



August 8, 1979

Third in a Series

Conservation: Serious Business  
For North Carolina Baptists

By Jim Lowry

79/134

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Systematic energy management is not a prevalent area of concentration in the Southern Baptist Convention, but the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is leading in efforts to organize and conserve.

Gwenn McCormick, building consultant in the state convention, and Cecil Ray, executive secretary, decided during the severe winter of 1976-77 to begin alerting churches to potential savings available from avoidable energy waste.

In attempting to relate the message that conservation is important for everyone, McCormick and others on the newly-organized North Carolina Energy Strategy Committee began emphasizing that small savings from many people add up to big conservation totals.

One of their primary vehicles for this appeal is a poster with a light bulb and the message that "One light bulb can steal \$106,000 a year from North Carolina Baptists." This means a total of \$105,777 would be saved if each North Carolina Baptist church would conserve energy equal to the energy consumed by a 100-watt bulb burning continuously for one year at 1977 electricity costs.

The Energy Strategy Committee prepared a checklist churches can use to determine which areas are wasting energy. Committee members anticipated questions about the costs of conservation measures, and intentionally emphasized measures that would cost little or nothing. Basic to the program was a strong emphasis on better energy management.

McCormick was sure energy conservation was not a cause that would win a mass following, even among church leaders. In fact, during their first Energy Conservation Seminar for pastors and staff members, they discovered a considerable amount of apathy toward energy conservation.

McCormick is now concentrating on training an energy conservation team for each of the 80 local church associations in North Carolina. These teams will help churches determine which areas of energy management need immediate attention and where the biggest savings can be realized.

He is also working with two associations to create an associational model for energy conservation to document actual energy savings. Additionally, he hopes to find churches to serve as energy conservation models, particularly smaller churches.

Personnel of the state convention also are urged to plan programs with energy economy in mind, car pool when possible and develop a lifestyle for energy conservation.

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At the state Baptist building in Raleigh during the harsh 1976-77 winter, the state convention went to a four-day week, cut temperatures to 62 degrees and worked as a liaison with the governor's office to urge churches to make every effort to conserve whenever possible. Many Sunday night services were cancelled because of a request by the governor's emergency energy council.

Today, after a survey of the Baptist Building to pinpoint energy waste, thermostats are set at 68 degrees in winter and 78 degrees in summer, and the lighting load has been lowered by 25 percent. An emergency energy policy also has been established to provide guidelines for cooperation with state government in the event of another energy emergency of similar proportions to the one in the winter of 1976-77.

"Energy is not just disappearing, it's being used up," McCormick says. "Baptist churches are wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars annually and it is not helping the purpose and mission of our church. If we are just trying to conserve, we have made a vast improvement over not caring."

"A majority of people still believe the energy crisis is a matter of manipulation," he said. "If we can get churches to begin to conserve energy in church buildings, the church can become a model in the community. We see churches facing a credibility problem if the church does not become a good model. Churches can be an example and influence to businessmen and home owners.

"I'm not sure we have matured to the point where we see waste as a sin," McCormick said. "Our consumptive-mentality and throw-away ethic must be recognized for what they are—irresponsible and sinful waste."

"Conservation of energy will probably never have the mass appeal that missions, evangelism, or even hunger has for most Southern Baptists," he continued. "The dramatic appeal of these concerns can hardly be matched in presenting energy issues.

"In fact, my concern is not to try to match the appeal of missions and evangelism but to call North Carolina Baptists to a mature and biblical understanding of the stewardship of energy. It is imperative that Baptists see and speak out against the sin of wasting energy and wasting our financial resources on excessive consumption of energy."

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(Article four will deal with the role of the pastor as leader of the church in planning an effective energy conservation program.)

(BP) photo mailed to Baptist state newspaper editors

Pastor Appreciates Local  
Church After Accident

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CLEVELAND, Texas (BP)--Pastor Larry Weaver of First Baptist Church, Cleveland, Texas, after preaching the last funeral service for the four members of his church who drowned in a van July 27, said the experience gave him an increased appreciation for the local church.

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"Our people. . . have ministered not only to the families of those that died but to each other. We're learning we're all ministers of Jesus Christ," he said.

Letters, telegrams and telephone calls have poured into the church from across the country. These have given him a new understanding of being a part of the "greater family of God."

"We are all hurt," he said. "But it is not a hopeless hurt. Somehow, some way, Christ is going to receive glory from this."

The drownings occurred as a group from the church, driving to the Glorieta Baptist Conference Center, was struck by a truck and pushed into flood waters. A fifth victim was a member of Calvary Baptist Church, Cleveland.

"I hope this accident does not in any way penalize what we do with and for our youth in the future, in our attempt to help them grow spiritually," Weaver said. "I'll always be apprehensive when a bus or van leaves with our kids in it. But we're here to help them be mature Christians."

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Short Notice  
For Big Job

By Robert J. Hastings

Baptist Press  
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SCHAUMBURG, Ill. (BP)--Shortly before midnight Jeff Clark, pastor of the Grace Community Baptist Chapel, received a call telling him to meet 16 Vietnamese refugees at O'Hare Field in Chicago within five hours.

What do you do with 16 Vietnamese boat people, ranging in age from two years to 67, only one of whom speaks falling English?

"Right now they're in my family room," Clark sleepily told the Illinois Baptist newspaper.

"We knew our application was approved, but didn't know exactly when they would arrive," said Clark, who had been up all night. "So we hadn't rented a house or anything."

The 16 refugees are relatives of another family, already resettled in Braidwood, Ill., by the Main Street Baptist Church there. Clark read about their plight in the Illinois Baptist. "My first thought was about all the big churches in Illinois that could help," said Clark, whose new congregation numbers only six families. "Then I realized this was something we should do."

And his small congregation agreed with him! They voted to sponsor the family, made application, and exactly 54 days later, met them at O'Hare Field.

"We took four cars to the airport, and when we got there, a photographer was also present from the Chicago Tribune," Clark explained. "He photographed them in the baggage area, but their luggage was pitifully small. I think all told, the 16 of them had five little flight bags and three or four cardboard boxes held together by tape. They'd been enroute 48 hours, direct from a refugee camp in Malaysia."

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The new refugees are related to the Ngo Kim Thanh family in Braidwood, and apparently escaped from Vietnam with them on the same boat which was at sea for 7 days and 8 nights. "It was only a 36-foot fishing boat," Ngo Kim Thanh said. "It had sprung a leak, and we were in danger of sinking, when a Japanese boat picked us up and took us to Malaysia."

"When we brought them to our home early Monday morning, we were at a loss what to do, since they were tired and apprehensive, and we could barely communicate," Clark explained. "But within a few minutes, my son, Randy, who is 10, brought out some of his toys. Soon we were all playing games, throwing balls, doing little magic tricks. It seemed to break the tension. We laughed and communicated, like little children, even though we were total strangers."

All 16 have Catholic backgrounds. Still in a refugee camp in Malaysia are 7 more relatives of the same family. They are Buddhists.

Although Clark and his tiny congregation have their hands full with 16, they look forward to the arrival of the remaining 7. "But we'd like a little more than five hours notice the next time!" he said.

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Parks: He's Earned His Spurs  
As Cowhand and Missionary

By Leland Webb

Baptist Press  
8/8/79

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--If R. Keith Parks must choose one word to describe himself, it's "missionary."

Involvement in missions has been "the dominant note in my life since God first called me," says the man elected to succeed Baker J. Cauthen as executive director of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Parks, 51, is also a former cowboy, jogger, do-it-yourselfer, and a man deeply dedicated to his family.

Parks, who becomes executive director-elect Sept. 3, has been a missionary to Indonesia, has counseled prospective missionaries, has administered missions in Southeast Asia, and has served as one of the top administrators at the Foreign Mission Board offices in Richmond, Va.

Now what he would most like to do is to inform Southern Baptists about missions needs, so that they can live up to their potential.

"We must underscore some basic concepts," Parks declares. He believes, for example, that communicating the gospel to the entire world is a mandate laid on the churches and on individual Christians, not on the Foreign Mission Board. The board stands "ready to channel all their resources as efficiently and with as great a strategic impact" as possible, he says.

"The Lord is working in some thrilling ways around the world," Parks continues. "There are more 'winnable' people than at any other time in history." In that context, he insists, Southern Baptists "have the potential to be used of God to really make an impact."

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"We have not yet been willing to pay the cost in dollars that it will take," he points out, adding that giving must move to "a new level."

Board members at the session in which Parks was elected seemed moved by the statements offered by both Parks and his wife, Helen Jean, about their personal, spiritual and missions development. Their statements and Parks's response to questions from board members reflected both the serious thoughts and the casual humor that is typical of the couple.

After the affirmative vote, the entire Parks family appeared before the board. The testimonies of the three sons, daughter and daughter-in-law completed a portrait of a loving close-knit Christian family.

All four children have acknowledged a call to the gospel ministry or to missions. Their decisions, their father reports, have been their own, for he and Mrs. Parks have taken care to avoid unduly influencing their vocational choices. "We just told each of them, 'we want you to follow the Lord's will for your life,'" relates Parks.

Most of his personal activities are family related. Outings as a family and travel together have contributed to their closeness.

Parks jogs up to two miles a day fairly regularly, usually at night. For him, the exercise also provides a quiet period for reflection. He plays tennis and enjoys home repair chores.

A Texan, Parks has been at home on horseback since childhood. His father raised cattle and young Parks soon learned to handle the herds. He wielded a branding iron and otherwise earned his spurs as a working cowboy.

He still recalls the break he took from a busy travel schedule as a missionary personnel secretary, while his father was still living. Parks stopped at home in Arkansas, where the family had moved, and spent most of the day in the saddle, working the herds and helping to dehorn cattle. He calls it one of his most relaxing times.

Approaching his new position, Parks speaks frankly about change in mission strategy, past and present. The Foreign Mission Board "has been sensitive to change and has changed more than any other organization of any size in Southern Baptist life," he says.

But he also sees the need for "new wineskins, as is true in every generation and in every shift."

He is pledged to the basic approach of career missionaries, for example, but he also struggles with the need to minister to the areas where missionaries are not permitted residence. He points to the need for a "worldwide strategy in terms of those large masses of people where we cannot send career missionaries." With changes in the world coming so rapidly, Parks adds, "We're going to have to develop some alternate strategies."

Parks is devoted to prayer and the Bible. "I have always been committed to the scripture as the word of God, a very personal guide to me," he declares. "I accept the whole Bible as being God's revelation to man."

Parks requests continued prayer support, and says the convention's missions outreach will be what God intends "if we mobilize the prayer support of Southern Baptists."