

# (BP) -- FEATURES

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They Came With The Wind  
But They Won't Blow Away

By Robert O'Brien

KAMEYA, Rwanda (BP)—Wind races up and down Rwanda's steep slopes and whistles through the hand-hewn poles in the unfinished walls of a struggling little church in remote Kameya.

It lifts hymns from the members' lips, mixes them with the "thump-thump-thump" of the accompanying drum and sends them singing through the hills. But the wind has not fulfilled a prediction that it would blow the church away.

"They came with the wind, and they will go with the wind," scoffed a local Catholic priest nearly two years ago, after 30 Baptists, meeting under a tree with Southern Baptist missionary Earl Martin and Rwandan Pastor Eliakim Gituru, agreed to start a congregation.

The congregation soon affiliated with the Union of Baptist Churches of Rwanda as an "out-school"—similar to a mission church—of the Kigali Baptist Church, about 100 miles away in Kigali, the nation's capital.

Drawn to Kameya by a free tract of land and a cow offered in a government resettlement plan, Baptists have toiled daily on farms which flow down into the green valleys and up again on the other side.

As they worked among new friends and neighbors, the new church started virorously—at first—under the leadership of a salaried evangelist sent by the Baptist Union after Martin, fellow missionary Stan Lee and Gituru helped them get started.

After three months they baptized 85 new converts, but financial support did not grow. "We thought something was fishy, but we couldn't find out what," said Martin, a 25-year veteran of African missions who transferred to Rwanda in 1977.

Then they learned the truth. The Rwandan evangelist had not reported contributions and had misused them. The Rwandan union—under which Southern Baptists work in a unique cooperative relationship with Danish Baptist missionaries and Rwandans—dismissed him. "But it was a blow," declared Martin.

Attendance dropped. Members had done nothing about a church building. Martin began a twice monthly trek from Kigali to work with the discouraged congregation. Maybe, he thought, the priest's prediction would come true.

But a faithful nucleus refused to yield. Instead of asking for another evangelist from the union, they tried an experiment. They picked a leader from their own number. Martin agreed to train him.

The new leader, Teresfor Nginze, preached, taught, visited and led Bible study, while struggling along with his farm work. Although acutely aware of their poverty, the people increased their contributions to 900 francs nearly every month (about \$10 US), fairly good by their standards.

Martin hopes developments at the church will show Baptists all over Rwanda that congregations which rely on themselves develop into stronger churches than those which rely too much on personnel and financial support from outside sources.

Baptists in the union, with their varying cultural perspectives, differ at that point. "It will continue as an issue to resolve," said Martin, who was faced with the discussion again during a visit to Kameya last January.

The people came in from the fields to worship and sing when he arrived. But after Nginze preached from John 14:11, he and his people--discouraged again--turned the session into an animated business meeting.

They asked not only for the union to send another salaried evangelist but for it to construct a church building, a school and a medical center. Martin patiently and firmly resisted while encouraging them to persevere.

He feels that if they free themselves of the idea they're too poor, they can make it without over-dependence on outside resources. So far he has been right. Soon after Nginze took over, the church baptized 35 more converts and began construction of the building which still stands unfinished on the windy hill.

While waiting, they have grown and experienced true worship within the skeletal, wind-pierced walls--singing, praying, studying the Bible and hearing Nginze preach as they sit on logs and grass mats arranged on a dirt floor.

Martin and Silas Ruhanya, pastor of the sponsoring Kigali Baptist Church, discovered on the January visit that another 18 converts awaited baptism, but trouble brewed again. Contributions had decreased, and a faction--led by a vocal opponent of Nginze--had stirred up strife. Nginze was tired, discouraged and ready to quit.

Ruhanya had come to baptize, but he stayed to counsel. All the problems didn't evaporate, but determination and common sense prevailed once again.

Martin made his own prediction before leaving Rwanda in February on a furlough which precedes his acceptance of a full professorship in missions and world religions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Forth Worth, Texas.

"That church--and its leader--have a tenacity and spiritual commitment, which will stand the test of any wind if they persevere," he said.

The church at Kameya struggles on, beset with growing pains but rapidly gaining a reputation as "the church the wind cannot blow away."

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(BP) photos mailed to Baptist state newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Three SBC Leaders Call For  
Special Mother's Day Prayer

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) -- Citing the "threat of annihilation through nuclear war," three Southern Baptist leaders called for a special Mother's Day prayer for evangelization and peace to coincide with evangelist Billy Graham's preaching visit to Moscow beginning May 9.

Asking Southern Baptist pastors and churches to include special prayer in Mother's Day services this year are Bailey Smith, president of the Southern Baptist Convention; William G. Tanner, president of the Home Mission Board; and Foy Valentine, executive director of the Christian Life Commission.

Graham will preach in both Russian Orthodox and Baptist churches on May 9, observed as Mother's Day in America, and also will speak May 11 in Moscow to religious leaders from around the world on the imperative of peace with justice in a nuclear age.

The joint resolution called for special Mother's Day prayer, "Since Christians around the world are bound together by a common allegiance to God in Jesus Christ, by a common mandate to share the good news, and by a common concern for peace with justice, and since in the fullness of time, God is setting before us an open door for going into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature."

SHAWNEE, Okla. (BP)--E. Eugene Hall has resigned as president of Oklahoma Baptist University, effective June 30, to become professor of preaching at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, La.

Hall will maintain active administration of the university until he begins classroom responsibilities at New Orleans July 1.

Hall became the 12th OBU president Oct. 15, 1977.

In his letter of resignation to the Board of Trustees the 49-year-old Hall said, "While I have often observed that I have no interest in a presidency other than the one I hold, I have from time to time acknowledged my affinity for the classroom, my desire to return someday to teaching, preferably at the seminary level, and in the area of preaching. Thus, I could not lightly consider the opportunity to become professor of preaching at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary."

A native of Mansfield, La., Hall has bachelor's degrees from Louisiana College, Pineville, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He has the master's degree and doctorate from Louisiana State University and has done post-doctoral work at the University of Kentucky.

During his administration, the university has implemented a new curriculum and academic structure, upgraded campus facilities and developed financial resources.

The \$10 million Growth for the Future Capital Campaign has provided funding for the remodeling of two OBU dormitories, the construction of a new health, physical education recreation activities complex (the Noble Complex, due for completion in August); construction of campus parking facilities; and renovation work in Shawnee Hall, Ford Music Hall and the Geiger Center.

Included in the capital improvement plans are numerous other projects, including the construction of a new science building and a campus pedestrian mall.

J. Thomas Terry, OBU vice president for business affairs, will be interim administrator and chief executive officer. Terry is a 15-year employee of the University.

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Baptist Boy Killed  
By Playground Gun

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LITTLETON, Colo. (BP)--Scott Michael, 13, was shot and killed April 7 in a Littleton schoolyard, apparently by a 14-year-old who carried a gun to school.

Jefferson County police have not ruled the shooting an accident and held ninth-grader Jason Roacha under \$25,000 bond. Police told the Rocky Mountain Baptist newspaper they had found probable cause to believe Roacha was involved in criminal homicide of Michael.

Michael, son of Dewey and Addalee Michael, was a member of Ken Caryl Baptist Church in the Denver suburb of Littleton. He was a Royal Ambassador and his father was the church's RA leader. He is survived by his parents and two brothers.

Michael's death is the second in seven months of young Baptists in Colorado. Wendy Watts, 9, a member of Trinity Baptist Church, was shot to death when she wandered into a stranger's apartment in Lakewood while her parents attended a Bible study in a nearby apartment.

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Mississippi Pastor  
Named NOBTS Prof

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Robert B. Barnes, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Poplarville, Miss., for 15 years, has been elected to the faculty of the School of Christian Training of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, effective June 1.

Barnes, a native of Atlanta, received a bachelor's degree at Mercer University in Macon, Ga. and was awarded the bachelor of divinity degree by the New Orleans seminary in 1955. He completed his doctor of theology degree in church history in 1968 at NOBTS.

While at Poplarville, Barnes has been moderator of the Pearl River Baptist Association, area committee chairman for the Baptist Student Union at Pearl River Junior College, pastor advisor for the Mississippi State BSU program and member of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

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Members Applaud, Shed Tears  
As Volunteer Returns to Church

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WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (BP)--Paralyzed mission volunteer Roy Church's return to church Easter Sunday was what his pastor, Mark Corts, called a "high moment in the life of the church."

More than 1,400 worshippers at Calvary Baptist Church applauded and many wiped away tears as Church, in a wheelchair, thanked them for their prayers during his hospitalization and quoted Helen Steiner Rice's poem, "My God Is No Stranger."

Stricken by Guillain-Barre Syndrome in December while working as an extended service volunteer in Quito, Ecuador, Church had hoped to walk into church on Easter morning. Though he didn't achieve that goal, he earlier in the week managed to take his first steps at North Carolina Baptist Hospital, Winston-Salem, with the aid of braces, parallel support bars and a therapist.

Sharing his pew at Calvary Church were family members, including his wife, Ruth, and two men and a woman he had won to Christ in the hospital. The two men and other hospital employees continue to come to Church's room each evening for Bible study.

"It was a very emotional time for me," Church said of this first visit to the church in nearly a year. "We have much, much to praise the Lord about."

Corts said the videotaped service, the second of two morning services at Calvary, was to be broadcast locally the following weekend.

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Worship Should Honor  
God, Clyde Fant Says

By Lynn P. Clayton

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ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP) -- Church worship services should honor God rather than be calculated to grow a church numerically, Clyde Fant told participants at a worship conference.

Fant, a former professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, who now is president-elect of Ruschlikon Baptist Seminary in Switzerland, said: "You should strive to have worship that honors God, but is simple and meaningful to participants."

"That's the only way biblically to grow a church that honors God. And this kind of church growth is absolutely essential."

The educator pointed out that "there is a difference between growing a 'church' and growing the kingdom (of God)."

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"If you simply want to have a worship that will 'grow a church,' that's easy. Find out the biases of your congregation and go with them and you will grow. But to calculate to fine tune your worship to be in line with culture is wicked," he added.

Speaking at the conference sponsored by the Louisiana Baptist Convention, Fant said to build worship services that honor God, worship leaders should "let the nature of our worship be determined by the nature of our God."

Fant said churches should eliminate the elements of worship services that contradict the nature of God.

"I don't see God as frigid, icy, remote; so I can't see worship being that.

"But I also don't see Jesus in the pulpit stance some preachers take; sort of a fighting crouch or a hydrophobic fury."

He also warned against preachers trying to be some kind of arch intellectual, and quoted a friend, who once told him: "Aim low; they're riding Shetlands."

Fant said that trying to formulate worship services that honor God also will restrict what he feels is a growing sort of personality cult prominent in many "super churches."

"This sort of a cult of personality is a disgrace. It's not God that is center stage. It's the staff, or the pastor, or the music director, or some layman. God's not center stage because he is off hiding his eyes somewhere because of the disgrace."

Fant recently resigned as pastor of First Baptist Church of Richardson, Texas, to accept the position with the Foreign Mission Board at the seminary which serves European Baptists. During his seven-year ministry at the suburban Dallas church, attendance grew from 1,100 to 1,750.

Fant concluded his session by saying: "Let growth be a by-product of worship -- that's the way it is in Acts. Growth is the by-product of faithfulness. If it's not, it's not the growth of the Kingdom."