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Evangelization of Cities Requires Vision, Customizing

ATLANTA (BP)--Evangelization of today's cities requires "global vision" and "custom-built churches," participants at the 1981 spring forum on urban evangelism were told.

Raymond Bakke, formerly pastor of Swedish Baptist Church in Chicago, said the world's annual urban growth rate is 7.2 percent, and the number of people living in cities will double in the next decade.

"There is no place to hide from urban reality," said Bakke, associate professor of ministry at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. "The suburbs are not an escape from the city, merely extensions of it. And people running away from Chicago are running into people running away from Los Angeles."

Such growth and change has not only shifted people from city to city; it has moved them from country to country, he added, noting the emergence of at least 175 "world-class cities" which have populations of more than one million and are of international significance.

As examples, he reported Los Angeles is 74 percent non-white, and "the best place to evangelize Arabs and Jews is London," he said, citing the large numbers of those groups there.

"For 2,000 years we have had the commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all these peoples and nations," he said. "And just now, we're finding where they are--in our world-class cities, next door."

"If we're going to survive in these cities, we've got to have a global vision. World-class cities are hooked up to the globe," he added.

Because of the opportunity for reaching wide varieties of language and culture groups, the networks of cities have become extremely significant in world evangelism, Bakke said, classifying the potential for reaching people for Christ as unparalleled in history.

"Yet we are going to miss this if we continue to see home missions as here and foreign missions as there," he insisted.

"I sense a kind of enclaving, a fear in the country where white folks are experiencing minority-ness, a global reality," he said. "One of the reasons white churches are growing fast is that there is a psychological need for white folks to feel big right now."

Bakke charged that white church growth is not enough in light of the increasing divergency of the world's cities.

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"We're going to have to custom build our churches to reach the cities," he said, pointing to the plurality of languages and cultures that exist within the reach of established churches.

Building such congregations requires "pastoral choreography" to blend multiple strategies and resources from a "rich theological arsenal," he said.

But doing that job means getting back to the basics. "We don't need new, avant-garde, untested strategies," he said. "We need to get back to scripture and understand we've got a gold mine there for urban ministry."

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House Panel Urged to Spurn
Alcohol Program Cutbacks

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WASHINGTON (BP)--A Southern Baptist ethical and moral concerns specialist urged a House budget panel to reject President Reagan's proposal to slash funding for a federal program which aids victims of alcohol abuse and alcoholism.

Foy Valentine, executive director of the SBC Christian Life Commission, told the House Budget Committee's Task Force on Human Resources that the proposal would result in the "dismantling" of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

"You have a mandate to do something, if you can, about inflation," Valentine said. "But you also have a mandate to help the poor and the needy, including the millions affected adversely by alcohol abuse."

Under the president's proposal, 76.5 percent of the alcohol agency's \$161 million would be cut by one-fourth and consolidated with approximately 40 other health services. It would then be passed on to states as block grants, leaving just \$37.9 million in 1982 for the federal alcohol program.

Though states would have the option under the Reagan proposal to spend block grant funds for state alcohol programs, Valentine warned that several of the national alcohol agency's programs could not be duplicated at the state level and urged the panel not to "abandon the federal system."

"Let's not turn it back to the liquor lobbies, which are by far more influential in state legislatures than they are in the national Congress," said Valentine, who was introduced by John Buchanan, a Southern Baptist minister and former congressman from Alabama.

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Southeastern Sets Budget,
Ratifies Election of Dean

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3/16/81

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Trustees of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary adopted a record budget for the 1981-82 year and ratified their earlier mail-ballot election of a new dean and a professor of evangelism.

The new budget of \$4,029,234 is an increase of 8.8 percent over the previous year.

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The Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention continues to be the dominant source of income for the seminary, providing 68.6 percent of the budget. Other sources are: student fees, 12.8 percent; endowment and investments, 5.2 percent; auxiliary enterprises, 10.8 percent; and miscellaneous, 2.6 percent.

Because of the support from the Cooperative Program, no tuition is charged and the matriculation fees are \$200 per semester. Non-Southern Baptist students pay an additional \$200 surcharge.

In ratifying their previous action, the trustees elected Morris Ashcraft as dean of the faculty and Delos Miles as associate professor of evangelism. Both are now on the faculty of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo., and will begin their work at Southeastern Aug. 1.

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Blind Nashville Radio Man
Brings Hundreds Together

By Norman Jameson

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—After a preaching trip to South America, Donelson, Tenn., pastor Ralph Harris told his ham radio operator friend Ralph Grubbs he was amazed.

"Everywhere I go in the United States and mention Nashville," said Harris, pastor of First Baptist Church, Donelson, "people think of the Grand Ole Opry. But everywhere I went in South America, when I mentioned Nashville, they asked me if I knew Ralph Grubbs!"

Sitting from sunrise to sunset beneath his 60-foot tower, Grubbs, who is occupationally and legally blind, daily cuts the miles that separate Americans overseas from their family and friends. He makes contact with a ham overseas and then patches that radio contact through the telephone in the U.S.

Grubbs has been a ham for 20 years but didn't become a main cord in the "halo net" until eye problems six years ago forced him out of accounting and into retirement on a VA pension and Social Security. Though he cannot drive and seldom leaves his radio for anything but church and his son Eddie's ballgames, Grubbs says, "I feel like what I'm doing right now is more worthwhile than anything I've done before in my whole life."

"The greatest sacrifice in missions service is leaving family and friends. I shorten the miles between them."

As message carrier between continents, Grubbs has the joy of announcing babies, engagements, graduations, home purchases, successful operations and major life events of all kinds. While monitoring the radio, he learned of events like the Argentine man who became the first person baptized in the baptistry he built. His 12-year-old son was second.

And over the 15-meter band he learned of a girl in Chile who accepted Christ as Savior and left immediately for a 14-hour bus ride to tell her sick sister how to become a Christian. Her sister accepted Christ and the next day she died.

"That was 14 hours well spent," Grubbs said. "When you sit back there all day and listen to things like that, you can't help but be excited."

He has also had to be the bearer of tragic news. The worst, he says without a moment's hesitation, was having to tell a mother in the northwest that her daughter had died of a drug overdose in Bolivia. The mother did not even know her daughter was in Bolivia.

Grubbs called her back an hour later to tell her the girl had already been buried by Bolivian officials—in a gunny sack in a quickly dug hole.

Machine guns rattled in the background as missionary Ted Cromer told Grubbs of the coup taking place that moment in Liberia. Later, when Victoria Tolbert, wife of slain Liberian president William Tolbert, was released from house arrest, Grubbs informed Baptist Press, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention, several days before it was verified and printed by secular media.

Such immediacy of message is important when distances and uncertain delivery systems hamper important news from home. Grubbs told a missionary in Ghana that his father was ill in the States. The man left for home immediately, arriving just 20 minutes before his father died. When missionary Jane Park's mother died, she learned of it by radio the next day. The cable from the Foreign Mission Board telling her of her death arrived two weeks later.

After six years Grubbs feels an obligation to be at his radio, "I've told them I'm going to be there." His radio reception is superior, so he is utilized constantly.

"Any person's greatest exhibit of faith is service," he says, "and the radio gives me a chance to do something. Faith without works is dead."

Grubbs' one frustration since he has gained such personal contact with hundreds of missionaries is what he sees as lack of support by Southern Baptists for their people on the field. "It's thoroughly disgusting what we do in that Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions," he says. "13.6 million people giving less than a dime a week to support missions is disgusting."

Occasionally the message is humorous. When one mother in the states told her missionary daughter she was coming for a visit and asked if she needed any bras, the daughter "must have turned purple," Grubbs says. She told her mother not to talk about such things, "with the whole world listening."

Some things people don't mind the whole world hearing, like this message from Ralph Davis in Ghana: "Tell Nan's mommy and daddy that the baby slept all night for the first time."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers.
