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Carmona, Angola Opens Up to Baptist Work

74-38

CARMONA, Angola (BP)--More than 5,000 persons have organized to become the First Baptist Church of Carmona in an area previously closed to Baptist work. The 5,665 charter members are currently broken down into 74 groups of believers in the Carmona area.

The Carmona area was opened to Baptist work for the first time in 13 years after the military coup in Portugal in April. Angola is a colony of Portugal. Since March 15, 1961, when an independent Baptist mission was closed, any gathering of 20 or more had been prohibited in the Carmona area.

The church, according to Southern Baptist Missionary Harrison H. Pike, is largely the work of two ministers, Benedito Junior and Jose Martins, who for the past three years served with the First Baptist Church of Luanda in an outlying area about 250 miles northeast of Luanda.

Pike, the pastor of First Baptist Church of Luanda, is also pastor of the newly-organized church, directing the work of Junior and Martins. By permission granted by the governor of the Carmona district, who now serves on the military junta governing Angola, Pike visits the work in this large area one week each month.

Since the reopening of the work, 1,292 people have been baptized into the church, all of them adults and young people. Another 2,439 have declared themselves as baptized believers, products of earlier Baptist work. The Carmona church received another 1,934 members from the mother organization in Luanda.

The 74 groups of believers are served by 42 evangelists, 21 lay leaders and many deacons. Beginning soon, the First Baptist Church of Carmona will organize the stronger groups of believers into churches in seven county divisions.

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Urban Evangelism Studied In Latin American Meeting

8/30/74

BELO HORIZONTE, Brazil (BP)--Hearing a reported prediction that more than half of the world's people will live in cities with at least 20,000 population by the end of this century, participants in a Conference on Urban Evangelism here discussed strategy for evangelization of Latin American cities.

Reporting on the population move from rural to urban areas, E. Luther Copeland, a professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., expressed the need for the church to restudy its approach. He said the new living patterns "seem to render obsolete old types of ministry and leave the church confused on how to implement its mission."

The conference, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, drew 82 delegates and observers, both missionaries and national Baptists, from 16 Latin American countries. Frank K. Means, South America secretary for the board, described it as "a conference whose time is overdue."

At the close of the meeting the group recommended that Baptist seminaries in Latin America give more emphasis to urban ministries in their curriculum. Another recommendation urged each national Baptist convention represented to give priority to reaching urban centers with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Participants also called for the establishment of a clearing house for information and ideas on urban evangelism.

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Several countries, including Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay and Colombia, are planning regional or national conferences emphasizing city evangelization within the next year.

The need for churches to approach people in new ways was emphasized several times.

Ralph W. Neighbour Jr., a newly-employed Southern Baptist missionary associate, stressed rethinking the nature of the church. Neighbour has been pastor of West Memorial Baptist Church, Houston, Tex., which began experimentally in homes and apartments. He is a former staffer of the evangelism division of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

"For generations we have considered the church as being a building, a preacher, a program and a membership--in that order," he said. "But it is an ecclesia, a body of called-out people, fitly joined together by the Holy Spirit to become the body of Christ."

Another speaker said the "house church" will be the most common organizational form for churches in modern cities for the remainder of this century.

Roger S. Greenway, Latin America secretary for the Christian Reformed Board of Foreign Missions, said, "City people hunger for fellowship, recognition and personal acquaintance with the man who preaches to them on Sunday. The smaller the congregation, the more intimate the fellowship. It is religion's antidote to the loneliness of the city."

Stressing that the church is not a building, he said, "More people are converted to Christian discipleship in small groups than in large churches."

The traditional method, erecting a chapel building for a congregation that eventually becomes a church, is too expensive for churches in developing countries, Greenway said.

He recommended that churches get to know every family within walking distance and also plot the locations of families on a map of the church's area to determine residence patterns.

Suggesting that the church should become acquainted with services available from government and private agencies to help meet social and material needs, he said Christian workers should serve as catalysts for referring needy people to proper agencies.

Greenway emphasized that the church should try methods that have proven successful and added, "There will be plenty of opportunity for creativity and experimentation once we have established a dozen churches using tested methods. But our collective experience in urban evangelism is so limited at this point that all of us would do well to begin where at least some success has been demonstrated."

"An urban strategy which persists in trying to reach an unresponsive segment of the population produces little fruit," he continued. "It only leaves missionaries discouraged and wastes valuable resources. Worse still it allows people whom God has prepared to receive the gospel to go unevangelized."

Means, however, cautioned participants not to feel each must carry out work exactly as someone else did in other circumstances just because it was successful, and he cautioned against neglecting to begin outreach simply because conditions are not ideal.

Copeland called on Christians to get involved in decision-making concerning urban affairs. "Cities must place a premium upon the personhood of the individual. Therefore, we have the right and responsibility to critique the plans of the planners," he said.

The recurring theme of personal witnessing and lay involvement was voiced by A. Clark Scanlon, Foreign Mission Board field representative for Middle America.

"Perhaps the greatest hindrance to the advance of the kingdom of God today is the attempt to do missions by proxy," he said. "As much as I believe in the power of the printed page and the impact of the electronic media, I am deeply convinced that there is no substitute for baring the heart in personal witness to share what the living Christ has done and is doing."

The conference was conducted in Spanish and Portuguese, with English speakers using translators.

Christ Was Slave's
Only True 'Master'

By Baptist Press

When Baptist Home Missionary LaVern Inzer "surrendered to preach" his family took him to the cemetery where his grandparents were buried and told him of their conversion to Christianity. The grandfather had been a Jew and was won to Jesus Christ by a slave.

"When my grandparents were married in 1846," relates the Southern Baptist from Carlin, Nev., "my grandfather went to New Orleans and bought a slave to take care of the house and do the chores.

"The slave was clean-cut and could speak English. When he was introduced to the old plantation in Arkansas, he was told what he had to do and he accepted the responsibility. But when he was told he had to call the man of the house 'Master,' he said he had only one master and His name was Jesus Christ.

"He almost got whipped that day by the slave driver, but he didn't. There was something about him that commanded more respect.

"In 1852, six years later, by the authority of a little church there, that slave baptized my grandparents.

"My parents told me that story and made three points--the Bible is a book of missions, I was the product of some missionary who had won that slave to Christ, and we can never repay that debt but we can pay back some interest. We are to preach Christ the rest of our lives.

"They said we are to go out and burn ourselves out for the Lord. And that's a family tradition and heritage as much as the family name.

"We knelt beside that slave's grave and my relations laid hands on me like it was an ordination service. It had an effect on me. I feel like missions is a way of life and I love it." (BP)