

(BP)

-- BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

December 13, 1995

95-199

TENNESSEE--FMB trustees affirm firing of Singapore missionaries.

ARKANSAS--Emil Turner unanimously elected new executive.

MISSOURI--Illinois editor named editor in Missouri.

NORTH CAROLINA--Scholarship, feminine view meet in Woman's Study Bible; photos.

TENNESSEE--Jerry Evers' story illustrates God's grace and forgiveness.

GEORGIA--New Orleans Seminary to offer accredited social work/Christian education degree.

KENTUCKY--Small Kentucky town raises barriers against homelessness.

TENNESSEE--Heaven, relationships headline annual discipleship, family agenda; photos.

FMB trustees affirm firing
of Singapore missionaries

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press
12/13/95

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees Dec. 12 upheld the termination of a missionary couple for advocating the practice of "falling" or "being slain in the spirit" in a Singapore church.

The couple, Charles and Sharon Carroll, appealed to trustees during their Dec. 11-13 meeting in Memphis, Tenn., after receiving a termination letter from board staff dated Nov. 24. Carroll is pastor of the 400-member Community of Praise Baptist Church in Singapore.

While the Carrolls said they disagree with the board's position on the practice, they affirmed they received a complete hearing. They also said they are convinced that God wants them to continue their Singapore ministry "outside the channels of the Foreign Mission Board."

A nine-member trustee committee met with the Carrolls for three hours Dec. 11. After deliberating two additional hours, the committee voted unanimously to uphold the couple's termination effective Jan. 1, 1996, "for failure to perform duties in keeping with the expectations for missionaries of the Foreign Mission Board."

The Carrolls said they will return to their Singapore congregation, which has pledged to pay their salary, and serve as independent Baptist missionaries.

The committee action noted the Carrolls, in advocating "falling," are "operating outside of generally accepted practices for Southern Baptists" and concluded "it is no longer appropriate for you to represent the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention."

The committee's decision to uphold termination was approved by the full board of trustees without debate or opposition in a plenary session Tuesday afternoon, Dec. 12.

In a 12-page written appeal Carroll argued the practice of "falling" "is not unscriptural" and has been witnessed as a manifestation of God's spirit throughout church history. He asserted that Southern Baptist foreign missionaries should not be expected to impose Western worship styles on Baptist churches in other cultures.

Carroll also disputed charges that he had taught "falling" was normative for all believers, that he had caused dissension among Singapore Baptists and that he was guilty of insubordination in refusing to resign.

--more--

The committee's decision to uphold termination of the Carrolls, however, was based on their testimony before the committee and not on charges about their conduct in Singapore, said Foreign Mission Board President Jerry A. Rankin.

The committee heard Carroll defend spiritual experiences that are "beyond what Southern Baptists would consider as having any sound biblical basis," said Rankin, who supervised Carroll when he (Rankin) served as director of the board's work in southern Asia prior to election as president in 1993.

"Southern Baptists have a great deal of diversity, flexibility and latitude in many areas, including spiritual gifts and manifestations of the Spirit," Rankin said. "However, we must come down as Southern Baptists on the basis of practices for which there is strong biblical evidence.

"We would expect our missionaries to teach and practice doctrine and manifestations of their witness in a way that is compatible with the Southern Baptists who sent them out."

The decision to uphold the termination was not an easy one, said trustee Bill Richardson of Troy, Ill., chairman of the committee that heard the Carrolls' appeal.

"We know this is a very difficult time for you. We all struggle with this," Richardson told the Carrolls after the committee vote. "We know you are sincere and doing what you feel the Lord is leading you to do. It's difficult to make a decision like this, but we believe this is the right decision.

"We want you to know we love you and are sorry we have to be in a situation like this."

As the hearing ended, committee members circled the Carrolls and prayed for their continued ministry. Charles Carroll prayed for God's blessing on the work of the Foreign Mission Board.

--30--

Emil Turner unanimously
elected new executive

By Trennis Henderson

Baptist Press
12/13/95

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--Former Arkansas Baptist pastor Emil Turner was elected Dec. 12 as the next executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Turner, 45, begins his ministry in Arkansas Jan. 15, succeeding current executive director Don Moore who will retire at the end of February.

Turner was unanimously elected during an Arkansas Baptist executive board meeting in Little Rock. Search committee chairman Billy Kite, director of missions for Ashley County Association, described Turner as "a soul-winner" who has "personal concern for people who need the Lord."

The new executive director has been pastor of First Baptist Church, Lake Charles, La., since January 1991. Previously he was pastor of Mount Olive Baptist Church in Crossett, Ark., for four years. Turner, a native of Louisiana, also was pastor of First Baptist Church, Harrisonburg, La.; a staff member of Hillvue Heights Baptist Church in Bowling Green, Ky.; and a director for Campus Crusade for Christ.

Kite said committee members first interviewed Turner Sept. 14 and voted unanimously to continue discussions with him as their top candidate. A second meeting with Turner, followed by an additional committee meeting, resulted in the committee voting unanimously to recommend him to the full board.

"I believe he's going to do a great job for Arkansas," Kite affirmed. "He's a visionary. He dreams big and then he implements his dreams by the grace of God. He's a gifted administrator, a people person and a great communicator."

"I really believe Emil Turner has the great potential to be an outstanding leader for you," Don Moore remarked. "He is very conscientious, very thorough, very committed."

"Enable the man to have free hands and a free heart to embrace his convictions with all of his heart and to serve all Arkansas Baptists," Moore added. He urged board members to "give him the very best of your support. Be fair with him and expect him to be fair with everybody else."

--more--

Following words of affirmation from each of the nine committee members about Turner's qualifications, state convention president Rex Horne, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, responded, "We appreciate this committee very much and we believe this committee is representative of Arkansas Baptists. We trust you and we're ready to get on with it."

Kite introduced Turner and his wife, Mary, to board members, providing Turner the opportunity to share his thoughts and field questions.

"You have paid me the consummate honor in asking me to take this responsibility," Turner noted. "I feel a deep sense of humility in responding to this request. We commit this to God. This is nothing we would have ever sought or even dreamed. We know we're here by the hand of God and we know He will continue to sustain and lead."

Following the unanimous vote, Turner told board members, "I have never followed anyone more loved and respected than Dr. Moore." Acknowledging the new position of leadership "is a tremendous honor and a tremendous challenge," he added, "We look forward to serving in Arkansas."

"The challenges that face a person in this job are tremendous and they can't be met without the help of the Lord Jesus Christ," Turner told the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine, adding a primary goal as executive director will be to help encourage and equip Arkansas Baptist churches to "continually baptize more and more people."

A graduate of Louisiana State University and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Turner currently is a trustee of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. He served this year as chairman of the Louisiana Baptist Convention's committee on convention arrangements and previously has served on the SBC Committee on Committees. The Turners have two teenage sons, Joel and Jonathan.

--30--

Illinois editor named
editor in Missouri

Baptist Press
12/13/95

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--William R. "Bill" Webb, editor of the Illinois Baptist since 1984, is the new editor of the Missouri Baptist Convention's news journal, Word & Way.

Springfield, Ill., resident Webb, 45, was the Word & Way committee's unanimous choice for the position. He was elected unanimously by the full Missouri Baptist Convention executive board in a meeting Dec. 11-12 in Jefferson City. He begins March 1.

Lyndell Worthen, chairman of the Word & Way committee, said the committee was impressed by Webb's experience in Baptist journalism.

"We wanted someone who would be fair and even handed in reporting news of importance to Missouri Baptists," said Worthen, pastor of First Baptist Church, Springfield. He added Webb met the committee's desire for an editor "who had an understanding of these difficult years we have been through and would report the unity and strengths of Missouri Baptists."

Webb said he is eager to get started. "Word & Way is a publication that has been influential not only in Missouri Baptist life but in the life of the entire Southern Baptist Convention, and I look forward to becoming a part of that ongoing tradition.

"For me it will be both a challenge -- and I anticipate a joy -- to become a part of that institution that has served so well."

Born in Mount Vernon, Ill., Webb is a graduate of Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, where he earned a bachelor's degree in journalism. He also attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and lacks one semester's work for completion of a master of divinity degree in Christian education.

While editor of the Illinois Baptist for the past 11 years, Webb has served simultaneously as director of communications for the Illinois Baptist State Association.

--more--

The bi-weekly Illinois Baptist has a circulation of 11,400. Weekly circulation of Word & Way currently stands at 51,000. The Illinois Baptist was the first state Baptist newspaper to "publish" each issue on SBCNet, the Southern Baptist Convention's online computer service.

Keith Stanford, church development division director for the Illinois Baptist State Association, said Webb has earned great respect among his co-workers and among Illinois Baptists. "He is sensitive about people, careful about truth in the issues he deals with," Stanford remarked. "He is willing to listen to people who disagree with him."

Stanford also complimented Webb on his efforts to assist state convention staff in communicating with Illinois Baptists through their state Baptist newspaper.

Webb is president-elect of the Southern Baptist Press Association and will become president in February. Prior to going to Illinois, he was a staff writer in the news and information services department of the SBC Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va. His first job in journalism was as a reporter/photographer for the Mount Vernon Register-News.

Webb and his wife Susan are the parents of two sons: Justin, 20, and Mark, 18. The Webbs are members of Springfield Southern Baptist Church, where Bill has been a deacon since 1986. Until recently, he served the church as treasurer.

Worthen said the committee undertook a nationwide search, and individuals from Florida to California were recommended or expressed interest in the Word & Way editor's job. "It was, I felt, a real compliment to the quality of Word & Way that there was such a large interest in the editorship."

Former Word & Way editor Bob Terry said he was extremely happy to hear Webb had been recommended to succeed him. Terry, now editor of The Alabama Baptist, cited Webb's experience and his strong missions background. "I believe that Missouri Baptists will be very pleased with him as their editor."

--30--

Compiled by Tim Palmer of the Word & Way and Baptist Press.

Scholarship, feminine view
meet in Woman's Study Bible

By Dwayne Hastings

Baptist Press
12/13/95

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--Thomas Nelson Publishers has staked plenty on the fact that women are different than men, unveiling what many are calling its most unique Bible product ever: The Woman's Study Bible, a Bible specifically prepared for women.

The Woman's Study Bible not only was created and edited by women, but the copy editing, design, paste-up and typesetting of the Bible, in the New King James Version translation, was totally done by women.

While the study Bible bears the handiwork of evangelical women from many denominations and cultures, its editor is a well-known Southern Baptist. The vision for this Bible -- for women and by women -- came to rest nearly a decade ago in the heart of Dorothy Patterson, whom Thomas Nelson named as the project's general editor at its outset in 1990.

Not long after the Criswell Study Bible was released in 1979, Patterson received a letter from a close friend encouraging her to complete a Bible for women. At the time, while intrigued by the idea, she said she didn't want to see another study Bible.

"I filed that letter away and it wasn't until about six or seven years ago in going through some files I ran across that letter," she said. While her interest in a women's Bible was stirred afresh, she was engaged in another lengthy project that would preclude any notion of another study Bible.

It was not long before Patterson was released from that project. Later the same week Frank Couch of Thomas Nelson visited the Pattersons.

"Frank Couch asked me if I had ever thought of doing a Bible for women. It just happened to hit at the right time," she recounted.

Patterson, who had assisted in the production of the Believer's Study Bible and the Criswell Study Bible as well as contributing to Zondervan's Women's Devotional Bible, was cautious about stepping into another such project.

--more--

"I made it clear at the outset to Thomas Nelson Publishers that I wouldn't be interested in doing just another Bible to sell to women. The only thing I was interested in was a really unique product that would draw women into the Word of God," said Patterson, whose husband, Paige, is president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Woman's Study Bible project did not lack for intensity -- five years in the making and a product of superior scholarship dovetailed with a feminine viewpoint. The end result is a work crafted to speak to women even if they have never owned a Bible, said Patterson, an adjunct professor of Christian family ministry at the Wake Forest, N.C., school.

"Perhaps the uniqueness of the Bible will prompt women who have never gone to church or opened a Bible to discover there is a Bible specifically designed for them. It is a Bible edited by women who believe God has something to say to all women."

The project brought together more than 80 women from a rich diversity of occupations, denominations and ethnic backgrounds to create a study Bible with scholarly annotations and topical notes that bear special sensitivity to women's interests, as well as features on women's contributions to biblical archaeology and theology.

"We wanted to produce a product that would meet the needs of women who are seeking to have a word with God," Patterson explained, noting it is not just a Bible for Southern Baptists.

"I wasn't as concerned about how the reader was going to come down on every doctrine as I was for her to come to the Lord," Patterson said. "For that reason, we elected in the beginning to work with great denominational and cultural diversity among our contributors."

The Bible is distinctive in the way it keys into Scripture passages of special interest to women, said Janice Meier, a professor of Old Testament at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Meier, consulting editor for the Old Testament on The Woman's Study Bible, said, "While the Bible contains a wealth of general information in the annotations and its descriptive portraits of biblical women, it is rich in its far-ranging topical notes on subjects such as femininity, the biblical concept of womanhood, battered wives, parenting and the like."

The portraits of women in the Bible should provide a valuable resource, said Rhonda Kelley, who served as managing editor of the study Bible. "These character sketches of the major and minor women in the Bible are visually set apart with cross references to other study helps and texts in the Bible," she noted.

"Contemporary women can identify with these women in the Bible and how God spoke to them," continued Kelley, professor of speech and communication at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. "The Woman's Study Bible reinforces the personal nature of God's Word."

In a style that recalls illuminated manuscripts handcrafted by medieval monks, The Woman's Study Bible features ornate raised letters and original artwork throughout its pages, Kelley said. "You can even tell from the front cover the study Bible is by women for women," she remarked, "It looks different!"

Couch, vice president of the Bible division of Nashville, Tenn.,-based Thomas Nelson, said in a recent luncheon meeting in Raleigh, N.C., The Woman's Study Bible may be the "finest product Thomas Nelson has produced in its 200 years of existence."

Pre-release sales of the Bible to bookstores set new records for Thomas Nelson, a presage of the market's high level of interest for the "niche" study Bible, he said. Preliminary sales reports indicated more than 55,000 copies of the Bible were sold within the first 60 days of its release. A second printing is on press, ahead of Thomas Nelson's expectations.

Couch, who personally has edited six study Bibles and worked with five different translations of the Bible, noted 85 percent of the people who purchase Bibles are women.

"There has not been a significant study Bible on the market written by women, even though most of the people doing Bible study are women," Couch said.

Most commentary work over the centuries has been done by men, noted Sharon Gritz, professor of Greek and New Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, and a contributor to the study Bible.

"Now that isn't necessarily bad," Gritz hastened to add. "It's just that women might want to know more about a particular Scripture verse that a man is not necessarily interested in exploring in depth."

The new study Bible will have a unique appeal, agreed Marsha A. Ellis Smith, adjunct professor of Old Testament and associate vice president for academic administration at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

"All study Bibles are helpful but none have delved into specific women's issues to this degree," she said. The wide variety of women from various evangelical traditions will enable this Bible to reach more women, Smith said.

While those involved in the project were from diverse backgrounds, a common link was their high view of Scripture, said Smith, who provided commentary on biblical archaeology for The Woman's Study Bible.

"This is the bond that held all of us together," she said. "Each woman involved in this project sees the Bible as the inspired Word of God, authoritative and binding on their lives."

"That is the common thread," echoed Patterson. "Each contributor stands under the Word of God, seeking to direct women back to God's Word."

"It was important to me from the outset that this Bible be marked by distinctive exegesis," Patterson insisted, "pulling out of Scripture what God intended, rather than reading into it our own whims."

God's message is straightforward and clear, Patterson said. "Not only does God see women as his creation of great worth, but he sees them individually in their needs and daily challenges." That assurance is priceless, she added.

"Women are equal in value in God's eyes but different in their role in the kingdom," Kelley said.

While The Woman's Study Bible has been prepared for a feminine audience, it is not a feminist work, Patterson elaborated.

"I think it would be quite presumptuous of us to decide that we're going to change the way God has chosen to communicate to us," she said, noting the language within study Bible is not what is termed today as "inclusive language."

"Certainly any theologian would say that God is neither male nor female. He's God. He's beyond us. For whatever reason, and I don't think we really have to be told what those reasons are, God chose to reveal himself to us in masculine terms. He chose to call himself Father," Patterson said.

The Woman's Study Bible is not a feminist volume, she continued. "It is not a volume that was written to be a political volume; nor was it written to polarize women, but rather to pull them into the Word of God."

The volume affirms the truth of Scripture that states women have a role to fill in the evangelical community, Gritz said.

"Women have a place in scholarship and academia," she continued. "This Bible affirms the traditional values of the evangelical community that says women do have a place in kingdom work."

Among the more than 80 women who contributed to this volume were Dale Evans Rogers; German theologian Etta Linnemann; Joni Eareckson Tada; Gigi Graham Tchividjian, daughter of evangelist Billy Graham; Beverly LaHaye; Kristina Hemphill, daughter of Ken Hemphill; Jill Briscoe; Edith Schaeffer, widow of the late Francis Schaeffer; and Elisabeth Elliot.

--30--

(BP) color photos (1 of Dorothy Patterson, 1 of The Woman's Study Bible) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southeastern Seminary news and information office and available upon request to others by calling (919) 556-3101, ext. 271. Debbie Moore contributed to this story.

**Jerry Evers' story illustrates
God's grace and forgiveness**

By Mich Livingston

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Jerry Evers relived a nightmare every time he turned on his television in January and saw the story that stunned a nation and topped all the news reports -- the drowning of two children by their own mother.

The story of Susan Smith in South Carolina was frighteningly similar to a tragedy that has dominated his own life since New Year's Day 1980 when Evers' wife murdered their three children by drowning.

As the Smith story unfolded, Evers says he didn't see Susan Smith in the news reports; he saw his first wife. He didn't see the Smith children; he saw his own. The pictures of grief and shock were only too familiar to him and his family.

As painful as it was to watch, it provided a way for him to put to rest demons that had haunted him for years. Since the days when the death of his own children dominated the news in central Florida, he has agonized over the question that everyone seems to have asked since Susan Smith was arrested: How could a mother murder her own children?

No one, Evers says bluntly, will ever be able to answer that question. As expected, he has been pursued by the media and offered payment to tell his story. But he chose carefully the outlet for sharing his story saying, "It is one of God's grace and love and -- at last -- forgiveness." He chose to tell his story through an article in the November 1995 issue of "Home Life," a magazine for parents published by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

In 1979 Jerry and Dianne Evers were the young parents of three daughters -- four-year-old twins Sherrie and Carrie and two-year-old Mandy. Living in a fishing camp in one side of a duplex shared with her parents, they struggled, as they had since they were married when he was 17 and she was 16.

Mental health problems had plagued Dianne since 1973. When they resurfaced, she made weekly visits to a doctor in Orlando. However, she stopped the sessions at a time when she was having delusions of being the Virgin Mary and hearing voices she said were telling her what to do.

In October, when his wife's behavior became blatantly bizarre and erratic, Jerry pleaded with doctors to commit her to a state hospital, but they determined she should not be institutionalized and would be better off at home.

On New Year's Day, after telling relatives she was going to bathe the children, Dianne methodically drowned them one by one in a tub of water. Then she walked into the living room and told her uncle: "Call the sheriff. I've drowned the three babies. They're better off now because they're in heaven." While her uncle fought in vain to revive the children, another relative struggled to restrain Dianne, who kept trying to put them back in the water.

Evers remembers asking his former wife, "Why, why, why" did she do it.

Her response was irrational. "She told me because I couldn't afford to take care of them and they were going through pure hell."

A neighbor at the fishing camp remembers Evers as a hard-working \$192-a-week truck driver and a doting father who took the kids everywhere. Still, for many years, Dianne's words haunted him.

"She said she did it out of hatred for me," he says tearfully, in a barely audible voice.

Dianne was sent to the Florida state mental hospital in Chattahoochee where she remained under evaluation for almost a year until December 1980, when she was declared competent to stand trial.

In the February 1981 trial, she confessed her guilt and entered a plea of not guilty by reason of insanity. After a three-hour nonjury trial, the judge found her innocent and ordered she be returned to the hospital in Chattahoochee, where she has spent the last 14 years. She has tried to commit suicide at least four times, including one case when she asked a fellow inmate to drown her.

After the trial, Evers drifted, feeling his life had no meaning. He went from job to job. Dianne divorced him in 1982, and he enrolled in Trinity Baptist College in Jacksonville, Fla.

"That," says the 38-year-old Evers who accepted Christ as his Savior at age 22, "was my salvation."

At Trinity, he found grace but not peace. There were still too many unanswered questions. Evers agonized almost daily, trying to bring meaning to the tragedy: Why? Why me? and Could I have done more to prevent what happened?

He served on church staffs for two years and gave his testimony everywhere. Still, he sought forgiveness, but it eluded him; he couldn't forgive his wife and he couldn't let go of the blame and forgive himself. He wandered, still numbed, just existing.

Evers admits he lived in a sort of limbo until October 1987, when he met Dorrie Jacobs at a gospel concert for single adults in Baxley, Ga.

"It was love at first sight for both of us," Evers says with a smile. They were married two months later. Then came Jessica, now 6; Jerry Jr. "Bubba", 4; and Rebecca, 2.

"We've been happy ever since," Evers says, beaming while he describes life with his new family. "People ask me how I got to where I am from where I was, and I tell them I couldn't. It was God's grace. Only God's grace.

"God has blessed me so much, and all I have to do to know how blessed I am is to look around me at Dorrie and my kids."

But looking at his beautiful children can also strike fear in Evers, because of their strong resemblance to the children he lost.

"I was fearful for my new family for a long time, especially for my kids," says Evers. "The last time I talked with Dianne was at her trial in 1981, and she said then she would make me pay."

His former wife wrote a chilling letter to a Florida judge in 1989, asking to be released: "The court made a crucial mistake," she wrote. "I confess that I was not mentally ill before, during or after the offense." In the letter she also stated she knew she could not be retried because of the double jeopardy law.

In January 1992, after she was diagnosed as schizophrenic and housed in a Florida mental hospital for 12 years, a court ruled she could be moved to a halfway house. From there, she began petitioning regularly for her release.

"Can you believe that?" Jerry exclaimed, looking at the 1989 letter. "I was terrified for both myself and my family."

During the years he drifted, Evers was also angry his wife, who confessed to the killings from the beginning, spent only two days in jail.

"It's wrong," he said tearfully. "She has to pay her debt."

The loss of his children took the heart out of Evers, and he felt it was his mission to help other abused children. He deplored the insanity plea and fought his wife's release when her hearings came up every six months. He founded Concerned Citizens' Foundation, a victims' rights group, and lobbied to have the insanity plea defense modified.

Eventually he began rebuilding his life through what he calls his "ministry in law enforcement." He has worked for police departments in Nicholls, Ricon and Vidalia, Ga., as well as several sheriff's departments. Since March, he has been the chief of police of the one-man force in Canon in northeast Georgia.

"Law enforcement is definitely a ministry I was called to," says Evers, whose life has finally come together so completely that he wears a chief's badge on his belt when he's speaking in churches, and he carries a Bible on the front seat of his squad car when he's on patrol.

His testimony to church and civic groups alike has always been filled with the beauty and comfort of God's grace. Yet he still could not forgive Dianne or himself. He worked hard to put the past behind and to turn the pain into something positive. But the fight became increasingly difficult, and Dianne's hearing in November lasted one hour longer than her trial in 1981.

"That's when I began asking God to deliver me," says Evers. "He had to."

"We each have to find it in our hearts to forgive because that's what the Bible teaches us. I've got such peace about me now; the burden has finally rolled away."

Then came the tragic drowning of two little boys in South Carolina.

Seeing the Smith case unfold, Evers realized he had been too traumatized in 1980 to feel anything. Watching the events in South Carolina on television was like being there and reliving the tragedy he had experienced but was too numb to feel. It was almost too painful to watch, but as he watched he began to feel healing and to forgive himself.

Then he made a conscious effort to forgive his ex-wife. God's grace, which had been so real and brought him through such a tragedy, flooded him.

"I am still for the death penalty. I believe if you take a life, your life is forfeited. I noticed David Smith made some statements that were almost identical to those I made. I can truly say I know what he means when he says his wife took something away from him that he will never get over. I feel especially sorry for David Smith, and I understand his writing the book he has been criticized for, because it's therapeutic. I've tried to make myself available to David if he needs me and wants to talk."

Today, Evers understands with certainty God's grace and his love and, now finally, his forgiveness.

The exact date this happened was Jan. 17, 1995. He remembers that even more clearly than he remembers New Year's Day 1980.

The act of forgiveness has not eradicated the painful memories, but it has freed him to move beyond the nightmare of 1980.

--30--

Mich Livingston is a free-lance writer from Buford, Ga. This article was reprinted with permission from the November issue of Home Life magazine.

New Orleans Seminary to offer accredited
social work/Christian education degree

Baptist Press
12/13/95

By Debbie Moore

DECATUR, Ga. (BP)--Beginning August 1996, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary will offer a joint graduate degree with Louisiana State University in social work and Christian education.

The dual program was approved Dec. 12 by the seminary trustee executive committee during a regularly scheduled meeting, held at the seminary's North Georgia Campus.

"This new dual degree program will require a minimum of changes on our part," said Robert R. Mathis, chairman of the seminary's division of Christian education ministries. For instance, next fall NOBTS students interested in Christian social work will carry simultaneous enrollment with LSU, but still will take all required classes on the NOBTS campus.

NOBTS began offering classes in Christian social work in 1955. Students who desired certification in social work would first complete a two-year graduate degree at NOBTS specializing in social work (originally the master of religious education degree, MRE, but since 1989, the master of arts in Christian education degree, MACE). Then after graduation they enrolled at either LSU, Tulane University or Southern University of New Orleans to work on a two-year master of social work degree (MSW). Students were permitted to stay in seminary housing through both degree programs.

This new dual degree program will take a total of three years to complete. On graduation day, students will receive two diplomas: the MACE degree from New Orleans Seminary and the MSW degree from Louisiana State. Both schools are accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to offer their respective degrees. New Orleans Seminary is also accredited by the Association of Theological Schools.

"The obvious advantage of this dual degree program for our students is that they will be able to earn an accredited MSW degree and an accredited MACE degree in three years instead of four," said Billy K. Smith, NOBTS provost and new interim president.

--more--

The MSW/MACE degree program will create a reciprocal arrangement between the two schools. LSU students may enroll in the dual degree program and carry simultaneous enrollment with NOBTS, providing they meet application requirements as detailed in the seminary's graduate catalog. Also, professors will be exchanged between the two schools as long as each meets the other's standards.

"We in the Christian education division are excited about the development of this dual degree program with LSU," said Jeanine Bozeman, professor of social work at NOBTS since 1985. "The joint degree will be a professional advantage for MACE students who wish to serve Christ through the profession of social work."

"Our profession's foundation rests on a Judeo-Christian ethic that believes in the inherent worth of all persons and the notion of responsibility for others," said Kenneth I. Millar, dean of the school of social work at LSU.

"In addition," he said, "as more and more people turn to their church for help and assistance, the advanced training provided by the MSW degree will make clergy and church-based counselors more effective in their work with individuals, couples, families and groups."

Students interested in this new dual degree program for the fall 1996 semester must meet a March 1 application deadline.

--30--

Small Kentucky town raises
barriers against homelessness

By Ken Walker

Baptist Press
12/13/95

WILLIAMSBURG, Ky. (BP)--Land acquisition has begun here for a floodwall that will eventually protect local residents from occasional swells in the Cumberland River.

But barriers have already been raised against homelessness in this southern Kentucky town of 5,500, thanks to a pair of missions started by Southern Baptists in recent years.

Emergency Christian Ministries (ECM) provides short-term housing, food and other assistance at a former motel that it acquired in November of 1991. Meanwhile, three-year-old Cedaridge Ministries supplies food and building materials to citizens throughout southern Kentucky.

Janus Jones, a Williamsburg native, believes that makes this community unique in the annals of small-town America.

"I don't know of any other place that has two outreaches to homeless and needy people," said Jones, director of missions for both the Mount Zion and Union Baptist associations. "It helps bring down barriers between churches, too."

For example, he said, besides the many Southern Baptist churches that donate to ECM, financial help comes from Freewill Baptist, Methodist and Church of God congregations. These aren't strictly SBC projects, he added, but community-wide efforts.

Jones said ECM has a three-fold purpose:

-- To serve local people. "It's far higher than we ever dreamed it would be," he said.

-- To help transients who shuttle off Interstate 75, which cuts past town 20 miles north of the Tennessee state line.

-- To assist churches with meeting people's needs.

The agency was founded in December of 1990, after Bill Woodward felt God leading him to find a house trailer or some other kind of facility for the homeless.

"The Lord saved me and God gives us a caring heart," said Woodward, evangelism and outreach director for Mountain Ash Baptist Church. "I had seen some folks in the Williamsburg area having to sleep in their automobiles."

Jones said when he and Woodward approached city council about using federal funds to acquire an old, 12-unit motel, ECM only had \$18 in its bank account.

"Only Bill Woodward could go to city council with \$18 and expect to buy a motel," he laughed. "They said if we raised \$600, they would give us the money (a \$50,000 federal grant earmarked for helping the homeless). We (eventually) got \$100,000 to renovate it and we were in the homeless shelter business."

--more--

Emergency Christian helps those who lose their homes for a variety of reasons, including fires, evictions, family disputes, spouse abuse, car trouble, lack of money, or weather emergencies.

During November the agency helped more than 500 persons, nearly half of them children, and provided shelter to 61 people. It provided clothing for 365 individuals and food to 175, served 667 hot meals and distributed 31 emergency food boxes.

ECM coordinates the town's Christmas basket project each December, too. Acting as a liaison with various social service agencies helps avoid duplication, Jones said. This year's goal is 1,200 baskets; Jones hopes for a last-minute donation like the one last year that allowed them to add ham and rolls to each basket.

ECM also offers the gospel. Through its witness 43 people have accepted Christ as their Savior over four years. "We would like to see more people saved," Woodward said. "One of our main desires is to lead people to the Lord. But you've got to meet physical needs before you can meet spiritual needs."

While most of ECM's assistance goes to citizens from the immediate area, Cedaridge's mission extends into surrounding Whitley County and five other counties in the region.

Presently located in an old warehouse, the ministry grew out of a 1992 fundraiser for the Mount Zion Association's youth ministry. The effort became so successful the youth raised \$5,000 in one year and 45 teens accepted Jesus as Savior at special Saturday-night youth services, Decker said.

This spiritual renewal sparked the effort to provide assistance to the needy, he added. Since it began, Cedaridge has supplied people with more than two million pounds of food, 1.5 million roofing squares and 480,000 pounds of building supplies, 1,500 pieces of furniture and 178,000 pounds of personal care and home products.

It has helped churches, too, furnishing various congregations with more than 88,000 pounds of building materials.

Through a cooperative effort with the SBC Home Mission Board, last summer 13 groups from 7 states visited the area to help build 3 homes and remodel 9 others. Decker said in some cases they renovate homes for landlords, but only if the owners agree not to raise the rent.

"We try to help people from getting homeless, and if they are, to get them out into a home of their own," said Decker, who pastors Corn Creek Baptist Church 12 miles from town. "And Bill (Woodward) helps them in between. I think it's made people sleep a little better at night."

Like those it helps, both outreaches exist on shoestring budgets.

At ECM, Woodward only draws a part-time salary. The man who stays at the center receives a small salary and free room and board, while volunteers do all the cooking and cleaning.

Decker is Cedaridge's only paid employee. The rest of the staff comes from church volunteers and people doing court-ordered community service. And in Decker's case, the only salary he has received is a housing allowance, supplemented by his weekly \$75 pastoral salary.

Though he relies on occasional odd jobs to help pay the bills, Decker said faith is all part of the work done by these community ministries. And the results are very meaningful during the Christmas season.

"Especially this time of year when there are so many suicides," he said. "The depression here is not as bad because there is some help available. It gives them hop. It really assures them they will have a place to live, no matter what."

--30--

Ken Walker is a freelance writer in Louisville, Ky.

Heaven, relationships headline
annual discipleship, family agenda By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
12/13/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Heaven, a man's relationship to God and a couple's relationship with each other served as headliner topics at the annual meeting of state and national discipleship and family enrichment leaders in Nashville, Dec. 6-8.

--more--

Three authors, Gary Smalley, Patrick Morley and Joni Eareckson Tada, spoke about their respective books to be released in 1996 by the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division.

Tada, a quadriplegic who suffered paralysis in a 1967 diving accident, said she never thought about God or heaven very often until she was injured.

"When I was on my feet I never really thought much about heaven," Tada, author of "Heaven: Your Real Home," to be released in June 1996, said. "You had to die to get there, and I didn't much like that."

"We get so caught up in the here and now" that heaven doesn't become a part of reality for many people, she said.

Tada, whose eight-unit study book emphasizes how a person's life on earth affects his experiences in heaven, said before her accident she was "put off by the gawky, awkward images of heaven."

Following paralysis, Tada, an artist who paints pictures using her mouth to hold the brush, said she was able to dismiss those images and replace them with "the incredible hope of heaven."

"The hope of heaven is meant to bless our path now," she said.

Tada's book is designed to give readers reasons to worship, praise, obey and serve God. It warns against not using everyday opportunities as preparation for heaven, and it answers questions for those who wonder why they suffer or why they feel as if they don't "fit in" on earth.

"Why is it that those of us who suffer loss look forward to heaven above?" Tada asked. "Hurts and hardships make us want to go there. The art of suffering is the art of readjusting our expectations."

Patrick Morley, of Orlando, Fla., and author of "The Seven Seasons of a Man's Life" told discipleship and family ministry leaders: "One observation I have about how men are doing in this day is that they are mentally, morally, psychologically and spiritually tired."

Morley's book is a collection of studies that help men sort out their lives and give them categories or seasons to think about themselves, where they are and where they are hoping to go with their lives.

"Men have a lingering feeling something isn't quite right with their lives. They feel their life is coming unglued and a lot of times it just doesn't seem like anybody cares about them," he said.

Morley describes the seasons of a man's life as being:

- the seasons of reflection and building (challenging men to have personal relationships with Jesus and submitting all other relationships to Christ);
- the seasons of crises and renewal (challenging men to face the causes and symptoms of burnout and helping them understand how God can renew and restore their lives);
- the seasons of rebuilding (challenging men to examine their spiritual lives and exercise spiritual discipline); and
- the seasons of suffering and success (challenging men to understand suffering and to claim God's success for their lives).

"A culture -- commonly called the rat race -- has been created in America that requires more energy than men have to give," Morley said. "Men are under enormous pressure, and men under pressure make mistakes."

"They don't make them on purpose, but they see themselves as failing morally, spiritually, mentally and financially. Often the problem is that Jesus is not Lord in their lives."

The center of a man's life must be his personal relationship to Jesus, said Morley, who describes his "business" as seeking to reach "every man in America with compelling opportunity to be transformed by Jesus Christ."

"A man "must love God with passion and intensity and every ounce of his energy," Morley said.

"This is relevant information for you because these men are sitting in the pews that you serve," Morley told the church leaders. "The men in your pews need this information and they need this intensity."

The center of our lives must be our personal relationship to Jesus Christ ... We must love God with passion and intensity and every ounce of our energy, he said.

In a related matter, "Stand Firm," a monthly devotional magazine for men to be introduced in April 1996, can help men put God at the center of their lives, according to Tony Rankin, editor of the new devotional guide. The magazine is meant to be used as a tool for men who are interested in growing spiritually by applying the Bible to their daily experiences, he said.

Meanwhile, Gary Smalley, who is writing a 12-session workbook designed to help couples understand how marital happiness relates to them individually and to their relationship, said "couples who stay in love have four things in common."

In his book, "Making Love Last Forever" to be released in mid 1996, Smalley, who is an author, speaker, counselor and television personality from Branson, Mo., listed qualities that better enable couples to have "more satisfying, loving and longer-lasting marriages." These couples: 1) agree to learn and grow; 2) outline a family constitution involving acceptable behaviors; 3) communicate effectively; and 4) get involved in small group support.

Smalley, who believes the years from seven to 10 are the crucial ones in a marriage, said couples divorce for four basic reasons.

Those are: 1) one or both partners withdrawing during conflict; 2) engaging in arguments that escalate uncontrollably; 3) failing to validate a mate; and 4) believing a mate's motives are something other than what they actually are.

"It doesn't matter how much you love each other, but how you do on a daily basis of resolving conflicts," Smalley said. "Anger is so destructive.

"The bottom line of healthy relationships is the word, 'honor.' You must highly value your mate."

--30--

(BP) photos to accompany this story are posted in the SBCNet newsroom and are being mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press. A list of related resources produced by the discipleship and family development division is posted in the SBCNet newsroom.

HOUSE MAIL

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, TN 37234

F
I
R
S
T

C
L
A
S
S

**Southern Baptist Library
and Archives**