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**Cook's Openness Closes  
Preacher-Teacher Gap**

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Some people see a huge gap between seminary professors and the people in the pews. Subjects like theology and biblical scholarship, they say, are out of reach of the average person, and those who study such scholarly subjects are different from the people who "just believe."

But such assumptions would surprise the members of Nall Memorial Baptist Church in Burlington, N.C., whose interim pastor, Donald E. Cook, is professor of New Testament at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

On a recent rainy Sunday morning, the Nall Memorial congregation gathered in a refurbished storefront. After four pre-school children opened the worship with a song, the lay leader announced that this was Pastor Appreciation Day.

Cook preached from the first chapter of Ephesians on the nature of the church. He reminded the congregation that God had chosen His church "before the foundation of the world" and "destined them to be His sons through Jesus Christ." He encouraged them to remember that no matter how difficult life may appear at times, they should rejoice in the knowledge that they are the people of God.

Later, during the time of commitment, Cook gave the invitation to respond, "If you've never given your life to Jesus, you need to do that today." On the way out the door, and into the rainy day, a deacon was heard to remark, "It sure is a blessing to have a man who knows so much about the Bible and still preaches the gospel."

After all the appreciation was expressed and the last hand was shaken, Cook went to lunch with one of the church families. Later he visited several shut-in-members and preached in the evening worship service. He'd be back for prayer meeting on Wednesday, even though it meant an hour's drive each way from his home in Wake Forest.

Soon the church will call a full-time pastor and Cook's interim work at Nall Memorial will be over. Meanwhile, he has other things to occupy his mind, like the lectures on advanced Greek grammar, New Testament survey and the Gospel of Mark that he must deliver in his full-time job at Southeastern Seminary, where he has taught since 1965.

How can a man who has encountered the historical-critical questions about biblical origins and the nature of Jesus stand in the pulpit and call for a radical life-commitment to the Christian faith? The question brought a smile to Cook's face and a quick answer.

"Yes, I've encountered the questions," Cook said, "but more importantly I've encountered the Person. I'm preaching the Lordship of the Jesus who is alive now. The critical disciplines inform and sharpen my experience of a personal relationship with Him."

But what about the gap? Are Baptists ready to deal with the issues that scholarship raises? Cook feels they are. "Our people are amazingly open and eager to gain a better understanding of God's Word. They are very teachable," he explained. "There's no difference between what I preach from the pulpit and what I teach in my seminary classes. An interim pastorate offers the opportunity to put into practice what I teach and to sharpen my skills as a preacher and teacher."

The husband and father of four finds that the key to communicating scholarly insights is a relationship of trust and openness. "People can tell when you love them, and they recognize when a person knows the Lord and lives the reality that the biblical material communicates," he explained. "The gospel writers used narrative form to talk about a present reality that was part of their own experience, not simply to communicate historical data. I don't think the gospel needs defending."

First Lady Headlines  
Family Help Seminar

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--First Lady Rosalynn Carter and pollster George Gallup Jr., will offer their views on the state of the American family during a national Southern Baptist seminar on "Help for Families" this spring.

The three-day seminar, sponsored by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, will be March 26-28 in Orlando, Fla.

Mrs. Carter will speak on public policy and American families, while Gallup will talk about current trends in the American family.

Some of the other speakers for the conference will be SBC President Jimmy Allen; authors David Mace, David Switzer and Logan Wright; Wallace Denton, director of the Marriage and Family Counseling Center at Purdue University; and William M. Pinson Jr., president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary.

The seminar also will feature a dialogue between theologian and author Harvey Cox and speaker and writer Phyllis Schlafly on the impact of the women's movement on family life.

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OBU Choir Cancels  
Concerts in Taiwan

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SHAWNEE, Okla. (BP)--The Oklahoma Baptist University chorale has canceled scheduled appearances in Taiwan.

The group was to spend a week in Hong Kong and a week in Taiwan. The concerts in Taiwan were canceled after a Southern Baptist mission spokesman there advised against the choir's visit.

Missionaries in Taiwan feared that the group's visit, scheduled for Jan. 14-20, might prompt demonstrations by college-age Taiwanese, said Joseph B. Underwood, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's consultant in evangelism and church development. Demonstrations against President Carter's decision to break diplomatic relations with Taiwan and establish relations with communist China increased in late December and early January.

The choir hopes to schedule concerts for that week in Manila.

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Fire Destroys Home Of  
Furloughing Missionaries

By Jennifer Hall

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MOORE, Okla. (BP)--A Southern Baptist missionary family on furlough escaped with only the clothes they were wearing as fire razed their rented mobile home and destroyed everything from Christmas gifts to a cherished teddy bear.

Missionaries to Brazil, Clayton and Leta Hulet and their four children were left homeless Sunday, Dec. 17, only minutes after Hulet discovered smoke coming from shorted wiring in the utility room.

Since that time church members, community organizations, friends and strangers have given money, clothing, and even a home to live in for the duration of their furlough. "We have even more than before the fire," said Mrs. Hult. But they still need summer clothing for the tropical Brazilian weather.

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"There was no explosion. It just suddenly ignited and went ablaze," Hulet said. "I ran, turned off the electricity (which probably prevented an explosion) and got the family out. By the time I got back the whole thing was on fire." There were no injuries.

Damage to the home near Oklahoma City was set at \$17,000, but Mrs. Hulet said the family never stopped to think of the monetary loss in personal items. "We're just thankful to the Lord that we got out," Hulet said. "It's a real trying time for the kids."

The family was napping as Hulet studied for a sermon he was to preach that evening. He is not normally home on Sunday afternoons. "If this would have happened a week earlier, it would have been a whole different story," he said.

Hulet went on to preach at South Lindsay Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, and told the family's plight. "A man at the service said he had a home for sale since July 1978, but he wanted us to live in it until we return to Brazil in June," Hulet said in a telephone interview from the house in Oklahoma City. Others began to respond, and by the time the Hulets were settled in the house, it was filled with furniture, clothing and other goods. The church took up a \$3,000 offering for the family.

Hulet discovered his passport was only partially burned and his wife's passport was intact--and he considers that a blessing from the Lord because of the document's importance.

Eleven-year-old Christina, however, was not so fortunate. The teddy bear she grew up with was left as ashes. "She kept hollering at us to get it," Mrs. Hulet related. "Clayton told the church that night about the teddy bear. One little girl there knew her parents were giving her a teddy bear. It was under their Christmas tree at home. That night she brought it to Christina.

"It has been a precious time, realizing more than ever God's purpose in our lives."

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International Effort  
Gives Girl Normal Life

By Barbara Rust

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DALLAS (BP)--People of two nations have built a bridge of love and compassion to give a small Mexican girl a chance to live.

Doctors in Mexico said six-year-old Veronica Morrales, of Nuevo Laredo, would die of a "malignant" brain tumor, but her friends and family kept hoping. When Mike Mojica, Southern Baptist missionary in Laredo, heard her story, he obtained permission for Veronica and her mother to come to the United States for treatment.

A plane belonging to Rudy Hernandez Evangelism, Inc. of Grand Prairie, Texas, flew them to Houston where neurosurgeons, radiologists and anaesthesiologists donated their professional services in two required operations.

The first operation removed what proved to be a benign tumor. Ten days later, a shunt device was implanted in her brain to drain fluid.

"She's doing very well," her neurosurgeon said. "She's almost normal neurologically speaking. She has some subtle difficulties with her vision, but that will probably improve with time."

Prayers were answered when surgeons enabled Veronica to live a normal life. But many people may think a more tremendous miracle occurred when Veronica's parents became Christians. They were baptized at First Baptist Church, Kenwood, which "adopted" Veronica and her family during their trip to the United States.

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Palm Beach Atlantic  
Trustee Generous

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WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (BP)--Palm Beach Atlantic College has received a \$700,000 naming gift from William G. Lassiter Jr., a member of the Southern Baptist school's board of trustees, to be used for construction of a new student center.

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Southern Baptists Gaining  
Ground In Northern Plains

By Jim Lowry

RAPID CITY, S.D. (BP)--Southern Baptist work in the great plains of the north central United States is making strong gains in spite of bitter weather much of the year and unbelievable distances which must be reckoned with.

John Thomason, director of the teaching-training division in the Northern Plains Convention which includes Montana, Wyoming, North and South Dakota, reported that 135 churches and 52 missions with 20,000 members, are scattered through 17 associations in a land area of 400,000 square miles.

Thomason, who is responsible for interpreting Sunday School, Vacation Bible School and church administration programs, said the convention's consultants drive to all of their engagements, since most of the towns are too small for airports, and the cost of flying is prohibitive.

During one two-week period each year, Thomason drives approximately 5,500 miles to visit in each of the states in the convention. He said it is not unusual to spend three days to lead a one day meeting--one day travel to the meeting, one day in the meeting and one day to return home.

Charles Sharp, director of church music, training and media for the Northern Plains Convention, said some people drive as much as eight hours to attend meetings.

Sharp, who with Thomason was among state leaders at a recent Baptist Sunday School Board meeting in Nashville, said the development of volunteers in the churches is the key to overcoming the problems of distance, weather and inadequate funds for additional travel.

He also explained that the travel distances probably could not be eased because of the low population in those states. He said starting new churches across the area with the frequency of a southern state is not feasible, because there are not enough people to support them.

To prepare for a winter trip, which is anytime between September and May, one extra bit of baggage is always included, according to Sharp. An emergency survival kit, consisting of a sleeping bag, candle, matches and canned meat is carried on every trip, just in case.

As difficult as this sounds, Sharp and Thomason agree that they rarely miss a conference because of the weather.

Over the past three years, Sunday School enrollment has increased in the Northern Plains Convention by 12.6 percent, 16.8 percent and 7.8 percent. Forty-three Sunday Schools and 14 churches were started last year. Thomason said the new starts are probably the most gratifying part of his work.

Thomason feels growth in the Northern Plains Convention is a result of churches reaching local people, and not from Southern Baptists moving into the area. His goal is to have a Sunday School or religious education worker in each state in the convention, to help overcome the distance and troublesome weather, and to provide more frequent aid for churches whose resources and facilities are so often limited.