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July 26, 1973

Europeans See Evangelism,
Change in Baptist Future

By C. E. Bryant

ZURICH, Switzerland (BP)--European Baptists went back to Zurich where their Anabaptist forefathers had suffered martyrdom but their discussions at the European Baptist Federation Congress looked forward, not backward.

Delegates came from 21 countries, representing a total of 1,140,000 church members. More than 60 per cent of this membership live, worship and work in the Communist states of Eastern Europe.

The Baptists of Western Europe are a similar minority, their lands dominated by the Anglican, Catholic and Lutheran state churches.

They spoke such a variety of languages that the 1500 participants wore headsets to pick up simultaneous translations in German, Hungarian, Swedish, Serbio-Croatian, Spanish, and English.

Even then some people had to listen to a tongue different from their own. Most Europeans fortunately can use a second and even a third language. In hallway conversations the participants would try first one language then another until they found one in common.

They found common interest in the congress theme: "Future of the Church--Church of the Future."

The congress is held every four years as a major part of the work of the European Baptist Federation, a regional organization of the Baptist World Alliance. C. Ronald Goulding of London, is both general secretary of the EBF and associate secretary of the BWA.

The program had few repetitious speeches unlike some American meetings. Instead it was a program of sharing. There were many panel discussions, balanced by participants from east and west, and including youth. Visitors from missions fields spoke candidly to mission executives about their likes and dislikes of the church's work in their countries.

There was a search for ways to make the churches more meaningful in a world where technical advance has drastically changed society.

Panelists agreed that television, for instance, would never make the traditional Sunday worship service obsolete, because "nothing can replace the togetherness we find in Christian fellowship." However, these same persons were heartily in favor of changing the format of that service if such a revision would make spiritual truths more meaningful to communicants.

Jack Brown, a London pastor, told how an influx of young people had altered the song and sermon pattern of his Sunday evening services. The church added folk music and discussion periods in order to enlist these youth into active participation.

Mrs. Ingrid Engelson of Norway told how women of her country invited other women into their homes for informal and uninhibited discussions of Christian subjects.

Evangelism, particularly for lay people, was given major attention in both inspirational and technical spheres. Gunter Wieske, European regional director of the World Mission of Reconciliation, a program sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance, led the crowd in a how-to session on personal witnessing.

Piero Bensi of Italy cited the plight of migrant laborers who leave Italy to work in German and Swiss harvests.

"Too often we give a man a New Testament, pat him on the back and tell him we're praying for him," he said. "The church needs also to help meet the basic problem that takes him away from his home and family."

The congregation used a hymnbook printed in three languages. A choir of 50 Hungarians was featured through the week, and a male trio from the Soviet Union sang frequently. Saturday night young people took over the full two hour program with a youth music festival.

Andrew MacRae of Scotland declared that "the future of the church is in the hand of God. But he has put some of it in our hands also. Paul reminds us that God has enlisted us in the service of reconciliation. He entrusted to us the mission of reconciliation."

Perhaps the most emphatic words of all were by Claus Meister of Ruschlikon, Switzerland, president of the European Baptist Federation. "The church of the future does not begin in the 1880's," he declared. "The future begins on Monday, as soon as you get home."

"We must change to meet current needs," he continued. "And happily the Baptist confession, with its autonomous congregations, can change more easily than any other church in the world."

He urged the largely lay audience to ask questions about church procedures, and to work for changes that will make the church more evangelistic and more meaningful to its community.

"You as an individual will not be able to do everything," he said. "But you can do one, two, or three things. Decide what they are, and with God's help take your place in the church of the future."

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Baptist Alliance Chooses
Louisville For 1974 Meet

7/26/73

EINSIEDELN, Switzerland (BP)--The Baptist World Alliance's executive committee will hold its next annual meeting at Louisville, Ky., Aug. 6-10, 1974.

The meeting, which will also include the BWA study commissions, will meet on the campus of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

It will be the committee's first meeting in the United States since it met at Nashville, Tenn., in 1967. It has since met in Monrovia, Liberia; Baden Bei Wen, Austria; Tokyo, Japan; Wolfville, N.S., Canada; Kingston, Jamaica.

A record 282 persons from 32 countries attended this year's meetings here.

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CORRECTION

In Baptist Press story mailed 7-25-73, headlined POW-MIA Families Told To Be Good Neighbors, please change graph 13 to read:

Davis, pastor of The Rock Baptist Church at Rex, Ga., a suburb of Atlanta...

--Baptist Press

(BP)

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---FEATURES

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Second of Two Articles

Churches Searching In Nomad's Land

By Tim Nicholas

Modern Americans appear to be selecting lifestyles which enable them to pull up stakes and move on to greener lawns, so to speak.

But some don't want to bother with lawns, others don't want to bother with neighbors.

And these new nomad -apartment dwellers, mobile home owners, and new town dwellers--pose challenging problems for Southern Baptist concepts of ministry.

The 1970 U.S. census showed more than 25 million families living in rented units responding to the promise of privacy and the implied freedom of apartment dwelling. They can have pretty flowers out front and never have to pull weeds or paint fences.

Even higher mortgages are optional for people wanting home ownership with the mobile home requiring fewer years of indebtedness. Today seven million people live in mobile homes and projections for 1973 sales exceed 650,000 units.

Options now include choosing a totally preplanned environment with nearly 130 "new towns" springing up across America. Some, like Sun City in Arizona, offer residences to a single age group, but others welcome any person or family who is pleased with the prepackaged lifestyle offered. Before the 21st century, experts predict, more than nine million people will live in planned cities from coast to coast.

"We have to get away from the traditions of a church being five acres of land, an auditorium, and educational buildings," says Wendell Belew, missions director for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

"In Co-op City, a big apartment complex in New York City, we have a full-time chaplain who ministers to the people living there. If he can develop a church, fine. But that's not his major role," says Belew.

Along with individual churches, the Home Mission Board has attempted to develop techniques and approaches for apartment house ministry, but most attempts have met with limited success, reports the board's metropolitan missions strategist, Warren Rust, in the July-August issue of Home Missions magazine.

Unlike home owners, apartment people usually have a defense against solicitors: managers.

And managers--sympathetic to Christian causes or not--must protect their tenants right to be left alone.

"Complete reliance on door-to-door visitation in apartments is out--O-U-T," says Becky Schultey, assistant manager of Broadmoor Apartments, Austin, Tex.

"If we let church people visit unchecked, we'd have to do the same to magazine salesmen," says Mrs. Schultey, who attends a Baptist church and is sympathetic to Christian ministries. "You just have to reach people through other methods."

Clifton Fite, who worked for a time as an apartment minister for an Atlanta area church, agrees that the "no solicitors" signs on apartment complexes usually include ministers.

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To begin his ministry, Fite visited apartment owners, explaining that he wasn't a fly-by-night religionist trying to swell the rolls of the church." He volunteered to help when deaths occurred, or when domestic squabbles arose. By going through proper channels, Fite gained acceptance with apartment managers that has been absent in too many situations.

Fite's phone ministry was "live." He put himself on 24-hour call for crisis counseling. He also organized vacation Bible schools in a dozen areas, helped train members of his church, Beecher Hills Baptist, in apartment ministry techniques, and served as chaplain for little league ball players. Fite's wife Ruby taught literacy classes to internationals in the Fite apartment.

Like apartment complexes, mobile home parks often need specialized ministries. Occasionally churches are built especially to minister to the people in a mobile home park.

Metropolitan Baptist Church's building consists of three mobile homes pieced together. The main thing that distinguishes it from the other 238 mobile homes at Metropolitan park, 25 miles northeast of Atlanta, Ga., is the steeple.

With beginnings as a mission seven years ago after a census revealed that a whopping 80 per cent of the inhabitants were Baptists, yet few were members of local churches. Metropolitan church now has 49 members with 13 more to be baptized at the park's swimming pool sometime this summer. But the small size hasn't kept the church members from exceeding their budget every year.

Metropolitan church has assisted families swamped by medical bills, raised money for playground equipment, volunteered a committee to clean up the park and sponsored a Boy Scout and Cub Scout group. About 100 children attend its vacation Bible school, and a community library is planned.

In the planned city the developer replaces the apartment or park manager, making decisions about religious operations within the cities.

State conventions have turned key men to the task of making Baptist witness a reality in new towns, and the Home Mission Board has added a new town consultant, James Hamblen, to serve as a national liaison between developers of new towns and Southern Baptists.

Actually most developers will provide some sort of religious facilities, Jim Hamblen has discovered, ranging from giving a church group land--as was done at Peachtree City, Ga.--to insisting on "interfaith centers," as has been the case at the most successful planned city, Columbia, Md., where Hamblen was pastor of a Southern Baptist congregation before his Home Mission Board appointment.

As Tom Draper, a Florida missions superintendent involved in churching several new towns in his area, says, "The idea of a community of 40,000 people with no Southern Baptist witness, man, that just leaves me cold." He's talking about planned cities, but he could just as well be aiming his words toward apartment complexes or mobile home parks, as he continues, "We've got to get our foot in the door."

Editor's Note: Tim Nicholas is a staff member of Home Missions magazine, and compiled this article from that magazine's July-August issue. Photos mailed to Baptist state papers and others on request.