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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Russian Baptists Receive
Warm Welcome, Ovation

By Adrienne Bonham

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Russian believers are taught before baptism they ought to be a "small Billy Graham" in sharing Christ with others, a Russian Baptist leader told an overflow crowd at the Southern Baptist Foreign Missions Conference.

Alexei M. Bichkov said he believes Russian Baptists can contribute a special concern for evangelism, unity and mutual understanding to the world fellowship of Baptists.

He and Jakov Doukhonchenko, who also addressed a responsive crowd at the Foreign Missions Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, received a standing ovation of welcome.

They joined hands during an area conference as the group sang "Blest Be the Tie That Binds."

Bichkov is general secretary of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the USSR, and Doukhonchenko is the council's vice president and superintendent (executive director) for the Ukraine, which has about half of Russia's Baptists. Churches in the All-Union Council have more than a half million members.

The two Russian leaders, on their way to the Baptist World Congress to be held July 8-13 in Toronto, Canada, discussed Southern Baptist missions and life for Baptists in the USSR.

Doukhonchenko, also pastor of Kiev Baptist Church, expressed gratitude to Foreign Mission Board leaders for inviting the two to take part in the conference for the first time. He said that, though they had heard much about the work of the board, they were now even more impressed with the "tremendous work of missionaries in many countries." They will now be better able to understand the work and to encourage fellow Baptists in Russia to pray for the Southern Baptist missions effort, he said.

"We appreciate the opportunity to meet face to face with Southern Baptists and to tell them about the life and witness of believers in Russia," he said.

Russian Baptists emphasize the importance of baptism and church membership, he said. Candidates for baptism are carefully examined by deacons and ministers of the church. The average age for baptism is 18. Another priority of churches is to educate young people in the Christian style of life. Such careful training is one reason there are few divorces among Baptists, Doukhonchenko believes.

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Of persons seeking baptism in Russia, an increasing number--perhaps 30 to 40 percent--grew up in non-Christian families. Bichkov believes that attempts to create a Russian society without God were in opposition to the way of life of most Russians. With a Christian history of almost 1,000 years, Russians see Christianity in art, culture, music, and various other aspects of daily life. "The spirit of God continues to live among the people," Bichkov said.

Baptists of the All-Union Council have gone on record as believing that, despite the historical connection between socialism and atheism, socialism does not have to be atheistic. Bichkov, who is also a pastor of Moscow Baptist Church, explained that Baptists of the council want to cooperate with the government in things that do not compromise their Christian beliefs and want the authorities to leave them free to live their Christian lives. He sees increasing openness to the gospel because, he says, constitutional changes now guarantee freedom of conscience.

Asked if he had something particular that he wanted to say to Southern Baptists, Bichkov offered this suggestion, "with love:" "Sometimes we feel some Southern Baptists are so proud that they make so much contribution to world missions that they do not pay attention to the needs for cooperation among Christians who are involved in mission efforts. Perhaps there is too much emphasis among missionaries in some places like Africa on 'We are Danish Baptists.' 'We are Southern Baptists.' 'We are Swedish Baptists.'"

Doukhonchenko called upon Southern Baptists to "keep the unity of your convention, be faithful servants of God in the world, and remember that we all are ambassadors of Jesus Christ in all circumstances in all countries of the world."

The two Russian leaders presented a samovar, an urn used by Russian Christians as a sign of Christian hospitality, to R. Keith Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board. It will be displayed at the board's headquarters in Richmond, Va.

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Adrianne Bonham, editor of Royal Service magazine at the Woman's Missionary Union, Birmingham, Ala., assisted in coverage of the Foreign Missions Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

White House Conference
Upholds Traditional Family

By Tim Fields

Baptist Press
6/26/80

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists "can enthusiastically endorse many of the recommendations passed by the recent White House Conference on Families on Minneapolis," Harry Hollis of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission declared.

Hollis, director of family and special moral concerns for the Nashville-based commission, is one of 40 members appointed by President Carter to serve on the National Advisory Committee for the White House Conference. He is the only Southern Baptist on the committee.

Recommendations Hollis feels most Southern Baptists can support include those which oppose alcohol and drug abuse, support a television rating system aimed at curbing violence and pornography, and define the family as "a unit of two or more persons related by blood, heterosexual marriage, adoption or extended families."

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Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in June in St. Louis passed a resolution calling for the remaining White House Conferences on Families to affirm the biblical concept of the family and requested the Christian Life Commission to continue to keep Southern Baptists informed about the conference.

The resolution also voiced disapproval of those recommendations of the conference's Baltimore meeting which, the resolution charged, supported abortion and homosexual rights and undermined the biblical concept of the family.

Hollis said the definition of the family recommended by the second White House Conference meeting in Minneapolis, June 19-21, is more in line with biblical family ideals.

"I, of course, do not agree with all of the recommendations of the Minneapolis conference," Hollis stressed. "But there are many that I do support. Southern Baptists should affirm the positive values which come out of the White House Conference on Families," he said.

"Although we will not agree with everything the three conferences recommend, I accepted the appointment by President Carter to serve on the National Advisory Committee because I believe Christians have a moral duty to respond to Christ's call to be salt and light in society," Hollis said.

"It's easier to stay outside and criticize the White House Conference on Families than it is to be on the inside trying to shape it to support the wholesome family values which our nation so urgently needs."

According to Hollis, numerous Southern Baptists served as delegates to the first two conferences and others will be delegates to the last conference July 10-12 in Los Angeles.

The number one affirmative vote-getter at the Minneapolis conference, he said, was a recommendation, passed 530 to 28, which called for public policies to help rather than hurt families.

The recommendation charged that few if any organizations or individuals ask how a policy might affect families. "As a result," the recommendation reads, "many government policies are anti-family, including the marriage penalty in the income tax, foster care policies and Medicare payments which favor institutional care over family care, and welfare laws that require the father to leave home in order for his family to receive assistance."

In a strong attack on alcohol abuse, the Minneapolis delegates passed a recommendation calling for a two percent tax to be levied on sales of alcoholic beverages and related license fees and asking that the tax revenues be kept in the counties for prevention and treatment programs.

The recommendation called also for the legal age for consumption of alcohol to be raised to 21 in every state and that legislation be enacted requiring labels on all alcoholic beverage containers warning of the dangers of consumption.

In related recommendations, delegates to the conference called for families, schools, churches and social organizations to give priority to programs to prevent alcohol abuse.

According to Hollis, other positive recommendations included support for equal housing, child care assistance, the handicapped and the aging.

Delegates to the Minneapolis conference also passed recommendations calling for religious institutions to become more actively involved in strengthening families.

A recommendation which would have closely paralleled a resolution passed by the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis but was defeated 286 to 281, called for parents of minors to be notified before their children are given contraceptives.

Recommendations of all three White House Conferences will be sent to a 117-member National Task Force for consolidation into a single final report. As a member of the National Advisory Committee, Hollis will serve on the Task Force.

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Tim Fields is director of communications for the SBC Christian Life Commission, Nashville.

Kammerdiener to Direct Work
In Middle America, Caribbean

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RIDGECREST, N.C.(BP)--Donald R. Kammerdiener, field representative for the eastern part of Spanish-speaking South America, has been elected by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board as area director for Middle America and the Caribbean, effective July 1.

A missionary since 1962, Kammerdiener has been stationed in Buenos Aires, Argentina, since 1970 as the board's liaison with missionaries in Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina.

Kammerdiener replaces Charles W. Bryan in the post formerly entitled area secretary. Bryan was elected in April as vice president for overseas operations to direct the board's overseas force of more than 3,000 missionaries in 94 countries.

Kammerdiener will be based in Richmond as he directs the work of almost 400 missionaries who serve in the 26 countries or territories that make up this area. He will also supervise missionaries assigned to publications work in El Paso, Texas.

Kammerdiener, 44, was born in Oklahoma City but grew up in Kansas City, Mo. He is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City.

He and his wife, the former Meredith Ruch of Kansas City, Mo., and Shawnee, Kan., were appointed missionaries to Colombia in 1962. He was pastor-director of the Christian cultural center in Cali and national coordinator of the Crusade of the Americas, a Baptist evangelistic campaign which culminated in 1969.

While in Cali he also was field missionary in the state of Valle, served as president of the board of Baptist Hospital in Barranquilla, and was a member of the church development committee for Latin America.

Since transferring to Argentina as field representative, Kammerdiener has also been a special instructor in missions at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires.

Before missionary appointment he was pastor of Richville Baptist Church, McAlester, Okla.; assistant pastor of Mt. Washington Baptist Church, Independence, Mo.; and pastor of Garfield Baptist Church, Kansas City.

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(BP) photo to be mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Korean Crusades Result In
Nearly 20,000 Decisions

By Mary Jane Welch

RIDGECREST, N.C.(BP)--Nearly 20,000 people made decisions for Christ and doors opened for reaching many more in seven weeks of major city evangelistic crusades in Korea, a project leader said here.

With reports not yet in from all churches, volunteers from the Florida Baptist Convention counted 19,778 who made decisions in central crusades, church revivals, home visitations, and special services in four Korean cities. James A. Ponder, crusade project director for Florida Baptists, expressed confidence the number will exceed 20,000.

Florida Baptists worked with Southern Baptist missionaries and Korean Baptists in carrying out crusades in Seoul, Pusan, Taegu and Taejon, Ponder reported during the annual Southern Baptist Foreign Missions Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

"I believe the area in the world most responsive to the gospel is Korea," said Ponder, who preached in Seoul. "Every time I preached to a school, to an army group, to a church, to a noonday Bible study--every time I was privileged to preach--someone received the Lord Jesus Christ."

Musicians working in Seoul went with Ponder or chalk artist Robert Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pompano Beach, Fla., to 13 schools, two prisons, the First and Third Korean Armies stationed at the demilitarized zone, and a Seoul youth rally. In those services, 4,487 made professions of faith.

Teams originally assigned to universities visited high schools after several disturbances caused the closing of universities and the cancellation of central crusades in Taejon. In schools and army units the teams visited, chaplains were assigned to follow up those who made decisions.

Ponder said team members found opportunities to witness outside planned crusade activities. Although he had been in Korea six times on such crusades, this was the first time he had ever seen one of the fast Korean trains arrive late.

As he waited beside the track, he met a group of university students on their way home. Through one of their number who spoke English, they began to question him and he shared his faith with them. Later several came to the Seoul crusade and made professions of faith.

Another Florida team member, Jim Morrell, associate director of the church music department for the Florida Baptist Convention, visited in the home of a church member to witness to the woman's mother. The woman's husband, a taxi driver, came in while they were visiting. Both he and his mother-in-law accepted Christ.

While driving the American team back to the hotel, the man took Morrell to see his brother who runs an auto body shop. Morrell witnessed to the brother, who also accepted Christ and asked for tracts for witnessing to his employees.

Another volunteer, Lorrie Clevenger of Baylor University, led a "mudang," a traditional Korean exorcist, to Christ at East Taegu Baptist Church. The woman made her living by driving out evil spirits believed to cause sickness or misfortune.

Lorrie and the East Taegu pastor visited the mudang after she came to a revival service. Lorrie gave her testimony and the pastor read from Acts about Paul casting out demons. The pastor then placed his hands on the woman's head and prayed that the spirit controlling her would leave. Freed, she gave all her relics and idols to the pastor and tore their shelf from the wall.

For one Florida man, Richard M. Bassett of Ancient City Baptist Church, St. Augustine, the trip brought back unpleasant memories. He had vowed never to leave the United States again after spending 22 months as a prisoner of war in North Korea during the Korean war. He kept his promise until the opportunity to go on the crusade came up.

He said his months as a POW in no way compared with his new experience in Korea. "The long winter months with eight of us in an 8 x 10 foot room with two meals per day, consisting of a bowl of very poor soup, will forever be in my memory. But now I can praise the Lord that even in that experience, he had a plan for my life, and he has given me grace to witness again in Korea."