

January 9, 1973

**Missionaries Minister
Under the "Big Top"**

MENZ, Ethiopia (BP)--Everyone here helps erect the "big top" when the missionaries arrive, but instead of waiting to see lions, tigers and bears, they look forward to hearing about the life of Jesus Christ and His teachings.

The circus-type tent can be set up for several weeks at a time in any area, then easily moved to a new location. After a spot is chosen, two large eucalyptus trees are used for the center poles.

During the week, Southern Baptist missionaries conduct a school from 7 a.m.-8 p.m. in the big tent, and the pupils range from small shepherd boys to women with babies tied on their backs. Instruction is provided in areas where the people say they need help the most.

Handcraft teachers introduce the "modern invention" of the carding comb to the ladies who have always carded (combed) their wool by plucking it with their fingers.

At night, Bible filmstrips are shown of Old Testament stories. On Sundays, in addition to regular preaching services, a special Bible study is conducted for priests and deacons of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, a Christian church that dates back to the fourth century.

In the mid-1960s, when Southern Baptists began mission work in the Menz highlands, they found the Orthodox priests wanted to learn more about the Bible, so they decided to work with and through the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. They felt that if the priests were open to the teachings of Baptist missionaries, the people would be also.

"The Orthodox Christians here claim to believe the Bible, but most of them know little about it," said Mrs. Raymond V. Lindholm, missionary press representative.

"The priests know only chants and memorized prayers and since the services are done in Ge'ez, an ancient language, no one understands them," she said.

Baptist missionaries have conducted a summer Bible training school attended by about 200 Orthodox priests. They also have held home Bible studies, taught Sunday School in the Orthodox churches and have even been invited to preach.

The circus tent, according to Mrs. Lindholm, "really comes alive every two weeks when the entire mission team is present."

Lynn V. Groce, an agriculturalist, presents "sheep that are twice as big and have eight times as much wool as the local sheep." Although new ideas are presented, the people are slow to change, said Groce.

Dr. Samuel R. J. Cannata Jr. and his helper, Muko, hold clinics in the end of the big tent, diagnosing patients, dispensing medicine and giving injections. In an effort to combat an epidemic, thousands of smallpox vaccinations have been given over the past months, and Raymond Lindholm helps with this.

When no planned activities are going on at the "big top," tape recorders and Amharic tapes, plus a library of easy-to-read Bible stories, are available.

"You can't imagine the din that results when everyone reads to himself aloud," said Mrs. Lindholm.

She added, "There are unlimited places we could go in Menz with a program like this, but we know that by waiting for the Lord to choose the place, we can rest assured that He has prepared their hearts."

Texas Baptists Record
"Million Dollar Year"

DALLAS (BP)--Texas Baptists experienced what might be called "a million dollar year" in 1973--highlighted by surpassing of the Baptist General Convention of Texas's \$15,775,000 Cooperative Program operating budget by nearly \$1.2 million.

For the first time, the convention also gave more than \$1 million to two mission offerings--more than \$1.1 million to the Southern Baptist Convention-wide Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions and nearly \$1.05 million to the Texas convention's Mary Hill Davis Offering for state missions.

Two million Texas Baptists in some 4,000 churches and missions also gave more than \$3.9 million to the SBC-wide Lottie Moon Easter Offering for foreign missions, also a Texas record.

Total gifts to worldwide missions from Texas Baptists totaled more than \$5.6 million, exceeding 1972 gifts by \$575,875.

Besides exceeding the Cooperative Program operating budget by nearly \$1.2 million, the total \$16,969,119 Cooperative Program figure for 1973 also topped the Texas convention's combined operating and "challenge" budgets by \$644,119. The "challenge" portion of the budget is added each year by convention action to cover additional specified needs if churches exceed the operating budget.

The \$644,119 does not represent a surplus, according to James H. Landes, the convention's new executive secretary, since it will be used to "fund many mission and advance programs previously approved in annual convention sessions."

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FMB Hears Reports,
Calls Special Meeting

1/9/73

RICHMOND (BP)--During its first meeting of 1974, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board heard optimistic reports about foreign mission advances in 1973, and approved a recommendation that board members attend a special full meeting of the board in February.

In the special meeting February 11-12, the board will consider the recently released report of the "Committee of 15" to the executive committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, which includes several recommendations concerning the work of Southern Baptist agencies, including the Foreign Mission Board.

"The report is highly significant from the standpoint of foreign missions," said Baker J. Cauthen, the board's executive secretary.

"Because of the importance of this meeting, it is our hope that all board members will be much in prayer between now and the February meeting and may come prepared to give their best counsel as to the course of action for the future," Cauthen said.

Louis Cobbs, secretary for missionary personnel, pointed out in his report to the board that during 1973 the number of missionaries under appointment increased to 2,538, the largest number ever under appointment by the Foreign Mission Board. This includes 229 new missionaries that were appointed during 1973.

"The statistical report for 1973, as encouraging as it is, tells only a part of the story," said Cobbs. "The work of the personnel department staff and the committee on missionary personnel brings us into relationships with persons who are struggling with life's ultimate decisions."

Cobbs said that during the year members of the personnel department staff talked with more than 500 new people about missionary service and conducted 1,133 personal interviews with missionary candidates.

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The board also heard reports of the financial advances made during 1973.

Cauthen indicated that reports concerning the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering "are more encouraging than we have ever known."

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is an expression of the deep desire of Baptist people to do more in making known the love of Christ throughout the world than we have ever done in our history," Cauthen said. "Christian forces will fail in a time of greatest responsibility if in the remaining 25 years of this century the gospel is not presented on a scale beyond anything the world has ever seen."

Winston Crawley, director of the overseas division, pointed out the "notable strengthening" of the U.S. dollar in the overseas market during the closing months of the year. E. L. Deane, treasurer of the board, reported \$39,435,694 in total gifts to foreign missions in 1973, an 11 per cent increase over 1972.

James D. Belote, secretary for East Asia, told the board that for the first time, Baptist churches in East Asia that are related to Southern Baptist mission work have a total membership of more than 80,000, not including Baptists in mainland China. He also spoke of the increasing number of self-supporting churches in East Asia.

Belote also reported advances in evangelism, medical work, music work, social ministries and mass communications.