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Youth pastors take stand
on Phil Donahue broadcast

By Ken Walker

Baptist Press
11/13/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Two youth pastors whose Halloween-alternative productions will be featured on "Donahue" said they felt awed by the opportunity to stand up for the Lord on national television.

"The big thing is it was such a humbling experience," said Phil Wilson of Two Rivers Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn. "I knew so many people were praying for me; some were fasting and praying."

"So few Christians and pastors have an opportunity to be in that kind of forum and make a stand for the truth of God's Word," said Keenan Roberts of Abundant Life Christian Center in suburban Denver. "I felt humbled and awed and also felt a great sense of responsibility."

The two men, along with Two Rivers' senior pastor, Jerry Sutton, visited New York for a Nov. 9 taping of the nationally syndicated program. It will be aired sometime between mid-November and mid-February.

The youth pastors discussed their respective Halloween-season presentations, Two Rivers' "Judgment House" and Abundant Life's "Hell House." Using drama to present the gospel, the two churches recorded more than 1,800 decisions for Christ during their October runs; total attendance was over 18,000.

Opposition to the churches on "Donahue" came from an official of Planned Parenthood and a lesbian pastor, both from Denver. The women claimed the churches were airing "right-wing political issues," Wilson said, but they replied they were showing biblical issues.

After appearing on a Christian TV station in Nashville recently, Wilson said it felt much different to go before a hostile studio audience of approximately 150.

"They directed venom at us for scaring teen-agers," he said. "But I said we weren't doing a 'Friday the 13th' thing; we were trying to give them life, hope and peace. We're giving them reality and showing people there is a heaven and a hell."

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Wilson said among objections from the audience were:

-- "How could you tell someone they're dying and going to hell?"

-- "How could you judge somebody?"

-- "You're scaring people into making a decision (for Christ). What do you do after you scare them to death?"

Phil Donahue was expected to play the devil's advocate, added Roberts. Donahue's probing, the audience's reaction or the guests' harsh criticism didn't surprise them, he said. "We were still able to do what we felt the Lord wanted us to do."

They were also careful to maintain their calm and not project defensive, hostile or obnoxious attitudes, Roberts said.

"What will leave a lasting impression is what people see, more than what they hear," he commented. "We didn't want to appear agitated, and that was accomplished. I think during the last half of the taping the audience as a group got frustrated that we weren't reacting to them."

This marked the fourth year Two Rivers has staged Judgment House. Wilson said it started after he came to the church in 1992 and member Jeff Atwood asked if he had ever done this kind of presentation at Halloween.

They drew on ideas from other congregations that year, but ever since they prepare a new script annually. This year's play required 240 volunteers per night. It was so well done the executive producer of "Donahue" saw a video and thought the church had hired a professional cast, Wilson added.

The latest Judgment House story line follows a girl who gets shot accidentally during an argument at a teen-age hangout. While she is in a coma, an angel takes the girl and her father to visit hell and heaven, telling her she must make a choice between the two -- depending on whether she accepts Christ as Savior.

The audience is left wondering what decision she makes. But during the final scene when Christ goes to the cross, an invitation goes out to the audience to make the right choice.

Almost 900 persons walked forward to make a public profession of faith during the three-week run, nearly twice as many who came to salvation at Judgment House's 1994 production.

Staging this kind of play during the Halloween season is a spreading phenomenon. Roberts said he knows of two other churches in the Nashville area, a third 90 miles away and churches in Kingsport, Tenn., Alabama and Ohio that put them on this year. "We get all kinds of calls from churches who say, 'Can you help us?'"

This was the first year for "Hell House" at Abundant Life, an Assemblies of God congregation. Roberts patterned it after the first production he directed at First Ass mbly in Roswell, N.M., in 1993.

It featured five controversial scenes on abortion, suicide, human sacrifice, drunk driving and a homosexual who dies from AIDS. The latter brought out gay and lesbian protesters after news of the event appeared on the front pages of Denver's two newspapers.

However, one night a lesbian picketer walked inside to watch and got saved, Roberts said. Over six nights, 972 people signed cards saying they had prayed to receive Christ, while 1,277 indicated they had made commitments.

Another highlight of the Donahue TV episode occurred off camera. When Wilson arrived in Manhattan Wednesday afternoon, Nov. 8, a fax message wishing him well was waiting at the hotel desk. Four more showed up before they went to the studio. So did a special delivery Thursday morning with 150 handwritten notes of encouragement.

In addition, prayer went up from churches across the country and Focus on the Family faxed a prayer request to 2,000 pastors, Wilson said.

As for Roberts: "I was thrilled to meet the two guys from Tennessee. They are great men of God."

16-year-old recounts salvation
at church's 'Judgement House'

By Ken Walker

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--After growing up in church and getting baptized at age 10, Lyndi Frankel thought she was saved -- until she saw heaven depicted during "Judgment House" at Two Rivers Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn.

The depiction of heaven and the concluding scene of Jesus' crucifixion made her realize she had never accepted Christ, but had just followed the crowd, she said.

"It hit me hard," the 16-year-old high school senior said of the last part of the church's Halloween-time gospel outreach. "I realized that's what I was missing in my life. I thought I had accepted Christ but I hadn't."

Baptized in another denomination, Lyndi said she was raised to believe that baptism was the only requirement for salvation. But she didn't feel any rejoicing or see a difference in her life, she said. "It just felt like someone put me in the water and lifted me up."

Looking back, Lyndi thinks she went through the ceremony because some friends were baptized at the time. Ironically, she began attending a Baptist church several years ago, but still didn't grasp the salvation message.

Although most of her friends are Christians and she attended church regularly, in the past the Nashville resident never felt that close to the Lord.

She described a very "up and down" life, filled with stress because she tried to carry her burdens on her own and sometimes followed the wrong people.

One of the major differences Judgment House made in her life, she said, was bringing out the necessity of repenting of her sins and making a public profession of faith in Jesus. Some members of Two Rivers who helped stage the play invited her to see it; she attended with a friend the night before Halloween. Despite the crowd around her, when she walked forward to receive Christ, she focused all her attention on God.

"I felt him coming into my heart; it was an overwhelming sensation," Lyndi said. "It's the best feeling I've ever had. I felt a huge burden lifting off my heart and back. I didn't have to carry my problems around anymore, because I had accepted Jesus into my heart. God let me know that I was doing the right thing."

This was the third gospel-based production she had seen in the past year. But the other two explored too many side issues, she said, and jumbled-up story lines followed too many characters.

However, she said Judgment House followed the main characters throughout the story and powerfully made its point. While the idea of a clear choice between heaven and hell may be controversial to some observers, Lyndi said she hasn't heard any criticism of the play.

She said she plans to be rebaptized in the near future, although she hasn't decided yet on a new church home. Next year she plans to attend a university in Tennessee and hopes to include religion in her studies.

"I've been interested in serving God all my life," she said. "I've just been trying to find the right place. I've always wanted to do something for him. I just don't know what it is yet."

But she does know that life has been much more peaceful the past few weeks.

"Everyday things are a lot easier. I read my Bible and pray every day. If I have a problem, I just take it to God and it's instantly lifted up. There's definitely less stress in my life than before."

**Eastern Orthodoxy called major
challenge to western Christianity**

By Sarah Zimmerman

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--The major challenge facing western Christianity today is Eastern Orthodoxy, said a Romanian Baptist.

After years of approaching life from an intellectual perspective, people in western cultures are attracted to the mysticism and lack of personal responsibility of Eastern Orthodoxy, said Paul Negrut, vice president of the Baptist Union of Romania and president of Immanuel Bible Seminary and College in Oradea, Romania.

Negrut wrote his doctoral dissertation on Eastern Orthodox theology. Phil Roberts, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department, said Negrut's dissertation "may be the first substantive analysis of Eastern Orthodoxy by a Baptist." The United States has at least eight types of Eastern Orthodox churches, with total membership reaching 2.5 million, Roberts said.

Eastern Orthodox religions are similar to Protestant faiths in teaching the doctrine of the Trinity, virgin birth, physical death of Christ and his resurrection, Negrut said. A primary difference, however, is the Eastern Orthodox view of creation which distinguishes between man being made in the image of God and having the likeness of God.

Sin caused man to lose his likeness of God, but man can work toward regaining that, according to Eastern Orthodox theology, Negrut said.

"They believe man is created by God and has in his being something of the image of God and has the potential to become like God," Negrut said. "Man is not totally helpless. He has the image of God and he's cooperating with God to achieve his likeness."

Another difference in beliefs is the role of the church, Negrut noted. Eastern Orthodox theology teaches that the church is the agency which unites man with Christ through seven sacraments. The sacraments are performed in a liturgical, mystical fashion that attracts people seeking the supernatural, Negrut said.

The Orthodox worship services appeal to Protestants feeling deprived of a sense of sacredness, Negrut said, quoting one person who described a Baptist Lord's Supper as fast-food worship. "Often there is no time for reflection, silence or a meaningful time of worship (in Baptist services). In Eastern Orthodoxy, people are overwhelmed with the presence of another world."

While sacraments and icons create a mystical worship style, they are also the road to salvation in Eastern Orthodoxy. "Salvation is not based on the atoning work of God. It is not the encounter of sinful man with the righteous and loving God, but appropriation of divine energy through the sacraments," Negrut said. There is no salvation outside Eastern Orthodoxy, the church teaches.

Salvation through sacraments is appealing to the western world because it does not emphasize sin, responsibility or repentance, Negrut said. "It's religion without the dramatic crisis of a new birth or responsibility of living a godly life."

The Eastern Orthodox church also attracts people looking for spiritual roots, Negrut said. Orthodox churches trace their beginnings to the Byzantine church, which scholars believe was founded by Andrew, the brother of Peter.

Christians need to take a closer look at Eastern Orthodoxy and evaluate it critically, Negrut said. Negrut is working with the Home Mission Board to produce a manual for understanding and witnessing to people in Eastern Orthodox churches. The manual should be available next year, Roberts said.

**Reaching 'Star Trek generation'
requires change, theologian says** By James A. Smith Sr.

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--What do Captain Kirk, Spock, Captain Picard and Data and their respective journeys on the Starship "Enterprise" have to do with a theological response to postmodernism? According to theologian Stanley Grenz, they provide a vivid illustration of the transition from modernity to postmodernity.

Grenz, author of the upcoming book, "Postmodernism: A Primer," used clips from the long-running TV series, "Star Trek" and its successor, "Star Trek: The Next Generation," as illustrative props at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Nov. 7-10, in the 18th annual Burlan A. Sizemore Jr. Memorial Lectureship in Biblical Studies.

Grenz's four lectures addressed the issue of postmodernism and how evangelicals should respond to this prevalent worldview. He is the Pioneer McDonald Professor of Baptist Heritage, Theology and Ethics at Carey Theological College and professor of theology and ethics at Regent College. Both institutions are in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Arguing "modern evangelicals have done well in developing a vision of the Christian faith for the old 'Star Trek' society," an illustration of modernity, Grenz asserted evangelicals are "living in a time of change ... from modernity to postmodernity," as represented by "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and its successors. Because of this transition in worldviews, evangelicals must be willing to change their methods in order to reach the culture, Grenz contended.

Modernity, Grenz said, concerned itself with the Enlightenment's glorification of reason and deification of science. "The modern mind assumes knowledge is certain, objective and good." In contrast, postmodernism rejects all three assumptions.

"Postmodern philosophy sweeps away the 'uni' of the 'universe' sought by the Enlightenment project," Grenz said. "It abandons the quest for a unified grasp of objective reality. The world has no center, only differing viewpoints and perspectives In the end, the postmodern realm is merely an arena of 'duelling texts' -- your interpretation versus mine."

In addition to the rejection of modernity's assumptions concerning knowledge, "the postmodern worldview operates with a more social, as opposed to individualistic, understanding of truth," Grenz said. "Not only the specific truths we accept, but even our understanding of truth itself is a function of the community in which we participate. This, in turn, leads to a new conception of the relativity of truth. Not only is there no universal truth, more significantly, truth is relative to the community or social group in which we participate."

The western world is abandoning the Enlightenment principles of modernity and is instead, "lifting anchor, leaving the safe modern harbor and launching our intellectual ship toward the uncharted waters of postmodernity," Grenz warned. As a result, today's generation "lives in a complex and complicated world."

Grenz said the new generation is characterized by: being less likely to "think in the classical norms of formal logic;" may "hold together seemingly mutually exclusive beliefs;" and is "often unimpressed by tightly reasoned arguments, final answers to their questions and claims to ultimate, universal truth."

The "tragedy" of postmodernism, Grenz said, is "it entails the loss of belief that any final criterion exists by which we can evaluate the various interpretations of reality that compete in the contemporary intellectual realm Our commitment to the God revealed in Christ demands that we stand squarely against this postmodern loss of a center."

Postmodernism insists all interpretations of reality are of equal value, including those interpretations offered by evangelicals, Grenz noted.

"We simply refuse to allow the postmodern ethos to relegate us to the status of being one interpretive community among others," Grenz said. "We believe that the biblical narrative not only makes sense for us. We are convinced that the message of God's saving work in Christ is also good news for all. It provides the fulfillment of the longings and aspirations of all peoples. It embodies the truth -- the truth of and for all humankind."

In spite of his critique of postmodernism, Grenz asserted there is common ground which evangelical Christians share with this worldview. "We can cautiously applaud the postmodern attempt to dethrone the intellectual hubris lying at the foundation of the Enlightenment project," Grenz said.

Like postmodernism, evangelicals "also deny that the rational, scientific method is the sole measure of truth," Grenz said. "We affirm that certain aspects of truth may lie beyond reason and cannot be fathomed by reason We know that because of the fall of humankind, sin can blind the human mind. And we realize that following the intellect can sometimes lead us away from God and truth.

"The human problem, we believe, is not merely ignorance," Grenz added. "Humans also suffer from a misdirected will. We must not only be saved from our ignorance; we require a renewal and redirection of the heart."

While postmodernism's critique of modernity is useful to evangelicals, it provides no answers for society. "But once their critical work is over, postmodern thinkers offer little in the way of a constructive alternative," Grenz said. "It is here that the Christian message continues to ring out with clarity."

Making the Christian message relevant to a culture dominated by postmodern thinking was a common theme in Grenz's four lectures. He noted the discomfort which some evangelicals feel when the word "culture" is used. "The ghost of Protestant liberalism and the spectre of Tillich's method of correlation still haunt the evangelical theological mansion," Grenz said.

However, Grenz offered "three rejoinders" to those who remain unconvinced of the importance in making the Christian message relevant to culture:

-- "If our task is to speak in a manner in which our contemporaries can understand, then how can we not take culture seriously?"

-- "Second, using culture should not be confused with syncretism. I am not elevating culture above either the biblical message or our theological heritage. I am not proposing that contemporary thinking about religion and morals sit in judgment over Christian teaching on these matters. Rather, I am advocating that theologians not attempt the impossible task of withdrawing from their social and historical context into some supposedly culture-free realm in which only the language of Zion is spoken."

-- Thirdly, "I would maintain that we in fact do bring our cultural context into our theologizing all the time."

Grenz argued "a truly evangelical theology must also be relevant." Such theology takes into account the "cognitive tools" -- language, concepts, symbols and thought forms -- of society as well as the problems and issues society faces.

"A relevant theology articulates Christian beliefs in a manner that people can understand," Grenz said. He added, "'packaging' is important as well. If we were to stand on the street corner in our multiethnic, multicultural cities and parrot John's declaration, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,' the majority of passers-by would not have a clue what we are saying."

Grenz described this function of theology in helping the church as "a type of 'translation' task Theology asks, 'What concepts in contemporary culture form appropriate vehicles to express the biblical truth which the church has always sought to pass from generation to generation and from location to location?'"

In addition to making evangelical theology relevant to the language of the society, "a relevant theology likewise speaks to the problems, longings and ethos of contemporary culture." Grenz said. "The social context in which we live presses upon us certain specific issues, which at their core are theological. We avoid grappling with these only to our peril!

"This is not to suggest that society sets the agenda for theology or the church, of course. Indeed, theology ought to do more in the way of setting the agenda for society. But it does indicate that at its best, theology seeks to respond to the perceived needs and questions posed by society."

Grenz insisted theologians should view their task with a "holy humility about ourselves. Ultimately our role is that of being servants."

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In order to develop a "truly evangelical theology for the postmodern world," the primacy of the church as the "central location of the theological enterprise" must be reasserted, Grenz contended. "Our calling is primarily to serve within the context of the congregation of Christ.

"In the end, theology is not primarily public, but confessional. Nor is it the task of the trained specialist, but the privilege of the faith community. The theologian is one who seeks to encourage, assist, train and guide the community in being the people of God or in 'doing the faith.'"

Other topics addressed by Grenz in the lecture series included, "The universality of Christ in a pluralistic 'Star Trek' world" and "Living with integrity in a complex 'Star Trek' world."

The Sizemore lectureship honors the memory of Sizemore, a professor of Old Testament interpretation and Hebrew at Midwestern Seminary from 1968 until his death in an automobile accident in 1976. The lectureship was established in 1978 by the Sizemore family and friends, together with the administration, faculty and trustees of the seminary.

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Penn.-South Jersey Baptists
celebrate 25th anniversary

By Lori Van Ingen

Baptist Press
11/13/95

EXTON, Pa. (BP)--It was a time of looking backward as well as forward, of passing the torch for spreading the gospel from past generations to new generations as the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey celebrated its silver anniversary Nov. 2-4 in Exton, Pa.

The anniversary's theme, "From Generation to Generation," was presented as a challenge from those who began the convention 25 years ago.

The need is great in Pennsylvania-South Jersey with 15 million people, with over 11 million of them without the gospel. In just the Greater Philadelphia Baptist Association, with 4.3 million people, there are more people than all of Louisiana, Kentucky, South Carolina, Mississippi or Alabama, said David Waltz, the convention's executive director-treasurer.

There are more than 3,000 Southern Baptist Churches in Alabama and only 90, including missions, in Philadelphia, he said.

But as the lad who gave his loaves of bread and fish to Jesus to feed 5,000 people, "if we make our meager resources available to God, he can multiply them," Waltz said.

"Our challenging goal in our 25th anniversary year was to start 25 new churches, a more than 10 percent growth. We have had 31 new starts this year, more than any in our history," he said.

Waltz included credit to Brad Roderick, the state's new church extension strategist; funds and labor provided by partner conventions, Florida and Virginia; more than \$1 million in assistance from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board for staff and director of missions support and training events; and more than \$60,000 from the Baptist Sunday School Board for state leadership in church development and student work.

And the churches of the convention have been giving sacrificially, Waltz said. Gifts were up 7 percent last year and up 3 percent again this year, enabling the convention to meet its budget for the first time in the last nine years and only the second time in the last 16 years.

Looking forward to the new year, messengers to the convention elected George Sanders as the new president. Sanders, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Altoona, Pa., was the convention's first vice president this year.

Kathy Sheldon, whose husband, Steve, is pastor of Bux-Mont Baptist Church, was elected the first vice president. She currently is the secretary for the Greater Philadelphia association. Andrew Stabler, a layman from First Southern Baptist Church, Williamsport, Pa., was re-elected second vice president.

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Total expenditures for 1996 have been budgeted for \$2,156,255, including a Cooperative Program of \$617,231. The CP includes \$141,963 for Southern Baptist Convention causes, or 23 percent of budget, up .25 percent from the 1995 budget.

Messengers rejected a resolution on pornography, but approved resolutions on gambling, taking of human life and of thanks for those who have faithfully served the Lord in the last 25 years.

The resolution on pornography which was defeated said, in part, "Whereas the vast majority of evangelical Christian groups are participating in a boycott of Holiday Inns for promoting sexual exploitation through pornography.

"Whereas the Executive Committee of the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey has, in past sessions, voted to participate in said boycott.

"Be it resolved that in annual session on Nov. 3., this convention requests that the Program and Arrangements Committee no longer patronize establishments that promote pornography.

"Be it further resolved that we request a copy of this resolution be sent to the Holiday Inn Corp. of America and the Exton Holiday Inn."

This year's session was held at the Exton Holiday Inn due to parking limitations and the host church, West Chester Baptist, being without a pastor until several weeks ago, Waltz said. When trying to find a place for the annual meeting after these problems arose, the Holiday Inn was selected because the rooms were \$30 cheaper, he said.

The next two sessions already have been planned and neither one involves a Holiday Inn, he said.

One messenger said the concept of the resolution was good, but it was also bad in the sense that Marriott hotels are owned by Mormon individuals and they also have been patronized.

Dave Patton, associate pastor of Country & Town Baptist Church, Mechanicsburg, Pa., said he, too, understood the principle behind the resolution, but "we have been treated graciously by the Holiday Inn staff. Pay per view pornography is available only in that regard. It's inappropriate to chastise a group who has treated us fairly. They have gone overboard to help us."

Another messenger said the issue should be put back to the convention's leadership.

"We will encourage our program and arrangements committee, as long as the boycott is on by other Christian groups, to seek to be sensitive to your concern even though the resolution failed," Waltz said.

The resolution on gambling, which was approved unanimously, states:

"Whereas God has ordained a diligent work ethic as the means to sustain home and family; Whereas the strength of our nation has come from people of faith and a strong work ethic;

"Whereas our nation is beset with a mindset that erodes this work ethic in exchange for ideas promoted by the gaming industry; Whereas the promotion of gambling as a source of tax revenue is proliferating in our nation;

"Now therefore be it resolved that the (convention's) messengers ... and the churches we represent seek to be informed on efforts to legalize casino and riverboat gambling by the Pennsylvania legislature, as well as efforts in New Jersey to expand gambling through casinos, Indian reservations and riverboat gambling;

"And be it further resolved that we cooperate with others in direct opposition to gambling of any kind; and be it further resolved that concerted prayer be made for all those involved in the gambling industry as well as our state legislators that they may come to understand the terrible consequences of gambling upon the moral fiber of our state convention territory as well as our nation."

The resolution of regret on the taking of human life, which was also approved unanimously by the messengers, states:

"Whereas we in no way support, sanction or agree with the taking of human life unnecessarily, including murder, abortion or euthanasia;

"Whereas we do not believe any past acts of violence justify the killing or raping of innocent, unarmed people;

"Whereas such acts are directly contradicting to the teachings and lifestyles of Jesus;

"Now therefor be it resolved that we ... express in clearest terms our rejection, repudiation, abhorrence of the atrocities committed by any in the name of Christ;

"Be it further resolved that we agree to pray for peace and an end of ethnic war and religious war and ultimately all war."

The final resolution passed unanimously was one of thanksgiving.

"Whereas the people and churches, the Associations and State Conventions which make up the Southern Baptist Convention have assisted with the work of the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey and its churches;

"Whereas the Agencies of and the Boards of the Southern Baptist Convention have supported the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey by involvement and gifts to local churches, associations and state convention;

"Whereas individuals have given money, time, talent and sweat to the spread of the Gospel of Jesus through personal efforts, gifts and through the Cooperative Program gifts;

"Now therefore be it resolved that we the 25th meeting of the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey extend to people, churches, associations, state conventions and Southern Baptist Convention a heartfelt thank you;

"And be it further resolved that we thank all boards and agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention for their support;

"And be it further resolved that we thank God for Christ, the Southern Baptist Convention and the people who have faithfully served in fulfilling the Commission of our Lord for the past 25 years."

The convention's 26th annual meeting will be Nov. 7-9, 1996, in the Conemaugh Valley Baptist Association.

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Illinois exec's absence
felt at annual meeting

By Ferrell Foster

Baptist Press
11/13/95

COLLINSVILLE, Ill. (BP)--While more than 900 Illinois Baptists focused on "Starting Something New" during their Nov. 1-3 annual meeting in Collinsville, an undercurrent of concern for Executive Director Gene Wilson permeated the proceedings.

Wilson is hospitalized in Springfield, Ill., more than two months after suffering a massive brain hemorrhage.

His name surfaced often:

-- Roger Ellsworth, president of Illinois Baptist State Association, gave daily updates on Wilson's condition.

-- During the time when Wilson was to have preached, the crowd joined hands to pray for him.

-- One messenger, Lanny Faulkner, director of missions of Central Baptist Association, offered a motion to provide continued full financial support for Wilson during his absence. Faulkner then withdrew the motion when apprised of insurance and legal difficulties. A later word came that efforts to support Wilson are being explored independently of IBSA.

-- Another messenger, Marge Ellsworth of Gateway Baptist Church, Millstadt, commended IBSA officers and staff for their handling of the annual meeting in Wilson's absence.

-- And messengers were encouraged to participate in Harvest Prayer Network, which is an effort launched by Wilson shortly before his illness.

Messengers adopted a string of proposals presented by the association's board of directors.

The actions call for a 1996 Cooperative Program goal of \$5.3 million, with 59.25 percent remaining in Illinois and 40.75 percent being used to fund Southern Baptist Convention causes, the same percentages used in 1995.

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The IBSA staff salary scale will be raised 2 percent, as a result of convention action. And funds for an additional 2.5 percent in raises were approved.

The 1996 IBSA budget calls for expenditures of \$6.93 million, including the SBC's portion of CP funds (\$2.16 million).

All proposals of the board were approved without discussion.

Messengers also elected officers, tapping Ellsworth, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Benton, and Vice President Eugene Gibson Sr., pastor of Mission of Faith Baptist Church, Chicago, for additional one-year terms. They chose a new recording secretary, Art Foster, an ordained minister from First Baptist Church, Eldorado, and assistant recording secretary, Annabel Woodring, a member of Meadow Heights Baptist Church, Collinsville.

A motion offered by Kevin Ezell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Marion, passed during the Thursday morning session of the meeting and was rescinded the next day. The motion sought that nomination speeches for officer include the CP percentage of the nominee's church.

During the afternoon session, parliamentarian Wendell Garrison told messengers he should have recommended a ruling of "out of order" regarding the motion. Ezell then moved to rescind the action, stating the intent of the original motion was to help messengers make well-informed decisions regarding election of officers. The motion to rescind carried.

Next year's meeting will be Nov. 6-8 at St. Mark Baptist Church, Harvey.

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N.Y. annual meeting
focuses on laity

Baptist Press
11/13/95

SOMERSET, N.J. (BP)--The 26th annual session of the Baptist Convention of New York met Nov. 2-3 in Somerset, N.J., utilizing the facilities of the Ukrainian Cultural Center. The theme, "All God's People on Mission," focused on the role of all believers being on mission, laity and clergy.

Sam Simpson, pastor of Bronx Baptist Church and Wake Eden Community Baptist Church, was re-elected for a second term as president. James Goforth, director of missions for Adirondack Association was elected first vice president. Norman Solis, pastor of Living Word Fellowship, Flushing, N.Y., was elected second vice president. Steven Blake, pastor of New Hope church, Hurley, N.Y., was re-elected recording secretary and Peter Michael Arges, Baptist chaplain at Princeton University, was re-elected assistant recording secretary.

The convention adopted a total budget of \$2,703,243, with 26.75 percent of undesignated receipts going for Southern Baptist Convention causes through the Cooperative Program. This is an increase of .25 percent over 1995 and continues a pattern of annual increases in the percentage given to SBC Cooperative Program begun in 1987.

Dellanna O'Brien, executive director, Woman's Missionary Union; James Williams, president, SBC Brotherhood Commission; Reid Harden, coordinator, renewal and marketplace evangelism, Home Mission Board; and Doug Inglis, director of promotion and development and ministry support, Baptist World Alliance, focused attention on the role of the laity in reaching the world with the gospel. Williams Crews, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in California, led the Bible study at each session.

Among the resolutions adopted included appreciation for four Baptist Convention of New York staff who are leaving: Clayton Day, evangelism director for the past five years, who has retired and returned to Texas; Evelyn Chandler, volunteer manager of the Baptist Book Store in Syracuse the past three years who completed her term of service; David Lositio, accountant and business manager the past 12 years who has taken a position with another religious organization in Syracuse; and Quentin Lockwood Jr., who is leaving the convention Dec. 31 after 19 years of service and was recognized for the longest tenure of any program staff to have served the Baptist Convention of New York.

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Another resolution recognized DeLane Ryals, who retired after 21 years as director of church extension for the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association.

In other matters of business, a motion to instruct a special finance study committee to report to the Dec. 9 executive board meeting was adopted. Kenneth Tan was introduced as the director of evangelism who will begin Jan. 1. The organization redesign and staff changes adopted by the executive board in September were also presented.

Next year's annual session will be Nov. 7-8 in the Thousand Islands area of New York, about 75 miles north of Syracuse.

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Harmonious spirit marks
Minnesota-Wisconsin meeting

By Gomer R. Lesch

Baptist Press
11/13/95

GREEN BAY, Wis. (BP)--The spirit of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention's 1995 annual meeting was as close and harmonious as the music of the women's ensemble from the host church, Highland Crest Baptist Church in Green Bay, Wis.

The Nov. 2-4 gathering was characterized by unanimity in business sessions, inspiration in messages and challenges to action.

Each new officer was elected by acclamation: president, Glen Land, pastor of Valley Baptist Church, Appleton; first vice president, Bobby Sinclair, pastor of Mount Hermon Baptist Church, Milwaukee; and second vice president, Larry Chaney, pastor of First Baptist Church, Clintonville. Re-elected unanimously were recording secretary Becky Dodson of First Baptist Church, Wausau, and assistant recording secretary Paul Berthiaume, pastor of Superior Baptist Church. All the officers are from Wisconsin.

The 108 messengers adopted without dissent a new constitution and bylaws. Previously the state convention governing document contained bylaws only. They also passed unanimously a resolution on racial reconciliation mirroring that adopted in the 150th anniversary meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

A 1996 budget of \$1,658,437 was adopted, also unanimously. It included Cooperative Program funding of \$84,760 for Southern Baptist Convention causes, or 26 percent of anticipated CP income, the same percentage as 1995.

In keeping with the theme "Risk the Journey," messengers and visitors heard Bible studies led by Roy Fish, professor of evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, along with messages by Charles Chaney of the Home Mission Board and Roger Hall of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Foreign missions representatives were Jeff and Margie Pearson, missionaries to Ethiopia.

Executive Director William C. Tinsley challenged listeners to follow up their vision statement of two years ago with vision action. "We are no longer at a place of seeking a vision from God," he said, "but we are at a place of acting on the vision he has given us." Tinsley defined vision action as reaching lost people in a lost world.

In the annual sermon, Jeff McBeth, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pewaukee, Wis., called the verses beginning with Ephesians 2:4 the "grandest statement of what happens to a person who puts his trust in Christ." In his president's message, Grant Hignight, pastor of Brown Deer Baptist Church, Milwaukee, talked about the annual meeting theme, saying, "When we risk, we are going with a God who knows what he is doing." He stated Christians must have a heart and soul and strength undivided in loving God.

The 1996 MWBC annual meeting will be at Emmanuel Baptist Church, Rochester, Minn., Oct. 31-Nov. 2.

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Hymn history is forte
of professor's 30 years

By Debbie Moore

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Resources in the field of church music history are available to Christians now more than ever before. Much of that knowledge, along with increased awareness and interest, is due to the dedicated efforts of a man who has served 30 years on the music faculty of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Harry L. Eskew, professor of church music history and hymnology and music librarian, was honored in a special chapel service Nov. 7 for serving since 1965 at New Orleans Seminary. Earlier this fall he was named to the seminary's fully endowed first Lallage Feazel Chair of Church Music.

"Whoever picks the hymns for the congregation to sing is potentially the most influential theologian in the church," he likes to remind his students.

Eskew has enjoyed calling attention to the human interest stories behind hymns. He rarely leads a congregation in singing without first telling the story that prompted the hymn's writing.

He also likes to keep in contact with the "grass roots," to know what congregations like to sing and how they like their services conducted. He has served as minister of music in churches in Louisiana and Mississippi, practical experience he uses in the classroom setting. Currently, he is a deacon and chairman of a denominational relations committee and sings in the choir of St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans.

Eskew sees himself more as a writer and church music historian than a performer, having published more than 300 articles in a wide variety of periodicals, journals, dictionaries and encyclopedias. He sees his goal as a professor "to inspire the students in their own calling to ministry so they can help their congregations to sing with the Spirit and with understanding."

The entire Southern Baptist Convention has benefited from his expertise as he has served on two Baptist Hymnal committees, working on both the 1975 and 1991 editions. He also contributed 149 articles to the Handbook to The Baptist Hymnal, published in 1992.

Eastern European Baptist students recently benefited from his skills as well. This past July he served as volunteer librarian and choral conductor at the International Baptist Lay Academy near Budapest, Hungary.

For eight years, he served as editor of The Hymn, a quarterly publication of the Hymn Society of America, devoted to the study of hymns, their composition and their effectiveness in worship. He also coauthored the textbook, "Sing with Understanding," used in colleges and seminaries throughout the world. The revised and enlarged edition of this book is to be released in December by the Baptist Sunday School Board's Church Street Press. His latest book is "Singing Baptists: Studies in Hymnody in America," coauthored with a church music professor from Samford University in Alabama and one from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Texas.

Eskew came to New Orleans Seminary as a student in 1958, studying under W. Plunkett Martin, then director of the school of sacred music, who was "an inspiration to everybody, warm, a committed Christian." He also studied with and was a fellow for Claude H. Rhea Jr., who later took Martin's place.

"It was at Dr. Rhea's encouragement that I first gave consideration to teaching as an avenue of Christian service," Eskew said.

Of particular interest to Eskew is early American Baptist church music traditions, including the distinctly American Sacred Harp sing, popular in the South in the early 1800s. Eskew has been active in keeping the Sacred Harp singing tradition alive not only for the New Orleans Seminary campus and community, but also for state conventions, including Louisiana and South Carolina. Through his efforts, New Orleans Seminary was the first of the six Southern Baptist seminaries to begin hosting annual Sacred Harp sings.

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Eskew holds a bachelor of arts degree in church music from Furman University in South Carolina, a master of sacred music degree from New Orleans Seminary and a doctor of philosophy degree in musicology from Tulane University in New Orleans. He has done additional study at the University of Erlangen, Germany; the University of New Orleans; Notre Dame Seminary; and Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta.

During his sabbatical last year, he completed the master of library and information science degree at Louisiana State University.

Eskew's wife, Margaret, holds a doctorate in German linguistics and is chair of the foreign language department at Xavier University in New Orleans. For several years, the Eskews have been active members of the New Orleans Chapter of Habitat for Humanity, an organization devoted to eliminating poverty housing worldwide through partnership ventures between Habitat volunteers and potential home owners. The Eskews have two adult children, Timothy and Judith.

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200-year-old tradition
still a fun family event

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press
11/13/95

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Good food and fellowship never fail to draw a crowd. Add some music and a church has the makings for a great family event.

The Sacred Harp singing tradition began and has continued with these simple elements for 200 years, said Harry L. Eskew at a recent fall Sacred Harp sing held annually on the campus of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Professor of church music history at New Orleans Seminary for 30 years, Eskew is an expert on Early American Baptist church music traditions.

A distinctly American tradition, Sacred Harp singing is a product of the American singing-school movement which first flourished in New England's churches in the late 18th century and then spread to the rural South and Midwest in the early 19th century.

And as tradition has it, Sacred Harp sings always include a "dinner-on-the-grounds." Participants bring their favorite hot or cold dish -- vegetable, bread, meat or dessert -- so they can stay and sing for hours.

The name "Sacred Harp" was derived from an 1844 collection compiled by B.F. White and E.J. King of Harris County, Ga. In this collection, now titled "The Original Sacred Harp," sacred texts were set to Southern folk tunes with shape notes designating syllables called fa, sol, la, and mi. As is typical of other tune books of its kind, "The Sacred Harp" songbook is oblong in shape and contains an opening summary of the rudiments of music for use in singing schools, followed by an anthology of harmonized music.

Traditionally at a Sacred Harp sing, participants face each other in four sections, forming a hollow square. All singing is unaccompanied. After a tune is selected, a vocal pitch is given, then the group first sings through the tune using just the "fa-sol-la-mi" syllables. Next they sing through with the words of the stanzas. Participants take turns choosing the songs and leading the group. The clock-like dips and rises of the leader's hands regulate each song's time, while tone-setting "keyers" establish correct pitches.

Some well-known hymns from this tradition are "Amazing Grace," "How Firm a Foundation," "Wondrous Love" and "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand."

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