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God turns Tokyo church's  
disappointment into blessing

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press  
12/18/96

TOKYO (BP)--Norman Wood was thrilled when a Japanese television news reporter asked if a crew could tape a morning worship service at Tokyo Baptist Church to help explain the real meaning of Christmas to their viewers.

"Christmas is just a big commercial here," said Wood, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionary who serves as senior pastor of the English-language international congregation. People in Japan understand even less about the original meaning of Christmas than the average citizen of the United States.

So Wood enthusiastically agreed to let the television crew record the service. What a wonderful way to share the good news that God sent his Son, he thought.

He notified the mission board's home office in Richmond, Va., about the Dec. 8 taping and the planned Dec. 15 broadcast. A prayer request was posted on the agency's toll-free telephone prayer line, and thousands of Southern Baptists across the United States prayed for the broadcast. One congregation even called an all-night prayer meeting to intercede for the broadcast, Wood said.

One church member said he had never sensed God's presence so strongly as he had in that service.

"My wife, Maureen, told him he should thank the Lord for all the people in America who were praying for that service," he said. "I don't think people will ever know just how much it meant to me and the church to have so many people praying for us at that time."

Imagine his disappointment, then, when the "program" turned out to be a 20-second snippet instead of the hour-long service they had expected.

Yet even out of that letdown, God has created a blessing, Wood said.

"We've already had people call and ask, 'Where is your church? We want to come to your church,'" Wood reported.

On Dec. 15, the day of the broadcast, the church held its annual Christmas drama. As many as 1,200 people attended the three services.

"It was the most people I've seen in our church," Wood said. "For many of them, it was the first time they had ever come to a church."

He expects the church will be packed with people on Christmas Eve. And probably only half of them will be able to speak a little English.

"I have people come up to me on the street and say, 'I'm not a Christian, but I want to know something about Jesus. May I come to your church?'

"To actually have someone ask for permission to come to your church, well, that's quite a revelation. This is obviously not Alabama."

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Wood, who grew up in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), served as pastor of churches in Tallassee and Daphne, Ala., before joining the more than 4,100 Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionaries serving among 336 ethnic people groups and 128 countries worldwide.

"We want to say thank you to the thousands who prayed for us that Sunday," he said. "It was just phenomenal to see the response and that God has blessed through this in a marvelous way.

"Even though the television coverage wasn't what we'd have loved for it to be, nevertheless God has done something with it and through it. We're looking forward to some great things."

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Spiritual example of Puritans  
focus of Midwestern emphasis

By James A. Smith Sr.

Baptist Press  
12/18/96

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Although believers and unbelievers alike use the title "Puritan" as a pejorative term, affixing it to persons who are considered backward and prudish, representatives of a publishing ministry specializing in Puritan works urged students at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary to follow the spiritual example of the derided group.

Contending that the theological movement known as "Puritanism" of the mid-16th century to the mid-18th century is the closest parallel to New Testament Christianity in church history, Bruce Bickel and Don Kistler of Soli Deo Gloria Ministries led a series of chapel messages, class lectures and evening dialogue sessions with students and faculty Dec. 10-12 at the Kansas City, Mo. seminary.

Disagreeing with H.L. Mencken's oft-quoted putdown, "A Puritan is someone who is afraid that someone, somewhere is having a good time," Midwestern professor Don Whitney told the Dec. 10 chapel audience the Puritans "are giants upon whose shoulders we often ignorantly and unknowingly stand." Whitney is assistant professor of spiritual formation at Midwestern.

According to Bickel, who is board chairman of Soli Deo Gloria Ministries, the "primary tenets" of Puritanism were personal piety, the proclamation of sound, biblical doctrine and properly ordered church life.

For the Puritans, the pastor's sermon on Sunday was the key in ordering his ministry throughout the rest of week, Bickel stated in his Dec. 10 presentation, "The Puritan view of the pulpit." Bickel, a Reformed Baptist who previously pastored in the Kansas City area, is a vice president of PNC Bank in Pittsburgh, Pa., where Soli Deo Gloria Ministries is based.

Although many evangelicals today are consumed with defending the authority and sufficiency of the Bible, Bickel decried the "paradox" of the "weak view of the pulpit" which is nonetheless present among many of the same evangelicals.

"The Scripture doesn't say go into all the world and dance. It doesn't say go into all the world and act it out. It doesn't say go out and share. ... Many people today do not want to be known as preachers, they want to be known as facilitators of their flocks," Bickel said.

"Much more time is spent on methodology, rather than the message. More time on technology, rather than the truth," Bickel said.

Instead, Bickel contended the Puritan perspective of the pulpit held that "God has ordained sovereignly, in the depths of his own heart, preaching to be a means by which he's going to draw the lost to himself."

"I think Protestants, for the most part, have lost one of the greatest spiritual heritages of our tradition, and that is faith in the mysterious, creative power of the proclaimed Word of God from the pulpit," Bickel said.

Noting that the Puritans believed the "pure Word of God was to be the criterion" for their ministry, Bickel said "the proclaimed Word of God was the central focus of all their worship."

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Rather than creating a message, the Puritans "viewed themselves as plagiarizers. ... The message was given to them in the Scripture and their job was to work as hard as they could, using all their God-given faculties, to plagiarize the message and to repeat something God had already given them," Bickel said.

The importance Puritans placed on preaching was a result of their "high view of God," Bickel noted. "They viewed this great chasm that existed between a holy God and a sinful man and they recognized that the means by which God in his providential grace had committed to them to bridge that gap was the proclamation of his Word from the pulpit."

Bickel urged the seminarians to be "strong men who preach a strong gospel to a weak church, and may God prevent us from becoming weak men who present a weak gospel to a weak church."

Speaking Dec. 12 on the "Distinctives of Puritan evangelism," Don Kistler noted "the Puritans virtually invented evangelistic literature," adding that three of the greatest evangelists of church history -- Jonathan Edwards, Richard Baxter and George Whitefield -- were Puritans or were influenced by the movement.

"Puritan evangelism was the consistent expression in practice of the conviction that the conversion of sinners is a gracious and sovereign work of divine power. It is not something that man can manipulate," Kistler noted. An ordained minister with the Presbyterian Church of America, Kistler is the president of Soli Deo Gloria Ministries.

"Since God enlightens, convicts, humbles and converts through the Word, the task of the messenger is to communicate the Word by teaching it and applying both the law and the gospel," Kistler said in reference to Puritan evangelists.

Not equating evangelism with conversion was an important distinctive of the Puritans, Kistler said. "Evangelism is preaching the gospel of Christ. Conversion is what God does in response to that," he said, adding that Puritans would never "equate conversion with a physical response."

Puritan evangelism, Kistler maintained, was "rooted" in their view of man.

"If man is fine, you don't evangelize at all. If man is sick, you're going to try to help him. If he's ignorant, you're going to try to educate him. If he's dead in his trespasses and sin, you're going to plead with God to give him a new birth because that's what he needs," Kistler said.

"To preach the gospel in terms of man's psychological needs is to make the gospel man-centered instead of God-centered. Evangelism needs to begin with sin and not his so-called needs," Kistler contended.

Another distinctive of Puritan evangelism was its preaching of "the whole Christ to the whole man" in contrast to modern methods of evangelism which offer "God's benefits but withholds God's demands," according to Kistler.

"Puritan evangelism was aimed not only at informing the mind but in influencing the will and reforming the life. They never saw repentance as a change of mind only. But a change of mind, a change of heart and a change of life. That was repentance."

Kistler noted that the phrase "Lord and Savior" appears 631 times in the Bible, while "Savior and Lord" is never used, pointing to the importance of lordship in true conversion.

"As ministers of the gospel ... how dare we ever offer Christ in a way the Scripture does not offer him," Kistler stated.

The "glory of God as the end, not the saving of souls" was another distinctive of Puritan evangelism, Kistler told the seminarians.

"The purpose of the winning souls was to increase the number of people who would glorify God through all eternity," Kistler said. "Puritan evangelism is God-centered evangelism. God is the reason for it. God is the method of it. God is the end of it."

Soli Deo Gloria Ministries was started after Bickel was rejected by a "major Christian publisher" when he suggested the company should republish some Puritan works. Bickel discovered the works in the course of pursuing his doctor of ministry at Luther Rice Seminary in Atlanta. The publisher declined Bickel's offer of the books, arguing the Puritan works were "too deep, too theological, too God-centered," according to Bickel.

Bickel studied the preaching of the apostles Paul and Peter in the Book of Acts and compared it with the preaching of the Puritans from 1559-1741 and that of Christian ministers from 1820-1984. He concluded from his research that the Puritan preachers more closely resembled the sermons recorded in Acts because they were "God-centered," while modern-day gospel preaching has been characterized by "man-centered" sermons.

In less than 10 years, Soli Deo Gloria has re-published more than 115 Puritan volumes, with more than 200,000 copies in print. SDG holds the distinction of being the world's largest republisher of Puritan works. In addition to publishing, the ministry also hosts an annual Bible conference and undertakes a teaching ministry in Puritan distinctives.

"We trying to honor (God) by calling our attention to an era back in the church where there is much from which we need to learn," Bickel explained as the purpose of Soli Deo Gloria Ministries.

Other topics addressed during the three-day focus on Puritanism at Midwestern Seminary included "The doctrine of hell and evangelism," "The duties of the Puritan pastor," and "Pressing into the kingdom: the Puritan doctrine of seeking salvation."

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Charles Page, battling cancer,  
finds Word of God to be 'alive'

By Victor Lee

Baptist Press  
12/18/96

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Twenty-six years ago, Charles Page faced a life or death crisis as a student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary when doctors gave him and his wife little hope for the survival of their newborn son, Robbie.

On Saturday, Dec. 14, Page returned to Southeastern, amidst his own struggle against a rare form of bone cancer, to deliver the seminary's commencement address.

"For 57 years I had hair, but four months of chemotherapy and massive steroids pretty well took care of the hair," Page said.

But there was no somber mood about the pastor of First Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C., as he spoke to the near-capacity crowd in Southeastern's Binkley Chapel in Wake Forest. This, in fact, was a time of joy for Page and his wife, Sandra, as they celebrated their son's graduation; Robbie Page was one of 75 who received diplomas from Southeastern.

During his address, Page shared the lessons wrought from his fight against cancer which began in May.

"The main thing I've learned is that God is good and he never hurts us; he has a purpose in it all," Page said before the ceremony. "I've seen a lot of that purpose fulfilled already. My desire is to share with the graduates what I've learned through this experience that I possibly should have been learning all along in a more in-depth way."

Page's decision to not wear a hairpiece since losing his hair in the aggressive cancer treatment has been consistent with his handling of the disease. He has hidden nothing and has taken very little time away from ministry. He held back nothing Dec. 14 in a frank, bold, touching 40-minute address that frequently left some members of the audience dabbing their eyes.

Page called his address a "confessional message." Titled "Why Wait for Crisis," it stressed four points: God's Word is truly precious; the Bible's promises are meant for me; the importance of friends; and God has a purpose in pain.

Page said since learning of his illness, the Word of God "is alive, as if on every page God has something special to say to me. ... Don't wait for crisis to drive you to the depths of the Word of God!"

He reminded the audience the Bible's promises are personal. "Those promises will not become powerful in your life until they become personal in your life," Page said. "Don't let crisis come before these promises get personal."

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In stressing the value of friends, Page recounted a phone call from former SBC President Jim Henry. Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., asked Page what worried him the most about his ordeal. Page answered that it was concern about filling his pulpit. "He said, 'Hold it right there,' and hung up. He (Henry) called back a couple of weeks later," Page said. With voice breaking Page continued, "He said, 'We've arranged for men to fly in from all over the world to fill your pulpit.'"

Page leaves Dec. 26 for Little Rock, Ark., home of one of two hospitals in the United States specializing in his type of cancer. He will undergo high dosages of chemotherapy. Over the next few months, Page will have two bone marrow transplants.

"They feel that gives them a better chance of getting a long-term remission (of the cancer)," Page said before the ceremony. "At this point there is no cure, but of course we're trusting the Lord for that cure. They feel like if they can get a five- or six-year remission by that time they may have a cure."

Page said he gains his strength from God's faithfulness over the years. He returns often in his mind to his seminary days when he surrendered his sickly infant son, Robbie, to the Lord while pacing the floor in a hospital waiting room.

Robbie recounted, "If you really think about it, prayer is what my parents looked for to ask for my life, and that's what we've come to now, asking for God to be in control of my father's life."

Page assured everyone God is in control as he uses this pain to make a longtime pastor even wiser and better equipped to serve.

"I don't want to live to keep from dying -- I'm long past that," Page said. "I want to live because I think just now I probably can be what God wants me to be. Begin now learning the lessons he has for you; don't wait for a crisis to come."

Many of the graduates said they will not soon forget Page's commencement address. Terry Hinson, pastor of Sandy Creek Baptist Church, near Greensboro, said: "It all seems worth it now. I was close to quitting, but I'm glad I stuck with it. Today was a great blessing. Dr. Page's message was very emotional. It's a message I'll take with me forever."

The Pages were not the only familial touch to the commencement. M.L. Walters Jr., pastor of Neuse Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C., led in a prayer during the ceremony. Later, his son, Joe, sang before receiving his diploma with the rest of the graduates.

Southeastern President Paige Patterson said the graduating class was "leaving here with after-burners ignited and determined to change the world for the better."

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Crews urges grads to have  
a 'pulpit to the world'

By Cameron Crabtree

Baptist Press  
12/18/96

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Christian leaders must see beyond their communities to "the ends of the earth" if they are to serve God fully, declared seminary president William Crews.

"It changed my whole ministry when I realized early on that God expects my church to see the whole world," Crews told Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary graduates during winter commencement ceremonies Dec. 13 at the Mill Valley, Calif., campus.

Golden Gate, one of six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries and the only SBC agency in the western United States, awarded degrees to 61 graduates representing 14 states and seven foreign countries.

Crews, president of Golden Gate since 1986, warned graduates against the notion that "we have to take care of ourselves first" before engaging in worldwide missions.

"See beyond the obvious and that Jesus intended for the gospel to go to the ends of the earth," said Crews. "Ministry must include a vision for the world."

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Referring to the holiday season, Crews remarked he can't remember a Christmas "without a lady named Lottie Moon." Moon is the 19th century Southern Baptist missionary to China for whom the SBC's annual foreign mission offering is named.

That yearly emphasis, he said, "helped me know the gospel is for folks far away and that I am to be part of making that happen."

Crews challenged graduates to find creative ways to help their congregations fulfill Christ's Great Commission mandate.

"It's a liberating concept to see the ends of the earth and to find ways for the gospel to go there," he said. "God expects you to find ways to do that and he expects you to find ways to help the people you lead do that."

Christian leaders, Crews said, should see their pulpit as a "pulpit to the world, not just for those close by."

For those who can't go personally to mission areas, Crews urged involvement in the denomination as it engages others in spreading the gospel.

"Early on in your ministry, have the vision of the world and what God wants you to do," Crews concluded. "It will change the way you preach. It will change the way you pray. It may even change the place you live. Find your place early and let God do what he could do in your life and in your ministry."

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**BWA team visits Karen refugees  
along Thailand/Myanmar border**

**By Wendy Ryan**

**Baptist Press  
12/18/96**

WASHINGTON (BP)--An estimated 100,000 Karen refugees on the northern border of Thailand and Myanmar, most of whom are Baptists, live in poverty and fear and face an uncertain future yet are preaching, teaching and baptizing new believers, according to Baptist World Alliance leaders who paid a human rights visit there from Nov. 30-Dec. 2.

The refugees had been forced to leave Myanmar because of an ongoing insurgency against the 25-year-old SLORC government there.

The BWA team included Denton Lotz, general secretary; Tony Cupit, director of the BWA division of study and research; Australian pastor Thorwald Lorenzen, chair of the BWA human rights commission; and Edwin Lopez, BWA regional secretary for Asia.

While life in the refugee camps is filled with suffering, Baptist pastors have organized schools and churches that serve the estimated 100,000 refugees in the camps, the BWA team reported.

The delegation was impressed with the organized school system of the Karens in the camp schoolhouses made of bamboo where students were educated and disciplined with little resources.

"Classes of 50 students were pressed together in small rooms with no windows or light," said Lotz, "and many of the students had no paper or pencil to do their work."

But as part of their plight: Refugees are not allowed to travel into Thailand and therefore cannot work after they have finished their education. The camp for them is a dead-end situation.

"We want peace," "We hate war," "We want education" were among the signs held by the hundreds of schoolchildren who welcomed the BWA team.

According to Robert Htwe, president of the Karen Refugee Committee who hosted the BWA, the killing of both Karens in Myanmar and government troops continues, with no reconciliation in sight.

While they have given up their fight for an independent state, the Karen say they want peace with justice and a chance to be self-governing, something the Myanmar government refuses.

At the refugee camp in Maela, the BWA delegation worshiped at the Baptist church that has 500 baptized members and helped dedicate a new worship center built with funds from Australian Baptist Aid after floods destroyed the old building.

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Karen Baptist leaders asked Baptists around the world to pray for them. The BWA team promised to plead their cause at the United Nations and around the world and encourage Baptists to speak to their governments on behalf of the Karens.

Moved by the plight of more than 20 orphan children in the camps, the BWA team gave \$4,000 to support an orphanage for two years.

"We left the Karen refugees with a sense of admiration for their single-minded struggle for freedom and justice and the evident devotion to Jesus Christ among the believers," Cupit said.

"Our visit showed the Karens while the BWA cannot solve all of the problems, it is now part of the struggle," he said.

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**BSSB survey profiles  
church support staff**

**By Charles Willis**

**Baptist Press  
12/18/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--More than 800 responses to a survey by "Secretary FYI," a quarterly publication of the Baptist Sunday School Board's pastor-staff leadership department, provides a profile of church support staff people in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Survey results, published in the newsletter's January-February-March 1997 issue, indicate 66 percent of respondents have a written job description, 52 percent have served their organization for more than five years and only 37 percent have an annual performance review.

While 15 percent are required by the church to be a member of that church, 70 percent are members where they work, the survey indicates. People responding that their church employer requires they not be members of the church where they work totaled 11 percent.

Sixty-five percent of respondents are full-time employees, 33 percent are part-time and 2 percent are volunteers.

Hourly wages ranged from \$3.50 to \$15.83, with the greatest percentage of respondents -- 39 percent -- earning between \$6 and \$7.99 hourly.

Paid vacation days ranged from zero for 11 percent of respondents to more than 15 days for 13 percent. Paid sick leave is provided to 78 percent.

No insurance benefits are provided 36 percent. Life insurance is provided to 13 percent, health insurance to 21 percent, disability insurance to 7.5 percent, workman's compensation insurance to 19 percent and family health coverage to only 4 percent.

Only 18 percent of respondents indicated they have a full annuity benefit provided by their employer. Another 9 percent are offered matching funds for retirement. No retirement benefits are provided for 73 percent.

The highest percentage of respondents -- 44 percent -- indicated they are between 41 and 55 years of age.

The highest level of education completed among respondents -- a master's degree -- is held by 7 percent of support staff. A bachelor's degree is held by 9 percent, business school degree by 11 percent, an associate degree by 9 percent, some college courses by 32 percent and high school by 32 percent.

The survey also covered other work issues, such as office equipment, computer software, professional development and professional affiliations.

Copies of "Secretary FYI" may be ordered by calling the Sunday School Board's toll-free customer service number, 1-800-458-2772.

A report detailing answers by church size and geographic region, with a special section for associational offices, may be ordered by sending a \$5 check, payable to Baptist Sunday School Board, to Support Staff Survey Report, 127 Ninth Avenue, North, Nashville, TN 37234-0158.

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**Baptist-coordinated clinic  
entails multi-agency effort**

By Barbara Denman

FLORIDA CITY, Fla. (BP)--The Good News Care Center has become a Christmas present of promise and health to South Dade County, Fla., residents who cannot afford quality health care.

"It's been a lifesaver for me," said Diana Rodriguez. "I didn't qualify for any medical assistance or insurance. The clinic provided me with medical care when I needed it. Here, they've never turned me away."

Rodriguez came to the clinic after an extreme diabetic attack, near death and depressed over her diabetic condition. The young woman could not afford to remain on a diabetic diet because she was poor, unmarried and unable to get a job due to teeth that disfigured her looks. A bill from an earlier hospital stay had remained unpaid, and she lived on the generosity of relatives.

But the Good News Center staff referred her to the Baptist Hospital of Miami which had reserved a million dollars in charity health care for patients from the clinic. There she was able to get her diabetes under control.

The staff at the clinic even arranged for her to have cosmetic surgery on her mouth and provided glasses for her to be able to see. "Christmas will be a lot different now that they're here. I feel better about myself," said Rodriguez. To return the favor, Rodriguez volunteers at the clinic almost every day.

The Good News Clinic, which opened to the public in October, was established and is operated by the Miami Baptist Association, in collaboration with First Baptist Church of Florida City and Baptist Health Systems of South Florida. Four other community health care agencies are participating in the project: Women's Health Corner, Health Foundation of South Florida, Barry University School of Podiatric Medicine and Dade County Area Health Education Center.

Nearly \$500,000 was pledged to build and operate the clinic by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, a prestigious national organization of physicians, and the Health Foundation of South Florida.

Funds also were available from a number of Southern Baptist sources, including the Maguire State Mission Offering, the Cooperative Program, Centrifuge and the Home Mission Board.

The clinic's facilities are located in a large trailer on property of the church, in almost the same spot where Florida Baptists mounted their relief ministries in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew.

"We want to bring to this community a prototype of a clinic that reaches the whole person the way the Bible teaches," said pastor Walter Campbell. "Our church is convinced that this project is so worthy and needed that we are giving consent to the usage of our property for the clinic site. We also are making available classroom space for classes in literacy, parenting skills, nutrition or anything else that will make the quality of life in Florida City better for those who live here."

The clinic will target the area's 250,000 migrants, as well as all races, and the poor who do not have health insurance or have fallen through the cracks of the Medicaid-Medicare system. All of the services are free to the patients.

Services from podiatrists, women health specialists, dentists and general practitioners are offered at the clinic. More than 200 physicians from the Baptist Hospital have pledged to volunteer at the center. Other Baptist physicians have agreed to treat patients free of charge at their offices. The hospital provides necessary follow-up care, including surgery and lab services.

The clinic enables these health care organizations to provide charity work and offer field service opportunities for students to treat patients with real problems.

The clinic is a dream come to fruition for Mike Daly, director of church and community ministries for the Miami Baptist Association, who began making contacts and preparations for the clinic in 1989 after the Florida Baptist Mobile-Dental Unit teamed with medical students from the University of Miami to treat area migrants.

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At one time, it looked as if the clinic would be placed in the Sweetwater community in North Dade County, whose residents do not have access to public health care. But community politics thwarted their efforts. Daly turned his efforts back to Florida City.

Daly gained support for the project when he was able to recruit physicians and assistance from Baptist Hospital. When he won the grant from the prestigious Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, more community agencies jumped on the bandwagon.

"Mike is extremely gifted in community networking," said Brenda Forlines, director of the church and community ministries department for the Florida Baptist Convention. He has brought together health care providers from a number of community organizations as well as funding from many of them. At the same time he had kept the focus on evangelism and ministry."

Now that his dream has become a reality, Daly can see how God has worked through the years. "We have so many resources available here, so much more than I imagined. You can see that God was in it. He himself was putting together this project."

"This has been the work of a lifetime," Daly noted. "To see it come about to fruition is incredible."

And the blessings have come from a variety of sources, Daly said. Three Florida Baptist churches came to Florida City to help renovate the trailer for use as a clinic. In August, prior to the opening of the clinic, Daly was listed as a missionary recipient of gifts in the Christmas in August promotion by the Woman's Missionary Union of the Southern Baptist Convention. Daly has distributed the gifts sent by thousands of G.A.s to the migrant children coming into the clinic. Then the week before Christmas, nurses from the Baptist Hospital showered the clinic with Christmas gifts to be given to patients.

Daly, and Nilda Soto, the clinic's in-house physician, together work out crises for both the clinic and patients. "One of the healthy aspects of this is the collaboration of so many agencies," Soto said. "The Miami Baptist Association cannot provide health care by itself. But no agency has the network that the Baptist association has."

Despite all this networking, the clinic can use financial help and pharmaceuticals, Daly said. In only two months, they have used half of the money allocated by the Baptist Hospital for medicine.

That networking has given new hope to one Guatemalan woman, who frequently had seizures and expected to die. She even had arranged for someone to take her children at her death. After coming by the Good News Clinic, the doctors were able to send her to a specialist -- at no cost to the woman -- who discovered the seizures were caused by a benign brain tumor and could be treated by medication.

"She has a whole new lease on life," Daly said. "All this was provided at no charge."

Because it is a free clinic, many of the 300 patients who have received medical care since the clinic opened want to give something back to the clinic. Many of the migrants bring fruits and vegetables, such as avocados and zucchini, they have picked from the fields.

As the patients enter the Good News waiting room, they are greeted with Bibles in English and Spanish and a television playing Bible story videos. Many of the patients come from word of mouth to the clinic.

"They come in asking, 'Is this the famous free clinic,'" Soto noted.

"It's all being done in the name of Christ," Daly added. "And the people know."

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**Family's faith nurtured  
at migrant children's camp**

By Stella Anderson

Baptist Press  
12/18/96

Eustis, Fla. (BP)--Since Josefina Alaniz's young children first attended the Florida Baptist migrant children's camp several years ago, her family life hasn't been the same.

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At the 1992 camp, her teenage son, Pedro, accepted Christ as his Savior and led his father to join the family at church. Before long, her husband also accepted Christ.

The migrant camp has left a mark on her family, one Alaniz won't soon forget. These lasting impressions were perhaps Alaniz's motivation to serve as a volunteer for the 1996 event Dec. 6-8 at Lake Yale Assembly.

Serving at camp, Alaniz said, was "a payback" to the migrant camp for its ministry to her family. It has "played a big impact" in her family's decision to follow Christ, she said.

During this year's event, Alaniz's personal rewards would again abound. Her youngest son, Abel, was among 59 children who made life-changing decisions for Christ, completing her family's circle of faith.

In all, 160 children representing 15 churches were treated to the weekend camp, 48 making professions of faith and 11 rededications. Miguel de la Cruz, director of migrant ministries for the Florida Baptist Convention, credited the decisions "to the love and faithfulness of the counselors and volunteers to share the gospel message."

When Melissa de la Cruz, a high school senior from Lakeland, was asked to volunteer at the camp, she didn't hesitate. A former camper herself, she knew the impression counselors and adults have on the children.

"When I was a camper, the counselors consistently shared God with us and had a great impact on my Christian life. I wanted to do the same for other children," said de la Cruz. "I wanted to show them that God is real."

"It is wonderful to see how Christ can make a difference in these kids' life at camp," said Rafael Baptista, a migrant pastor from Winter Haven who led a young camper to accept Christ as his Savior. The opportunity to share with the child, Baptista said, "made my whole weekend."

The annual meeting is a Christmas present of sorts that Florida Baptists give to migrant children, underwritten by funds from the Maguire State Mission Offering. Without these funds, most of the children, ages 8 through 12, would not be able to attend the gathering.

When the children arrived at the three-day meeting, they were presented with several Christmas gifts, Bibles, school supplies, socks, toiletries and candy purchased with donations from Florida churches, Women's Missionary Union groups and other interested individuals. Volunteers from the Lake County Baptist Association also sponsored their traditional ice-cream sundae fellowship, bringing and serving the treats themselves.

The three-day camp introduced the children to Bible stories, Scripture, how to use the Bible, the meaning behind making a profession of faith, mission and ministry opportunities. Focus also was given to self-esteem, personal hygiene, crafts, songs and recreation.

"The camp is a means for children to come to know Christ and to provide a camping experience for them," said de la Cruz. "Many of them have never been to a camp and probably would not otherwise have the opportunity."

Often this is the only time the children have ever been away from their parents, he noted.

A former migrant child himself, de la Cruz said "it is a joy" to see kids "come to camp, find Christ" and leave as a new person.

Although the weekend rain and thunderstorms didn't make for an ideal camping experience and canceled most recreational events, the children didn't seem to mind. They were eager to play indoor games, sing Christmas carols, learn sign-language and make crafts to give as Christmas gifts.

One favorite camp activity among the children was a clowning workshop hosted by "Spacey the Clown" and two youth from Southside Baptist Church in Jacksonville. During the class, the children witnessed and mimicked with little success the basics of juggling and balloon sculpting. Each child was later rewarded with a "dog" balloon sculpture.

For many migrant children, attending camp is the highlight of their year, an event they will treasure for years to come. The fun and fellowship is like "going to an amusement park and having fun singing with Barney," a young Jacksonville girl noted.

Arlene Garza from Plant City, already anticipating next year's event, described her camping experience as a "great place to meet new people and friends. I like the singing time best."

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**Pastor: Bakker has much to say,  
but sadly, few to share it with**

**By Ken Walker**

**Baptist Press  
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DANVILLE, Va. (BP)--When a Southern Baptist pastor boarded a plane to fly to a trustee meeting at New Orleans Theological Seminary last winter, he recognized a famous fellow passenger -- Jim Bakker.

It wasn't the first time Don Davidson had seen the founder of the now-defunct PTL television ministry. As a teenager, his Tidewater, Va., church filmed half-hour programs at the Christian Broadcasting Network, where Bakker formerly worked. One night they shook hands on the set.

Now, as they were leaving the airplane and walking toward the baggage claims area, Davidson, pastor of Mount Hermon Baptist Church, Danville, Va., introduced himself to Bakker.

As they talked, Davidson learned that Bakker was writing "I Was Wrong," his newly published autobiographical account of the fall of PTL and his five years in prison. In it, the former televangelist refutes the "health and wealth gospel" that helped fuel his multi-million-dollar empire.

During their 20-minute conversation, it was the only theological topic Davidson brought up, asking Bakker if his views had changed.

Bakker responded that he spent many hours in prison comparing the words of Jesus with the idea that God wants every believer to be rich -- and, Bakker said, the doctrine "didn't match up."

One verse often quoted by those supporting prosperity doctrine, according to Bakker, is 3 John 2: "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (NKJV).

In his book, the former Assembly of God pastor outlines a detailed explanation of that and other "prosperity" verses. He cites extensive Bible study and research to conclude that John was not stating a principle favoring Christian wealth.

Bakker compares John 3:2 to a similar greeting in Romans 1:10, concluding in the latter that the apostle Paul was simply saying, "I sure hope God grants me an opportunity to visit you soon. Please pray that I will have a good journey on the road as I travel to see you."

In disavowing the idea that all Christians should be rich, Bakker quotes Matthew 6:25 and 31-33, where Jesus says his followers are not to worry about what they will eat, drink or wear. And, Luke 6:24: "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort" (NIV).

"I used to make much of the word 'prosper' in 3 John 2, seeing it as financial, material prosperity," Davidson quoted Bakker as saying.

"More study taught me that John was using that word as a greeting and best wishes to his readers.

"It's incredible how we can build such a system of error on a single verse of Scripture, wrongly interpreted," Bakker said.

Davidson said he believes the once-famous TV preacher is humble and repentant, an impression that remains after seeing him since on television. Bakker isn't fiery or accusing, said Davidson, because he has been broken.

When he asked Bakker if he was aware of the media circus surrounding his fall, the evangelist described seeing someone on an airplane, reading a magazine with his picture on the cover.

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"I was devastated," he said. "Earlier, of course, I would have wanted to be on the front cover of a major newsmagazine. But not like this. I am a very shy person and this was humiliating."

Still, he related how his prison experience ended up being a blessing. At first he wondered if God still loved him or had abandoned him. But through extended Scripture study, Bakker regained his faith and assurance that God was there.

During the conversation, the Virginia pastor thought how ironic it was that when Bakker had an audience of millions he had very little worthwhile to say. Now, he shared a highly significant message with an audience of one, Davidson remarked.

Davidson said he found himself genuinely liking this scarred and broken preacher partially because he realizes how easy it would be for him to fall. All ministers are vulnerable to the right mixture of sex, power, money and lack of accountability, Davidson said.

"I genuinely wished him well and I still do. I think God has something he (God) can do with him now."

Though Bakker was part of a charismatic church, Davidson, a graduate of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in North Carolina, said he believes the televangelist's fall and restoration represent valuable lessons for all Christians.

"It teaches us we need to keep money in the right place and seek first the kingdom of God," Davidson said. "Secondly, but equally important, it's a warning as to how quickly a lifetime of Christian testimony can be lost. For 15 to 20 minutes of pleasure, (in Bakker's book) he talks about walking out of the hotel, realizing what he had done."

The former PTL leader's fall also serves as a warning to all pastors, Davidson added.

"Those who preach the Word need to be sure we're not passing on faulty interpretation. I think God expects his ministers to put in time and study his Word."

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