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History's Echo Sends
Young Pastor Westward

By Marv Knox

VICTORIA, British Columbia (BP)--Bo Brantley heard the echo of history--"Go west, young man"--when he graduated from seminary back in 1975.

He discarded ease of ministry in the Bible Belt to start a church on Canada's Vancouver Island, several hours by ferry from Seattle.

Brantley's concern for people in regions barely touched by Southern Baptists started years earlier, when he spent summers working with young people in Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala.

"We would spend a full week in mission work each year, helping churches in the Northeast," he explains. "On these trips, I began to learn to overlook cultural differences and see real needs."

Consequently, Brantley was a prime candidate when native Canadians Terry and Norma Wuester moved to Victoria and began looking for a pastor to help them start the city's first Southern Baptist mission.

By September of '75, Brantley and his wife, Karen, were in Victoria.

Beginnings hardly could have been more modest: Only nine members, including four Wuesters and two Brantleys. Financial support was secured from friends and churches in Texas and Alabama.

Today, Victoria Baptist Church draws about 160 persons to Sunday School and 240 to worship services.

Despite the current optimism, the church's climb to its present situation hasn't been an easy one.

Victoria has very little unemployment and is almost exclusively middle-class, Brantley explains. Most folks have the money to spend their weekends pursuing recreation and leisure. This causes many Victoria residents to feel they don't "need" church. "Perhaps only three percent of the population attends church on any given Sunday," he estimates.

"Many people who will attend our church are content to leave their memberships in other churches. They won't commit themselves to the church. The problem is compounded because many churches don't expect such commitment."

And the young congregation had to overcome yet another obstacle--having a "foreign" pastor.

"There's this bold, brash image of the typical tourist," Brantley relates. "He's an American bowling his way over, not caring about people's feelings, not ever listening, thinking that the way they do it 'back home' is always right."

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But Brantley hasn't projected the Yankee stereotype: "No one does not get along with Bo," claims church member Diane Yam. "He knows how to work with people and bring out the best in them. You never feel like he's rushing you, and he's always got the time for people. We really love him."

The feeling is mutual. "A major strength of our church is the quality of the lay people involved," he says. "We're spearheaded by Canadians attracted to Southern Baptists by theology and methodology. They have a vision of reaching Canada for Christ."

Under Brantley's guidance, they have converted the vision to action.

Sunday School teachers are taught to see themselves as shepherds of their classes, keeping in touch with all members and seeking out new prospects. Members participate in Monday night home visitation, regularly leading persons they visit to acceptance of Christ. On Wednesday evenings, people gather in homes across the city for Bible studies and prayer. At 6 a.m. on Thursdays, Brantley's living room fills with men who come to pray and plan for the church's growth.

This kind of commitment, supporting the regular activities of the church, has put the congregation into a position to where it can help Victoria "explode for Christ," Terry Wuester believes.

Six years after "going west," Brantley agrees. "Everybody's got a spiritual need," he says. "Our job is to be prepared, aware and ready to help them when they realize that need."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

CP Meets Operating Budget,
Sights Bold Challenge Goal

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--With one month left in the 1980-81 fiscal year, contributions through the national Cooperative Program have met the year's operating budget and covered one-fourth of the capital needs budget.

August contributions, reflecting calendar vagaries that helped July to a 29 percent increase, were up just 7.69 percent over August 1980, to \$6,845,237.

That increase put undesignated year to date receipts at \$75,108,527, up 14 percent over the same period last year and well past the 1980-81 operating budget of \$74.5 million. The capital needs portion is another \$2.5 million.

Additionally, Southern Baptists in their 1980 annual meeting in St. Louis, voted a \$13 million Bold Mission Thrust challenge goal to put the total budget at \$90 million.

If September contributions hold at the current 14 percent increase, final fiscal month receipts would be approximately \$6.7 million. That would put receipts about \$4.8 million into the challenge goal. Last year, gifts reached just \$762,634 into a \$12 million challenge goal.

"I believe Southern Baptists are responding to Bold Mission Thrust and world mission needs," said Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee. "I'm gratified the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions passed its goal of \$17.25 million."

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"Most significant is that Cooperative Program receipts met the operating budget sooner than any time in the past several years. Also, it appears that this year we will achieve the largest percentage of the Bold Mission Thrust challenge goal in our history."

"These encouraging statistics are from receipts of just 90 percent of our churches," said Bennett. "The Stewardship Commission reports that roughly 10.5 percent of our churches, with total income estimated at \$112 million, gave nothing through the Cooperative Program. Had these churches contributed at the average rate of 8.9 percent their sister churches give, the national Cooperative Program would have received an additional \$3.3 million and we would be well into the missions challenge portion already."

August's designated receipts increased 13 percent over August 1980 to \$1,330,619. Year to date designated receipts are \$70,736,583, up 13.9 percent over 1980.

Total receipts, designated and undesignated, are \$145,845,110, an increase of \$17.9 million or 13.98 percent over the same period last year.

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Runaway, 'Throwaway' Children
Topic of NBC-RTVC Special

Baptist Press
9/2/81

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A television special about runaway and "throwaway" children, a cooperative effort of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission and NBC News, will air on NBC-TV at 5 p.m. (EDT) Sept. 27.

Each year an estimated one million American youth run away from home, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. This does not include thousands who are forced to leave by parents. Many others suffer sexual abuse from family members.

The special gives an overview of the problems, examining causes, what happens to children who run away and what help is being offered both runaways and families.

The program surveys the work of many helping organizations. Counselors, administrators, judges, psychologists and even runaways themselves offer perspectives on the situation.

Baptist leaders interviewed include Gene Bolin, pastor of Metro Chapel in New York City; R.C. Campbell, president of Buckner Baptist Benevolences in Dallas, and Walter Delamarter, executive director of the Florida Baptist Children's Homes in Lakeland, Fla.

"I'm pleased we could feature the caring response of Southern Baptist churches and other ministries to these fragmented lives," said Jimmy R. Allen, RTVC president. "It is heart-warming to examine their daily contribution to the nation's well-being, but I am dismayed that so much remains to be done."

Segments of the show were taped in New York City, California, Texas and Florida. Some material previously taped by the RTVC was used.

"What Shall We Do About the Children" is one of several public affairs presentations the RTVC produces each year in cooperation with NBC. Scheduling of the broadcast may vary among NBC affiliates. Check local listings for exact date and time.

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BSSB, Burnett Suit
Settled For \$60,000

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A four-year lawsuit between the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and former employee Don Burnett ended Sept. 1 when the board paid Burnett \$60,000 in damages.

Both the board and Burnett, 42, a former personnel placement consultant, agreed to a reduction of damages ordered by Circuit Judge Joe C. Loser Jr. after a jury awarded Burnett \$400,000 damages in his \$1.5 million lawsuit.

After a two-week trial, the civil court jury found the board and its president, Grady C. Cothen, had defamed Burnett, now an insurance salesman.

Loser, however, directed verdicts in favor of the board on five other allegations--false arrest and imprisonment, assault and battery, wrongful discharge, gross negligence and outrageous conduct.

Following the jury decision, Loser reduced the original award of \$400,000 to \$60,000, saying in a memorandum to attorneys that the jury's award "exceeded the range of reasonableness."

Cothen told Baptist Press that while he continues to believe the jury verdict was not supported by the evidence, he agreed to the reduced damages to avoid further harm to innocent persons whose names surfaced during the trial, to avoid additional legal costs and to enable board officials to turn their full attention to meeting the needs of Southern Baptist churches.

"For five years, this case has been a tremendous distraction from our major thrust of providing materials and resources to aid churches in reaching people for Christ," Cothen said. "I very much regret that innocent people and totally unrelated incidents were brought into this case."

Burnett, when contacted by Baptist Press after damages were paid, declined to comment.

Initially he indicated he would comment to Baptist Press on the case when the issue was concluded, but said, "I have changed my mind."

Asked if his refusal to respond applies to all media or only to Baptist Press, Burnett said it specifically applies to Baptist Press. "Since this thing has gone on as long as it has and this is the first inquiry I have had from Baptist Press, I will have no comment for Baptist Press," he said.

However, Burnett's attorney, Charles Williams, said it was difficult to accept the judge's reduced damages.

"When you have 12 jurors carefully chosen, with give and take by both attorneys, who found the board sufficiently abusive they awarded \$400,000, needless to say, when you accept \$60,000 that's a difficult decision," Williams said.

"We felt he (Judge Loser) was wrong in reducing it that much, but it was either accept that or a new trial which would have required the expenditure of \$5,000 to \$7,000 just for the record. With other expenses, that's just too much burden for Mr. Burnett. This process has been not only a financial burden but a tremendous emotional burden for the man."

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Williams said his client had been vindicated and could now hold his head up among his Baptist acquaintances. "The jury found that the board acted wrongfully toward him and with malice when they did it," Williams said.

"This suit was not instituted with expectation of massive recovery," he said. "He was humiliated by what occurred."

The suit, filed in the spring of 1977, arose after a series of events in July and August 1976 when Burnett went to Cothen to express his concerns that certain board employees might be involved in massive conspiracies to defraud the board of funds and that some employees might be forcing others to engage in sexual misconduct.

During the trial, Burnett testified he had no concrete facts upon which to base his concerns and that on occasions "my imagination ran away with me." However, names of numerous employees surfaced in connection with rumors reported by Burnett.

After learning Burnett was carrying a gun in his car for protection, Cothen testified that he became concerned about Burnett's mental health and for the safety of board employees and asked Burnett to see a psychiatrist.

After two sessions with Burnett, the psychiatrist said in a deposition read during the trial that he believed Burnett possessed the likelihood of harm to himself or others. He advised Cothen to have the police pick up Burnett and have him committed temporarily for further psychiatric evaluation.

Testimony showed Burnett was picked up by police on a board parking lot Aug. 4 and taken to a hospital. He was then taken by police to his personal physician who released him.

On Aug. 6, 1976, Cothen spoke briefly to employees in chapel about Burnett, without mentioning him by name.

He requested prayer for a fellow employee, "who, in the judgment of competent authority, needed some help. He has not done anything bad. He has not done anything wrong. He is a respected Christian brother who does not deserve our judgment. He does not deserve our censure. He deserves our prayers."

Burnett was terminated Nov. 4, 1976, because he had failed to provide medical evidence requested by Cothen concerning his health.