



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Baptist Youth Prepare
Canadian 'Launching Pad'

By Robert O'Brien

SASKATOON, Saskatchewan (BP)--Baptist student work--forged out of the sacrifices of a handful of pioneers--has quietly gone about the business of laying a seedbed for church growth in Canada's four western provinces.

It has infused the growing, but struggling Canadian churches called Southern Baptist with the type of enthusiasm and potential for acceleration reminiscent of the spiritual tone which youth of other generations have provided religious movements.

Ingredients in the formula, which has put Baptist Student Unions on six of the nine major university campuses in the four provinces, include a dash of Henry Blackaby charisma, a portion of solid leadership from the Northwest Baptist Convention and vision of Canadian pastors, and an abundance of dedication by several individuals willing to take a step of faith.

It can be said, without overstatement, that Blackaby, pastor of Faith Baptist Church, Saskatoon, weaves a bit of magic when he implores all who will listen to heed the spiritual needs of Canada.

Blackaby, a Canadian by birth, burns with a zeal which has spurred his dynamic church and those who have heard him speak of those needs to attempt what some consider implausible. Blackaby--one of three strong leaders on the Canada scene--sometimes ruffles those who wish he would take a different approach. But his charisma has helped lay the groundwork for the student-based aspect of Canada's Southern Baptist growth--in developing concept and proclaiming the challenge.

At least two Texas couples, interviewed in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and in Edmonton, Alberta, heard Blackaby speak at either meetings for students or student directors in the United States. His words generated an inner spiritual turmoil which eventually led them to Canada.

Today, Robert Cannon, former BSU director at Texas Tech, Lubbock, one of the largest BSU's in the United States, runs a highly successful student program at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, Blackaby's home base, and Mickey Porter heads up the successful program at the University of Alberta. They aren't the only ones responsible for student growth, but their cases offer typical examples--and neither have had it easy.

Both Porter and Cannon, who stepped out on faith and live of whatever financial support comes their way, pre-dated the Mission Service Corps, the ambitious plan of the Southern Baptist Convention to inspire volunteers to support themselves--or gain support from others--to serve on home and foreign mission fields.

Canada now has an MSC volunteer at work--Barbara Burkett, a Texan who arrived at Faith Baptist Church on May 15.

But Porter, Cannon, and a group of struggling student volunteer BSU directors who laid groundwork for them in the early 1970s, typify the spirit which foreran official MSC formation.

On a recent trip through Canada, Sam Fort, director of student work for the Northwest Convention, paused in an airport in Calgary to reflect on what has taken place in Canadian student work. The Northwest Convention, which covers Southern Baptist work in Oregon and Washington, also includes about 35 churches in Canada which identify themselves as Southern Baptist

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Fort gets excited when he talks about the 45 young persons, products of BSU evangelism, who have decided to enter the ministry during the past three years. They represent only a fraction of the professions of faith in BSU's which have fed what Fort calls the "cream of the college crop" into the leadership of Canadian Baptist churches.

Some of that "cream" rose to the top of neophyte Baptist student efforts at a time when a numbers-oriented standard of measurement would have called it a failure. Joe Pfeifer, now in his 20s, is an example. He entered the University of Saskatchewan at age 16, where he eventually accepted Christ through the influence of student work. He later entered the university's medical school and has served a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board medical receptorship in Gaza. He exerts a strong Christian influence in the campus medical community.

Joe and others joined the efforts in the early years, when student volunteers, with no training, kept the spark alive through hard work and dedication. They set the stage for the likes of Cannon and Porter and then John Turner at the University of Calgary. All had BSU experience in Texas.

Other BSUs still operate under volunteer leadership, such as the one at the University of Victoria led by Dr. Diane Yam. She has a medical practice, eight children, a husband who is not Christian and heavy church responsibilities. But she conducts a growing Bible study group on campus, has two meetings a week with students, and has, says Fort, "a nucleus of students already chomping at the bit."

Such "chomping-at-the-bit" nuclei have grown into burgeoning groups since Fort, Cannon, experienced BSU leaders from the States, and others have traveled across Canada, teaching BSU techniques and providing spiritual emphases for a future generation of Baptist leaders.

"It's not just a matter of the future," said Fort, "it's also a matter of the present--right now. In my opinion, youth have been the backbone of the growth of many of our churches--and they're learning the principles of churchmanship in BSUs."

An earlier visit to Cannon's BSU in Saskatoon underlined Fort's point. Detained by an interview about events since he and his wife arrived, on faith, in Saskatoon, in 1975, Cannon walked in a little late.

The young people, many brand new Christians, eyes glistening with purpose, sat around a table, hearing reports, laying plans, making decisions about how they would reach their campus for Christ. They hadn't waited for their BSU leader to arrive; they were building their plans on principles he had taught them.

"Those kids, just like ones I observed in Mickey Porter's group and others, are learning how to serve on committees in churches," said Fort. "They're learning how to organize and plan, how to take responsibility, and how to give support to a pastor as they give support to a BSU director."

Churchmanship is the main principle around which Canadian Baptist student work revolves. Although BSU in the States emphasizes church relationship, there's a freshness about the way it's applied in Canada. BSU is not viewed as something handed down by a denominational structure, as some stateside Southern Baptist churches tend to do. It's viewed as an integral part of the activity of the church and the association and as an arm of mission outreach.

"Unless BSU is willing to die for the church, as Christ gave himself, then it has no place entering on the campus from the very beginnings," says Cannon.

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(BP) Photo will be mailed to Baptist newspapers by the Atlanta Bureau of Baptist Press.

Texas Baptists Unit
Provides Flood Relief

By Debbie Stewart

DALLAS (BP)--The Texas Baptist disaster relief unit has fed about 2,000 people daily in the tragic wake of flash floods from torrential rains that quenched the drought-stricken state Aug. 1-5.

Tropical Storm Amelia hurled her final fury at the hill country of Central Texas near Austin, and then around Albany in West Texas by dumping torrential rains that caused floods, that killed an estimated 27 people and destroyed hundreds of homes and businesses.

Even as the 10-20 inch rains continued in Central Texas, the 18-wheel mobile unit, manned by a train d task force of Texas Baptist Men, dispensed meals to homeless flood victims and relief workers in Kerrville in Central Texas. Three counties in the hill country, normally a tranquil setting of natural beauty for campers, and three West Texas counties, the setting of ranches and small towns, were declared federal disaster areas.

The relief unit responds in emergencies as part of the disaster relief program of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Charles McLaughlin, chairman of the statewide Texas Baptist Disaster Relief Committee, said that the program also will assist Baptist churches to minister to the needs of people in both areas of flooding. The mobile unit had assisted in flood recovery in Austin, Minn., in late July.

Bob Dixon, director of Texas Baptist Men, led the crew of volunteers and members of his staff.

Members of the Texas Baptist Convention staff, associational staffs, pastors and laymen cooperated in the recovery work with other church groups and state officials. The final meal served by the Baptist unit in Kerrville was to Mennonite relief workers staying at a Methodist camp.

HEB Food Stores donated food for distribution by Texas Baptists. Kerrville Baptists prepared the food in their church kitchens. The unit's crew and local volunteers dispensed meals from the unit in Kerrville and from pickups in surrounding communities.

After feeding meals and searching for missing persons in the hill country for five days, the Baptist relief unit moved to West Texas on Monday, Aug. 7, for standby service. The Graham area in West Texas received about four inches of rain during the storm's passage.

Billy Clarke, Baptist missions director in the hill country, said that members of the First Baptist Church, Comfort, Texas, bailed out six inches of water and removed ruined carpet from their sanctuary on Friday and Saturday after the floods. The congregation returned to the sanctuary Sunday morning for regular worship services.

Clarke said that a story reported by Richard Porche, pastor of the Baptist church in Comfort, had a more tragic outcome. Two deaths occurred in one family who had visited the church after moving into a "dream home" in Comfort the week before the flood. The mother rushed her three young children upstairs in their new home when they heard the rising flood waters.

"She questioned her children about their salvation, and they said they were saved," Clarke said. "Then the floods swept the house away and only one child survived."

Newspapers reported seven deaths at a church camp near Bandera in the hill country. A youth group at Alto Frio Baptist Camp in the area was safely evacuated when water and power services were severed.

When power failed at the Medina Children's Home in the hill country, a generator from the Baptist mobile unit provided temporary service. In nearby Bandera, the First Baptist Church opened its education building as the Red Cross and Salvation Army Relief Center.

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Georgi Vins Beaten;
Condition Uncertain

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Georgi Vins, imprisoned Soviet Baptist dissident, was "brutally beaten" on June 10, according to a British group which monitors religious developments in Communist countries.

The Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism at Keston, England, reported on July 27 that Vins was beaten and placed in an underground isolation cell. No reason for the beating is known.

The Centre earlier reported on July 6 that Peter Vins, Georgi's son, was beaten on arrival at a Ukrainian Labor Camp to serve a one year sentence for "parasitism."

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The elder Vins, 50, has been reported to be in poor health for some time. According to reports from the Soviet Union, his condition had stabilized prior to the beating but is now unknown. His wife, Nadezhda Vins, is "very concerned" about his health, especially his heart condition.

Vins is the leader of Baptists in the Soviet Union who refuse to register their congregations with the government. In 1975, he was sentenced to five years in a labor camp on charges of inciting citizens to commit "illegal acts"--holding unauthorized prayer meetings. His term is scheduled to expire next March, but he then faces a five year term of internal exile.

He had found a job in the camp hospital, where he worked as an electrician for which he has professional qualifications. He is reported to be ready to accept an invitation to join relatives in Canada whenever he is released from prison.

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Grandparents Day Set
For September 10, 1978

Baptist Press
8/8/78

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Jimmy Carter has proclaimed Sunday, Sept. 10, 1978, as "National Grandparents Day."

In calling on government agencies and voluntary organizations to plan appropriate activities to recognize the contributions of grandparents to the nation, Carter said: "I urge each citizen to pause and to reflect on the influence his grandparents have had in shaping his own destiny, and on the legacy bestowed upon our contemporary society by his grandparents' generation."

Carter noted, "Just as a nation learns and is strengthened by its history, so a family learns and is strengthened by its understanding of preceding generations. As Americans live longer, more and more families are enriched by their shared experiences with grandparents and great-grandparents."

The president praised the sacrifices of earlier generations that produced much progress and pointed out the responsibility of the elders of families for "setting the moral tone" and "passing on the traditional values of our nation."

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Baptist Press Schedule of Possible Newsmaking Events
February, 1979

- 7 Academic Convocation, Golden Gate Bapt. Theo. Sem.
- 8-9 National Alumni Workshop, NOBTS
- 12-13 FMB meeting, Richmond
- 12-14 Miss. Evangelism-Bible Conference, FBC Meridian
- 13 Baptist/Jewish dialogue, GGBTS
- 13-15 Southern Baptist Press Assoc. (BP editors), Anchorage, AK
- 13-15 James H. Tharp Lecture Series--speakers, Dr. and Mrs. Ken Cooper, Dallas, Tx
and Buckner Fanning, San Antonio, TX NOBT 5
- 16-17 Southern Baptist Convocation on Peacemaking, Southern Seminary, Louisville (CLC)
- 16-18 Golden Gate Mission Conference
- 16-18 Student Missions Conference, NOBTS, featuring Joe McKeever, pastor, FBC, Columbus, MS
- 19-21 SBC Executive Committee, Nashville, TN
- 22 Seminary Foundation Board meeting, NOBTS
- 22 Faculty/Staff Endowment Campaign dinner, NOBTS
- 22-24 Golden Gate Church Music Workshop