



May 11, 1977

77-86

World's Baptists Watching
Singapore's Urban Strategy

By Jim Newton

SINGAPORE (BP)--Confronted with this city's rapid urbanization, secularization and the massive movement of people into high-rise dwellings, Baptists here are taking the church to the people.

In the process, they are creating a model of Christian urban strategy that Baptists around the world are watching.

Their goal is to establish at least 200 "extension churches" (sometimes called "house churches") in high-rise units throughout the city by 1980.

The strategy is still in the testing and training stages, and urban strategy missionary Ralph W. Neighbour--the project's mastermind--hopes to have a working "model" by year end 1977. Neighbour, a Southern Baptist, came to Singapore in January 1975 after testing most of his urban strategy principles as pastor of West Memorial Drive Baptist Church, Houston, Tex.

A recent survey in the city disclosed that some 85 percent of nonChristians said they had no objections to becoming a Christian, but they did not understand enough about Christianity to object.

Therefore, Neighbour said, the strategy has been designed to bring people through stages which will permit decisions to be made.

"For those who are unaware of the Christian message, there must be a way to make them aware without demanding a decision for Christ," he cited.

"Unawareness must be awareness. Those who are aware must become willing to receive. Those willing to receive can be brought to a point of controlled attention where they can hear the gospel.

"This requires personal relationships with concerned Christians who can share with them both the information about the gospel and the incarnation of the gospel. Only then can the nonChristian be led to a commitment," Neighbour said.

Although many things are being done simultaneously, Baptists primarily are utilizing a step-by-step approach in carrying out strategy.

The first step is called "climatization." Using every media of communication available, Singapore Baptists are seeking to establish an identity throughout the island as "the people who care."

A logo, created by Singapore artist Jackie Fang, shows a pair of hands encircling a bright red heart and appears on almost everything the Baptists are publishing and doing.

The logo appears on car bumper stickers, apartment doors, buses, shop windows, businesses label pins, calendars, key chains, letterheads, printed materials, posters, church signs, and even T-shirts worn by Baptist youths.

"Book Trees," or steel book racks, selling Christian books advertised as "Books for Successful Living," are scattered in 25 locations and within a year are expected in 125 additional locations.

"The second step is designed to determine the needs of Singapore's people. It includes direct mail, and door-to-door survey techniques in the high-rise apartments. Trained team members ask a series of questions designed to determine residents' needs and interest in small groups designed to meet those needs," the Southern Baptist missionary said.

-more-

The third step, based on information from the surveys, is the creation of friendship groups aimed at meeting needs of high-rise dwellers.

A friendship group, Neighbour explained, is a point of contact between the believer in Christ and the nonbeliever. The groups are composed of two Christians relating to not more than eight nonbelievers.

The friendship groups meet weekly for 10 weeks, using materials developed as a part of the strategy, covering nonreligious topics that seek to communicate the concept that Baptists are people who care about all of life's problems.

The most popular friendship groups offer instruction on how to play a guitar, personality development, how to fall in love successfully, steps to a successful marriage, how to choose the right career, and help for lonely people.

But friendship groups can deal with any subject that meets a need, including such topics as flower arranging, sewing, cooking, tennis, music, photography, reading, or a dozen other topics of mutual interest to people who live in a high rise unit.

As an important part of the strategy, Singapore Baptists hope that individual Christians who receive training in small group techniques will organize hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of these friendship groups throughout the island to meet the needs of high-rise dwellers.

Moving from unawareness to awareness, the next step of the strategy is aimed at harvesting through evangelistic Bible studies prepared with a special pattern of group sharing.

People reached through friendship groups would be enlisted to participate with new-found Christian friends in Bible study groups where meaningful relationships would develop on an even deeper level.

As each person, both Christian and non-Christian, shares personal convictions, the Bible study emphasis throughout 10 weeks of study would gradually shift toward public and private conversion experiences.

Some people involved in the Bible study groups may also come, not from the friendship groups, but from a Bible study correspondence course two Singaporean writers have designed to answer Singaporean's objections to Christianity. The correspondence course is being heavily advertised in all possible Singapore mass media.

As converts result from the Bible study groups, according to the plan, the new Christians are enlisted as quickly as possible into a discipleship group for deeper Bible study, personal attention from mature Christians, and eventually for baptism and membership in a "base" church.

The final step is establishment of an "extension church" in the high-rise unit, meeting in the home of a believer, and relating to a "base" church--one of the 13 existing Singapore Baptist churches.

The "extension" church would provide regular worship services in the housing unit, plus monthly fellowships with the "base" church. The extension churches would emphasize all levels of evangelism strategy, from climatizing to discipleship groups.

The question is, will the strategy work, not only in Singapore, but in other urban centers of the world?

Neighbour is convinced it will, but he sees a danger in trying to short-circuit the approach by cutting out some of the key steps.

He feels that secular, urban Singaporeans will not be ready to reach the "commitment" stage until they have gone through the "awareness" stage.

Missionary Bob Wakefield, who helps Neighbour in training leaders for the friendship groups, said the strategy's success depends on development of the "success model"--the first extension church growing from friendship groups--plus patience to wait for response from the awareness stage.

With their urban strategy, Singapore Baptists are plowing new ground in "cultivation" evangelism. The harvest hasn't started yet, but they are convinced it will.



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
James Lee Young, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Orville Scott, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
MEMPHIS Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2000
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

May 11, 1977

77-86

SBC Faces Wide Range of Issues

By Robert O'Brien

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Injected with an unexpected shot of presidential politics, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) here, June 14-16, will emphasize the denomination's goal of evangelizing the world by the close of the century and confront a variety of other issues.

Messengers to the 120th annual session of the 132-year-old SBC will make a major decision in selecting a successor for SBC President James L. Sullivan, 67-year-old retired president of the SBC Sunday School Board.

Sullivan, elected last year at the convention in Norfolk, declined a traditional second term, citing "ceaseless air travel, constant physical and emotional strains and extended absences from home."

Presidential politics, SBC style, dictates no overt campaign for office, a tradition which makes predictions difficult in a normal election year. Sullivan's unexpected announcement, two months before the convention, leaves speculation on his eventual successor even more uncertain.

Meanwhile, the more than 16,000 messengers expected to register for the annual session of the 12.9-million-member denomination will vote on a proposed \$63,400,000 total national Cooperative Program unified budget and discuss business and resolutions in between a series of speakers and presentations.

Business items include decisions on whether to allow SBC agencies to assist Baptist churches in Canada and whether to release totals on votes taken during SBC sessions.

The SBC Foreign Mission Board, responding to a referral of a motion made last year in Norfolk that assistance be given Southern Baptists in Canada, will make a two-part recommendation that "all appropriate SBC agencies be permitted and encouraged to give assistance and resource help to all Baptist churches, associations and organizations in Canada as requested, in keeping with the Southern Baptist agencies' program statements and with appropriate consultation between agencies."

But, in an attempt to show that Southern Baptists do not intend to try to lure any existing Baptist churches away from other organizations in Canada, the board recommendation also states:

"...No worker whose salary is paid wholly or in part by any SBC agency shall encourage any presently existing Baptist church in Canada to affiliate with Southern Baptist work."

The board will not suggest that some 35 Canadian Baptist churches affiliated with the Northwest Baptist Convention (Oregon-Washington) be seated as messengers at the SBC, an action that would require an SBC constitutional change.

The Canadian recommendation came after consultation with leaders of SBC agencies, Northwest Convention officials and representatives of Canadian Baptist churches affiliated with the Northwest Convention.

The question on vote totals grew out of a motion by a messenger in Norfolk that the SBC Executive Committee study the possibility of a bylaw or procedural change to allow for disclosure of vote counts on all written ballots during SBC annual sessions.

The Southern Baptist Public Relations Advisory Committee studied the matter and recommended to the Executive Committee that all vote totals be released.

The Executive Committee's recommendation to the SBC will suggest that votes on officers be "announced and recorded only on the request of a majority of the messengers voting" but that the vote on all other issues be released automatically to the convention.

In other action, the SBC Christian Life Commission "will make firm recommendations to the SBC and local churches about how to deal with the grave concern over morality in television programming," according to Foy Valentine, the commission's chief executive.

The commission will also mail a "Help for Television Viewers" packet to every Southern Baptist pastor after the convention for churches to use in a broadbased plan of action to deal with television programming.

During past months the commission has gathered data through a series of hearings across the country, monitoring of network programming and intensive study of the subject of television and morality.

Although it is difficult to predict what resolutions and motions messengers may present, early reports indicate they may include such things as a call for disclosure of salaries in SBC agencies and church-state issues such as the Internal Revenue Service's ruling about which ministries are "integrated auxiliaries of a church" and which are not.

The IRS has drawn widespread opposition over a ruling that church-related hospitals, colleges, child care homes and homes for the aging are not "integrated auxiliaries"--a term coined by Congress in the Tax Reform Act of 1969. Those church-affiliated organizations must file the IRS annual information Form 990 under the current ruling.

Messengers could deal with a wide range of other issues discussed or debated among Southern Baptists during the past year. They include women's issues (such as ordination of women and the Equal Rights Amendment), homosexuality, energy, human rights, pornography, world hunger.

Besides the Cooperative Program budget, which includes \$55,080,000 in basic operating and capital needs of SBC agencies and \$8,320,000 in challenge operating needs, messengers will also vote on a \$986,500 Convention Operating Budget.

The Convention Operating Budget is made up of \$536,000 from the Cooperative Program, \$414,500 from the SBC Sunday School Board and \$36,000 from dividends and interest. It covers the budget of the SBC Executive Committee and other costs, such as the expense of the annual SBC meeting and contributions to the Baptist World Alliance.

Other business items include several recommendations by the Executive Committee for changes in the SBC's constitution, bylaws and business and financial plan.

Several such changes would alter gender designations to conform to practice that men and women are eligible to serve as officers and board members and benefit from SBC programs.

Other suggested changes (in Article VI of the constitution) would reduce from 18 to 12 the number of trustees who may serve on an SBC general board from the city or vicinity of that board's headquarters, and reduce from 5 to 3 the number of local trustees who may serve from the same church.

As for institutions and commissions, the recommendation asks that maximum allowable local trustees be reduced from 10 to 8, with no more than 2 (rather than the current 5) from the same church.

Another suggested change in Article VI would reduce from 500,000 to 250,000 the number of members a cooperating state convention must have (above the 25,000 member total stipulated in Bylaw 20) before being eligible for an additional representative on an SBC board of trustees.

Several proposed changes in the business and financial plan would clarify the Executive Committee's relationship to agencies of the convention, ask that each agency appoint a committee of trustees within three months of the close of the fiscal year to recommend appointment of an independent auditor and study the agencies' audits, and add the Southern Baptist Foundation as a suggested place for agencies to deposit securities.

5/11/77

Page 5

Baptist Press

69
Besides Sullivan, messengers will vote for successors to two other SBC officers who have declined to run for additional terms. They are Clifton J. Allen, 75-year-old retired editorial secretary for the Sunday School Board, who has served 13 terms as recording secretary, and W. Fred Kendall, 47-year-old retired executive secretary of Tennessee Baptists, who has served 12 terms as registration secretary.

Messengers will also vote on Los Angeles as a proposed site for the SBC annual meeting in 1981.

-30-

Mission Board Appoints 10,
Opens Work in 87th Country

Baptist Press
5/11/77

RICHMOND (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board appointed 10 new career missionaries at its May meeting here and also voted to begin work in the Southeast Asian country of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka, formerly known as Ceylon, will be the 87th country in which Southern Baptist missionaries are serving. Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Cullen, formerly missionaries to Thailand, have been transferred to the new area of work. Cullen has been on temporary assignment to Sri Lanka since Jan. 1.

In other action, the board decided, after consultation with leaders of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), to extend by one month the period for tabulating the annual Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions. This means that the final total for the annual offering will be compiled at the end of May, instead of at the end of April.

Executive Director Baker J. Cauthen said the month extension will allow the final total to reflect "the considerable sum of money" usually received in May. The annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and the WMU now are held in June, instead of May as in earlier years, Cauthen noted, and the final tabulation will be available for announcement just prior to these meetings.

Latest reports on the 1976 Lottie Moon Offering showed a total of \$28,314,617 an increase of \$2,145,195 over last year's offering but still short of the \$29 million goal. If receipts this year follow the pattern of past years, Cauthen said, the total should be more than \$28.5 million by the end of May.

Appointed as missionaries were Mr. and Mrs. M. Joseph Benfield of Indiana and Georgia, to Uruguay; Mr. and Mrs. Richard C. Dickerman of Missouri and Indiana, to Ecuador; Mr. and Mrs. James Miller Jr. of South Carolina and North Carolina, to Ecuador; Mr. and Mrs. Larry S. Thomas of Texas, to East Africa, and Mr. and Mrs. R. Neil Tuttle of North Carolina and Kansas, to Japan.

Mrs. Tuttle will be returning to the land where she grew up as an "MK" (missionary kid) while her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Alvin E. (Bud) Spencer, served as missionaries in Japan.

At the May 10 meeting, board members also appropriated \$225,000 from 1976 Lottie Moon funds to rebuild and refurbish the storage building at Jibla Baptist Hospital in Jibla, Yemen, which was destroyed by fire, April 21. The entire 70-bed hospital was evacuated at the height of the fire, and afterwards the hospital sent home all patients except those in critical condition.

The fire, believed caused by a faulty water heater, destroyed all the hospital's drug supplies, four generators, all hospital linens except those on the beds, spare parts for all hospital equipment, the water heater, the electrical distribution center, the telephone intercom system, two commercial washing machines, and a commercial sewing machine--all housed in the 4,000-square-foot storage building.

Missionary doctor James M. Young Jr., hospital administrator, said the hospital staff expects to reopen its outpatient clinic soon, but that it could not begin operating on a regular basis until supplies have been replenished and some equipment replaced.

-more-

At the same time it was looking to needs overseas, the board also approved the \$255,000 purchase of an additional piece of property adjoining its home office site in Richmond. The lot, fronting on Monument Avenue at Hamilton in Richmond, will provide space for future expansion and parking requirements.

The board voted \$80,000 from 1976 Lottie Moon funds to produce eight additional episodes for use overseas of the "Jot" television series as a joint project with the SBC Radio and Television Commission, which will share equally in the financing for the production.

J. Winston Crawley, director of the board's overseas division, said experience has shown that the cartoon presentation, in which "Jot" is the central character, translates more easily into other cultures than almost any other type of TV program. With the 18 episodes already available, the new series will make possible a 26-week series for showing abroad.

-30-

Three Missionaries Urgently
Needed In Sri Lanka

Baptist Press
5/11/77

RICHMOND (BP)--The Transfer of Southern Baptist missionaries Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Cullen to Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) marks the formal beginning of Southern Baptist work in this Southeast Asia nation.

But three other missionaries are urgently needed to utilize visas available for this country, reports William R. Wakefield, the Foreign Mission Board's area secretary for Southeast Asia.

Cullen has been on temporary assignment in Sri Lanka since Jan. 1, with the transfer effective immediately, he will continue working with the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) of London which originated Baptist work in the country, and the Sri Lanka Baptist Sangamaya, developing church programs and training leaders.

The Sri Lanka Baptist Sangamaya is the union of local Baptists that has evolved from work started by the BMS in 1812. In 1973, the BMS gradually handed over the administration of the Baptist community affairs to local Baptists and ceased financial support.

At that time, direct responsibilities of the BMS toward the Baptist work in the country came to a close, but missionaries are still being sent. Southern Baptists were asked to help because of five vacancies for "missionary units" (singles or couples). If these vacancies are not filled within one year, the Sangamaya loses its right to have them.

Wakefield emphasized the urgency of the need for three other missionaries to assist churches in outreach, evangelism and church planting. "Two of the visa openings for missionaries will expire in September and October and once these visas lapse, the Sri Lanka government will not reinstate them," Wakefield said.

The Sri Lanka Baptist Union has 23 churches and preaching stations with a total membership of around 2,000 in a population of over 13 million, according to Wakefield.

Sri Lanka, the fifth country entered by Southern Baptist missionaries since 1976, brings to 87 the number of countries or territories where Southern Baptists have work.

"The board has projected a goal of missionaries at work in 125 countries by A.D. 2000, as God may lead," a spokesman said. This objective is a part of "Total Missions Thrust," the board's plan for evangelism and ministry during the remainder of the century in the SBC's Bold Mission emphasis.

An average increase of more than two countries per year has been recorded since the foreign missions advance program was launched in 1948, according to J. Winston Crawley, director of the board's overseas division.

An average of two new countries per year for the remainder of the century will give a total of over 130 countries. However, Crawley suggested in his report at the May board meeting that it will be difficult to continue expansion into new countries at the same rate. "Those countries most obviously open and needy and easier to enter, have already been entered."

Crawley also mentioned the need to "minister to neglected areas in countries already entered." In some countries where Southern Baptist missionaries are already at work, many cities of more than 100,000 population have no Baptist work, and provinces of a million persons have no Southern Baptists missionaries.

Both areas of expansion, into new countries and into neglected areas within mission fields, are important concerns, according to Crawley. The Cullens moving to Sri Lanka is advance toward one of them.