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BAPTIST PRESS

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April 25, 1995

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Convention spokesman, inerrantist,
Coppenger is Midwestern nominee By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
4/25/95

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--He is an articulate spokesman for the "conservative resurgence," an avowed inerrantist and most probably the next president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.

Mark T. Coppenger, 46, has been nominated to succeed Milton Ferguson at the smallest of the six Southern Baptist Convention-owned seminaries. The 35-member board of trustees of Midwestern will interview Coppenger and his wife, Sharon, June 1-2 and then vote on his nomination.

Coppenger has been vice president for convention relations for the SBC Executive Committee since early 1991. In that position, Coppenger has emerged as a national spokesman for the SBC's conservative positions.

Beginning with the SBC annual meeting in Houston in 1979, conservatives have won every presidential election, a key to the strategy developed to name like conservatives to boards of trustees which, in turn, control the agencies and institutions. From the beginning, conservatives have decried what they termed "liberalism" being taught in the SBC seminaries.

If elected, Coppenger makes it plain, he intends the seminary "in the heartland" to clearly identify itself with biblical inerrancy.

"The seminary needs leadership which not only believes in inerrancy, but also stands for it and administers by it," Coppenger told the trustee search committee in a position letter.

In that regard, Coppenger is uniquely equipped. As the public relations point man for the SBC, Coppenger has written materials, pamphlets, produced video and television clips, and produces SBC Life, a monthly publication for the Executive Committee -- all in the fashion of articulating, defining and spreading the convention's conservative positions.

Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the Executive Committee, thinks Coppenger is highly qualified to become Midwestern's president.

"He has done an outstanding job for the Executive Committee and will bring the same enormous skills and brilliance to Midwestern's presidential office. He is a true academician and a genuine Christian whose faith is deeply rooted in God's Word and whose utmost desire is to please our Lord Jesus Christ."

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Chapman cited Coppenger's experience in the classroom and said it has given him a "vision to see young Southern Baptists going from our seminaries fully equipped to be effective witnesses throughout the world. I can easily see why God would call him to serve on one of our seminary campuses. While we will miss him greatly ... we rejoice in this new opportunity of service for him, his wife, Sharon, and their three children."

And Midwestern Seminary seems like a natural for this native Tennessean who considers Arkansas as home.

Six years on the faculty of the evangelical Wheaton College near Chicago, two years as executive director for Indiana Baptists and a "good feel for new work area churches," helps him feel he is a "Midwesterner." His wife is the daughter of Rheubin South, colorful executive director of the Missouri Baptist Convention until his untimely death in 1986.

Midwestern is still small and young and is positioned for dynamic development, Coppenger said.

"Midwestern is a seminary waiting to happen."

Coppenger is no stranger to controversy.

As pastor of First Baptist Church, El Dorado, Ark., Coppenger faced an historic church in decline. The former pastor was a man "strongly identified" with the leaders of the now-Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the moderate Baptist organization critical of SBC leadership and a vocal critic of the conservative changes in SBC seminaries.

Then when he went to Indiana in 1988 as state executive director, he faced a convention organization in financial straits. When he came to the Executive Committee in 1991, two staff members of Baptist Press had been fired. The committee created a public relations post with one of the purposes to combat the rhetoric of the moderate critics by clearly articulating and defining the SBC's policies and positions. Coppenger, with a doctorate from Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn., in philosophy and extensive teaching experience in ethics, philosophy of law, aesthetics and philosophy of science, was the perfect choice.

Serving 25 years in the Army Reserve and National Guard, now a lieutenant colonel and assigned to the Army's Office of Public Affairs at the Pentagon, gives him the discipline needed in a battle to win the hearts and minds of Southern Baptists.

Lewis Adkison, Colorado Springs, Colo., pastor and chairman of the trustee board and search committee, said Coppenger was "very clearly" the top choice among 24 resumes and recommendations received. The trustees said they found six criteria in Coppenger most appealing:

- 1) academic credentials
- 2) love of missions
- 3) pastoral experience
- 4) strong in evangelism
- 5) a known conservative
- 6) vision and leadership

Adkison told news media, following the announcement April 24 at the regular trustee meeting, that the candidate needed to be "all for the direction of the SBC, believe the Bible without reservation and be an inerrantist."

Search committee members made it plain to news media that more balance is needed in the Midwestern faculty -- with inerrantists. However, when asked if they foresaw any difficulty with the faculty, Ronnie W. Rogers, a Hot Springs, Ark., pastor and president of the Arkansas Baptist Convention, said they don't expect it to be a problem.

Also, regarding a topic which has been a recent headline at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., Rogers said "in the framework of inerrancy," Coppenger would agree that women should not serve as senior pastors.

Rogers called Ferguson's cooperation with the search committee and trustees "exemplary."

Ferguson, 65, had planned to retire July 31, 1996, but told trustees, "I will respond positively and favorably to any change in the best interests of the seminary." Although he said the Aug. 1 date for a new president is "a very short time frame in educational leadership," Ferguson said "we will reorder our priorities. We can do it and we will do it. My primary concern is the welfare of the seminary."

Rogers said trustees will keep their commitment to Ferguson to continue his salary and benefits to July 31, 1996. Ferguson will receive his \$61,000 salary plus a housing allowance when he moves out of the presidential home on the campus. Trustees also voted, in honor and appreciation for his 23 years of leadership, to give him a gift of \$50,000 on Aug. 1, 1996.

Adkison said the committee met twice with Coppenger, once in mid-March and then an extensive interview April 20-21 in Memphis, Tenn.

Asked about the vote on June 2, Adkison said the search committee would ask the full board to use a two-thirds vote for approval, the same as is required to hire faculty. Coppenger will be a member of the faculty.

"He was the unanimous and enthusiastic recommendation of the committee," Adkison said.

The Aug. 1 effective date will accommodate the need for Coppenger to move his family from Nashville to Kansas City, get his children in school and be ready for the fall term of the seminary, Adkison said. The Coppengers have three children: Caleb, 18; Jedidiah, 15; and Chesed, 11.

The salary package for Coppenger will be given to the trustee board at the June 1-2 meeting, search committee members said.

A 1970 magna cum laude graduate of Ouachita Baptist University in Arkansas, Coppenger earned a doctor of philosophy degree from Vanderbilt in 1974 and a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, in 1983.

He was a trustee of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., 1987-88, and chairman of the SBC Resolutions Committee in 1989.

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(BP) photo available upon request from the Baptist Press central office.

Exp rt: Casino gambling
no boost to economy

By Ferrell Foster

Baptist Press
4/25/95

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (BP)--Casino gambling is not an effective strategy for economic development, an expert on the subject said in Illinois April 18. In fact, Robert Goodman maintained, casino gambling has serious negative economic consequences, as well as being a "terrible human tragedy."

Goodman is an urban planner, economic development consultant and author from Northampton, Mass. He spoke during a two-day "People's Conference on Gambling" in Springfield, Ill., which encouraged participants to lobby the State Senate to pass a gambling referendum bill this session.

The bill (SB 431), sponsored by Sen. Todd Sieben, R-Geneseo, would require a non-binding, statewide referendum be placed on the November 1996 ballot asking voters whether they want lawmakers to approve more forms of gambling. Supporters believe such a referendum could slow or halt the spread of gambling in Illinois.

Goodman, who said he gambles himself, dealt with the economic consequences of casino gambling.

He noted the difference between "convenience gambling," such as on riverboats, and "destination, resort type gambling," such as in Las Vegas. With the first type, players typically come from a 30- to 50-mile radius. They are local people, or "day trippers," he said.

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As a result, convenience gambling does not have the same "multiplier effect" on local economies that resort gambling do s. In fact, rather than generating income for a community, the gambling establishment "cannibalizes" the local economy as people shift their "discretionary" dollars into gambling. As a result, jobs and tax dollars are being lost at other businesses, while growing at the casino.

Terrence Brunner, executive director of the Chicago-based Better Government Association, said surveys by his organization have found cannibalization. He said business people in the vicinity of gambling establishments repeatedly told of how visitors to casinos bypassed their businesses.

Another problem with convenience gambling, Goodman said, is costs related to gambling are "borne by the local region."

The cost of counseling problem gamblers is minor. The "real costs" are in "how they behave," he stated. "They start borrowing money, ... selling property they own," and typically "don't pay off their debts." Others write bad checks, move into fraud and even bankruptcy.

The costs, in other words, are borne by the person, the private economy and the government.

"The longer you have it and the more forms of gambling you have, the higher the rate of problem gamblers," Goodman said.

One result is an increase in the number of people being processed through the criminal justice system. "People who had never been in trouble with the law before," turn up in the jails and court system as a result of gambling problems, he said.

Taking all costs into consideration, Goodman estimated problem gamblers cost the public and private economy \$13,200 per year. He said his is considered a conservative figure, with others estimating the cost at \$30,000-\$50,000 per year.

"You've got to look at the total picture," he stated. "The costs outweigh the benefits."

The only ones benefiting, Brunner maintained, are the casino owners, their employees and politicians who support the gambling industry.

Goodman noted the impact the gambling industry can have on politics. It "has the potential of totally changing the political landscape," because of the vast amounts of money available to the industry, he said.

Many legislators, however, are realizing the costs outweigh the benefits for their constituents, Goodman stated.

Also, he said, it is not true gambling is expanding because people want it. "The more you have it, the more people don't like it." As a result, grass-roots groups are organizing to "get it out or keep it out."

Casino gambling is "a horrible, horrible idea," Brunner stated.

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Shawnee tribe, casino developer
push for Branson-area gambling

By Brian Smith

Baptist Press
4/25/95

BRANSON, Mo. (BP)--If a New Jersey casino developer and Oklahoma's Eastern Shawnee Indian tribe get their way, tourists to Branson will have more ways to spend their money.

Their proposal to build a casino 10 miles north of the popular tourist destination is just what gambling opponents in southwest Missouri don't want. About 4,500 Christian County residents have signed petitions opposing the project.

Creative Gaming International has bought 39 acres along U.S. 65 between Ozark and Branson. Purchase deeds cleared the Christian County assessor's office April 11.

Company officials have said they plan to buy an additional 700 acres and build a high-stakes casino, hot ls, restaurants and possibly other attractions.

The developers have agreed to turn the property over to the Eastern Shawnee, who say they have a historical claim to the land.

Rep. Jim Kreider (D-Ozark) said tribes seeking to enter the casino business in Missouri will be in for a tough battle, since Missouri's constitution prohibits casinos anywhere but on the Mississippi and Missouri rivers.

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"I know the Indians are rich and they have a lot of high-powered lawyers, but all the attorneys that we've talked to in the governor's office and such say (Missouri's constitution) makes it a whole different ball game. Any amendment has to be done with the vote of the people, versus a statute or law that we might pass."

Stephanie Hanna, spokeswoman for the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, however, said a state's constitution "doesn't necessarily have anything to do with it."

But she added the Indians could face other obstacles. "As far as I know, there is no precedent for taking lands in trust in another state besides the state where the tribe has its reservation."

The Eastern Shawnee reservation is in Oklahoma, across the state line from Seneca, Mo.

An Eastern Shawnee second chief said in March the tribe had "indefinitely postponed" plans to bring gambling to the Ozarks because of local opposition. But on April 11, Chief George Captian said that was not true.

"We've just been keeping quiet. I think it works better like that," he told Associated Press.

Terry Kendrick, pastor of Hopedale Baptist Church, Ozark, is an organizer of Citizens Against Gambling, a group that has sponsored community meetings and collected signatures on petitions against Indian casinos.

Kendrick said the issue reaches beyond the Eastern Shawnee plan. "We are not looking at one casino coming into our community. We are looking at the real possibility, because of the Highway 65 traffic, of a whole corridor of casinos. Once one is in, there's no way to keep any others from coming in. We're looking at this as being the possibility of a strip such as they have in Biloxi and Gulfport, Miss."

Other Indian tribes also have been eyeing southwest Missouri. The Kickapoo Indians have proposed a casino for Campbell City, an unincorporated area near the Greene County/Christian County line between Springfield and Ozark.

The tribe said it would pay the \$3 million to \$5 million cost of a new Christian County judicial building. That offer has Christian County commissioners, who say they are morally opposed to gambling, wondering if citizens' opinions on legalized gambling might change.

Commissioner Tom Chudomelka told the Springfield News-Leader, "A lot of people are against gambling, but how do they feel about it if they're not having to pay \$150 to \$200 in taxes every year to pay for a new facility? It's not every day someone comes in and hands everyone in the county \$150 to \$200 a year."

The Kickapoos have not bought any land yet, but their proposal to fund a public building raised a question with Kreider. "I hate to use the word 'bribe,' but maybe that's why they offered to build a court building," he said. "I think they're trying to get public support for this."

Public support for legalized gambling in southwest Missouri has been hard to come by. In last November's election, 73 percent of Taney County voters rejected legalizing slot machines on riverboats; 58 percent of Greene County voters rejected the amendment.

Unlike the Kickapoos, the Eastern Shawnees have not offered to fund a new county building. And their land purchase may make local opposition a moot point.

"Let's face it. They're not investing in our hills just to help the farmer," Chudomelka said.

Wayne Lee Lindsey, a Nixa resident who sold 13 acres along U.S. 65 to the New Jersey-based casino developer, said, "They want to put in the whole shooting match."

Lindsey was paid \$100,000 for the property, about twice the average price for land fronting the highway, according to an estimate by a realtor in Ozark.

The 1988 Indian Gaming Regulatory Act allows Indian tribes to apply to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior to take acquired land in trust for use in gambling operations.

The Department of Interior then would determine if the land could be taken into trust. That decision would be based on the best interests of the tribe and impact on local communities.

Hanna said before the Department of Interior can take land into trust, a tribe must sign a compact with the governor of the state where the tribe's reservation is. That would allow them to operate casinos on their reservation.

The governor of the state must agree to the trust, something Gov. Mel Carnahan has said he would not do.

Chris Sifford, Carnahan's spokesman, said the governor is "very clear about his opinion about gaming in southwest Missouri -- he's opposed to it."

In Connecticut and Florida, tribes sued after those states' governors opposed Indian gambling. Florida's case hasn't been decided, but the Pequot Indians in Connecticut won the right to operate high-stakes casinos.

Hanna pointed out the Pequot reservation is in Connecticut. "If (Indians) wanted to do gaming in somebody else's state, then I think the governor's decision would have a considerable weight," she said.

But local opposition has little effect on federal decisions, she added. "The way the Indian Gaming Act is structured, it doesn't really matter what the attorney general thinks or the city council thinks. We're supposed to weigh into it community impact at some point, but way, way down the road."

Even so, Kendrick, Kreider and other gambling opponents want to make sure their message is known.

"If they could get a good majority, like 60-65 percent of the people, to say they want it, that would make a lot of difference in the legislature or with the governor, or even the next governor," Kreider said. "That's why I have said to many, many people that it's very important that we voice real strong opposition."

Kendrick said Citizens Against Gambling is stepping up its efforts by trying to involve law enforcement and business organizations.

"In today's climate, if you are a group of Christian people in a political arena, the press, government officials and even community people have made that a liability rather than a plus, and you get viewed as a group of religious zealots who are trying to be the moral conscience of a community," he said.

He still urged people who oppose gambling on moral grounds to take a stand. "We have a wonderful way of life; economically our area is sound. There simply is no reason for the community to roll over and allow this to come in."

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Robinson: Evangelism
will result from revival

By Douglas C. Estes

Baptist Press
4/25/95

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--As the spirit of true revival builds, an evangelistic thrust will prevail in the churches of this nation, said Darrell Robinson, a vice president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

"Revival -- we're seeing it happen. It reminds me of the tornadoes in West Texas that touch down here, touch down there, and touch down somewhere else; we're seeing God's power coming down in tornado fashion on church after church," said Robinson at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary April 20.

"God wants to give not just tornado touchdowns, but a hurricane movement, bringing a revival that will sweep across our land in moral and spiritual awakening. God wants to give us revival," Robinson said on the seminary's Wake Forest, N.C., campus.

Revival occurred at Pentecost as the Holy Spirit came to the followers of Christ, said Robinson, but only when the disciples met three provisions. "Three things are present in revival. When revival happens there is extraordinary prayer," Robinson said.

"The second evidence of revival is unity. The disciples were all together in one accord. When our eyes are focused on him, he brings us together in one mind and one spirit -- he makes us one," Robinson said.

Another evidence of revival is obedience, said Robinson, noting the disciples demonstrated their obedience to God by sharing the gospel. "They began to speak the Word of God with boldness," Robinson said.

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When churches today meet these three provisions, then true revival will occur, Robinson said. As God moves across this country in revival, evangelism will be the visible fruit.

"God wants to give us revival in the midst of corrupt and violent times in America. And he wants to use us in winning people to Jesus Christ," Robinson said.

Citing a survey of Southern Baptist churches across America, Robinson said 95 percent of Southern Baptists have never witnessed to anyone. Yet the fruit of true revival is the witness of God's people, he reiterated.

"If revival is real, it will initiate our lives into effective witnesses, and often the revival comes through evangelism," Robinson said.

The role of church leaders is to equip their members for evangelism so as to create a fertile soil for revival, Robinson said. "If the army of the people of God are enlisted, equipped and engaged, then God will move across this country."

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Roberts calls for discernment
in a spiritually confused world By Chele Caughron

Baptist Press
4/25/95

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Urging Christians to take a critical look at spiritual movements that are being touted as the handiwork of God, Phil Roberts called for the church to remain focused on taking the truth to the lost.

"We need today, in this nation and across the Southern Baptist Convention, discriminating and discerning churches and pastors who understand and who test and discern when God is really at work and when he isn't. We can know the difference," said Roberts, director of interfaith witness efforts for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits. We live in a pluralistic, mixed-up, confused world from a spiritual point of view," said Roberts April 19, preaching from 1 John 4:1-7. "What the apostle is calling for here is spiritual and theological discernment."

In Toronto, disciples of the so-called "Toronto Blessing" are displaying prolonged laughter and other emotional outbursts, he said at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C. Proponents are promoting the movement as the Third Great Awakening, Roberts noted.

Yet this movement does not stand up to the tests that determine whether God genuinely is at work and a part of it, Roberts said.

"We want to see revival, but how can we know when the action is of God and produced by the Spirit of God and is not being produced by the emotional propensities of one person or another?"

"There are evidences and characteristics that we know only the Spirit of God will produce when he is alive and at work among his people," said Roberts, who was professor of evangelism and church growth at Southeastern before going to the HMB in 1994.

When a movement is genuinely the work of the Spirit of God, according to 1 John 4:2-3, Jesus Christ is exalted, he said.

"It tells us in 2 Corinthians 11 there are many who have gone out and who have preached another Jesus. You can look at the Jehovah's Witnesses (who say) that Jesus actually is Michael the archangel who was used of God and became the Son of God by adoption," Roberts said.

"The Mormons teach that Jesus was the spiritual child in heaven, brother of Lucifer, who was born to the physical relationship between Elohim and Mary. The New Age teaches the guru Jesus, a graduate of the Shirley MacLaine school of theology." Jesus is not exalted by these religions, Roberts stressed.

"One of things that most concerns me about the Toronto Blessing is that often times -- I quote -- 'When the spirit starts to move preaching is halted, prayer is halted, praying is ceased in order to let the emotions roll.' That is not the essence of the work of the Spirit of God," Roberts said.

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The truth of Scripture is emphasized in a genuine work of the Spirit of God, Roberts said, noting verse 6: "We are from God. He who knows God listens to us."

"The sign, or the mark, of every cult and cult movement is that there is a contradictory authority that is brought into play against God's Word," Roberts said.

Jim Jones of Jonestown-massacre fame stood in his pulpit in Indianapolis, Indiana, and said to those people, 'The problem with you folks is that you're listening to this Book, and you're not listening to me.' Then he threw it on the floor and stomped on it. Now when that happens in the life of a person either literally or spiritually, you can be sure it won't necessarily lead to physical suicide but it will lead to spiritual suicide." A true moving of God produces a loving and godly service on the part of his people, he continued.

"The question to us today is if God loves the world that much, shouldn't we? Should we not give of ourselves in every way that we can, and all that we can, so that the world may hear the message that Jesus saves?"

"Not only will they hear the saving message of the Lord Jesus Christ, they'll be ministered to in ways that will revolutionize and change the face of this nation, of the world," Roberts said, noting the United States is the world's third-largest nation of lost people.

"In 2 Chronicles 7:14, the last promise of God in revival is that he will heal the land. That does not mean God waves a magic wand and suddenly all the problems are gone. No, this is the way God heals the land -- God moves in the hearts of his people."

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Omnipresent media ministry
brings people to Jesus Christ

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
4/25/95

HOUSTON (BP)--Ed Young and his wife were leaving a funeral recently when a young woman came up to them, hugged him, and said, "I got married this morning."

Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston, and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, admitted he was taken aback by the incident. Then the woman explained she had been living with a man out of wedlock. She said they had watched Young's TV program, "The Winning Walk," and as a result had attended Second Baptist Church for four consecutive weeks. They had, she continued, come under conviction, had accepted Christ as their Savior and had committed themselves to a Christian marriage.

As a result of his media ministry, Young often encounters people whose eyes and hearts are opened to God's love through one of his Christ-centered messages on radio or television. Also, because of its media ministry, Second Baptist and Young are often thought of as almost omnipresent in the Houston area.

In somewhat of an exaggeration, one of the city's residents said, "When you turn on the radio you hear Ed Young. When you turn on the TV you see Ed Young. When you open the newspaper, you read about Ed Young. When you walk into a bookstore, you see books by Ed Young."

Indeed, "The Winning Walk" is on Houston radio at 8:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. every weekday. The Sunday morning service of Second Baptist is also carried on Houston radio.

And Young is seen on Houston television 10 times a week.

That, of course, is only part of the story. "The Winning Walk" is carried on independent radio and television stations throughout the United States and in Israel. The TV version is also carried on ACTS, FamilyNet, TBN and 'superstation' WGN in Chicago. Approximately 22,000 cable systems reaching into 90 million homes carry the program. The radio and TV versions reach every major market in the country.

Young explained Second Baptist's commitment to a media ministry as follows: "Churches have personalities like people. Our mission statement is the Great Commission. We operate with the idea of gearing the church to those who aren't here yet."

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The pastor said people get to know Second Baptist through media and also develop a relationship with him.

"Through media I become their friend, someone they trust," he said. "That's so critical in today's world. I think a lot of Christians have forgotten how to be a friend to sinners. They have forgotten how to be all things to all people without compromising the gospel."

While Second Baptist pays for media in the Houston area, a volunteer group called "Centurions" underwrites the national and international media ministry.

Young said evangelism drives every facet of his ministry.

"I've been at Second Baptist 17 years," he said, "and we've had about 2,000 additions annually. And approximately 900 of those each year are for baptism. Of the 40 to 50 people who come down the aisle every week, most have been introduced to us through our media ministry. Our annual goal is 1,000 baptisms.

"When a person joins our church, he or she is immediately put into discipleship or evangelism training. We really work at discipling and active evangelism. Our people don't just give lip service to witnessing. They report every week about their witness."

Young said on average the church receives 150 telephone calls a day to its toll-free number as a result of the media ministry. There are also numerous calls to the "prayer line," which are not toll-free.

Church members are involved in a prayer ministry that goes on 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The pastor said last year 140 called and prayed to receive Christ.

"Our media ministry, obviously, reaches far beyond Second Baptist Church," he said. "Calls come in from across the nation. We encourage people who call to find a local Bible-believing church."

In addition to 547 full- and part-time staff members, Young said 225 to 230 volunteers work in the various ministries of the church.

"Annually, we send 350,000 to 400,000 audio tapes around the world," he said. "Tapes, books and tracts are also a part of our media ministry. We ship 4,000 to 6,000 books and videotapes every week. And our mail response to every type of inquiry runs 14,000 to 18,000 letters each week."

Instead of a newsletter the church publishes a full-color magazine for its members, which is just another facet of its media ministry.

Young said there is not a church on the planet that has a program like that of Second Baptist.

"We do a lot of crazy stuff," he said, "but we don't manipulate people through media or any other way. Through growth, support and recovery groups, we make a difference without manipulating people. And we become their friends.

"Some people have a little trouble figuring us out because from a doctrinal standpoint we're biblically sound, but liberal socially."

For its "Angels of Life" program during the Christmas season, Second Baptist buses as many as 6,000 poor and indigent people to the church and, in Young's words, "treat them like kings." This program of food, clothing and toys for the less fortunate requires 3,000 volunteers.

"It's the most thrilling thing the church does," Young said.

Annually the church also has an old-fashioned Disney parade, featuring 24 floats. The event has been viewed by more than 250,000 people.

The church's sports program is also first-rate, with more than 6,000 people participating. The National Basketball Association Houston Rockets occasionally use one of the church's basketball courts for practice.

Second Baptist also operates a kindergarten through 12th grade accredited school attended by 1,100 students.

The church, now running more than 6,000 in Sunday school, has started 129 churches in Mexico and trained the pastors for them. The churches are sponsored by Sunday school classes.

Second Baptist is now planning to build a mega-church in Brazil.

"We're not coming close to meeting the need," Young said.

The week prior to Easter, the church's telephone switchboard was jammed with calls from people asking about the times for Easter services. The church had four services that attracted 18,000 people.

"People who move to Houston, or who are visiting Houston, know us because of our media ministry," Young said. "But our church and other churches of the Southern Baptist Convention are not coming close to reaching the lost for Christ.

"One of our greatest needs is apologetics preaching and teaching, which I do a lot of when I'm not preaching on family. We've always been better proclaimers of the faith than defenders of it. In this day and time, we need to be both."

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Future history teacher makes
history as state BSU president

By Don Kirkland

Baptist Press
4/25/95

GREENVILLE, S.C. (BP)--Bobby Black, whose goal is to teach government and history when he graduates from Furman University, has made history by becoming the first African American elected as president of South Carolina Baptist Student Union.

"Ken Owens (Furman campus minister) and I were sitting in Watkins Student Center one night and he said, 'Bobby, I want you to think about running for state BSU president. I want you to pray about.'"

Black decided to make the run for the office and, as they say, the rest is history.

Is this the birth of a career in politics? "One day," Black said with a smile, "Congress could be my mission field, but right now, I'm excited about teaching."

Much more important to this likable Greenville, S.C., native than the possibility that a political career may have been born, however, is the certainty that he has been reborn.

Black grew up in the same community, Sterling, and the same church, Long Branch Baptist, that were home to a widely known Greenvillian, Jesse Jackson. Although he was baptized at Long Branch, he said he "never knew what salvation meant."

Not, that is, until he graduated from Greenville High School in 1991 and enrolled at North Greenville College. "The day I got on campus," he recalled, "I saw something different in virtually every student. There was a feeling of joy -- something that I was not accustomed to. They had something I didn't have and I wanted it."

"Too embarrassed" for years to admit that he was not saved, Black became a "seeker" at North Greenville -- and not just through BSU, but also within the fellowship of a nondenominational study group that called itself "Bible Thumpers Anonymous." Meeting off-campus in student apartments, this Bible band also attracted collegians from other nearby schools.

"It did wonders for me," Black said. "We went through the Bible and I began to understand what God's messengers were saying to me."

But it was in a chapel service at North Greenville that Black's search for the assurance of salvation ended and his new life began. It was on a Wednesday, Oct. 16, 1991. The speaker that morning was Greenville evangelist Paul Fleming.

"He said nothing that I had not heard before," Black remembered. "He talked about God's love, about how you can come to know Christ -- the simplest things. But that day, those things became real."

At the end of the chapel message, Black responded to an invitation. With "my heart pounding, scared, but also excited," he stood up, said a sentence prayer asking God's forgiveness for his sin and asking Christ to come into his heart, and "that day, the Lord became real in my life."

For Black, who had "never been a bad kid," life took on a new outlook. "I started looking at people differently," he said. "I learned to love and to tell people that I loved them. My family was stoical, and I had never been able tell anyone, not even my family, that I loved them. I was just brought up that way."

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His newfound relationship with Christ did not result in a change of career plans for Black, who will become a "fifth-year senior" at Furman to earn his teaching credentials. "But it did make me look at wherever I happened to be on any given day as a mission field," he said.

Not long after becoming a Christian, Black began visiting Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church, only about 10 or 15 minutes away from the North Greenville campus.

"My suite-mate during my sophomore year at North Greenville, Troy Taylor, was youth minister at Mt. Lebanon then and he asked me to go with him," Black said. "I was searching for spiritual food."

Black has not felt malnourished since. He immediately was attracted to the "very warm" congregation and to its pastor, Scott McAlister, who was "on fire for the Lord." "It really made an impression on me," he said.

Although he has been a member at Mt. Lebanon for more than a year, Black visited for two years before joining. "On the day that Bobby joined," said McAlister, "the response, the vote was very quick. He was very well-received, and our people love him."

Membership at Mt. Lebanon was something Black had to think about, though. "I was the only black," he said, "although I had never really thought about skin color, even in a black church."

He prayed about the decision for a few weeks. "And then the Lord seemed to say to me, 'Bobby, this is the first church you've been in that you really loved.'"

On the day he joined, several members said to him, "It's about time."

McAlister, who has been at Mt. Lebanon for nearly four years, said Black had impressed him from the very start. "He has such a godly character," said the pastor. "Jesus is first in his life, and this just overflows. He's the kind of person you want to be around, always an encourager. I'm thankful he's a member at Mt. Lebanon. I just hope we'll be as much a blessing to him as he has been to us."

After he graduates from Furman, Black "would love to stay in the Greenville area," and if so, he "definitely will stay at Mt. Lebanon."

"I haven't found many churches like that," said the 22-year-old state BSU president.

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'Godfathers' program
helps inner-city youth

By Vicki Stamps

Baptist Press
4/25/95

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Fathers are seen as the remedy for the breakdown of families in the inner city of St. Louis and other metropolitan areas. Specifically, "godfathers." The Godfathers Program, a national effort that started in Nashville, Tenn., and has extended to several other cities, focuses on providing Christian role models for young men between the ages of 7 and 17.

"This is both an educational and a spiritual program," said Ron Vail Sr., executive director of metro ministries for the Christian Civic Foundation and pastor of Bible Way Baptist Church in St. Louis. "The idea is to bring together African American churchmen committing energy and resources to develop young African American boys."

The St. Louis chapter has 23 godfathers working with 40 godsons. Each week the godsons meet to participate in sessions featuring African American history, tutoring, counseling and fun in the form of basketball or softball. Godfathers rotate the supervision and instruction of these weekly meetings.

Once a month, the godfathers meet to discuss the progress of each of the boys. They discuss the needs and strengths of every youngster. Godfathers are responsible for getting godsons to the meetings, to activities and to church.

"The reason I became a godfather was to give something back," said M. Jerome West, program director for the Gateway Foundation. "I have an MBA and I've been an accountant for a lot of years. I want to help create more managers and accountants."

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Vail also sees the education program as a plus for economic development. "The godsons will understand the advantage of economic development for the community," he said. "This is something that they don't learn in school. First they will learn non-violent methods of social change with conflict resolution and then they will learn to develop six areas of the community: business, school, home, church, government and clinic. They will learn the importance of all of these areas and how to run them."

Mario Howard, 17, is an active teen-ager involved with the godsons and other community work. He has been recognized by the National Committee on Drug/Alcohol Prevention in Miami and he was tapped to attend a Housing and Urban Development department crime prevention workshop in Washington.

"We have too much recreation," Howard said. "We need to focus on ourselves by building our self-esteem and our networking skills. There are few programs dedicated to building the family. The family is broken down and we've got to fix it first."

Cooperation with the godson's family is important, said Hillard Martin, associate minister at Mercy Seat Baptist Church and a St. Louis city police chaplain. "We do a lot of counseling with the boys. We go to school to help solve problems. We might serve to spearhead the movement of getting the family back together."

Martin also sees the opportunity to rotate godfathers and to take the boys to church as a major advantage of the program. "This way the godson gets to learn the personalities of all of the men and to see how each man thinks," he explained. "Taking them to church each Sunday is a learning experience for the father and son. It provides an opportunity for one-on-one relationships."

Levoyd Gordon, 20, is one of the godsons. He already has experienced trouble with the law and problems with gangs.

"Communication and lack of understanding is the problem," Gordon said. "Adults talk, but they don't understand what kids are trying to say and kids think grownups are being hard by telling them what to do all of the time."

Ruth Booker, program director for the Godfathers Program and a member of Mount Zion Baptist Church, said the program targets young boys to get them on the right track.

"We need to grasp them at that young age," she said. "The curiosity about violence starts at that young age of 6 or 7. Prevention is best. Every time Levoyd tried to straighten himself out, he had problems with the gangs."

As director, Booker serves as liaison with potential employers, meets with parole boards and plans cultural and educational activities. She also has ideas for future trips for the godfathers and godsons to take.

A close look at street violence brought Booker into the program.

"After I was held up by gang members, I decided to minister to high-risk adolescent males because our hope is in them. I wanted to stir them up and motivate them. When they tell me, 'I won't see 21,' I want to say, 'That's a lie!' I wanted to help build self-esteem and to get involved."

Howard is encouraged to be a part of the Godfathers Program, but he still sees a long road. "There is a lot of pain," he said. "Many children experience the pain of trying to take care of themselves."

Gordon also has experienced pain -- the pain of having two of his best friends gunned down by gang members.

Vail is encouraging churches, organizations and corporations to study the possibilities of the program with a view of support. "Financial resources are lacking," he pointed out. "We must have more support to be effective."

6 BSSB videos receive
'95 Telly recognition

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Six videos produced by the Baptist Sunday School Board -- four episodes of the "Secret Adventures" video series for children and two youth Sunday school videos -- have been cited in the 1995 Telly Awards competition.

An international competition, the Telly Awards recognize outstanding non-network and cable television commercials, film and video productions. More than 8,600 entries were received in this year's competition.

Two "Secret Adventures" episodes, "Smash" and "Shrug," received the silver Telly award which is given only to 4 to 7 percent of entries. "Secret Adventures" is produced by the board's Broadman & Holman Publishers in association with Taweel-Loos & Co.

Receiving the bronze Telly or finalist award were two other "Secret Adventures" episodes, "Snag" and "Slam." Between 20 and 27 percent of entries receive this award.

The two youth ministry finalists are "In Search of the Successful Youth Sunday School" (the second volume in the Youth Sunday School Video Training Series) and "Youth Life Issues Video Clips, Vol. 1."

The BSSB's video production team included Bob Metcalf, Bible teaching-reaching division, producer; Rick Simms, trade supplies and media department, director; and Bill Cox, a Nashville, Tenn.,-based production specialist who served as writer and creative consultant.

Metcalf said "In Search of ..." combines a comedic story line with "real-life" interviews with youth ministers, youth workers and teen-agers. The program outlines "10 Ways to Grow a Youth Sunday School."

"Youth Life Issues Video Clips, Vol. 1" provides 10 brief segments on "some of the most critical life issues faced by youth," Metcalf said, adding teen-agers helped identify the topics and assisted in developing the featured case studies.

Earlier, four "Secret Adventures" segments received 1995 International Angel Awards.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Deaf 'hear' about Christ in Puerto Rican ministry," dated 4/21/95, please change the name of Mrs. Mitchell to Marsha, not Martha.

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Seminarist waits for fate of relatives in Oklahoma City," dated 4/24/95, please correct the identification of Kenny McCullough in the 10th paragraph to Drug Enforcement Agency agent, not federal alcohol, tobacco and firearms.

Thanks,
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