



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Baptist Partnership in Brazil
Featured on ABC's 'Directions'

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Nearly 100 years of missions activities and alliances between Texas Southern Baptists and Brazilian Baptists will be featured on national television over the ABC-TV network Oct. 5.

Three Baptist leaders involved in the most recent partnership between Texas and Brazilian Baptists will talk with host Robert Trout of ABC News on the network's Emmy award winning religious/cultural series, "Directions."

Trout's guests on the 30-minute program are Nilsson Fanini, pastor of First Baptist Church, Niteroi, Brazil; Milton Cunningham, pastor of Westbury Baptist Church, Houston, Texas; and Bill O'Brien, executive vice president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, Richmond, Va.

Produced in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, the segment was taped in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where many Texas Baptist groups have gone in recent months to help Brazilians spread the gospel in their land. Brazilian Baptists hope to increase the number of Baptist churches in their country from 3,000 to 6,000, with a total membership of one million by 1982, the 100th anniversary of Baptist work in Brazil.

Through this alliance between the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Brazilian Baptist Convention, Texas Baptist cities have been coupled with "sister cities" in Brazil. Groups from churches of Texas cities visit their sister cities in Brazil for two to three weeks at a time to work with Baptists there "teaching, preaching and healing for Christ," commented Fanini. "Since the first Baptist missionaries to Brazil were Texans, we are happy to continue and strengthen the 100-year-old alliance between Texas and Brazilian Baptists with this partnership."

Fanini's church is the largest in Brazil, with 3,500 members. He is immediate past president of the Brazilian Baptist Convention and has worked with Cunningham, immediate past president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, from the beginning of the newest Texas-Brazil endeavor.

O'Brien is coordinating the alliance through the Foreign Mission Board and hopes to help more state Baptist conventions cooperate with various countries in expanding missions efforts throughout the world.

Scenes from both urban and rural areas of Brazil will be used as background for the conversations between the four men.

Times and channels for the "Directions" program may vary, so viewers are urged to check local listings for details in their areas.

Rhodes, SBC, Government
Figure Ordained to Ministry

WASHINGTON (BP)--He may have been 45 years late, but Fred Rhodes, retired government official, former Southern Baptist vice president and current treasurer of the Baptist World Alliance, was ordained to the gospel ministry Sept. 21.

Rhodes, 66, was a young pre-law student at Colgate University when he first felt God calling him into the ministry in 1935. But he continued his law education, then enlisted in the army. After his discharge in 1947, he established his career on Capitol Hill where he was deputy administrator of the Veterans Administration and chairman of the Postal Rate Commission. He has been a prime figure in Charles Colson's prison ministry and is a direct descendant of Roger Williams, who founded the first Baptist church in America.

Rhodes was a charter member and is currently interim pastor of the Briggs Memorial Baptist Church in Westmoreland Hills, Md., where his ordination took place.

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Cooperative Effort Propels
Pennsylvania Revival Crusade

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SCRANTON, Pa. (BP)--Twelve-member Northeast Baptist Chapel teamed up with a couple of long distance friends for an evangelistic crusade which attracted up to 1,100 persons nightly in this predominantly Catholic area.

"No one can even remotely remember a crusade like this," Gary Williams, pastor of the church, said after more than 100 persons made professions of faith in Christ and about 50 others made related religious decisions. Membership of his congregation doubled in the three weeks.

Bailey Smith, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., and president of the Southern Baptist Convention, preached the first six nights of the eight-night event. Bill Glass, professional football player-turned-evangelist, spoke the final two evenings.

Additionally, religious "celebrities" such as movie and television star Dale Evans, humorist Jerry Clower and singers Wendell Goodman, Wanda Jackson and Aubie McSwain helped attract audiences.

Because of the Del City church and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, the crusade was a "cooperative effort" according to Jack Smith, director of missions for Northeast Pennsylvania Baptist Association.

The Del City church not only sent its pastor, but also provided its music director, a singing group and other volunteer workers. The board channeled 24 volunteers into the city to do advance publicity work and to help follow up on decisions made during the week.

The Del City congregation provided about \$20,000 to the crusade, and the board added \$5,500 more to help promote and conduct the campaign.

"Our people are very soul-conscious, and we joined in this effort to try to help our Home Mission Board in an area where Baptists are so weak," said Bailey Smith. "We wanted to provide some spiritual muscle to this endeavor."

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"The Home Mission Board gave support in the area of publicity because we felt that it was necessary if we wanted to best utilize the personalities and volunteers which came," said Bobby Sunderland, director of mass evangelism for the board.

Outside support was vital because Scranton is "such a difficult place to minister," said Jack Smith. "Since 1976, we have tried all the traditional methods of reaching people—backyard Bible clubs, surveys and others—but Scranton is just a tough place to crack. It is the hardest place I've ever worked."

But the success of the crusade changed all that, he said.

"The crusade gave us good exposure and showed people we're credible," he said. "That's a big battle in a town where there are not a lot of Southern Baptists."

"This has opened the way for us to start Bible studies throughout the city," added Williams. "Now that people know about us, we know we've just begun to scratch the surface."

Baptists in Scranton are "scratching the surface" for other denominational groups in town, too. Baptists are seeking to reach those who made decisions but have no denominational preference and they are giving the names of the others to churches listed as preferences, Jack Smith explained.

"Our prayer is that Christ will continue to stir the fires of evangelism that we have ignited in Scranton," he said. "We hope that local church evangelism—among other denominations as well as our own—will continue and increase."

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Cubans Sing Their Hope
But Sponsors Still Few

By Erich Bridges

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FORT MCCOY, Wis. (BP)--"We left from Cuba in real bad weather/ With the thoughts of our liberty./ We crossed with anxiety that we did not capsize/ And here awaits us happiness and joy./ Jesus my Savior, Jesus my Great Lord...."

In a chilly, ramshackle barrack, 35 weary looking refugees sing the melody together, rocking in unison to the strumming of an old guitar.

They sing with hope. After all, the compadre who wrote the song has found an American sponsor; perhaps they will, too.

Southern Baptist language missionary David Turner stands to preach a brief sermon in Spanish. He speaks of patience, faith, and the assurance of hope in God. Patience and assurance are what these shivering believers need most now, as Wisconsin prepares its frigid winter and the distinctively cool welcome the Cubans have received from Americans continues.

Most of the refugees in the worship service have languished behind Fort McCoy's fences three months or longer, waiting among the grim, gray rows of barracks for the new life promised in America.

These are the losers in America's tragic-comic attempt to assimilate the Cuban wave of humanity washed upon its southern shores last spring. Single, male, without relatives in the United States, they have inevitably been associated with the criminals, rioters and alleged Castro agents who have disrupted refugee compounds at Fort Chafee, Indiantown Gap and Fort McCoy.

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Since few churches or individuals show willingness to risk sponsoring them, they wait with the 4,000 other remaining men and boys for imminent transfer to Fort Chaffee, Ark., where all remaining unsponsored refugees will be located for the winter.

Seven relief agencies and six full-time chaplains working around the clock locate fewer than 30 sponsors per day for Fort McCoy refugees. Prospects seem bleak, but Cuban believers at Fort McCoy prize one new privilege: freedom of worship.

"Response to the gospel here has been awesome," reports Turner, who directs language work for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Southern Baptist Fellowship. "The men listen to preaching intensely and love to sing choruses. Some even cry, which is very rare for Latin men."

Turner began work with Fort McCoy refugees soon after they arrived in late May, and in mid-June brought in Ailton Damota, a Brazilian Southern Baptist pastor from Chicago, to work with five other camp chaplains.

In early summer, 200 to 300 men gathered daily around a low platform in the compound for five Protestant worship services, standing for two hours to sing, pray and hear gospel preaching. Turner reported 105 decisions for Christ in one three-week period. Many of the younger Cubans had never attended a church or owned a Bible.

Currently, Damota works 18 to 20-hour days preaching and counseling new believers and searching for churches and individuals to sponsor them.

"We have to do the job of the Good Samaritan," says Damota who has sponsored seven refugees. "Yes, some refugees will take advantage of our trust, but most won't. We must take a chance on them. Unless we do, they'll be in the camps forever."

Sponsors have no legal responsibility for refugees they agree to aid. They are asked to help refugees find housing, obtain jobs, and adjust to American culture. The federal government pays for transporting refugees from camps to their resettlement location.

Mario, 34, one of the regulars at camp preaching services, wonders when his "number" will come up. "I would hop on one foot to meet anyone who would give me a chance!" he exclaims.

A college graduate and journalist, he understands the negative impact of bad press reports on sponsorship. He understands the hate and fear violent camp incidents have engendered. "I have not lost hope," he said. "But I wonder, when?"

Churches or individuals desiring to sponsor a refugee recommended by David Turner and Ailton Damota should contact Turner at the Minnesota-Wisconsin Southern Baptist Fellowship, 303 Elton Hills Drive, Rochester, Minn. 55901; telephone (507) 282-3636.

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Cluster Sponsorship
Could Aid Refugees

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ATLANTA (BP)--Thousands of Cuban refugees can be freed from bureaucratic bonds if churches and associations will join forces to sponsor them through "cluster sponsorship" says Southern Baptist language worker Hubert Hurt.

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Cluster sponsorship is a joint effort between groups of churches or associations to sponsor several men, says Hurt. He says the "vast majority" of unsponsored Cubans are unaccompanied men.

"The churches could establish welcome centers, where Cuban men could receive general orientation to American life, take English classes, get help in finding jobs and live for an interim period until they become self-supporting," he explains.

Cluster sponsorship of single men should be simpler than sponsorship of entire families, he claims, because unattached men can quickly become self-supporting.

Stressing the need for more sponsors, Hurt sympathizes with the refugees' problems. He says: "It must be terribly frustrating to come to a 'land of freedom' only to be held in captivity month after month, waiting on paperwork, waiting on sponsors."

Persons, churches or associations who want to sponsor refugees may contact state refugee coordinators working with state Baptist conventions, or they may contact the Southern Baptist Refugee Resettlement office by writing to 2715 Peachtree Road, N.E., Atlanta, Ga. 30305 or by calling (404) 873-4041.