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**Seaport ministries bring
foreign missions home**

By David Winfrey

**Baptist Press
9/5/95**

SEATTLE (BP)--Foreign shipping vessels often export more than the products in their hulls. Scattered around America's ports, Southern Baptist seafarer ministries witness to shipping crews, who in turn carry the gospel around the globe.

"The Lord is bringing the people of the world to our port and we're able to minister to them," said Carlos Abeyta, a port minister in Everett, Wash., north of Seattle.

Port ministries offer a variety of services, from Scripture distribution and worship opportunities to phone calls back home and visits into town. Along the way, they share Christ's love as the motivation behind their service. Many directors are home missionaries; others are pastors or volunteers who have developed a heart for this ministry.

Such work dates back to 1779, when the Naval and Military Bible Society was formed in England, said Roald Kverndal, co-founder and president of the International Association for the Study of Maritime Mission. "We call it the Lord's original mission -- entrusting the gospel to the seafarers. John, James, Andrew, Peter."

Southern Baptists trace their heritage in this field to the late 19th century when Annie Armstrong worked in Baltimore, said Joel Land, associate director of the Home Mission Board's special ministries department, which works with port ministers.

Little was being done by Southern Baptists in recent history, however, until a New Orleans minister felt the calling in 1962. John Vandercook, then pastor at Third Street Baptist Church, said he was walking along the Mississippi River one Sunday afternoon as a banana boat was being tied down.

A Dutch crew member asked Vandercook if he knew a church where he and his co-workers could attend that night. The boat had recently signed a six-month contract bringing it to New Orleans each week, and the crew started attending Vandercook's church.

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On the last Sunday night service of the boat's contract, Vandercook preached on missions. When he drove the crew members back to the boat, Vandercook recounted, one stayed in the van and asked whether he believed what he preached. "He said he couldn't understand why we'd sent missionaries all over the world and then when the world came to the United States (as seamen), we didn't even see them," Vandercook said.

Before leaving, the two men prayed and the seaman thanked God for calling Vandercook into port ministry work, but he had not yet agreed to become involved. "Before daylight Catherine and I had committed ourselves to this ministry," said Vandercook, who 33 years later still gets teary recalling the story. "The next Sunday I resigned from the church and told them the first of September I was going into this ministry full time."

Southern Baptists currently operate 40 port ministries, but others are needed, said Land, noting, "Several new ports need to be opened in Florida." Also, New England states comprise the only Baptist convention on the coastline without a ministry. Nationwide, about 5 million air and sea crew members visit American ports each year, he said.

Changes in the shipping industry are forcing seaport ministers to adjust, said Marshal Bundren, a home missionary port minister in Gary, Ind. Pre-packed container vessels take four to seven hours to unload -- a job that previously would have taken days. That means ministries have less time to interact with seamen. Many ministries are considering relocating from buildings far from port to trailers or motor homes they can drive to the ship, Bundren said.

Automation also is requiring fewer seamen. Advances in communication technology could make the radio man obsolete before the turn of the century, Bundren predicted. The growing use of cellular phones could eliminate one of the ministries main draws -- calling home from the center, he added.

Despite the changes, Vandercook remains optimistic about the future. "It's always going to be a vital ministry because shipping's here to stay," he said. "You just have to be there where the need is."

Carlos Abeyta, a research scientist for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, discovered the need in his community in 1982. He said he had felt a calling to foreign missions since he was a Royal Ambassador.

It wasn't until he was grown and living near Seattle, however, that he discovered how God was using Southern Baptists in foreign missions work through port ministries. That year, he and his wife were the only couple in Seattle to attend a seminar about the ministry operated in Tacoma by US-2 missionaries.

As a volunteer, Abeyta visits about six ships a month. "Sometimes you work with a whole crew, sometimes you just work with one man."

He said he captain of a Chinese crew consulted with him recently as Abeyta was about to take several men into town. "The captain pulled me aside and said, 'Are you going to Chinese church?'"

When Abeyta explained the church was closed, "He said, 'Can you please get me some Bibles? It's very important for my men and my people.'"

Several port ministers said they don't always know what impact their ministry will have. Often they hear stories years later of the impact of their witness or giving Scripture.

"We're involved in a ministry where you don't know what's going to happen. We have to trust in God that he will work through that act of service," Abeyta said. "I guess that's just what faith is all about."

An information manual about developing a ministry to seafarers is available from the Home Mission Board, 1-800-634-2462. Please identify product number 631-117F.

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(BP) photo of Carlos Abeyta (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press. Color slides are available upon request. Outlines are in the SBCNet News Room. Also, a listing of Southern Baptist seaport ministers and localized quotes from a recent conference on port ministries is in the SBCNet News Room.

EDITORS' NOTE: Three stories related to the Foreign Mission Board's journeyman program follow. They may be used together or individually.

Like with Coca-Cola, things go better with 'Journeyman Classic' By Mary E. Speidel

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--When Wendy Norvelle talks about changes in the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's journeyman program, she borrows an analogy from the Coca-Cola Co.

In 1985 it introduced a new soft drink known as New Coke, replacing the traditional cola popular worldwide. The new drink tasted sweeter, more like Pepsi, one of Coke's major competitors. But when the revised product hit the markets, unhappy customers voiced their complaints.

The Coca-Cola Co. listened. Three months later they repackaged the original cola as Coke Classic and took the new product off the market. In 1993 the company reintroduced the product as Coke II, aimed at people who prefer Pepsi.

So what does all that have to do with the journeyman program, a two-year foreign mission opportunity for young college graduates?

"We're back to 'Journeyman Classic' now," says Norvelle, who directs the board's international service department that runs the program.

Well, it's actually a slightly revised version of "Journeyman Classic," but the program is still pretty close to the original. The original journeyman program was created in 1964 to allow recent college graduates to serve overseas for two years alongside career missionaries. The program underwent some minor changes but kept the same basic identity until 1989, according to Norvelle, a former journeyman to Zimbabwe.

That year the mission board made the journeyman experience part of a newly created International Service Corps (ISC), formed to send non-career personnel overseas for four months to two years. Under that umbrella, it became known as the journeyman "option" of ISC.

Elements of the original journeymen program were used as a model for the ISC program, created to provide a more uniform approach to the sending of non-career personnel. Participants in the journeymen option went through the same application and screening process as other service corps volunteers but attended a separate 16-day orientation.

As the new journeyman option took shape, it drew criticism from some Southern Baptists who felt it weakened the original program. Among the strongest critics were some former journeymen.

In response to the backlash, a task force on journeymen was formed to survey a sampling of Southern Baptists familiar with the journeyman experience. Respondents included missionary supervisors of journeymen, former journeymen and board administrators.

"Overwhelmingly, respondents wanted to retain that journeyman identity and camaraderie" from the original program, said Norvelle, a task force member.

Like the Coca-Cola Co., the Foreign Mission Board listened and restored the "real thing." In 1993 FMB trustees voted to reinstate the journeyman program's original identity.

But for many Southern Baptist young people like Todd Lowe, a journeyman in Haiti from 1993-95, the repackaging of the journeyman program doesn't make that much difference. The important thing is what they gain from going.

Lowe, who worked in an agricultural program, saw intense need during his service in Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere. During much of his time there, he lived in a small, tin-roofed house without electricity. He hauled drinking water a couple of miles from a well. And in the summer of 1994 he and other missionaries left Haiti because of political turmoil. He returned to the island nation in October 1994.

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When Lowe came back to his hometown of Belton-Honea Path, S.C., this May, he was a changed young man. "I realized a lot of things in my life which were just unnecessary. Some of the ways I'd viewed other cultures before and some of the ways I'd stereotyped others were totally wrong," said Lowe. "When a lot of people think of Haitians, they think of the refugees who want things. But when you go there, you find there's a lot of need and want, but there are people there who give (of themselves) to you."

Lowe was asked to lead a segment of the journeyman training this summer at Cauthen Missionary Learning Center. Among the 67 journeymen who attended the training was Shannon Bruce, thought to be the first child of former journeymen to go overseas as a journeyman.

Bruce, who left Aug. 31 for Spain, is the daughter of FMB administrator Joe Bruce and his wife, the former Shirley Plumlee, who both were journeymen from 1966-68 and later missionaries in Honduras and Guatemala.

That piece of the "Journeyman Classic" history speaks for itself. "It shows that the short-term options for involving young people in missions -- which includes the journeyman program -- were a good idea then and they're a good idea now," said Norvelle.

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For more information on the Foreign Mission Board journeyman program, call 1-800-999-2889, ext. 1543, or write "Journeyman Program," Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230-0767.

Shannon Bruce maintains missions

legacy of journeyman parents

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press

9/5/95

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--"I would have done cartwheels, but I don't know how."

That's how Joe Bruce reacted when he learned he was accepted into the journeyman program of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. The year was 1966; he was a senior at Union University in Jackson, Tenn.

"It was such a big deal for me to think about going someplace overseas," says Bruce, who grew up in the small southeast Missouri town of Quin.

It was a big deal, too, for the woman who three years later became his wife -- the former Shirley Plumlee of Fort Worth, Texas. In 1966 she was a senior at Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas, when she got her journeyman acceptance letter. She went alone into a room to open it.

"I didn't want anyone around in case they told me 'no,'" she recalls, laughing. "It was such a momentous thing for me."

So almost 30 years later, the couple well understood their daughter Shannon's feelings when she called home during her senior year in college.

"She said -- almost in a voice of panic -- 'Dad, I think God is calling me to be a missionary. What do I do?'" recalls Joe, who directs Foreign Mission Board work in Middle America and Canada. The Bruces live in Guatemala City.

"None of our (three) girls had ever talked about wanting to be missionaries. We never tried to push them in that direction," says Joe.

But a growing sense of God's call eventually propelled Shannon into the FMB's journeyman program, offering two years service to single college graduates under age 30.

Shannon, 22, left Aug. 31 for Spain, where she'll teach children of missionaries. She's thought to be the first child of former journeymen to go overseas as a journeyman.

She brings to her task a rich missions legacy. She grew up in Honduras and Guatemala, where her parents were career missionaries until her dad was named to his current post.

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"There's another cultural side to me, a part of me not every young American has," says Shannon, a 1995 graduate of Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas. "As an MK ('missionary kid'), I've learned to be more world aware. I'm bilingual. And I'm flexible. I've learned (in Latin American culture) not to be ruled by a timeline, a plan or one way to do things."

Shannon, who will teach third- and fourth-grade MKs in Madrid, hopes to be a good role model for her students. With older MKs, she wants to share insights gained from leaving her overseas home for stateside college life.

"It's scary coming from a foreign country to the States, but I want to help them see it's not all bad. ... I want to be a friend to the MKs, just like the journeymen I grew up with were friends to me."

This summer Shannon described some of those journeymen in a poem she penned during training at Cauthen Missionary Learning Center in Rockville, Va. She wrote it for another journeyman who also will work with MKs overseas.

It tells of several journeymen who impacted her life. One was Colleen Friar (now Colleen Horton of Fort Worth), who stayed with the Bruce sisters when their parents were traveling. One night Shannon woke up sick, vomiting. Colleen got out of bed to wipe her face with a cool cloth. Then she cleaned up the mess.

"She has a weak stomach like me. ... I guess I didn't realize what an act of servanthood that was until I sat down to write the poem," says Shannon, who was asked to read it at the commissioning service for 67 journeymen who completed training this summer.

Besides Shannon, the group included two other FMB MKs -- Sunneye Phillips, daughter of Charlotte and Larry Phillips, missionaries to Thailand; and Melissa Powers, daughter of Laquita and Wendell Powers of Beaumont, Texas, former missionaries to Taiwan.

During journeyman training, the MKs helped their peers "see that MKs are normal, that we're real," says Shannon, "and sometimes it was scary for us to live overseas just like it is for them (journeymen) to go."

But for Shannon, the "scary part" of the journeyman program is what she'll face in two years. That's when she and fellow journeymen return home.

"They (her peers) don't realize it now, but it's going to be a lot harder coming back than it is to go," she says. "That's the toughest struggle, going through all the changes and trying to be 'Americanized' again."

Meanwhile, Shannon's parents feel a bit nostalgic watching her start journeyman service. The Bruces met in the board's second journeyman class. (The program was born in 1964). Joe served in Chile, Shirley in Ghana. After their journeyman stints, they started dating while seminary students.

"I'd always hoped if the Lord wanted (journeyman service) for any of our girls that they'd be open to it," says Shirley, "because it was such a good experience for us."

It's still not easy seeing one of them go. "It's a whole lot different when it's your daughter and it's not you," says Joe. "I can imagine now what my folks must have gone through when I went as a journeyman."

"But we're so proud of her," adds Shirley, "and excited that she wants to do what the Lord wants her to do with her life."

"And we're just as excited about what God's doing in the lives of our other daughters, too," Joe says.

Their youngest daughter, Joanna, just started college at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark. Their oldest daughter, Garon Wennik, is a wife and mother in Big Spring, Texas.

"To honestly follow God's leadership, that's all we've ever wanted for any of our girls," Joe says.

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers Aug. 29, 1995, by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outline available on SBCNet News Room.

EDITORS' NOTE: "Missionary kid" (MK) Shannon Bruce, 22, wrote the following poem during recent training for journeyman service through the South rn Baptist Foreign Mission Board. The poem "fast forwards" through her experiences with journeymen, from the time she was a child overseas until she entered training with 66 other journeymen candidates this summer at Cauthen Missionary Learning Center in Rockville, Va. Shannon grew up in Honduras and Guatemala, where her parents, Joe and Shirley Bruce, both former journeymen, were missionaries until he was named to direct FMB work in Middle America and Canada. Shannon left Richmond, Va., Aug. 31 to begin her assignment teaching MKs in Spain.

Journeymen -- as seen
through the eyes of an MK By Shannon Bruce

ROCKVILLE, Va. (BP)--Hey God, did you hear the good news? New journeymen are on the way. The airport was crowded. All the missionaries were excited, too, you see.

I wonder what they'll look like. I know she'll have blonde hair, like all Americans do. He'll be tall and gorgeous like most men on TV.

There they are God, do you see? Do you see? They're waving, Lord. I know it's right at me.

Tonight's the "bienvenida," the great big welcome party. I can't wait to see if the journeymen will like me.

God, she has such a beautiful name and such a pretty face. She said she'd play with me one day!

Don't tell, God, but I think I'm in love. He told me I was cute, Lord, while smiling down at me. God, why can't I be grown?

Lord, they're leaving now. Mom says they're going home. I don't understand. ... I thought their home was here.

Hey God, guess what? I'm 17 today, and we've got journeymen coming in. Two wonderful women. Oh, I have so much to learn. They're both so sweet and kind. Lord, will I ever be that way?

She stayed the weekend with us Lord, and, boy, I learned so much. I got sick, and know what, Lord? The journeyman woke up. Lord, she wiped my face with a cool cloth and sent me to bed. Lord, wanna know what touched me so? She stayed and cleaned up my mess. ... Lord ... that's gross! That night, Lord, I learned what it meant to serve. Thank you, Lord, for servants, especially ones like her.

My back got blistered, Lord, and guess who wasn't home? Mom and Dad are on a trip again but the journeyman's at home. She softly put ointment on my back, Lord, and I didn't even cry. Her hands barely touched my skin as she helped heal my back. So caring, gentle and loving was she. Oh Lord, make me like her.

God, I saw my journeyman crying at church today. I didn't know what to do. I gave her a hug, Lord. Do you think that was enough? Mom says she's sad about leaving. That I understand. I'll be leaving, too, but to an unknown land. Lord, help me be like those journeymen and touch the lives of those around.

Hey God, guess what? I'm surrounded by 66 other journeymen! I must be the envy of all MKs! Lord, I'm confused, I thought journeymen could only touch my life when I was young. Boy, was I ever wrong.

Lord, did you see the way she spoke to me? Lord, did you see the way he smiled? Lord, did you see the way they sang and shared? Lord, they are playing with the MKs.

Lord, my life has been touched time and time again by the actions and lifestyles of journeymen. I pray, oh Lord, that these 66 friends of mine might have the privilege of touching the life of another MK.

Pro-lifers should adopt
Lincolnian stand, writer says By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP)--Pro-life advocates, especially politicians, should adopt a position toward abortion similar to Abraham Lincoln's toward slavery -- "tolerate, restrict, discourage" -- in order to make gains in the national controversy, according to the cover article in the September issue of Atlantic Monthly.

A majority of pro-lifers, however, will consider such an approach unacceptable, said a Southern Baptist medical ethicist.

Pro-lifers should focus not on overturning Roe v. Wade, the 1973 Supreme Court opinion legalizing abortion, but on capturing public sentiment, writes George McKenna, a political science instructor at City College of New York. Like opponents of slavery and racial segregation, pro-lifers should patiently seek not only to win legally but also to develop a moral consensus, he says.

"The lesson for pro-life advocates is that they need to take time to lay out their case," McKenna writes. "They may hope for an immediate end to abortion, and they certainly have a First Amendment right to ask for it, but their emphasis, I believe, should be on making it clear to others why they have reached the conclusions that they have reached. They need to reason with skeptics and listen more carefully. They need to demand less and explain more."

A politician devoted to both the pro-life cause and building support for it should use Lincoln's rhetoric toward slavery from 1854 until part-way through the Civil War as a model, McKenna writes. Such a politician, he writes, would take the following approach in a campaign: Acknowledge the right to abortion is protected by the Supreme Court. Speak against it as evil. Admit he or she will not attempt to overturn it but promise to support all restrictions which would be Supreme Court-approved. Pledge to end "all public subsidies for abortion, for abortion advocacy, and for experiments on aborted children." Promise to encourage those offering alternatives to abortion. Pledge to speak out not only against abortion but related practices, such as euthanasia, while in office.

This position is "unequivocally pro-life even as it is effectively pro-choice," McKenna writes.

In his speeches beginning in 1854, Lincoln focused not on abolishing slavery but on stopping its spread. The Kansas-Nebraska Act, ushered through Congress by Sen. Stephen Douglas, D.-Ill., allowed the expansion of slavery into new territories if the people in them voted for it. The rights of slaves belonged in the realm of religion, not public policy, Douglas said, according to McKenna's article. Douglas cared only about the territories' freedom to choose, not what they chose, McKenna says.

Lincoln saw slavery as a cancer which could not be eradicated if it spread to new territories, McKenna says.

"Lincoln kept returning to the question of the humanity of slaves, the question Douglas ruled out of bounds as essentially 'religious,'" McKenna writes. In his speeches from 1854 through the 1860 presidential campaign, Lincoln "continually reminded his audience that the theme of choice without reference to the object of choice was morally empty," McKenna writes.

While he desired for slavery to be eliminated, Lincoln "had no intention of abolishing it" and wanted to save the country, McKenna writes.

While his article is sometimes perceptive, McKenna's recommendation is flawed, said Ben Mitchell, consultant on biomedical and life issues for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"While it appears historically accurate that President Lincoln's caution was forced by practical concerns and not moral equivocation, there is a fundamental difference between slavery and abortion," Mitchell said. "If Mr. Lincoln tarried on the issue of slavery, most of the slaves would live and eventually go free. While we tarry on the issue of abortion, children continue to be killed.

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"The reason Mr. McKenna's so-called Lincolnian position will not be acceptable to the majority of pro-life citizens is because while the nation awaits moral consensus, unborn babies die at the hands of abortionists.

"In fact, when faced with a military stalemate and a restless slave population in the South, President Lincoln finally moved decisively against slavery in 1862," Mitchell said. In the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1863, Lincoln declared all slaves to be free.

"Would that Mr. McKenna had adopted" Lincoln's later position, Mitchell said.

In his article, McKenna expresses doubt either major party would endorse his recommended approach. The Republican Party, especially its leadership, appears "to have embraced a philosophy of possessive individualism that has a distinctly pro-choice ring to it, and in this respect is no longer the party of Lincoln," McKenna says. The Democrats' liberal wing actually may become the "proper philosophical home" for pro-lifers, if the party can "break free of the abortion lobbies," he writes.

Even abortion advocates sense there is something troubling about the procedure and seek to avoid mentioning it, McKenna says.

President Clinton continues to repeat "the mantra of 'safe, legal, and rare' abortion," he writes. "Why 'rare?' If abortion is a constitutional right, on a par with freedom of speech and freedom of religion, why does it have to be 'rare?'"

"If one abortion is not a bad thing, why are many abortions bad?"

Abortion, McKenna says, occupies "an absurd, surrealistic place in the national dialogue: It cannot be ignored and it cannot be openly stated. It is the corpse at the dinner party."

Slavery is the only other institution in the United States which "has been treated so evasively," McKenna writes.

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Speaker: Seminaries need
'strategies for change'

By Cameron Crabtree

Baptist Press
9/5/95

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Seminaries in North America must carry out "strategies for change to face the training climate on the horizon of the 21st century," according to J. Sam Simmons, director of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary's Southern California campus in Brea.

Simmons spoke at Golden Gate's fall academic convocation on the Mill Valley campus Aug. 31.

The former director of Mid-America Baptist Theological seminary's New York campus listed seven imperatives for seminaries as they face the rush of the new millennium:

-- Redefine "seminary" for a new generation.

"Some pastors no longer believe seminary automatically is the most profitable training resource for effective ministry," he acknowledged. "This trend reflects a genuine lack of trust on the part of pastors that seminary will equip those called under their ministry."

-- Move toward "church-based" theological education.

"The two institutions by their nature should automatically be closely linked," Simmons said. "Seminary education exists as a training arm of the local church; otherwise, there is little scriptural justification for it."

Simmons said seminaries, lacking substantive methodological changes in recent decades, appear "more and more irrelevant to the real-life struggles" of today's church leaders.

"Training church leaders will be accomplished either by relevant seminaries that wake up and make necessary changes or by impatient churches who take seminary education into their own hands," he predicted. "Partnership between churches and seminaries may not only be a good idea, but a strategy of survival for today's seminaries."

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-- Become a "training partner" with church leaders for life.

"Continuing education is no longer just a good idea, but a strategic component of theological education philosophy that recognizes future trends and prepares for them," Simmons said.

He noted the speed of change in today's culture "energizes a search" for information that helps shape effective ministry strategy and methodology.

"The truth is that society is changing so rapidly that no seminary can provide training that will last a lifetime," Simmons said. "This realization is reshaping our understanding of education from a longitudinal process to a cyclical process, continuing through adulthood."

-- Globalize to evangelize.

"Globalization is a future reality for all seminaries and their students, whether they remain in North America or not," Simmons said.

"Multicultural-friendly seminaries will have an opportunity to impact the future evangelization of America as never before."

America's own mission field, he said, provides a glimpse at the reality of ministry in the next century -- urban, international and ethnic.

"New thought must be developed in how churches of different ethnic and international backgrounds can partner for greater effectiveness," he said.

"Leading ethnic churches must be embraced by seminaries as partners in developing training programs that will produce a new generation of ethnic leaders."

-- Recognize the new paradigm of lay minister.

"More and more church members believe they are called to minister, but are not called into 'full-time vocational' ministry," Simmons noted. "They want help in ministry effectiveness through professional training."

Most church leaders, Simmons said, welcome any acknowledgement on the part of seminaries that this paradigm shift represents a valid training responsibility for seminaries.

"We must build within the purpose and training philosophies of our seminaries the recognition of lay ministry professionals as having a valid biblical call with specialized training needs," Simmons added.

-- Attempt to address the leadership vacuum.

"The two major stakeholders in seminary education -- graduates and laypeople -- consistently and predictably point out that seminaries are failing churches by not teaching leadership effectiveness," Simmons said. "While God alone entrusts the mantle of leadership, seminaries should be available to join the leadership development process so that his leaders are ready to be used when he chooses."

-- Provide seminary education without relocation.

"Seminary training is most effective when it occurs within the context of a student's ministry," Simmons said. "The result is a leader who maintains and builds his ministry influence while being trained at the same time."

Allowing students to be trained near those who have positively influenced them also builds relationships and accountability, he said. "This does not diminish the important contribution a seminary professor can make, but it does affirm the role of a home church pastor or a church leader who had a key influence in the student's life."

Golden Gate Seminary is one of six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries and the only SBC agency in the western United States.

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Evangelist seeking to overcome
a future that went up in smoke

Baptist Press
9/5/95

EDDYVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Don Short's future just went up in smoke.

Short, one of Kentucky Baptists' best-known vocational evangelists, recently lost his calendars for 1996 and 1997 when fire destroyed a garage at his home.

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"The only copy of my 1996 and 1997 schedule was in my car, and it was completely destroyed," said Short, a former vice president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. "There's no way I can remember all those dates."

The fire consumed the garage building, which also contained a part of Short's office and its 400 to 500 books.

Short knows his family keepsakes are irreplaceable. But he desperately wants his future back.

He's asked churches that have scheduled him for revivals in 1996 and 1997 to contact him at 1400 Elkhorn Rd., Eddyville, KY 42038.

As one of the state's most in-demand revival preachers, Short was teased about the possibility that several churches may call and say they booked him for the same week.

"That's a risk I've got to take," he said, laughing. "I'm just scared some preacher's going to call me on a Sunday morning and ask, 'Why aren't you here?'"

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Church gives man
new van and new hope

By Joyce Sweeney Martin

Baptist Press
9/5/95

ERLANGER, Ky. (BP)--A van changed Mike Clark's thinking about the church.

"You know, you belong to a church for a long time. You like the people. You have a ministry there. You are a deacon. You get used to ministering to others, but then when you get into a situation like I'm in, where you really need people to help you, you find out what church is all about," he said.

Clark's "situation" is multiple sclerosis.

About two years ago, he noticed the first signs of the disease. Then it crept "from my toes upward," he said, moving "very aggressively" and swiftly. By the spring of 1995, he was confined to a wheelchair.

For the 40-year-old public school teacher, life never would be the same. His legs were gone; he was a paraplegic.

When fellow members at Erlanger (Ky.) Baptist Church noticed Clark having more difficulty, they wanted to help, pastor Bill Crosby said. They realized Clark soon would have to take disability leave from his job, but that he wanted to continue to be as productive as possible.

That's where the van comes in.

The church members knew a properly equipped van would give Clark the mobility necessary to pursue a master's degree in counseling at Cincinnati Bible Seminary to be able to continue helping people as a counselor.

A government vocational rehabilitation program would pay to handicap-equip a van, but not to purchase the vehicle.

And so, with little more than word-of-mouth advertising, \$22,500 poured in from church members within two weeks.

Coincidentally, Erlanger Baptist Church had just raised \$75,000 for the building fund one month earlier. Neither offering hurt the other, Crosby said.

Although the bulk of the van money came from Erlanger members, contributions also came from Clark's former church, Long Ridge Baptist in Owen County, Ky., as well as colleagues in the Owen County and Boone County public schools where he and his wife, Karen, have taught for 16 years.

"I couldn't believe it," Clark said. "You hear of churches taking up an offering to meet a need." But this "was unlike anything I had ever seen. Nobody even passed the hat."

All Crosby did was "pass the word" and after one week, the people had given \$13,000.

"I offered to pay the balance, but the church wanted to raise the entire amount," Clark said.

--more--

For Clark, the gift of the van has put the ministry of the church in focus. The church is about people who care, he said. "I didn't even know many who donated."

And it has put salvation into perspective, he said. "The van is like the gift of salvation that Jesus gave to us. There is no amount of work that I can do to work off this van; no way to pay the church back for what they have done for me."

Further, Clark said when the future looks scary, he can look at the van as evidence of God's care.

"I have this disease. I can't change that," he said. "But I can go through this with or without Jesus in my heart and God at my side. Either way, I will still have the disease. I am convinced to stay with God, even though my disease passes my understanding."

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