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February 9, 1996

96-23

TENNESSEE--Schedule of meetings for week of Feb. 11-17.

GEORGIA--Volunteers being recruited for Crossover New Orleans.

ATLANTA--Newspaper reporter: Crossover exemplifies Southern Baptists.

WASHINGTON--CLC praises cyberporn measure in new law; ACLU files suit.

ILLINOIS--Nationwide evangelism network centers around associations.

CALENDAR

TENNESSEE--Foreign Mission Board trustee meeting, Feb. 12-14, Knoxville.

ATLANTA--Youth Ministry National Conference 5, Feb. 9-13; "True Love Waits -- Thru the Roof" celebration, Feb. 11-12.

Volunteers being recruited
for Crossover New Orleans

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
2/9/96

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--Volunteers for the June 8 witnessing blitz before this year's Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting should sign up by May 1, said Crossover New Orleans organizers.

People who do not meet the May 1 deadline can participate, but early registration gives leaders time to match volunteers' interests with local church needs, said Don Smith of the Home Mission Board evangelism staff.

Greater New Orleans Baptist Association covers five parishes, or counties, with 1.2 million people, said associational missionary Fred Dyess. Only 3 percent of residents are Southern Baptists. Currently the association has more missions (83) than constituted churches (65). Only 29 of the churches have more than 100 in Sunday school, and none of them have 1,000 in Sunday school, Dyess said.

With so many new and small congregations, Crossover New Orleans "could really be a boost" to area churches, said Louisiana Baptists' evangelism director Wayne Jenkins.

The pre-convention evangelism thrust began in 1989 and has grown to include block parties, door-to-door witnessing and street evangelism. Each activity is designed to present the gospel and discover prospects for local churches.

During block parties, churches offer free food and entertainment to attract local residents. Door-to-door activities involve teams of two asking residents about their religious beliefs and sharing the plan of salvation. Street evangelism includes performers such as chalk artists and puppet teams who share the gospel through their art. Dyess noted New Orleans is especially suited to street evangelism because sidewalk artists are popular there.

This year volunteers are sought for a prison ministry as well, Jenkins said. Volunteers will go to a women's prison and a youth facility to visit inmates in their cells. Baptists have established ministries in the places to be visited, and Crossover activities will undergird those ministries, Jenkins said.

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Southern Baptists can participate as individuals, a group from one church or a group from several churches, Jenkins said. Participating in Crossover New Orleans would be an inexpensive, short mission trip for people who could not be involved in a longer project, Jenkins noted.

Goals for Crossover New Orleans include evangelism, witness training and church starting.

"This is an opportunity to reach thousands for Christ in a single day," Smith said. "Not many times in your life do you get the opportunity to do that."

Jenkins added, "We really hope to get the gospel to literally thousands of people and, out of that, a large number will come to know Christ." He said he also hopes two churches will be started from prospects discovered during Crossover.

Crossover New Orleans is the first phase of the association's goal to present the gospel in every local household, Dyess said. "We hope to have a large number of people saved who we can disciple and get into our churches." He said the training will strengthen local churches and missions, as well as challenge out-of-town volunteers to be more consistent witnesses at home.

Most Crossover New Orleans events will take place Saturday, June 8, with volunteer training on Friday, June 7. To register, write the Louisiana Baptist Convention evangelism office, P.O. Box 311, Alexandria, LA 71309-0311. Include your name, address, phone number, church name and how you would like to participate.

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EDITORS' NOTE: The following article in The State, Columbia, S.C., was written after Crossover Atlanta, which preceded the 1995 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in the Georgia Dome.

Newspaper reporter: Crossover
exemplifies Southern Baptists By Jennifer Graham

Baptist Press
2/9/96

ATLANTA (BP)--They came, they saw, they witnessed.

Not witnessed, as in "looked on passively." Witnessed as in "bore witness to a living God who can change lives."

It's not an unusual thing to do if you're a Southern Baptist. After all, they are evangelicals, meaning they evangelize. And they found plenty of potential converts in the homeless people who ambled around the Georgia Dome, figuring they had hit the jackpot of soft hearts with deep pockets.

But the major witnessing, the Witness-A-Rama as it were, took place in the days before the Southern Baptist Convention, before the 50 or so reporters arrived in town hungry for a story. So you might not know about Crossover Atlanta.

The year before, it was Crossover Orlando; before that, Crossover Houston. Everywhere the Southern Baptist Convention meets, it first has a "Crossover."

And many Baptists come just for the Crossover, a weekend evangelism blitz designed to coat the city in God.

In Atlanta, the Baptists held 23 block parties, inviting the neighborhood for food, entertainment and fellowship. At block parties this month, the SBC reported 558 professions of faith.

Then there were the neighborhood surveys. Teams of two went door-to-door, asking anyone pleasant enough to answer the questions if they were involved in a church, had any spiritual needs or any prayer requests. If folks were willing, the Baptists shared their testimonies and the plan of salvation.

The results: 372 professions of faith and 1,406 prospects.

Members of one church in Bowling Green, Ky., drove five hours Friday to participate in Crossover Atlanta. They did neighborhood surveys for four hours on Saturday then drove back to Bowling Green. They never set foot in the Georgia Dome.

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"We'll go back enthused," layman Johnny Hunt told Baptist Press. "It benefits our church as much as any church we help."

All in all, more than 1,400 people made professions of faith in Jesus Christ during Crossover Atlanta, according to the SBC. It's best to view the numbers skeptically; after all, sincerity can be faked.

But 1,400; 200; 4,000 -- do the numbers really matter? Fact is, Southern Baptists were out there in droves, doing good work. Truly believing the "lost" people on the streets of Atlanta will suffer eternally in hell if they die without Jesus, they were doing their best to make sure that doesn't happen. They used vacation days to do it, put hundreds of miles on their cars, paid for their own hotel rooms, and all in the sweltering heat.

They say the Southern Baptist Convention really only exists three days a year -- when the messengers, or delegates, are assembled in some cavernous assembly hall, clutching Bibles and ballots. The rest of the time, there isn't really an SBC, just Southern Baptist churches, which are, after all, autonomous. The convention exists for the churches, not the churches for the convention.

All true. But should you ever need to explain to a non-Baptist what the Southern Baptist Convention is all about, don't take them to the convention. Crossover Wherever -- that's what it's all about.

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Graham is a staff writer for The State newspaper. Reprinted with permission.

CLC praises cyberporn measure
in new law; ACLU files suit

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
2/9/96

WASHINGTON (BP)--Anti-pornography organizations rejoiced at President Clinton's signing of a telecommunications reform bill, while the ACLU immediately went to court in an attempt to halt a controversial cyberporn provision in the legislation.

The president signed into law Feb. 8 the Telecommunications Reform Act, which, among other effects, will open the door for more competition among telephone companies and within the cable television industry.

Included in the new law is a provision which prohibits the distribution through on-line computer services of indecent material to minors. Those found guilty of knowingly disseminating pornography may be imprisoned for a maximum of two years and forced to pay a fine. The legislation would apply whether the material was sent directly to a minor or displayed in a manner available to a minor.

Under the legislation, on-line services and access providers are not held liable for providing access to systems or networks over which they have no control.

"Everyone concerned about the pornographic pollution of our society through the nation's telecommunications and computer networks should rejoice over the telecom reform bill's adoption," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "While this bill's adoption does not end the war against pornography, it does represent a significant victory in the struggle to protect children from the moral cancer of pornography and obscenity."

The ACLU and 19 others filed suit in a Philadelphia federal court within hours after the president signed the bill. The suit argued the cyberporn provision violates the First Amendment's protection of expression and asked for a temporary restraining order against that portion of the law.

"Nothing less than the future of free expression in the United States is at stake here," said Ira Glasser, the ACLU's executive director, in a written statement. "By passing this legislation, Congress has misunderstood a promising new medium and has, once again, turned its back on the First Amendment."

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Joining the ACLU in the suit were Planned Parenthood Federation of America and some journalism and electronic communications organizations.

Sen. Dan Coats, R.-Ind., defended the provision he crafted with Sen. James Exon, D.-Neb.

The cyberporn provision was "reviewed and analyzed by legal teams who have successfully argued First Amendment cases before the Supreme Court. It is their decided opinion that the anti-pornography provision will pass a constitutional legal test," Coats said in a prepared statement.

"It is time to again underscore the immense importance of giving parents the legal muscle they need to keep this raw, degrading material away from young eyes and young minds," Coats said.

Final passage of the bill came by a 91-5 vote in the Senate and a 414-16 vote in the House of Representatives.

The American Family Association opposed the cyberporn language because it exempted on-line services and access providers.

Among supporters of the legislation were the Family Research Council and the National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families.

Also included in the reform law is a requirement that a "V chip" be included in most new television sets so parents can block programs rated too violent for children.

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Nationwide evangelism network
centers around associations

By Ferrell Foster

Baptist Press
2/9/96

STREATOR CAMP, Ill. (BP)--Quietly, without publicity, a group of Christians called The Network is binding together people committed to creating "a network of associations of churches which contextually present the Gospel to every person."

It is an effort that in just over a year has attracted about 250 members from across denominational lines, said Bob Bailey, missionary for Southeastern Indiana Baptist Association and director of the project. About 75 percent of members are Southern Baptists, but people from groups such as Promise Keepers, Campus Crusade for Christ, the Jesus video project and the Christian Women's Network also have joined.

Bailey came to Illinois Feb. 6 to share the concept with the state's associational directors of missions. A two-and-a-half-hour presentation centered around "telling your story," as many of the DOMs told about their ministries.

"It helped us to see where the person's dreams and desires were, what they would like to see accomplished, and that was helpful," said Gerald Steffy, DOM for Metro Peoria Baptist Association and outgoing president of the Illinois DOM Conference. And many of the Illinoisans signed up to be part of The Network.

Similar story-telling events have been held in other locations and are the main avenue of entry into The Network. "Most people in The Network have come in this way," Bailey told the Illinois Baptist. "Others have been brought in through an extended conversation with a network member."

The effort had its genesis in a November 1994 meeting in Orlando, Fla., at the behest of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Bailey said. A "diverse" group of Southern Baptist national, state and association leaders eventually sought an answer to the question, "How can you reach every county in the United States in the simplest way?" The answer they came up with: through directors of missions, because every county has one.

The basic plan is to enlist DOMs, who then will go and seek to enlist pastors in their association through the same process of first "telling your story" and then committing to the evangelistic mission of the group.

"I'm convinced that in the great majority of our associations, pastors don't know each other," Bailey said. "They don't know another man's struggles, nor do they know his hopes and dreams. Story-telling is a path to both.

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"I don't believe a strategy to reach the people in a given area will be effective without the cooperation of pastors who know and love each other," he added.

The Network is different from some other evangelistic efforts in that it is "idea-driven," not program-driven, Bailey said. The founders also decided membership in The Network would require a "degree of commitment."

The link that now binds The Network together is a monthly newsletter in which Bailey writes a brief message, "Ideas in the Works" are shared by members and other brief information and listings of new members are included.

Bailey said The Network has three requirements of members: 1) that they do their best to lead their associations to share the gospel with every person, 2) that they submit evangelistic ideas that are effective in their areas and 3) that they respond with more information about their idea to anyone in The Network who asks for help.

In 1998, Bailey said he foresees The Network moving beyond the idea-sharing stage into more practical use of the ideas. Now, he said, is "a time of sowing."

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