

April 5, 1982

82-54

Church Apprentice Meets
Crested Butte Challenge

By Norman Jameson

CRESTED BUTTE, Colo. (BP)--Steve Moorhouse stood with his wife Linda in the little post office of their new home town and wondered "How are we ever going to get these people to come to church?"

They had just arrived in Crested Butte, Colo., a small enclave inhabited with retired miners and rootless adventurers. Theirs was an experiment really, to see if Crested Butte and its baby sister up the hill, Mt. Crested Butte, were fertile enough ground to grow a new Southern Baptist Church.

Moorhouse, one of the first five church planter apprentices appointed by the Home Mission Board for situations like this, has been phenomenally successful. Two weeks after he and Linda came, 35 people attended the first worship service of Oh Be Joyful Chapel, affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

The name comes from a phrase coal miners used to urge each other back into the dreary mines before they closed in 1952. Today, the mountains still support the towns, not by bleeding coal, but by wearing a slippery coat for up to 5,000 skiers a day.

Moorhouse has divided the towns into five groups to involve in ministry: the temporary visitors who come to hike, ski, snowmobile or simply frolic in the freezing powder; second home owners; employees of Crested Butte Mountain Resort; "old timers"; and locals.

Second home owners live the majority of the year somewhere else, often Texas or Oklahoma, but spend sizeable chunks of time in Crested Butte. When in town, they involve themselves in community affairs and many attend the chapel.

Helping the skiers slip, slide, dip and glide down Mt. Crested Butte are 350 seasonal workers. Working for minimum wage in a rich man's domicile where tourists pay \$125 a night for rooms makes living tight. The only affordable entertainment is in the bars.

Crested Butte Mountain Resort turned to Moorhouse for help as a chaplain. He and Linda have season passes on the slopes and are encouraged to be visible. They enjoy access not common to their type of ministry in other resort areas.

Moorhouse also directs CBMR's adopt-a-student program. Student employees of CBMR, often the farthest and longest they have been from home, are "adopted" for their stay by Crested Butte families, frequently from Oh Be Joyful Chapel.

The long-term residents or "old timers" are the hardest group to reach, Moorhouse says. They've seen fads come and go, decided to stick when the bottom fell out and seen those with supposed long-term commitments decide commitment was easier someplace else. They reserve allegiance for those who earn it.

"Eventually we'll reach them as they see our constancy," he says. "They're observers and over time they'll see we love them and care for them and have the community in mind."

Locals live in Crested Butte and will be there when the snow is gone, but they haven't lived there long. They manage lodges, run restaurants, own craft shops.

"The locals are difficult sometimes," says Moorhouse. "Even though they're open to people doing their thing and are open to discussions, they have their own ideas about religion."

-more-

Those ideas seldom include an option to change or to commit themselves to Christ. The Big A Club is popular for children, but "when the kids come home and start singing Jesus songs, we don't see them anymore."

"Take away their play things and they're empty," says Moorhouse. "Their gods ar skiing, climbing, hiking, biking, ballooning, klunker biking (low geared bicycles for mountain trail riding). The interesting thing is though, when the bottom drops out, they call me. And I'm glad they do."

Seventy to 80 frequently attend Oh Be Joyful, making it the largest congregation in town. Though he has been there just two years, Moorhouse is the stickiest pastor Crested Butte has seen in half a century. The chapel is as large as its sponsoring congregation, Trinity Baptist in Gunnison.

Moorhouse, in striped sweater, corduroy jeans, and mountain boots, courses through Sunday morning worshippers with hugs and belly laughs. The chapel meets temporarily in a Catholic church and above the services hangs a banner with special significance in this ski-town. "Remove my sin and I will be clean. Wash me and I will be whiter than snow."

Frank Pillsbury, a second home owner from Dallas, says Moorhouse excels in relationships: "He has such an ability to appeal to the young guys and at the same time to the older guys. He ran in the first marathon and established a basketball team. That's how you get to know people."

Mark Dill, 23, feels it is easier to win people to a Christian perspective in a pleasure magnet like Crested Butte because "this is the ultimate experience," he says. "People who come here have tried it all--booze, drugs, travel, surf bumming. But they've burned out on all of it. Then they come here thinking this will be the ultimate. When they burn out here that's the bottom and they're reachable. And Steve is there."

Oh Be Joyful, anxious to constitute as a church, hit a roadblock that illustrates the pain of new congregations chewing the umbilical cord between them and their mother church.

Trinity said "No" when Oh Be Joyful tried to constitute in September. Trinity pastor Bob McDowell and his church felt the young congregation just was not ready--and more significantly--he heard a charismatic, independent influence had vowed to take over the chapel.

Moorhouse, aware his denominational commitment was suspect, says "I'm committed to the Southern Baptist Convention. Many people here are afraid of being dictated to by a hierarchical authority and I've told them that's the unique feature about the SBC--the local church is completely autonomous. Then they want to dictate the name."

Oh Be Joyful wants to constitute as Oh Be Joyful Chapel, affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, the designation it has always used. Trinity wants the name to be the Oh Be Joyful Baptist Church.

Moorhouse wants to promote Oh Be Joyful as the community church for evangelicals. Prominant name identification with a single denomination may discourage that, he feels.

McDowell says people are not reached by a name but by an individual who reached out to them in love. That person is clearly Moorhouse, in McDowell's eyes.

The mutual respect McDowell and Moorhouse share has prevented the disagreement between the two congregations from ever becoming more than a difference of opinion. Neither wants acrimony over the name of the eventual new church.

"We could have had a 'safe' mission here," Moorhouse says. "We could have established a homogenous or 'you all club' and been pure Southern Baptist. But what is pure Southern Baptist? We might be heading for trouble. I don't know what is going to happen. We've got a lot of diversity but we've also got a lot of vitality."

Augusta Pastor Named
Shorter College President

ROME, Ga. (BP)--George L. Balentine, pastor of First Baptist Church in Augusta, Ga., has been elected president of Shorter College in Rome, Ga.

Balentine will succeed Randall H. Minor, who is retiring June 30 after 24 years as president of the Georgia Baptist School.

Shorter trustees elected Balentine March 30. He resigned his pastorate April 4, and will move to Rome May 1 to assume the presidency July 1.

Balentine, from West Helena, Ark., has a bachelor's degree from Ouachita Baptist University and a bachelor of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

He was a New Testament fellow at Southern Seminary three years and taught Greek there two years. He then held Baptist pastorates in Arkansas, Kentucky and Florida.

In 1968, he joined the staff of Palm Beach Atlantic College in West Palm Beach, Fla. as dean of students. He later became religion professor, then academic dean. He left that position in 1975 to become pastor of the Augusta church.

Mrs. Balentine, the former Mary Sue McDonald, is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Florida Atlantic College. She has taught school in Kentucky and Florida. They have one daughter, Mary Elizabeth Balentine, a student at Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta.

During Minor's presidency, Shorter enrollment has grown from 243 students to more than 800, and the school has erected an administration building, student center, women's dormitory, library and fine arts building. The fine arts building is named for Minor.

-30-

Desbien Elected
BPRA President

Baptist Press
4/5/82

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Robert Desbien, director of public relations for Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has been elected president of the Baptist Public Relations Association.

The 300-member organization elected Desbien to succeed Jim Newton of the Baptist Home Mission Board at its annual meeting in Kansas City.

It also voted to "decry the injustice" of January's second-class increases by the postal service that doubled mailing costs of non-profit mailers.

In another resolution, the public relations practitioners voted to support the SBC Executive Committee in its decision to recommend to the Southern Baptist Convention in June that Baptist Press, the denominational news service, remain an integral part of the Executive Committee.

A messenger to the 1980 annual SBC meeting in Los Angeles had recommended the news service become a separate agency and the recommendation was referred to the Executive Committee for study.

Officers elected to serve with Desbien, who was program vice president for the Kansas City meeting, were: Maurice Elliot, Baptist Memorial Hospital in Memphis, the 1983 host city, program vice president; Norman Jameson, SBC Executive Committee, reelected membership vice president; Jerilynn Armstrong and Terry Barone, both of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, co-editors of the newsletter; Jim Newton, awards chairman; Don Hepburn, Southern Baptist General Convention of California, reelected treasurer; Mike Creswell, SBC Foreign Mission Board, secretary. Linda Lawson, Baptist Sunday School Board, was reappointed as placement coordinator.

-30-

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

Six Month CP Receipts
Double Inflation Rate

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Increases in 1982 mission contributions through the national Cooperative Program are running better than double the rate of inflation through the first six months of the fiscal year.

March gifts of \$8,003,085, a 22.5 percent increase over March 1981, pushed the six month total to \$46,991,535, up 14.6 percent over the first half of fiscal year 1980-81.

Both designated and undesignated contributions for missions and education enterprises of the Southern Baptist Convention are a million dollars a month ahead of the 1981 rate.

March designated gifts, fueled by offerings from the Lottie Moon Christmas offering for foreign missions, were up \$4.9 million over March 1981 to \$15,206,779, an increase of 46.9 percent.

"The long term significance of these receipts is the 14.6 percent increase year to date," said Harold C. Bennett, executive director of the SBC Executive Committee which disburses the funds. "This compares extremely favorably to the inflation rate of approximately seven percent.

"I appreciate Southern Baptists for their giving commitment. My desire and prayer is that they will continue to maintain this level of cooperative missions giving."

The months of the second quarter were three of the four highest ever in national Cooperative Program receipts beginning with January's \$9.4 million, February's \$8.9 million and March's \$8 million. Only January 1981's \$9.39 million was higher than any of the first-quarter months.

In March designated and undesignated receipts totaled \$99,041,822, an increase of 14.4 percent over the first half last year.

A continued trend in that level of giving, said Bennett, will enable Southern Baptists to meet Bold Mission Thrust needs that otherwise would go wanting for lack of funds. Southern Baptists, in Bold Mission Thrust, have committed themselves to give everyone in the world a chance to hear and respond to the gospel by the year 2000.

-30-

Baptist Aid Floods
Tornado-Stricken City

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
4/5/82

PARIS, Texas (BP)—A flood of Baptist response has poured into stricken Paris after a massive tornado left a three-mile-long path of destruction across this North Texas city April 2.

At least three Texas Baptists were killed, and two Texas Baptist churches were destroyed. Other Baptists were among the estimated 200 people injured and many lost their homes and businesses.

Among the eight fatalities of the storm were First Baptist Church members Mrs. Ora L. Spangler, 74, and Mrs. Martha Jo Landers, 52, and Mrs. Helen McQueen, 53, of Seventh Street Baptist Church.

Buildings of the Lakeway Baptist Church and the Belmont Baptist Church were demolished by the tornado. Belmont was leveled, and Lakeway was left with no roof and only parts of the walls, including the baptistry and a sign over a doorway reading, "God Loves You."

Sunday worship services were held as the Belmont congregation met in the office building of the Red River Baptist Association, and Lakeway Baptists secured a temporary building.

-more-

Local volunteers served with the crew of the Texas Baptist disaster relief mobile unit which arrived from Dallas about 9 a.m. Saturday and set up a field kitchen to feed storm victims and disaster workers. By late Saturday, a call went out for assistance and the Oklahoma Baptist disaster relief unit arrived Sunday to help with feeding.

James H. Landes, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said: "The convention will make the full range of our disaster relief assistance available as long as the emergency exists."

Richard Faling of the Texas Baptist Mission Support Section, chairman of the Family Life Task Force, said 57 tornado-stricken Baptist families were assisted with emergency funds in the immediate wake of the storm.

First Baptist Church was designated as an emergency child care center to assist disaster victims involved in digging out and applying for aid.

About 50 Baptist volunteers from areas such as Wichita Falls, Dallas, Forth Worth and Houston arrived Sunday to help clear the streets and remove debris.

One of the volunteers was Fred McDowell, director of missions for the Wichita-Archer-Clay Association, who came to Paris in a travel trailer to assist at the associational office. Two years ago, one of the most destructive tornadoes in history struck Wichita Falls. Then, Doyle Holmes, director of missions for Lubbock Association, went to Wichita Falls to assist McDowell for an extended time.

-30-

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

Survivors Cheerful
In Wake Of Tornado

Baptist Press
4/5/82

PARIS, Texas (BP)--The sun shone brightly the morning after the Paris tornado, and relief crews marvelled at the equally bright spirit and cheerful outlooks of survivors.

"I'm just glad my family's all right," said Larry Martin, minister of outreach at First Baptist Church, Paris. His wife Golda, and their daughter, Patty, crouched safely in a closet as the tornado destroyed their home.

The tornado wrecked the home of Jim and Becky Semple, but the young couple rejoiced that they were spared. Digging through the debris, Becky said cheerfully, "Look, I found some of our bills."

Pastor James Semple, Jim's father, whose home was undamaged, emerged from a closet during the storm to answer a telephone call from his wife who had been driving but had taken refuge in a home.

Knowing the tornado might hit any second, he told her, "If you have to dig me out I'll be in the closet in the center of the house."

Looking at hundreds of homes reduced to piles of rubble, wrecked automobiles imbedded in shells of homes and huge trees splintered and twisted in grotesque shapes by the terrible force of the twister's winds, people could scarcely believe so few had been killed.

"God has his protective hand on us," seemed the common explanation.

Even as Baptists and others rallied to the relief of the Paris tornado victims, people pitched in as perhaps never before to help stricken neighbors.

"Sometimes it takes something like this to wake people up," one observed.

-30-

CORRECTION: In Pastors Conference program mailed April 1, please change church of Charles T. Carter, scheduled to speak at 10:15 Monday, from Shades Crest to Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham. Thanks, Baptist Press.