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February 15, 1996

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'Pentecost every four days,'
Willis tells FMB trustees

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press
2/15/96

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries witnessed a Pentecost harvest of souls every four days during 1995, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees were told during their Feb. 12-14 meeting in Knoxville, Tenn.

At the meeting, trustees appointed the FMB's first new missionaries of 1996 -- 29 candidates headed to 16 countries -- in an emotional service at Knoxville's Wallace Memorial Baptist Church. The church is named in honor of Bill Wallace, a Southern Baptist missionary doctor tortured to death in a Chinese prison 45 years ago.

Trustees also voted to ask the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee to devote a larger percentage of the convention's receipts to the cause of global missions and to address a crisis in funding for hunger and relief ministries overseas.

"We are in a harvest time, and it's time we give glory to God for all the mighty and wonderful things he is doing around the world," Avery Willis told a capacity crowd in the 1,200-seatsanctuary of Wallace Memorial Baptist Church. Willis is FMB senior vice president for overseas operations.

The 287,806 baptisms registered in 1995 by overseas Baptists and their FMB missionary partners was the equivalent of a Pentecost harvest every four days, Willis said. He referred to the event recorded in Acts 2, in which 3,000 people accepted Christ as Savior in one day.

The 2,612 churches started in 1995 represent a 20 percent increase over the previous year and include 367 congregations among "World A" people groups, which have had little or no access to the gospel, Willis said. One country, with only 65 known believers a few years ago, now has an estimated 200,000 Christians, he said.

"We're seeing that once we take the gospel into these darkened places where it's never gone, people are responding," Willis said. "It's amazing. We never expected this to happen this quickly."

The appointment service at the church named for the martyred physician, who grew up in Knoxville, coincided with the re-release of a biography on his life. "Bill Wallace of China," first published in 1963, quickly became a classic and inspired hundreds of young people to consider God's call to overseas mission service.

Ted Warren, executive vice president of the Baptist Sunday School Board, presented each of the new missionaries with a copy of the book, written by Jesse Fletcher, former director of the FMB's mission support division and now chancellor of Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas. The appointees included two physicians and three nurses headed for medical assignments overseas.

During their business session, trustees adopted a proposal asking the SBC Executive Committee to increase the percentage the Foreign Mission Board receives through the Cooperative Program, the convention's unified budget plan. Half of the Cooperative Program basic allocation budget now goes to overseas work, a total of \$68.3 million in 1995.

However, needs and opportunities have far outstripped receipts, said board President Jerry A. Rankin.

"We are grateful for the wonderful support Southern Baptists have given to the cause of world missions," Rankin said. "But God has been calling more and more people to serve him overseas, and we live in a world where 1.7 billion people have never had an opportunity to hear the gospel.

"Without a dramatic increase in funding, we are looking at having to cut back when we need to be increasing our efforts."

The trustee statement says since "the purpose of restructuring the Southern Baptist Convention was to focus a larger proportion of the denomination's energies and resources on world missions, (we) respectfully urge the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to budget a dramatic increase in the percentage of Cooperative Program allocated to the Foreign Mission Board so we can continue to provide the funds to send those whom God has called to his service around the world."

The request is to be presented to the program and budget subcommittee of the Executive Committee, which will meet Feb. 19-21 in Nashville, Tenn.

Trustees also endorsed a plan to heighten Southern Baptist awareness of critical needs in hunger and relief projects around the world. While ministry opportunities are at an all-time high, funds on hand are so low that projects are only being approved at half the requested level.

The plan, which must be approved by the convention's Christian Life Commission, calls for the Foreign Mission Board to assist in publicizing hunger and relief needs. Human needs projects play a strategic role in creating opportunities for Christian ministry in countries closed to traditional missionary work.

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HMB volunteerism
continues to rise

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
2/15/96

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--The number of Southern Baptists serving through Home Mission Board volunteer opportunities continues to rise annually. An estimated 81,300 volunteers served in Christian ministries through the agency last year, up 1.8 percent from 1994.

Youth volunteers comprised the largest category, with 39,931 individuals -- up by more than 1,700 compared to 1994. Also increasing were the number of college volunteers, with 3,745, up nearly 800. Mission Service Corps volunteers grew by 177 to a total 2,193.

More than 24,500 adults served last year in short-term volunteer projects coordinated through the Home Mission Board. Volunteers coordinated through the agency's evangelism section and language church starting division totaled an estimated 10,900.

Volunteers serve in a variety of ways, from construction and summer missions activities to church starting and missionary support. More information about volunteer missions opportunities is available from local Baptist associations, state volunteer coordinators or the Home Mission Board at (800) HMB-VOLS. Sunday, Feb. 25, 1996, is Volunteers in Missions Sunday for Southern Baptists.

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Home missions organizers
say volunteers are vital

By David Winfrey

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--Volunteers are a vital component of missions work in America, say volunteer leaders at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

"We've had missionaries who have just said they couldn't begin to do as much as they do without volunteers," said Mike Robertson, director of the HMB's student missions department.

One survey showed about one-third of Southern Baptist missionaries and mission pastors use volunteers, Robertson said. Volunteer labor often accomplishes in one week what might take a mission church or missionary all summer, he said.

Elmer Goble, who coordinates volunteer mission teams, agreed. "A missionary can dream and feel called of God to do something. But if God didn't call volunteers to minister, all it would be is dreaming."

Byproducts of volunteers' work are seen in their personal lives and in the church's missions activity, Robertson said. "Almost every summer missionary has a significant experience that summer they say has changed their life."

Surveys show about 50 percent of Southern Baptists' current missions personnel got their first missions experience as a youth missions volunteer, he said.

Mission trips offer opportunities for God to speak to workers, Goble agreed. "The interesting thing is that even though they go as a group, each person gets a different blessing."

And church-wide volunteer mission trips regularly result in greater understanding of missions and stronger financial giving to missions, Robertson said. Workers better understand what they are giving to, he said. "I don't think the pastor is aware of the impact beforehand of what the mission trip will mean."

Needs for volunteers are especially great in areas outside the South and in urban areas, said Bob Mills, director of the HMB Mission Service Corps department. MSC volunteers serve for four months or longer.

"The needs are great in new work areas, but the resources aren't there to get the work done," Mills said. In urban areas, Mills encourages people to use a secular job skill as a way to support their mission calling. "It's a wonderful way for the missionary to be infused into the city to meet people, as well as start or support churches."

Called "tentmaking," the idea is modeled after the apostle Paul, who used his skills at making tents to support his missionary journeys. Tentmaking also is a way for Christians to combine their religious beliefs with their marketplace lives, Mills added.

"It used to be, 'I can't do this because I'm still working.' Now they have the opportunity of making a location change, doing the same thing, but doing it in a mission context," he said. "Their lifestyle probably won't change at all, but their focus changes big-time."

More than 5,000 professions of faith were recorded last year as a result of volunteers' efforts, Mills noted. "Our folks are making a difference for the kingdom."

More information about Southern Baptist volunteer opportunities in America are available from local Baptist associations, state volunteer coordinators or the Home Mission Board at (800) HMB-VOLS. Sunday, Feb. 25, 1996, is Volunteers in Missions Sunday for Southern Baptists.

Volunteer opportunities
abound in home missions

By David Winfrey

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--Below is a list of volunteerism opportunities offered through the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board:

-- Mission Service Corps. For adults serving four months or longer in a variety of long-term missions assignments. MSC volunteers serving two years or longer are counted as home missionaries and included in the Woman's Missionary Union prayer calendar.

-- Missions on Short Term. Individually or as a group, MOST volunteers are adults serving between one week and four months.

-- Student summer missionaries. This 10-week summer program is for students who have completed their freshman year of college. Most students work alongside a missionary or mission pastor. Financial assistance available through a weekly \$60 allowance as well as transportation, housing and meals. (Deadline: three months prior to service.)

-- Student semester missionaries. Similar to summer missionaries, the program can last longer, is not restricted to the summer and is for students who have completed their sophomore year of college. (Deadline: three months prior to service.)

-- Innovators. Another 10-week program for student volunteers; primarily during the summer. No financial assistance is available, but students are helped finding part-time work. Most Innovators are encouraged to use their jobs as a part of their missions effort to reach into their community. (Deadline: three months prior to service.)

-- Special Projects Other Than Summer. SPOTS volunteer assignments can last between one week and one year. (Deadline: six to eight weeks prior to service.)

The Foreign Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Woman's Missionary Union also offer Southern Baptists volunteer opportunities. More information about volunteerism is available from local Baptist associations, the state Baptist convention offices and the Home Mission Board at 1-800-HMB-VOLS.

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Bosnian family welcomed
with just 7 days' notice

By Connie Davis

Baptist Press
2/15/96

KINGSPORT, Tenn. (BP)--"Snow in America. Snow in Bosnia. Bosnia sent us snow," said Mirzet Tarakcija to new friends. "My family is happy."

Tarakcija is one of the few adults in Kingsport, Tenn., who was glad to see the snow from recent snow storms. It reminded him of his home in Bosnia, which he left Dec. 6 with his wife and two children for asylum in the United States.

The family's arrival in Kingsport the next day was the end of "four years of being on the run" for Tarakcija, 29, and his family who, as Muslims, had been targeted by Bosnian Serbs for ethnic cleansing, said Mitch Whisnant of Kingsport's First Baptist Church.

The church sponsored the Tarakcijas, who had been living in a refugee camp, with just seven days' notice, but it has been "a wonderful experience," said Whisnant, the church's minister of education.

The church learned about the family from Bridge Refugee and Sponsorship Services based in Knoxville. The original sponsor had pulled out and an emergency situation was developing. The missions committee and staff at the Kingsport church responded by presenting the need during the next Sunday evening worship service -- and the congregation agreed to help the family.

After seven weeks of relating to the Tarakcijas, church members have decided they have received a special family, said Whisnant, adding the Tarakcijas are working hard at their new life.

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Mirzet and his wife, Jasminka, can hold conversations in English, which is amazing for the short time they have been studying the language. Communication is still assisted by a translator recommended by Bridge -- a former Bosnian who works at Tennessee Eastman and volunteers his service.

Mirzet, a stone mason, is working at a vending machine company, repairing machines. Jasminka, 26, cares for their children who are 4 years and 8 months old, respectively. And the family, who weren't active in their Muslim faith, attends activities at First Baptist Church, although that is not a requirement of the relationship, Whisnant noted. They follow Scripture reading in a Serbo-Croatian Bible, as their language is known.

The Tarakcijas aren't the only ones who have been learning. Church members have learned some Serbo-Croatian words and phrases. And they have learned about the Bosnian culture. New friends of the family were appalled to learn after leaving the family to celebrate New Year's Eve alone that it is a holiday for large gatherings of friends in Bosnia.

Church members have learned to appreciate Bosnian cooking, since the family is very hospitable and likes to show their thanks by sharing food Jasminka has cooked. Baklava has become a favorite. And Tennesseans have compiled anecdotes which naturally arise when two languages and cultures try to meld.

A bag of wet clothes which needed drying nearly got delivered to a thrift store by one church member when communication broke down, Whisnant recounted. And he's sure the Tarakcijas have some experiences they will share as they learn the language better. Mirzet has kept a journal of his experiences. To keep all church members informed, the church has planned a dialogue with Mirzet during an upcoming Wednesday evening service.

The church also has learned from other local churches who have sponsored Bosnian families. Colonial Heights Baptist Church has sponsored a family and Litz Manor Baptist Church will receive their family soon. And a Lutheran church relocated Jasminka's brother and his family. The small Bosnian community in Kingsport has made the family's transition easier.

First Baptist, Kingsport, hasn't sponsored a refugee family in many years, Whisnant said, but the experience has been a good one. Although many of its members are involved in missions work, this experience has "pulled missions together for this family."

The challenges of being a sponsor have been distilled by the response of church members, Whisnant explained. They formed seven committees to direct the sponsorship. They include housing, employment, English, food, health, clothing/furnishings and transportation. In addition, members have served as coordinators and as financial advisors. Others have volunteered and many have given money to add to the \$2,000 the missions committee budgeted for the effort. Other funding came from Bridge.

Although the official relationship between the church and family can end at three months, Whisnant predicted the relationship has just begun.

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SBCNet climbs
to 7,500 users

Baptist Press
2/15/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The number of people participating in SBCNet, the Southern Baptist data communications network, climbed to 7,500 users on Feb. 12, a 50 percent increase since June 1995 when the 5,000th subscriber went on line.

The number of on-line hours per week within SBCNet has increased to 2,440 since its beginning in April 1991.

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SBCNet, which is coordinated by the Baptist Sunday School Board, provides services including supplemental teaching helps for adult and youth Sunday school lessons in three curriculum series; Baptist Press; CompassionNet, the Foreign Mission Board's worldwide electronic prayer network; Home Mission Board Library; bulletin boards for selected seminaries and state Baptist conventions and a variety of other services aimed at specific interests of church staff people and church members.

In 1995 the network expanded to three forums, adding more message and library areas and providing for expansion in services for the future.

SBCNet may be accessed by using a computer, modem and a membership kit distributed free by the Sunday School Board. Kits, which provide access to services of CompuServe and SBCNet, contain software and account information. New members receive 10 free hours of CompuServe and one free month of SBCNet. The kits are available in DOS, Macintosh and Windows versions. The flat-rate cost of SBCNet, \$7.95 monthly, and CompuServe, \$9.95 monthly, provides users the ability to read and download files and participate in on-line conferences without per-minute charges within SBCNet.

The CompuServe charge provides five hours of access each month to more than 3,000 services, including The Internet.

To order an SBCNet kit or to obtain additional information, call 1-800-325-7749. People who are already members of CompuServe may join SBCNet by simply typing "GO SBCNet" at any CompuServe prompt.

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FamilyNet & ACTS
to air Dove Awards

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
2/15/96

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The 27th Annual Dove Awards will be telecast live April 25 from 9-11 p.m. Eastern by FamilyNet, the broadcast television service of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission and on the Faith & Values Channel as a presentation of the ACTS Network.

ACTS and FamilyNet also have scheduled a pre-show special to feature backstage interviews and music video clips from many of the artists nominated for Dove Awards. It will air from 8-9 p.m. Eastern.

"We are finalizing an agreement with Gordon Television Group to produce the pre-show as well as a live half-hour post-show highlighting the winners," said Deborah Key, RTVC vice president of network operations and general manager of ACTS and FamilyNet. "Both the pre-show and the post-show will be exclusive to FamilyNet and the Faith and Values Channel via ACTS."

Site for the nationally televised program, which is sponsored by the Gospel Music Association, is the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, Tenn. Host will be contemporary Christian musician Michael W. Smith.

Smith, a seven-time Dove Award-winner, has been in Christian music more than a decade. He is one of a handful of Christian artists who has achieved significant mainstream success with total career sales exceeding 6 million albums.

His current album, "I'll Lead You Home," debuted last fall at number 16 on Billboard's Top 200 Album Chart -- based on Christian retail sales alone -- and was certified gold (500,000 unit sales) after two months. Smith has topped both Christian and pop charts with the singles "Place in the World," "I Will Be Here for You" and "Somebody Love Me."

He is also a past Grammy and American Music Awards winner and a 1996 Grammy and Nashville Music Awards nominee.

Bruce Koblisch, Gospel Music Association president, said television agreements with FamilyNet, The Family Channel and the Faith & Values Channel via ACTS give the Dove Awards a potential of 100 million households, the largest potential TV audience in its history. Koblisch said he anticipates the simulcast increasing viewership 50 percent over previous years.

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The Faith and Values Channel will rebroadcast the awards program April 27 from 4-6 p.m. and April 28 from 1-3 a.m. (EST). FamilyNet also will rebroadcast the program within a week of the actual performance.

Michael Omartian will return as musical director for the awards. Omartian, whose credits include producing for top pop, country and Christian artists, recently completed a special project for the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta, including writing a theme song for the games.

Dove Awards will be presented in 40 categories. The awards are voted on by the GMA membership, which numbers more than 4,500.

Steve Roberson, president of TimeRite, RTVC's marketing and sales arm, said FamilyNet's airing of the awards program would give the broadcast service additional recognition.

"This is the major awards program for Christian music," he said. "It's going to increase our visibility and status among the music producers in Nashville and help our relationship with the Gospel Music Association. It's also great Christian entertainment, which will help build audience."

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Preacher dad brings NBA son to evangelism conference," dated 2/14/96, please correct the name of Wayman Tisdale in second paragraph, not Tosdale.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

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