



BAPTIST PRESS

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Hunger Groups Explore
Common Concerns in Forum

By Mary Jane Welch

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Concerns about lifestyle changes and the need for more planning, educational material and successful models surfaced in a forum of Southern Baptist groups dealing with the world hunger problem.

Representatives from Southern Baptist agencies charged with coping with hunger and from groups which sprang from a grassroots concern about world hunger shared what their groups are doing during the forum sponsored by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

The intense interest of Americans, and particularly Southern Baptists, in hunger issues, made Foreign Mission Board administrators feel such a forum would be timely, said William R. O'Brien, board executive vice president.

The board called the forum, realizing the issue was too big to be the exclusive property of any one group, he said. "We met to sensitize each other as to how the issue is spoken to by various groups, to uncover duplication of efforts, to explore how different approaches complement each other."

The groups' activities in the hunger arena varied from education to creating models to taking action. But all expressed a common concern in hunger relief efforts closely tied to a Christian message and voiced the feeling that Southern Baptists must be led to consider changing their lifestyles if they are going to deal adequately with the hunger issue.

Cecil A. Ray, executive director of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and an author noted for writing on Christian lifestyle, echoed earlier words of board president R. Keith Parks when he said the gospel and a cup of cold water must go together. "As I look at world hunger, it is always with the flaming gospel in our hearts," said Ray.

"The Southern Baptist Convention hasn't accepted the idea that hunger is wrong," said Sammy Simpson, former missionary and now executive director of Agricultural Mission Foundation.

While some asked for educational materials which would enable individuals to respond better to world hunger needs, the group also called for successful project models and more planning to enable Southern Baptists to make more appropriate and adequate responses to the problem.

John R. Cheyne, the Foreign Mission Board's consultant for relief ministries, reviewed a position paper on relief ministries he prepared recently to aid the board in planning, but acknowledged that the Foreign Mission Board's planning is limited because the amount of hunger funds cannot be anticipated from year to year.

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John E. Mills, the board's director for West Africa, presented plans for a community development and evangelism project which is to be implemented soon in the Sandwabo area of Upper Volta after more than three years of planning.

Other forum participants were Paul R. Adkins of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, which along with the Foreign Mission Board is charged with distributing Southern Baptist hunger funds; Tom Cairns of Seminarians United against Hunger; Owen Cooper, of Agriculture Mission Foundation; Norman Godfrey of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission and Gary Gunderson of Seeds, a ministry group sponsored by Oakhurst Baptist Church of Decatur, Ga.

Also included were David Gunn of SHARE; Elmin Howell of Los Hermanos de la Frontera; Bob Salley of World Hunger, Inc.; W. David Sapp of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and Phil Strickland of the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

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Personnel Needs Urgent
Since Zimbabwe Ceasefire

By Irma Duke

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SALISBURY, Zimbabwe (BP)--With the war over, Southern Baptist missionaries are on the offensive again in Zimbabwe.

But they need reinforcements, some by the first of the year, if they are to move ahead with their mission program.

Six MKs (missionary children) will be living in a hostel in Gwelo, Zimbabwe, in January but no dorm parents are in sight. The current ones are going on furlough and there aren't any missionaries to replace them.

Sanyati Baptist Hospital, symbol of Baptist work in Zimbabwe, desperately needs a hospital administrator to work alongside Maurice Randall when he resumes full-time medical practice there.

Salisbury, the country's capital, has only one church development consultant serving 1.5 million people—John Faulkner.

These are priority needs in Zimbabwe. They are among the 21 personnel requests coordinator Linda Coleman submitted recently in the first personnel requests the mission has made in two years because of the war there.

"If we don't get the help, we're going to have to cut back," she said. "I don't know how, but there is no way the present missionary staff can continue."

Four years ago, 75 missionaries were assigned to Zimbabwe, then Rhodesia, but now there are only 41, including two volunteers. None of the work has actually closed except at Sessami, where 11 of the 13 buildings were demolished.

"The population is growing so fast, especially in urban areas, we can't keep up," Mrs. Coleman added. She said they have just been holding on, doing what had to be done during the war while they have been so short staffed. Now, the war is over, and she feels they have to get hold of the situation.

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Two of the urgent positions, the dorm parents and the hospital administrator, can be filled by volunteers. The dorm parents would be responsible for the six MKs who attend the International School in Gwelo. In the areas where the MKs' parents are living, there are no schools they can attend.

Currently, Ray Justice, a volunteer from Portland, Ore., is handling hospital administration and also covering the bookstore in Gwelo but the mission hopes to divide the job. The new hospital administrator will also be responsible for training a national for the position.

During the latter years of the war, Randall flew back to Sanyati Hospital to care for the critically ill patients there. From the time missionary Archie Dunaway was killed on the Sanyati compound in June 1978 until now, no Southern Baptist missionaries have lived on the compound. When the surgeon moves back, he will be the only doctor there. He will have to devote full time to medicine.

Of the 19 other requests submitted, seven are for church development consultants like Faulkner. These are evangelists who work directly with people in the churches. In the war years, Mrs. Coleman said, evangelistic work was limited because it took back seat to things that "had to be covered." Five men on the field are working with churches full time among the country's seven million population and the rest are working with institutions.

"If we are serious about moving ahead with our mission program we must leave behind our 'war mentality' of 'covering' and 'hanging on' and try to secure personnel who can give adequate time to mission-established needs," wrote Mrs. Coleman in a recent personnel report.

The city of Salisbury is expected to grow to six million people by the turn of the century, according to Faulkner. It tripled its size during the war years.

One of the tremendous opportunities in Salisbury is among the refugees who moved from rural areas to the cities during the war. Many of them will not be going back to the bush, and because they have had to give up material possessions and face many uncertainties, they are open to the gospel. Faulkner would like to start a system of house churches among them but one man, even with the help of a few local pastors, cannot adequately minister to 1.5 million people.

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Mrs. Duke, information coordinator at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, just returned from a visit to Zimbabwe.

Former Arkansas Exec
Dies in Little Rock

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LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--S.A. (Jack) Whitlow, retired executive secretary of the Arkansas State Baptist Convention, died Nov. 4 in Little Rock, six days after suffering a stroke. He was 74.

Whitlow headed the convention from 1958 until 1963 when he took early retirement in order to return to the pastorate. He entered the ministry at age 27, after resigning from a bank position.

He was pastor of First Baptist Church of Hope, Ark., as well as churches in Washington, Tupelo, Arkadelphia and Fort Royal, and in Morganfield, Ky.

He was a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and was a graduate of Southern Seminary.

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Seminary Faculty Reaffirms
'Love, Support for Jews'

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--The faculty of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary has unanimously adopted a statement of "reaffirmation of our love and support for the Jews."

Although the statement does not mention the current controversy over remarks made by the president of the 13.4 million-member Southern Baptist Convention, Bailey Smith, it does express concern for the current "manifestations of anti-Semitism" and "deplores its resurgence in our time."

Smith, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., told a national religious-political gathering in Dallas in August that "God does not hear the prayers of a Jew."

The remark, made as an aside during a sermon on the distinctiveness of Jesus Christ, set off a storm of protest and criticism, both from within and without the denomination. It even was mentioned during the recently concluded presidential election campaign.

The resolution does not mention Smith, nor the remark. It does, however, claim that "the God of the Judaeo-Christian faith hears the prayers of all persons who call on him," and says "bigotry and narrow religious dogmatism spawn anti-Semitism..."

Smith, in previous responses to the criticism, has maintained he is not anti-Semitic, but "loves the Jews." He has steadfastly maintained, however, that "Jesus Christ is the sole mediator between man and God."

Southeastern's resolution, adopted during a called meeting of the faculty, notes it also is a reaffirmation of "the historic statement adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in session in Philadelphia in 1972, in which Baptists are enjoined to follow the Christian attitude and practice of love for Jews, who with all other people 'are equally beloved of God.'"

The resolution was initiated by Thomas A. Bland, professor of Christian ethics and sociology. It was presented by a four-person committee of representatives from the biblical, historical, theological and ministry areas of the faculty.

"There was some mention of Bailey Smith's name during discussion, but the group felt they wanted a broader statement. They did not think it served anyone well to enter into a confrontation with the SBC president," said a seminary spokesman.

"What we were interested in was to express a pro-Jewish sentiment," he added.

The statement acknowledges "our common humanity with the Jews through the creative work of God," as well as a common religious tradition.

It adds: "We repudiate and reject all manifestations of anti-Semitism and deplore its resurgence in our time. We believe that the God of the Judaeo-Christian faith hears the prayers of all persons who call on him. Bigotry and narrow religious dogmatism spawn anti-Semitism which is a subtle and pernicious expression of injustice which impedes interfaith dialogue and undermines interreligious communication and witness. Such dialogue, communication and witness are precious to us and to the Jews."

Former Investigator Helps Pinpoint Church Prospects

HENDERSONVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—A study in concentration, the expert investigator grips his desk, pouring over a strategic map of Hendersonville.

He divides the small middle Tennessee city into eight sections, pinpointing specific areas for intense concentration.

To one side of the map lies a long list of names. Suspects? No. Prospects. The investigator is Robert DePriest, minister of outreach for Bluegrass Baptist Church in Hendersonville.

DePriest, 54, joined the staff at Bluegrass in June, a year after retiring as southeastern regional chief of investigations for the United States Office of Personnel Management in Atlanta.

DePriest and his wife Mary, both natives of the Nashville area, fulfilled a mutual dream by becoming Southern Baptist mission volunteers last year after he took medical retirement following a near fatal heart attack.

"After Robert's heart attack, we realized the precious value of life," recalls Mrs. DePriest. "We rededicated our lives to Christ and began searching for ways to serve Him."

That search led the DePriests to a year of mission service in Hawaii as participants in Mission Service Corps, the Southern Baptist plan to place 5,000 volunteers beside career missionaries around the world by 1982.

After returning to the Nashville area to be near family and friends, the revitalized couple decided to continue their Mission Service Corps stint at Bluegrass Baptist Church.

As minister of outreach, DePriest offers Bluegrass as a church home to residents and newcomers to Hendersonville, a suburban community that city planners estimate will double to over 50,000 within the decade. His ultimate goal is to greet new residents with a witness and invitation to church "before they finish unpacking."

As Mission Service Corps volunteers, the DePriests pay their own living expenses as they minister.

"Here we are in our fifties, and we're just now really committing our lives to Christ," reflected Mrs. DePriest. "We're so excited about it, and we want to help other Christians commit themselves before half of their lives are gone too."