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-- FEATURES

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SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

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Texas Says Happy Birthday
With Help for Brazil Baptists

By Norman Jameson

DALLAS (BP)—Brazilian Baptists are planning a birthday party and they've asked the Baptist General Convention of Texas to help cater it.

Baptists celebrate their 100th year of work in Brazil in October 1982 and they've planned to have one million members by that time, which would double the total membership of when the goal was set in 1978.

Brazilian and Texas Baptists have entered a cooperative relationship that eventually may take as many as 2,000 Texas Baptists to Brazil and may become a model for similar efforts between nations and other state Baptist conventions.

ABC-TV featured the relationship Oct. 5 on its series "Directions," produced in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

Basically, Baptist associations in Texas will be matched with 10 cities in Brazil in a massive Christian growth effort. All aspects of a complicated, diverse, thorough evangelism project will be shared. Texas Baptists were to pick up \$3.5 million of the project's \$6.3 million budget, with Brazil Baptists handling \$2.3 million and the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board covering \$500,000. Texas has since decided it can raise just \$2 million and Brazil missionary Glen Grober says the difference will probably mean purchase of fewer strategic properties and less television promotion.

Planning committees of Texas and Brazilian Baptists, adapting the three-year plan for each area, matched cities of similar characteristics. Thus Sao Paulo, Brazil, a population center of 12 million, was matched with Houston and Gulf Coast associations, probably the fastest growing area in America.

Salvador, what Boswell called the "Mardi Gras" city of Brazil, was perfectly matched with San Antonio and its magical riverfront atmosphere, and so on.

Eight hundred Texans have already gone to Brazil to work on specific projects including construction of church buildings, surveys and even a traveling basketball team that received great media coverage there.

Other specific requests in what original coordinator Ron Boswell calls a "panoramic approach" to Brazilian evangelization include:

- (1) Target teams. Special interest groups such as doctors or lawyers will share their expertise among their peers in Brazil, perhaps in a seminar situation. After establishing contact, the Texans will share their Christian testimony;
- (2) Sunday School leaders. Texans will lead enlargement and training sessions for Sunday School leaders in cities specified by Brazilian Baptists;
- (3) Home Bible Studies. Texans will help Brazil Baptists establish home Bible studies and train leaders to conduct them;
- (4) Simultaneous Crusades. Texas preachers will lead simultaneous crusades throughout Brazil. Each area will have several local church crusades simultaneously to achieve the greatest saturation and exposure in the area;

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(5) Witness Involvement Now. Texans will teach WIN courses to prepare Brazilians to preserve the results of the crusades and to follow up on public decisions. These trained churchmen will canvass their areas to assure large crowds at the crusades and to reach unchurched;

(6) Crusade. At the climax of the three-year evangelization program is a city-wide, major, united campaign to be conducted in a large auditorium.

Boswell and Bill Damon, a 14-year missionary to Brazil who took over coordination of the project when Boswell joined the Foreign Mission Board as a coordinator for volunteers in September, emphasize the training aspect of Texas' involvement with the Brazilian Baptists. Though as many as 2,000 Texas Baptists will go to Brazil during the three years of the project, that number would be miniscule if they had to do all the work. And they won't have to.

The Brazilian Baptist Convention is self-supporting with 515,000 members. They have missionaries in 11 countries and their Home Mission Board supports 300 missionaries inside Brazil. But they have put a time limit on their goal and have asked for help to double the number of Baptist churches in Brazil by 1982, 100 years after the first Baptist work was started in Salvador.

There are no blanket requests from Brazil. Each is specific and each Texas association responds specifically. For instance, there are requests now for three Sunday School specialists for September 1982; for a concert pianist in March 1981; for five laymen who are well versed in stewardship planning for January 1981; and for dedicated doctors, lawyers, professors and other professionals in all cities throughout the period; for construction teams; puppet troupes; handbell choirs and quartets--all to do their specialty and relate their lives to their Christian witness before their Brazilian peers.

"The criteria is to meet a real, felt need," says Boswell. "We don't try to create places for our people to go."

The Brazilians have requested advance teams for two weeks that will do house to house visitation and conduct a local revival at night. During the second week, the team will pair with a Brazilian team to start a new work from scratch. The Brazilian team that helped start the new work will then be responsible to nurture it.

The next year another Texas team will come to encourage the work started the year before, then go on from there the second week to start another new work.

Mission to Brazil, as the project is called, does not compete with the work of career missionaries. The largest single force of career missionaries of any Southern Baptist field, 272, is in Brazil. The groundwork that they and the Brazilian Baptists have laid is the only thing that makes a project of this magnitude possible.

Groups returning from Brazil are reporting significant results: a group from 25 churches from the Top of Texas area recorded 4,539 decisions for Christ in a two-week revival period. Sixty-four people from East Texas recorded 3,490 decision in the Sao Paulo area. And that's in the preliminary work, before the major urban evangelism projects get underway.

Dunn Claims New Right
Really Old Extremists

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (BP)--A public affairs agency representing nine Baptist groups has issued a statement questioning the "present linkage of powerful religious forces and partisan politics."

In a position statement on the dangers of civil religion unanimously adopted at its semi-annual meeting, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs warned that "the current activities of the religious right may pose a more dangerous threat to the American principle of church-state separation than any previous movement."

While urging all Baptists and other citizens to work for political causes and candidates, the statement cautioned against "judging candidates as 'Christian' or 'non-Christian,' 'moral' or 'immoral' on the basis of highly selective, essentially political rankings by the religious right.

The statement cited historic Baptist commitment to the constitutional provisions for church-state separation and no religious test for public office, and called on voters to "examine candidates both on the basis of their personal character and on the basis of their public positions."

"A careful look at the so-called new right reveals that the persons and ideas bearing that label are really the old extremists, both religious and political," said James M. Dunn, elected at the meeting to become executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee.

Dunn, who has been director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission since 1968, said, "There's a particular danger in this linkage because it lends a thin veneer of virtue to the rigid and outworn economic and political theories of the past."

The Texas ethicist said religious liberty is always threatened "when religion is made the handmaiden of a particular ideology."

"God is minimized in any marriage of religion and politics," said Dunn, who will assume his new duties Jan. 1, 1981. "We wind up making God the national mascot and that's civil religion at its worst."

An additional warning on the impact of the merger between the religious right and right-wing politics was sounded by Alabama Congressman John Buchanan, a Southern Baptist minister. The 16-year House veteran says he was defeated in the September Republican primary largely because of efforts by Moral Majority, a conservative political organization headed by Lynchburg, Va., electronic preacher Jerry Falwell.

"I was the first real victim of a movement that is very much alive in the United States and that is looking for many other victims," Buchanan said.

The religious right, Buchanan said, is "greatly encouraged" by his defeat but added "their main target is President Jimmy Carter."

During the meeting, Elizabeth J. Miller, general secretary for issue development in national ministries, American Baptist Churches, U.S.A., was elected chairman of the Baptist Joint Committee. She is the first woman to be selected for that post.

Others elected included C.J. Mallory Jr., general secretary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention as first vice chairman; John Binder, executive secretary of the North American Baptist Conference as second vice chairman; and R.G. Puckett, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State as recording secretary.

In addition to adopting a record budget of \$353,995 for 1980-81, the Baptist Joint Committee passed a resolution commending Porter Routh for his term of service as interim director of the Washington-based agency. The former executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee will conclude his service Oct. 31. Between that date and Dunn's arrival in January, John W. Baker, the agency's general counsel and research director, will be in charge of day-to-day operations.

The committee also agreed to postpone indefinitely its religious liberty conference scheduled for October 1981, because of similarity of its theme and a conference on governmental intervention in religious affairs planned in February by several religious groups including the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Baptist Joint Committee represents nine Baptist denominations including the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., the Baptist Federation of Canada, the Baptist General Conference, the National Baptist Convention of America, the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A. Inc., the North American Baptist Conference, the Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc., the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference and the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Success Formula No Secret
On Uruguay's Juan 3:16 Ranch

By Wally Poor

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SALTO, Uruguay (BP)—Juan Trindade was on top of the world. For the third consecutive year one of his Merilin sheep had walked off with top honors at the national livestock show in Montevideo.

On the way home Trindade exulted to his wife, Martha, over winning the coveted prize. Martha, though not a religious woman, muttered, "Gracias a Dios" (Thank God).

"God had nothing to do with it," snapped Trindade, thinking of the long hours he and his gauchos had spent to prepare the livestock for exhibition.

"From that moment everything went downhill," recalls Trindade, now the lay pastor of 11 churches scattered throughout northwest Uruguay.

High living plus declining beef and wool prices brought Trindade to the brink of financial ruin. He sold 2,470 acres of his 4,384 acre ranch to pay some of his debts and even that was just a stopgap measure. He was at the end of his rope financially, and things were not going well between him and his wife.

The night before the surveyor came to measure off the land to be sold, Trindade walked from the ranch house to the family cemetery. As he stood staring into the night, he was overwhelmed by the hopelessness of his situation. The man who had boasted, "God had nothing to do with it," when he was on top was now ready to turn to a higher being.

"I didn't know how to pray," recounts Trindade. "But I looked up and said, 'Oh, God, if you exist, show yourself to me in some way.'"

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The surveyor, who knew the rancher's circumstances, spoke to Trindade the next day as they worked and said, "All is not lost because Jesus Christ lives."

Trindade says that simple affirmation went straight to his heart. "Suddenly I knew not only that God exists, but that my prayer had been answered."

Trindade still had to sell half his ranch, but he began to feel God was helping him to work out his tangled financial affairs. At a time when livestock sales were very slow, a rancher from a neighboring department came three times to buy stock from Trindade's ranch. The man let an astonished Trindade set his own price in the three purchases, which totaled \$50,000.

No one had talked to him about tithing, but Trindade had read about it in the Bible and he immediately tithed \$5,000. His mother, who accepted Christ later, objected and reminded him that the money he had tithed was enough for him to live on for an entire year.

Trindade renamed his ranch the Juan 3:16 Ranch. But not everyone understood that, either. One acquaintance said he thought the name meant Trindade had three sons named Juan and he hoped to have 16 grandchildren.

Trindade began starting "home churches" which he visited circuit-rider style. As the number of congregations grew to 11, he found a willing helper in his work: his wife accepted Christ.

To help in her husband's services, she learned to play the accordion from the wife of Baptist pastor Carlos Tschanz. As Mrs. Trindade began getting to know Tschanz and his wife, Trindade began examining Baptist doctrine and comparing it to what he had come to believe through his Bible study.

"I knew I had finally found a group that believed the way I did," says Trindade. After Tschanz baptized him, Trindade rode out to the "house churches" announcing to each congregation, "From now on, we're Baptists." No one, he adds, objected.

Trindade invited Southern Baptist missionaries Kenneth Evenson and Jimmie Spann to accompany him on a visit to some of his house churches. In five days, each man preached 28 times.

Because each congregation meets weekly and Trindade is the only pastor, each house church has its own person in charge. One, Olimar Lucas, Trindade met at a stock sale. After greeting his old friend, Trindade asked, "Come andras de creencias?" (How are you fixed for beliefs?).

"Well," replied Lucas, "I used to believe in Chico Taso (a noted politician some years back) but he died on me, and now I don't believe in anything." When Trindade finished talking, Lucas believed in Christ.

Marveling at the sprouting of totally indigenous churches throughout the interior of Salto, Evenson and Spann asked Trindade the secret of his successful work.

"The secret," says the rancher-pastor, "is persistence. Preach the gospel; preach it again; preach it again."

On the broad plains surrounding the Juan 3:16 Ranch in Salto, Uruguay, there's no doubt the formula is working.

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Wally Poor is a Southern Baptist missionary to Uruguay.

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