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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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July 11, 1978

78-112

Russian Baptist Services  
Full, Weatherford Reports

By Roy Jennings

GLORIETA, N. M. (BP)--Baptist church services were full, and people were anxious to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ preached, a Southern Baptist missions executive said at a conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of the Woman's Missionary Union, Birmingham, Ala., speaking at a Bold Missions Leadership Conference, recounted a trip she and other Southern Baptist leaders made in June at the invitation of the All Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

She was accompanied by Mary Essie Stephens of Montgomery, Ala., executive director of the Alabama Baptist WMU; Grady Cothen, president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, Tenn., and Mrs. Cothen, and William G. Tanner, president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Atlanta, and Mrs. Tanner.

"I believe God sent me to Russia as a part of Bold Missions," Miss Weatherford told the 1,900 conference registrants. "I believe there are Christians there who are sharing their faith at great personal risk. There are people in the Soviet Union who feel God is creating a spiritual awakening.

"I expected to see primarily old people in the services," she said. "I was not expecting to see the large number of youth and young adults. I expected to find people lonely and frustrated. I found people who were filled with joy in the Lord and who found, in every situation, opportunity to praise the Lord in spite of the adversities they were experiencing."

Miss Weatherford said every seat was filled and the hallways were packed when she spoke at First Baptist Church, Moscow. "The people were hungrily seeking to hear the word of God. Their eyes never left the pulpit. They wanted to hear our testimonies of how we became Christians."

The Southern Baptists were rebuked because they didn't preach long enough, Miss Weatherford said.

The WMU leader said the Southern Baptist visitors were under surveillance during the entire trip, and they were cautioned to pray silently at night.

"Our itinerary was changed many times, sometimes with only an hour's notice," she said. "We had to meet with the Ministry of Cults each place we visited. We were very apprehensive. But God gave us the words to say."

Miss Weatherford said the Ministry of Cults wanted to hear what Baptists believe, particularly President Jimmy Carter.

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Baptist Medical Work Faces  
Serious Personnel Shortage

By Ruth Fowler

Baptist Press  
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RICHMOND (BP)--Handing the small boy back to his father, the missionary doctor looked at the hopeful parent and quietly and sadly shook his head. Nothing could be done. This Baptist Hospital didn't have the right specialists or the right facilities.

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In careful Arabic, the doctor explained that because of apparent birth defects the boy would never walk. The father's face distorted with grief as he left the tiny clinic room--all hope for helping his son faded. No other doctor could be consulted. This Baptist missionary was the only doctor in the area. Southern Baptists offered the only health care within the father's reach.

This scene--with slight variations--could be repeated in many of the 21 countries where Southern Baptists have medical work today. An acute personnel shortage and the financial crunch of rising medical costs have brought the denomination's 132-year-old health care ministry under the most serious pressures it has ever faced.

But for every person turned away, dozens more are helped. Unwilling to give up, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and medical missionaries urgently appeal for more physicians who feel called of God to serve overseas. They also place more emphasis on health ministries that require less financial investment.

The personnel shortage is the greatest and most urgent problem. Twenty-nine physicians and an equal number of nurses are needed immediately, says Dr. Franklin T. Fowler, the board's medical consultant.

Personnel are needed in part because of the resignation rate among missionary doctors. In the past six years, Fowler notes, more doctors have resigned than have been appointed. This net loss comes at a time when Southern Baptists have committed themselves to expanding medical ministries as part of the denomination's Bold Mission Thrust. Without personnel there can be no expansion, and even the present ministries are endangered.

Doctors resign for a number of predictable reasons--to care for their aging parents, to meet special needs of their children or because of an inability to adjust to field situations. Additional underlying reasons bring the resignation rate for doctors to about twice the resignation rate of the missionary force as a whole--8 percent versus 4 percent.

In some cases the workload is a contributing factor, but Fowler sees many reasons for the high resignation rate. Some of these relate to the kind of mass medicine they must practice and others to the uncertainty of financial support for a particular ministry.

Because of the personnel shortage, in some countries the only missionary physician at the hospital must remain on duty or on call for months at a time.

For Dr. Walter M. Moore in Ghana this has meant long periods of time without leaving the hospital compound. He and other doctors in similar circumstances have had short-term physicians to relieve some of the pressure, and local doctors are a big help. But they can't completely fill the need for another missionary doctor.

Many hospitals need specialists. The Gaza Baptist Hospital must have additional personnel, including specialists, to accomplish its goal of becoming more self-supporting. As a private patient care hospital, it must offer a wide range of medical care and needs not only a surgeon and internist, but also a pediatrician and family practice specialist. Other hospitals have similar needs.

In most mission hospitals, the lines of people needing care stretch on and on. Seeing this many patients allows little time for detailed medical histories or more than a minimum examination, even though medical missionaries often work 14 to 16-hour days.

Appointment of a greater number of doctors within a short time might alleviate the workload, Fowler believes. Seldom are there enough doctors on the field at one time to make normal workloads possible.

Personnel and adequate financial support are especially essential in some nations where Southern Baptists may enter only as medical missionaries.

One such place is Gaza, where Southern Baptists have offered not only good medical care but also a good witness. Through training programs for physical therapy assistants, X-ray

technicians, lab technicians and nurses, Baptist missionaries provide all of Gaza with such ancillary medical personnel.

When a recent military action threatened to throw the area back into open fighting, the frightened students sought help not from their own faith but from their missionary teacher's Christian faith. Faces tense, they asked the missionary to pray through Christ for the peace not to be broken. She did and they relaxed and continued class.

A student later explained that he was sure the prayer was heard. He didn't feel that he could have prayed in that manner to his God.

In many other countries, as new ministries are established, Fowler emphasizes the need for these efforts to be a Christian witness. Some such ministries attack disease at its cause and seek to alleviate hygiene and nutrition related problems through expanded use of preventive medicine.

In many nations, where governments now provide hospitals for the critically ill, medical missionaries establish low-overhead community health clinics with a smaller staff than a hospital. "Basically this is a program of health care that goes into the community, village or slum area and learns what the needs are," Fowler explains. "Then an attempt to meet these needs is made."

And the needs are great. In one country, where a missionary doctor is on loan to the government to help establish more village-level medical care, the doctor must step over an open sewer as he enters the Ministry of Health building each day.

In some areas, digging a well may save more lives than providing a new hospital, Fowler says. "Developing a rug industry might mean more in the long run than hours of lecture on good nutrition if there's no money to buy better food," he continues. "In other words, the community health program seeks out the causes of disease and tries to eliminate them while taking care of those that need immediate help."

The board coordinates its medical ministries with its agricultural programs and also with developmental ministries done through relief funds as it tries to meet both physical and spiritual needs of the world's masses.

By expanding these newer health care ministries, Fowler hopes that the Foreign Mission Board can continue an effective medical program less dependent on growing subsidies. But all types of medical ministry require personnel, and this is still a growing concern.

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(BP) Photos mailed to Baptist newspapers by the Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press.

Volunteers Halt Work  
On Nicaraguan Chapel

By Stanley D. Stamps

Baptist Press  
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MANAGUA, Nicaragua (BP)--Construction on the chapel of First Baptist Church, Jinotepe, about 35 miles south of Managua, Nicaragua, has been suspended indefinitely because of the tension in this city following the July 9 deaths of four high school students and a farmer.

Volunteers from North Richland Hills Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, were advised by leaders of the local church and Baptist Convention of Nicaragua not to go to the work site because Jinotepe was mourning the deaths of the students--some of whom lived in the vicinity of the church. The Texas group was conducting a special evangelism project and helping to build the new chapel.

The group was advised that proceeding with the work project at the present time would be misinterpreted. Baptist leaders and other interested citizens felt it best not to give any cause for provocation of striking students and anti-government leaders who have taken possession of school buildings and several Catholic church buildings in Managua in protest against the government.

The volunteers from Fort Worth remained at the Mt. Olive Baptist Encampment--about 15 miles south of Managua and away from the scene of action. Plans called for them to return to Fort Worth, July 12.

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About 30 men participated in the work project made possible by special gifts from the Fort Worth church and the volunteer participation of more than 90 persons who formed part of the combination choir and construction crew.

Under the leadership of their pastor, W. Hal Brooks, the group had constructed the chapel walls and nearly completed the rafters. About two days of work remains to complete the chapel.

Earlier, construction had moved along despite sporadic student demonstrations in Managua. As the building took shape, community leaders became concerned for the group.

On Friday, July 7, work was halted early when neighbors advised the crew to leave the city to avoid any consequences that might occur in an anticipated encounter between protesting student groups and police. The construction group returned to the Baptist camp by taxi caravan but worked normally the following day.

But when they returned to work, the crew found evidence that fire bombs had been thrown at the building. There was no damage. As a symbol of sympathy, neighborhood residents stood and formed a chain surrounding and guarding the building.

Incidents that have taken place in Jinotepe have not been related to the presence of the visiting North Americans, nor have any of the members of the group been involved in the situation.

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Stanley Stamps is a Southern Baptist missionary stationed in Managua, Nicaragua.

Poll At SBC Shows  
Support For Carter

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7/11/78

ATLANTA (BP)--Nearly two-thirds of 1,307 Southern Baptists polled at the annual national meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in June expressed approval of the overall performance of President Jimmy Carter, according to syndicated columnist Lester Kinsolving, who conducted the poll.

Kinsolving reported his poll of messengers to the convention in his column, "Inside Religion," distributed via The McNaught Syndicate, Inc., New York.

He said more than half of those interviewed, who comprise about one tenth of one percent of the 13-million-member denomination, the nation's largest Protestant body, replied they would vote for President Carter, rather than either former President Ford or former California Gov. Ronald Reagan.

But more than half of those polled expressed disapproval of Carter's support of the Panama Canal Treaties, while less than one-third felt their fellow Southern Baptist has kept his campaign promises more than other presidents.

The poll included 173 persons from Georgia, Carter's home state and host state for the SBC meeting. Others polled came from the District of Columbia and 29 additional states--North Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Texas, South Carolina, Florida, Mississippi, Kentucky, Missouri, Virginia, Illinois, Louisiana, Ohio, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Maryland, Indiana, California, Michigan, Arizona, Pennsylvania, Kansas, New Jersey, West Virginia, Wyoming, Iowa, Wisconsin, New York and Alaska.

Messengers of voting age, sent to the convention by their local churches, were asked at random in the corridors just off the convention floor, Kinsolving said. Most often in groups of four to eight, they were asked:

1) "The performance of Jimmy Carter as President": Approve: 65 percent; Disapprove: 20 percent; Undecided: 15 percent.

2) "President Carter's support of the Panama Canal Treaties: More Than Other Presidents: 31 percent; Less Than Other Presidents: 11 percent; About The Same--or Undecided: 58 percent.

4) "If the election of a President were to be held tomorrow instead of 1980 and Carter were running against either Ford or Reagan, would you vote": For Carter: 55 percent; Against Carter: 40 percent; Undecided: 5 percent.

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