



BAPTIST PRESS

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November 29, 1973

Lutheran, Baptist,
Presbyterian in Space

HOUSTON, Tex. (BP)--It's no joke. There's a story about a Lutheran, a Baptist and a Presbyterian who are touring "heavenly places."

The three are the Skylab III astronauts roaming the heavens in what appears will be man's longest space voyage. Blastoff was at Cape Canaveral on Nov. 16, 1973.

In outer space with Skylab pilot Col. William R. Pogue, USAF, an ordained Southern Baptist deacon and a member of Nassau Bay (Texas) Baptist Church, are a Lutheran, Edward G. Gibson, civilian astronaut-scientist, and flight commander Col. Gerald P. Carr, USMC, a Presbyterian, according to the news bureau of the Lutheran Council in the USA.

Gibson, the Lutheran news service says, is a member of House of Prayer Lutheran Church, a Lutheran Church of America congregation in suburban Houston, where his older brother, Calder A. Gibson II, is pastor. Carr reportedly attends Webster (Texas) Presbyterian Church.

Gibson didn't even know how to fly a plane when he answered an advertisement by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) "for people with a scientific background for future space missions," the Lutheran news bureau said.

Now he's flying around with his colleagues in "heavenly places."

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A 'Pioneer' Project
Information Retrieval
System Launched

11/29/73

By James Lee Young

NASHVILLE (BP)--The day is coming when individuals or groups looking for contemporary or background information on Southern Baptists will be able to plug into a centralized computer system for reference information on a myriad of subject areas.

Thanks to a newly-launched Baptist Information Retrieval System (BIRS) pilot project, the time is also coming when most, if not all, Southern Baptist periodicals and other pertinent documents will be uniformly indexed and computerized for relatively quick reference.

"In our investigations we have not found a system of this nature that has been developed by other religious or denominational organizations in the country, said Lynn E. May Jr., executive secretary-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission, the agency coordinating the project.

Representatives from several Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and other Baptist organizations participating in the pilot venture for 1974-75, were briefed on the project at a meeting here.

May called the BIRS system a "pioneer project that is revolutionary among Christian groups in terms of its comprehensiveness and its eventual wide availability to persons desiring information on Baptists."

BIRS requires use of a uniform thesaurus of subject headings for indexing current Baptist publications and documents. It provides for a widely expanded information storage and retrieval operation subsequent to the pilot system, according to May.

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He said the system, which may be used for both input and retrieval purposes, relies heavily on lay (non-computer trained persons) for coding articles and documents to feed into the system. The information will be stored in the commission's data bank.

The project, for which \$38,500 has been appropriated by at least eight participating Baptist institutions and agencies, will provide printouts of reference data on request only to organizations already involved in the pilot system, until further notice, May said.

Information may be retrieved by these agencies beginning in July, 1974, pending initial input into the system, he added.

The \$38,500 will be for initial development of the program and costs will subsequently decrease, May continued.

The system works like this. A person designated in an agency indexes and codes a periodical or document per thesaurus standards. After the material has been prepared in machine-readable form, it is channeled through the Historical Commission for checking and entry into the data bank.

When the information is properly stored in the data bank, students, educators, writers, pastors, denominational workers and others desiring background and contemporary information on Baptists may secure reference information within a relatively short time after a request is received by the commission, May said.

BIRS will save individuals travel and time they would otherwise spend in researching myriads of reference materials to dig out information going back months or years on specific subjects, May said.

For example, a person might want information on Baptists and stances on prayer in schools in the last few years. The computer would provide a printout detailing references the individual could check, without having to search through other less specific references or doing the work piecemeal.

The pilot project isn't Southern Baptists' first system of indexing. The Historical Commission, at the request of the SBC's Inter-Agency Council, has helped to coordinate indexing efforts of SBC agencies and has cooperated in compiling and publishing the annual Southern Baptist Periodical Index since 1965. May said.

The periodical index will continue to be published but will be more uniform, produced more quickly and will be more accurate, because of BIRS, according to A. Ronald Tonks, assistant executive-secretary of the Historical Commission.

The commission has also produced indexes to SBC annuals, graduate theses and other materials. Several other Baptist organizations index publications and other documents, but this will be the first attempt to coordinate a computerized indexing and information retrieval system among all the agencies of and cooperating with the SBC, May said.

F. Wilbur Helmbold, librarian at Samford University in Birmingham and chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on BIRS, the Historical Commission's indexing study group of advisors, said he believes that BIRS is of "far-reaching importance to researchers, biographers and an even broader range of the Baptist constituency."

He continued, "I see the (BIRS) project as currently the most far-reaching expansive project of its kind by any religious organization I know."

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SBC Home Mission Budget
Raised to \$18 Million

11/29/73

ATLANTA (BP)--Because of better-than-expected income, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board raised its 1974 budget to \$18,039,210. Earlier this year the agency had adopted a budget \$666,000 short of that amount.

Arthur B. Rutledge, executive director of the agency, said receipts from the two major sources of income--the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering--"exceeded our hopes."

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Also included was added income of \$112,000 from a major foundation gift for church extension and language missions.

The \$18 million budget supports the work of 2,178 missionaries in all 50 states, Panama and Puerto Rico.

Rutledge said the Annie Armstrong Offering is "running approximately 14 per cent higher than one year ago. Over a span of two years this offering has increased more than 25 per cent."

In spite of the increases, Rutledge said, "It is not easy for the agency to keep abreast of rising costs and at the same time also expand our witness and ministry."

And these are times when we must respond to the challenges which face Christians in America, he told the fall meeting of the agency's directors.

"The problems which our nation has faced this year have cast upon the nation a pall of gloom and distrust. We have almost forgotten the cease-fire in Vietnam and the return of our prisoners of war," he said.

"On the other hand this mood seems to have driven many of our people to a deepened concern for the spiritual and moral welfare of our nation. Millions of unbelievers and marginal church members are more responsive to Christ than ever before," he said.

"This is a challenging time to be committed to help cross barriers with the gospel of Christ."

The board also authorized the creation of a separate corporation to handle the purchase and sale of church bonds.

Robert Kilgore, director of the division of church loans, was named president of the corporation. He said that it will be spring of '74 before final details are worked out and the corporation starts functioning.

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Mission Board Honors Alma Hunt for 25 Years Service

11/29/73

ATLANTA (BP)--"This has been a beautiful and joyful experience," Alma Hunt, executive secretary of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union said. "And seeing yours life on the screen is far better than going to your own funeral."

Miss Hunt made the comment after seeing the multimedia presentation on her life at the Alma Hunt Appreciation Day Luncheon given by the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board during its annual fall meeting here.

The agency's board of directors, who gave Miss Hunt a standing ovation, honored her for 25 years service to the WMU and her support of the board.

Miss Hunt became WMU executive secretary in 1948. Since then she has worked together with the Home Mission Board to form a partnership which has resulted in printing and distribution of more than four million copies of some 100 books, delving into every facet of home missions.

One of Miss Hunt's most beneficial projects, a board spokesman said, has been the special offering to home missions. Since she took office, the offering has grown from \$600,000 in 1948 to more than \$6.8 million in 1973.

The offering undergirds every home missions program and ministry in the land, supplementing the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program unified budget.

Miss Hunt, the Southern Baptist leader with the longest years of service, has worked with three Home Mission Board executive secretaries: J. B. Lawrence, Courts Redford and Arthur B. Rutledge.

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"It has been my privilege to work closely with Alma Hunt since 1965," Rutledge said at the presentation. "Those of us who know her as a person know that she lives missions--missions overseas and missions at home.

Jack Lowndes, president of the mission agency's board of directors, presented Miss Hunt with a resolution of appreciation.

Porter W. Routh, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, said of Miss Hunt, "She has acted as a key leader since becoming the WMU executive secretary and has sought, in an effective way, to get women involved in missions at the local, state and world levels."

Miss Hunt spoke of the relationship that has and will continue to exist between the WMU and the Home Mission Board.

She turned to Rutledge and said, "Here is a check for \$400 from my printer for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. Take it and know that I am still at work."

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BP PHOTO mailed to state Baptist paper editors

Viewer Response, More Funds
Decide "Spring Street" Fate

11/29/73

ATLANTA (BP)--The future of the evangelistic television program "Spring Street, USA" depends almost entirely on viewer response and the SBC Executive Committee's approval of additional funds, Arthur B. Rutledge, the board's executive director, told the Home Mission Board's directors here.

In his annual report, Rutledge said that despite a large increase in mail response, "Funds in sight seemingly make it impossible to produce any new programs after January of next year."

So the Home Mission Board has asked for an additional \$400,000 in its 1974-75 Cooperative Program request, to be acted upon by the Executive Committee in mid-February, 1974.

"It is our hope that within the next three years mail receipts from listeners will reach the level of providing all or a substantial portion of the cost of the program," Rutledge told the directors.

"The 468 mail responses received in October represented more than one-third of the total since April 1 (when the show debuted), Rutledge added. November responses jumped past 500.

Bill Hogue, director of the agency's evangelism division, reported an example of local viewer support. An anonymous donor offered to foot the \$7,000 fee required for showing 31 segments of "Spring Street, USA" on station KHON-TV in Hawaii at 2 p.m. on Sundays.

In addition, the station will give a free 30-second spot local identification during the show to promote the work of the 32 Southern Baptist churches in Hawaii.

An additional \$75,000 was received by mail in November, but production of the final eight shows in January will require \$160,000 (for a total of 34 programs).

With a necessary cut in production next year, the board approved use of funds for purchase of station time which will give "Spring Street, USA" more favorable viewing times.

Several stations which showed the program in early morning hours, such as 6 a.m., were dropped from distribution and several cable television stations which provide a larger potential audience were added. The tentative schedule for January 1, 1974, includes 28 stations in 14 states.

Until or unless more are produced, the present 34 programs will enable "Spring Street, USA" to stay on the air two or three more years by repeating on some stations and by initial use of others, a board spokesman said.

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The program is produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission for the Home Mission Board.

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Baptist Professor Feels
Impact of Driving Ban

11/29/73

By Baptist Press

A Southern Baptist seminary professor on sabbatical leave in West Germany may be among the first of the denomination's ministers to experience the effect of a total ban on Sunday driving.

Clayton K. Harrop, New Testament professor at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., experienced the frustration of having to reschedule a preaching assignment in a church 150 miles away because of the Sunday ban on driving in West Germany, his wife said in a letter.

While a Sunday ban on driving may or may not be a possibility for the United States, the question of what such a ban might do to this country might be answered best by other examples from Europe.

Two initial "car free" Sundays in the Netherlands "proved the spirit of the people" and "were encouraging," European Baptist Press Service reported of attendance among churches of the Baptist Union of the Netherlands.

EBPS said a non-Sunday driving ban was a "challenge to remain faithful in church attendance," which the people accepted. Taking advantage of the good weather, the churchgoers used public transportation and many rode bicycles to services.

With future auto-less Sundays to come, Netherland's Baptist leaders indicated that churches serving a region or province might begin to "feel a pinch in attendance," according to EBPS.

The news service said some congregations were considering conducting Saturday evening services, in addition to Sunday morning worship.

In Belgium, also hit by the fuel shortage, two churches began meeting on Saturdays for worship. Another church had a "larger than usual" congregation attendance because "people could not go to the country," EBPS reported a church spokesman as saying.

One Belgian church was forced to change its early Sunday morning service to afternoon. Jean Desy, president of the Belgian Baptist Union, preaches in two churches on Sunday. Now he has to use public transportation, and with the Sunday restrictions it takes longer than with private car to travel the distance, EBPS said.

In the United States, Southern Baptist Sunday Schools and other programs such as Church Training are not likely to be affected attendance-wise by the current curtailment of gasoline sales on Sunday, according to a Baptist Sunday School Board spokesman. Other than causing ministers and church workers who normally would travel great distances by car on weekends to shift plans, the current situation should have little overall effect on either Sunday morning or Sunday evening programs, the spokesman said.

If any kind of Sunday travel ban were put into effect, churches would most likely have to change the meeting times, and, possibly, days. A Sunday ban on driving would probably motivate more home Bible studies, the Sunday School Board spokesman said.

For the present, however, the energy and fuel shortage will probably mean colder or hotter churches in this country (depending on the season and climate) though, hopefully, not colder in the spiritual sense, an observer noted.

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Agencies Recommend Shift
of Panama Mission Work

11/29/73

ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home and Foreign Mission boards have jointly recommended transfer of mission work in the Republic of Panama and the Canal Zone from

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the Home to the Foreign Mission Board.

"Consultations have reached the point that Panamanian Baptists, the Home Mission Board and the Foreign Mission Board are ready to effectuate this change on Jan. 1, 1975, subject to approval of the Southern Baptist Convention," said Arthur B. Rutledge, the Home Mission Board's executive director, at the agency's board of directors meeting here.

Since 1908, the Home Mission Board has held responsibility for the work which began primarily for Americans and West Indians in the Canal Zone.

But as the Panama Baptist Convention developed, as their ties with other Central and South American countries increased and as the work of the Foreign Mission Board grew in the Caribbean area, the administrations of both boards felt that the work in Panama could best be carried out under the leadership of the Foreign Mission Board.

Rationale for transfer of the work includes the idea that the medical mission work in the San Blas Islands will fit well with the Foreign Mission Board's extensive medical program and that the Foreign Board's theological seminary at Cali, Colombia, could best care for graduate work for the pastoral leadership of Panama.

After being informed of the two boards' wishes, the Panama Baptist Convention recognized the necessity and voted to officially request that the Foreign Mission Board establish fraternal relations with the Panama Baptist Convention.

Baptist work in Panama includes 42 churches with 6,639 members among the four distinct ethnic groups which work together in the convention: Spanish-speaking Panamanians (15 churches); West Indians (13 churches); Cuna Indians (9 churches); and Americans (5 churches). In addition there are 82 missions, a theological institute, an assembly and a medical clinic, along with 13 home missionaries.

Though full agreement has not yet been reached on transfer of budget and property, both boards agreed generally to a 10-year annual phaseout of Home Mission Board funds to churches and institutional-type ministries in the Panama Canal Zone.

The missionaries now serving in the Panama Canal Zone will be given the option of relocating in some other home mission field or applying to serve as missionaries of the Foreign Mission Board.

The Panama transfer in some ways is similar to the 1960-1970 transfer of Hawaii work from the Foreign Mission Board to the Home Mission Board.

After Hawaii became a state, the Foreign Mission Board began a planned 10-year withdrawal, turning the work over to the Hawaii Baptist Convention, which, in turn, began to relate in the same way as other state Southern Baptist conventions.

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On page 5 of today's Baptist Press mailing, insert the following between graphs 10 and 11:

One concern of some Southern Baptists is the condition of their missionaries overseas, particularly in light of the energy and fuel crisis. A spokesman for the convention's Foreign Mission Board in Richmond said, "As far as overseas is concerned, many missionaries have experienced various shortages, including fuel and energy, for years.

"Adaptation to new circumstances is a daily part of missionary life and work. The present U. S. crisis will no doubt affect life overseas, but not immediately," the spokesman said.

November 29, 1973

Energy Shortage Not
Crisis for Most--Yet

By James Lee Young
for Baptist Press

Shock waves of the energy crisis that have already changed the lifestyle of much of Europe are just now being felt in the United States.

The alert has been sounded, but most people wait to see if, and to what extent, they are going to be affected by it all.

Some--church organizations not excluded--look for special "outs" and exemptions because of special needs, such as Sunday responsibilities.

The matter is more serious for church organizations than many realize, according to C. Welton Gaddy, director of citizenship for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. In a statement which warned of "the challenge to the church's standing," Gaddy emphasized that the problem goes deeper than the energy crisis.

"There is little evidence that church leaders were consulted during recent governmental discussions concerning the curtailment of Sunday activities," Gaddy said.

Gaddy's position was disputed by other observers who pointed out that Sunday driving has not been banned and that a previously considered proposed driving ban would only have included 1-5 p.m. on Sundays.

Such a plan would not generally have affected or disallowed Sunday morning and evening services, it was emphasized.

It was also pointed out that prohibiting gasoline sales on Sunday would affect everyone and not just churches.

"The possibility still exists," however, Gaddy said, "that legislation might be passed curtailing Sunday driving, other than long trips.

"Church going, when not ignored altogether, has been considered along with leisure time and the peripheral activities of life," Gaddy said in his statement. "Present proposals do not include a total ban on Sunday driving though they do give cause for alarm," he said.

Gaddy urged church members and leaders to consider the "ramification (caused by) . . . making gasoline unavailable on Sundays," and noted, "The energy crisis provides no excuse for compromising Christians' allegiance to the one institution which equips persons to deal with all crises."

"For example, consider churches across the United States who are served by "out of town" ministers, college and seminary students, particularly where driving would require more than a single tank of gas, he noted.

Also, "Will church bus ministries have to be cut back?" he asked.

With preliminary measures taken to cut back on use of energy and fuel, most Baptist leaders interviewed agreed that it was really too early to tell what overall effect the fuel and energy shortage would have on churches and denominational agencies.

A number of Baptist agencies surveyed indicated they had already cut thermostats to cooler degrees during winter months and were attempting to conserve on use of electricity.

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, implemented an energy conservation plan they hoped would result in 20 per cent reduction of natural gas and electrical usage, according to Southwestern President Robert E. Naylor.

Similar steps have been taken by other Southern Baptist agencies.

A Sunday School Board spokesman in Nashville, said the fuel shortage might "cause an inconvenience in travel" by air and car for persons in field services positions for the board and for other Baptist agencies. He anticipated no cutback in field services output, however.

The board spokesman said no problems were seen in coming distribution of literature to churches and other outlets. He expressed concern, however, that a shortage of natural gas might result in a cutback of paper production in paper mills.

"We have cut back on use of lights and heating," the board spokesman said.

Don Mabry, secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) department of survey and special studies, was conducting a study to determine the location in the Atlanta area of board employee's homes, for possible car pools, if the energy and fuel situation "gets too bad."

Oscar Romo, secretary of the Home Mission Board's language missions department, was concerned that "the energy crisis could be a serious detriment to the effectiveness of language missions, because so many of our missionaries serve in a catalytic role, requiring extensive travel to equip others and to initiate mission work." Most language missionaries have to cover extensive areas, geographically, in their work.

"There is no indication of change, so far," for the Home Mission Board's church extension department, said the department's head, F. J. Redford, "but many workers in church extensions in new work areas serve many congregations, sometimes hundreds of miles apart.

"A shortage of fuel could curtail this work," Redford indicated that it might accelerate greater use of lay persons in some of these areas.

Michael L. Speer, acting director of the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission, hinted that a period of hardship might be a positive factor in bringing more Christians to a greater concern and awareness of God and the church.

If the energy crisis is as serious as it appears to be, Speer said, and industry is forced to cut back, decreased employment will certainly mean less available money, for example.

No one likes to think of having to make do with less money Speer noted, but he saw a favorable note for Southern Baptists in terms of possible wider commitment among church members.

Southern Baptists have given more in times of depression than times of prosperity, per capita," Speer noted, "Even though the total receipts might not have been as high when the economy was tight."

Gaddy offset his warning to Baptists and political leaders, with his own note of positivism.

He said, "The coming days of winter may offer some unique opportunities for Christian ministry. . . .an alert congregation can find multiple opportunities to share its resources in helpful acts of ministry carried out in Christ's name."

Gaddy cited such "helpful acts" of ministry as "assisting those with empty gas tanks and moneyless pockets. . . (providing) transportation--to and from work, school, medical appointments. . . (and aid by) local churches. . . (to) those households where clothing and shelter are inadequate and fuel supplies depleted."

Gaddy's statement was mailed to President Nixon, to Nixon's energy advisor, John Love, and to Rep. Harley O. Staggers (D.-Va.) chairman of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, and to several other congressional leaders.

Gaddy said, "Biblically, Christians are admonished to obey the law," and. . . churchmen can demonstrate their good citizenship not only by obeying the demands of the law but by exemplary behavior while emergency legislation is being passed. . ."

"Christians can have a voice in the type of legislation passed," Gaddy continued. Observing that the United States has often been described as a land of "energy gluttons," he said, ". . .The crisis is now. What remains to be seen is what our response will be."