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Unique Indonesian Choir Completes Tour

By Susan S. Cahen

RICHMOND (BP)--An unusual choir, which uses Indonesian art forms as an avenue for Christian witness, has completed a tour encompassing the 1970 Asia Baptist Evangelistic Campaigns and the Baptist World Congress in Tokyo.

The KABARIA '70 choir, from Semarang, Indonesia, derives its name from an acronym in the Indonesian language relating to the words for "Good News" and the Asia Baptist Evangelistic Campaigns.

Sixteen Indonesian Baptist leaders make up the choir, along with a layman, Bagong Kusudiardjo, an internationally-known choreographer and creator of modern dance and art forms. Choir director is Southern Baptist Missionary William R. O'Brien.

The group's 1 1/2-hour program during the tour consisted of Asian church songs and Christian dance interpretations based on Javanese-Balinese classic folk dance forms. The ensemble also includes handbell and anglung (Indonesian bamboo instrument) choirs.

An added feature at each concert was a small exhibit of Christian themes in oil paintings by Bagong, who became a Christian as a result of his contact with O'Brien and the choir.

"The appeal and strength of this group comes from its 'Asian-ness,' as Asians share the Good News of Jesus with fellow Asians through various art forms, O'Brien said.

"The music portrays the universality of God's love, as the listeners hear both the Oriental and the Occidental characteristic sounds," he added.

O'Brien first approached Bagong with the idea of using Indonesian art forms as a means of Christian witnessing. He asked the artist to choreograph the parable of the sower and the seed.

Bagong said he accepted the task because "the older I get the more I realize the importance of having something on which to hold. Through the creation of that first dance story I began to realize that Jesus was Savior," he said.

Bagong has toured Asia, Europe and the United States with his own creations since 1953. He directed all stage productions for Indonesia at the World's Fair in New York.

By the time he had finished choreographing his first Christian drama, plans for two more were on the drawing board.

Soon he offered his home as a meeting place for a new church, and on the first Sunday he and his wife and oldest child made professions of faith in Christ.

Besides the parable of the sower and the seed, Bagong has also choreographed "The Wise and Foolish Virgins," the story of Mary Magdalene and the life of Christ, which required 250 dancers.

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Susan S. Cahen is a staff writer in the press office of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, which is a bureau of Baptist Press.

NOTE TO EDITORS: A photo has already been mailed to state Baptist eds.



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July 21, 1970

RECEIVED
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Blessitt, Hippie Evangelist,
Calls For 'Jesus Revolution'

HISTORICAL COMMISSION, SBC

By Beth Hayworth

WASHINGTON (BP)--Preaching a message of "love to overcome the hate in the nation," Hippie Evangelist Arthur Blessitt of Hollywood, Calif., completed a 4,000 mile "walk for Jesus" here which he started six months ago on Christmas day in Los Angeles.

Rolling a 10-foot, 150-pound cross on old bicycle wheels, Blessitt and a few associates from Sunset Strip, a hippie hang-out in Los Angeles, ended the trip with 24 hours of prayer and fasting prior to a rally on the grounds of the Washington Monument.

Earlier a group of about 600 young persons joined Blessitt carrying his cross in a march around downtown Washington. Shouting to passersby and onlookers that "Jesus loves you," the group sang folk rock religious songs and gave cheers for Jesus.

Dressed in mod clothes and wearing his hair in the long hippie style, the 29-year-old Southern Baptist minister challenged the youths, many of them dressed also in the garb of the hippie world, to be a part of a new revolution.

The "Jesus revolution," he called it, at a rally ending the 24-hour period of prayer and fasting.

Blessitt, who earlier in the day had collapsed from exhaustion, according to a Red Cross nurse, preached with strength and compassion for about 30 minutes to a crowd of about 1,000 persons.

He began the cross country trek against the advice of four doctors, concerned over five minor strokes the young evangelist had suffered in four years.

Although three out of the four doctors gave him a 50-50 chance of surviving, Blessitt said he refused to stay in California because of his conviction that the journey would dramatize the nation's spiritual needs.

During the six month excursion, the travelers divided their time between riding in a 15-year-old automobile which pulled a trailer, rolling the cross and conducting evangelistic rallies. Blessitt's wife and three children accompanied them.

In his appeal to the crowd in Washington, Blessitt asked his followers "to stress love and understanding instead of hate...to go into every community and become brothers with every man...to go on the streets, hand in hand...shoulder to shoulder...to share Jesus in a new revolution."

"God, we can't live without revival in the land," Blessitt prayed, pleading for a spiritual revival to begin in the group gathered before him and in the Congress and White House.

"There is so much suffering, death, disease, pain and hate..." he cried.

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Blessitt prayed especially for those who "cursed us and tried to kill us" on the long journey to Washington. "Put love in the hearts of our people," he prayed.

"We can't live with our churches so cold and our preachers so dead and our buildings so fine," he cried, with tears streaming down his face.

Using terms familiar to the hip community, Blessitt told the reverent, listening youth that they did not need to get "high" on drugs. Instead of "dropping acid, all you need is to drop a little Matthew, Mark, Luke and John...and get stoned with Jesus," he advised.

In front of Blessitt as he spoke was the mobile cross he and a few converts had wheeled across the country. Fashioned from an old rough-hewn telephone pole, the cross was splashed with red dots about two inches in diameter.

On the red dots were the sign of the cross at the top ending with the peace symbol at the bottom of the cross.

The words "smile, God loves you" were printed in black ink. Blessitt's title as "Minister of Sunset Strip" and his Hollywood address circled the rim of the red dots.

The same red dots appeared all around Washington on poles and buildings, and were worn by many persons at the rally. Some of the young people arranged the dots in the shape of a cross on their clothing and some stuck them in the center of their foreheads.

The two-hour rally at the Washington monument began and ended with the group shouting cheers to Jesus. "Give me a 'J,'" a leader shouted in typical cheerleader style.

The group responded with a loud "J." "Give me an 'E'--give me an 'S'--give me a 'U'--give me another 'S'--what have you got?" And the crowd yelled back, "JESUS."

Another cheer popular with the mainly teenage crowd during the march was "Rah, Rah, Roo, Jesus loves you. Rah, Rah, Ree, Jesus loves me."

For the most part, those in the crowd seemed to be middle-class church-going young people who want some identification with a new spiritual movement. Many of them have adopted the language and clothes fashions of the hippie community while holding on to a fundamentalist faith.

One of the followers, a radiant 15-year-old junior in high school, said she and her father were recently "saved" in one of Blessitt's meetings, though both had been members of a Baptist church for some time.

Active in the youth program in a church in West Palm Beach, Fla., she said her recent experience had changed her attitude toward people, "especially colored people."

"This is what America needs," she emphasized. "It is the only thing that can overcome the hate between the two races."

The young girl and her father, like a majority of those at the rally, had followed Blessitt to Washington just to participate in the prayer day observance.

At the rally in the hot midday sun, Blessitt told the eager young people that he was going to stay in Washington for 40 days to pray and fast for a spiritual revival.

Citing references of early disciples who "went into the wilderness to pray," Blessitt said there was "no bigger wilderness in the nation than Washington, D.C." He called the nation's capital "a jungle of bitterness, hate, deceit and chaos."

Noting that permission to pray on the Monument grounds had not yet been granted, Blessitt told the crowd that he would prop his cross against a tree at the corner of Constitution Avenue and 15th Street near a telephone booth.

"Nobody could object to setting up the cross of Jesus Christ against a tree," he declared.

The young Baptist evangelist, who operates His Place, a Christian coffee house on Sunset Strip, urged his followers to go into the nation's capital and other cities and "feed the hungry...clothe those who are naked...and help find shelter for the homeless.

"Blitz the city," he urged. "Don't witness in hate and don't argue," he advised, "but share Jesus Christ in love."

Blessitt promised that he or someone from his staff would be on hand at the telephone booth on the mall 24 hours of the day to answer any calls for prayer and other requests. That telephone number, he said, is (202) 393-8893.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Photos are tentatively expected on Arthur Blessitt's Washington Rally. They will be mailed to state Baptist editors when available.

Baylor University Reimburses
Students \$45,000 in Tour Losses

7/21/70

WACO, Tex. (BP)--Baylor University's board of trustees has commended the university's decision to reimburse 50 of its students who paid about \$45,000 to a tour agency which has declared bankruptcy.

Herbert H. Reynolds, Baylor's executive vice president, told the trustees that World Academy, which had headquarters in Cincinnati, approached the Texas Baptist school last fall about collaborating in a program in which students would travel to foreign countries to study courses offered by Baylor professors.

Early in July World Academy made headlines by declaring voluntary bankruptcy and leaving about 3,000 students from the States stranded in Europe.

Two Baylor tours arranged through World Academy were to have left the United States for Europe in late July.

"Baylor University was not legally liable to these students, who paid directly to World Academy," Reynolds told the trustees. He said the costs were absorbed because the Baylor administration feels "morally obligated,"

He said the incident "should not negate any interest in a study abroad program" by Baylor since such a program of travel and study is "something many of our students need and want."

He said most of the universities with similar programs arranged through the World Academy did not reimburse their students.

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Indiana Baptists Urge Recall
Of Vatican Representative

7/21/70

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Indiana Baptists' executive board voted here to recommend a record budget for 1971 and to send a letter to President Richard M. Nixon, urging him to reconsider his appointment of Henry Cabot Lodge as personal representative to the Vatican.

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The appointment "established an official relationship between the government of our nation and a religious organization which operates within our nation," the letter said.

The action came at the quarterly meeting of the 30-member board which transacts business between annual sessions of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana.

The board will recommend to the convention's annual session in Richmond, Ind., Nov. 11-13, a 1971 budget of \$603,346--eight per cent above the 1970 budget.

The recommended budget sets the 1971 state Cooperative Program goal at \$372,000 for the next year, 11 per cent above the current goal. Of that amount, 28.1 per cent will go to the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program.

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Georgia Baptist Foundation
Executive Announces Retirement

7/21/70

ATLANTA (BP)--Harry V. Smith Sr., executive secretary of the Georgia Baptist Foundation and Endowment Committee will retire in 1971.

The foundation administers endowment funds for the convention's colleges, benevolent homes, a hospital, and missionary causes.

Smith, a Georgia native, directed public relations and alumni affairs at Mercer University, 1948-55, before assuming the foundation post.

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Attendance Records Set At
Conferences in Glorieta

7/21/70

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Two new attendance records have been set at Glorieta Baptist Assembly here.

The second Sunday School Leadership Conference registered 2,314 persons, the largest registration for a Sunday School conference in the assembly's history.

That figure, added to 2,429 registrants at the joint Sunday School-Church Training Conference and 2,139 at the first Sunday School week, totals 6,882 persons--a new record for attendance during these three weeks.

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SBC Executive Committee
Member Dies in Florida

7/21/70

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--Cecil Carroll, 60, a member of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee, died July 18 of a heart attack suffered on the plane from Miami to his home in Jacksonville.

Funeral services were at Southside Baptist Church, Jacksonville, with burial at Oaklawn Cemetery.

Carroll, an insurance executive, was past president of the Florida Baptist Convention and a former trustee of the Southern Baptist Hospital Board. He had served as Sunday School superintendent in two Florida churches.

A Florida Baptist Convention official said Carroll had often helped deserving young people, paying their college tuition.

He is survived by his wife, Lena, and two daughters.

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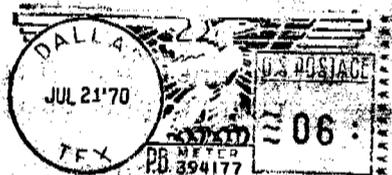
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