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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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December 8, 1981

81-187

Evangelism Directors Approve Plan For Nation-Wide Revival

By Patti Stephenson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Plans for a series of simultaneous national revivals in 1986 were approved by state Baptist evangelism leaders during a four-day meeting, shortly after hearing that estimated baptisms for this year are down almost 7 percent.

Directors also honored Home Mission Board evangelism staffer John F. Havlik, and heard calls from Southern Baptist Convention leaders and pastors to "let God's spirit run loose and free" in stirring spiritual awakening in America.

C. B. Hogue, HMB vice president for evangelism, encouraged directors not to waste time "moping in discouragement and discussing unreached goals" in the face of a projected 29,000 decline in SBC baptisms.

"There are still more than 1,000 persons a day being baptized into SBC churches," Hogue stressed. "Let's get on with the task to which God has called us."

Hogue warned the baptism statistics are evidence that "Satan has assaulted the pastor with discouragement, family problems and in-fighting among churches."

State evangelism leaders must move out to help pastors, he concluded, "because our churches will do no more than their pastors lead them to do."

In preparation for a future emphasis of Bold Mission Thrust on the theme "Bold New Frontiers," the directors approved plans for nation-wide simultaneous revivals for spring, 1986. A national steering committee appointed by Hogue will coordinate the effort.

Among those addressing the directors were Harry Piland, director of the Sunday School department of the Sunday School Board, and Jimmy R. Allen, president of the Radio and Television Commission.

Piland, admitting "the Sunday School has been relegated by some to the role of internal church growth," claimed "no organization on the face of the earth has the outreach of a Sunday School class.

In previewing the SBC's new ACTS TV network programming, Allen told directors "It's lamentable that Southern Baptists haven't dealt adequately with this avenue of witness until now." However, he conceded, "we're getting involved at a time when God has made it more affordable" and predicted Southern Baptists will add a "human touch" to Christian programming by linking with local churches.

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In a report from Larry Rose of the Center for Urban Church Studies, directors were challenged to understand the implications of urban trends affecting families and jobs. "We can hide in a corner and say cities are dying," Rose said. "But trends show we're becoming more urban every day. Unless we work in teams, we'll fail."

At a joint banquet for state evangelism and missions directors, HMB Vice President for Missions Gerald Palmer called for a cooperative spirit between missions and evangelism efforts. "We need to see ourselves as one unit working for God's purposes," Palmer declared.

Emmett Johnson, director of evangelism for the American Baptist Churches, urged directors to "do your job as catalysts" in training evangelistic churches. "The potential power for reaching the world lies with Southern Baptists," he said, adding that "until the gospel is more than propositional truth, America will not turn to God."

Two Home Mission Board leaders were honored during the conference. Hogue received a plaque in appreciation for his contribution to the American Festival of Evangelism from Paul Benjamin, the festival's executive coordinator. Havlik, the HMB's director of evangelism education and writing, was also honored prior to his retirement next March. Hogue called Havlik "the finest theologian and writer in the Southern Baptist Convention" and expressed the directors' appreciation of his "consistent commitment to evangelism."

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Bronx Shepherds Cite Need
For Baptist Volunteer Help

By Jim Newton

Baptist Press
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ATLANTA (BP)--The Bronx Shepherds, an interdenominational organization of religious leaders in the Bronx section of New York, have issued a plea for continued Southern Baptist help in rebuilding the burned-out and abandoned apartments in an area that looks like a war zone.

During the past year, five work teams from Southern Baptist churches helped the Shepherds rebuild and refurbish 135 apartments in five buildings in the Bronx. The apartments will eventually be sold to tenants for \$250 each.

Leaders of the Shepherds met with about 25 program leaders of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and SBC Brotherhood Commission to determine whether or not to continue Southern Baptist support of the project.

Although no official actions were taken, there was general consensus to continue SBC involvement in the project, according to Dale Cross, director of metropolitan evangelism for the SBC Home Mission Board, who presided at the meeting.

With cutbacks in federal funds available for housing renovation, it is even more important for religious groups to be involved in such projects, said Bob Davis, a deputy housing commissioner for the City of New York, who attended the meeting.

Davis said his department manages more than 35,000 apartments the city has taken over from owners who would not pay their taxes, and 14,000 of these are now in various stages of ownership assumption by about 25 different community housing and tenant's organizations such as the Shepherds.

The Shepherds is the only church-related group involved in such projects, Davis said. "They represent the wave of the future. They are a rare and unique group of people," he added.

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Davis commended Southern Baptist participation in the Shepherds' project, saying it is the only religious involved in sending work teams to renovate apartments in the city.

Sam Simpson, pastor of the Bronx Baptist Church, and one of the key leaders in the Shepherds, pointed out, "We are not in the housing business--we are in the people business."

Simpson said the work teams are involved in "sweat evangelism," demonstrating their concern for the people and sharing the good news of the gospel while they work alongside Bronx residents. Members of Bronx churches are asked to "tithe" five work days a year to work with team members from Southern Baptist churches.

Harvey Durham, executive director of the Bronx Shepherds Corp., said the combination of work teams and "tithed labor" from Bronx churches enables the Shepherds to renovate an apartment for less than \$12,000, compared to the \$50,000 cost of current market rate, since labor costs comprise about 75 percent of renovation expenses.

In his presentation, Durham requested \$71,000 in financial aid for Southern Baptists, including \$18,000 for a youth development program to teach Bronx youth how to manage and maintain the apartments, \$5,000 for materials to renovate the Shepherds' offices, and \$26,000 in matching funds to enable them to get New York state housing renovation money.

Simpson told the SBC agency staff members the Shepherds need people more than money-- "volunteers who will come to the Bronx and touch people and say, 'I love you.'"

Simpson also cited the need for a work team coordinator who would make sure all building materials are available when work teams from SBC churches arrive, and supervise construction by work teams.

Jack Roach, a certified public accountant from Cleveland, Tenn., and member of two such work teams, told the group, "We went to the Bronx not to reclaim buildings, but to reclaim lives."

Although the teams went with some apprehension and experienced great shock at the physical deterioration of the buildings, there was no fear while they were there, said Roach, a member of Cleveland's Westwood Baptist Church. Highly skilled construction workers were not needed on the teams, "because you can't hurt the buildings," Roach said.

Roach told about witnessing to six different people during his experience in the Bronx, including a black man named Jose who accepted Christ. Roach said Joe told him he'd never heard anyone talk about God like him.

Simpson pointed out response is not as great as they would like, "but this is a lifestyle situation where you cannot count heads," he said. Adding he was thrilled with Southern Baptist participation so far, Simpson explained Southern Baptists have not had the best record in this type of ministry in the past, and many people in the Bronx are skeptical and suspicious.

In the Bronx project, however, Southern Baptists have made a "monumental step" no other denomination has taken, added Simpson, current president of the New York City Council of Churches. "Not many white groups are anxious to see our cities saved."

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-- FEATURES

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**Guyana's Christian Gets
Pacemaker and Testimony**

HOUSTON (BP)--A young Guyanese Baptist woman, who just three weeks before had been near death, flew home to Guyana Dec. 6 with a new pacemaker and a testimony she prays will help win her Hindu parents to Christ.

A hastily arranged trip to the United States was climaxed Nov. 19 when a team of surgeons at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital in Houston implanted the life-saving device in the chest of Rukhmin "Juliet" Ram.

Troubled with a heart that beat only half the normal rate for the past eight years, Ram had become seriously ill a week earlier. When her rate slowed to 20 beats per minute, a cardiologist said her only hope was to have a pacemaker implanted, surgery unavailable in Guyana.

Ram's close friends, Southern Baptist missionaries Charles and Mary Love, and other Baptists helped pave the way for the life-sustaining surgery, which was provided free for Ram, daughter of cane field workers.

To Mary Love, who traveled with her failing Christian co-worker, the frantic mission of mercy was a miracle-laced trip.

When their first attempts to phone friends in Miami were unsuccessful, the Loves got in touch with Ken Binks, a Texas acquaintance who had been to Guyana to help with evangelistic training. Binks, a layman at Alta Vista Baptist Church, Pasadena, Texas, returned their call with the news that the surgery could be done at no charge at St. Luke's.

As they prepared to leave Guyana, Mrs. Love said God opened doors which do not easily open--an emergency medical visa, emergency tax clearance for both women, airline tickets confirmed at the last minute and Ram's positive response to drugs that quickened her heartbeat and sent oxygen to her brain.

After Ram's discharge from St. Luke's, the Binkses cared for her until doctors cleared her to return home to the east coast area of Guyana.

"It is all because of the Lord," Ram said of the trip and surgery that saved her life. "Because of this, I believe my family, my mom and dad--will become Christians."

Mrs. Love thought back a few days: "The father, a Hindu, had taken my hand before we left and said, 'Now I place her in your hands.' I said, knowing full well the seriousness of Juliet's case, 'I'm glad she is not in my hands alone, but in God's.'"

Despite her health problems, Juliet Ram had been Sunday School superintendent for her church, a student at the Baptist Lay Leadership Institute and a children's Sunday School workshop leader.

Court Strikes Down Policy
Banning Worship on Campus

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--Students at state universities and colleges have a constitutional right based on freedom of speech and association to worship on campus, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled.

The court, 8-1, struck down a policy at the University of Missouri-Kansas City banning student worship and religious teaching in campus buildings or on campus property.

The policy, adopted by university trustees in 1972 and implemented in 1977, was challenged in federal court by Cornerstone, a non-denominational group of evangelical Christian students. Cornerstone members claimed the policy violated their rights of free exercise of religion and free speech.

Although a federal district court upheld the university, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the lower panel, setting the stage for university officials to ask the nation's high court to decide the issue.

Speaking for the eight-member majority, Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr. declared that the ban violated the students' First Amendment Rights of free speech and association.

He emphasized, however, that the court had sidestepped what many observers believed to be the central constitutional issue in the case, whether the students' free exercise of religion had been abridged.

By basing its decision on what Powell called "narrow" grounds, the court avoided deciding whether the students' free exercise right outweighed the state's interest in avoiding an establishment of religion.

The narrowness of the court's ruling also left constitutional experts guessing as to the disposal of a similar case now on its docket involving a challenge by high school students in up-state New York to their school's policy prohibiting religious worship in school facilities.

Powell noted in his written opinion that the University of Missouri-Kansas City students, by appealing their case on free speech and association grounds as well as on free exercise rights, permitted the high court to decide on the narrower grounds. The New York high school students, Powell pointed out, have appealed solely on free exercise grounds.

The distinction means that the court cannot now dispose of the New York case merely by citing the Kansas City decision. It will instead have to decide if it wishes to confront directly the conflict between the high school students' free exercise claims and those of school officials who argue that to permit religious gatherings on high school premises would amount to an unconstitutional establishment of religion.

Despite avoiding the Kansas City students' free exercise claims, the high court did rule that an "equal access" policy allowing a wide variety of groups to use campus facilities would not violate the establishment clause.

Noting that the university recognizes more than 100 student groups, religious as well as non-religious, Powell wrote that the "primary effect" of permitting religious groups to worship on campus would not be the advancement of religion.

He also declared that "an open forum in a public university does not confer any imprimatur of State approval on religious sects or practices."



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