



-- FEATURES

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Mexican Team Brings Bold Missions To U.S.

CHICAGO, Ill. (BP) — Unaware they are making history in the area of missions, five students are visiting door to door, conducting backyard Bible clubs, Vacation Bible Schools and other summer mission work in Chicago.

Missions is not new to Southern Baptists in Chicago, but the student mission team is making history as the first Baptist group from another country to come to the United States for summer mission work.

The project is a joint effort of the Southern Baptist Sunday School, Home Mission and Foreign Mission Boards, and represents only the second mission venture of the Mexican Baptist Convention, which was established more than 100 years ago.

The team is working in an area of Chicago where there are more than 50,000 Spanish-speaking people. They move from house to house, staying with whoever will open their hearts and homes. Occasionally they have had to sleep on cots in area Baptist churches.

But their spirits have not been dampened, in fact they have been sparked with a new enthusiasm for mission work. "Wonderful things have happened to us, and we are going to teach others what we have learned," explained Elizabeth Molina, from Guadalajara. Upon returning to Mexico, the team hopes to instill enthusiasm for home missions among their people.

Even before the team arrived in the United States they began to see evidence of God's will working in their lives.

Angeles Arrioja gave up her medical studies for the summer to participate. To participate, she had to get permission from her father, who only has been a Christian for a year. "I thank the Lord for helping my father understand the importance of the work I am doing this summer. I believe this is helping my father give me over to God, because I belong to God," she said.

Elisa Ramirez's mother did not want Elise to come and give up her church responsibilities for the summer. "But I told her if God is calling me to go there, there is a purpose in this work and who am I to say no to God," she said.

The National Student Circle in Mexico, equivalent to the Baptist Student Union, raised about half the money for the project. The 10 circles have about 100 active members, and they raised more than \$1,000 in seven months. Baptist student groups in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama raised the rest.

Rollin DeLap, the Sunday School Board's student ministries mission consultant, wanted the team to attend student week, Aug. 15-21, at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center in New Mexico where the idea for the project came from last year.

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DeLap prayed for a way for them to attend the student conference. Soon after, Delia Echebarria from the Spanish department of First Baptist Church, Wheeling, Ill., volunteered to drive the students to Glorieta, at her expense. DeLap is planning to pay the team's registration fees from money he earned painting houses this summer.

The Mexican mission team said the events that have occurred this summer have given them a vision and desire for mission work, "much larger and wider than ever before."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press.

North Carolina Court Rules
BSSB Is Religious Institution

Baptist Press
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RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Sunday School Board won a precedent-setting case when the Superior Court of North Carolina ruled the agency indeed operates primarily for religious purposes.

The board filed suit because the Employment Security Commission of North Carolina demanded payment of unemployment compensation taxes on the operation of Baptist Book Stores owned and operated by the board in North Carolina.

A ruling at the end of the two and one-half hour trial declared the Sunday School Board was operated for religious purposes and directed that taxes paid under protest since 1979 be returned to the board.

"The heart of the issue is whether or not the Sunday School Board and the Baptist Book Stores operate primarily for religious purposes," said Grady C. Cothen, board president. "We felt that the constitutional issues involved were of such gravity that this suit may be filed and pursued to a successful conclusion.

"Such arbitrary action by the state represented excessive entanglement with the affairs of religion and thus violated the free exercise clause of the Constitution."

Cothen said the North Carolina statute under which the board filed suit is patterned on a federal law which provides that corporations operating primarily for religious purposes are exempt from paying unemployment compensation taxes.

He said he felt the outcome of the case would be helpful for other Baptist agencies and institutions, several of which are currently engaged in legal disputes with the federal government.

The charges from the state of North Carolina involved Baptist Book Stores in Asheville, Charlotte, Greensboro and Raleigh, plus the Greensboro Mail Order Center and the Raleigh Lifeway Store. The state did not attempt to collect taxes on the Baptist Book Stores at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center or Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, which are operated under the same guidelines and policies.

The trial, Cothen said, "demonstrated that we are a not-for-profit organization operating for religious purposes."

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The conclusions of the court were supported by documents and evidence introduced relating to the operation of the Sunday School Board and the Southern Baptist Convention, including bylaws, annual reports, charters and a history of the 90-year-old agency. Financial, organizational and program relationships also were presented in support of the suit.

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Divorce Rate Up Faster
Among Ministers Than Others

Baptist Press
8/12/81

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (BP)--"If you're not interested in family and marriage counseling, you'd better be," Bill Little told 50 Illinois Baptist pastors and their wives at a retreat.

Little, pastor of Christ Memorial Baptist Church in St. Louis, said 51 percent of American marriages now end in divorce and that the highest rate of increase is among clergymen.

"Remember, everyone on every level, including the ministers in this room, has some problem with interpersonal relationships in his or her marriage," Little said. He emphasized the necessity of making a commitment to make marriage "work" and encouraged the pastors to let members know they have problems of their own.

"Don't leave the impression that because you're a minister, your marriage is problem-free," he said.

"Getting along means accepting the personality differences of your husband or wife," he explained. "If there are no differences in your marriage, there's no growth, only an echo. Accept the weaknesses and strengths of each other—but don't try to reform the other!"

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Student Takes 18 Days
To Minnesota Missions

Baptist Press
8/12/81

GRAND RAPIDS, Minn. (BP)--Most student summer missionaries board a plane and are at the site of their assignment in a matter of hours.

David Hall, an 18-year-old from Ben Wheeler, Texas, was 18 days enroute—by bicycle.

Hall started the 1,500-mile journey with 100 pounds of gear. But he left his clothes, food, ropes and tools in Oklahoma and dropped his tent and mess kit in Nebraska. He arrived in Grand Rapids, Minn., with "one change of clothes, a first aid kit, and my Bibles."

"If I got in trouble, I didn't have anyone to turn to but the Lord," Hall said. Along the way, he slept on picnic tables, in cars, ditches and during bad weather, in motels.

At one roadside park, he said he "sat up until 3 a.m. witnessing to a wino and his family. I left him a Bible with the plan of salvation in it."

Another time a group of hostile men threatened him, but he says he "kept on using the Bible because I would rather show them for a couple of minutes than talk about it for an hour. I was scared, but after awhile they left."

Once in Minnesota, Hall said the hardest thing was witnessing to those with whom he had no cultural connection. "We've had every kind of response," he said, "but we're planting the seeds."

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Eaves Expresses Optimism
About Southern Baptists

By Linda Lawson

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--When it comes to singing the blues about Southern Baptists, James Eaves is not interested.

Eaves, professor of evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, predicted during the Church Training Leadership Conference in Glorieta that "we are looking at the greatest time of growth in evangelistic and mission work that Southern Baptists have ever known."

Among the reasons for his optimism, Eaves cited increased training and involvement of laypersons in missions and ministry as "one of the most powerful things that has happened in many years."

Eaves was optimistic about the "great moving of God among the youth of the Southern Baptist Convention."

He said the advent in 1967 of the youth musical and student summer missions programs "has changed the tone of youth work and has contributed to the current high seminary enrollments," which is another positive sign.

Fourth, he listed the increasing number of "great evangelistic churches." "A few years ago it was almost unheard of for a church to baptize 600 to 1,000 persons in one year. Now we have several churches doing it," he said.

While Eaves questions whether the goals of Bold Mission Thrust will be accomplished by the year 2000, he is quick to emphasize that "our faith to accept Bold Mission Thrust" is a sign that Baptist priorities are in order.

"We will have to be willing to accept more creative and aggressive methods of evangelism if we accomplish the goals," he said.

Eaves, who teaches a seminary course on using media in evangelism and church growth, believes stepped-up use of electronic media will "accelerate what we can do in Bold Mission Thrust."

"Some people have felt religious broadcasting is a substitute for the local church," Eaves acknowledges. "But if people from churches get out and knock on doors, it cannot hurt for this method of communicating the gospel to be taking place."

On the financial side, Eaves praised the SBC Stewardship Commission's Together We Build program.

"For many years Southern Baptists borrowed money to build buildings until we were paying more in interest than we were contributing to missions," said Eaves. "With Together We Build, people are sacrificing and paying for buildings, releasing a greater amount of God's money for missions."

He credited the Foreign Mission Board for recent action in integrating the World Evangelism Foundation into their mission strategies, "involving us more directly in evangelism on the mission field than ever before."

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Finally, he said in the church training department's "Survival Kits for New Christians," DiscipleLife Celebrations and MasterLife discipleship process, Southern Baptists have "the ability and programs to do the finest work of follow-up with new Christians we've ever done."

"We're in the beginning stages of many wonderful things in the Southern Baptist Convention," he said.

At the same time he noted some problems do exist.

"We are very weak in our knowledge of the Bible and of doctrine," said Eaves, who taught a study on the doctrine of the church at Glorieta.

Improvement in these areas will have to start with preachers, he said. "The preacher is going to have to equip himself to preach and teach the Bible and doctrine."

Also Eaves said, while denominational programs now exist to support every facet of study, growth and discipleship, many leaders are not aware they exist.

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Northern Church Comes South To Help Build in Columbus

COLUMBUS, Miss. (BP) — A New Jersey Baptist church, that received help from First Baptist Church, Columbus, Miss., returned the favor this summer when 27 members traveled 1,000 miles by bus to build an education building in Columbus.

Two years ago, 75 members of First Baptist, Columbus, flew to Matawan, N.J., to help build a church. Churches in strong Southern Baptist areas frequently use mission trips to build churches in areas where there are few Southern Baptist churches.

But it is very unusual for a church from a "pioneer" area of Southern Baptist work to come south for a project because it is assumed southern churches are strong enough to do their own work, or more likely, hire it done.

Members of First Baptist in Columbus, after realizing the spiritual and practical benefits of their trips to help other churches, thought they should have a mission "trip" in their own town, for their church.

They needed a new music-educational building. So the church members and staff planned a stay-at-home trip that centered around building the 9,000-square foot addition to the church. They also operated 41 backyard Bible clubs and surveyed the town in advance of the church's Starlite Crusade.

First Baptist contracted out the work on the superstructure including steel and masonry work. Church volunteers did the electrical, plumbing and finishing work. The church raised over \$275,000 cash to pay for the materials and is going into a new building debt-free—with the help of 27 members of Matawan Baptist Church from New Jersey.

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