



-- FEATURES

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79-21

Boom Towns Present
Exploding Mission Need

By Jim Newton

MEMPHIS (BP)--Prophets of "boom" are predicting an explosion in the "energy corridor" that streaks through Wyoming, Montana, North and South Dakota.

They don't expect a nuclear explosion, even though uranium is partly behind the forecast.

Rather, they expect a population explosion caused by the energy crisis as the nation seeks to develop the vast natural resources of the Great Plains area.

Lying just beneath the surface of the rolling hills are the nation's largest deposits of unmined coal; plus significant deposits of uranium ore, oil and natural gas.

As a result of efforts to tap into this energy resource, boom towns already are springing up throughout Wyoming and parts of Montana as the nation gears up to meet the energy crisis. Populations of sleepy little ranch towns suddenly double, triple, quadruple as mobile home parks sprout up like fields of mushrooms.

What does all this mean to Southern Baptists in the Northern Plains Baptist Convention which encompasses the four states involved?

"It presents an unprecedented missions challenge to Baptists in the Northern Plains Convention," said Roy Owen, executive secretary of the convention.

"It's bringing in numerous families and new people, and we need to establish new churches and missions to minister to them," added Clyde Billingsley, missions and Brotherhood director for the Northern Plains Convention.

Area missions directors who work closely with the small Baptist churches in the four states see the energy boom, not as a bonanza bringing in thousands of Southern Baptists to strengthen their churches, but as a missions challenge.

O. R. "Bennie" Delmar, area director of missions for northern Wyoming where the boom started, pointed out that Southern Baptists need to get into these "boom town" situations by establishing a mission-type church in the early stages before the boom really starts.

"If we start a Baptist witness before the boom, we'll have an opportunity for ministry later during the crucial time when problems in the community develop," Delmar said.

"We just can't afford to wait to start a new church until the boom actually hits, for then the cost of land and building will be higher and it will be more difficult to get a good church site," Delmar said. "We need to start our churches on the ground floor of these boom towns, so they can grow with the town," Delmar insisted.

Wendell Mosser, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Douglas, Wyo., compared the boom in his town to the gold rush 100 years ago.

"It's a frontier town," he said. "The men are making big money, but they booze it up. Deep down they're hurting. The cost of living is so high, and things are scarce." The best prospects for the church, he observed, are the people, almost half the town's 13,000 population, who live in the mobile homes.

The situation is similar in Gillette, Wyo., a boom town where population has jumped from 7,000 to 15,000. "Newsweek" reported that Gillette sits on top of "the world's largest single coal deposit, an 80-mile-long seam that may contain as much as 20 billion tons of the stuff--fully one-fifth of the nation's mineable reserve."

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S. B. S. NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

"It's a pretty rough town," Wadley said. "Bars are everywhere. There's a lot of drinking, divorce, mental health problems. It all boils down to a spiritual problem, so we're just trying to win souls to the Lord."

South of Gillette is another boom town which is not even on the map. Wright, Wyo., claims a population of 2,000 and is planning for 10,000 residents in a few years.

Already there is a Baptist church in the town, meeting in a mobile chapel where the pastor, Ed Gordon, lives. Gordon came to Wright last summer to work as a maintenance man for the huge mobile home park in Wright where almost all the residents live.

At Rock Springs, Point of Rocks, and Green River, people were living in tents, sheds in gullies and ravines, travel trailers and campers because no other housing was available. Monroe Avenue Baptist Church and Flaming Gorge Baptist Church in Green River, plus Calvary Baptist Church in Rock Springs, sought to reach the newcomers.

"Our greatest need is for Baptist lay people to come up here, get jobs that are available, and plant their lives in Baptist churches as a mission outreach," said Mrs. Charles Crim, whose husband is area director of missions for Southern Wyoming.

Almost all the pastors and area missionaries agree that for those who are willing to do so, there is an unlimited spiritual power supply available to meet the challenge of missions in the energy corridor.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Memphis Bureau of Baptist Press.

Adapted from the January 1979 issue of "World Mission Journal."

Ice Storm Collapses
Shrewsbury Church

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SHREWSBURY, Mass. (BP)--The walls and roof of unfinished construction of new facilities for First Baptist Church, Shrewsbury, Mass., collapsed during an ice storm according to the pastor, C. Richard Risas.

The Southern Baptist congregation, which was constituted as a church in March 1976, and has 79 members, was expected to move into the new building on Rt. 40 in May 1979. It presently meets in the American Legion Hall in Shrewsbury.

Risas was a layman in the Worcester (Mass.) Baptist Church before entering the ministry. Ironically the roof of the Worcester Church, which was sold in Dec. 1977, to Hispanics for use as a community center, collapsed in August 1978, injuring five persons.

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Lilly Grant Awarded
To Southeastern Seminary

Baptist Press

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary has been awarded a grant of \$15,500 by Lilly Endowment, Inc. of Indianapolis, for a program to develop lay support.

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Wayland Baptist
Receives Grant

Baptist Press

PLAINVIEW, Texas (BP)--A \$500,000 "challenge" grant commitment from the Mabee Foundation has been made to Wayland Baptist College toward construction of the school's \$1 million Student Union Center.

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Taiwan Missionaries Upset
At Americans' Indifference

By Anita Bowden

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Missionaries in Taiwan are shocked and hurt that the majority of Americans apparently have accepted without question President Jimmy Carter's decision to break official diplomatic ties with the Republic of China (Taiwan), a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board official reports.

"Many of the missionaries expressed to me their feeling that Taiwan had been abandoned," said George H. Hays, secretary for East Asia, after returning from a visit to Taiwan where 107 Southern Baptist missionaries are stationed.

Hays explained that missionaries generally take on the feelings and stance of the country they live in and have great sympathy for that country if they believe it's being wronged.

"Missionaries in Taiwan see their ministry going down the drain if Communist China takes over," he said. "And they don't see any likelihood of work on the mainland in the near future. They don't feel that a Communist takeover is imminent, but still, it's in the back of their minds."

It's the freedom concept that concerns them the most, he said.

A letter written by Taiwan Baptist Mission chairman LeRoy B. Hogue expresses the feelings of the Chinese on Taiwan as well as Southern Baptist missionaries, Hays said.

A portion of Hogue's letter read: "I wish you could be here to talk to some of the people with whom I have talked in recent days. You would quickly understand the Chinese reaction to President Carter's announcement...and I am persuaded that you would return to the States prepared to do all that you could possibly do to insure that the American Congress and the American public were aware of the feelings of the people of Taiwan."

The letter said the people were angry at being betrayed by Carter, fearful of the future and concerned about their freedom. "One old gentleman revealed the anxiety of his heart when he pointed to his daughter, now grown and with children of her own, and said, 'It wasn't so many years ago, it seems, that we fled from the Communist rule on the mainland, carrying our daughter, who was just a baby, on our backs. And now, what will we do? We have no place to go.'"

Hays stressed that Southern Baptist missionaries would continue to work on Taiwan. "Two missionary couples have gone to Taiwan since President Carter's announcement. We have a couple in orientation who are going to Taiwan and others are moving toward appointment."

As far as work on mainland China is concerned, Hays said that the Foreign Mission Board stands ready to do all it can to meet any opportunities on the mainland but that it is too early to know what to expect.

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Missionaries Stay In Iran,
Hopeful for Eventual Peace

Baptist Press
2/9/79

TEHRAN, Iran (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries Mr. and Mrs. Henry E. Turlington have reiterated that they plan to stay in Iran and expressed hope that the civil war predicted by many political leaders will be avoided.

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In a telephone conversation on Feb. 9, Helen (Mrs. Henry E.) Turlington told Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board officials that 29 persons attended their regular Friday worship services.

"As long as we have Americans or other church members here we want to stay," Mrs. Turlington said. "We're tremendously involved in this ministry and don't want to lose the nucleus of our church."

Mrs. Turlington pointed out that the two men now claiming to be prime minister, one named by the shah and the other by Ayatollah Ruhallah Khomeini, are old friends. "We're hopeful we can avoid the bloodshed some have predicted," she said.

The Turlingtons have been in Tehran since 1977. The English-language church where he is pastor ministers to American business and military personnel and other internationals.

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Brazil Flood Claims 689;
Southern Baptists Respond

Baptist Press
2/9/79

BRAZIL (BP)--Southern Baptists have sent \$10,000 to alleviate hunger in Brazil, where 47 days of rain have caused severe flooding and forced evacuation. The flooding left 689 persons dead and 375,000 homeless.

Missionaries are assisting with food distribution in the states of Minas Gerais, South Bahia, Espirito Santo and Rio de Janeiro, said Thurmon E. Bryant, Eastern South America secretary for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

The four states were hardest hit by the rains, and in some cases cities were cut off from outside communication and clean water supplies, said Bryant.

"Another \$3,400 was already in disaster relief funds in Brazil," added W. Eugene Grubbs, consultant for laymen overseas and relief ministries. "It's being used for other emergency needs such as medical assistance."

Grubbs noted the response to the needs is based on preliminary reports from the field. More complete reports are expected later. "This is only the initial phase--we're just beginning to respond," said Grubbs.

The Baptist World Alliance also sent \$10,000 to the Brazilian Baptist Convention for refugee relief. The BWA appealed to all 111 of its member groups to send funds after it received word of the flood from Joao Falcao Sobrinho, general secretary of the Brazilian Baptist Convention. Total needs were estimated at \$100,000.

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Minn.-Wisc. Fellowship Elects
Rennell to Church Services Post

Baptist Press
2/9/79

ROCHESTER, Minn. (BP)--James E. Rennell, Sunday School associate in the Kentucky Baptist Convention, has been elected director of church services for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Southern Baptist Fellowship, effective March 1.

Rennell, a native of Birmingham, Mich., is a graduate of Austin Peay State University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He holds the doctor of ministry degree from Vanderbilt University.

Rennell, 41, succeeds D. E. Strahan, who retired Dec. 31, 1978. He has been pastor of churches in Tennessee, Indiana, and Kentucky, and is a chaplain in the Army Reserves.

As church services director, he will be responsible for the development and administration of educational programs and services for the 78 Minnesota-Wisconsin churches and chapels, including Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Church Training, music, and architecture.

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