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June 21, 1972

20,000 Baptists Among 80,000
Delegates Attending Explo '72

By Joan Harvison

DALLAS (BP)--Explo '72, the most massive gathering of students and Christian laymen ever descend on any one city, sought to start a movement toward the evangelization of "the world in our generation."

That slogan became the marching orders of some 80,000 delegates to a week-long Christian training conference here, sponsored by Campus Crusade for Christ International.

Delegations represented all 50 states and some 68 foreign countries. The international student congress on evangelism was the brainchild of Bill Bright, Campus Crusade founder and president.

Bright had nurtured the dream of such a meeting since his participation in the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin in 1966, sponsored by Evangelist Billy Graham.

Estimates of Southern Baptist participation in the meeting ranged from 17 to 25 percent of the total delegation.

But that was only a miniscule measure of the involvement of Southern Baptists, many of whom worked behind the scenes providing housing, leadership, counsel and tangible assistance such as financial aid for students unable to pay their own way.

In response to an all-out appeal for private housing and sleeping spaces, a number of Southern Baptist families, churches and institutions joined Dallas-Fort Worth area citizenry in opening their doors and their hearts to the youthful delegates.

Baylor University Medical Center provided some 150 sleeping spaces. Several Dallas-Fort Worth Baptist churches offered their facilities for groups who bedded down on thousands of air mattresses that had been flown in. Sleeping bags and cots filled the bill for others.

For one unforgettable week in Dallas, a city learned what it was like to be inundated by what Evangelist Billy Graham, honorary Explo chairman, called the "Silenced Majority."

Graham noted that national attention had centered on radical, militant youth and, in effect, silenced the majority of responsible young people--the kind who came to Explo '72.

The orderliness and courtesy of the delegation as a whole drew praise from both Dallas daily newspapers and local police.

Noting that Explo delegates "have made a great impression on the people of Dallas," the Dallas Morning News said, "They have come here to learn how to carry the message of their faith. And from the looks of it, they have already begun to get the message across."

The week combined 15 hours of morning training conferences in Christian witnessing techniques and optional seminars in the afternoons with opportunities for delegates to practice what they had learned on the Dallas citizens.

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In pairs and in groups, students and laymen dispersed throughout the city in a door-to-door campaign to share their Christian faith on downtown streets and suburban shopping centers.

They confronted and often repeatedly bombarded Dallas sites with the gospel message outlined in simple terms in Campus Crusade's palm-sized booklet and major evangelistic tool--the "Four Spiritual Laws."

Even Graham unexpectedly took to the streets during the noontime hour one day in an unscheduled appearance, addressing hundreds of people who gathered on a small downtown Dallas mall and hippie haven to hear the famed Southern Baptist evangelist.

Later, he donned casual clothes--golf cap and dark glasses--to stroll unannounced through "Tent City." Hundreds of Explo delegates, including many California "Jesus People," had pitched tents on the sprawling 38-acre tract of camping ground and conference site between Dallas and Fort Worth.

At night, Tuesday through Friday, the scene shifted to the Cotton Bowl, where the singing, clapping and exuberant delegates all came together for mammoth "Jesus Rallies."

Bright delivered the main address at three of the services. Graham, who officially welcomed the delegates at the opening rally and appeared on each of the Cotton Bowl programs, was featured speaker at the final service on Friday night.

At times, particularly the first night, the rallies took on the look of a gigantic pep rally for Jesus.

Delegates often delayed the program for lengthy intervals, chanting such phrases as "Praise The Lord" and "Jesus Saves," pointing their index fingers heavenward symbolizing that "Jesus is the only way."

Explo's grand finale came on Saturday when a strip of unfinished freeway, cordoned off near the downtown area, became the scene of an eight-hour-long Jesus music festival. It drew an estimated crowd of 150,000 persons and created traffic congestion for miles around.

Singers Johnny Cash and Kris Kristofferson were two of the heavyweight attractions on the program. Also included were country and western vocalist Connie Smith, and performers as diverse in style as the Speer Family and Jeff Fenholt of the Jesus Christ Superstar cast.

Graham had earlier described the gathering as a "Christian Woodstock," a phrase picked up by the more than 200-member press corps covering the event.

But a Woodstock it wasn't. The drug scene spectre that the term connotes never materialized in Dallas. The rally was practically incident-free, much to the relief of Dallas police officers, who publicly praised the orderliness of the crowd.

In a news conference following Explo, Graham described the week-long meeting as a "historic event."

"Thousands have committed themselves to carry back the message to home towns across the world," he said, referring to Explo's "Operation Penetration." This project is targeted on a five-to-one follow-up, with each Explo participant charged with the task of recruiting five others to help "Evangelize the world by 1980."

Although the total evaluation of Explo will take years, Graham said, "It's position in church history will come. It will have an impact on every denomination in the United States."

Graham told newsmen he was surprised at the decorum of the group and the noticeable absence of fringe groups.

Rumors abounded of possible anti-war demonstrations at the music festival but they never got off the ground.

The bill for Explo was \$2.4 million, with most of it expected to be financed through registration fees.

On the subject of the Campus Crusade goal of evangelizing the world in the next eight years, Graham said, "That seems to be a realistic date."

But it will take the combined forces of all denominations and churches, not just Campus Crusade as a single organization, he stressed.

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EDITORS' NOTE: Joan Harvison, former public relations director for Oklahoma Baptists, is a freelance writer and public relations consultant in Dallas.

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BP Photos mailed to Baptist state editors.

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Thief at SBC Gets a
Scriptural Surprise

6/21/72

PHILADELPHIA (BP)-- A would-be thief received a dose of biblical admonition in a totally unexpected manner during the recent annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention here.

The episode occurred when David Clanton of Dallas, staff photographer for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, missed an expensive camera. Clanton was in Philadelphia to operate the darkroom for the SBC press room.

Putting himself in the shoes of a criminal, Clanton surmised the culprit might have decided to hide the camera on the premise and carry it out later undetected by guards.

Sure enough, amid the debris beneath a stairwell, he found the camera wrapped in old rags.

He replaced it with a water-filled bottle about the same size and shape. On the bottle, Clanton wrote "Thou Shalt Not Steal."

Clanton said he hopes the person who took the camera "got the message."

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Argentine Sick Children
Get Baptist Assistance

6/21/72

RIO CUARTO, Argentina (BP)-- Sick children from 57 families here received medical aid through a local Baptist church and the Baptist World Alliance after parents of several children sought help from a local newspaper.

When the parents asked the newspaper to print requests for medical help, the editors directed them to Alfonso Olmedo, pastor of the Baptist church at Rio Cuarto, about 350 miles west of Buenos Aires in the state of Cordoba.

"They came to my home," Olmedo, a former vice president of the Baptist World Alliance told the Alliance's representatives in Washington, D.C. "It was a joy...to tell them of God's love in the hearts of Baptists of the world," Olmedo said.

He contacted the BWA Office in Washington, requesting assistance from the Alliance's relief program. About 4,268 pesos were sent to Olmedo for the purchase of medicines and powdered milk for the children.

With the funds, Olmedo was able to assist 48 families outside the church, and nine families of church members.

"For many it was the first contact with evangelicals or with Baptists, and they were deeply moved," he said. "Many have come to our services and we have hopes of leading some to 'Everlasting Health,'" Olmedo said.

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Baptists Honor Luther Rice;
Organize New England Churches

NORTHBORO, Mass. (BP)--Southern Baptist leaders, including Owen Cooper in his first official role as president of the Southern Baptist Convention, paid tribute to Luther Rice as the founder of Baptist foreign mission efforts in America by mounting a plaque at his birthplace here.

The next day four Southern Baptist churches in the New England area were constituted.

Luther Rice and Adoniram Judson were appointed in 1812 as Congregational missionaries to India. On separate ships during the six month voyage, both changed their views on the ordinance of baptism and when they reached India they were baptized and resigned as Congregationalist missionaries. They offered their services to the Baptists who, at that time, had no missionary program in foreign countries.

Rice returned to the United States to raise aid for Judson who remained in India. He traveled throughout the eastern United States to create an interest in foreign missions.

The plaque calls Rice a denominational statesman, journalist, and educator. He founded Columbian College in Washington, D.C., now George Washington University. He was instrumental in establishing the Triennial Convention, the Baptist General Tract Society, and in "The uniting of scattered Baptist churches into a Baptist denomination."

The building where the plaque was mounted is on the site of the home where Rice was born. It is now the home of Elmer Sizemore, Baptist Home Mission Board missionary and missions director for the New England area. The adjacent property is the proposed site for offices of what will be the Baptist General Convention of New England when it is once organized.

The day after the plaque mounting ceremony, four churches were added to the roster of Southern Baptist churches in New England.

Nashua Baptist Church, near Screven, N.H., was only the second Southern Baptist church to be constituted in New Hampshire. With 97 people, the church has mostly an indigenous membership and a weekday ministry to 100 kids.

In Lewiston, Maine, Baptists constituted "The Chapel" with 40 members. It is a trailer parked on a shopping center parking lot. The Chapel has baptized 25 people since its inception four years ago and it is open all day with a counseling center and a library operated by pastor Gordon Thomas.

An order of worship is printed for shoppers who stop by for prayer or inspiration. The Chapel is the fifth Southern Baptist church constituted in Maine and was the last mission there.

Holden Baptist Church in Massachusetts constituted with 80 charter members including 17 awaiting baptism. Northshore Baptist Church in West Peabody of greater Boston had been a mission of Metropolitan Baptist Church in Boston until its constitution.

With seven churches constituted in New England in 1971 and four more in one swoop, Wendell Belew, Home Mission Board director of the Division of Missions said, "New England is one of our fastest growing pioneer areas."

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BP PHOTOS mailed to Baptist state papers.

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First Baptist, Dallas
Starts Parochial School

6/21/72

DALLAS (BP)-- The largest church in the Southern Baptist Convention will begin operation of a newly-formed elementary school in September with an estimated 275 students.

The 16,795-member First Baptist Church of Dallas has named Mayme Lee O'Brien, a church educator from Houston, as principal of the school, which will serve kindergarten through seventh grade age.

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Miss O'Brien said the school, which has stated an open-door racial policy, will expand to the church's new \$3 million educational plant when it is complete in the fall of 1973.

Ten fulltime teachers, including a coach, will open the school year, and faculty will increase as enrollment increases.

Tuition charges, which will eventually finance the school's entire operating cost, will be \$20 per month for pre-first graders and \$65 per month for first grade and above.

Miss O'Brien said the school will seek accreditation from the Texas Education Association (TEA), but added, "Our policy will be to maintain academic requirements more stringent than the TEA's."

She said all 10 teachers formerly taught in the public schools and eight have master's degrees. Most were already members of First Baptist Church.

The school will offer a mix of regular academic courses, physical education and courses in Bible and religious education.

For 17 years, Miss O'Brien was principal of Broadway Baptist Church's school in Houston, Tex. Previously, she was professor at Grand Canyon College, Phoenix, Ariz., for five years, and director of a Baptist good will center in Bristol, Va., -Tenn. She earned the doctor of religious education degree at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and has done additional graduate work at University of Texas, Austin, and University of Houston.

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Maryland Baptist Board
Approves Staff Restructure

6/21/72

LUTHERVILLE, Md. (BP)--The State Mission Board of the Baptist Convention of Maryland approved here a reorganization of the convention board's staff, accepted the resignation of their state director of missions, and approved plans for a state camping and retreat center that could eventually become an assembly.

The restructure proposals were brought by the Executive Committee of the State Mission Board as initial recommendations of a long-range study.

Under the new organization, the 12 current departments of work will be grouped into four departments in order to better coordinate and correlate their work.

Convention officials pointed out that the restructure would not cut back any phase of the convention's work, but would only realign the programs with different relationships and assignments.

The four new departments created by the board will include the missions department, church development department, business services department and Woman's Missionary Union. Each department will be headed by a department director reporting directly to the executive secretary, plus associates and assistants with areas of specialty.

The missions department will include the work of evangelism, stewardship, church administration, Baptist men and boys work, and student ministries.

The church development department will include Bible teaching and church training, church building, church music, church recreation and summer assemblies.

In a unique arrangement, the Woman's Missionary Union, an auxiliary to the convention, will become a department with funding and policy approval through the convention board.

In effect, the new structure will be similar to the division concept of organization used by several state conventions, but the four organizational entities will be called departments rather than divisions.

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Current department heads would become associates or directors of one of the four new departments. The four new department heads have not yet been named.

By a vote of 32-7, the board approved the purchase of 295 acres of land in central Maryland, about an hours drive from either Baltimore or Washington, D.C., for development of a retreat, camping and conference center. It is located near Frederick, Md., in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Initial cost of the center will be \$250,000, with \$100,000 coming from a loan approved by the board, and \$150,000 from funds already on hand.

Initially, the center would provide camping and conference facilities for about 75 persons. It will be used as a camp for Royal Ambassadors primarily at first, but could become a statewide Baptist assembly in about 10 years or so.

In other action, the board accepted the resignation of E. Milford Howell, state director of missions for the convention since 1966, who becomes superintendent of missions for the Southwest Baptist Association in the Bradenton-Sarasota, Fla., area effective Aug. 1.

Before coming to Maryland, he was pastor of a church in Dallas, and for 21 years was a Southern Baptist missionary to Nigeria. He is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary where he earned the doctor of theology degree.



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