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April 26, 1995

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Christian radio speaks
to hurting Oklahoma City

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
4/26/95

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--In the midst of death and suffering, a steady voice of hope and healing has been speaking to Oklahoma City.

Christian radio.

"What we have to offer," said Robin Jones, general manager of AM and FM Christian stations in Oklahoma City "has another whole dimension."

The spiritual emphasis of news-and-information KQCV, 800 AM, and contemporary Christian KNTL, 104.9 FM, she said, isn't underscored in secular media reports from the scene or the much-needed assistance of the Red Cross and other relief agencies.

Jones, a member of Oklahoma City's Metropolitan Baptist Church, noted a third station, which plays alternative Christian music, 91 FM, also has been busy reflecting the compassion of the body of Christ to a shocked, grieving city.

There have been "so many practical opportunities" to minister, Jones said, since the April 19 blast at Oklahoma City's federal building, which left more than 200 people dead or presumed dead, shattering countless families' lives.

Jones recounted such examples as:

-- airing a prayer every hour over both KQCV and KNTL from a different pastor in the city, beginning the day after the tragedy and continuing through the weekend.

-- preempting WQVC's weeknight programming April 25-27 for a two-hour live call-in outreach with guests "who can help us walk through the biblical perspectives of evil, grief, pain and suffering," Jones said. Secular media, unfortunately, have relayed an abundance of wayward counsel -- "it makes you cringe if you're a Christian hearing some of the stuff," she said. April 26's guest: Joni Eareckson Tada, sharing her "unique perspective on pain and suffering and how it relates to God," Jones said, of the Christian disability advocate. April 25's guest was Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., after a funeral was conducted that afternoon at the church for 3-year-old Chase Smith and his 2-year-old brother, Colton, who were among the children killed in the federal building's day care center.

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-- holding a candlelight prayer service during KNTL's weekly feature for junior and senior high students, "The Lighthouse," aired from a different location each Friday night. Students gathering at Hillcrest Christian Church also were given an opportunity to ask "the hard questions" about the tragedy and hear youth pastors respond, Jones said. A crew from the Nickelodeon network filmed part of the service and aired it over the weekend.

-- devoting KQVC's midday half-hour talk show April 19 to listeners' immediate reactions to the bombing; April 20 to the pastor of downtown First United Methodist Church, which also was severely damaged by the blast; and April 21 to a Christian counselor.

-- giving interviews to Christian radio stations around the country wanting a Christian's perspective from Oklahoma City. Jones estimated she and other staff members have done more than 75 interviews. She said she was impressed the Christian media without failed asked questions about how Christians across the country can pray for those in Oklahoma City.

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Missionary praying for unity,
forgiveness after the blast

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
4/26/95

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Less than a week after the federal building bombing in Oklahoma City, a home missionary there asked fellow Southern Baptists to pray for a continued spirit of unity and forgiveness.

Physician Fred Loper said "people pulled together amazingly" after the disaster. Within 90 minutes of the explosion, Loper was at a local hospital to treat the injured. So many medical professionals came from surrounding communities, however, most physicians only treated one patient each, he said.

The number of people offering assistance, whether it was feeding rescue workers or donating blood, was overwhelming, he noted.

Loper asked Southern Baptists to pray for people to continue working together in a spirit of unity. He also requested prayers for a "forgiving attitude, no matter where this came from."

Other prayer concerns Loper expressed include:

-- wisdom for city and state officials as they decide about demolishing or rebuilding other buildings damaged by the explosion.

-- other places in the country with tensions and conflict.

-- guidance for pastors and chaplains who counsel grieving survivors.

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Stewardship agency's dissolution?
trustees cautious, Chandler opposed

By Shari Schubert

Baptist Press
4/26/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--An official statement from the Southern Baptist Convention Stewardship Commission, approved by trustees, stops short of directly opposing a proposal to eliminate the agency and reassign its duties. But the response to the report of the SBC Program and Structure Study Committee (PSSC) notes, "Stewardship Commission trustees and staff are eager to assist Southern Baptists in Stewardship Development, Cooperative Program promotion, and Endowment and Capital Giving as we move forward into the twenty-first century."

The Stewardship Commission's president expressed without reservation his conviction dissolving the commission "is not in the best interest of the Southern Baptist Convention."

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The PSSC proposal not only would reassign but would split the Stewardship Commission's work. Cooperative Program promotion would become the responsibility of the SBC Executive Committee, while the Baptist Sunday School Board would be responsible for stewardship education and assisting churches in capital fund-raising.

The trustees' formal response followed a lengthy discussion of the PSSC report March 24, during which Missouri trustee Kenneth Hull made -- and subsequently withdrew -- a motion trustees go on record as opposing the PSSC proposal to reassign stewardship and CP promotion responsibilities, and requesting the Stewardship Commission remain intact.

After Hull's original motion was offered March 23, another motion was made and approved to postpone a vote on the matter until the following day. In the meantime, trustee Charles Sullivan of Indiana moved a four-member committee be appointed to draft an official response to the PSSC report.

Hull, pastor of Tenth Street Baptist Church, Trenton, Mo., said he withdrew his motion when the motion to appoint the committee was approved.

The committee worked late the evening of March 23 and through much of the next morning to draft the statement. It was approved that afternoon.

There was lengthy discussion about how to word the statement, said trustee Jason Mori, a layman from Alexandria, Va., who helped draft the document. "The intent was not to come out blatantly negative," he said. Coming from the trustees of a commission that would be directly affected by the PSSC proposal, Mori noted, such a statement could be perceived as "sour grapes or protectionism."

What the trustees wanted to accomplish, Mori said, was to call attention to a need to "think this thing through" and make sure that services currently being rendered to the convention would not be lost in the name of efficiency.

"I'm in the private sector," Mori explained, "and I've been through several major reorganization-type activities. The hardest thing is not to plan the event; it's to carry it out -- because work doesn't go away." When the number of people doing the work is reduced, he observed, some things generally "fall into the crack."

Mori said trustees also were concerned dividing the responsibilities of the Stewardship Commission between two other agencies would result in "breaking up the longstanding expertise and a great deal of synergy that currently exists."

The trustees' statement stresses the importance of stewardship development for Southern Baptists in contemporary American society. "It is the deep concern of the trustees that there exists a gross materialistic mind-set in the churches of America today, and in particular among Southern Baptists. According to Fortune magazine, between the years 1998-2002, we will witness the greatest intergenerational transfer of wealth in history. Baby Boomers will inherit some \$2.3 trillion. A Foreign Mission Board study reports the next decade will see \$13 trillion inherited. Without a strong, dynamic ministry in stewardship development with direct linkage to the Cooperative Program and its promotion, for all practical purposes that generation may be lost to the support of missions."

The statement cited a study sponsored by the Lilly Foundation, which found in 11 denominations, including Southern Baptists, per member giving as a percentage of income was lower in 1992 than in 1921, and lower than in 1933 at the depth of the Great Depression.

"Trustees are vitally concerned the Convention's decision with regard to the recommendation of a 'Covenant for a New Century' strengthen the ministry of stewardship education and Cooperative Program promotion resulting in personal spiritual growth and the spread of world missions," the statement said.

Similar concerns were shared by Stewardship Commission President Ronald E. Chandler in a report to trustees that preceded the drafting of their official statement. "Twentieth-century Christianity has been captured by the culture of our day," he said. "The consumer-dominated, materialistic mind-set of American society has received an 'acceptable' evaluation in Christian living.

"More is said in the Bible about material possessions than about other media-popular issues of our day, i.e., abortion, church and state, who should or should not be ordained, etc.," Chandler continued.

"Greed is called idolatry in the Bible (Eph. 5:5, Col. 3:5). We live in a nation of idol worshipers. Now is not the time to lower or dilute the message so needed in our day. Stewardship must be a major emphasis, not just for raising money ... but because of what poor stewardship is doing in our hearts and to our values, loyalties and commitments."

The Stewardship Commission trustees' statement notes they are alarmed the SBC spends only 0.35 percent of its budget for promotion of stewardship and the Cooperative Program. "No viable organization in America can succeed with so little invested in generating its support," the statement says. "It is remarkable that the Stewardship Commission has been able to accomplish so much with such limited funding."

In his report, Chandler pointed out similar nonprofit organizations typically spend 8 to 12 percent on fund-raising.

Despite the limited funding, Chandler noted, overall per capita giving by Southern Baptists increased 68 percent from 1985-1993 (1994 figures were not available). Statistics for 1985-94 show increases in other stewardship indicators: total receipts, up 43 percent; total Cooperative Program receipts, up 22 percent; SBC Cooperative Program receipts, up 20 percent; and mission gifts, up 33 percent. At the same time, churches and church membership increased 7 percent; Sunday school enrollment increased 3 percent; and baptisms dropped 7 percent.

Chandler acknowledged inflation accounts for some of the increase in giving indicators. But he asked, "Do we consider population increase in looking at our other most common growth indicators?"

Considering the giving statistics in light of the small amount spent on promotion, Chandler remarked, "If effectiveness is the goal (of the PSSC recommendation), we already have it!"

The trustees' statement notes the place of stewardship promotion in Southern Baptist life has been debated since the early 1920s. "The assignment of stewardship education and Cooperative Program promotion has been changed from the Executive Committee to other commissions on at least three separate occasions. The present assignment given to the Stewardship Commission in 1959 was born out of the desire to provide Southern Baptists with a unified approach to stewardship promotion."

Chandler's report notes attempts during the 1972 convention to transfer the work back to the Executive Committee were defeated by SBC messengers.

Taking a cue from Chandler's report, the trustees included in their statement a comparison of the proposed Southern Baptist Convention mission statement and the present mission statement of the Stewardship Commission.

The latter statement reads: "The Stewardship Commission exists to serve Southern Baptists and to challenge them to grow in commitment and obedience to Jesus Christ by applying Biblical principles of stewardship and by giving the financial resources necessary to fulfill the Biblical mandates of the New Testament churches, including world mission support through the Cooperative Program."

The trustees' document notes the commission's mission statement is "closely akin" to the proposed SBC mission statement: "The Southern Baptist Convention exists to facilitate, extend and enlarge the Great Commission ministries of Southern Baptist Churches ..."

While the Stewardship Commission trustees' statement did not specifically call for Southern Baptists to reject the PSSC's recommendation to dissolve the agency, Chandler expressed his personal conviction that the commission should remain intact.

"My stance is not taken with political overtones nor personal considerations," Chandler told trustees. "I do not desire to add fuel to any convention fires. Neither do I wish to attack anyone's motives, wisdom or character. Christians can come to different conclusions in matters such as these and resolve their differences in a Christlike manner." If the SBC adopts the PSSC proposal, Chandler added, "I will work with those to whom our program assignments are transferred to assure a smooth and orderly transition."

Recalling most SBC agency heads did not express immediate opposition to the PSSC recommendations when they were unveiled in February, Chandler explained, "An immediate negative reaction would have been inappropriate at the time. We were asked to give prayerful consideration to the recommendations. This request was reasonable and fair."

"Now, several weeks later, I have had time to pray and seek the will of God," he said. "It is out of this conviction that I have come to believe that dissolving the Stewardship Commission is not in the best interest of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Chandler said the PSSC proposal is not a leap forward to the 21st century, but a step back to the 1950s. "It is not self-evident that a different organization is more effective We have tried what is proposed in the past and found that it did not work."

If Southern Baptists want a more effective promotion of mission support and stewardship development, Chandler said, "I ask them to give priority to funding these ministries to a level that will enable whoever receives these responsibilities to do the work."

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Free speech, homosexual rights
clash in Supreme Court case

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
4/26/95

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments April 25 in a case involving the clash of state-endorsed homosexual rights and First Amendment free speech rights.

Sponsors of Boston's St. Patrick's Day Parade asked the justices to overturn lower courts which ruled they violated a Massachusetts law forbidding discrimination based on sexual orientation by prohibiting an Irish-American homosexual group from marching in the event. The decisions denied its right to express freely the message it wanted to communicate in its private parade, the South Boston Allied War Veterans Council said.

The Irish-American Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Group of Boston (GLIB) argued the parade sponsors had unlawfully discriminated against them on the basis of their sexual identity.

The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission signed onto a brief supporting the parade organizers.

GLIB organized in January 1992 in order to march in that year's St. Patrick's Day/Evacuation Day Parade, which the veterans council had held in south Boston since 1947. The council receives a permit from the city each year to hold its privately funded event.

The council rejected GLIB's request, but a superior court ordered GLIB's inclusion in 1992 and '93 parades. The council canceled the 1994 parade when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court upheld the lower court's ruling allowing GLIB to march because the organizers were guilty of unlawful discrimination.

During the April 25 arguments, Chester Darling, the lawyer for the veterans council, said the central issue of the case is "whether government can mandate viewpoints" in a private activity. His clients excluded a message, not people, with which they disagreed from an event which expresses a viewpoint by its nature, Darling told the justices.

The council chooses groups which reflect its values in the neighborhood, he said. That is why a Baptist Bible college group and pro-life organization were included, he said. The council excluded not only the Irish-American homosexual group but an anti-homosexual group and the Ku Klux Klan, Darling said.

Arguing on behalf of the homosexual group, John Ward said it is a "case about discrimination. The parade sponsors banned the organization for who they are," he said. "Viewpoint discrimination is different than discrimination against people for who they are."

GLIB did not express a viewpoint by carrying a banner bearing its name in the parade, Ward said. Like other groups in the parade, GLIB identified itself with its sign, he said. Such self-identification is "not an act of expressing an antithetical message," Ward said.

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The justices questioned both Darling and Ward extensively during the hour-long arguments.

Hurley v. Irish-American Gay is "about the power of the state to control the content of speech" of a private group "merely because they use public property for their meeting," said Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Christian Life Commission. "Like a ventriloquist putting words in a dummy's mouth, Caesar claims the right to manipulate the message of a meeting to include whatever Caesar thinks is proper speech. But we are American citizens, not Caesar's dummy, and we insist on the First Amendment rights to self-determination of our message and our association in our meetings.

"If the veterans lose this case, churches who rent public schools or parks or other public facilities for church-related events may become powerless to exclude gay rights activists and other radical groups who want to force their message, no matter how irrelevant or irreverent, upon a religious meeting," Whitehead said. "This would effectively cause religious groups to abandon the public forum, leaving it to be dominated by the radical groups alone."

Afterward, Steve McFarland of the Christian Legal Society predicted victory for the parade sponsors. "What was fatal was the trial judge's finding" there is no difference between message and trait, McFarland said outside the court building.

In its opinion, the superior court found GLIB "would be excluded because of its values and message, i.e., its members' sexual orientation."

The case is about free speech, not homosexual rights, said McFarland, director of CLS' Center for Law and Religious Freedom.

"The gay rights movement has more to lose from this case going against" the veterans, he said. "If government can start scripting" parade participants, the homosexual groups also are in trouble, McFarland said.

McFarland wrote the CLS friend-of-the-court brief. In addition to the CLC, the Family Research Council and National Association of Evangelicals also joined in the brief.

A decision is expected before the court's term closes in late June.

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MBTS trustees OK gift
for retiring Ferguson

By Brenda J. Sanders

Baptist Press
4/26/95

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Trustees of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary tended to a variety of business matters, including the approval of a financial gift for retiring President Milton Ferguson, and visited the institution's Kansas City, Mo., campus for a groundbreaking ceremony during their April 24-25 annual meeting.

After the board's presidential search committee named Mark Coppenger as their nominee for the seminary's next president, trustees met in executive session for more than an hour Monday afternoon to consider a retirement package for Ferguson. The 35-member board will conduct a called session June 1-2 to interview and vote on Coppenger, currently serving as vice president for convention relations with the SBC Executive Committee.

In an open board session Tuesday morning, trustees approved a motion presented by Ohio layman James Dobbs, chairman of the board's finance committee, appropriating for Ferguson and his wife, Bettie, a gift of \$50,000 "in honor and appreciation of the 23 years that they have served" Midwestern Seminary. "These funds will be disbursed at the discretion of Dr. Ferguson, working with the finance committee," before Aug. 1, 1996, Dobbs said.

Monday evening, trustees participated in a groundbreaking ceremony, dinner and worship service on the seminary campus. They and approximately 250 students, faculty, staff and other seminary supporters joined together to turn shovelfuls of earth in a wooded area behind the Midwestern Residence Hall where a new Student and Family Life Ministry Center is to be constructed.

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Because of a projected increase in revenue for the upcoming academic year, due in part to an expected rise in Cooperative Program funds, trustees approved a proposed revenue budget of \$3.9 million for 1995-96, an increase of 4 percent over the current year's budget projection.

Trustees also voted to increase student matriculation fees to \$750 per semester (up from \$700) and raised on-campus housing rental fees approximately 3 percent.

The board approved a goal of \$75,000 for the institution's 1996 Annual Fund and heard a report from their development committee indicating a five-year decline in gifts to the fund.

Trustees gave final approval to a motion presented last April by trustee Roger Oldham, pastor of First Baptist Church, Martin, Tenn., to give the seminary's Academic Freedom and Tenure document the same force as bylaws of the institution.

Two resolutions presented by trustee Kent Cochran, a layman from Kansas City, were adopted by board members. One resolution expressed support for the proposed restructuring plan of the SBC Executive Committee's Program and Structure Study Committee, "Covenant for a New Century." The other resolution protested the "growing cultural acceptance of homosexual conduct as normal or genetically determined," and called homosexual practice "a morally unconscionable learned behavior unacceptable for Christians."

At the close of their meeting, Midwestern trustees elected officers for 1995-96. All officers were elected by acclamation.

Lewis Adkison, senior pastor of Circle Drive Baptist Church, Colorado Springs, Colo., was re-elected to serve a second term as board chairman. Other officers include Ronnie Rogers, pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church, Hot Springs, Ark., first vice chairman; Bob Lilly, pastor of Catonsville Baptist Church, Baltimore, who will serve a second term as second vice chairman; and Lowell Socolofsky, a computer programming instructor from Omaha, Neb., who was elected to a seventh term as secretary-treasurer.

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Rally boosts judge who prays,
posts 10 Commandments in court By Carol B. Link

Baptist Press
4/26/95

GADSDEN, Ala. (BP)--Christians gathered by the hundreds on the lawn of the county courthouse in Gadsden, Ala., to support Judge Roy Moore in his fight with the American Civil Liberties Union.

The ACLU initiated a legal challenge against Moore because he displays a copy of the Ten Commandments on his Etowah County courtroom wall -- a wood carving he did himself -- and has prayer in court on the day of jury organization. The ACLU filed suit March 30 in U.S. District Court in Birmingham contending Moore's practices violate the separation of church and state.

On April 10, Christians began gathering on the courthouse lawn around 8:30 a.m., waving American flags and singing "God Bless America." The event merited front-page coverage in Birmingham, with the Post-Herald estimating the crowd at 500.

Philip Ellen, pastor of White's Chapel Baptist Church, assured Moore's supporters, "This is only the beginning This is one time in America that those who do not believe in God will not win." Ellen encouraged Christians to continue praying for Judge Moore and to help support him financially in his fight for free speech rights for every American. "The First Amendment guarantees that right," said Ellen.

Maurice Wright, pastor of United Christian Church of Gadsden, followed Ellen. Wright said, "Blessed is a nation whose God is the Lord. God has raised up Judge Roy Moore for a time such as this He (God) destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because he could not find 10 righteous people in the entire city. There are more than 10 righteous people gathered here We're here to stand in the gap."

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Steve Owenby, pastor of First Baptist Church, Rainbow City, told the crowd, "War has been declared on the people of Etowah County They (the ACLU) seek to destroy the Constitution of the United States. These godless organizations attack not only you, but all the people of the United States of America Your fathers, your brothers, your sons gave their lives for our rights This is one battle we'll fight until the bitter end."

Dean Young, defense coordinator for Moore, described Moore as a high school graduate in Etowah County, an honor graduate from the military academy at West Point, a company commander and veteran of the Vietnam War and a man of high character. Young told the supporters Governor Fob James has pledged his support of Moore, who was appointed in 1992. Young held a sample bag of letters from people across the United States, at least one from every state in the union, promising their support.

Moore, in his black judge's robe, greeted the crowd, saying, "The ACLU would have you believe that what I do in my courtroom is wrong (by having prayer and displaying the Ten Commandments), but I am exercising my right to freedom of religion I'm doing my sworn duty to uphold the Constitution of the United States The Constitution never intended to keep God out of our government, but to keep government out of our church We have a sworn duty to acknowledge his (God's) providence."

Moore ended his address by quoting Martin Luther: "Here I stand -- I can do no other."

After Moore finished speaking, his supporters followed him inside the courthouse and waited in the halls until he completed his courtroom prayer. With a few "amens," they quietly filed out of the building.

In the hallway of the courthouse, Harold Wood, chairman of the Etowah County chapter of the Christian Coalition, said, "One of our founding fathers, George Washington, said in his farewell address, 'Religion and morality are the only firm support of our government, and we must protect those two greatest supports, or else it (the government) will fail.'"

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Link is member of Siberton Baptist Church, near Gadsden, Ala., and editor of Alabama Rural Letter Carrier News.

Pitcher's family faced adversity
buoyed by faith & the faithful By John D. Pierce

Baptist Press
4/26/95

NEWNAN, Ga. (BP)--When Atlanta Braves' relief pitcher Steve Bedrosian mentions "the farm," he is not referring to the minor leagues. In fact, it has been a while since the 13-year veteran played at that level.

Rather, he is speaking of the house and acreage in rural Coweta County, southwest of Atlanta, that he and his wife, Tammy, call home. There the otherwise quiet countryside setting is only interrupted, and joyfully so, by the activities of their four sons: Kyle, 9, Cody, 7, Carson, 4, and Cameron, 3.

Bedrosian's baseball career has given him much about which to be proud. He has pitched in the World Series and, in 1987, received the coveted Cy Young Award acknowledging him as the best pitcher in the National League. Yet what really brings a sparkle to the dark eyes of this gifted athlete is to come home and see his four sons resting comfortably on their pillows.

Life has not always been this peaceful for the Bedrosian family. Their lives were upended in 1990 when young Cody became quite ill. Steve, then with the San Francisco Giants, was in Atlanta for the season opener which had been canceled due to rain. After several attempts, Tammy reached him with the news that their son's condition was worsening. Steve quickly returned to the west coast that evening. A biopsy the following morning revealed that Cody had leukemia.

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"I'll never forget that day," Steve said. "We were devastated and certainly grieved for a long time." After the expected period of shock and denial, the couple knew they would need help beyond themselves. "It was so hard to believe at first," Steve confessed, "but we turned to God." Their prayer was one for endurance: "With your strength, please get us through this."

Bedrosian was raised in the small town of Methuen, Mass. Coming from an athletic family, it was natural that he was attracted to sports. He was especially involved in baseball and hockey, and a fan of the teams in Boston. However, his own talents in baseball were not so apparent in his growing years. "I was a late bloomer," he acknowledged.

Steve's biggest break came during a junior college all-star game in Rhode Island. Although selected as an alternate, he joined the team when another pitcher was injured. "No one knew who I was," Steve recounted. But after pitching the final three innings of the game and striking out seven of nine batters, people took notice of the lanky right-hander. He soon accepted a scholarship to the University of New Haven and, subsequently, pitched in the 1978 Division II College World Series. That year the Braves made him their third-round draft pick.

The native New Englander remembers asking: "Where is Atlanta, Ga.?" Before reaching that destination, however, Bedrosian would spend a few years in the minor leagues. His first season was split between Kingsport, Tenn., and Greenwood, S.C., before returning to Massachusetts for the off-season. A surprising phone call came from Hank Aaron, then director of player development for the Braves, inviting Steve to join the Richmond team for the AAA World Series. Though not called on to pitch, Steve received a bonus and a championship ring.

The next couple of seasons were spent in Savannah before returning to the AAA team in Richmond in 1981. Later that season Steve was called up to the majors and joined the Braves in Los Angeles, making his first major league appearance. Steve established himself as a major leaguer in Atlanta and soon met and married his wife, Tammy, a native of Spartanburg, S.C.

In 1986 Bedrosian was traded to the Philadelphia Phillies. The following season was a career best with 40 saves, including 12 consecutive, earning him the Cy Young Award. Eventually, Steve would be traded to San Francisco where he pitched in the 1989 World Series, best known for the tragic earthquake.

The diagnosis of Cody's illness came as the 1990 season began. Teammates and their wives were very supportive as the young boy began what would be three difficult years of treatments. At season's end, Steve was once again traded, this time to the Twins. Tammy was so disappointed when Steve called the clinic to tell her they would be moving to Minnesota. What initially was disheartening soon became good news. "We had no idea," Tammy explained of their discovery of the leukemia center at the University of Minnesota. "It ended up being the best facility in the country for childhood leukemia," she said.

"So many ways the Lord has worked in our lives," Steve gratefully noted. Little did they know that an experimental drug study at that hospital would play a key role in saving Cody's life. Still, there were some very difficult days ahead as Cody continued his treatments.

The end of the 1991 season found Steve back in the World Series. This time he would pitch for the Twins against his former team, the Braves. The following year he announced his retirement due to numbness in the fingers of his pitching hand. Surprisingly, the hand improved after a while and Steve returned to baseball, once again with the Braves. Cody's improved health and Steve's comeback caused the family to rejoice.

After moving to their farm near Newnan a couple of years ago, Steve headed out alone one Sunday to visit First Baptist Church. He was eager to get home and report his findings. "Honey, this is it. You've got to go," he said. Soon the whole family was drawn in by the worship and warmth of the church. It was this caring fellowship that would support the Bedrosians through more trying days.

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Sept. 27, 1993, was to be a special day to recognize the completion of Cody's years of chemotherapy. Steve's parents, along with pastor Eugene Tyre and others from the church, were on hand at Eggleston Hospital in Atlanta. There Cody, feeling very good, would receive a routine blood test and then celebrate the end to his treatments.

The celebration turned to heartache when the blood test revealed a relapse. Steve recalled the agony of removing the celebratory words from the frosting of the cake and wiping tears from his own eyes. As everyone sought to encourage the young boy, they soon learned he was a reservoir of strength for them. "I've done it before; I can do it again," said the courageous 6-year old. But it would not be easy.

"There were days when he was so sick we wondered if he would make it to the next day," his mother painfully remembered. Returning to the clinic in Minnesota, the Bedrosians found their church family to be very supportive. Members drove their belongings northward and later returned them to Georgia. Others would visit them to offer care and concern. "Dr. Tyre and the whole church family were right by our side," Steve said.

Additional care came from Peter and Judy Walker, friends from San Francisco. The couple had lost their only child to leukemia yet were willing to relive that pain to help the Bedrosians through this crisis.

An answer to many prayers came with the news that two of Cody's brothers matched as potential donors of bone marrow. After suffering through radiation treatments, the transplant was successfully performed Dec. 27, 1993. There were still difficulties to endure for the remainder of the 89 days of hospitalization.

Cody, although still hospitalized, was adamant his dad go to spring training. He was hopeful of returning home, eventually, and attending a game in Atlanta. Reluctantly, Steve headed to Florida but kept in close contact with the family still in Minnesota. It would be several months, but Cody's anticipated night at the ballpark would become a reality. That May evening, Cody, joined by brother Kyle, threw out the ceremonial first pitch. Fellow players wore their uniform leggings for that game in the same fashion as Steve does. The teammates acknowledged that both the leggings and the extra-innings victory were tributes to the courage of the Bedrosians.

It has been over a year now since the transplant and Cody is active and back in school. His annual checkup showed him in full remission. However, Steve and Tammy remember the darkest days and what they learned from them. "You can't do it by yourself," Steve said. "He (God) will give you strength. And don't be proud," he added.

In addition to finding ways to minister to others who are facing crises, Steve and Tammy also find Thanksgiving to be a daily event for their family.

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Church's media ministry
an evangelistic outreach

By C.C. Risenhoover

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CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (BP)--The woman was sitting on the bed in the master bedroom of her home in Dallas, gun in hand, contemplating suicide. For some reason, which she did not understand, she had the remote control for the television set in her other hand and was channel surfing.

A statement made by a man on one channel caused her to stop. That man was Ron Phillips, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Hixson, Tenn., and he was saying there was no darkness in life that could not be penetrated by the light of God's love in Jesus Christ.

She wondered. She was the wife of a successful doctor, materially living the American dream. But her husband's request for a divorce, the scorn she faced in the community and constant stalking throughout the ordeal had become intolerable.

She looked at the gun and she listened to the preacher. Finally, what he was saying gave her a hope that had long been dormant in her life. She laid the gun aside, got down on her knees and asked God to take away the darkness. He did.

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After the woman's divorce was final, she took a job with a company. Through God's providence she was transferred to Chattanooga, Tenn. That enabled her to walk the aisle of suburban Central Baptist Church of Hixson and meet the messenger who had been God's instrument the night she was contemplating suicide. She now sings in the Central's choir and is a testimony for the church's media ministry.

Ron Phillips has been a pastor since 1967 and has had a media ministry for 25 years.

"I started with radio and publications," he said, "but 10 years ago the church here moved into television and we're head over heels into it."

Phillips is moving toward his 16th anniversary at Central Baptist.

"The Central Message," the church's Sunday morning worship service edited to a 30-minute format, is seen weekly on ACTS and FamilyNet. The program also is carried by the Inspirational Network and several independent stations.

"We're on the ABC television affiliate in Chattanooga," Phillips said, "and have the No. 1 rated religious program in the area. We're pulling 11, 12 and 13,000 people 18 or over according to Nielsen ratings."

That gives the program a 3 to 4 Nielsen rating, which is excellent. Most churches have difficulty pulling even a 1 Nielsen rating in metropolitan areas.

"People really know us through television," Phillips said. "I'd estimate that 50 percent of our new members have their first contact with us through TV. And that's a modest estimate. Television is our No. 1 outreach."

Phillips said he did not think a church could really move forward without using media.

"I call it artillery," he said. "It softens up the ground for Christ's foot soldiers. Almost every week we have at least one person call our 800 number to accept Christ. People call for all sorts of reasons, of course, most asking for prayer.

"The gospel is media. We're here to communicate Christ to people. And when you consider what is spent to reach so many people with the message of salvation, there is not a better buy."

Phillips said Central Baptist gives more than \$200,000 annually to support its television ministry.

"Our people support the media ministry above their tithes and offerings," he said. "They understand its importance in the total outreach of our church."

The pastor said the church does not ask for money on the air.

"People give but we don't ask," he said. "We don't have time to make an appeal on a 30-minute program. And we wouldn't if we had more time because that's not our focus. Our focus is to introduce people to Jesus Christ. That is the only reason we are involved in a media ministry."

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Judge knows the troubles
O.J.'s jurors have seen

By Melanie Childers

Baptist Press
4/26/95

OWENTON, Ky. (BP)--The verdict is still out in the O.J. Simpson trial, but a Kentucky Baptist judge could make a strong case for offering help to jurors who have to face the traumatic aftermath.

"If anyone is ever going to need debriefing in a situation, it would be those jurors," Circuit Court Judge Charles Satterwhite predicted.

"You've got to feel sorry for everybody involved with that. Every decision that is made is analyzed, overanalyzed, second-guessed and criticized by top people in the profession. It will be horrendous for those people."

Satterwhite, moderator and longtime member of First Baptist Church, Owenton, Ky., knows what it's like to be in the hot seat.

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He presided over the much-publicized 1988 Kentucky case Commonwealth vs. Mahoney, which resulted from a church busload of children being struck by a drunken driver near Carrollton, Ky. His compassion and concern for the jurors in that case led him to seek resources for helping them debrief and readjust to a normal routine after the trial was over.

"I knew from the very beginning it would be a very difficult case for everyone involved -- just by the nature of the case," Satterwhite explained. Not only were jurors subjected to the spotlight of a high-visibility, public trial, they witnessed disturbing graphic evidence such as a computerized recreation of the death scene, and they heard the testimony of survivors and of family and relatives of the deceased."

In his office late one night after a full day of the harrowing trial, Satterwhite noticed an article telling about counseling services provided for victims and police officers involved in violent crimes. "I realized if anyone needed counseling, juries would," he said.

Satterwhite contacted Roger Bell, professor of psychiatry at the University of Louisville, to ask if such service were available.

Despite careful research, Bell said, no record could be found. However, he and Satterwhite agreed the project warranted consideration.

"We held what has turned out to be the first jury debriefing of a trial" ever held, Bell said.

Satterwhite and Bell agreed to suggest the group counseling session to jurors immediately after they reached a verdict.

"As soon as the trial concluded, (Bell) and a psychiatrist would be available," Satterwhite said. When the courtroom was cleared, all jurors were invited to talk about what happened and how to re-enter a life of normalcy.

Although attendance was voluntary, "I believe nine or 10 of the 12 jurors attended, plus two alternates, Judge Satterwhite, the court reporter and the bailiff," Bell said.

Bell and Theodore Feldmann conducted the first session, about two hours in length. "We followed standard crisis debriefing strategies," Bell said.

Jurors raised a variety of personal concerns.

"It was Dec. 22 at 4 p.m., and they wanted to know how to get into the Christmas spirit since they'd spent Nov. 1-Dec. 22 dealing with the trial," Bell said.

Other jurors were concerned about going back to work, about working with a relative of the defendant and even about being around their families again.

Jurors had been silenced from speaking about the trial for so long that the debriefing session was important for helping them begin to talk openly again, Bell said.

During the session, jurors and leaders talked about possible side effects of the trial -- sleeplessness, nightmares, flashbacks and difficulty returning to "normal" life.

"The debriefing let them know they're not alone -- all of them were feeling the same thing," Satterwhite said.

Unless the symptoms persisted long-term and became intrusive of their daily routines, jurors were told, what they would experience was "a normal response of the body to being involved in a traumatic event not of their own making."

Coping skills included good nutrition, a fixed sleep cycle, a steady routine and honesty with family members, Bell said.

A year later, Satterwhite said, eight jurors returned for a follow-up session to evaluate their progress and the positive impact of the counseling.

Satterwhite himself found help through the counseling and through his church, he said.

"That trial certainly was like nothing I've ever had before and hope never to have again," he said. "I'm glad I went through the counseling too. It helped me to cope with the situation.

"It certainly would have been more difficult for someone who was not a Christian or did not have a strong faith," he added. "I did not begin a day of court without my own private thoughts and meditation.

"Serving on a jury is one of the highest forms of service you can do in this country," Satterwhite added, saying he believes judicial leaders have an obligation to help jurors make the system work.

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Chaplains to celebrate
HMB, SBC anniversary

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ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist chaplains and pastoral counselors will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Home Mission Board and Southern Baptist Convention during their annual convocation June 19.

The meeting, scheduled one day before the SBC annual meeting, will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Dunwoody Baptist Church in suburban Atlanta.

Guest speakers include James L. Sullivan, retired Sunday School Board president, and Bill Pinson, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Lunch will be served during the meeting. Participants are asked to register by calling the HMB chaplaincy division at (404) 898-7440.

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