



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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January 31, 1977

77-17

Philippine Baptist Mission
Given \$10,000 For Bibles

MANILA, Philippines (BP)--The Philippine Baptist Mission has been granted \$10,000 from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to help escalate its program of Bible publication and distribution during 1977.

The administrative committee of the mission (organization of Southern Baptist missionaries) requested the money from the Ann Oldham Fund, set up for publication and distribution of Bibles around the world.

William T. Roberson, Southern Baptist missionary press representative, said a recent survey by the Baptist mission revealed that more than 51 percent of the Baptist church members attribute their conversion experiences to the reading of the Bible.

This makes it imperative "to publish and distribute increased numbers of Bibles, especially in light of the fact that literacy in the Philippines is more than 90 percent," Roberson explained.

Roberson, also director of Philippine Mission publication work, has negotiated publishing of 13,000 "Cebuano" New Testaments for distribution in the Visayas and Mindanao.

Cebuano is one of the major dialects of northern and western Mindanao, as well as the Visayas. The Visayan Islands are the central islands of the Philippines located between Luzon on the north and Mindanao on the south.

While escalating Bible distribution efforts, Baptist churches in the Philippines are also continuing their emphasis on organizing home Bible studies and house churches. Last year, 290 Bible study groups outside church buildings were organized on the island of Luzon.

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South African Pastors
To Visit, Study in U. S.

Baptist Press
1/31/77

RICHMOND (BP)--Fifty-three South African pastors will visit the United States in March to observe and participate in special evangelistic and Bible study events.

They will visit 11 states, with each man studying at a different church in one of the states. The entire group will spend one week at First Baptist Church, Houston, Tex., with its pastor, John R. Bisagno, for an evangelism seminar.

Coordinating the visit are Roger Voke, director of evangelism for the Baptist Union of South Africa, and Joseph B. Underwood, consultant for evangelism and church development for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Also helping with arrangements are James W. Cecil, associate to the board's consultant for evangelism and church development, and Jack Stanton, professor of evangelism in the school of theology, Southwest Baptist College, Bolivar, Mo.

The South African pastors will also visit the Sunday School and Home Mission Boards of the Southern Baptist Convention. Both white and black pastors will be included in the group.

Special state coordinators include Charles Godwin, director of missions for the Cullman Baptist Association in Alabama; Howard Teel, member of Longline Baptist Association in Kentucky; and Cecil Finrock, director of missions for Valvasta Baptist Association in Georgia.

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Baptists, Catholics Turn
On' in Joint Lay Renewal

By Oscar Hoffmeyer

JENNINGS, La. (BP)--A unique joint lay renewal effort between Catholics and Baptists here has "caused people to open up as if a switch had been turned on," a Catholic priest reports.

Ronnie Groth (pronounced Growth), pastor of a downtown Catholic church in Southwest Louisiana, said, "Our people are on fire. I have been praying for this type of experience for a long time."

Similarities between the Baptist Lay Renewal Weekend program and the Catholic Parish Renewal Weekend are only natural since Baptists responded to Groth's invitation to organize the effort in his parish, Our Lady of Help of Christians Catholic Church.

All resource materials were purchased from Baptists, Groth said, adding: "To my knowledge this is the first time such a program has been attempted in the South."

Groth said he has been working to involve members of his congregation more deeply in the life of the church.

"I have been active for more than five years in the Catholic Charismatic movement (Bible study and prayer groups) but this was not doing what I felt needed to be done," he explained.

The youthful pastor said those meeting in homes for Bible study and prayer did receive benefit but the experience usually ended there. He wanted to make renewal part of the whole congregation and bring it into the church.

When Groth, a native of Hathway, La., became associate pastor of the Jennings church about 18 months ago he met Lawrence Baylot, pastor of the First Baptist Church.

They developed a mutual friendship as they participated in the local ministerial alliance and discussed common goals in the ministry. When Baylot shared the results of lay renewal efforts at First Baptist, Groth became interested.

"The thing that caught my attention about the program is that it ties members to the church and it is not charismatic. I realized that the Catholic people were turned off by the charismatic efforts and that we needed a non-charismatic approach to renewal."

Groth consulted with his bishop and was given approval to explore the Baptist renewal program. Last April he and Baylot met with Bishop Gerard Frey of the Lafayette Diocese. The program was explained and Groth outlined what he wanted to attempt in Jennings.

"After the bishop said 'go with it' the only request he made was that if it didn't work to find out why," the priest said.

Baylot consulted with Leonard Sanderson and Calvin Cantrell of the Louisiana Baptist Convention's evangelism department to secure team leaders and other resources to assist members of his church in leading the effort.

The two pastors and Phil Hyatt, a Baptist layman from Lake Charles, La., who served as renewal coordinator, stressed that from the beginning there would be no hidden agendas, no efforts at church union or at dialogue on doctrine.

Hyatt agreed with Baylot that the primary reason the Baptists were willing to participate was to serve as catalysts to share the Christian experience and help Catholic laypeople understand they, too, can become involved in ministry.

During the planning stages both groups developed a common glossary of terms to reduce the problem of mis-communication as the share groups held their sessions.

For example: When Baptists say "being saved" Catholics refer to "sanctified grace"; Baptists term the local congregation their "church" and Catholics refer to their "parish"; Baptists "make a decision for the Lord", Catholics "rededicate themselves to the Lord."

Following a Friday night supper attended by more than 450 persons, including some 85 Baptist and Catholic team members, share groups were organized and spent about an hour together.

When the groups returned to the sanctuary, reactions from Baptists and Catholics included: "We feel we are on the verge of a spiritual breakthrough"; "We want more openness and sharing together"; "We desire a personal feeling of Jesus for ourselves" and "We were concerned that as Christians we are not bringing the message to others."

One middle-aged Catholic man quite frankly admitted he "came to this whing-ding out of curiosity" and learned "God is with us all the time to work for us."

Baylot and Groth acknowledged during an interview that members of both congregations had some apprehension about "what the others were like."

Groth, who became pastor of the church last fall, said some of his people had a "wait and see" attitude and some even agreed to the renewal idea but wondered "why the Baptists had to lead it."

"We will continue to lead the people to a deeper commitment in the Lord," said Groth, reflecting on the future. "We will not change our basic program of worship and education since this will make it all more meaningful.

"I plan to share our experiences with other priests and if they invite us we will send renewal teams to other Catholic churches to organize similar programs," he said. Followup study is planned, including a "ministry of evangelism" weekend.

One of the most moving experiences involved a young petroleum engineer from the Catholic parish, who reported for his group at the first session. As he stood before the congregation in the high, arched-ceiling sanctuary with prayer candles flickering at alters, he said:

"This is the most beautiful night of my life. Tonight I accepted Christ for the first time in my life. It is a beautiful feeling. I didn't know what people meant when they said that. Now I know.

"In our group, we prayed for specific men to turn to Christ."

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Stewardship Commission Sets
Budget, Elects Officers

Baptist Press
1/31/77

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Members of the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission here approved the commission's 1977-78 budget, elected officers and heard an address on "The Role of the Commission Member."

The new Stewardship Commission budget, in excess of \$1 million for the second year in a row, was arrived at through a budgeting process which listed the cost of each ministry of the commission as it related to the commission's program statement, according to A. R. Fagan, the commission's executive director-treasurer. "This is just one of the ways by which we demonstrate our commitment to carrying out our program responsibilities," said Fagan.

The commission re-elected Lyle Garlow, assistant executive secretary and director of public relations for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, as chairman. Also re-elected were David C. (Bill) Bates, a layman from Pineville, La., as vice president, and Eugene Fleming, pastor of First Baptist Church, Franklin, Ky., as secretary.

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Ben C. Fisher, executive director-treasurer, of the SBC Education Commission, delivered an address during the opening session of the Commission's meeting. Fisher stressed the responsibility of the commission members in seeing that the agency carries out the program statement called for in the Organization Manual of the Southern Baptist Convention and suggested various ways Commission members could fulfill this responsibility.

In other actions, one committee chairman was re-elected and two new chairmen named. Robert H. Botts, a layman from Wichita, Kan., was re-elected chairman of the commission's stewardship development committee. Newly elected chairmen are Howard Taylor, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Greenville, Miss., Cooperative Program committee; and Bernard W. Dougharty, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Santa Fe, N. M., stewardship development committee. The officers and committee chairmen make up the commission's executive committee.