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**Baptist convention gets grant
to promote abstinence in schools**

By Vivian Phillips & Ronald K. Chaney

**Baptist Press
3/24/95**

BALTIMORE (BP)--With a financial boost of almost \$100,000, the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware will promote sexual abstinence in public schools through a "Wait on Love" campaign.

The \$99,750 grant comes from the Baltimore-based Abell Foundation, a group which seeks "solutions to ... social and economic problems." Because of concern over teen-age and unwed pregnancies in the Baltimore area, the foundation awarded the grant to the convention.

"This is a major miracle," exclaimed Peggi Kissinger. "This is God at work." Kissinger, a Mission Service Corps volunteer in single adult ministry, is directing this year's campaign through BCM/D's church growth and services division.

In a test for interest Kissinger contacted 15 Baltimore County high schools and found "every principal excited and encouraged by the project."

Currently she is producing a video showing clips of the Wait on Love music presentation, the challenge to teens and comments of youth, parents and teachers. The video will be shown to the principals of Baltimore County schools. If they approve, Kissinger will take the program to the students. Within a two-month period this fall, Kissinger hopes to present the program in 40 schools.

Kissinger said she plans to remain in the schools for the entire day, making it a sexual abstinence awareness day. After the assemblies, where students will hear contemporary Christian recording artist Jeffrey Dean and his band play and talk about their personal experiences, Kissinger hopes to visit classes. There more intimate conversations can take place. "We want to take time with the kids," she said.

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Wait on Love will focus on sexual abstinence and self-esteem. Many abstinence programs stress only the diseases that teens risk by having sex, but Kissinger will bring up the emotional side of sex. "We want them to become aware of their value as a person and the opportunities they will miss if they get pregnant," she said. As well, having sex outside of marriage can leave emotional scars. "We want them to make healthy decisions. We want them to know they do have a future. ... We don't want to scare them; we want them to know they are valued," she said. "The key is knowing that there is someone who understands them and that there is hope."

The campaign takes its name from Dean's song, "Wait on Love." In April 1994, Dean challenged 4,000 teens in six local middle and senior high schools in the Delaware's Sussex County area. At a weekend rally, 182 teens made a written commitment to sexual abstinence. This month, Dean will return to Sussex County to help teens strengthen previously made commitments, as well as to challenge new teen participants.

At a rally last year in Ocean City, Md., Kissinger appeared on stage with Dean, sharing her testimony about remaining single and sexually pure. Soon afterwards she booked Dean for a week of assemblies through public schools in the vicinity.

Currently, Dean is in Nashville recording new songs with producers of the popular recording artist Michael W. Smith. Dean will use the songs for the Maryland/Delaware campaign. Katie Grogan, BCM/D family ministries/discipleship department director, said follow-up materials will be developed to be used as a guide for teens to use through clubs or support groups. "We want to give encouragement and support to kids who make the commitment to wait on love.

"They (the Abell Foundation) entrusted us with a very powerful mission, to help to bring the abstinence message into schools," Grogan said. "We are committed to following the requirement that schools have with separation of church and state.

"Churches can benefit, as a part of the whole scenario," Grogan continued. "After a week of assemblies in the public schools, local churches can put on a rally in the community with a concert, testimonies from kids and a message of how Christ in one's life can help a teen keep the pledges he or she has made."

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Phillips is a staff member in the Sunday school department of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware.

EDITORS' NOTE: The following account is drawn from the journal of Chris Robeson, a student at Howard Payne University, Brownwood, Texas. Baptist Press reported March 1 that at the conclusion of the 8:30 a.m. worship service Jan. 22 at Coggin Avenue Baptist Church in Brownwood, Robeson asked to share a testimony. Pastor John Avant recounted: "He (Robeson) 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." That service sparked a spiritual renewal that has touched numerous other parts of the country.

FIRST-PERSON

He saw 2 Chronicles 7:14
come to life at the altar

By Chris Robeson

Baptist Press
3/24/95

BROWNWOOD, Texas (BP)--Throughout Scripture, it is plain to read that God is most concerned with the heart of his creation. This truth has been communicated to me in a very personal way during the past few weeks and it is my desire to share how God has so graciously moved upon our lives here in Brownwood, Texas, and Howard Payne University.

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Jan. 22, 1995:

What must be understood or simply stated about the morning service at Coggin Avenue Baptist Church is that God in his sovereign grace chose to move upon the hearts of his children. For the past few years, the one common prayer that I would hear was that of a cry for God to send true revival. I heard this prayer in both the church setting and the university setting. Many times I have heard and read the Scripture familiar to this topic, 2 Chronicles 7:14. What happened on this day was a complete picture of this verse.

On a normal Sunday morning, the early service is attended by only a few of our college students. Nothing was particularly planned for this service, so it was interesting that a rather large group of the university students were in attendance.

The only way that I can describe the order of events is to say that immediately as I entered the front of the church building, the Father ushered me into his presence. As the service began, I could literally feel the holiness of God's Spirit and it became very evident to me that God was desiring to speak to me. I began to perspire and my heart began to beat as fast as when I first came to know the Lord as my Savior. I did not know exactly what the Father was trying to say to me, so I began to turn through the Old Testament, back and forth, back and forth. I ended up stopping at the Book of Joel. I began to skim through the chapters when my eyes fell upon a subtitle which read, "Rend Your Heart" and I was brought face-to-face with the reality of the depth of my own sin before the Lord and how much it hurt him. I almost jumped out of my seat!

I now must share the battle that began to rage in my heart. Not only was God saying this to me, but he was asking me to make this declaration to the whole church body. I recall telling the Father that if I was to go down front and share this word, he was going to have to make me. I was so afraid of manifesting something from my own heart that I almost missed the heart of the Father.

The time came for the invitation for people to respond for salvation. I quickly walked down to the front where I met my pastor, Dr. John Avant. I had asked myself whether or not I believed that Dr. Avant would even trust me to do such a thing because I knew it would be something out of the order of service. I also knew that if God was indeed leading me to share this with the church, he would quicken it to the heart of the shepherd over the church. I asked for Dr. Avant's permission and he said, "yes."

It is a miracle in itself that Dr. Avant could even understand what I said. By that time, I had begun to shake tremendously. I stood before the church and slowly turned to Joel 2:12. As I began to share, the weight of what I was about to share literally broke me. I did not know how the people would respond. I gathered my emotions and shared what I believed to be God's word to all of us. "Rend Your Hearts!" It has become clear to me that God was desiring to show us just how far away from him our hearts had gone.

For a while I was the only one at the altar. I began to weep bitterly over my own sin and the state of what my worship had been in the sight of God. Soon an older lady came before the church and made a plea for prayer. One by one, other college students began to respond in brokenness. Soon, the altar was completely full of people, both students and adults.

Time began to pass but it became very clear that God's Spirit had not lifted and was still desiring to move upon the hearts of the people. Subsequently, our pastor asked for those who felt it necessary to leave for Sunday school to do so. If they felt like they needed to stay, then they should do so as well. Some left, while others went and brought their entire Sunday school into the auditorium. Our college minister brought the university students over in response to the pastor's request.

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During the whole time, there was never any break between the two services. When it was time for the 11 o'clock service, the pastor gave the invitation for people to respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Our 11 o'clock service is aired live on the local radio station and those who were listening thought that what they were hearing was the ending of last week's sermon. People began to respond before any sermon had been preached. For a great while, people simply wept before the Lord.

Each time I recall this specific service, I know that God was freeing me of some deep, deep bitterness and beginning a process of renewal and revival.

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Seminary controversy continues
over Mohler's dismissal of dean By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
3/24/95

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Controversy surrounding the school of social work at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary continues in the wake of President R. Albert Mohler Jr.'s removal of Diana R. Garland as dean.

Mohler and several seminary trustees met with faculty for more than two and a half hours March 23. Comment about the meeting, however, is minimal. A seminary spokesman said Mohler will not comment on faculty or other internal meetings at the seminary. James Chancellor, chairman of the Faculty Committee and associate professor of missions and world religions, also declined to comment to Baptist Press, except to say he had consulted with Vice President for Academic Administration David Dockery and the situation is "very complicated."

The Organization for Student Social Workers at the seminary's Carver School of Church Social Work issued a seven-point "request" of Mohler March 22 including a call for Garland's reinstatement as dean; further dialogue with Mohler; a specific statement of Mohler's plans for social work studies at the seminary; Mohler's stance on homosexuality, abortion and women in ministry "and the role of ministers in relating to these issues;" written comment from Mohler on whether the National Association of Social Workers code of ethics is "congruent with biblical and theological values and ethics;" and public disclosure of "all processes for choosing faculty" at the seminary. The students asked for a written response by April 3.

The students also conducted a sit-in in front of Mohler's office the week after Garland's removal as dean, with about six to 12 students present at any one time during the day.

The seminary spokesman said Mohler would not issue specific responses to student requests, instead reaffirming his statements in a March 22 letter to students at the Louisville, Ky., seminary.

Mohler wrote in the letter, "... we remain committed to continue the work of the Carver School. We will not concede that the school cannot find faculty who can meet all the requirements for election or appointment. We will work to forge a future for the Carver School which is fully in keeping with the mission and identity of Southern Seminary.

"Second, we remain committed to those students currently in programs of study through the Carver School. We will do all within our power to see these students through their courses of study. If necessary, we will seek to make special arrangements with other schools in order to ensure that students will graduate."

Meanwhile, David Sherwood, the nominee Mohler turned down for an opening on the social work faculty -- the action that precipitated a challenge by Garland alleging restrictive hiring procedures at the seminary -- released answers he provided to Mohler on the seminary's doctrinal Abstract of Principles and various social issues.

Mohler had cited Sherwood's view on women as pastors as the reason he turned down the nominee, who is director of the social work program at Gordon College, Wenham, Mass., and editor of the journal, Social Work and Christianity.

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In his answers to Mohler, Sherwood wrote of women in ministry, "In my understanding of Scripture, God's Spirit blows where it wills and certain (but not all) women may be called to any role in the ministry of the church, just as certain (but not all) men may be. Evangelical scholars committed to the full authority of Scripture differ over this issue. I am sensitive to those differences and I can respect and work with those whose understanding is different from my own, recognizing that I might be wrong. I would expect the same respect and recognition from them. In all these things we must seek to 'preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace ...'" he wrote, quoting Ephesians 4 in the New Testament.

Mohler, on March 21, issued a statement to Baptist Press concerning his view on women in ministry: "Based upon the New Testament, I believe there is a clear pattern of male leadership in the congregation, especially reflected in the office of senior pastor. The New Testament clearly reveals a complementary pattern of relationships between men and women. Spiritual gifts are not gender-specific, but some roles within the church were and are limited to men, just as other roles are more properly fitted for women. It is simply not acceptable to allow a secular egalitarianism to obscure the New Testament pattern. We must maintain trust with the churches we serve, and Southern Baptists have spoken loudly concerning their convictions on this issue. We are a Southern Baptist institution, and we will not apologize for maintaining loyalty to the denomination we serve."

Sherwood, in an interview March 23, said a stance such as Mohler's is "very unusual" among evangelicals. An elder of North Shore Community Baptist Church, Beverly Farms, Mass., affiliated with the Baptist General Conference, Sherwood said, "It seems, within a Baptist context, there ought to be room for honest, biblically based differences, certainly on issues like this that are matters of principle and interpretation. It's not a question of biblical authority in any sense."

Sherwood said he is grieving over a controversy that is "seemingly so unnecessary."

Although Garland has been removed as dean, she remains Greens Professor of Christian Family Ministry at the seminary. She joined the faculty in 1983 and was appointed dean in 1993. Her husband, David, also teaches New Testament at the seminary.

The faculty selection process was among the concerns addressed by Mohler in his March 22 letter to students:

"The faculty selection process calls for search committees to seek candidates for recommendation to the faculty and then to the President for possible nomination to the Board of Trustees for election. At each stage of this process, issues and questions are raised in order to determine that the candidate meets all the appropriate requirements and expectations of service on this faculty. This is not a new process -- it has served this institution for many years.

"When a candidate is presented to me for consideration, I take this responsibility with great seriousness. I must know that the candidate's convictions are commensurate with the Abstract of Principles (our Seminary confession of faith), with the (1991) Covenant Renewal document, and that the candidate's convictions on an entire range of issues fall within acceptable parameters. Should the President recommend a prospective faculty member for election, the Board of Trustees then has the responsibility to interview the candidate through the Committee on Academic Personnel. The trustees also bear the responsibility of ensuring that the candidate is fully suitable for election to this faculty.

"This is the rightful expectation of the churches and denomination we serve, and it is the rightful role of the President and trustees. The process guards the appropriate roles of faculty, administration, and trustees, each acting in their proper sphere."

Mohler also noted: "We would never coerce the conscience of any individual. Those who cannot eagerly and freely stand within the parameters set by the trustees and administration should not come to serve on this faculty. This is honest and fair -- and it is fully Baptist in tradition. It reflects the statements made by the founders of this institution. This has been the expectation of this institution from the founding era to the present."

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Foreign Mission Board leaders
support restructuring proposal By Louis Moore

Baptist Press
3/24/95

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Although Foreign Mission Board trustees have not had an opportunity to respond to changes recommended by a Southern Baptist Convention study committee, board administrators have voiced strong support for proposals that affect the mission board directly.

Trustees are expected to study the report of the SBC Program and Structure Committee and take action at their next board meeting April 26-28 in Huntsville, Ala.

"Approximately every 40 years the SBC has come to the point of evaluating its programs and recommending significant changes," said FMB President Jerry Rankin. "Certainly it has been appropriate for this to be done as we rush toward the 21st century in the midst of a rapidly changing culture and unprecedented opportunities for being on mission with God."

The SBC Program and Structure Committee has recommended a broad overhaul of the convention. Its report has been called the "Brister Committee Report" for its chairman, Mark Brister, pastor of First Baptist Church, Shreveport, La.

The report was adopted by the SBC Executive Committee in February. To take effect, it must be approved by a majority of messengers at two successive annual SBC meetings -- presumably in 1995 and 1996.

The most obvious recommendation affecting the Foreign Mission Board is a name change -- to International Mission Board. Rankin and others affirm the proposal.

"'Foreign' has become somewhat of a patronizing and condescending term for relating to people groups and other nationalities," Rankin said.

The most important change, however, is the creation of a new Great Commission Council. It would seek closer cooperation and networking between the new International Mission Board and the proposed North American Mission Board, a new entity combining the current Home Mission Board, Radio and Television Commission and Brotherhood Commission.

Brister counters rumors that the Great Commission Council would act as an administrative body with budgeting functions over the two SBC mission boards.

"The (restructuring plan) does not suggest that the Great Commission Council would make a joint funding request" for the two mission boards, Brister said. "The Great Commission Council will help to facilitate communication and avoid reduplication between the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board. Each mission board would make its own budget request."

Rankin said the new Great Commission Council "would enable us to utilize and benefit from the electronic media and communication resources of the Radio and Television Commission, and the volunteer enlistment, disaster response and missions education ministry of the Brotherhood Commission. We would be able to offer cross-cultural resources to the tasks of evangelizing North America in closer coordination between the two mission boards."

The most controversial recommendation affecting foreign missions involves promotion of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, which funds almost half the Foreign Mission Board's work overseas.

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"Although the FMB is delegated the responsibility of promoting the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering under the proposed changes, it does not imply a change in our partnership with the Woman's Missionary Union as an auxiliary to the convention," Rankin said. "We're already heavily involved with Lottie Moon Offering promotion through an inter-agency task group, and the WMU will continue to carry a primary role as a valued partner in missions education, mobilization of prayer support and promotion of the missions offering."

Contrary to what some others have said, Rankin said he believes the Brister Report offers unprecedented opportunities for WMU.

"I would see this as the greatest opportunity in years for WMU," Rankin said. "The refocus on missions is compatible with the new objectives of the WMU to be women on mission. Their auxiliary status has not changed. They're absolutely free to do whatever they determine to do. I hope it's to support the missions boards of the convention in mission education, prayer support and offering promotion as they have always done."

"The WMU represents a significant constituency among the convention and is the most missions-focused entity in our churches. It's regrettable that anyone would interpret a report dealing with convention agencies as having any intent to ignore or alienate the WMU as an auxiliary."

Sam Pittman, FMB executive director of public affairs, said, "The FMB will continue to work cooperatively and enthusiastically with all entities of the Southern Baptist Convention. Although some entities will lose their identity in the restructure, the ministry functions of those entities will continue to find expression under other structures. We look forward to a strong working relationship with the SBC agencies and an even stronger working relationship with WMU as a continuing auxiliary to the SBC."

The only real structural change for the Foreign Mission Board would involve shifting the work in Canada to the new North American Mission Board if the SBC approves the proposed changes.

"We're already discussing with Canadian leadership and our personnel assigned to Canada a smooth and appropriate transition of work that will not be disruptive," Rankin said. "We have 29 missionaries assigned to Canada to do student work and theological education. Some of these will be transferred to other fields, some may transfer to the North American Mission Board and continue their assignment, and some could continue under FMB support but be seconded to NAMB for an extended time of transition."

Avery Willis, FMB vice president for overseas operations, said, "I believe our more than 4,100 missionaries will welcome these recommendations when they understand how they can thrust us forward in reaching the people of the world for Christ. Even though they won't all be easy to implement, they (cast) a vote for those who don't even know to ask that Christ be preached to them."

He said the convention reorganization proposal affirms "the FMB and the direction we have been taking."

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Texas WMU leaders question
proposed SBC restructuring

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
3/24/95

DALLAS (BP)--The Texas Woman's Missionary Union executive board wrestled with "ambiguities" in the Southern Baptist Convention's Program and Structure Study Committee report and adopted a \$5 million goal for the 1995 Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions during its March 21-23 meeting at Mt. Lebanon Encampment near Dallas.

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Joy Fenner, executive director-treasurer of Texas WMU, used the time allotted for her report to the board to answer questions regarding the proposed restructuring of SBC agencies and institutions. Mary Humphries of San Marcos, Texas, president of Texas WMU, and Carolyn Miller of Huntsville, Ala., president of national WMU, joined her in responding to questions.

"There are some good proposals in terms of streamlining Southern Baptist work, but there are a lot of ambiguities in the document," Fenner told the board.

If approved by messengers at two consecutive annual national conventions, the plan would reduce from 19 to 12 the number of SBC agencies, consolidate three entities into an Atlanta-based National American Mission Board and remove from WMU its program assignment to promote offerings for home and foreign missions.

Fenner noted the proposal by the seven-member, all-Anglo, all-male study committee was approved by the SBC Executive Committee after only 45 minutes of deliberation.

While WMU is directly addressed only in a footnote, the committee report transfers to the two Southern Baptist mission boards primary responsibility for promoting the offerings that raise roughly half of their annual budgets. It assigns "women's ministries" to the Baptist Sunday School Board and "missions education" to the North American Mission Board.

Members of the study committee said WMU was not given program assignments because it chose to remain an auxiliary, electing its own leaders rather than have trustees elected by the SBC.

Responsibility for promoting the missions offerings needed to be assigned to "agencies whose accountability to the SBC is binding," according to Mark Brister of Shreveport, La., chairman of the study committee.

"Our accountability is to a higher authority than the Executive Committee of the SBC," Fenner told her board.

WMU's task is to develop the leadership potential of women in missions involvement and missions education. The auxiliary will continue its work out of a sense of calling, Fenner said.

"The missions purpose of WMU is biblically based. That takes preeminence over any committee or convention," she said.

The presidents of both the Home and Foreign Mission boards have asked WMU to continue promoting the missions offerings, and Brister has been quoted as saying the committee's proposal does not change the working relationship between WMU and the SBC.

"The problem is not in what they are saying, but in what is not written in their report," Miller said.

Humphries expressed appreciation for Texas Baptist support and for the recent affirmation of Texas WMU by the Baptist General Convention of Texas executive board. At its March 7 meeting, the board gave Fenner and Humphries a standing ovation and passed a resolution supporting WMU.

"In Texas, it is a different story," Humphries said. "For that, we are grateful."

While allocations for the home and foreign mission offerings are determined by the respective mission boards and national WMU does not benefit from the offerings, the state missions offering is different, Fenner noted.

By voting on allocations for the 1995 Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions, board members were "claiming ownership" of the offering, she said, while pointing out the offering ultimately belongs to God and his work.

The 1995 offering allocates more than \$2 million for new mission church assistance and other programs related to new congregations, \$571,000 for missions projects related to language and cultural groups, \$500,000 for associational missions and ministries, more than \$150,000 to help coordinate volunteer missions, \$245,000 for church-based ministries, \$93,000 for criminal justice ministries, \$760,000 for missions awareness and involvement, and more than \$490,000 for direct missions projects.

In 1994, Texas Baptists gave \$4,772,448 to the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions, an increase of \$55,084 (1.2 percent) over gifts in 1993.

**Gambling foes score victory
in Texas Senate committee**

By Ken Camp

AUSTIN, Texas (BP)--Texas gambling opponents won a skirmish March 20 when a Senate committee rejected a casino proposal, but they warned the casino industry will not surrender.

"We need to gird up our loins and hunt for five smooth stones, because Goliath is still out there," said Dan Martin, executive director of Texans Against Gambling.

The State Affairs Committee voted 8-4 against reporting to the full Texas Senate a measure that could have placed on a statewide ballot a constitutional amendment legalizing Las Vegas-style gambling in Texas. "This vote shows that Texas is riding the swell of a nationwide backlash against the gambling industry's greed. The tide is turning against the continued expansion of gambling," said Weston Ware, citizenship associate with the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission. "But considering the huge investment that casino interests already have made in Austin-based lobbyists, we can be sure they won't let the matter die. They'll be back, and we need to be ready."

Martin said casino backers see the committee vote as a setback, not a defeat. He predicted casinos could reappear during this legislative session in the form of a call for a non-binding referendum.

"We've seen gambling bills rise Phoenix-like from the ashes before," he said.

Casino opponents, including Martin and Ware, had testified before the committee in hearings a few days before the vote, urging lawmakers to "exercise responsibility" and not subject Texans to the slick, high-dollar advertising campaign casino operators would mount in an effort to sway voters.

More than 25,000 Texans have signed petitions saying "enough is enough" when it comes to legalized gambling in Texas, Martin told the committee. Calling on lawmakers to "do the job you were sent here to do," he urged the committee members to exercise their authority and kill the proposal, not submit voters to a barrage of false advertising financed out of the deep pockets of the casino industry.

"How would you feel if you were in race where you knew your opponent could outspend you 100 to one?" he asked the legislators.

Ware likewise urged the committee not to "subject the people of Texas to a money referendum."

He pointed to the social costs of easily accessible forms of gambling, particularly relating to problem and compulsive gamblers and those whose lives are touched by theirs.

"There will soon be more gambling addicts than alcoholics in the United States," he said.

Those testifying in favor of the measure -- primarily developers and gambling industry representatives -- promised casinos would bring jobs to Texas and keep revenue inside the state that currently is going to Louisiana and other states with casinos.

But Robert Goodman of Hampshire College, Amherst, Mass., who directed the Ford Foundation-funded United States Gambling Study, said casinos' economic benefits were "vastly exaggerated." Rather than producing real growth, casino gambling just "siphons dollars from other segments of the economy," he said.

J. Terrence Brunner, executive director of the Better Government Association in Chicago, said when Chicago began looking at a proposed land-based casino, his organization investigated casino promoters' claims of economic growth and jobs.

"What we found was no economic development and no net job creation. And we found that casinos would create tremendous social problems," Brunner said.

Joe Twellman of Irving, Texas, chairman of the Board of Church and Society for United Methodists' North Texas Conference, said concern for social justice unites Texas Methodists in opposing casinos.

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"Gambling is a menace to society, deadly to the best interest of moral, social, economic and spiritual life, and destructive of good government," he said, quoting from the United Methodist Book of Discipline.

Casino proponents and opponents alike cited polls to bolster their arguments. The Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas, which wants a share of casino revenues designated for its work, revealed a poll showing a near 50-50 split among Texas voters regarding legalization of casinos. The poll, however, showed 88 percent wanting a statewide referendum on the issue.

On the other hand, the Texas Restaurant Association, which opposes casinos, offered a poll demonstrating voters say they want a direct vote on a number of issues ranging from casinos to term limits to sex education in schools. However, half of those polled also said they would want elected representatives to stop casino gambling from coming to Texas.

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Gary Huckabay resigns
Williams' presidency

Baptist Press
3/24/95

WALNUT RIDGE, Ark. (BP)--Gary Huckabay has submitted his resignation as president of Williams Baptist College in Walnut Ridge, Ark. Huckabay, who had served as president of WBC since August 1993, resigned March 21 following a special meeting with Williams' board of trustees in Little Rock, Ark.

Huckabay stated, "It is with deepest regret that I offer my resignation, effective immediately, to the board of trustees due to an incompatibility in the governance and direction of the college. I wish to thank all of those trustees who have been supportive and encouraging during my short tenure at WBC."

Before coming to Williams, Huckabay, who is in his mid-40s, had been dean of Dallas Baptist University's college of adult and continuing education since 1991. His previous ministry had included roles of senior pastor of Woodmen Valley Chap 1, Colorado Springs, Colo.; adjunct professor of Old Testament at Denver Theological Seminary; and professor of Old Testament and chairman of the division of Christian studies at Hannibal-LaGrange College, Hannibal, Mo.

R.W. Ross of Van Buren, Ark., trustee chairman said, "It is very sad to me that Dr. Huckabay has tendered his resignation. The board has asked Dr. Jerol Swaim to serve as interim president until further plans are made."

Swaim, academic dean and executive vice president of Williams, has served at the college for more than 30 years.

Ross said the search process has not begun for a new president. Ross said the search will be fully discussed when the board meets in regular session in April on the Williams campus.

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Fruit & vegetable stand
is his roadside mission

By Lisa Martin

Baptist Press
3/24/95

SPEARSVILLE, La. (BP)--Selling fruits and vegetables along Highway 15 in north Louisiana, 85-year-old Leonard Poston quietly aims for lofty results among his customers.

For the past 20 years, Poston has become a local celebrity of sorts, passing out 2,000 to 3,000 tracts a year from his roadside mission.

Like Jesus, Poston was a carpenter. After retiring, Poston planted a garden and sold his harvest in the back of his truck on the side of the road. Business picked up for Poston's vegetable stand just outside Spearsville, and he wondered how he could witness to all of his customers.

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"There are about a million people a year and about 45 trucks an hour that pass my stand, and I wondered how in the world I could reach them," Poston says. "So I ordered 50 little Bibles. I gave them to truckers (that stopped) and told them about Jesus."

Poston was inspired to order 1,000 more tracts when a truck driver accepted Jesus after Poston witnessed to him. And he has not slowed down since.

Poston had many problems in the beginning of his efforts, one being what to say when people stopped.

"When people stop at my stand, they are moving fast and sometimes I have only two minutes to talk to them," he explains. "Sometimes I only have the chance to say 'God loves you' or 'Jesus loves you,' but I try to ask them if they know Jesus. They answer 'yes,' 'no,' or 'I want to know more.' It gives me a chance to tell them how wonderful Jesus is."

Another problem was with the tracts. Poston found he needed nondenominational tracts.

Poston passes out "Romans road" tracts and little Bibles with popular verses. Also he gives out Bibles to children and Spanish translations.

Poston is always amazed how the Lord works through him.

"Last summer a trucker stopped to tell me how he kept the little Bible I'd given him," Poston says. "He pulled out of his pocket the old Bible . . . It was old and worn, so I gave him a new one. He said I had asked him if he knew Jesus. Jesus Christ does the work. I am just a servant."

Sometimes Poston says he feels as if he is a counselor.

"I remember one time one of my regular customers stopped coming by, and I started to worry about her," Poston says. "When she finally stopped, she told me her husband died of cancer. She got a cryin' and she told me she had no money. I told her how my wife had died of cancer a few years before, and I told her everything was going to be all right. And we prayed together in the midst of heavy traffic. God cares, so I care."

Poston says he feels his humble way of life is beneficial to his work as a layman. "I don't drive a fancy truck, and I don't talk fancy," he says. "I do talk to all kinds of people, and if I talked fancy or had a fancy education, I don't think I would be able to reach them the way I do now."

He was born near the Camp Creek community to a family of eight children. "We lived in an all-black community," Poston says. "These people were my neighbors and my friends, and I loved them. It doesn't make me any difference about people's color or nationality. Jesus was colorblind."

Growing up next to a large sawmill, Poston says he felt the temptations of sin offered by Satan. But he knew God had something better to offer him.

Joining the local Baptist church, Poston was baptized in Corners Creek at 17 and was ready to start serving the Lord immediately. But feelings of rejection and disappointment overwhelmed him, and he ran from the Lord for the next 17 years.

"Being not in God's service, Satan took over my life during the Great Depression, and times were hard," Poston says. "I was 34 when I hit rock bottom of the trash can. When someone gets out of God's service, they are in the garbage can, and that's where I found myself on my knees looking up. That is where I found the real Jesus, and he put his loving arms around me and changed my life. He didn't change me for a week, but forever."

In the meantime, Poston married Ela Elkins, and they had two daughters. Poston says he feels God called him into service without any church training and little formal education. "First thing, I got my Bible, my wife and my two girls and joined Mt. Union Baptist Church (in Spearsville)," he says. "I couldn't sing, teach a Sunday school lesson or preach in public. I wondered how I could serve God."

"My wife and my two daughters started a family altar. We read the Bible together and prayed God would use us in the right direction. Without him we would be nothing, and my two daughters would love me for leading them in the right direction."

Poston's prayers of how to serve the Lord were answered via his work as a carpenter, which allowed him to use his skills for his church in Spearsville.

"The preacher came to me and asked me to build two churches' first indoor bathrooms," Poston says. "I had never done anything like that before, but I knew with the Lord's help I could do anything."

Poston also built the church's fellowship hall. "We didn't have any blueprints for the building, but I drew some up, and me and another boy built the hall with the help of the Lord," Poston says. "I knew I could do this for the Lord."

Poston's service did not stop with his church; his works went outside the church's walls. "When you go to church you see the same people," Poston notes. "They all know the Lord. You need to get out and talk to people in the grocery store, the barber shop, anywhere."

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Martin is an intern with the Baptist Message, Louisiana Baptists' newsjournal.

Ministerial burnout, dropout
addressed by chapel speakers

By Mike Hooker

Baptist Press
3/24/95

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--"Nearly 2,000 Southern Baptist pastors and staff drop out of the ministry every year," said Jim Henry, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, told students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., told a chapel audience, "Everything from sin in their lives to difficulties and confrontations in the church cost them their ministries. The reality is that in your ministry, more than likely, there will be days in which it will be very important for you to grip this word called 'endurance.'

"Disappointments will come," Henry said. "Sometimes your colleagues are suddenly saying things about you that you've never heard. And you're saying, 'Why did they say that?' You'll ask yourself, 'Is it worth it all?' and 'Do I have to go through this?'"

Henry's counsel to help ministers endure the "strategic race of life:" maintain a devotional life, exercise regularly, meditate on God, listen to God, be accountable to someone in ministry life and personal life, take vacations and don't preach through them, keep learning, stay fresh, be willing to change, learn how to deal with people, learn how to say "no," discipline time and learn to accept criticism.

Discouragement and burnout will not be as widespread among church ministers when Christ is allowed to be who he wants to be, Southwestern trustee Ed Saucier emphasized in another chapel message.

Ministers don't have to have all of the answers to life's problems; their chief responsibility is to direct people to Christ for the answers, said Saucier, pastor of Grand Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Smith, Ark.

By leading people to believe a person in the ministry does have all the answers, ministers are partly at fault for their church members' unrealistic expectations, Saucier said.

"People bring me their messed up lives, and too often, I've had little more to give than those tired-sounding Christian cliches that have never worked for me, and they won't work for anybody else," Saucier said. "There is something fundamentally wrong with the way we're doing church and approaching Christianity. And it is so fundamentally wrong that it's not going to be fixed at the present level of doing things as we do them."

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Innovation, imagination, determination, excitement and enthusiasm aren't the sole solutions, Saucier asserts. "Something is so fundamentally wrong that we can't continue in the direction we're going without compromising something deep within us. When we compromise it, we'll rob (ourselves) of our spiritual power, and we'll be left doing the work of the ministry without the source of the ministry and we find ourselves burning out at a rapidly increasing rate."

After noting many churches have frustrated pastors, burned out lay people and superficial programs, Saucier echoed the thoughts and ideas of Christian counselor Larry Crabb: "These are the kinds of things he (Crabb) hears from people just like you and me: 'One, I'm tired of trying to make it (church) work better, because it's working me to death, and the better it works, the more it gets in my way of deeply knowing Christ.'

"'Two, I'm ashamed that so much of my time and energy has been dedicated to work. Three, my work over the years seems to have less to do with God and more to do with being the CEO of a profitable enterprise. Four, there's no room for the mystery of godliness. Everything has to be manageable, explainable and predictable. Five, there's no room for failure by having a lack of answers.'"

Saucier admitted being "on the edge of burnout" at times, saying, "It doesn't have to be that way."

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Presidential role gave Jim Henry view of 'deep-down love' for SBC," dated 3/22/95, please change the 14th paragraph to read:

"My thrust has been -- don't compromise in the essentials of the faith, but in the spirit of Christ have our differences," he said.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

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