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Southern Baptists will aid  
famine-stricken North Koreans

Baptist Press  
1/25/96

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--As millions of hungry North Koreans face starvation this winter from flood-induced famine, Southern Baptists will spend \$500,000 now -- and perhaps more later -- to send food aid.

Cooperative Services International, the Southern Baptist overseas relief and development agency, will use the funds to start a project designed to feed up to 10,000 North Korean schoolchildren for six months, purchase low-cost rice for immediate shipment to North Korea and ship large containers of foodstuffs provided by local Southern Baptist churches and others.

Disastrous flooding in North Korea this past summer destroyed thousands of homes and buildings and devastated the grain harvest. Even before the flooding, the food situation looked grim; North Korean harvests reportedly have fallen short of needs for the last several years.

While some nations have disputed the severity of the famine and refused to supply food, a Korean-American who has traveled to North Korea five times since November has seen the suffering.

"I saw people eating soil," reported the Korean-American, who spoke to Baptist Press Jan. 21 on condition of anonymity.

When he visited one small North Korean hospital in December, a doctor told him 100 people die at the facility during a typical six-month period. In the previous six months, the doctor said, 1,420 people had died -- mostly children and elderly patients weakened by malnutrition. That afternoon, the visitor saw one more malnourished child die.

Later, he saw only six students in a schoolroom that normally would hold 40 or more. "The other boys and girls could not come to school," he said. "They have no energy" because of hunger.

Conditions are better on the seacoast where people can eat fish and seaweed, he said. And the capital city, Pyongyang, "is a different world. Pyongyang people have two meals a day. Two meals a day is a luxury in North Korea."

But in the mountain villages and rural areas of the north, starvation looms as the winter grows bitter.

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"I stayed with these people, with ordinary people in their homes," the Korean-American said. "Forty-five years ago, you American brothers and sisters helped save our lives (when the Korean War caused enormous human suffering among civilians). I urge you to help us once more."

The flooding and resulting severe food shortages have directly affected up to 5 million North Koreans, relief groups report. The Red Cross said Jan. 21 that 120,000 North Koreans may die before the next harvest without immediate, concerted action.

The crisis represents a "huge opportunity" for Southern Baptists and other Christians to help suffering North Koreans in the name of Christ, said Mike Stroope, director of Cooperative Services International.

But aid must be sent now, stressed a CSI worker, because food from the next North Korean grain harvest won't become available before June or early July.

"We can't wait," he said. "These people are starving to death."

In addition to its direct purchase of food, Cooperative Services International will appeal to Southern Baptist churches to fill shipping containers with foodstuffs for shipment to North Korea. CSI will pay the shipping costs or negotiate payment other by participating agencies.

Only the following bulk items will be accepted for shipping, however: dried beans, white rice, flour, edible corn, powdered milk and eggs, noodles -- and blankets to help people survive winter.

A telephone number will be announced that Southern Baptists and others can call to learn how to get involved.

Beyond relieving human suffering, the importance of this opportunity -- and its rarity in the reclusive communist country -- can hardly be overestimated, the worker said.

"We have worked, prayed and probed for the last several years for access to North Korea, but we have seen little progress," he explained. "This is a great change in the attitude of North Korea, one that we should pursue aggressively to build relationships in the name of Christ and help alleviate suffering."

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(BP) photo (vertical) mailed 1/24/95 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outline available on SBCNet News Room.

**U.S. Christians, government urged  
to defend persecuted believers**      **By Tom Strode**

**Baptist Press  
1/25/96**

WASHINGTON (BP)--American Christians and the United States government need to be sensitized to the plight of persecuted believers worldwide and be motivated to help them, said spokesmen for a diverse group of more than 50 Christian leaders and others who met recently to discuss the problem.

Not only did some of the spokesmen express dissatisfaction with the United States' failure to address the problem, but they admitted their shock at the extent of the persecution and their disgrace at their lack of concern.

"I think all of us were driven by some of the comments to repent at our indifference, our lack of concern, our lack of moral outrage over the scandalous silence of the Christian community towards the persecution of Christians worldwide," said Chuck Colson, president of Prison Fellowship and a well-known evangelical writer.

"I think we will look back and see that this was a date when the Christian community, evangelicals, Roman Catholics and others, came to an understanding that we have a responsibility," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, at a news conference after the Jan. 23 meeting in Washington.

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The participants -- who included leaders of various denominations and para-church organizations, as well as representatives of congressional offices -- received reports of martyrdom and other forms of persecution in Islamic countries, plus China, Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba. The various Christian organizations plan to inform their constituents of the problem, to call them to prayer and to encourage them to influence their government representatives, a spokesman said.

In the meeting, there was "bipartisan criticism of the American political establishment," Land said.

Neither the president nor Congress "have shown adequate concern" about the persecution of Christians in other countries, Colson said.

"I think the government has to know that the Christian community is aroused on this issue and is not going to be bought off and placated by placebos or candy-coated pills," Colson said. "I hope we can feed some very powerful vitamins to President Clinton, (Secretary of State) Warren Christopher and the congressional leadership to stiffen backbones and to make them defend the cause of the persecuted church in negotiations" with countries where Christians are suffering persecution.

Land said, "What good is it to be a superpower if you can't have influence to stop this kind of uncivilized and barbaric behavior?"

"We understand that some people will see the light and some will just have to feel the heat.

"As a parent, I was always taught that children will do not what you expect but what you inspect," Land said. "Now I want to serve notice to the American political establishment that we who call ourselves Christians not only expect you to do the right thing, we're going to inspect what you do to make sure that you do the right thing."

While the meeting did not produce specific recommendations for government action, the National Association of Evangelicals issued a statement Jan. 19 calling on the United States to take the following steps regarding religious persecution:

- "Public acknowledgment of today's widespread and mounting anti-Christian persecution and the adoption of policies condemning religious persecution whether it results from official policy or from unchecked terrorist activity.

- "Issuance by the State Department's Human Rights Bureau and related government agencies of more carefully researched, more fully documented and less politically edited reports of the facts and circumstances of anti-Christian and other religious persecution.

- "Cessation of the indifferent and occasionally hostile manner in which the Immigration and Naturalization Service often treats the petitions of escapees from anti-Christian persecution.

- "Termination of foreign assistance to countries that fail to take vigorous action to end anti-Christian or other religious persecution, with resumption of assistance to be permitted only after a written finding is made by the president that the countries have taken all reasonable steps to end such persecution, and arrangements are made to ensure that religious persecution is not resumed."

NAE President Don Argue met with Clinton Jan. 16 and asked for the appointment of a special assistant to the president on issues of persecution, he said at the Jan. 23 news conference. While Argue said he believed the president is committed to addressing the problem, Clinton did not mention the issue in his State of the Union speech that evening.

While spokesmen for those in the Jan. 23 meeting expressed concern about the persecution of all religious people, they focused on such treatment of Christians.

"Demographically, in nearly every region of the world, it is the Christian communities who are under fire," said Nina Shea, director of the Puebla Program on Religious Freedom for Freedom House, which sponsored the meeting.

Among examples of persecution cited at the news conference by Keith Roderick, secretary general of the Coalition for the Defense of Human Rights Under Islamization, were:

-- In the southern Sudan, raids on Christian villages in which the men are killed and the women and children are taken as slaves;

-- In northern Egypt, the killing of Christian professionals and the burning of businesses;

-- In Saudi Arabia, where 10 percent of the population is Christian, the bulldozing by the government of the last ancient church in the country.

Included in the meeting were Chaplain of the Senate Lloyd Ogilvie, James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Ministries, Gary Bauer of Family Research Council, Moody Bible Institute President Joseph Stowell, evangelist/apologist Ravi Zacharias, Lynn Buzzard of the Campbell University School of Law and Rep. Frank Wolf, R.-Va.

Other participants included representatives from the General Council of Assemblies of God, the U.S. Catholic Conference, the Church of God, Focus on the Family, the Institute on Religion and Democracy and Christian Legal Society.

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**Study: National news media  
biased against pro-lifers**

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
1/25/96

WASHINGTON (BP)--The national news media provide distorted coverage of the abortion issue, resulting in inaccurate and harmful portrayals of the pro-life movement, according to a recently released study.

The study, released by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Pro-life Activities, found:

-- The news media gave inflammatory labels to pro-life politicians while calling politicians who support abortion rights "moderate."

-- The news media portrayed the pro-life movement as almost totally within the Republican Party.

-- The news media largely ignored or provided negative coverage of the more-than-3,500 crisis pregnancy centers in the country.

-- The news media presented abundant coverage of violence by anti-abortion protesters while coverage of violence by abortion advocates and abortion doctors was nearly nonexistent.

The study by the Media Research Center examined three major newspapers (The New York Times, USA Today and The Washington Post), three major news magazines (Newsweek, Time and U.S. News and World Report), Associated Press and news programs on four networks (ABC, CBS, CNN and NBC). A portion of the study was from 1994 to 1995, while another part was from 1992 to 1995.

One portion of the study found Republicans who support abortion rights were described as "moderate" in 116 stories, while pro-life Republicans were described in terms such as "far right," "hard right" or "extreme right" in 37 reports. Terms for abortion advocates such as "far left" or "hard left" were never used.

No pro-life incumbent lost in the 1994 elections, but reporters predicted in 48 stories such advocacy would harm Republicans. The Republican Party, which has a pro-life plank in its platform, won both houses of Congress in 1994.

Only one article said the pro-life movement was a diverse mixture of political persuasions, races and religious beliefs. No pro-life Democrat appeared as a "talking head" in an abortion report on television.

Only 16 reports on crisis pregnancy centers were filed in nearly four years. Fourteen of those were negative.

In the print media, the murders at abortion clinics by Michael Griffin, Paul Hill and John Salvi resulted in more than 1,100 articles. In 11 selected cases of violence by abortion advocates, the same outlets produced 59 articles. Six incidents of death or disfigurement because of botched abortions resulted in 53 articles in the print media.

Upon the study's Jan. 18 release, Helen Alvare, spokesperson for the Catholic bishops, said the findings "show the pro-life movement unfairly disadvantaged in the court of public opinion."

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The results are "hardly surprising" for "those of us who've invested ourselves in pro-life causes," said Ben Mitchell, consultant on biomedical and life issues for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "The national news media operate from a worldview which forbids them from being honest with the facts and from objectively reporting what they do not understand and do not believe in. They have to be antagonistic. That's who they are."

Calls for comment from media relations officials with ABC News and NBC News were not returned before deadline. A call for reaction from the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights League also was not returned.

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CLC brief supports inclusion  
of religious schools in program By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
1/25/96

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has joined in a brief supporting the inclusion of religious schools in an educational choice program when other private schools are participants.

In a case before the Wisconsin Supreme Court, the brief calls for the justices to uphold an educational choice program in Milwaukee which was amended to include private, religious schools.

Initiated in 1990, the original Milwaukee Parental Choice Program permitted parents to use public money to pay for their children's tuition only at non-religious, private schools. Last year, Gov. Tommy Thompson proposed inclusion of religious schools in the program, and the state legislature approved it in June.

People for the American Way, the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association, parents of public school students and members of the clergy filed suit, charging the inclusion of religious schools is an establishment of religion. A county circuit court granted an injunction, blocking the expansion of the program.

The Christian Legal Society brief, signed onto by the National Association of Evangelicals and the CLC, argues the inclusion of religious schools would not breach church-state separation, while the exclusion of religious schools would infringe on the free exercise of religion.

"This case is not about tuition tax credits and vouchers," said Richard Land, the CLC's president. "It is about religious freedom and government discrimination against religion.

"This case does not say that the government must or should offer vouchers to parents who choose alternative schools for their children. It does say that if the government chooses to offer such vouchers, it must not and cannot discriminate against religious schools as opposed to other private schools."

Neither the U.S. Constitution nor Wisconsin Constitution requires the "discriminatory denial of tuition benefits to parents who choose religious education," the CLS/NAE/CLC brief says.

"The U.S. Supreme Court has made clear that programs such as this one, which provide benefits to citizens on a religion-neutral basis for use at a wide range of schools and which create no incentive to choose religious schools over other kinds, do not violate the First Amendment's Establishment Clause," the brief says.

"The parents are the payee of the check; they direct where it will be mailed and endorse it to the school; in short, the decision where to use the money is theirs . . . ."

The inclusion of religious schools in the program "creates no incentive for parents to choose religious education and therefore comports with anti-establishment principles," the brief argues. The exclusion of such schools "would amount to impermissible government interference in the religious lives of the people," says the brief, which was filed Jan. 16.

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"It is beyond doubt that for a state to withhold benefits solely because of a citizen's religious status or activity imposes an unconstitutional burden on the free exercise of religion, just as much as does affirmative prohibition or regulation of the activity."

The Baptist Joint Committee is monitoring the case but has not filed a brief, a BJC spokesman said. Staff members in the BJC's counsel office were not available for comment.

State aid provided to the Milwaukee public schools for the 1995-96 school year is \$3.667 per student. If the amended choice program had been implemented, participating private schools would have received up to that amount for each student who was in the program for the entire year.

During the spring semester of the 1994-95 school year, 768 students attended private schools in Milwaukee under the original educational choice program. At the time the lower court blocked implementation of the law, more than 4,500 students had been accepted to attend private schools under the expanded parental choice program.

Of the 122 private schools which would have been eligible to participate this year in the amended program, 89 are religious.

Under the legislation amending the program, students at sectarian schools may opt out of religious activities with the consent of their parents.

The name of the case is Thompson v. Jackson.

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**Ronnie Floyd to be nominated  
to lead Pastors' Conference**

**Baptist Press  
1/25/96**

EULESS, Texas (BP)--Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark., will be nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference, which meets June 9-10 in New Orleans prior to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Claude Thomas, pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, announced Jan. 25 he will nominate Floyd, who also is chairman of the SBC Executive Committee.

"Dr. Floyd is a man who has a heart for God," Thomas said. "He shared with the (1995) Pastors' Conference ... his life-changing pilgrimage of revival during 1995. Out of that personal revival experience, Dr. Floyd has begun the 'Awaken America' rallies in cities across the country.

"His heart beats for revival" in America and the SBC, Thomas said of Floyd.

Thomas also noted, "Ronnie Floyd's commitment to Christ and his family are the top priorities in his life. I have known him for over a decade and have observed his integrity in these priorities and all other areas of life."

In connection with the proposed restructuring of the SBC, approved by messengers to the annual meeting in Atlanta, Floyd was a member of the Program and Structure Study Committee, whose recommendations form the basis of the changes, which include a reduction in the number of SBC agencies from 19 to 12.

Floyd is author of three books, "The Meaning of a Man," "Choices" and "Reconnecting," all published by the Broadman & Holman publishing arm of the Baptist Sunday School Board. And he is the speaker on the "DayStar" national television ministry.

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**SWBTS creates nat'l panel  
for input into its future**

**By Jan Johnsonius**

**Baptist Press  
1/25/96**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--An emphasis on spiritual formation and "mentoring groups" were among priorities suggested at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary when more than 40 Southern Baptists from across the country met to study the future of theological education at Southwestern.

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President Ken Hemphill, who formulated the idea of "The Presidential Blue Ribbon Committee," termed the Jan. 8-10 meeting "an historic event -- the first of its kind at Southwestern."

The purpose statement of the committee was "to gather in-depth thinking from a broad range of perspectives to help Southwestern in its continued commitment to providing the finest in theological education as we move into the 21st century."

"We want to know how we are doing. Give us your input," Hemphill advised committee members, which included faculty, students, trustees, alumni, laymen and convention leaders from across the country.

A priority list established as a result of the three-day session included the following areas: spiritual formation (particularly mentoring between faculty and students); interpersonal relations course work; leadership skills course work; lifelong learning emphasis; integration among the schools (theology, religious education, music) in core curriculum; establishing a visions implementation group; technology and education; innovative curriculum designing; re-imaging (making public our partners); multicultural issues; marketplace strategy training for ministry (lay studies, bivocational, creative missions, ministry planting); and immediate access mission action strategies.

Scotty Gray, Southwestern's executive vice president, said a final compilation of priorities will be incorporated into the seminary's strategic plan. In the meantime, the seminary is planning additional forums with faculty, state leaders and alumni on what they think should be the emphasis of theological education in the 21st century.

"We will also be reporting our findings to the board of trustees in March, and decisions will be made about scheduling implementation of priority items. Following the meeting of the board, we will continue to keep the blue ribbon committee informed and seek their input," Gray said.

Among committee members was Reggie McNeal, director of the leadership development and pastoral ministries department of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

"I appreciate the openness toward re-evaluating the role of the seminary and its methodologies on the part of the deans, faculty and administration," McNeal said. "I appreciate that this issue has been put on the front burner in a proactive way. There is no question that churches are pushing for greater leadership material, and they're going to search for leaders wherever they can find them. The question is whether the seminary wants to take the lead. I'm very encouraged."

Also serving on the committee was Dan Southerland, pastor of Flamingo Road Baptist Church, Fort Lauderdale, Fla. "I was pleasantly surprised by the openness to change," he said. "The spiritual formation emphasis excites me. The cooperation between the schools at Southwestern excites me."

Bernie Spooner, another committee member and director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas' Sunday school/discipleship division, echoed Southerland's sentiments.

"I think there seems to be a consensus to some degree about the need for a strong focus on leadership and for more integration between the schools," he said. "I also feel strongly that the ethnic issues raised are right on target. They must be addressed, not only for Texas but across the nation."

In early sessions of the committee meeting, Spooner pointed out the need to minister to blacks, Asians, Hispanics and other ethnic groups. He noted in the past 10 years the number of black Southern Baptist congregations in Texas has increased from less than 100 to almost 500. Also showing rapid growth is the ministry to Hispanics, with Southern Baptist Hispanic congregations in Texas now totaling 850.

Serving on the committee from the Southwestern faculty was Jim Spivey, associate professor of church history. "It resurfaces again and again -- leadership and spiritual formation. We need to re-focus and re-engineer our approach to producing leaders in SBC life."

Spivey added it was good to have different constituencies coming together on the committee. "The fact that we shared the same ideas was very reaffirming."

Spivey also spoke of the "huge paradigm shifts" occurring in society and noted if Southwestern Seminary is to "remain the flagship of Southern Baptist seminaries and theological education in America, changes will have to be made. We have to be even more flexible and have a sharper strategic vision."

Hemphill noted the three-day committee meeting was "extremely productive."

"We made an attempt to listen to our constituency and will respond to the best of our ability. The success or failure of our institution depends on how we help men and women called to ministry."

Hemphill added it was "enlightening and encouraging" to find the core needs are viewed the same across the convention.

Based on the priority list developed by the committee, Southwestern will be "redefining where we need to put our emphasis," Hemphill stated.

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(BP) photos available on SBCNet and upon request from Southwestern's office of public relations.

### 'Full-service' ministry

given to gas station owner By Joyce Sweeney Martin

Baptist Press

1/25/96

FORT THOMAS, Ky. (BP)--"Full service" has taken on new meaning down at Clarence's Chevron in Fort Thomas, Ky.

A string of tragedies in owner Clarence Moermond's family almost put the station out of business. But a group of men from Highland Hills Baptist Church pitched in to keep the station open.

It all began when Moermond died suddenly of a heart attack Nov. 17, 1994. Then in January 1995, Moermond's widow had to have emergency quadruple bypass surgery while visiting a daughter in Atlanta.

In March, son Roger, 39, who had bought out the family business after his father's death, also suffered a heart attack and was unable to work. And to top it off, in April, while Roger was still in the hospital recovering from angioplasty, his 34-year-old sister also had a heart attack and died in the same hospital.

That's when the men from Highland Hills Baptist demonstrated what "full-service" really can mean.

Gerald Sharon, pastor of the church where Roger Moermond has been a member more than 25 years, suggested fellow church members might help keep the station open until Roger could return to work.

Church member Dick Johnston quickly organized a group of volunteers from both Clarence and Roger's Sunday school classes.

For three months, most of the 11 men worked at least one day each week. They pumped gas, put air in tires, washed windshields and answered the phone.

They continued their hands-on ministry until Roger was able to return to work in June. And then, when in August Roger had to go back to the hospital for heart bypass surgery, the volunteers went on duty again. Each worked a half day each week until Roger returned to work in October.

This "full-service" ministry was a life-saver for the entire Moermond family. "I can't say enough for them," Roger said. "Because of them, I was able to keep the doors open. Without them, I would have lost the station."

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**Knocking on doors works  
for African American church**

By Barbara Denman

MIAMI (BP)--Joe Coates began Glendale Baptist Church in a Miami home garage with 35 people. After 27 years of "knocking on doors," the African American congregation has grown to more than 3,500 members.

He has instilled that outreach spirit into four sibling congregations in south Florida which, like their parent, have members knocking on doors with the gospel message.

Three of the new congregations are located in greater Miami -- Glendale in Brownsville, Solid Rock and New Beginning churches. The fourth, Glendale in Immokalee is located across the state.

Coates starts new churches to "spread the gospel. The local church ought to spread the church out.

"If a church doesn't have a strong mission, it is of poor quality. Jesus' heart is missions. I want to please God by starting new churches."

Florida Baptist leaders are studying Joe Coates and his methodology. He has been able to do what they have not -- effectively start Southern Baptist churches in African American communities.

This year, the Florida Baptist Convention has set a goal of starting 40 churches in African American communities. From 1996 to the year 2000, Florida Baptists intend annually to start 100 new churches in black communities.

That goal is especially ambitious when considering that of 2,300 Florida Baptist congregations, only 85 are African American churches.

"Southern Baptists need to be aggressive in starting Southern Baptist churches in African American communities," said Sid Smith, director of African American ministries for the Florida Baptist Convention. "We have the methodology that has proven effective in starting new churches and the experience of those who have started churches in the African American communities.

"We have the potential to combine the best of two traditions to start churches to reach people."

Smith said the "primary impetus" in starting any new church "is a call for the Lord. The Lord lays on somebody's heart not because we have goals or the convention has programs, but because it is a movement of the Lord."

Smith predicted the greatest growth in the future of Southern Baptists will be in ethnic and black churches.

"Today Southern Baptists are a denomination that is 95 percent white, but with tremendous acceleration of church starting in African American and other ethnic communities in due time the composition will change."

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**Religious educators to hear  
Church on Brady's McManus**

**Baptist Press  
1/25/96**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Religious Education Association will explore "Racing Into the Future" during its annual meeting, Feb. 15-17 in Louisville, Ky.

Three keynote addresses by Erwin McManus, president of Global Impact and senior pastor of The Church on Brady, a Southern Baptist congregation in Los Angeles, will focus on "Events That Will Shape Us in the Future," "What Are We Going to Look Like in the Future?" and "Working with People with No Religious Heritage."

Robert Dale, assistant executive director of the Virginia Baptist General Board and director of its leadership center, will lead sessions using a "Success Style Profile" completed by conferees in advance of the meeting.

Face to Face, a performing arts-style drama and music team from Birmingham, Ala., also will be featured.

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The SBREA's distinguished service awards will be presented to Merle T. Basden, J. Russell Comer and William E. Young.

Basden, who currently serves as SBREA executive director, formerly worked 27 years as education director of the Tarrant County (Texas) Baptist Association until his 1988 retirement. Previously, he had been on church staffs in Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas and Texas.

Comer served on church staffs in Kentucky, South Carolina and Virginia for more than 40 years before his 1993 retirement. Most recently at First Baptist Church, Richmond, Va., he was associate pastor for 15 years.

Young, a former SBREA president, was manager of the Baptist Sunday School Board's preschool/children's section from 1970 until his 1992 retirement. He previously was in the board's church administration department and was on church staffs in Georgia and Texas.

Registration is \$40 for members, \$20 for retirees and free for students. SBREA's mailing address is P.O. Box 330369, Fort Worth, TX 76163-0369.

SBREA's president, Carolyn Jenkins, is interim children's coordinator at First Baptist Church, Alexandria, Va.

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'Country Crossroads' producer  
undergirds show's credibility By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press  
1/25/96

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Eddie Reed, the songwriter, recently received a royalty check for \$4.46.

"That's not the smallest royalty check I've received," he said, laughing. "I once received one for \$1.90."

Reed, who is well-known in the country music industry, obviously does not depend on such royalty checks for a living. His bread and butter comes from being producer of "Country Crossroads," the popular weekly 30-minute radio program produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission. At last report, the program was aired by 884 stations nationwide.

Although he was interested in, and involved with, country music from early childhood, Reed's connection with Country Crossroads began as happenstance 16 years ago.

"I have an unfinished degree in criminology," he said. "My plan was to become involved in the behavioral sciences, to study overseas and to eventually teach."

But in April 1979 while a student at Tarrant County Junior College in Fort Worth, Texas, Reed began a part-time job at the RTVC. A month later he was working full time for the agency.

"I started in tape duplication," he said. "At the time, I was a member of Wedgewood Baptist Church (Fort Worth) and my friend Stan Knowles was producer of Country Crossroads. On my own time I used to help Stan with production of Country Crossroads.

"It was maybe a year later that I talked to Ed Malone (vice president of radio services) about being more involved in the work of the commission. He moved me into a production assistant position, working on Country Crossroads and recording the radio version of 'At Home With the Bible.'"

Host of the television and radio versions of "At Home With the Bible" was Frank Pollard, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss., and preacher for the RTVC-produced "The Baptist Hour" on TV and radio. During his years as a production assistant, Reed also worked on "On Track" and "Powerline," two other weekly RTVC-produced radio programs.

Reed became producer of Country Crossroads when Knowles left the RTVC in 1985.

"One of the things that really helped me over the years is that I've never been a person who was star-struck," Reed said. "People are people and I've always tried to treat everyone the same way.

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"What's more, because it has been on the air since 1969, everybody in Nashville (Tenn.) knows Country Crossroads, who sponsors it and what it's all about. Because the show is Christian some artists avoid us. There's a certain element of celebrity who think anything Christian is a detriment to their career, but even they respect the program."

Reed said many artists have given candid interviews about their Christian faith. One of the artists most outspoken about his faith, he said, is Marty Raybon of the group Shenandoah.

"All the members of the band are Christian," Reed said. "Marty's faith has been tried hard, but he's hung in there. He's a powerful individual who will tell you up front that his purpose in life is to take the kingdom of God to the people. I'm more impressed with Marty than anyone I've run into."

Reed said Ricky Skaggs also is a strong Christian and that Kathy Mattea is one of the most genuine people he has met.

"Kathy's Christmas album unexpectedly won a Grammy award," he said. "It's a very powerful album with some very different songs on it that will blow you away."

Reed said Bill Mack, host of Country Crossroads, and country comedian Jerry Clower, who does vignettes for the program, are institutions in country music and that Derwood Rowell, who does many of the interviews on the program, is almost a character in Nashville.

"When I've been to The Nashville Network (TNN) offices with Bill Mack, everyone there knew him and wanted to shake his hand," Reed said. "And just about every publicist in Nashville says the people they represent would rather do an interview with Derwood Rowell than with anyone else in the business."

"These men are responsible for the credibility of Country Crossroads with secular radio stations across the country, why the program is always accurate in determining the trends in country music."

Reed is certainly no slouch in his perception of the trends in country music, either, not only because of his writing but also from years of performing. He does some interviewing for the program, too, but said Rowell is better at it.

At the tender age of 16, Reed, who plays guitar, was for several years part of a country trio with Knowles and Rowell. They performed primarily in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Arkansas. Every five weeks they performed on the Louisiana Hayride in Shreveport.

Most of the songs he has written are registered with BMI (Broadcast Music, Inc.), but he also has a writing interest other than music.

"I want to write novels," he said, "primarily science fiction and fantasy. I have one manuscript that, hopefully, will be published soon."

Reed, born in Conroe, Texas, was raised in Carthage, Texas, and graduated from Southwest High school in Fort Worth. He is married and has two children. The family lives in Weatherford, Texas.

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She'll call every other week  
to invite you to Bible study

By Mike Trice

Baptist Press  
1/25/96

ABBEVILLE, La. (BP)--Le Seigneur a ete bon pour nous.

Visit David and Lula Stevens and you likely will hear that phrase in Cajun French, which translates as, "The Lord has been good to us."

Both natives of south Louisiana, the Stevenses speak Cajun French fluently. In fact, Stevens, now 80, was an adult before he could speak and understand English.

The couple hosts a biweekly, home-based French Bible study, led by their Sunday school teacher at First Baptist Church, Abbeville.

It was through the French Bible study that Lynn and Hilda Porter, then neighbors of the Stevens, heard and accepted Christ as their Saviour.

Hilda says her husband, who understands French, was invited to the Bible study soon after they moved across the street from the Stevenses. "My husband refused that night, and every time they called for two years," she recounts.

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"We never give up," says Lula, who says she has a list of people she calls every other Wednesday and invites to the Thursday night meeting.

"We prayed about the Porters for two years," her husband adds. "One day they showed up in church. I told her, 'Look, our prayers are answered.'"

Lula looks at her husband and smiles. "So many of our prayers are answered. It's unbelievable."

For their former pastor, David Stovall, it has been the Stevenses who have been the blessing. "This couple is the real thing," he says. "They're a couple whose lives were just transformed by Jesus Christ. I wish I had a church full of people like the Stevens.

"Despite ill health, they never stop trying to do something for their neighbors."

Both of the Stevenses have suffered heart problems, in particular Lula who is scheduled to have the last of seven blockages removed this spring. But both see their trials as blessings from the Lord rather than curses. "I told Bro. David, 'Every time that devil knocks me down, the good Lord gets stronger and stronger,'" she says.

It was not until 1975 that the couple discovered two of the greatest blessings God had for them: a personal relationship with Christ and one another.

"I know God brought us together," Lula says. "We were both Catholic and neither of us knew the Lord when we met."

She says her sister gave her the first Bible she had ever owned. "I began reading it about the same time he and I were dating," she recalls. "It didn't take us long to realize the Lord was working in our lives. When we got together the bells and whistles went off, and the Lord hit us the same way."

The couple was married in April 1975 and baptized at First Baptist Church, Grand Isle, the next month. They say they have never had a fight since.

Growing up on a farm outside Abbeville, Stevens never went to school and cannot read English. His wife read the Bible to him until her health began to fail and she could no longer read aloud for long periods of time.

She admits she had trouble understanding the Bible at times. "I could read it, but I didn't know what it meant."

So the Stevens asked their French Sunday school teacher if he would be willing to lead a French Bible study during the week. "We had four of us at first," Stevens recalls. "Now, sometimes we have 18."

The couple is quick to point out the Bible study is not just an extension of the Sunday school class. The group includes several persons of other denominations. "We don't study religion," Lula says emphatically. "We study the Bible.

"It doesn't matter what religion they are, it's whether or not they have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ personally as Savior."

The Stevenses say the Bible study is no substitute for church attendance. They say they are in church every chance they get. "Church is the only place we go," he says.

"But, if we miss one (a service), everyone will call and want to know where we were," she says. "If we miss a Wednesday night, our whole week is lost," he adds.

Stovall can attest to their attendance record. "They never miss a Sunday or a Wednesday service. They are so supportive of everything the church is doing."

The gentle Cajun couple says they will continue to host the French Bible study and invite their neighbors and friends.

"We've been praying for some of our neighbors for years," Lula says. "And until they tell me, 'Stop calling me, you are bothering me,' I'm going to call them every other Wednesday and invite them to our Bible study."

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