



FEATURES

produced by Baptist Press

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They Have a Baptist
Bishop in the Bronx

By Walker Knight

NEW YORK (BP)--At 2 a.m. on a Sunday in the Bronx, minister Sam Simpson interrupted his sermon preparation to schedule a meeting between two street gangs about to do battle.

He was successful. The street kids respect Simpson because of his taking such risks and involvements. His co-workers have named him--"Baptist Bishop of the Bronx." Officially, he is pastor-director of church extension, under the church extension department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and the Baptist Convention of New York.

Simpson appears at home in any situation in his community and is at ease with those in power or out. In the decade he has lived and ministered among the compacted millions in the New York City borough, he has been instrumental in establishing four congregations. He expects soon to start or bring three others into the Baptist fold.

Simpson's area-- the Bronx--is a huge, sprawling concrete complex of apartments, shops and industry caught in the grip of change that can squeeze lives dry of hope. But hope is Simpson's forte, he says.

Hope is near the top of a long list of needs in an area that was once home for Jews, Italians, Germans, Swiss and others of European background. As they moved out, blacks and Spanish people have moved into the area. Population density increases yearly.

Families get larger, and the apartments smaller as landlords break them up for cheaper rental and more income. The older and poorer of departing groups are left behind, and they live in fear of criminals. Since locks and burglar alarms proved inadequate, residents have turned to watch dogs.

With higher density, public services begin to break down, compounded by slowdowns by city workers. Garbage litters the streets. The strain of a weakened economy adds its heavy load. Deterioration sets in, and frustration levels rise. The escape routes are flight, withdrawal, alcohol or drugs.

Simpson reached the Bronx along a circuitous route that took him from a small Jamaican district called Retirement, through Kingston, Chicago and New York City.

He grew up with his parents on their farm in Jamaica, raising corn, bananas, coconut, yams, chickens and cows until he was 14. Then, for the sake of schooling, he moved in with an aunt in Kingston. There he also received an education in religion. At 9 a.m. on Sundays, he attended Plymouth Brethren services with his aunt, went to Baptist services (the church of his parents) at 11 a.m., and in the afternoon he and his uncle visited the Methodist Sunday school.

In 1959, Simpson came to the United States to attend seminary but encountered some racial prejudices and decided to become a photographer. He attended the New York Institute of Photography, where he earned a professional certificate.

In New York, he became acquainted with other Jamaican Baptists and was persuaded to enroll in the Northeastern Bible College at Essex Falls in New Jersey.

After graduation and marriage to Lola Campbell, then executive secretary in the United Nation's department of human rights, Simpson was recruited by David Morgan, a former Southern Baptist missionary in Panama, who, along with Paul S. James, then director of Southern Baptist work in New York, asked the Jamaican to start a Baptist congregation in Manhattan.

While looking for an apartment in the Bronx, Simpson found an apartment manager who invited him to hold worship services in her apartment. That was the beginning of Bronx Baptist Church.

In the next few years as the church was outgrowing two meeting places, he joined with ministers of other denominations in forming the Twin Parks Association. Disturbed at the rapid deterioration of much of the city, they incorporated and assumed ownership of buildings sold to them by the city for \$1. Financing was secured to rebuild the apartments, and tenant associations were formed to set rules and enforce them. Eventually some new buildings were also erected.

Under the association, the buildings went from 60 percent occupancy to 95 percent, rental collection from 20 percent to 97 percent, and the facilities were vastly improved.

When efforts to place the church in one of these buildings fell through, Simpson arranged to buy a United Congregational Church building. He bought himself a house in the Wake-Eden community, an affluent, middle-class section, which created the chance for a further extension of the Bronx Baptist Church.

Only four blocks from his house, he noticed a Lutheran church unable to attract new residents when its German and Swedish-American constituency moved out. After the church disbanded they were eager for the building to be used for Christian services, donating the first year's rent and making possible the birth of Wake-Eden Chapel.

Services communicate the Jamaican influence in the Bronx church, and English heritage of a formal worship service that includes stately hymns and long, articulate prayers.

Simpson, one of seven missionaries featured in "Seven Beginnings," a new photo-textbook for the Home Mission Board, SBC, reaches into the community whenever the opportunity arises--even in to the life of street gangs.

The youths who agreed early Sunday morning to meet, rather than fight, their opponents at Wake-Eden Chapel discovered neither group really wanted to fight. Both sides agreed to respect the other's territory and decided to compete through organized basketball teams.

Simpson and the police arranged to have a playground ban lifted and get basketball courts lighted.

So Simpson was late getting home again, but good things were happening and he was in better touch with the community.

"If we can have the people in the community involved, not only will there be a church but they'll be concerned about each other"--that was a Baptist bishop talking. Who says there's no such thing.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers

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Send in Those SBC
Room Deposits!

Baptist Press
4/7/76

NORFOLK (BP)--Room reservations at Norfolk area hotels which have no deposit for the price of the first night's lodging by April 15 will be made available to anyone willing to make that deposit, on a first-come-first-served basis despite previous reservations, according to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Housing Bureau here.

The bureau cautions persons who have received confirmation on hotels or motel rooms but have not sent in the required deposit to the hotel to do so immediately.

"Norfolk is a summer resort area and hotels and motels refuse to hold rooms without the deposit," a housing bureau spokesman said.

The transportation committee of the Norfolk Baptist Association has also announced that local buses will adequately serve public transportation needs during the SBC annual meeting, June 15-17, and earlier related meetings.

"There will be hourly connections each day of the convention week with area hotels and motels," says Paul Mims, pastor of First Baptist Church, Norfolk.

"Individual passes will provide service for the entire period on shuttle buses serving Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Portsmouth. The passes may be secured at transportation desks at the Scope Convention Center, site of the convention," he said.

"Initial trips to the Scope on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, June 13, 14 and 15, may be made without charge to the riders, but the passes must be in hand for a return journey.

"Transportation data sheets will be included in individual convention packets received by messengers to the convention, and the sheets will be available in all hotel rooms," he added.



BAPTIST PRESS

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April 7, 1976

RPRC Presents Annual
National Media Awards

76-62

For Release, 10p .m., April 8

PHILADELPHIA (BP)--The Religious Public Relations Council (RPRC) presented Awards of Merit to three newspapers, a national news magazine, a radio station, and a television station during its annual national convention here.

The national, interfaith organization also named five persons as RPRC Fellows and granted a special citation to a Cleveland photographer.

The Awards of Merit went to the Daily News of the Virgin Islands, The Dallas Times Herald, The Elyria (Ohio) Chronicle-Telegram, Newsweek, WINS Radio in New York, and WPVI-TV in Philadelphia.

Named RPRC Fellows were Susan Cheever Cowley of Newsweek; Jim Fulbright of WPVI-TV; Peter S. Goodwin of the Daily News of the Virgin Islands; Frank Taggart of the Dallas Times Herald; and Monica B. Williams of The Elyria Chronicle-Telegram.

The special citation went to photographer William A. Wynne of the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

The RPRC, made up of persons involved in communications and public relations for church-related organizations, makes the awards annually in order to recognize outstanding achievement in reporting and broadcasting about religion and related subjects.

The Daily News of the Virgin Islands and Goodwin were cited for a man-on-the-street column, which frequently touches on religious issues and opinions. "The Daily News has created a distinctive and highly commendable approach to its task of reflecting honestly and frontally the heterogeneous environment of faith in that territory," the citation noted.

Religion coverage in the Dallas Times Herald "seeks to establish a balance between local, national, and international material," and is not limited to the Saturday church page, said the citation granted by RPRC to that paper. Religion editor Frank Taggart consistently shows "fairness in reflecting the community's religious concerns," said the award to Taggart.

The Elyria Chronicle-Telegram and religion writer Monica B. Williams have given "comprehensive coverage" to the controversial story of ordination of women in the Episcopal Church, the RPRC citation stated. In addition, regular religion coverage contains an "abundance of exceptional photographs and interpretative articles not only of the local scene, but also of national and international major religion stories."

Newsweek was cited for its focus on developments in the field of religion, and for two major articles, "The Uneasy American Jew," and "Facing Up to the Holocaust." The citation naming Cowley an RPRC Fellow praised her "unusual account of a convicted murderer who became an Episcopal priest," and her "discerning insight into the struggle of women for ecclesiastical human rights."

WINS Radio, an all-news station, was granted the Award of Merit because it airs contemporary religious commentary over 30 times each Saturday and Sunday, and because the commentaries "reflect the religious diversity in the number one market area of the nation."

WPVI-TV in Philadelphia and reporter Jim Fulbright were cited for "Think About the Children," a documentary produced about "Operation Baby Lift" which brought Indochinese children to the United States. The program was able to "capture the essential human drama of the story with artistry and integrity," the citation observed, and was "responsible documentation . . . under the pressure of severe time limitation."

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Photographer William A. Wynne of the Cleveland Plain Dealer was awarded a special citation for a photograph entitled "Above the Cross," which appeared on the sports page of the newspaper on Good Friday, 1975.

The photograph captured a diver in mid-air with the shadow of a cross on the water below. Besides appearing in the Plain Dealer, it appeared in many other newspapers throughout the country through the Associated Press Wire Photo Service.

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Baptist Visitors' Center
Opened in Nation's Capital

Baptist Press
4/7/76

WASHINGTON (BP)--First Baptist Church here, a historic landmark in the nation's capital, has opened a Bicentennial Visitors' Center in hopes of making a spiritual contribution to persons visiting Washington this year. "

U. S. Sen. Mark O. Hatfield (R.-Ore.), a Baptist layman and keynote speaker at the center's opening, said, "The Bicentennial year and the activities planned in and around this visitor's center give Christians of First Baptist Church an opportunity to call fellow Americans to an allegiance in the authority outside man.

President Harry Truman attended the First Baptist Church during his presidency. One of a number of exhibits featured by the center will be the Truman family pew and an autographed picture of President Truman, which he presented to the church.

Exhibits are being maintained at the visitors center by the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, the Baptist World Alliance and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

Other exhibits include photos of each member of Congress who is a Baptist (10 senators, the vice president and 45 representatives), a historical time scale from A.D. 1500 to the present, illustration of great moments in Baptist history, and a display illustrating the three theories of Baptist denominational origins.

Frederick E. Taylor, chairman of the church's Bicentennial committee, said the church hopes, through the center, to make a spiritual contribution to visitors to the nation's capital and will place an emphasis on Baptist history and heritage and the contribution Baptists have made to the development of the American nation.

During the Bicentennial year, Charles A. Trentham, pastor of First Baptist Church, will preach on "the religion of the presidents" on the last Sunday of each month. Other Bicentennial projects include a guided tour of the church and its stained glass windows, daily noontime organ recitals, and lectures, films and dramas.

First Baptist Church, located at 16th and O Streets, N. W., eight blocks north of the White House, is a historic landmark and a tourist attraction in itself. The Visitors' Center will be open daily from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Information on it is available by writing the church (zip code 20036) or by calling (202) 387-2206.

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Cooperative Program
Celebration Set for SBC

Baptist Press
4/7/76

NORFOLK (BP)--The Cooperative Program Celebration highlighting the Tuesday evening session of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) here June 15-17 will be a cooperative effort of Baptist agencies to tell how cooperation has caused denominational growth.

The 40-minute multi-media presentation featuring The Centurymen singing group in a 1925 church service setting will give the Biblical basis and trace the history of the accomplishments of Baptists since the SBC's national Cooperative Program unified budget became a reality nearly 51 years ago.

Because of logistics of the large Norfolk auditorium, the special presentation will be prepared for use on a television image magnification system similar to the ones used during the Dallas and Miami annual national SBC sessions.

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The SBC Radio and Television Commission will produce the program and videotape it for state Baptist executive secretaries to distribute regionally.

The celebration, designed to draw attention to the close of the Cooperative Program's 50th anniversary, is a cooperative effort between convention agencies represented on the SBC Stewardship Commission's Cooperative Program Forum.

"The Cooperative Program Forum is a committee composed of representatives from SBC agencies, a representative for the seminaries, representatives for the state executive secretaries, a representative from the state newspaper editors, and representatives of stewardship secretaries," said B. Conrad Johnston, pastor, Salem (Va.) Baptist Church, and member of the SBC Executive Committee.

Johnston is chairman of the Cooperative Program Forum and acts as a liaison between it and the Executive Committee. The forum functions at the request of the Stewardship Commission in an effort to further correlate Cooperative Program promotion among the state conventions and the SBC boards and agencies.

"This presentation will be the final aspect of the Cooperative Program's 50th anniversary celebration," he said. "The multi-media presentation is designed to make Baptists aware of the Cooperative Program, and what it has accomplished.

"The special program has been in the planning stages since September when the Cooperative Program Forum asked the Stewardship Commission what the forum could do to help with Cooperative Program promotion."

The Cooperative Program Forum turned to the Radio and Television Commission for help because "one of the requirements for this program is that it be prepared for television magnification and the commission has the best experience for that kind of production."

A. R. Fagan, Stewardship Commission executive director-treasurer, has coordinated efforts for the production. Jesse Fletcher, pastor of First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tenn., will write the script. Buryl Red of New York, music director of "The Centurymen," is program director with Jac Adler of Dallas' Theater 3 in charge of staging. Bob Thornton of the Radio and Television Commission's television department is program producer.

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(BP) Photo will be mailed to Baptist state papers.

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Foundation Cites Gains,
\$17 Million in Corpus

Baptist Press
4/7/76

NASHVILLE (BP)--A corpus of slightly more than \$17 million and other "encouraging trends," due to general improved market conditions, were reported by the Southern Baptist Foundation here.

The Foundation's corpus for January through March, 1976, was "comparable to book and market values," for the first time in two years, said Kendall Berry, Foundation executive secretary-treasurer.

Total market gains over the three months, January through March, of more than \$1,385,000 amounted to over \$1 million in January, another \$161,000 for February and \$224,000 in March, for the agency's seven largest funds, Berry said.

Gains were noted also in the Foundation's 26 smaller funds, administered for Baptist agencies, churches and individuals. Unit value of the Foundation's General Investment Fund by April 1, Berry noted, was over \$1.30, an improvement of 11 cents over January.

Berry saw a positive trend in "increasing cooperation and referrals" between most foundations of state Baptist conventions and the Nashville-based agency. He said also that more wills are being written and greater interest in estate planning is being shown by individuals through the Foundation.

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Last year, fiscal 1975, was the Foundation's best year, in terms of increased earnings and a net corpus increase of more than \$2 million, Berry said. He noted that 1975 was the first time the Foundation distributed earnings of more than \$1 million in a single fiscal year.

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Former Vietnam Missionary
Notes Situation Since Exodus

Baptist Press
4/7/76

By Irma Duke

RICHMOND (BP)--A year has passed since the last Southern Baptist missionaries barely escaped capture by Communist military forces in South Vietnam on April 28, 1975.

Only two days later, Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) was taken and South Vietnam fell.

Current reports indicate some churches in Vietnam are still functioning, even though missionaries have gone on to other fields of service.

However, there has been a decline in attendance, according to Samuel M. James, former missionary to Vietnam, temporarily serving as research assistant to the overseas division director for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Several factors have brought about the drop in attendance.

Priority pressure imposed by the new government has restricted church attendance considerably. "Religious freedom is assured but Christians are often not able to use it," James admitted. "In some areas, they are undergoing rather severe pressure."

It's a subtle pressure, according to James. Often, the government has things for church people to do during church hours. Many times, re-education programs are required that "just happen" to be scheduled at regular worship times. Sometimes, this additional education necessitates moving to an area where there are no churches.

The government wants all Protestant churches under one umbrella organization, James said. It hopes all will join together. Government control would be much easier that way.

Fear, of course, is another strong factor in declining church attendance. The people do not know what to expect from the government and are afraid they will be punished for worshipping.

Despite fear and pressure, James has word that the Christian student organization in Ho Chi Minh City still meets.

Information about the student group and about church activity is very difficult to obtain, according to James. Some comes to the United States through France where mail from Vietnam flows much easier due to long-time ties. Refugees in the United States fear undue pressure will be put on those who receive letters from America so mail is kept to a minimum.

Some of the information has come from new refugees. People were still fleeing the country as late as January.

The possibility of career missionaries returning to South Vietnam is doubtful in the foreseeable future, according to James. But national Baptists and other Christians who continue to work in the country need prayer support, he said.

Most of the Southern Baptist missionaries have been reassigned and others are awaiting reassignment. Of the 16 missionary couples and one missionary journeyman previously stationed in Vietnam, only five couples still await new assignments.

Three of the couples and the journeyman have been reassigned to Indonesia. Mr. and Mrs. Herman P. Hayes are involved in general evangelism there and Steve Brown has been transferred to complete his two years as a journeyman. Mr. and Mrs. James M. Gayle and Mr. and Mrs. Joe G. Turman are awaiting visa approval.

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The Philippines received four of the displaced couples. Mr. and Mrs. James L. Kellum Jr. and Mr. and Mrs. Robert R. Compher have been transferred there to work in general evangelism. The Kenneth L. Goads are also in the Philippines, where he is acting treasurer of the Philippine Mission. Mr. and Mrs. William T. Roberson are involved in publications work.

The Peyton M. Moores and the James J. Bobo family moved to Hong Kong, where Bobo will be book store manager and Moore will be involved in mass communications.

Mr. and Mrs. H. Earl Bengs Jr. have been transferred to Singapore-Malaysia and are now in Sarawak. The James H. Lassiters are preparing to go to the Ivory Coast, where he will be involved in radio technology. They are in language study in France now.

Mr. and Mrs. Lewis I. Myers Jr. are in Atlanta, Ga., awaiting reassignment. He is on loan to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, where he serves as the Vietnamese language missions consultant in the department of language missions.

Three couples are living in Texas. The Samuel F. Longbottom Jr. family is on furlough in Waco, while they wait for a new field of service. Mr. and Mrs. Gene V. Tunnell are living in Fort Worth. He is enrolled at the University of Texas at Arlington, working on a doctorate in social work, and she is attending Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Davis Jr. are also in Fort Worth. He is studying at Southwestern Seminary and she is studying at the University of Texas at Arlington.

Dr. and Mrs. Samuel M. James are temporarily living in Richmond, where he is doing research for the Foreign Mission Board. They are also awaiting a new assignment.

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BWA Schedules Baptist
World Youth Conference

Baptist Press
4/7/76

HONG KONG (BP)--Five thousand young people from 65 nations are expected to gather here July 19-23, 1978, for the Baptist Youth World Conference sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

The 1978 meeting, which will convene under a proposed theme, "Jesus Christ--the On Light for All People," will be the ninth youth conference sponsored by the BWA. The first met in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1931, with 400 participants from 20 countries.

Guidelines for the meeting, which convenes every five years, use Bible study as a basis for examining self-identity, faith, culture and missions. Youths will meet in sessions ranging from small group discussions of 15 persons to mass assemblies at the Hong Kong Stadium, with a capacity of 28,451.

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