

October 10, 1969

Baptists in Texas, Belgium
Compared by Flemish Visitor

by John D. Carter

DALLAS (BP)--Perennial groaners complaining over the proliferation of church activities might well take a simple lesson from Geertje Kuhn, a pretty young Flemish woman who loves Southern Baptist churches because "if you want, you can spend all of your time at church."

After coming to America from her native Belgium, Geertje and her husband Eduard "were happy to discover that we were not the only Baptists in the world."

Eduard is working on a physiology research project at Southwestern Medical School here and the Flemish visitors are impressed with Baptist-rich Dallas.

"There is only one Baptist church and one Baptist school serving six million Dutch-speaking people in Belgium," Geertje claims. "The church, which is pastored by my father, has 50 members, and 128 children attend the school."

The church and school are located in the coal mining town of Genk, population 55,000, less than two hours' drive from Brussels.

Geertje has visited several churches in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, speaking on Baptist work in Belgium and taking mission offerings for the Baptist school. The small congregation in Genk has been forced to assume indebtedness in excess of \$10,000 to build a new school-house and avert a government closure of the little school.

The population is strongly pro-Catholic, and Protestant youngsters often find public or Catholic schools hostile to them, socially and academically, Geertje said.

The situation is complicated by the fact that Geertje's father Andries Deelstra is in poor health, and Mrs. Deelstra must attend to religious instruction duties in the school.

Eduard and Geertje Kuhn plan to return to their home in Ghent, where Eduard teaches in a university, in late November. Since their home is almost 100 miles from Genk, the Kuhns are able to attend church only once every two weeks, when they make the drive to their home town.

Baptists are so few in Belgium, that it caused problems in Geertje's life. "When I went to school to become a teacher, I was the only non-Catholic in a class of 400," she related.

Of her marriage to Eduard five years ago, she mentioned another problem. "If a girl wants to have a Baptist husband, she might have to go to England or the Netherlands to find one. I was fortunate that Eduard and I grew up in the same town and were both Baptists."

"Being a Baptist in Belgium is almost as bad as being a princess or something, as far as finding a suitable husband."

Since she was a newcomer to America, Geertje was at first very shy about speaking before groups at Baptist churches, "but I thought of how necessary the school is and how we need it, so even though I don't like to do it, I went through the Yellow Pages and called every Baptist church and asked them if I could come and speak."

If she tried to speak at all the Texas Baptist churches, she'd have a problem. In contrast to the one Baptist church for six million Dutch-speaking people in Belgium, in Texas there are more than 4,000 Southern Baptist churches with more than 1.8 million members.



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Criswell Observes 25th
Anniversary As Pastor

by Robert O'Brien

DALLAS (BP)--The First Baptist Church here has grown accustomed to doing things in a big way during a quarter century with Wallie Amos Criswell as their pastor.

And that's just how the 15,000 member church observed the 60-year-old Southern Baptist Convention president's 25th anniversary in the pulpit of the world's largest Southern Baptist church.

Criswell, serving his second term as president of the 11.3 million member denomination, preached his first sermon as pastor of the historic downtown Dallas Baptist church on October 7, 1944.

Without apparent hesitation, the little-known, 35-year-old preacher (in only his third full-time pastorate) faced a congregation that day which had listened to the eloquent George W. Truett for 47 years.

Telling the 7,800-member church it would continue to grow as it had under Truett's leadership, Criswell said: "We'll go on and up with various works. We'll have a Sunday School with 5,000 in attendance...and the services in the church will be in the eye of God."

The magnitude of the 25th anniversary celebration of Criswell's assuming the pastorate indicates that Criswell's predictions 25 years ago turned out to be true.

The church's membership has more than doubled, the annual budget has grown from \$377,151 to a projected \$2.4 million in 1970 and Sunday School enrollment has increased from 3,940 to 8,855, with more than 5,400 average attendance each Sunday.

Criswell's congregation and staff showered him with gifts and acclaim during a series of events on his anniversary Sunday, and an eight-page tabloid-sized Sunday morning newspaper supplement and a 20-page 9 x 11 brochure recounted his accomplishments during 25 years in the pastorate. Both were produced and financed by the church and interested members.

Criswell won't keep two of the gifts--reconditioned school buses. One is a streamlined, fully equipped medical clinic and the other a dormitory for medical staff to be used in the Rio Grande River Ministry of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Besides the buses, other gifts included permanent ownership of his home, an "upgraded" annuity, two antique old Sheffield silver compotes made in 1825 and a cashier's check.

But the gift which drew the most enthusiastic response from the silver-haired pastor was the news that the church has acquired a long-sought-after segment of property with which to launch a \$5 million building campaign.

First Baptist Church now lacks only a small parcel of owning a four-square-block area of downtown Dallas.

The church plans to build one more large building to add to the five it already owns to house its downtown mission, deaf ministry, a dining room and those departments which have outgrown present facilities.

Value of present property exceeds \$8 million and is expected to exceed \$13 million when the building campaign is complete.

Criswell told the anniversary congregation that when he ends his second term as SBC president that he will virtually eliminate his international travels and speaking engagements to devote his energies to his church.

"I'm going to stay home and see the church through this gigantic program," he said. "I believe it's God's will for my life."

In an interview with a Dallas newspaper, Criswell discussed other goals for future years.

He hopes to increase the church's trend toward "reaching out." He emphasized, "It would be a pious assembly of people who just sit down. More and more the church is getting involved in its people--seeking to help, trying to serve."

"By all means," he said, "there is a place for social action. Anywhere there is morality and human need, the church ought to be right there."

Other priority items which also challenge tomorrow's church, he added, are evangelism and reaching the young people, apartment dwellers and others who flood the metropolitan area without spiritual guidance.

Criswell said his personal challenge for the coming years is his pulpit ministry--"the great motivating force."

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Missionaries Increasingly Use Clinical Pastoral Training

by Jack U. Harwell

ATLANTA (BP)--Clinical pastoral skills are gaining increased acceptance as vital tools for an effective Christian minister, even those on mission fields.

Three Southern Baptist Convention missionaries on furlough from overseas assignments are currently taking special training in clinical pastoral care at Georgia Baptist Hospital here, along with eight Georgia Baptist pastors.

All three agree that the experience may go a long way to help them become more effective and sensitive missionary ministers.

The three missionaries are Carol A. Veatch, who serves in the Bahama Islands; John Patten, and Paul S. Moody, both missionaries to Thailand. All three are natives of Georgia--Veatch from Americus, Patten from Lakeland, and Moody of Atlanta.

They are clinical interns under E. A. Verdery, chief of the pastoral care division of Georgia Baptist Hospital and one of the nation's leading experts in pastoral care.

Each of the missionary-interns expressed warm appreciation for benefits gleaned from the pastoral care internship.

Veatch said, "I am the only counselor in my whole area of the Bahamas who has steady contact with English-speaking people. This clinical training will be invaluable when I return to my duties in the islands."

Patten said the training will help him in his work with students and church leaders in Thailand.

Moody said "In addition to the benefit gained for my normal missionary duties, this training will also help me in my part-time work as a military chaplain."

Verdery is just as complimentary about the attitudes and performance of the three missionaries, as well as the eight Georgia pastors, under his supervision. He especially voiced praise for their acceptance of the important role of pastoral care ministries at home and abroad.

"More and more, spiritual leaders are coming to see the vital link between emotional well-being and spiritual strength," Verdery said.

"The Christian faith has something to say to every need of mankind. I am grateful for a growing awareness that Christianity and psychology can work together in a redemptive and healing ministry."

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First Negro Church Joins Indiana Southern Baptists

10/10/69

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. (BP)--For the first time, a Negro church has become affiliated with the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana.

St. Paul Baptist Church of Terre Haute, Ind., was accepted into the fellowship of the Central Indiana Baptist Association. The action also means the church joined the state convention, since the convention's constitution stipulates that churches accepted by the associations are automatically considered in fellowship with the state convention.

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The church intends to be dually-aligned with the Southern and National Baptist Conventions, said Reddie Moore, the pastor.

For several years Moore and members of the church have attended various meetings of the association and state convention, and have contributed to missions through the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget.

The association's new church committee reported that they had examined the church and found it to be "sound in doctrine, purpose and practice." Their recommendation to accept the church was approved unanimously.

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SBC Hotel Reservations
To Be Processed In January

10/10/59

DENVER (BP)--Hotel reservations for persons planning to attend the 125th anniversary session of the Southern Baptist Convention here, June 1-4, 1970, will not be processed until Jan. 1 of 1970, convention housing bureau officials here said.

Hotel accommodation reservation forms have been sent to Baptist state convention officials, and will be published in the November issue of the Baptist Program, which goes to all 34,000 Southern Baptist pastors.

Already, reservations requests are being received by the housing bureau, but no reservations can be filled until the Jan. 1, 1970 date, officials said.

At that time, the reservations requests will be processed in the order of receipt. Officials said it helps to assure choice of accommodations to apply early, but that no reply could be made to room requests until the January date.

Last year, reservations were not processed until February, and much of the housing bureau's time was spent in replying to correspondence and long distance telephone calls from persons who wanted to know why they had not received a room confirmation, said John H. Williams, financial planning secretary for the convention who works with the housing bureau.

Williams said it would help if those who make early reservations refrain from writing or calling the housing bureau before Jan. 1, 1970 to find out why no confirmation had been received.

The housing bureau forms request four choices for hotel or motel preferences, the type of room desired, the arrival and departure time and date, and the names and addresses of all occupants.

The forms should be sent, with all information requested, to the SBC Housing Bureau, 225 W. Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo., 80202.

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