

February 1, 1974

**Baptists Find Ski Areas
Good Places for 'Witness'**

By Larry Jerden
for Baptist Press

When Southern Baptist minister Coy Finley visited the village of Eagle Nest, N.M., he was disappointed in the run-down Baptist mission building and decided to do something about it.

Today, he is the mission's pastor and is a home missionary in the now booming resort area that is brimmed with skiers during the winter months.

Finley is part of a new breed of Southern Baptist ministers, missionaries and collegians attempting to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ to millions of skiers who crowd some 850 ski areas in the United States each winter.

The ski ministries are being launched by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board through its department of special mission ministries. US-2 missionaries (the board's two-year program for college graduates) are in ski ministries in New Mexico, Colorado, Vermont, New York and North Carolina, a board spokesman said.

Efforts involve two main thrusts--permanent ski ministries and short-term mission work.

Finley and US-2er Dick Lemaster, 23-year-old Maryland native, coordinate the short-term efforts of groups, mostly from neighboring Texas, along with more permanent local projects.

A primary source for short-term efforts are Baptist collegians who work the slopes, often inviting other skiers to a nighttime coffee house or similar activity.

In most ski areas, music at night draws crowds, giving added opportunity to tell skiers about Jesus Christ, an observer noted.

Also, the collegians are encouraged to ride chair lifts with someone they don't know, to engage the person in conversation.

At Angel Fire resort, the newest in the Eagle Nest area, Finley and Lemaster say they have found an openness to their ministry. Through Lemaster's work, a door was opened for scheduling Christian singing groups in the Angel Fire country club. He also succeeded in establishing a Bible study group at the Taos ski basin, attended by employees of the ski run.

Finley's club membership is another "open door" to ministry within the ski resort community, he said.

The "inside out" approach to ministry, as used by Finley and Lemaster, was applauded by Randy Foster, the pastor of Roaring Fork Baptist Church, near Aspen, Colo.

"Many of these planned ski resort cities are closed to outside religious groups, but if you live there, you can do anything you want," Foster said.

Working with Foster are US-2ers John and Robyn Long. The couple was given permission to conduct worship services on the slopes at Marble and hoped to conduct similar services at Vail and Aspen resorts.

The main thrust of the Longs' ski ministry is "person-to-person witnessing" on the slopes.

"The only way to get that entree is to ski," Long said. "You have to dress like a skier and talk like a skier to be heard."

Charles Baker, associate in the student division of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, who has worked with ski ministries, reassured beginning skiers.

"If you're a novice, go ahead and admit it...Ask for help...They'll feel they are helping you (learn to ski) and the naive approach disarms people...You'll have an automatic entree," Baker said.

In reviewing Southern Baptists' work in ski resort ministries, Joel Land, assistant director of the Home Mission Board special mission ministries, noted that the work in North Carolina is probably the most "mature."

"They have the advantage of being in an area where Baptists are strong," Land said.

US-2ers Mike and Mona Crane were assigned this winter to North Carolina's Banner Elk, in an area known as the "ski mecca of the South."

Crane says the resort people are his parish and congregation.

"I want to help individuals remove frustration that everyday life brings. Sometimes it means to fix tents and cars. In all, it means that my wife and I are here to help make vacationing better and shows people that the church does care."

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(Adapted from the February, 1974, issue of World Mission Journal)

BP PHOTOS mailed to state Baptist paper editors

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Nixon Renews Pledge to
Aid Parochial Schools

2/1/74

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--In spite of firm Supreme Court decisions to the contrary, President Nixon, in his State of the Union message to the Congress, restated his commitment to give public aid to private and parochial schools.

"Although governmental efforts aimed at supporting these schools have encountered difficulty in the courts," the President said, "I believe we must continue our efforts to find ways to keep these schools open.

"For that reason," Nixon pledged, "I continue to support legislation which permits tax credits for parents who pay to send their children to nonpublic schools."

The President made no mention of aid to parochial schools in his 45-minute speech to the Congress. His renewed pledge was included in the education section of the 51-page State of the Union message which elaborated on his speech.

The President's continued efforts to aid parochial schools flies directly in the face of recent Supreme Court rulings that tax credit plans are a violation of the First Amendment to the Constitution.

Last year the Supreme Court invalidated laws in New York and Pennsylvania that provided aid to private religious schools in a variety of ways. These included (1) funds for maintenance and repairs of facilities and equipment, (2) tuition reimbursement to parents in the low income bracket who send their children to nonpublic elementary and secondary schools, (3) income tax deductions for tuition paid to parochial schools and (4) across-the-board tuition reimbursement to parents of parochial school pupils.

Following these decisions it was widely believed throughout the country that "tax credits" to aid parochial schools, as proposed by President Nixon, had been effectively killed.

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Mr. Nixon has not revealed new proposals to aid parochial schools. However, the U.S. Office of Education in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare continues to experiment with voucher plans in some states. This plan would give parents school tuition vouchers which could be spent in any school selected for the education of their children. Many believe that the voucher plan is also unconstitutional, but it has not yet been tested in the Supreme Court.

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Elmer Gray Named to Edit
California Southern Baptist

2/1/74'

FRESNO, Calif. (BP)--Elmer L. Gray, academic dean at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., has been elected editor of the California Southern Baptist.

Gray, 56, succeeds Donald T. McGregor as editor of the journal of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California. McGregor returned to Texas last September, after two years in California, to serve as editor and publisher of the Kemp (Tex.) News.

A native of Oklahoma, Gray served as professor of religious education at Golden Gate Seminary, 1959-67. He spent three years after that as manager of the Sunday School department at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, and then returned to Golden Gate Seminary.

Gray, who has also held pastorates in California, Oklahoma, Texas and Kansas, has served on a number of state-level and Southern Baptist Convention-level boards and committees and has written extensively for denominational publications.

He is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, and earned master of theology and doctor of theology degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

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(BP) PHOTO mailed to state Baptist paper editors

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