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Tennessee Church Responds To
Minnesota Community's Need

By Michael Tutterow

ELIZABETHTON, Tenn. (BP)--In response to a Newsweek magazine article, Elizabethton's Siam Baptist Church has begun efforts to collect and send a truck load of food to residents of Hibbing, Minn., where unemployment has risen as high as 80 percent.

Hibbing, in the heart of northern Minnesota's Mesabi iron range, has been plagued by iron-ore mine shut-downs, with most furloughed miners nearing the end of their unemployment benefits, Newsweek reported.

Shafer Parker, pastor of Siam Baptist Church, said the Newsweek article prompted him to talk Hibbing's plight to church members, who voted to support a relief project. Parker contacted Tom Hertel, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Hibbing to discuss possible ways Siam Baptist could help.

Hertel explained the economic picture, noting out of 44 members in his congregation, only four persons had jobs. "It's bad when people pass out from hunger in church," said Hertel.

He said the church already "pounds" (supplies) about two families a week with canned and dry goods, but admits church members "are not suffering like the community is. We keep two offering plates: one's for taking out, the other's for taking in," added Hertel.

Hertel said the two churches wanted "to use the Christmas time and spirit" to launch the food distribution plan. Parker predicted Siam Baptist and local community supporters could collect the foodstuffs and secure transportation to deliver the goods by the end of January.

Hertel agreed to use Calvary Baptist facilities as a warehouse for the food, removing half the pews in the sanctuary in order to store the food.

Parker admitted securing transportation posed the most difficult problem, but he remained confident. "I can't imagine that if we get the food together we won't find transportation," he said.

He added that Elizabethton churches of various denominations are interested in supporting the project, tying Hibbing area churches. Parker also hoped to enlist community service organizations and businesses in the project.

Parker said the church considered collecting money to send to the Hibbing area, but felt monetary contributions were "easier" than personal involvement and "would not make the same kind of impact."

He explained that church concern for the Hibbing residents had also sparked a new concern for the Elizabethton community, where figures show 13 to 14 percent of the residents out of work. Church plans to serve Christmas dinner to 17 needy Elizabethton citizens blossomed into meals for more than 60 families--275 persons in all.

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Parker, who calls Siam Baptist "the country church with a world-wide vision," said the church has always been a missions supporter, contributing 20 percent of church offerings through the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program in 1982 and designating 25 percent of 1983 church receipts to world wide mission causes. But, he explained, giving money to mission causes can become impersonal.

"We felt it would be a good thing for our church to help in a personal way," said Parker. "God had blessed us. We had a real responsibility to look around and see how we could be a blessing to others."

Coy Finley, director of missions for Northwoods Baptist Association in Minnesota, said Siam Baptist's help has come a crucial time. No openings are forecast before April, when only a limited number of workers will be recalled if any.

He also said funds totalling \$1,200 had been channeled to the association from both the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and the Minnesota-Wisconsin Southern Baptist Fellowship. Finley said the monies will help defray utility costs and clothing needs, as well as purchase food.

Finley said Southern Baptists' concern for the Hibbing area demonstrates that "there is no division" between evangelism and social gospel. "When we see people in the daily walk of life, we try to minister," said Finley. "If there's a hunger need, fill it; if not, then meet the spiritual needs. If both, then fill them. The whole gospel is to minister to the whole man."

"Christians need to be personally involved in helping people, even over long distances," added Parker. "I don't believe we're ever ahead when the government takes over the area of good works. Christians are commanded of God to be outstanding in that area, and in our love for one another and for people who are hurting."

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Valentine Lists Ten
'Good Things' Of 1982

By Duann Kier

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Although humanity has stumbled along with its foot in a bucket for much of 1982, some good things have happened, Foy Valentine, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, wrote in a great column in USA Today.

Valentine's column, in the final issue of 1982, noted 10 good things.

"We're alive. And we are not just alive, we are reasonably well, thank you. The good gifts of love, family, work, achievement, mobility and health add up to one great, good gift of life. It beats the alternative," he wrote.

"We're free," he continued. Even though religious liberty and separation of church and state are battered a bit, he said, they are by no means buried. "The winds of freedom that blew in the faces of our forebears have not ceased to blow in our own faces."

"We're at peace," Valentine noted, adding that while it is uneven, shaky and tenuous, it is still peace.

"General war," he wrote, "has been avoided. More importantly, nuclear war, with its prospect of a billion dead human beings, has not been triggered."

Valentine said initiatives for peace with justice have grown and public perception of the importance of stopping the nuclear arms race has increased significantly.

"Our economy has not collapsed," Valentine also noted. "Even though the supply-side theoreticians of voodoo economics have bequeathed us the highest unemployment since the Great Depression, the banks aren't closed and the grocery shelves aren't empty."

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Extremism has once again been weighed and found wanting, Valentine said, as the New Right in general and the New Religious Right in particular have begun to be reined in. "Even demagogues can read election results," he wrote.

The Southern Baptist ethicist also told the readers of the 400,000 circulation Gannett publication that an orderly transfer of power occurred in many places (such as the leadership changes in Egypt, Spain and even the USSR) and that the Third World seems to have steadied a bit.

"Many Third World countries which were teetering on the brink of economic, political and social disaster refused to take the plunge--Kenya, for example," Valentine said.

Moral values are also coming into somewhat clearer focus, he said.

"The commitment to personal integrity and public righteousness, without which no nation can long endure, has been growing, it seems to me," Valentine wrote.

"Faith survives," he concluded. "Lech Walesa is a good example. God has made this a moral universe. He has made humanity in his own image. And he keeps on kindling the fires of faith in all who will hear his song in the air and see his star in the sky."

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Dallas' First Baptist
Honors \$1 Million Pledge

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DALLAS (BP)--A dream of Pastor W.A. Criswell of First Baptist Church, Dallas, came true when he presented the balance of the church's \$1 million pledge to the Cooperative Program for 1982.

Criswell gave Texas Baptist Executive Director James A. Landes the church's check for \$590,000. Previous contributions for the year have totaled \$410,000.

It is believed to be the first time any church has given \$1 million in support of missions through the Cooperative Program in a single year. First Baptist Church of Midland, Texas, which has led the Cooperative Program giving for the past few years, through Dec. 30 had given more than \$801,736, however, and First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas, another perennial leader, had given \$458,465. The Texas Baptist Convention books closed Dec. 31.

In the fall of 1981, Criswell said, after the church's budget of \$6.5 million had already been adopted, he repeatedly had a dream in which the Lord showed him the need of the world to hear the gospel.

"The Lord said to me, 'I'm asking you to give \$1 million to the Cooperative Program,'" Criswell said.

"It dumbfounded me," he said, but "without any conferences with anybody--there was nobody to confer with--I asked the church to add \$1 million to the budget, to oversubscribe it by another \$1 million."

Criswell said the deacons thought it was a fantastic dream to "out of the blue" ask the church to add another \$1 million, but faced with the challenge, the church pledged \$7.8 million.

Throughout the year, Criswell said, there was speculation that the pledge could be met, but at the last deacons' meeting it was announced the pledge to the Cooperative Program would be made good.

Deacon Vice Chairman Jack Brady said at the check presentation ceremonies that the church had many needs that \$1 million could have been used for, "but the great host of our deacons felt that this was a commitment we were going to keep."

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Landes accepted the check, expressing appreciation on behalf of the "missionaries around the world who will be blessed by it" and for the intangible benefits to be reaped by the symbolism of it.

"God give us more dreamers like W.A. Criswell," he said.

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Equal Rights Amendment
Reintroduced In Congress

By Larry Chesser

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Sending a signal of continued strong support for the controversial Equal Rights Amendment, more than half the members of the new U.S. House of Representatives joined in reintroducing the measure on the first day of the 98th Congress.

Though a 10-year effort to win ratification of ERA by three-fourths of the state legislatures fell three states short when an extended deadline expired last summer, backers of the measure remain optimistic of its eventual passage.

That optimism is partially fueled by the growing political strength American women demonstrated in November's elections, according to Rep. Patricia Schroeder, D-Colo., and co-chair of the bipartisan Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues.

"The women's vote proved a critical factor in the recent elections, both at the state and federal levels," she said. "Significant gains have been made in the number of pro-ERA legislators, thanks to women voting en bloc."

Rep. Peter W. Rodino, D-N.J., said the newly-introduced amendment (H.J. Res. 1) will be "one of the principal items" on the agenda of the House Judiciary Committee he chairs.

"The women of America have already waited too long for justice and equality," Rodino said.

Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights Chairman Don Edwards, D-Calif., said his panel will promptly schedule hearings on the measure which he predicted will win overwhelming approval by the House.

"I challenge the Republican-controlled Senate to do likewise," Edwards said. "Only in this way can the Senate show that it is truly committed to women's equality. Symbolic, piecemeal measures simply will not do."

Senate backers of the amendment are expected to reintroduce it when the Senate returns from an adjournment in late January.

The one-sentence amendment states, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

ERA remains a controversial issue among Southern Baptists. During its 1981 annual meeting in Los Angeles, the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution on the role of women which stated the convention "does not endorse the Equal Rights Amendment."

Nonetheless, the statement encouraged "all persons to be sensitive to the contemporary pressures facing women," and urged "employers to seek fairness for women in compensation, advancement, and opportunities for improvement."

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Baptist Finds \$40,000
And Turns It In

By Erin Hallissy

CONCORD, Calif. (BP)--Richard Wooten had been struggling with his finances when his pastor at Grace Community Baptist Church in Concord told him, "if God wants to give you money out of the air, He will."

It seemed like God delivered.

Standing at a bus stop, Wooten found a plain package that contained between \$40,000 and \$50,000. But even though he only had \$16 in the bank and a broken-down 1970 Ford Ranchero, he really didn't have second thoughts about what to do.

He said he was tempted to slip out a little but it was just a fleeting thought. Wooten, a 32-year-old electronics technician with Exxon Office systems in San Francisco, talked to some friends and a few hours later took the small fortune to the Concord Police Department where it is now under lock and key in the property room.

Wooten appeared taken back by all the attention he received as reporters crowded into a room where he gave a press conference to explain his decision.

He didn't think turning in the cash was a crazy thing to do.

"All I wanted to do was to get rid of it," Wooten said. He said he saw a curious looking package on the bench of a bus stop on Park Avenue, opened it and saw the money. Police refused to specify the exact amount of money or describe the package, saying publicizing those details could hinder the rightful owner from claiming it.

If it isn't claimed by the beginning of April Wooten will be given the money.

Wooten, a self-described born-again Christian and recovering alcoholic, said he had decided the day before finding the money that he would put all his trust in God to take care of his rocky financial situation.

He had been working out a budget with the help of his pastor, Tony Rosenthal, because of financial problems. Rosenthal said he told the divorced man to trust in God and Wooten agreed.

"A year ago I wouldn't have turned that money in," Wooten admitted.

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