



**-- FEATURES**  
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Letters, Goals, Faith  
Spark Church Growth

**LAGUNA HILLS, Calif. (BP)**—Fifteen years ago, Laguna Hills, a "planned community" nestled in the Saddleback Mountains, existed only on paper.

Now, as bulldozers level hills to make room for expansion, Laguna Hills claims 50,000 residents, with one million people expected to live within a 20-mile radius by A.D. 2000.

Likewise, when Rick Warren arrived, there was no Saddleback Valley Community Church; today it boasts 120 members with more than 200 at Sunday services held in a rented high school auditorium. In its 17-month history, the church has had 122 persons profess faith in Jesus Christ and 82 baptized.

One of the nation's fastest growing, most affluent areas, Laguna Hills for years proved a difficult location for Southern Baptist church starting. Then Warren, a young seminary graduate, began to apply public relations techniques, including direct mail campaigns, to attract visitors.

While a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Warren felt a strong pull toward west coast ministry. Through demographic studies, he learned that the Saddleback Valley, south of Los Angeles, had little religious activity to offer its people. He also read numerous books on the subject of church growth; wrote the 100 largest churches in the nation, requesting information and suggestions.

He concluded church growth is dependent on knowing the community, finding a need and filling it.

In his first month in Laguna Hills, Warren informally surveyed the community. From answers, he summarized four basic complaints: sermons boring and not relating to daily living; emphasis on money, not people; church members unfriendly to visitors; quality of nursery care unsatisfactory.

He added to this his own observations of the community. Recreation seemed to be god: Everything was available—tennis, boating (on man-made lakes), basketball, golf, fishing; family life was frazzled in the "fun for everyone" atmosphere.

Warren also knew, from early experience in the community, that "cold turkey" visiting was almost impossible. Most people didn't welcome strangers into their homes. Some sections were even walled; entrance was prohibited without invitation.

He decided a direct-mail campaign might prove the most successful approach. With the help of a commercial artist friend who designed his letter, and volunteer labor from sponsoring Baptist churches, First of Norwalk and Crescent of Anaheim, Warren prepared his mailout—15,000 letters detailing ways the church met the needs he had discovered. Two hundred and five people came to the first service, Easter 1980.

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"Anyone can be won to Christ if you find the key to his heart," insists Warren. "But to do that you must consider the community in developing a church strategy. You can't reach people who never hear your message."

Though Warren plans another mass mailing—perhaps as many as 30,000 letters—he does not rely solely on that approach. The church advertises via radio, television and newspaper. Flyers, introducing people to the church and its ministry, are distributed. Warren and associate pastor Steve Williams follow up each prospect, either from cards filled out during worship services or from referrals.

"In a community like this, there is no excuse not to grow," says Williams. "A church that is not growing means one thing: it is not meeting needs."

Warren credits the rapid growth of Saddleback church to faith. Still, he isn't satisfied: His goal is to have 20,000 members in 40 years. And he expects to get them by meeting the needs of the upper middle-class people who reside in Laguna Hills.

Also projected are new facilities. Because the seven lots designated as church sites in the planned community already have been sold, Warren hopes to find a lot on which to construct three multipurpose buildings. These will meet not only spiritual needs, but also educational, social and physical ones, he explains. He envisions a Christian school for grades kindergarten through 12, a recreation center and a civic auditorium. The buildings will serve church functions on Sundays, community functions on weekdays.

He thinks setting such goals are "statements of faith" and help growth. "In challenging people to reach a certain goal, you ask them for a big response," he explains. "Failure is when we don't set goals, not when we don't reach the goals we set."

So far, Warren's goals and achievements have kept pace. Saddleback church member Melba Bayless says, "We go where the spirit leads us."

On that journey, Rick Warren seems to know the way.

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Adapted from MissionsUSA magazine. (BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

Missionaries, Europe Baptists  
Discuss Concerns, Future Plans

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RUSCHLIKON, Switzerland (BP)--In an unprecedented joint strategy session, Southern Baptist missionaries and Baptist representatives from 20 countries met to share concerns and make plans for continued cooperation in European Baptist work.

Thirty-five persons participating in the July 6-11 consultation for planning unanimously adopted a statement of 10 "mutual concerns," including desires that the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board continue assistance in church construction, literature production, church growth and mass media training.

They expressed the need for continued Southern Baptist missionary presence in Europe and for the theological training offered by the Baptist Theological Seminary of Ruschlikon, urging

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an increased emphasis upon practical theology and evangelism. The participants also expressed hope for an improved understanding of Muslims in Europe and a more effective ministry to them.

Resolutions adopted at the Foreign Mission Board-sponsored consultation included one encouraging goal-oriented planning within Baptist unions and another projecting a "Muslim awareness conference" in 1982.

J.D. Hughey, Foreign Mission Board director for Europe and the Middle East, said he believes the consultation was the first of its kind. Representatives from most of the Baptist unions and every group of Southern Baptist missionaries assigned to Europe were present.

National leaders and missionaries from Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Yugoslavia and the United States were at the consultation.

Currently, 149 Southern Baptist missionaries live in 11 European countries, but also work in many other lands.

At the consultation, European Baptist leaders repeatedly reaffirmed their commitment to missions and told about Baptist advance in their countries.

A French pastor, Andre Souchon, told of new congregations among Baptists in France. In addition, several independent churches, already in initial stages of development, have appealed for affiliation with the French Baptist Federation out of concern for their future, he said.

Gilbert H. Ritchie, immediate past president of the Baptist Union of Scotland, reported that the main, and sometimes only, evangelistic thrust in many parts of Scotland today comes from Baptists, "who have an opportunity such as never before" in their 200-year history.

Scottish Baptists, who count 160 churches compared to 148 five years ago, are experiencing "planned growth" of new congregations and are active in evangelism, Christian education, leadership training and center ministries.

Maximo Garcia, missions promoter for the Spanish Baptist Union, told of the relative instability of 100 years of Baptist work in his country but assured participants that Baptists in Spain "have hope now for the future and for the present."

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Chaplaincy Leader  
Cummins Succumbs

Baptist Press  
7/15/81

ATLANTA (BP)--George W. Cummins, 74, former director of chaplaincy for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, died July 12 of natural causes.

At the time of his death, Cummins was interim pastor of First Baptist Church of Powder Springs, Ga. Church members found his body in a nearby motel room when he failed to attend Sunday morning worship services.

Cummins joined the staff of the board in 1955, when he was named associate director of the HMB Chaplains Commission. He was elected director of the division of chaplaincy in 1961 and served there until his retirement in 1971.

Previously, he was pastor of churches in Kentucky, chaplain in the U.S. Navy, associational missionary in California and superintendent of Western Missions for the board.

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## Conferees To Decide Fate Of Nonprofit Postal Hike

WASHINGTON (BP)--The extent of postage hikes facing nonprofit mailers such as Baptist state newspapers and denominational publications this October will be settled when conferees meet to resolve differences between the House and Senate versions of the 1981 Budget Reconciliation Act.

Under the Reagan administration budget proposal approved by the Senate, a phasing subsidy for such nonprofit mailers would be eliminated, a move most Baptist editors say would double their postage bills.

The House-passed version of the budget bill would retain the subsidy but would reduce it 10 percent in both fiscal 1982 and 1983, and 20 percent in 1984.

The 16-year phasing subsidy was established by Congress to allow nonprofit mailers gradually to assume full costs of their mailings instead of forcing them suddenly to absorb such costs. The phasing period, scheduled to end in 1987, reached step 10 this June.

House and Senate leaders hoped to get the budget conference underway by the middle of July and conclude action in both houses before the August recess.

Spokesmen for the House Budget Committee and the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee were unable to predict how much of the subsidy is likely to survive the conference.

Don McGregor, current president of the Southern Baptist Press Association and editor of the Mississippi Baptist Record, urged Baptist support for the House version of the postal budget which retains 90 percent of the subsidy for nonprofit mailers.

"If the subsidy is lost immediately, there will be many such publications that will go out of business or greatly restrict their mailing schedules," McGregor warned.

Senators appointed to the conference committee who will be working on postal service budget matters include William V. Roth, R-Del., Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, Charles McC. Mathias, R-Md., Thomas F. Eagleton, D-Mo., and David H. Pryor, D-Ark.

Their House counterparts include representatives William D. Ford, D-Mich., William L. Clay, D-Mo., Patricia Schroeder, D-Colo., Mickey Leland, D-Texas, Mary Rose Oaker, D-Ohio, Geraldine Farraro, D-N.Y., Edward J. Derwinski, R-Ill., Gene Taylor, R-Mo., Benjamin A. Gilman, R-N.Y., and Tom Corcoran, R-Ill.

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Seminary Student Killed  
In Churchyard Accident

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7/15/81

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Carl C. Williams, a 25-year-old first-year student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, was killed July 12 in an accident in a churchyard near Shepherdsville, Ky.

Williams was electrocuted when an aluminum extension ladder he and three other men were moving fell against a 7,200-volt power line. Kenneth Brown, 46, a member of the church, also was killed, and the other two men were seriously injured.

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The men were painting the steeple of Beech Grove Baptist Church in preparation for a revival. Williams had been pastor of the small, rural congregation about a year and a half.

Williams, who had been married less than a year, was the son of Robert O. Williams, pastor of Louisville's Clifton Baptist Church for 18 years. His uncle, Joe P. Williams, is pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church, also in Louisville.

His death is the third among the seminary community in three months. Another student, Clyde Bond, 23, of Sheridan, Wyo., was electrocuted three months ago when the lawnmower he was riding severed a power line.

A third, Mark Boland of Colorado Springs, Colo., apparently died in his sleep in his seminary dorm room. A coroner's report on the cause of death is pending.

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Grady Nutt To Star  
In Situation Comedy

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--"The Grady Nutt Show"--a 30-minute comedy starring humorist Grady Nutt--is scheduled to be aired Friday evening, July 24, on the NBC television network.

In the show, Nutt portrays the minister of a small church in the Midwest (in real life, he is a Southern Baptist minister). The cast includes Elinor Donahue (Betty from "Father Knows Best") as his wife.

For Nutt, the experience of starring in the show, which was written specifically for him, was one of the highlights of his career.

"It is a positive contribution to the field of entertainment," Nutt said. "It is a good and fun show!"

He added producers "were very much in harmony with my attitudes about the Christian faith, and with my particular touch with humor."

"There was never one second from conception (of the show) to conclusion when I felt that I had to compromise or water down any of the Christian principals that have guided me in my career as a performer," he said.

While "The Grady Nutt Show" is not in NBC's fall lineup of new shows, it is being considered as a replacement series. Public response to the show will be a factor in the network's decision to place the program on its schedule.

Comments about "The Grady Nutt Show" may be directed to:

NBC  
30 Rockefeller Plaza  
New York, NY 10020

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