation of Islam "does cult," said the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's associate director of black church extension.

"It's one of the fastest-growing cults in the African American community because it seems to meet a need that the young African American male is displaying," said Robert Wilson. "The thing that we learn from them is that the church has left its roots of meeting needs that are relevant to ministry groups."

Wilson said a video tape and training book about the Nation of Islam will be available from the Home Mission Board in late summer. In addition to information about the group, the materials will explain why young black men are joining the Chicago-based cult.

Led by Louis Farrakhan, the Nation of Islam is not an orthodox form of Islam, said Tal Davis, associate director of the HMB interfaith witness department. The Nation of Islam is not recognized by other Islamic groups in America or around the world, he said. Most black Americans who are Muslims are not involved in the Nation of Islam.

Jerry Buckner, pastor of Tiberon Christian Fellowship in metro San Francisco, said the Nation of Islam's appeal for unity, self-esteem and economic opportunity attracts many black men.

"They're doing a lot of effective things in the black community, economically and socially," he said while addressing church-starting leaders during a leadership conference in late February. "They're doing a lot of things the church should be doing."

He noted that most of the Nation of Islam congregations are predominately male, in contrast to African American Baptist churches, which he said tend to be matriarchal.

Buckner called the Nation of Islam the black equivalent to the Ku Klux Klan.

"They are really slaves to a black, brain-washing machine," he said. "The driving fuel behind all this was to fight white racism with black racism."

--more--

Buckner said too many Anglos have hidden behind racism while too many African Americans have hidden behind an "oppressed pathology" that blames Anglos for their problems.

"Reconciliation begins with communication and being willing to say we're sorry, not only personally but corporately," Buckner said.

Wilson noted that African American churches should be informed about the Nation of Islam but should not "counterattack" them. "We're out to present the real thing," he said, referring to the life-changing power of the gospel.

Wilson said the primary enemy has been Christians who are not doing what they have been called to do.

"The church for thousands of years has won adherents by being the church," he said. "Many of us are trying to counteract Farrakhan and the black Muslims instead of saying, 'What we've got is much better.'"

--30--

God is moving in Turkey,
says Southern Baptist worker

Baptist Press
3/3/95

NICOSIA, Cyprus (BP)--God is moving in Turkey and increasing numbers of people are becoming Christians, said a Southern Baptist worker assigned there.

"The work is very encouraging and the Lord is doing some wonderful things," said the worker, who asked not to be identified for security reasons.

Turkey, now called "Turkiye," is 99 percent Muslim and has strongly resisted missionary presence and establishment of Christian churches. Conversion of Muslims to Christianity also has been strongly opposed.

The Southern Baptist worker estimated he's one of at least 400 Christian workers in the country, about equal to the estimated number of baptized believers. As many as 2,000 people may attend Bible studies or worship services, he said. Small congregations have been established in all of Turkey's major cities, most with no denominational labels.

The baptism of 27 new believers in one service in 1994 startlingly revealed how much God is at work in Turkey, the worker said. "That was possibly the biggest baptismal service here since Paul preached at Ephesus," he said, referring to the New Testament city in what is now western Turkey.

Only two groups have their own buildings in which to meet. When the second group acquired a meeting place recently, it was considered a major victory.

Such gains are taking place against a background of cycles of repression by local government and Muslim leaders. Turkey's constitution guarantees freedom of religion, but local authorities often bow to pressure from influential Muslim clerics dedicated to the elimination of Christianity.

Turkey is at a crossroads in its future, some Christian workers say. Its government leaders have been moving the nation more or less towards a secular society in recent decades, and they would like to see it join the European Community. Turkey's military forces are generally pro-Western in outlook.

At the same time nationalism and militant Islam are on the rise and threaten to move Turkey toward an Iran-style government run by Islamic teachings. Several major cities now have militant Muslim mayors.

Christians brought to trial in Turkey for converting from Islam are eventually freed by higher courts that adhere more stringently to national laws. But the Christians often undergo lengthy persecution -- and sometimes torture and time in jail -- before ultimately being freed.

In Istanbul the post office was holding up mail thought to be Christian. A Christian group took the issue to court and won the case when it was proved such mail tampering was illegal. "Of course it still happens," the Southern Baptist worker said.

--more--

An intensive anti-Christian media campaign in one city during the past year has left Christians fearful of persecution. One man who had claimed to become a Christian later announced he was returning to Islam and charged Christian churches with winning converts by offering money and jobs. He gave authorities lists of members and Christian workers, which also were published.

Fear of persecution has made some groups reluctant to admit visitors they don't know to services, which can slow growth. "But there are people interested and wanting to know the truth, and that's exciting," said the worker.

Ironically, a television expose against Christians repeatedly showed the mailing address for a Bible correspondence course. "That was the best publicity we've had for the course," said the worker. One Christian group in the country is trying to establish a Bible teaching center which can help meet training needs among Turkish Christians.

Even as growth occurs amid the problems, the biggest need is for Turkish Christian congregations to develop strong, disciplined leaders who will lead members to start new churches, the worker said.

"Our No. 1 need is for leaders with a vision for starting new work. If they start a church, it'll be theirs, not mine, and it'll grow," he said.

The Christian worker issued a call for prayer support from Southern Baptists for the safety of Christians in Turkey and for more of the response they have begun seeing.

"We can work here, but we must be careful," he said. "No government can stop the prayer of committed Christians."

--30--

Toronto renewal offers no
'blessing' to HMB observers

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
3/3/95

ATLANTA (BP)--A movement known as the "Toronto Blessing" or "Laughing Revival" is neither a blessing nor a laughing matter to two Southern Baptist Home Mission Board personnel.

Characterized by uncontrollable laughter and people roaring like lions, the movement began in South Africa and is currently centered at the Airport Vineyard Church in Toronto. The movement has spread to Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. It is not "sweeping" the United States, but there is evidence of it in major U.S. cities, said Phil Roberts, HMB director of interfaith witness.

Ron Owens, HMB associate director of prayer and spiritual awakening, visited the final service of a "Catch the Fire" conference sponsored by the Toronto church this winter.

"As I entered the door, people were lying all over the floor, in various positions. Some had their feet in the air, laughing uncontrollably. Intermingled among the laughing was roaring like lions, with some people on all fours, some sitting," Owens said.

"As Christians, our goal is the formation of Christ-like character. Does this have any evidence of the Christ nature? It's demeaning to think Christ in me will be manifested in this way."

Cult watcher Hank Hanegraaff warned his radio audience that the Toronto Blessing is not biblical, according to the February 1995 issue of "Charisma," a charismatic/Pentecostal magazine. Yet other observers cited in the magazine noted its worldwide and interdenominational appeal as evidence of God's anointing.

"Truth is not authenticated by crowds or a majority vote. The only sure thing we have to judge anything by is God's Word," Owens countered.

Charisma magazine reports that 75,000 people from around the world have visited the Toronto church to experience the "blessing."

The popularity of the movement, Owens said, is evidence that people are hungry for God to act. But he sees the Toronto Blessing an effort to sidetrack people from what God is doing.

--more--

"With any genuine moving of the Spirit of God, there have always been distractions and counterfeits," Owens said.

While some say the unusual physical behavior is evidence of God at work, Roberts noted that uncontrollable laughter and making animal sounds is characteristic of other religions such as the New Age "Kundalina energy" teaching. Also, uncontrollable laughter or weeping frequently accompanies the "samadhi" trance based in India.

In addition to the laughter and animal noises, Owens said he observed a "masterful manipulation of human emotions by the music leaders" and a lack of "awe and deep reverence of a holy God" during the three-hour session in Toronto.

Biblical renewals, Owens said, include a "call to fall on your face before God in repentance and awareness of his holiness."

Roberts referred to four points listed by theologian Jonathan Edwards as distinguishing marks of a movement of God. Based on 1 John 4, they are:

1) Jesus Christ is honored, uplifted and exalted. Roberts said the Toronto Blessing "happens without reference to Jesus Christ and almost to the diminishing of his person."

2) The truth of God is upheld and honored. During genuine movements of God, people have a greater respect for the Bible and a desire to base their lives on its teachings, Roberts said.

3) People involved have a greater desire for holiness. "After all, it is the (ital) Holy (end ital) Spirit," Roberts said.

4) Biblical revival produces love for other Christians and love for the world.

"The marks of great revival are worship, evangelism and reformation of society through Christian service," Roberts said.

--30--

**BSSB's 'Marriage Savers'
gains national attention**

By Terri Lackey

**Baptist Press
3/3/95**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The "True Love Waits" abstinence campaign isn't the only Southern Baptist story gaining widespread attention these days.

Three nationally known news publications have taken notice of Baptist Sunday School Board resources designed to save marriages.

Time, U.S. News & World Report and The Washington Times have all printed stories recently about divorce -- a plague they report is weakening American society.

In their stories, they refer to syndicated religion columnist Michael McManus and the community marriage policy he is promoting around the country. McManus is author of two books being offered within a video package by the BSSB -- "Marriage Savers" and "Insuring Marriage: 25 Proven Ways to Prevent Divorce."

"Sixty percent of American children born today will see their parents divorced by the time they are 18," McManus said in an earlier Baptist Press interview. "Of those children who have suffered this pain of divorce, half of them will see a second divorce before they are 18."

Other statistics McManus routinely quotes are:

- Six of 10 new marriages will end in divorce or separation.
- 1 million children will see their parents divorce this year.
- One-half of new marriages annually are remarriages.
- 75 percent of remarriages fail.

In the Feb. 27 issue of U.S. News & World Report, McManus is quoted as saying: "God hates divorce."

In Time, Feb. 27, McManus said churches must take more responsibility for creating marriages that last, noting that fewer than 20 percent of American couples had premarital counseling.

"If it is the job of a church to bond couples for life, it has to provide more help before and after," he said.

--more--

A member of Fourth Presbyterian Church, Bethesda, Md., McManus has traveled to nearly 30 cities from Fairbanks, Alaska, and Merdeto, Calif., to Louisville, Ky., and Atlanta touting his community marriage policy.

The marriage policy "galvanizes support from an array of groups," Tim Cleary, a consultant of single adult work at the Sunday School Board, said in the March 1 Washington Times article.

"Young people are choosing to remain single or unmarried out of fear, because they've seen so many problems in marriages," he said. "They are looking for someone to tell them right and wrong."

Essentially, the community marriage policy is an effort to join the forces of area clergy from several denominations in signing a community contract that would radically reduce the divorce rate, McManus said. He believes the answer lies in ecumenical cooperation.

Some of the rules of the community marriage contract include:

- requiring engaged couples to undergo a minimum of four months of marriage preparation; completing a premarital inventory that identifies areas of conflict in the relationship.

- having mentor couples in the congregation work with engaged and newlywed couples.

- encouraging engaged and married couples to attend weekend encounters.

- appointing a committee of attorneys to draft possible changes in marriage and divorce laws.

McManus' two books are packaged by the Sunday School Board with a Marriage Savers Video Series (six 30-minute videos) and a leader's guide. Cleary said the video package help church leaders know how to address the issues and needs of persons who are dating, engaged, newly married, estranged couples, separated and divorced couples and remarried/blended families.

--30--

**NewSong's new faces, new album
generating new set of fans**

By James Dotson

**Baptist Press
3/3/95**

WOODSTOCK, Ga. (BP)--NewSong member Eddie Carswell tells the story of how the new owner of the group's record label, The Benson Company, was at a Six Flags Over Georgia Christian music concert checking out the talent and gauging crowd reaction. When NewSong took the stage, he heard people saying, "Hey, this is great." Moving around to other areas, he heard the same thing.

Talking with his own representatives, the owner said, "You know what makes me sick? Why can't we get a group like this?"

He was told, of course, that it was their group -- one he had heard about a year earlier in its previous incarnation. "It had changed that much, he just didn't recognize it," Carswell recounted.

NewSong has changed a lot in the past year or so, with two of the original quartet departing to pursue other interests and four fresh faces adding more than just a younger front to the popular contemporary Christian group, transforming it with live instrumentals and distinctive lead vocals while retaining just enough of the signature "wall of sound" (as one promotional piece described it) that has made the group one of the perennial favorites in the Christian music business. Last year NewSong was a nominee for the Dove Award group of the year.

Younger audiences are continually rediscovering NewSong, but many in their home state of Georgia can proudly lay claim to being able to say, "I knew them when." And Southern Baptists can proudly claim all the group's members, then and now, as their own.

--more--

It was in 1980 that a group of four members of Morningside Baptist Church in Valdosta first got together as a quartet with a bent toward the contemporary Christians and that was then still relatively new. They were Billy Goodwin, minister of music at Morningside at the time; Carswell, who was working as a loan officer at Valdosta State College; Eddie Middleton, a former secular club singer who had just signed a recording contract when he became a Christian in 1976 and began having second thoughts about the venues he was taking; and Bobby Apon, a music education student at Valdosta State who also served several smaller Georgia Baptist churches as minister of music and youth.

It wasn't too long before all four began feeling that God was calling them to minister with NewSong on a full-time basis.

"So by May of '81 we were full time into it, we had quit our jobs and were doing it any day anybody would ask us to do it," Carswell said in an interview from NewSong's headquarters, a modest office suite upstairs from the Woodstock Drug Company in downtown Woodstock, Ga.

The group's early years took them basically a couple of hours from Valdosta in any one direction, packing their own equipment in station wagons when they went on the road. They were, incidentally, among the first groups to rely entirely on recorded instrumental tracks; they earlier had a five-piece band but the student musicians were unable to continue with them when the group went full time.

It wasn't too long before they began getting national exposure, particularly through several appearances at First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., where Bailey Smith was then pastor. It was at an appearance there that they were seen by a member of the Imperials, according to Carswell, who persuaded Word Records to take a look. They signed their first contract with the major label in 1984 and began receiving national airplay.

Their primary interest from the beginning was contemporary Christian music, but with four talented voices on the road in south Georgia, they soon found themselves also singing a good mix of southern gospel as well.

It also wasn't long before Carswell was writing most of the songs for NewSong, a role he has continued to fill over the years.

The group eventually moved to the Atlanta area to facilitate their national travel schedule.

The group kept all of its original four members until 1993 -- somewhat of an achievement for any group, Carswell said. But it was about that time that Apon decided he needed to spend more time with his family, which currently includes five children with a sixth one on the way. Apon now does furniture repair and refinishing at his home in Kennesaw.

Meanwhile, Eddie Middleton of Acworth, who sang lead vocals on many of the group's hits, decided to pursue a continuing interest in solo work with a slightly older target audience than NewSong's, Carswell said. He said all four have remained close friends.

The changes were made with the idea of not necessarily just replacing the two -- which would invite inevitable comparisons -- but remaking the group to build on the strengths of the new members, Carswell said.

A nationwide search process culminated with two days of interviews that included a dinner with Johnny Hunt, pastor of Woodstock's First Baptist Church and chairman of their board of directors, for his input from a spiritual perspective.

The four new members are:

- Charles Billingsley, a popular solo artist, who also plays trumpet with the group. His father, Clyde Billingsley, is currently executive director of the Montana Baptist Fellowship.

- Russ Lee, a former member of Truth known for his distinctive R&B vocals.

- Leonard Ahlstrom, a Nashville songwriter friend of Carswell who had already worked with NewSong for several years, doing background vocals and guitar.

- Scotty Wilbanks of Athens, who plays keyboards and saxophone.

The two new lead vocalists both had the broad-based appeal NewSong was seeking.

"People Get Ready," the title cut on their new album released in January, typifies the new NewSong, drawing heavily on instrumental solos and fresh vocals.

And as always, their primary purpose of ministry shines through. At one recent concert in Jackson, Ga., Lee pulled no punches in his impassioned presentation of the gospel before an invitation. A large group of teenagers was led away for spiritual counseling about their commitments.

"It's just really an exciting time to be in NewSong," Carswell said. With the interest of The Benson Company's owner, NewSong's record company is "infatuated" with them, he said, heavily promoting their new album and sponsoring their first true nationwide concert tour. And with the new album, a new group of NewSong fans is likely on the rise.

--30--

EDITORS' NOTE: In the 3/2/95 (BP) story, "State historians oppose Historical Commission's end," please substitute the following for the 12th paragraph, then revise the next paragraph to begin with the quotation from the Program and Structure Committee report:

The study committee's chairman, Mark Brister, said the committee "would agree with these state Baptist historians on the preservation of denominational history. However, do we need a separate commission in order to do this?" Brister, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, La., quoted the study committee's section addressing its Historical Commission recommendation:

Thanks,
Baptist Press

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, TN 37234

F
I
R
S
T

C
L
A
S
S

Southern Baptist Library
and Archives