



--FEATURES

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Transkei Baptists Find
Gift That Makes Them One

By Robert O'Brien

UMTATA, Transkei (BP)--A new spirit--generated by a special gift from some special people--has invaded the Baptist Union of Transkei and begun eroding racial barriers some thought could never be broken down.

The spirit, encouraged in particular by the formerly all-white Umtata Baptist Church, has not sprung forth full grown and obliterated all problems. Rather, it has been developing gradually under patient nurture, enhanced by the "little things" which mean a lot in human relationships.

The simplest, yet most profound, of those "little things" has been the gift of love and mutual dignity some Transkei Baptists are learning they can joyfully give to and receive from a person of a different race.

It's a gift which, like a divine solvent, has begun melting hardened hearts which could block attempts at ministry by Southern Baptist missionaries Gene and Lavonne Thompson Meacham and Baptist Union of Transkei general secretary Waugh Nkuhlu (En-Koosh-Lu) and his wife, Jostina.

The Baptist Union of Transkei, which Nkuhlu says existed as an association of churches in the Baptist Union of South Africa from 1927 to 1980, began seeking its autonomy in 1976, the year South Africa granted independence to Transkei.

Many of the world's governments still do not recognize that action by South Africa, but regardless of political position the definite fact has emerged and Transkei officially has abolished apartheid--separation of the races--since it set up government in 1976.

But it's not easy to accomplish. "Apartheid has ended officially in Transkei, but it's hard for it to grow out of people's minds--both black and white," explains Johannes Latta, a black pastor in Butterworth, Transkei. "Apartheid goes two ways. Many blacks don't want to associate with whites."

The Meachams, white Texans who have made their mark in Transkei, and the Nkuhlus, black Transkei citizens, have worked to breach barriers in the mind which alienate one race from another.

Gene Meacham emphasizes that the multiracial ministry still has a long way to go. And he explains that members of the Umtata Baptist Church, in Transkei's capital city, decided to end racial separation before he transferred from Malawi to become their pastor in 1979. In fact, the church asked the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board for an American pastor with an outside perspective to lead it to a multiracial status.

The Meachams feel that Nkuhlu's decision to join the Umtata church, which now approaches 10 percent black membership, has enhanced their ability to reach black people who otherwise would be skeptical.

That decision may well have its roots in one of those "little things" which took place in mid-1980. Gen and Lavonne invited the Nkuhlus to stay at their home and eat meals with them during a week the Nkuhlus visited Umtata for meetings.

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The invitation literally overwhelmed the Nkuhlus, who never had been asked by whites to eat a meal with them, much less spend the night. But, after much prayer and soulsearching, they accepted--and a deep friendship blossomed around the dinner table with the Meachams and their three daughters.

"They even served us tea in the same china cups they used, not in separate mugs as other whites have done," marveled Waugh, who has had tea with whites during his work as a pastor and Bible translator.

But, even though close to the Meachams, the Nkuhlus wondered at first if they and their five children should join a black church of their own Xhosa people rather than the Umtata church. "I was skeptical at first about the invitation to join the Umtata church," Waugh says, "but the Lord helped us (to do so)."

"I don't expect all Africans to want to go to a white church," he continues. "No African wants to be white, and no white can be black. But once the barriers are down, the people will be satisfied."

When Nkuhlu, who since has become the church's first black deacon, told a local Xhosa pastor that he had passed up his church to join Gene Meacham's church, the pastor smiled and said, "now we are one."

The Meachams believe that Transkei Baptists will truly become "one" as children and young people grow up together. They have targeted ministries to them through Sunday School, special church activities and student work at the University of Transkei.

"Our primary aim and best hope is the Sunday School (which has grown from 80 to 250 members under Lavonne's direction)," says Gene. "As the children grow up, I think their relationships will become natural."

The Meachams and Dudley and Rebecca Reagan Phifer, who pioneered Southern Baptist missions in Transkei together, have made a lasting impact on adults as well as children.

Meacham, president of the Transkei Baptist Union, has earned respect. "When Rev. Meacham visits our churches, he is willing to stay in our houses and eat our food," explains Pastor Latta. "He feels free with us. We trust him. He is a Transkei Baptist."

Dudley Phifer, who died of leukemia in mid-1980, did a lot of work around Butterworth. Asked if the Xhosa people would accept a new white Southern Baptist missionary scheduled to work there, Latta said, "If you can give us a missionary such as Rev. Phifer, the people will accept him. Rev. Phifer was different (from some other whites they know). He not only taught Christianity, but he acted it."

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Adapted from the August 1982, issue of The Commission, magazine of the Foreign Mission Board.

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

Canaday, Other Clergymen
Expelled From Saudi Arabia

By Bill Webb

Baptist Press
7/22/82

JOHNSON CITY, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Extended Service Volunteers James and Ellen Canaday were expelled from Saudi Arabia July 1, just six weeks after Saudi police closed their meeting place without warning.

Canaday, 66, who had been pastor of a protestant congregation in Saudi Arabia for five years, said he was given no reason either for the expulsion or for the closing of the meeting place.

Legal appeal was not available, he said, adding that he and his wife were given only two weeks to leave the country.

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In predominately Moslem countries, as in every other country in which Southern Baptists work, the presence of volunteers or career missionaries is subject to the consent of the government.

There are no career Southern Baptist missionaries in Saudi Arabia, according to the Foreign Mission Board.

The Canadays' protestant congregation and a Catholic group shared an assembly hall they built cooperatively on an American school campus in Jedda, in western Saudi Arabia. The school used the hall on weekdays.

Two priests, who worked with the Catholic congregation, were expelled immediately after the hall was closed; the Canadays were told a month later that they had only two weeks to leave the country.

"The Christian fellowship was recognized and permitted by the Saudi Arabian government for the benefit of the many Christian expatriates working in the nation," Canaday explained. "By the regulation of government authorities, no Saudis were included in any of the Christian services. No church signs or Christian symbols were displayed. No publicity about the services was permitted."

In spite of strict limitations, both the Catholic and protestant groups continued to grow, he said. The protestant congregation totaled 450 members, representing 45 nations and a variety of church backgrounds. The Catholic group was even larger.

The Canadays, who also assisted a home fellowship in Yanbu, 215 miles north of Jedda on the Red Sea, used the six weeks between the closing of their meeting place and their expulsion to help the Jedda congregation organize eight home worship centers with Bible classes. They also arranged for worship services to be conducted in the U.S. Embassy in Jedda.

Leadership is in the hands of a group of lay preachers who live and work in the city, Canaday said. The congregation in Riyadh also continues with lay leadership, its pastor unable to secure a visa to reenter the country, he added.

The Canadays, for now in Johnson City, Tenn., see little hope of returning to Saudi Arabi but haven't had time to decide what they'll do.

Canaday is former pastor of churches in Tennessee. A former vice president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, he has been a member of the Tennessee Executive Board and the Foreign Mission Board. He also has been a trustee of Union University, Carson-Newman University and Baptist Medical Center in Memphis.

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Christian-Marxist Dialogue
Focuses On Peace, Understanding

Baptist Pr ss
7/22/82

NEW YORK CITY (BP) -- Christians and Marxists, gathered here to discuss the arms race and other issues, approved a joint statement agreeing, that "the road to peace is not to be found in the pursuit of armament but in fostering mutual trust."

The 1982 session of the Christian-Marxist Dialogue attracted five Soviet diplomats and journalists, 16 local and state Baptist leaders and other Christians to discuss threats to human existence and human liberty. A similar dialogue was held last year.

The dialogue held in six monthly sessions focused on both differences and common concerns in the spirit of mutual respect for individual views, said Elias Golonka, Southern Baptist missionary to the United Nations and Internationals and convener of the dialogue. He added that participants spoke as individuals and not as representatives for their respective organizations.

"All dialogue participants agreed that the global danger in our age is the arms race," and that the security of the nations and the entire globe "has not been improved by arms production or the arms race," Golonka reported.

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All participants affirmed "the security of the nations rests on arms reduction and a mutual respect for the dignity of human life," said Golonka, "as well as mutual acceptance of the principles of international law and collective assistance to developing nations. Life is a precious gift and must be cherished as the greatest good common to all humankind."

Soviet participants, including Sergei I. Divilkovsky, Counselor of the U.S.S.R. Mission to the United Nations, stressed the need to avoid introducing a new generation of nuclear and chemical weapons. They also expressed concern about proliferating offensive weapons "which can be directed toward any country."

Golonka said that while the United States and the Soviet Union are trying to deal with proliferation of nuclear and other arms, "the question of trust and mutual understanding constitutes the greatest hindrance" to disarmament. Participants agreed that in order to end the arms race and avoid nuclear war, it was not necessary to link talks on disarmament with "existing ideological differences between East and West."

Other discussions during the dialogue centered on the status of believers in the Soviet Union and the revival of religious interest among Soviet young people, as well as the rising interest in Marxism in the United States.

Both Christians and Marxists expressed interest in evangelist Billy Graham's recent visit to the Soviet Union. One Marxist said Graham's work for the prevention of nuclear holocaust testified to "the greatness of his personality and that our differences should not hinder discussion of the problem: the threat of extinction."

Other participants indicated Graham's visit and Soviet response to it represented the possibility of a more pervasive Christian-Marxist dialogue, said Golonka.

Participants expressed particular concern about the threat of nuclear war and the accidental use of nuclear weapons, and the necessity to eliminate all international military conflicts. Golonka said participants desired "productive negotiations with the intention to achieve a freeze, then reduction and ultimately the elimination of nuclear weapons."

Quinn Pugh, director of missions for Metropolitan New York Baptist Association and two-year dialogue participant, echoed Golonka's sentiments, and charged "peace is a Christian issue." "Every Christian has the responsibility to exercise their citizenship as peacemakers. "It is our mandate to bear witness of the Prince of Peace."

"We have to find ways and means to remove this barrier of mistrust between our two countries and create a climate of international understanding and cooperation for the purpose of eliminating war, poverty, suffering and oppression," Golonka concluded.

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Religious Educated Advocate
Family Life Education

By Gail Rothwell

Baptist Press
7/22/82

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—The future hope of church educational programs lies in an ability to involve the family, participants in a recent Church Training Leadership Conference were told.

Jack H. McEwen, dean of the school of religious education, the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., led a doctrine study on the biblical view of the family and noted that education does not occur in many Southern Baptist churches because there is no "felt need" to learn. "If we are really serious about affecting families, then we must begin to structure the educational programs of the church around the family," he said.

Raymond Bailey, associate professor of communications and adjunct professor of preaching at Southern, who led sessions on parenting enrichment skills and family relationships, said in the past the church has been guilty of fragmenting the family instead of treating it as a unit.

"The church needs to provide the family with shared experiences," Bailey said. "Let the parents and children, sixth grade and up, share their learning experiences."

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McEwen feels understanding and developing the role of the individual in the family will be the single most important educational issue shaping the church for the remainder of the 20th century and noted the greatest influence on family life will be the changing role of women.

"I believe that two of the most important issues Jesus ever dealt with, children and women, have just come into focus within the past few years," McEwen said. "As the role of women begins to change, the role of men changes in reaction to this. I think we will begin to see more shared responsibilities in the home and family."

Then the church will need to provide the family with communication and parenting enrichment skills, he explained.

Bailey noted that many of the church training department's equipping center modules can improve the total ministry of the church because they increase the church's understanding of the family. In addition, the 1982-83 church training curriculum materials, produced in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention's 1982-85 "Strengthening Families" emphasis, will center on family and ministry.

More than 2,400 persons attended the weeklong training session which was conducted by the church training department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

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Frank Voight
Dies In Virginia

Baptist Press
7/22/82

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Frank G. Voight, director of the division of church programs for the Virginia Baptist General Board, died July 22 while on vacation at Myrtle Beach S.C. He was 59.

Voight came to the Virginia Baptist General Board as secretary of the Sunday School department in 1954. In 1970 he became director of the division of church programs, which includes the areas of Bible teaching, Baptist Men, church administration, church music, church training, and the Eagle Eyrie Baptist Assembly. Born in Paducah, Ky., he graduated cum laude from Mississippi College and received his Ph.M and Ph.D degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

He was pastor of churches in Kentucky, Indiana and Virginia before going to the Virginia Baptist General Board.

He is survived by his wife, Dorothy, two daughters, Marianne and Elaine, and two grandchildren.

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CORRECTION: In 7/20/82 BP, "Block Room Reservations For 1982 SBC Are Drawn," please add sentence at end of second paragraph. Saunders is director of missions of the Clay-Platte Baptist Association in Kansas City.

CORRECTION: In 7/20/82 BP, "World Cup Witness In Spain Successful," please correct identification in fourth paragraph. John Tresch is dean of the School of Christian Service at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee.

Thanks,
Baptist Press