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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Craig Bird, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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82-150

Roy Church Hardly
A 'Woe Is Me' Type

By Bill Webb



RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Paralyzed mission volunteer Roy Church is anything but one of those "woe is me" types.

On the contrary, he exudes quiet optimism about his recovery and confidence in his faith even though he remains in a wheelchair, partially paralyzed. He was stricken by Guillain-Barre Syndrome more than 10 months ago in Quito, Ecuador where he and his wife, Ruth, were nearing completion of their second volunteer term.

The 55-year-old North Carolinian has come a long way since the virus paralyzed him from the neck down last December. Nearly each day since has included intense therapy. The first seven months he spent at North Carolina Baptist Hospital in their hometown of Winston-Salem.

Church's doctors say his recovery could take up to two years and estimate he will regain "95 percent" of his movement. Church claims he'll be "110 percent" someday.

He believes quite simply his attitude has not only kept him from becoming depressed but has expanded his range for sharing his faith and encouraging others. His steady progress in therapy has bolstered his optimism.

The attitude matter was settled within a couple of days of his hospitalization in Quito. A pastor friend assured him, "God doesn't punish His children by putting them flat on their backs. What has happened to you is a blessing."

At that point Church began to accept his condition as God's will and "rejoice in it."

During his hospital stay he not only led several hospital employees to make professions of faith but began an 11 p.m. (at the end of a workshift) Bible study where he disciplined new converts.

The Churches said they actively shared their faith before he became paralyzed but for him the circumstances for sharing have changed. The stricken volunteer regularly found himself "eyeball to eyeball" with people to whom he might never have witnessed otherwise.

He still might not have pursued one such relationship with a young accident victim paralyzed permanently had it not been for his wife's urging. "I was ready to write him off in the hospital because he was so rough talking," Church admitted.

Instead he took the initiative and the two developed a mutual respect and fast friendship they still maintain now that both are no longer hospitalized. The Churches continue to pray their friend will invite Christ into his heart.

"Had we met under different circumstances I doubt he would have spent 10 seconds considering whether I could be a friend to him or not and I'm quite sure I wouldn't have with him," Church says.

Frustration has been no stranger to Church during the past year. As he has gained the use of muscles in his body he has had to learn to do the most routine things all over again—things like using a fork and spoon and buttoning a shirt. Progress has come by repetition and after repeated failure.

But Church has a formula for frustration too. "It's just a matter of being obedient and confessing frustration and getting forgiveness for it," he explained. "You find as this becomes a part of your life it turns from frustration into blessing."

And though he believes his wheelchair is a temporary implement for him, he confesses he's thought about the possibility of spending the rest of his life in it. He suggests confidently: "God is not going to ask me to do anything that He is not going to equip me to do."

Church has not lacked for encouragement from people around him.

Two women in his church, Calvary Baptist in Winston-Salem, arranged for regular water therapy at the local YMCA. When he has tried to do something, failed and wanted to give up, he has often heard the assuring voice of his 4-year-old grandson, Austin, "You can do it, Grandfather. You can do it."

Children gather around his wheelchair at church just to talk and Mrs. Church says one five-year-old girl continues to pray for her husband's recovery every night. Other youngsters send him letters of encouragement.

One of the Church's fondest memories is of young MKs (Missionary Kids) leaning over to kiss him and say, "Uncle Roy, we love you," as he and Mrs. Church prepared to board a Foreign Mission Board-sponsored air ambulance on a Quito runway on Dec. 16.

Neither knows what the future holds for their lives.

Should he recover sufficiently, they might consider going to Spain as volunteer workers in a literatur ministry. It was their sense of calling that actually brought them to Ecuador, Church explained. They felt they would learn Spanish (in preparation for service in Spain) while making a contribution in the mission treasurer's office and the local English-language church in Quito.

They have been impressed to keep working on their Spanish since they've been home, though they realize they have no guarantee they will have a chance to use it again overseas.

That possibility doesn't distress them. Church believes God has called him to full-time ministry and that He will reveal the details in due time.

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Southwestern Seminary
Dedicates Roberts Library

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By Norman Jameson

Baptist Press
10/22/82

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Friends of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary lit the beacon in a "Lighthouse of Knowledge" Oct. 19—the A. Webb Roberts Library.

Sixteen ceremonial ribbons, cut by campus and community representatives, fluttered to the ground in a bright, fall breeze to officially open the nation's largest theological library.

"We dedicate this building to the end and purpose that the name of Jesus Christ should be exalted unto the ends of the earth," prayed James E. Coggin, chairman of Southwestern's board of trustees and pastor of Fort Worth Travis Avenue Baptist Church.

The new library, centerpiece and showplace of Southwestern's Vision/85 Capital Needs and Endowment campaign, is named for A. Webb Roberts, Dallas investor and philanthropist who made the seminary residual beneficiary of his substantial family trust.

Roberts said, through his gift, the library could develop into the largest and best in the world. "I foresee people coming from all over the world to use the extensive and valuable resources here," he said. Roberts, originally from Ball Ground, Ga., and members of his family were present at the dedication and at a luncheon in his honor which followed.

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Roberts' pastor, W.A. Criswell of First Baptist Church, Dallas, prayed at the luncheon that God would bless Southwestern, "so that men and women trained here can move the whole earth Christ-ward, God-ward and heaven-ward."

Robert A. Baker, professor emeritus of church history, called the new library "a lighthouse of knowlege" and traced the seminary's library of humble beginnings with 3,511 books in 1911 to its position as the nation's largest theological library with 577,625 items.

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Fast Growing SBC Churches
Focus On Individuals, Outreach

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By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
10/22/82

LUTHERVILLE, Md. (BP)—The atmosphere is warm and friendly and members relish the opportunity to welcome and try to meet the needs of each person who comes their way in nine of the fastest growing churches in the Southern Baptist Convention.

These churches are defying the stereotype that a person can get lost among the multitudes and organizational machinery of a large church, the director of the church development department of the Maryland Baptist Convention learned.

Charles Barnes, a 13-year veteran of state convention work, visited nine churches in Florida, Texas, North Carolina and Mississippi this year "to get the feel and the spirit of what is happening in growing churches." He discovered effective organization and trained leaders are resulting in outreach and evangelism with a personal touch.

The churches Barnes visited included: First, Fort Lauderdale, and First and College Park, Orlando, Fla.; Prestonwood, Dallas, First, Garland, First, Katy, and Sagemont, Houston, all in Texas; Calvary, Winston-Salem, N. C.; and First, Jackson, Miss.

All have more than 1,500 members and all are experiencing rapid growth.

While the programs of the church differed widely, Barnes found in each a "high degree of excitement, joy and celebration in the worship services. People are excited about what God is doing in their church," he said.

He cited the enthusiasm of volunteer parking lot attendants at a downtown church which has two Sunday Schools and three morning worship services.

Noting most are averaging 200-300 visitors per Sunday, Barnes said all are finding ways "to meet, greet and warmly receive visitors and new members into the fellowship."

At the same time some form of lay witness training is an important part of the outreach and evangelism programs with several hundred persons involved at all times.

While Barnes said no pressure is put on visitors to join the church or make a profession of faith, printed materials such as brochures and bulletins carefully explain how to enroll in Sunday School and how to join the church.

Barnes also gave high marks to the educational, organizational and promotional efforts of the churches. For example, he noted, "When they have a spectacular event it is spectacular with every detail cared for."

Based on his observations Barnes listed nine essentials for growth, with concern for individual needs of members and visitors topping the list.

For example, after a flood, representatives of one church were on hand before the insurance companies to provide funds and manpower to aid the victims.

Other factors included: Sunday School as the foundation of the church program; visitation, growth and evangelism magnified in all activities and materials; a staff committed to the pastor and the church and a highly motivated pastor who feels "he is right where God wants him."

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He also cited quality Bible study, good fellowship, effective planning and adequate facilities.

Acknowledging most churches lack the money and resources of the nine churches he visited, Barnes nevertheless emphasized churches of any size can take positive steps to improve their capacity to reach people.

First, Barnes said, churches should carefully evaluate their worship services and strive to improve every facet, from music to preaching to meeting and greeting visitors.

Second, "keep visitation, growth and evangelism obvious and visible in the services. Focus on the purpose of the church—reaching people."

Third, the use of Southern Baptist Sunday School grouping, grading and educational approaches. He said they result in quality Bible study and outreach through adding new units and maintaining proper pupil-teacher ratios.

Fourth, publicity should be planned to penetrate the community not just communicate with fellow church members. A publicity poster placed in a grocery store will reach more people than a sign on church property. "Growing churches are focusing their attention on the people in the marketplace," he said.

Finally, "vision and excitement dominate growing churches. Pastor and people have a vision for what their church can mean to the community."

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

New Pastor To Plant Gospel
Where He Once Sowed Wild Oats

By Tim Nicholas

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JACKSON, Miss. (BP)—A young Mississippian is going back to where he sowed his wild oats to plant different seed.

Lennon Brown, 30, a student at Mississippi Baptist Seminary in Jackson, will become the pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church at Glendora, a quarter time church in November.

Brown says he was once a "home town playboy" in nearby Swan Lake and Greenville. Working part-time as a disc jockey, Brown "sold dope, drank whiskey, used women like a person uses a tool, gambled—I was rotten, selfish."

In 1977 he decided drug dealing was foolish and, though never a churchgoer, was ready to listen when someone offered a witness.

A woman peddling clothes on the streets of Greenville talked to Brown about people who don't think of anything but themselves, about prayer and how to pray.

During the conversation an old woman asked him for money to buy one of the dresses. "Something went through me then," Brown recalled. He "broke down in tears," and gave the woman the \$15 he had in his pocket. He had never given money away before.

"That's when I started seeking God," he said. "I went out on Lake Ferguson to pray." He started reading Genesis in his "dusty" Bible but it made no sense. Asking God to help him understand, he was inspired to read Bible helps and the Living Bible with King James.

As he read, "I began to understand myself more—how rotten I was—the Lord told me to join a church." At a camp meeting he heard former rhythm and blues singer Little Richard tell how his life had changed through Christ. "That was encouraging to me," Brown admitted. "That's when I got school on my mind."

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He met E.E. Evans, a trustee of Mississippi Baptist Seminary and attended classes at the Greenville extension center for nine months. Joseph Sutton, retired dean at MBS told him the school would help him get his high school diploma (Brown had only finished the 10th grad) and Dick Brogan, MBS president, wrote him about job possibilities in Jackson.

In 1979 he came to Jackson, passed his G.E.D. and entered Hinds Junior College in electrical technology while attending classes at MBS. Though he dropped out of Hinds he had enough background "and through prayer" got a job as a trouble-shooting maintenance mechanic.

Currently he is assistant pastor at White Rock Baptist Church in Jackson and at Rosemont Baptist Church he teaches a Wednesday night Bible class and preaches on Sunday nights. When he starts at Bethlehem church he hopes to be able to continue his work at Rosemont also.

Bethlehem church will have 35-40 in attendance. "I see them needing more or less professional leadership," Brown said. "I practically grew up in this community and they need to know some of the things I learned at seminary—like stewardship, worship, bookkeeping...." He plans to start a Sunday School and begin work on the building which is in bad shape.

Brown believes the seminary has helped him in life. "Even when I became a preacher I was still selfish. The seminary taught me to be kind and thoughtful like Jesus ... I used to be afraid to talk to people, used to look down on myself. I learned self-confidence in the classes."

Brown is working on his bachelor of theology degree at MBS which is supported by black and white Baptists across Mississippi. He is anxious to share an important lesson: "God can use me like he can anybody else."

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BWA Men's Department
Dedicates New Offices

By Norman Jameson 

Baptist Press
10/22/82

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Offices for the new Baptist World Alliance men's department were dedicated in a quiet ceremony at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Oct. 20.

Dub Jackson, former Southern Baptist missionary and former president of the World Evangelism Foundation, will direct the department from offices adjacent to Southwestern on land purchased and donated to the seminary by Evelyn Lineberry of Midland, Texas.

Seminary President Russell H. Dilday Jr. said the department's proximity to campus will fulfill a dream of his—Southwestern becoming more deeply involved in world Baptist affairs.

Duke K. McCall, Baptist World Alliance president, joined persons from Sri Lanka and Japan, the Southern Baptist Convention Brotherhood Commission, Dilday and Fred Roach of the Texas Baptist Men, in bringing greetings and praying for the success of the new department.

"Is this the dawning of another great opportunity for Baptists around the world to come together?" asked Hidetsugu Ando, evangelism secretary of the Japan Baptist convention. "I think this would be the heart of our Lord."

McCall cited the impossible task of world evangelism if left to career missionaries and called the seminary "as a good place for Baptist World Alliance to have an anchor" to encompass the world for Christ. "This is a great seminary with world-encircling influence," said McCall, himself the retired president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

"Any Christian enterprise not lashed to the word of God is doomed to fail," McCall said in opening remarks. He said the gifts of leaders are to perfect the saints, so the saints can minister. It is those saints, or lay believers, that the men's department will try to unite Christian ministry around the world.

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CORRECTION: In BP mailed 10/21/82, "Baptist Hospital Site of Mafia-Styled Killing" the day of the shooting was Oct. 16, not Oct. 23 as sent. Thanks, BP