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E. German Pastor Reports  
Baptist Efforts, Gains

By Jim Lowry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--In East Germany, young people walk uninvited off the streets and ask, "I have heard a name, Jesus, who is he?"; or, "What is a Bible?"

Opportunities abound in the communist-controlled country for pastors like Hans-Gunther Sachse to spread the gospel among persons who often are atheists.

Sachse, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, East Berlin, visited the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board recently with a group from Europe to learn about programs available for age group Sunday Schools in their countries. It was his first visit to America.

Only a limited amount of printed materials may be taken into East Germany, so Sachse is anxious to return home and translate and apply what he learns. He said they have an adequate number of Bibles, but training and study materials are not available.

He was able to join the group because of an invitation from the Baptist World Alliance, for a trip he called "an unexpected privilege."

Sachse's church has 375 members. It's the largest in East Germany and is part of the Convention of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany, where there are more than 21,000 members.

Sachse went to East Germany in 1956, when there was a tremendous need for pastors there, and was unable to leave after the communist takeover.

He said only two percent of the people in Germany are Christians. As many as 60 percent may be church members, "but that means nothing," he said.

Positive steps are being made in East Germany, however. Sachse said his church held a missions week last year, and 600-700 young people attended every night. Never before had so many young people been in his church. He even got permission for a Western evangelist to speak during another missions week.

His church has a sound studio where cassette tapes are produced and given to other churches in the area. This ministry is operated strictly on a love offering basis to spread tapes of messages, music and conference reports.

The churches in East Germany have joined together for several community projects including a large home where care is provided for mentally ill persons. Sachse expressed pride that the churches have been allowed to continue operation of the home.

Additionally, they operate three homes for the elderly and a seminary with 18 students and four professors. They provide conferences for young people in another location, the Martin Luther King House.

One of the biggest needs of East German Baptists is for new buildings, Sachse commented. His church recently received building permission from the state, but the new building must be paid for in Western money, such as dollars. He said most of their buildings are very old.

Sachse said the number of Baptists in East Germany is still declining slightly, following several years of significant decreases. The primary reason is that at ages 60 and 65 women and men, respectively, can leave East Germany.

"The number of baptisms in the last three or four years has been going higher and higher," Sachse reported. "We now have an open door for young people, which 10 years ago was not so. In the last three years we baptized 25 young persons who were previously atheists."

Baptists 'Pick Up Pieces'  
As Volcano Remains a Threat

By Leland F. Webb

KINGSTOWN, St. Vincent (BP)--With membership of one Baptist church scattered among six evacuation camps and many normal activities disrupted, Baptist missionaries on this island threatened by the volcano Soufriere are continuing to minister. And they have formulated plans to help refugees resume normal lives after the emergency has ended.

Baptists were the first to provide food following the April 13 "blowing" of rocks and ash by Soufriere. They secured two tons of powdered milk with the aid of Southern Baptist missionary William L. Womack on Barbados. Food and other supplies began arriving soon thereafter from governments and other agencies, and Baptists turned to different ministries.

An estimated 20,000 persons are refugees, some 15,000 of them living in 61 evacuation camps set up by the government, most in schools and some in church facilities. The schools were on Easter holiday when the emergency began.

Most residents in the northern one-third of the island, where the volcano is located, fled south the day of the first rumblings or the following day. Some took only what they wore. Others waited long enough to bundle a few belongings.

One of two churches in St. Vincent related to Southern Baptist work is at Sandy Bay, a coastal town at the foot of the volcano. Members of the church are now located in at least six evacuation camps.

The two Southern Baptist missionary families on the island, Don and Marti Overstreet and Orvell and Suzan Bryant, have conducted worship services in various camps. Missionary journeyman Cleveland Davis and puppeteers from St. Vincent Baptist Chapel in Kingstown, where Overstreet is pastor, performed skits about how to be courteous while living in a refugee camps.

Missionary Fred Walker, stationed in Dominica and the disaster-relief coordinator for the Windward Islands Baptist Mission, helped set long-range plans for Baptist aid. Most plans are aimed toward the refugees' eventual return to their homes. "There'll be a period when it will be tough to go back," said Bryant. "They can plant, but there will be a time before there is food."

Baptists plan to provide seed for replanting, perhaps to offer chickens to some families who have lost livestock, and to make milk available through schools. Also under consideration is an agricultural evaluation of the area in an effort toward better crops.

The volcano, which erupted with deadly violence in 1902, continues to be monitored by scientists. More violent eruptions are feared, but none can predict Soufriere's activity with certainty. An eruption April 25 sent clouds of ash 25,000 feet high. The ash was blown southward and a coating four millimeters deep fell on the capitol, Kingstown, on the southern edge of the island. An eruption April 17 had sent ash-clouds 60,000 feet high and deposited about five million tons of ash on the island.

As of April 29, Soufriere had erupted 20 times. There had been moderate lava flow on at least one occasion. On April 28 Premier Milton Cato closed the northern one-third of the island, identified as the "danger zone". About 150 tremors an hour were recorded at the volcano that afternoon, but there was no eruption. Then came a long period with no tremors, only occasional steam. During "safe" times, some passes had been issued to travel north through police road blocks.

Such lack of pattern makes predicting the length of the emergency difficult. An Anglican church spokesman in late April advised relief groups to expect the present situation with evacuation camps to continue for at least three months and perhaps longer.

It is reportedly costing the government of St. Vincent about \$30,500 a day to care for the refugees.

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Webb, managing editor of the Foreign Mission Board's The Commission magazine, is on special assignment in the Caribbean.

Chaplain's Prayers  
Capture Attention

By Luther C. Alexander Jr.

TOPEKA, Kan. (BP)--When Fred S. Hollomon prays, people listen.

And when Hollomon finishes praying, people sometimes applaud.

Though applause isn't the usual response to public divine conversation, Hollomon, Kansas State Senate chaplain, said he doesn't mind because the legislators' applause means they are listening.

Hollomon, pastor of Faith Southern Baptist Church, Lawrence, Kan., was chosen by Senate President Ross Doyen in January, shortly before the beginning of the 90-day legislative session. But Hollomon is no stranger to state government.

In 1975 and 1976 Hollomon was an administrative assistant to the Kansas House of Representatives majority floor leader. In 1977, he was Doyen's administrative assistant and had worked 18 months for the Kansas Corporation Commission before going to the full-time pastorate at Faith Southern Baptist.

Doyen said he originally selected Hollomon because he knew him personally and thought he would do a good job. But in retrospect, Doyen said Hollomon was doing an "excellent job."

"We've had one or two (chaplains) who liked to interject what they thought about what we're discussing, and that can be dangerous," said Doyen.

Hollomon admitted being tempted to speak his mind during his allotted time at the beginning of each session. "I have very strong feelings about what's going on. I get so put out. Sometimes I wish I could be out there and other times I'm glad I'm not," he said with a smile.

"I know they are not there to hear that prayer. But if God can use me to get their attention... Sometimes I try to be light and other times I say something heavy," he added.

One such light moment occurred during the bitter winter cold and snow, when Hollomon said:

"I'm sure You're quite aware, Oh God, We've had a lot of snow.  
And some folks are complaining that the temperature's too low.  
Now I'm sure You know Your business, but the problem is, You see,  
That just because I'm chaplain, folks are blaming it on me.  
Now You and I know better--the weather I don't bring,  
But when looking for a scapegoat, folks will jump at anything.  
I'm not asking You to stop it, but it shouldn't be a crime--  
If someone's praying for snow, to grant me equal time."

A graduate of the University of Alabama and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a pastor for 27 years, Hollomon said he refused to think of his chaplaincy as a mere token.

"I think the chaplain can make it whatever he wants it to be," he said. "It can be an honorary position or it can be a position of ministry."

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"I really felt like the Lord had a ministry for me when I was here before. It was all very low key, obviously. This (the chaplaincy) was formalizing a ministry that I already had," he explained. "Senators here need someone who understands. They appreciate someone who can understand what their problems are."

But Hollomon's ministry isn't limited to elected officials, which is evident as he greets and chats with capitol staff members, clerks and aides. And his daily schedule can be as varied as the persons to whom he ministers.

"Sometimes I can come over here, pray and get right back (to Lawrence)," he said. "Other times I'm here a couple of hours."

Hollomon's knowledge of government is easily perceived in such prayers as this:

"Our Father: We hear a lot about spending lids and tax lids. Help us to be receptive to some lids which only You can impose:

Put a lid on sorrow, and a lid on tears,  
A lid on ignorance and a lid on fears.  
Put a lid on hunger, and a lid on need  
A lid on suffering, and a lid on greed.  
Put a lid on corruption, and a lid on hate,  
And a lid on gossip would be just great!  
Put a lid on prejudice as tight as can be;  
And when I talk too much, put a lid on me!

And I would like to close this prayer with gratitude that there is no lid on your mercy.  
In the name of Christ, Amen."

Hollomon said Faith Southern Baptist has been very supportive of his ministry in Topeka, which pays \$45 per week. "I think they understand," he said. "In fact, it's good exposure for the church."

Indeed, Hollomon's prayers have been printed and broadcast in newspapers and on radio stations across the nation.

Hollomon told one reporter he had a "kind of a knack" for writing verse, and said his prayers are often written that way, and his Sunday sermons sometimes also include verse.

Explaining why he had chosen to write his own prayers instead of quoting the works of others, he said with a smile, "I can't even preach somebody else's sermon, let alone pray somebody else's prayer."

It is a preference that keeps Kansas state senators listening and applauding.

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Alexander is on the staff of the Kansas-Nebraska Baptist Digest.