



July 12, 1977

77-122

Belgian Church Moves
To Strategic Location

By Bob Stanley

NIVELLES, Belgium (BP)--The "Street Of Choirs" is echoing today with the strains of familiar Baptist hymns.

The tiny little street, Rue des Choraux, got its name in the 16th century when a children's choir group held rehearsals there to enhance the music of the local Roman Catholic cathedral.

But the music today is coming from the Baptist Church of Nivelles, a congregation of some 60 persons which has just moved into the strategic location only a half block off the city's Grande Place, or central square.

Southern Baptist Missionary Rudolph M. Wood, the pastor, believes the new location will help the church reach out more effectively to this key area just south of Brussels.

During the past six years, the church has already made its impact on this community of 17,000 through the annual International Gospel Music Festival. This year's event attracted between 3,000 and 4,000 persons to the city's sports hall to hear the music and Christian testimonies of groups from as far as Canada and the United States.

It was the success of this festival which led the small church to seek a more adequate location. Town officials, enthusiastic about the response which the festival generated, asked the festival committee to consider starting a year-round youth club.

Church members knew there wasn't room to accommodate such a club in the narrow row house which they were renting as a meeting place. So they started looking for a more adequate church site.

Praying for God's direction, they examined many possible locations, but none seemed right. Then a young friend of some of the members noticed a "for sale" sign in the window of a 200-year-old house on property just off the town square.

When Wood and the church members looked at the property, they knew immediately that it was what they needed. In addition to the dwelling, it contained a newer building that had been used for private dinners and banquets.

A large upstairs meeting room could accommodate about 100, and first-floor rooms would provide space for the youth club activities which the church had agreed it would start.

The church bought the property with money from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, made possible by Southern Baptist mission gifts, together with loans from the International Baptist Church in Brussels and from a private company.

Wood and his wife, Helen, who transferred to Belgium from Luxembourg in 1967, are excited about recent evidences of growth. On the first Sunday of May, seven people were baptized and accepted into the membership of the Nivelles church, a record number for a single service.

In its early years, the church had grown slowly. It got its start during a religious survey made in Nivelles by an "Operation Mobilization" team working in cooperation with the Belgian Gospel Mission. This team found a small group of Protestants, brought them together in 1964, and established a church in the town where there had been no other Protestant witness up to that time.

Pastorless from the beginning, the group maintained worship services on a fairly regular basis and invited speakers when they were available.

Mrs. Wood met one of the women from the church one day as she waited for her children at a local kindergarten. They discovered they had a common faith and a friendship developed. From this initial contact, Wood was invited to lead the group in a weekly Bible study, which continued nearly two years.

During this period, Mrs. Wood recalls, the group felt the need to be a part of a larger group of Christians. After study of the Bible and examining their own convictions, they determined they were Baptist in belief and asked to join the Belgian Baptist Union.

This union, composed of nine churches with a total of 482 members, includes two English-language churches in addition to congregations of French, Polish and German-speaking people. Its members are a part of the 50,000 who claim to be members of any type of Protestant or evangelical church among Belgium's predominantly Roman Catholic population of some 10 million.

In 1972, the Nivelles church invited Wood to become its first pastor. Previously, he had been pastor of the English-language church in Brussels. Earlier he had helped a group of Americans related to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) establish an English-language church near Mons.

At Nivelles, Wood ministers to a congregation that includes a British family which has lived in Belgium for at least 13 years, a family from the East African country of Rwanda, and an American family, in addition to Belgians.

Wood says his philosophy of evangelism has changed some since he first came to Europe 13 years ago. Now, he favors a more forthright proclamation of the gospel. Despite their sophistication, Europeans also hunger for the meaning that Christ brings into a person's life, Wood believes.

It has been estimated that five million people live within a 50-mile radius of Nivelles. Wood and his congregation are confident that "God is now making it possible for their church to provide an even stronger witness in this key area."

-30-

(BP) Photos mailed to Baptist state editors.

#

Three Baptist Churches
Burn In North Georgia

Baptist Press
7/12/77

CLERMONT, Ga. (BP)--Under an arching oak tree about 50 yards from the smoldering ruins of Christian Hills Baptist Church, 20 or so members set up folding lawn chairs for prayer services two days after arsonists burned the church to the ground--and gutted two others nearby.

Pastor J. Alvin Smith said the Southern Baptist church, which was only partially covered by insurance, would cost \$350,000 to \$400,000 to rebuild, "but we are going to rebuild."

Center Grove and Zion Hill Baptist Churches in Nearby White County were gutted from the fires, which officials said were caused by arsonists and "didn't just happen, but were planned."

Christian Hills' red-brick structure, built by the congregation and completed in 1971, was burned the evening of July 4. The 300-seat sanctuary burned to the ground and the two educational wings received heavy smoke, water and heat damage.

The other churches also plan to rebuild.

Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland, Ga., offered its facilities to all three churches. Center Grove Church, however, planned to meet in the basement of its educational wing and Christian Hills Church was making arrangements to use a nearby building. Zion Hill Church had not responded.

Nearly six years ago, members of Christian Hills watched in helpless horror as the six-year old daughter of their former pastor was burned to death in a trailer fire.

-more-

Despite this tragedy and the recent fire, one woman at the prayer meeting insisted, "It will pull the people closer together."

The people of Christian Hills are beginning a building fund and one of these days they'll rebuild.

Until then, said Pastor Smith, "We may just pitch a big tent under the big oak."

-30-

Bible Offers No
Easy Answers

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
7/12/77

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--The Christian who turns to the pages of the Bible for an all-inclusive set of rules to live by or for easy answers to today's difficult moral questions has some serious misunderstandings about the relationship of the Bible to moral decision making, according to the director of the Christian Life Commission conference held here.

John A. Wood, director of program development for the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission, led the morning sessions during the conference on "The Bible and Moral Decision Making" at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center. C. David Matthews, pastor of First Baptist Church, Greenville, S. C., spoke each night.

In his presentations, Wood outlined the Biblical basis for moral decision making, demonstrated how a person's understanding of man and God affect the way he makes decisions, and gave some principles and guidelines to consider in decision making.

Matthews spoke on the relationship of the Christian calling, freedom, knowledge, confidence, and the cross to moral decision making.

Both men stressed the important position the Bible should have in Christian decision making, but they also emphasized that Scripture should be used to construct a useful framework for making decisions, not as a restrictive rule book.

Wood reminded conference participants that Jesus viewed the past and the present in his ministry "from a people perspective and not from a rule perspective.

"We need rules and guidelines," he commented, "but they are to be guideposts, not hitching posts. They are to be a compass, not a map. We get a sense of direction and motivation by viewing the intent of the rules that have been developed in the past, but we face each situation with a sense of newness and freshness and with our focus on the needs of people."

Wood warned that Southern Baptists should guard against becoming increasingly legalistic, pointing out that some institutions, including many churches, often base decisions more on "policy" than the needs of people.

Legalism, Wood added, "allows no space for my wants.

"Part of a legitimate Christian approach to decision making," he said, "involves a genuine assessment of your real wants. Just because we have unChristian lusts and greed doesn't mean that we have to mistrust all of our wants. God made us to desire and feel. To negate these functions is just as bad as to pervert and pamper them. One real task for Southern Baptists is to learn to say, under the Lordship of Christ, 'Here is what I want.'"

The Bible, Wood said, teaches that men are free to choose and act and that they are responsible for their own decisions.

Because God controls but does not manipulate the universe, it means that "freedom is real and not just psychological."

"My choices are really mine and what I do makes a difference in the universe," he explained. "What I do really counts. We are creatures, not robots. God shares His creativity with His creatures."

This also gives new meaning to prayer, Wood said.

"I can influence the world, history and God," the Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary graduate stated. "God does respond to what I ask and do.

-more-

Mystery is still here, but the fundamental truth is unchanged--God answers prayer. Prayer changes things. God works in a way in which He would not have worked had I not prayed."

In his address on the Christian calling, Matthews said that the nation and its churches are filled with people who are longing for some type of dramatic spiritual experience.

"The people of Jesus Christ are intended to have experiences with God," the former Waco, Tex., pastor said. "I believe we are meant to know peak experiences that fill our living with divine richness."

But he added a warning that "when given priority, our religious experiences can become quite unChristian, even instruments of Satan. Our preoccupation with spiritual experience may be ingeniously demonic, a vintage work of anti-Christ."

Matthews said that perhaps the Christian experience or calling cannot be had by simply wanting it or by "doing certain things to make it happen."

"The calling of God, Biblically, is not so much the occasion of ecstatic experience as it is the occasion of moral demand," he said. "God's calling to persons in history never had spiritual experience as a goal and end in itself. He calls us into a way, into a work, into a responsibility."

"When the Christian sense of calling is kept separate from the Christian concern for moral decision making, we either become gnostics who cannot redeem the world because we have already left it or we become semi-Biblical humanists whose God becomes theoretical and whose vision fades."

According to Matthews, the cross is also moral. Jesus carried "our cross," not His own, he explained.

"He was under our load, by His own choice, and I know of nothing more moral than that," Matthews said. "If I am merely bearing my own burden, so what? Pagans and animals do that. What morality is there in carrying my own load? My load is only a cross when it is the burden of someone else which I have chosen to put on my shoulder."

Choosing to bear another's burden, according to Matthews, is at the heart of Christian moral decision making.

-30-

SBC Must Not Falter In
Goal of 5,000 Short-Termers

Baptist Press
7/12/77

By Charlie Warren

GLORIETA, N. M. (BP)--Tying together the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) "Bold Mission" plan with President Jimmy Carter's challenge to the denomination to send out another 5,000 short-term missionaries within five years, Baptist publishing executive Grady Cothen said he believes God has chosen Southern Baptists for the responsibility of preaching the gospel to every person in the world.

"God has raised a people," Cothen told 2,000 attending the Bold Mission Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

"Oh yes, there are others besides Southern Baptists, thank God for that, but you and I stand in his presence responsible for the proclamation of the gospel to the whole world (under the Bold Mission plan). And there is no way we can escape that responsibility."

Cothen, president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, told the group that he sees more unity among the convention agencies than ever before, calling it "a new day in the history of Southern Baptist Convention."

Cothen cited the SBC's Bold Mission plan for preaching the gospel to every person in the United States and in the world, as being the most challenging goal ever before the denomination.

-more-

Then he gave a personal account of his visit on June 7 to the White House along with several other Southern Baptist leaders to discuss missions with President Carter.

"For five minutes, he quoted statistics like how many churches we have and how many Baptists there are and how many missionaries we have and how the SBC Cooperative Program budget (although it has increased in amount) has declined from an average of 14 percent down to 9 percent (of collections in the churches).

"As I listened, I knew he (Carter) had been doing his homework. Somebody stuffed the ballot box--he knew all about us." Cothen told of the President's proposal that the denominational leaders challenge Southern Baptist churches to double the number of missionaries within the next five years.

He quoted the President as saying, "Let's get every widow who has enough to live on to go someplace and become a missionary. Let's get every young person who's uncertain about what life holds for him in his occupation to go serve somewhere for a year or two as a short-term missionary. Let's get every church to provide a missionary for a minimum of one to two years and pay the bill so that missionary can go."

The President then stated that if First Baptist Church, Washington, where he is a member, would sponsor one then he would personally sponsor one, Cothen related.

"He already had my adrenalin flowing," Cothen said. "So, I thought to myself, if First Baptist Church, Nashville, (where Cothen is a member) will send one, I'll send one."

(The impetus of the President's challenge to the agency leaders on June 7 led to a motion two weeks later in Kansas City to send 5,000 volunteer missionaries by 1982. In a videotape challenge to the convention, before the affirmative vote, Carter repeated his challenge and volunteered himself to support a short-term missionary for two years, noting that his pastor would do the same.)

"I don't repeat all of this for any kind of political impact," Cothen said. "I don't care what your politics may be and it doesn't really matter to me what you think of the President. My point is this, when Southern Baptists met in Kansas City to consider the mission thrust of the age to come, they voted overwhelmingly " to put the additional short-term missionaries in the field.

"While the nation stands at its highest moment . . . of its power in the world, Southern Baptists seem to have been blessed by God for such a moment as this.

"The denominational mechanism is in place," Cothen said. "All of the institutions necessary are already in existence. All of the people who are needed are presently alive and multitudes of them are ready to go.

"We'll never do it just with professional missionaries. We've got to have all the priests of Christ preaching. That's you. A question that I want to ask Southern Baptists is, 'Do you mean it or are you just talking?'"

The leadership conference, sponsored by Brotherhood Commission and Woman's Missionary Union, has attracted about 1,600 church missions leaders from throughout the United States.

Southwestern Seminary
Gets \$63,000 Gift

-30-

Baptist Press
7/12/77

FORT WORTH (BP)--Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has received a \$63,000 grant from a Dallas businessman to be applied toward newly constructed student housing and financial aid to students.

Rufus C. Higginbotham Sr., a retired businessman with interests in diversified retail establishments, ranching, and oil, made the grant in the form of stocks and bonds which have been redeemed by the seminary.

The major portion of the funds, \$60,000, will be used to pay for construction costs on a recently completed four-unit apartment building in the seminary's J. Howard Williams Student Village. The building, one of nine new buildings that will provide 48 additional apartments for married students and their families, has been named the Sybil and Rufus Higginbotham Building.

The remainder of the funds have established a special emergency aid fund for seminary students. The Sybil and Rufus Higginbotham Student Aid Fund will be made available to students who incur sudden and unexpected emergency financial need.

The apartment unit is the second such facility which has been provided by the Higginbotham family. A similar building was provided by Higginbotham's mother, Mrs. J. M. Higginbotham, when the original units in the Student Village were constructed in the late 1950s.

-30-

Kentucky Church Gets
'Personal Missionary'

Baptist Press
7/12/77

HISEVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The Hiseville Baptist Church here decided to get personally involved in missions, so they got their own missionary.

Their missionary is Janet Hager, a first-year music student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. A native of Huntersville, N. C., she had already been chosen to go to Inuvik, Canada, this summer under the sponsorship of the Student Summer Missions Program at the seminary.

According to the pastor, Tony Chastain, a recent Southern Seminary graduate, the Woman's Missionary Union was looking for a missions project. They decided to sponsor Janet's work with Eskimos and Indians in Canada this summer, and the church responded.

"We raised over \$350," Chastain says. He explains that the money will provide for Janet's transportation and will also give her some expense money there on the field.

The project has been so successful that the church has visions of greater things, similar to the Southern Baptist Convention's plan to send 5,000 new short-term missionaries to home and foreign fields by 1982.

"We've already adopted a project for next year to either send one missionary overseas or sponsor two missionaries closer to home," Chastain says.

-30-

Charleston Church Crosses
Barriers to Minister

By Thomas J. Brannon

WALTERBORO, S.C. (BP)--This small Southern town has just witnessed what may be described as true ecumenical cooperation.

Ten adults from Ashley River Baptist Church in Charleston, S.C., crossed what could have been dual barriers as they made a daily trek from the Port City to Walterboro, 50 miles away.

There they held a Vacation Bible School (VBS) in the black St. James Holiness Church. What's more, they used Southern Baptist Mission VBS materials, and adjacent St. Anthony Catholic Church provided overflow playground facilities.

The idea for the cooperative project all started months ago when St. James' pastor, Lewis M. Taylor, was in Charleston looking for church pews. He contacted Gordon Knight, minister of education at Ashley River Church, and in a later conversation, they discussed the possibilities of Ashley River, which has about a dozen black members and several oriental families, providing leadership for the school.

"We just swung the doors open and Ashley River came right in," beamed Pastor Taylor.

"Our people had only planned for grades 1-6, but when all the teenagers showed up, we just had to adapt," he said.

About 30 St. James adults worked in the school alongside Ashley River people. "We took the lead and then pulled back so the St. James leadership could take over," Knight explained. "All age groups had at least one worker each from Ashley River and from St. James."

Nothing can compare to what's been going on here this week," asserted Eddie Taylor, minister of music and brother of the pastor. "We've never been as effective or as organized. I feel very warm about this week."

Attendance swelled from 103 to 180, necessitating classes in nature's outdoors. And Mamie Blakeney, volunteer coordinator of the VBS, didn't seem to mind the long line at all as she passed out the VBS certificates.

Whether Ashley River will return to Walterboro next year is uncertain. St. James feels positive about their coming to help again.

"But they now have the experience and leadership. We could provide materials and counsel. We'll see," Knight smiled, justifiably pleased over a successful week.

-30-

(BP) Photo will be mailed to state Baptist editors

The Crutchfield Solution:
'I Just Love 'em'

Baptist Press
7/12/77

By Jim Newton

NEW ALBANY, Miss. (BP)--It started off like a typical Bible study at a mission center here, but the way the Bible study ended was truly unique.

For almost 30 minutes, the Bible teacher, Mrs. Mickey Crutchfield, had examined the Scriptures verse by verse, explaining the Bible in clear, easy-to-understand language.

-more-

During the closing period, several men and women raised their hands asking for prayer and indicating they wanted to know more about accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Then Mrs. Crutchfield knelt, praying fervently for the people she loves so much.

After the prayer, the 35 men and women present quickly moved into 12 adjacent rooms to pick up what they really came to get--free clothing given to them by the Union County Baptist Association.

But they got much more--a clear presentation of the gospel and compassionate concern of Christian people, in addition to the badly-needed clothing.

They call it the Union County Baptist Bible Study and Clothing Center, and it happens twice each month on Tuesday mornings.

"I only got one rule I strictly enforce," said Mrs. Crutchfield in her strong Mississippi accent. "If you don't come to the Bible study, you can't get the clothes."

Guy Culver, director of missions for Union County Baptist Association, said the Bible Study and Clothing Center is probably the most effective missions project in the association.

Since the center opened on July 6, 1974, more than 435 individuals have received both the gospel and clothing they needed.

About 45 people have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior as a result.

Mrs. Crutchfield, who has directed the center and taught the Bible studies twice monthly (except once when she was in the hospital) since the beginning, estimated that the association had given away 50,000 items of clothing in the last three years.

The center is open to anyone and everyone. About 40 percent of the people who come are black.

Regardless of race, they come from all walks of life, Mrs. Crutchfield observed. Some are alcoholics, drug addicts, prostitutes, prisoners (released just long enough to go to the center by the nearby county jail)--but most are just people in the county who don't earn enough money to buy clothes.

About 15 "regulars" come nearly every session, but they are allowed to get clothes only once a month. Mrs. Crutchfield knows each one personally, and keeps accurate records on who attends, how often, and how many different types of clothes they receive.

Of the 38 Baptist churches in the Union Baptist Association, every one has participated in the project by sending either clothes or volunteers to help, Mrs. Crutchfield said.

Although it is strictly a Baptist project, the clothing center has also attracted the attention and support of others. Two Glennmary Brothers from the St. Francis Catholic Church have been coming to help pass out the clothes.

"I just try to talk their language," Mrs. Crutchfield said of her Bible study-clothing ministry. "Most of them would rather come to the Bible study here than go to church. Lot of them won't go to a church 'cause they don't understand what the preacher is saying.

"It's just a gift God has given me--making the Bible plain and simple. I tell 'em that God hates sin, but He loves sinners. I don't tell 'em, 'You're not no account.' I just love 'em and God loves 'em too."

"People have got to realize," she adds, "that there's more to Christianity than meetin' behind the four walls of the church. 'Cause when you get out and help others, you're helpin' God too."