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NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420.17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522, CompuServe 70420,250
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232, CompuServe 70420,115
NASHVILLE Linda Lawson, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300, CompuServe 70420,57
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151, CompuServe 70420,72
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223, CompuServe 71173,316

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CLC decries Clinton stand
on homosexual rights bill

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
10/24/95

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Bill Clinton's recent endorsement of homosexual rights legislation is a political move which may cost him votes in the 1996 election, a Southern Baptist public policy spokesman said.

When Clinton expressed his support of the Employment Non-discrimination Act, he became the first United States president to endorse a major homosexual rights bill. The legislation would prohibit job discrimination on the basis of "sexual orientation." Sen. Edward Kennedy, D.-Mass., is the chief sponsor of the reintroduced bill, with Sen. James Jeffords of Vermont the lead Republican backer.

"Whatever votes or dollars the president gains from the homosexual political lobby will be more than offset by the support he loses among religious Americans who reject the moral equivalency between sodomy and race or religion," said Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Christian Life Commission.

"The Kennedy bill is a perennial political gesture which has no possibility of passage in this Congress," Whitehead said.

The bill would add "sexual orientation" to the classifications -- race, gender, religion, national origin, age and disability -- protected in federal law from discrimination in the work place.

In an Oct. 19 letter to Kennedy endorsing the bill, Clinton said, "Individuals should not be denied a job on the basis of something that has no relationship to their ability to perform their work."

The president expressed agreement with the bill's exemptions for religious organizations, the military and small businesses.

Whitehead called the religious exemption "wholly inadequate to protect religious individuals and businesses operated by religious persons regarding their freedom of association and religious convictions about character."

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The CLC has expressed serious doubts the exemption would protect Southern Baptist Convention agencies, Christian schools, Christian bookstores and some churches. Even if the exemption provided absolute protection to such entities, the CLC has said it would oppose such a bill.

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs worked with homosexual rights organizations to include a religious exemption in the bill in 1994, a BJC staff member said earlier this year.

A committee hearing on the legislation was held last year, but no vote was taken. Unlike last year, the Republicans control the Senate and House of Representatives, decreasing the bill's chances of approval even further.

In an Oct. 20 speech to 600 homosexual journalists, White House adviser George Stephanopoulos said the president plans to "get back a large proportion of the gay and lesbian vote" in 1996, according to a Washington Times report.

"I know we didn't achieve what we set out to achieve ...," Stephanopoulos told the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association, the paper reported.

Stephanopoulos received a large amount of applause when he announced Clinton's endorsement of Kennedy's legislation, according to the report.

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Consultant: Constant change
thwarts long-term commitment

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
10/24/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Americans are so buffeted by change in today's world, they're no longer willing to project what their lives will be like in five years. They're less willing to make long-term commitments.

They talk about "where I currently live, where I currently work or where I currently go to church," a consultant who analyzes emerging trends told employees of the Baptist Sunday School Board Oct. 18 in an annual issues briefing.

"We have been through two and one-half decades of so many transitions that it is not transitions but transitionings that are driving us," said Edie Weiner, president of Weiner, Edrich, Brown, Inc. of New York.

As a result, "we are all in a period of what I call social schizophrenia," Weiner said. "We are training our minds to develop alternative, parallel worlds to live in so we can cope with the transitionings that are a part of life."

In addition to their impact on individuals, transitionings also affect churches and the work place, she noted.

In churches, one positive impact may be that "people want more spiritual fulfillment" to cope with constant change, Weiner noted.

At work, many people have more work to do than ever before due to downsizings, but in a time of transitionings it is important that they have the time to develop new skills, interests and relationships, Weiner said.

"At a time when we need people to be flexible, we've created a situation where people, of necessity, are more rigid," she observed.

Weiner presented what she called a "trends sampler" of social, economic, political and technological issues. "The challenge," she said, "is to understand the broad range of issues affecting us over the next five to 10 years."

In another area, Weiner said the ways family is defined will continue to change.

"In every single society that moves from agricultural to industrial, divorce rates go up," Weiner said, "because wealth is portable and jobs are available."

Less traditional household models that will increase in the next 10 years include the "single male head of household with children," "parentless households" where children are being raised by neither biological parent, senior adults living with non-related persons and "true multinational households" where a person works and earns income in one country and sends it to family members living in another.

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She predicted the demise of the middle class in the United States, emphasizing she was not talking about the demise of middle-income persons but the end of a set of values and norms "that enabled us to judge ourselves and our loved ones to determine if we were on track."

Underpinnings of middle-class values include: children will do better in life than their parents; education guarantees lifelong employment; assurance of a well-funded, secure retirement; and stable family relationships.

"Many of these assumptions have been destroyed," she said.

On the other hand, a class on the increase is a new professional servant class, well-educated people who, "due to downsizing or disillusionment," are operating services for everything from cooking, to hospitality, lawn and garden, housecleaning and physical fitness.

The people running the services "don't see themselves as servants but as 'of service,'" Weiner said.

While racism and racial differences are a hot topic of current discussion and debate, Weiner said Americans are "moving away from racism but we are moving toward classism."

She cited the increase in interracial marriages and the larger number of people who can't point to a particular racial identity as factors.

"People don't have a problem with educated, middle-income people of any race moving into their neighborhood," Weiner said. "They do have a problem with the poor moving in."

In another issue which she termed "virtual immortality," Weiner said through international travel and virtual reality entertainment systems, people can experience life in the past, present and future.

"You can go to Epcot (at Disney World) and experience in one weekend more than your grandparents did in their lifetimes," Weiner said. Also, she noted, children's brains are being challenged earlier with more experience and information.

The results are boredom and burnout, Weiner said.

While some have expressed surprise that sales of books are increasing at the same time more is available on video, CD-Rom and computer, she said the value of reading is to "slow down the pace."

The pace of technology advances will continue to increase, Weiner predicted. She noted that technology and time today are measured in nano units, "billionths of" a unit or second.

The use of nano-technology "enables individuals to operate like Dow Jones, McGraw-Hill or the Sunday School Board," she noted. For example, a type of periodical flourishing today is the so-called "zine," a magazine designed for an audience of less than 100 persons.

While privacy will continue to be an issue of concern, Weiner predicted the focus of alarm will shift from "big brother" to "little brother."

She predicted laws will be enacted limiting encroachment by large data banks.

At the same time, the inexpensive availability of "spy paraphernalia" is resulting in actions such as employees wearing wires to performance reviews with supervisors and spouses using recording devices to check up on behavior.

"Much of our personal privacy may be compromised by the ubiquitousness of micro-miniaturized technology," she said.

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Transition is key concern
for Brotherhood trustees

By Russell N. Dilday

Baptist Press
10/24/95

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention restructuring and transition remained a primary topic of concern among trustees of the Brotherhood Commission as they met Oct. 20-21 at the commission's offices in Memphis.

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During the meeting, trustees adopted a motion recommending a pay incentive for current Brotherhood employees and a resolution of support for employees. They also voiced their concerns about maintaining the commission's mission and staff.

The Brotherhood Commission is slated to merge with the Home Mission Board and Radio and Television Commission into the North American Mission Board. The merger was proposed by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee's Program and Structure Study Committee in their "Covenant for a New Century" during the SBC in June and adopted by convention messengers. The merger will be official pending a second vote on bylaw changes during the SBC next June in New Orleans.

Brotherhood Commission President James Williams told trustees during his report, "It has been a very difficult six months for us, with the roller coaster-type moments that come along the way. Yet we have recognized that typically happens when you are bombarded with the kind of change that is out before us."

Williams said Brotherhood leaders will maintain the organization's role of missions education, support and involvement during the transition time. "The (Brotherhood) executive committee, working with me to develop my work plan for the next year, knows that I have a goal to lead the commission in such a way that during these transition days we will maximize our opportunity and minimize risk involved."

The transition, he noted, "has caused us to reposition ourselves for some different kinds of action and different kinds of decisions."

Recalling events leading to the adoption of the PSSC report, Williams said, "It was in the April trustee meeting that you trustees responded to the Program and Structure Study Committee. They had asked the agencies to embrace that report. You chose not to embrace the report and expressed four major concerns.

"I appreciate the integrity with which that was done, the spirit with which that was done and thank you again for all that represented," he told trustees, adding that the SBC Executive Committee "did not respond to your concerns officially or formally."

In response to the SBC action, Williams said, "Let me tell you what my stance has been: The convention has acted. We are a kingdom people and members of the family. We have a built-in accountability to be partners in the gospel work in a cooperative and collaborative way with our convention family and leadership while keeping our focus on our mission.

"I would fully anticipate next year that vote would be approved, and so we must move forward in a very aggressive, proactive way to claim our future and claim the ministries that we ought to have in the North American Mission Board," he said. "It will be the heart, the will and the mind of the president working with the trustees to cooperate fully with that process and do all we can to support the (Executive Committee's) implementation team."

The most visible effect of the transition period, he emphasized, is staff morale. He said past and "anticipated" resignations continue to plague the work of the 88-year-old agency. "The transition has caused a number of our staff people to think about the future. Between now and the first of January, we could have as many as eight resignations.

"I hope that doesn't materialize," he said. "Transition is impacting the work of our staff and some are choosing to look at other opportunities."

Trustee chairman Donley Brown of Jefferson City, Mo., agreed that "probably the greatest impact that I see right now is the impact it's having on our staff."

"We are losing some key staff members, but with God's help and the leadership of Dr. Williams, we believe God will provide for us," Brown said. "We will be able to continue to minister and accomplish God's purpose here."

Addressing the problem of employee resignations, trustees unanimously adopted a motion recommending a financial incentive for employees.

The motion, presented by the commission's nine-member transition team, asked trustees to approve "the provision of a salary bonus (in a range of up to 25 percent of the employee's annual salary) for Brotherhood Commission employees who remain in the employ of the Commission until July 1, 1997."

The motion empowered the commission's executive committee to finalize an amount by January 1996 and that the bonus "be considered additional to and exclusive of any severance/transition benefit package offered to employees in the transition period."

Underscoring the importance of the trustees in supporting the work of the commission, transition committee member Bill Prince of Lilburn, Ga., said, "When you are in business and something like this happens, your work suffers. In this business, perhaps somebody will wind up in hell if we don't do it right. There's a whole different vision of what we are doing."

"The importance of keeping the staff and literature moving and programs going depends on our people," he said. "We felt like it's the right thing to do."

Brotherhood Executive Vice President Mike Day, chairman of the transition team, said he could not "answer definitively" that the incentive package will help stem employee resignations.

"What it does do is send a signal to employees of the concern of trustees of their welfare, their future and their current work," Day said. "We cannot afford at this point in our history to let the work we're doing so effectively now slide by the wayside."

"If we can offer some incentives to allow people to feel comfortable for some period of time, then we can keep the focus on the work," Day emphasized. He said of the eight expected resignations, "five are directly related to the transition. We have 75 staff, so eight resignations since February 1995 represents more than a 10 percent loss. That's significant."

Trustees also passed a resolution affirming Brotherhood employees and their ministry. It pledged "to provide the employees spiritual, emotional and financial support to the fullest extent of the empowerment of the trustees," adding that trustees "wish the employees of the Brotherhood Commission and their families to know that we love you, honor you and affirm you in your personal pilgrimages on this day and into eternity."

Trustees gave a standing ovation to the staff after unanimously approving the resolution.

In other business, trustees also approved a revised development plan that will insure the "transportability" of funds raised to support Brotherhood ministries after they become part of the proposed North American Mission Board.

Trustee Karl Minor of Morganton, N.C., was one of five new trustees attending a session for the first time. He called his first meeting "emotional."

"Coming here and seeing everyone has been a whirlwind of emotion," he explained. "You see, at the same time, hope and apprehension, expectancy and doubt ... It's exhilarating to see what may be, but sad to see what has been."

"I share empathetically with the staff and president and all involved in the commission to know an era is ending no matter what happens," he added.

The action of the Program and Structure Study Committee also prompted one resignation among trustee ranks before fellow trustees encouraged him to reconsider.

Speaking prior to the president's dialogue on Saturday, the trustee said he was submitting his resignation because "I feel maybe we've been led along on a chain and they're asking us to fulfill their agenda. One of the things that has disturbed me is the fact that they came and made this decision that this is what they were going to do and did not ever once let the agencies know," he said. "They did not consult, they did not ask for insight into the formulation of plans."

Speaking to Williams, he said, "You've asked us also as trustees to help advance the kingdom of God by accepting this and moving forward with a cooperative spirit. That's wonderful. I applaud those who will do that ... But, Jim, this is where I can't move ahead. I'm sorry."

"I cannot make decisions to dismantle this agency with a gentle and quiet spirit," he said, voicing concern that "what we say doesn't make any difference."

Apparently, fellow trustee members dissuaded him from resigning during the emotional session.

One trustee, in affirming the feelings of the trustee voicing his intention to resign, said he "even considered leaving the Southern Baptist Convention. That's how strongly I felt" about how the PSSC handled the restructuring. But he decided to "stay the course," he added, "and deepen my role as a trustee because of the work of the commission."

Another told the trustee, "You are not alone. Many of us have thought about resigning because of the way it (Covenant for a New Century) was handled. It was absolutely horrible."

Speaking during the president's dialogue, Williams called for unity in purpose among trustee members. "It's going to take all of us to get this done," he declared.

"The Great Commission of our Lord is bigger than how we're orchestrated or structured," he said. "And that's going to be the commitment of the Brotherhood Commission."

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Brotherhood trustees approve
'MissionKids' coed studies

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
10/24/95

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Brotherhood Commission trustees approved further development of a coed missions education program for children and tackled a full agenda of other, more routine matters at their Oct. 20-21 meeting in Memphis, Tenn.

"MissionKids" is the developmental name for the new program. It would be offered to children in grades one through six and is aimed at churches that do not currently report children's missions education programs on the annual church profile.

"MissionKids will be for the church that wants to reach children for Christ and teach them to support Southern Baptist missionaries," said Tim Seanor, director of the children/RA department at the Southern Baptist Convention agency. "We will be focusing our attention on helping children learn about missions through the eyes of other children, the children of our missionaries. This is unique in Southern Baptist missions education."

The program will not use the "club" approach that characterizes Royal Ambassadors, thus lowering the cost for smaller churches.

The program will be further developed over the coming year.

In other action, the trustees:

- reviewed the status of the agency's ongoing missions education and involvement programs, including the World Changers coed missions involvement option. World Changers, begun in 1990 with 135 participants, is expected to involve more than 10,000 in 1996.

- reviewed an agency image enhancement program, "Taking Missions and Ministry Into a New Century," developed to build awareness of the impact of Brotherhood ministries around the world and send the message that they are continuing. The program includes a new logo that includes the program theme and agency's ministries and will be used alongside the familiar Brotherhood Commission oval on the agency's dated materials.

- approved the agency's request of \$1,080,072 from the basic SBC Cooperative Program budget for the year 1996-97, representing 10 percent increase over the 1995-96 allocation.

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-- viewed presentations on the agency's disaster relief work in the wake of one of the busiest hurricane seasons on record, including feeding units operated on St. Thomas and St. Croix by Alabama and Texas Brotherhood departments and construction activity on Antigua and St. Maarten done in coordination with the Foreign Mission Board.

-- approved a resolution "strongly requesting" that the Promise Keepers ministry for men "allow displays of denominational resources that equip men for service and ministry," including those offered by the Brotherhood Commission, at its pastors' meeting in Atlanta Feb. 13-15, 1996. Last year, the trustees endorsed Promise Keepers while calling on the Brotherhood Commission to continue development of its own church-based Men's Ministries program, which was introduced Oct. 1.

-- re-elected Donley Brown, retired military management analyst, Jefferson City, Mo., as trustee chairman; Kenneth King, director of missions, San Marcos Baptist Association, New Braunfels, Texas, vice chairman; and Charles Brown, engineering support specialist, Aurora, Colo., recording secretary.

-- welcomed new trustees Bob Dyer of Illinois, Mike Melloan of Kentucky, Karl Minor of North Carolina, David Raddin of Mississippi and Paul Schlett of New York.

The next meeting of the Brotherhood Commission trustee executive committee is scheduled for Jan. 27, 1996, at Gatlinburg, Tenn. The entire trustee board will meet again April 26-27, 1996, in Memphis.

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(BP) photo specials of new officers and trustees mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Brotherhood Commission.

EDITORS' NOTE: Terri Narrell Mause, a correspondent for the Maryland/Delaware Baptist Life newsjournal, penned the following reflection Aug. 7, the day her friend Connie Zinn departed for Africa for two years of missionary service.

FIRST-PERSON

Connie's departure for Africa

leaves void -- and a witness By Terri Narrell Mause

Baptist Press

10/24/95

BALTIMORE (BP)--Connie left for Africa today.

Our houses, a block apart, looked the same when we got back to Baltimore. The sunset over the harbor still was striking, and I guess life will go on much the same as it did before she left. But the past few weeks have shown me a real and personal picture of the sacrifice involved when someone answers the call to missions.

And it's not just Connie's sacrifice that has impacted me. I can't stop thinking about the way her dad hugged her goodbye and stood looking out the window long after her plane had flown away. Connie's service as a journeyman in Nigeria means her parents will not see -- and will rarely talk to -- their youngest daughter for two years.

I can't deny that my ideas about missions have changed since my friend, Connie Zinn, decided to become a journeyman.

Missions is nothing new to Connie. The daughter of two Southern Baptists, Connie grew up in Calvert County, Md., and became involved with Baptist Campus Ministry while studying education at the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

In 1990, she served as a summer missionary to Rwanda, where she fell in love with the people and the country. The following year she served as a summer missionary at Canton Baptist Church, an inner-city ministry in southeast Baltimore. It was another falling-in-love experience, after which she joined the church and returned to serve the following summer. After graduating from college, rather than pursue a teaching job in Calvert County, where her parents long had been educators, she took a job in west Baltimore. Connie felt God had called her to the poverty-stricken, crime-ridden neighborhood where she taught for three years -- until this past June.

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She also felt called to Canton, where she bought a house a block from the church and immersed herself in the neighborhood and the ministry. After playing with her on the church softball team, I came to know Connie as a generous, compassionate, energetic person who cares a great deal for others and very little for herself.

Connie had lived less than a year in her rowhome and was just getting settled in when her mind turned to Rwanda. She had watched on television as people she knew there left the war-torn country, and she had followed the news closely, knowing that many of the people she met during the summer of 1990 had been killed in the massacres. She began to have a desire to go back and help them rebuild.

She applied for a teaching position in Rwanda with the journeyman program. After renewed political strife, the position closed, leaving her to rethink the journeyman commitment. But it wasn't long before God made it clear. She would teach the two children of missionaries in the bush country of Nigeria.

Once the decision was made last spring, there was an overwhelming load of work to be done. From the initial trauma of telling her family, to resigning from her job and deciding what to do with her house, to packing enough shampoo, film and batteries for a two-year stay in the African bush, Connie was busy from February to June, when she left for a month-long orientation near Richmond, Va.

After months of deciding what to take and what to store, she completely cleaned out her house for the renters who agreed to a two-year lease on the morning she left for Richmond. I cried when I called her phone number that morning and it already had been cut off. I wasn't sure what I would do when from then on I felt the urge to walk the block up to her house and have a chat, ask advice or borrow something.

I knew I would miss her, and I was right. The church misses Connie, too.

For the past three years, she willingly taught neighborhood children on Wednesday nights. Now, we are praying someone soon will volunteer. She worked with the youth, taught Sunday school and was always there for church services and functions. We took for granted that she would lead the youth mission trips or work with children's clubs in the summer. Her teaching schedule allowed her to do those kinds of things.

Not to mention that our softball team lost its pitcher and top power hitter.

But we're proud of her. Our small church has one of its own serving God in Africa. She has gone where many of us would fear to tread. Though we miss her, part of us goes with her, and it's exciting to know that we're a part of such a ministry.

We held a tear-filled commissioning service for her at church. I think it was something that she will remember fondly over the next two years. We promised to support her in prayer, and we meant it. Now it's time for us to make good on that promise and look forward to her return. Those of us sadly gathered at BWI Airport sent her off proudly and with bright thoughts of a similar reunion to welcome her home in 1997. There are many blessings awaiting Connie. And there may be many trials.

"But she's got somebody taking care of her," her mother said. "And Connie's gonna be OK."

Though I am in awe of Connie's sacrifice and that of her family, I realize that the transition career missionaries make is often much more difficult. Those who devote their lives to people thousands of miles from their home, raising their children away from loving grandparents, have my heartfelt admiration. I am privileged to know such a woman willing to give up what God has given her here to serve him elsewhere.

'Southern-type Baptists'
boosted Montana fellowship **By Karen L. Willoughby**

BILLINGS, Mont. (BP)--Kathleen Knowling was a bored and lonely housewife when she was reached by the ministry of Southside Baptist Mission in Billings, Mont. Because the need for workers was so great, she was drafted to teach children in Sunday school not long after she became a Christian.

Thirty-five years later, she is known throughout the Montana Southern Baptist Fellowship as a solid Bible teacher and one of the mainstays at what has become Bethel Baptist Church.

Southern Baptist missions is about people being the hands, feet and heart of Jesus in their neighborhoods, across America and around the world. The people of Montana have benefitted from that missionary zeal. Some of their stories -- like that of Knowling -- have been chronicled in "Stories of Montana Southern Baptists," written by longtime home missionary Dorothy Hughes.

The book captures the excitement of Mississippians, Floridians, Texans and other Southern-type Baptists who helped carve a strong Christian witness out of the bedrock of individualism in what has been called a pioneer missions area. "Stories of Montana Southern Baptists" also is a microcosm of how Southern Baptist evangelistic and church-planting strategies and methods have evolved over the last 45 years.

Much has been written elsewhere about Southern Baptist stalwarts such as missionary Benny Delmar of Casper, Wyo., who started churches wherever he found a Southern Baptist family in the Northern Plains states, and pastor Roger Hill (formerly of Texas) who with his distinctive flattop haircut started churches, led family camps and raised up leaders first in Three Forks, Montana, and continues his work as a missionary in the western part of the state.

Hughes' book gives credit to these and other denominational giants, but it reserves "hero" status for faithful laypeople.

She writes of handyman John and secretary Venita Sorrell of Southaven, Miss., who didn't think they had much to offer the Lord in the way of theological training or evangelistic fervor, but they answered a call to missions anyway and served as Mission Service Corps volunteers alongside Bruce and Sue Cannon of Missoula, Montana, who were starting a new work.

"Without the ministry of the Sorrells with senior adults, secretarial, bookkeeping and yard work, Lincoln School Baptist Church would not be what it is today," Cannon is quoted as saying. The Sorrells also served in general fix-up, as child care providers and as encouragers to the pastor and his wife, Hughes writes.

At the other end of the economic scale, Sandy and Gladys Stearns of Louisiana followed oil field work to Montana in the early 1950s. A self-proclaimed backslidden Nazarene, Sandy Stearns redirected his life at the invitation of Montana's first pastor, Glen Braswell, who went on to lead Colorado's convention. The Stearnses entered Southern Baptist work as enthusiastically as they did their new business, Continental Labs Inc. All prospered.

Gladys Stearns taught preschoolers for years; Sandy Stearns was building chairman and Sunday school director. As generous with their money as with their talents, the Stearnses continue in retirement to give liberally to Montana Southern Baptist causes, Hughes writes.

Montana's story is dependent on Southern, Southern Baptists, Hughes writes. Mississippi, for example, has shown its commitment by participating in building programs, Vacation Bible Schools, January Bible study sessions, and pastoral and laypeople encouragement in Montana.

Also:

-- Members of First Baptist Church in Murray, Ky., made 16 annual mission trips to the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in Lane Deer and one of their own became the church's pastor.

-- Oklahoma Baptist University has linked its Christian Ministries School with Yellowstone Baptist College in Billings.

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-- Florida, which has a formal partnership with Montana, sends a continual stream of mission volunteers and pastoral leaders to Montana.

"Those who made the trip to Montana enlarged their mission understanding and grew spiritually," Hughes writes. "Paul Kendrick (pastor of a rural church near Thomasville, Ala.) said the trips helped the church at Midway, increasing its emphasis on missions. Everyone who makes a trip wants to go again, and encourages others to go."

Many such tales are in "Stories of Montana Southern Baptists," available from the Montana Southern Baptist Fellowship, P.O. Box 99, Billings, MT 59103. For more information on the book or current mission opportunities, call the fellowship office at (406) 252-7537.

Hughes, whose previous book credits include "So Your Dad's a Minister," is the wife of W.J. "Dub" Hughes, at 19 years Montana's longest-tenured home missionary. In retirement the couple are serving a year in Pennsylvania.

"I want to say, 'These are your heroes,'" Hughes writes in the preface to her book. "I hope ... you are challenged by their example."

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Willoughby is a free-lance writer in Visalia, Calif.

'Miss Ida' hit 10-year goal
for Montana college library

By Karen L. Willoughby

Baptist Press
10/24/95

BILLINGS, Mont. (BP)--Ida Owen asked God for a library. He gave her a challenge.

Owen was one of five women who came in 1981 to Yellowstone Baptist College in Billings, Montana, as part of a missions work group from Northwest Baptist Association in Mississippi.

Owen returned that fall as the school's librarian. She had retired at age 65 from a similar post at the Hernando (Miss.) High School library.

"It's been the greatest blessing of my life to know I am in God's will, doing what he prepared me to do," wrote the woman known affectionately by students and faculty as "Miss Ida."

She began her work with about 2,000 volumes that had been processed, many unopened boxes of donated books and three library shelves. Homemaker Andrea Todd volunteered her assistance; Miss Ida trained her, processed books and acquired library furnishings.

Along the way, often while at work in the book stacks, she would stop to offer words of consolation, encouragement and God's grace to homesick students, harried instructors and hurting preachers.

"She gave liberally to assist students and the school in any area of need," Hughes writes.

The library's holdings grew to more than 31,000 volumes.

Less than a week before her death, Miss Ida said to the college's then-president, "I asked God to give me 10 years to build the library, and he has answered that prayer."

It is this type of long-term, in-depth commitment to God's work that Dorothy Hughes writes about in her book, "Stories of Montana Southern Baptists."

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Anticipate legal attacks,
attorney tells seminarians

By Lee Weeks

Baptist Press
10/24/95

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Vaughan Drinkard Jr. has seen it happen all too often -- ministries destroyed and churches bankrupted while unscrupulous lawyers grin all the way to bank.

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Drinkard, a lawyer for 18 years in Mobile, Ala., says churches and their staff members are fair game and too often easy targets in the cutthroat world of lawsuits, litigation and multimillion dollar settlements.

"These plaintiff lawyers, they are not worried about the kingdom of God or saving souls," Drinkard said. "All they want to do, quite literally, is get millions and millions of dollars."

Speaking to a group of students Oct. 19 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Drinkard warned ministers to "be extraordinarily cautious" in how they respond to churchgoers both publicly and privately.

"It's a scenario where I tell you that we have always got to be prudent in prayer and everyday plead the blood of Christ over our ministry and ourselves and our families," he said in a pastoral ministry class on the school's Wake Forest, N.C., campus.

Drinkard, a deacon at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, serves as the church's lawyer. He said churches and ministers involved in counseling programs are extremely vulnerable to lawsuits.

When counseling people, Drinkard said, ministers should hold their meetings in glassed-in rooms where they can be seen but not heard.

He said ministers should never counsel others by themselves. "Never do anything alone," he said.

And avoid using words such as "honey," "baby" and "sweetheart," when dealing with children, youth and adults, Drinkard said.

Church day care centers must be sure to operate within state guidelines, he said.

Churches can protect themselves from potential lawsuits by paying careful attention to child-worker ratios and by maintaining a single entrance and exit at day care centers.

Drinkard said it's imperative that all churches, regardless of their size, become incorporated. Otherwise, he said, church members as well as staff members are susceptible to being named in a lawsuit against a church whether or not they were allegedly involved.

If sued, Drinkard said, a church should contact a respectable lawyer as soon as possible and conduct an internal investigation. He said the pastor or person named in the lawsuit should not be involved in the investigation.

Ministers should not fear lawsuits for offending people by preaching the Word of God, Drinkard said.

"If you're in the pulpit and you're preaching the Bible, you're constitutionally protected," he said. "The truth is your best defense."

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New Orleans Seminary presents
mass choir worship experience

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press
10/24/95

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--At a time when harmony seems to be available only through music, an interracial, interdenominational and intergenerational mass choir joined together on the campus of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to present the musical worship experience, "God With Us," Oct. 17.

"God's angels descended on me and touched me in a way I can't describe," was one of many comments received through the seminary's switchboard throughout the week as New Orleanians called in to voice appreciation for the event.

"This musical ('God With Us') is being used across our country in an extraordinary way to touch thousands of lives," said Sidney Buckley, chairman of the seminary's division of church music ministries. "It was awesome to witness the response of the people as they took part in this worship experience and thrilling to see God working in our midst."

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Accompanied by members of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, the mass choir was composed of men, women and young people from 40 churches in not only the greater New Orleans area, but also from across the Gulf Coast areas of Louisiana and Mississippi. The audience filled the seminary's Roland Q. Leavell Chapel, which seats nearly 2,000.

"The excitement was high in not only the music building, but also across the campus and throughout the area as we anticipated the upcoming performance of this powerful worship experience," Buckley said. Rehearsals started in August and were held on the campus weekly until the performance.

"We enjoy performing a wide variety of sacred music here at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary," Buckley said. "This unique production was a contemporary style of worship," he said, which included such nontraditional elements as a praise team and a band with electric guitar and drums.

The presentation of "God With Us" was under the direction of Ken Gabrielse, assistant professor of church music at New Orleans Seminary. Narrator was Graham Smith, music director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. Worship leader was Mark Foley, vice president for student development and institutional research and planning at New Orleans Seminary.

The highlight of the evening, Buckley said, seemed to be when the names of Jesus were read by Smith. "As Dr. Smith finished the reading, the audience on their own initiative rose to their feet and burst forth in applause," Buckley said. "The spirit of the Lord was present in a powerful way."

A survey of all participating choir members found "unanimous, wholehearted support" for a similar mass choir worship experience next year, Buckley said. "We are thrilled with the response and look forward to the next project. This will definitely become an annual event."

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(BP) photos available upon request from New Orleans Seminary's office of public relations (CompuServe: 70420,62; phone: (504) 286-3603).

Orella Stanford named
HMB volunteer of the year

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
10/24/95

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (BP)--Orella Stanford tells people God hasn't let her win the million-dollar sweepstakes yet, but she claims she has something just as good.

"He told me he'd take care of me and he has," said Stanford, 62, who was recently named this year's volunteer of the year by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's Mission Service Corps department.

As director of the ladies daytime ministries for the Neighborhood Center in Albuquerque, N.M., Stanford teaches sewing classes to immigrants, providing a service and teaching as well as Christian fellowship.

"I think they feel safe there," she says, admitting that some students are illegal immigrants. "Most of them are scared to death of (the department of) immigration, but they'll come to sewing class."

The Alabama native has lived in New Mexico 27 years. She was already doing some work for the center in 1992 when director Ken Goode asked her to consider joining the staff as a Mission Service Corps volunteer. "He didn't know I'd already started filling one (application) out, but stopped because I'd chickened out."

MSC volunteers serve at least four months in home missions work. Those who work at least two years are considered home missionaries.

Goode notes that Stanford sacrificed personally to join the staff. She lived 30 miles east of Albuquerque in the Manzano Mountains. Convinced she needed to be near the ministry, she sold her home and property to move into a three-room apartment in the back of the center.

Goode praises Stanford's energy and tenacity. "She knocks over stones that other people wouldn't even think of kicking over," he said. "She knows everybody and is not bashful about asking for what she needs."

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In fact, only children daunt her readiness to serve. She protests that she's "too old and too nervous" to work with kids. "I leave them to the younger ones who have more energy than I have."

Stanford doesn't see herself as extraordinary, Goode adds. "She feels like it's amazing to her that God uses her the way he does."

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Fee stresses spirituality
as basis for Bible study

Baptist Press
10/24/95

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Ministers must be careful not to read the Bible from a purely academic standpoint, Gordon Fee told students, faculty, staff and guests of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Oct. 19.

Fee, professor of New Testament at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia, was the featured speaker for the annual Huber L. Drumwright Jr. lecture series Oct. 19-20 at the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary.

During the first of his three lectures, Fee emphasized the necessity of combining spirituality with exegesis, or the historical or analytical approach to the Bible.

Far too often, the disciplines of spirituality and exegesis are so separated that students tend to take courses focusing on one or the other, Fee noted.

"These two sirens ... are seen as constantly at war with one another, with the result that piety in the church is for good reason highly suspicious of the scholar or the seminary-trained pastor who seems forever to be telling people that the text does not mean what it seems plainly to say."

The cure to this problem, Fee said, is a closer walk with God. "Without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, all else is mere exercise, mere beating the air!"

Fee noted that the danger "is to become a professional, to analyze texts and talk about God but slowly to let the fire of passion for God run low so that one does not spend much time talking with God."

As a professor of New Testament, Fee said he fears the day when exegesis becomes an easy task for his students or when they do it primarily for the sake of their own congregations.

"If those who teach and preach God's Word ... do not themselves yearn for God, live constantly in God's presence, hunger and thirst after God, then how can they possibly bring off the ultimate goal of exegesis?"

Fee recommended ministers approach their study of the Bible in an attempt to understand the author's own spirituality.

"As Paul was a passionate lover of Christ, so we ourselves must become passionate lovers of Christ if we are to hear the text on Paul's terms and not simply our own."

Fee's second lecture Oct. 19 focused on exegesis and spirituality in the New Testament Book of Philippians, concentrating on verses 4:10-20.

He addressed the delicate balance between formal study and personal worship in the life of a minister, noting that Paul's ultimate aim was the Philippians' spirituality. As he spoke, Fee continually returned to the idea that worship should be the focus of exegesis.

The climax of the passage in verses 18-20 is "artistry at its best," Fee said, pointing out that Paul used the metaphor of an Old Testament sacrifice to conclude the letter, expressing God's gratitude over their gift.

"Paul's master stroke is in verse 19, where he writes that 'my God will fill up your every need.' One cannot imagine a more fitting way for the letter to conclude," he said.

Fee concluded by relating a personal story: While working on his commentary on Philippians, Fee came to the verse in which Paul emphasized the riches in glory that Christians have because of Christ Jesus.

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"I began to weep. I turned off my word processor and went out on the deck, and I spent a great deal of time just worshipping," he related. "God in his mercy gave me a tender heart, but I think I'm a rigorous scholar. Sometimes I'm more concerned about being right than about bowing to what the text really says."

He emphasized Christians must have an attitude of obedience when studying God's Word.

"What an incredible privilege it is to be responsible for this kind of work When it's all been said and done, God has the final word and we want to become obedient," he said.

"True theology is doxology," Fee asserted. "What else is there to do when we realize all the riches we have in Christ?"

Fee's Oct. 20 lecture continued the theme of exegesis and spirituality in Philipians. "I urge that we complete the exegetical circle by engaging both in the spirituality of the divinely inspired author and in the spirituality he intended for his original hearers."

He noted that Philipians gives evidence of being a special blend of a letter of friendship with a letter of moral exhortation. That type of letter, he noted, was usually written by an older person to persuade or dissuade a younger disciple toward or away from a certain type of attitude or behavior. He explained that the heart of Philipians is composed of two lengthy passages which function as such a moral exhortation.

"Paul's intent is clearly to persuade toward specific expressions of Christian behavior."

He said the passage must be seen within the entire letter's role as a letter of friendship "as Paul's appeal to Christ as the ultimate paradigm of selflessness and humility, as the way of overcoming the selfish ambition and vain conceit Paul tries to dissuade the Philipians from in verse 3."

Fee pointed out that Paul was contrasting Christ's activity with what formerly pagan gentiles would have expected as activity appropriate for a deity. "Here's the closest thing to Christology one finds in Paul," he said.

The point of the passage is genuine spirituality, Fee stressed.

"The Philipians, and we ourselves, are not called upon simply to imitate God by what we do, but to have this very mind -- the mind of Christ -- developed in us so that we, too, bear God's image in our attitudes and relationships within the Christian community and beyond."

The Huber L. Drumwright Lecture Series was established in 1987 and brings specialists in New Testament studies to Southwestern. Drumwright served on the seminary faculty from 1951-1980 and was dean of the school of theology from 1973-1980. He died Nov. 1, 1981.

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Contributing to this article were SWBTS staff writers Brian Smith, Mark Christie and Dena Dyer. (BP) photos available on SBCNet and from Southwestern's office of public relations.

Converted and called:
Requirements for ministry

By Douglas C. Estes

Baptist Press
10/24/95

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--God is looking to use ordinary people who are converted and called, North Carolina pastor Greg Mathis said Oct. 17 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The great laborers of the faith of the past may appear near-perfect, Mathis said.

"We think of them as stained-glass saints, but if you study the people the Lord used in the ministry throughout the Bible, you discover they are not perfect." It was by God's power not their power that they are counted as faithful witnesses across the centuries, he said.

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Mathis, who has announced as a candidate for president of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention, is pastor of Mud Creek Baptist Church, Hendersonville, N.C.

"You are in the ministry not because of who you are, but because of who God is," Mathis told the students, asking, "Have you ever wondered why God chose you?"

The primary attribute of those the Lord chose is that they were saved, Mathis said, suggesting that the weakness of the church today can sometimes be traced to the spiritual state of the one who stands before the congregation each Sunday morning. "In some churches today, the problem is within the pulpit," Mathis said. "Many men that stand up and preach on Sunday morning are not saved."

Mathis recounted the salvation story of a fellow minister in his community who after years of ministry finally came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.

"I am not ashamed to stand up and tell you when I was 8 years old at Sulphur Springs Baptist Church, I got on my knees and asked the Lord Jesus Christ to come into my heart. I have my salvation settled within my heart, and you need to have it settled in your heart," Mathis said.

"If you can't look back to a point in your life that you know you trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, then before you think about doing ministry for the Lord, you need to be saved," he said.

"The Bible says the disciples had a salvation experience with the Lord Jesus Christ; yet, not only were the disciples converted, but also called."

It wasn't their idea to join in his ministry, Mathis explained. "It was because Jesus himself called them into the ministry."

"There is no way in the world the disciples could have sacrificed the way they would sacrifice, if Jesus indeed had not called them," Mathis said.

Reminding students at the Wake Forest, N.C., seminary that it is a calling, not a choosing, Mathis said, "If you are choosing the ministry as a career for yourself, you don't need to be in the ministry."

"Just as I would ask you to look back to a point in your life where you know that you were saved, I ask you to look back to a point in your life where you know without a doubt God called you into the ministry."

The only way a minister will finish the race is if he is converted and called, Mathis said.

"I'd rather you read my name in the obituary column than read that I didn't finish the race," Mathis said. "It's one thing to fight a good fight and to run a good race -- I want to finish the race."

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(BP) Brites
Compiled by Art Toalston

Baptist Press
10/24/95

Prayer saved seaman's wife, children

SAVANNAH, Ga. (BP)--Douglas Chanco noticed the Croatian seaman in port at Savannah, Ga., withdrawn and anxious for his wife and children back in war-torn former Yugoslavia. Chanco, a 20-year U.S. Navy veteran, and the mission congregation for internationals he leads at Savannah's Cresthill Baptist Church lifted the seaman's family to God in prayer. The seaman later wrote to Chanco describing how at that same moment his wife had felt a clear voice telling her to get the family out of the house. When they returned, it had been destroyed by a mortar shell. Chanco, son of a Filipino pastor, says he was a prodigal son until an Air Force pilot confronted him in 1972 about his spiritual condition and squarely reminded him of God's love in dying on a cross. "Boy, it hit me right here," Chanco recounts. "I couldn't say a word."

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He got it right, second time around

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--During a senior adult piano program years ago, Don Phillips asked for requests, and one woman in the front immediately called out "Amazing Grace."

"I sat down at the keyboard and played a rather elaborate, bombastic arrangement of that familiar hymn," Phillips, minister of music at First Baptist Church, Franklin, Ky., recounted at a recent Kentucky Baptist keyboard ministers' retreat. "When I had finished playing, I asked if there were other requests. The same woman replied, 'I'm still waiting to hear Amazing Grace.'" Humbled, Phillips sat back down and played a "quieter, simpler arrangement." "Though I still tried to make it artistic, my goal was to be sure my friend heard 'Amazing Grace.' When I stood back up and looked out, the woman who had made the request had tears in her eyes. The first time I had performed. The second time I had ministered."

Even in death, there can be healing

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--You may not get cured, but you can be healed, Steve Sweatt, a Southern Baptist chaplain resident at Carraway Methodist Medical Center, Birmingham, Ala., pointed out in an article in The Birmingham News. "A cure is what physicians do. But healing tends to the emotional, psychological and spiritual side. ... It's possible people can heal unto death -- they may deal with issues they never addressed in life, like conflict or family relationships." If people believe their lives have meaning and purpose, whether a medical crisis leads to remission or death, "it makes a tremendous difference" toward healing, he said.

How to keep your Bible out of the bindery

ESCONDIDO, Calif. (BP)--Use your Bible if you want to take care of it, advises Jerry Kiley of the Golden Rule Bindery, Escondido, Calif. That is, don't keep it open at the same passage for weeks or years at a time, advises Kiley, who specializes in Bible restoration. Among other pointers Kiley offers: Don't use a yellow highlighter or a red pen, because the ink eventually will seep through to the other side of the page; use a bookmark -- instead of bending pages -- to keep your place; don't stuff your Bible with paper or momentos; and apply a leather dressing such as mink oil to the cover.

End-times writer weathers hardship after hardship

BENTON, Ark. (BP)--Terry James went blind from an eye disease. He survived a fire that destroyed part of his home. His longtime companion, a bulldog named Buckley, died. He underwent surgery for a melanoma on his leg. Nevertheless, James has finished "Earth's Final Days" and two other books in a series on biblical prophecy featuring chapters by various end-times experts. "It feels like you're under attack sometimes," James says. "But the Lord is in control and has seen me through it." Among the Lord's blessings, James says, was a new set of "eyes" who helped with the writing, Angie Peters, a fellow member of Highland Heights Baptist Church, Benton, Ark., and a former writer for the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

He opted to stick around -- for 40 years

BERNICE, La. (BP)--Kenneth Nutt was 25 and had preached only one eight-minute sermon when he first went to Hebron Baptist Church, Bernice, La., 40 years ago. He's been the bivocational pastor there ever since, along with 26 years in the same role for Summerfield (La.) Baptist Church. The mail carrier also found time to earn a religious education degree at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. "I had the same aspirations as most preachers -- to 'go up,'" he admits, "but I also felt the need to stay; smaller churches have to have leadership, too."

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James Dotson, Melanie Childers, Erich Bridges, Russell N. Dilday and Holly Colle contributed to this column.

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