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Baptists on Hand to Help Refugees Spilling into Ghana

LOME, Togo (BP)—Southern Baptist missionaries were there to help when Ghana opened its border to thousands of refugees stranded on neighboring Togo's beaches.

The border opening on Jan. 29, requested by the United Nations, enabled thousands from Nigeria to return home to Ghana. But they faced conditions no better than those they left, said Clayton Bond, Southern Baptist missionary in Lome, Togo.

Missionaries and Togolese Baptists sent a truck of food to refugees who had crossed into Ghana and continued distribution of food, water and medical supplies in Togo. They distributed 25,000 pieces of bread Jan. 31.

Southern Baptist missionaries also work in Ghana but they live farther from the border and food is unavailable in Ghana. The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission board has allocated \$45,000 for distribution of food, water and medical supplies in the emergency.

More than 50,000 Africans gathered on the closed Ghana-Togo border after Nigerian President Shehu Shagari proclaimed a mass eviction of foreigners without work permits Jan. 17. According to news reports, he attributed his action to economic problems and social tensions created by illegal aliens that led to bloody riots last fall.

Nigeria estimates that half of the 2 million unauthorized foreigners in the country are Ghanaians. With jobs and goods scarce in their country, Ghanaians have flocked to Nigeria, whose oil wealth undergirds its economy. A world oil glut in recent months has reduced that prosperity.

Groups of refugees also massed at the Togo-Benin border, at the Nigeria-Benin border and in Lagos, Nigeria's capital and principal port, where they scrambled to get out of the country by the Jan. 31 deadline.

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Pilot Spiritual Renewal
For Pastors Held In S.C.

By Celeste Pennington

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MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. (BP)—"This is where the egg hits the pan," said Ira Craft to 63 South Carolina pastors and spouses. "How many of you can say you've heard the Christian witness of each of your deacons—and they have heard yours?"

Craft, a layman, looked out over the gathering, a "pilot" spiritual renewal retreat for pastors. No one raised a hand.

Spiritual renewal in the SBC—for a decade geared toward laypersons—is moving to the pulpit. The aim is to familiarize the pastor with renewal experienced by church members; to better prepare the pastor as an equipper for these newly-motivated saints and to offer a renewal "journey" tailor-made for the clergy.

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"Pastors kept asking us, 'Where is our place in lay renewal?'" explained Reid Hardin, director of the Home Mission Board evangelism support department, which guides lay renewal programs. "We learned pastors and their wives have the same need for spiritual renewal as the laity."

The S.C. retreat—the first projected for five states in 1983—was patterned after lay renewal meetings held in about 3,000 churches in the past 10 years.

Ralph W. Neighbor Jr., director of Touch ministries, a Houston-based effort to train churches how to equip laity, spoke pastor-to-pastor.

"Why do pastors run so hard for office in the SBC?" he asked. Why are pastors so dependent on the size of the church, the number of baptisms, the expansion of the Sunday School for a sense of worth, he continued. "How many of the laity today get their significance from their control of the budget or a piece of the program?" Laity often take their cues from the pastor, he insisted. "We have some values very unlike the one we serve."

Recounting his past efforts, Neighbour, a former church planter and later pastor in Houston, Texas, said he worked hard to find all the "you-all" people. Then one day he faced the fact that his church was committed not to Christ, but to tradition, Neighbour admitted.

For six months, the Houston church closed its doors to new members. After painful soul-searching, the members decided to seek the down-and-outs, the "hidden people" of the city.

A former heroin dealer became a Christian; he brought with him addicts and street people.

In a ramshackle building, the church opened a halfway house for heroin addicts. And in the midst of vomiting, shaking and agony were Sunday School teachers and deacons: "Every member of our church had their shift," said Neighbour. "All of us learned how spiritually bankrupt we were." Church members began seeking and using their individual ministry gifts, Neighbour reported. "I had to learn to do what seminary didn't teach me: equip the laity."

Although it's not easy, Neighbour said the pastor must "rattle the cage of the sit and soakers." Lay renewal offers a conducive environment: "Nothing will shake (inactive) members more than a group of turned-on laypersons: when a layman tells another layman what God is doing in his life, he says what no pastor can."

Often, Neighbour believes, the pastor's attitude toward his members is, "If you can't teach, if you can't sing in the choir then maybe you can collect records—or be a deacon."

Neighbour warned that as the laity in a church mobilize, tensions and problems will arise. But, "You will have problems of life rather than problems of death. A church that doesn't equip its members is a dead-end street."

Bill Mackey, director of evangelism for South Carolina, said, "It is important for us to help our (church) people be more effective in their sharing...in their serving Christ."

Mackey will help prepare the South Carolina pastors and their spouses for a three-year renewal journey through "sharing groups" organized by geographic areas. Their meetings and study will revolve around the three-year ministry of Christ, he said.

Mackey expressed appreciation for the openness of pastors at the retreat.

"Unmasking is always painful," observed Harold Thompson, pastor of Gowensville Baptist Church in Landrum. "But, the conference was exactly what I needed. I've come to a real dry moment. I needed this personal renewal."

The pilot retreat was a "good start," Hardin believes. "The pastors and their wives met with colleagues and experienced renewal in the same way laity experience it in local churches."

Hardin's assessment was underscored by a pastor's spouse: "It's been nice to renew and rebuilt some relationships." And, she said, "If our husbands come to a meeting like this without us—they're in trouble."

Preacher Stunned, But Not Silent
When Th President Drops In

By Robert O'Brien

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)—Ambrose Nyangao's "blood stopped flowing" when he heard—with 20 minutes advance warning—that the president of Kenya would hear him preach.

Th young African was scheduled to speak at Parklands Baptist Church, Nairobi, where he had taken his first church staff job as associate pastor two months earlier. The pastor, Southern Baptist missionary Charles Tope, was out of town.

The church of Africans, Asians, Europeans and Americans had invited Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi to worship there. He had accepted but did not say when he would come.

When Nyangao and others arrived Jan. 16, the church's custodian informed them, "The president's escorts were here and they said not to start without him. He will arrive at 10:15." Moi, who had visited another Baptist church in Nakuru, Kenya, last November, agreed to speak briefly before Nyangao preached.

"I really didn't come here to speak but to worship with you," said Moi, a member of th African Inland Church. The Kenyan president had an obvious grasp of the scripture and familiarity with speaking before his fellow christians.

Moi urged worshippers to "be faithful in praying and be confident that God will answer prayer." Quoting from Psalms, he noted "God is ever present when trouble comes," and that Kenyans should "thank God for having protected us during 1982."

"God was ever present when we had trouble in 1982," declared Moi, whose government survived a coup attempt Aug. 1. "Humans can't solve their own problems—it's impossible," he said. "All persons have failed and become sinners. Satan never wants people to have rest. But we can pray to God and overcome our problems."

Moi compared modern-day humanity to the biblical example of Peter, who could walk on water when he had faith in Jesus but sank beneath the waves when "he lost faith and looked aside rather than toward Jesus."

"Peter found that Jesus Christ was the only one who could be trusted," Moi said. He urged the Baptists to "pray that God will increase our faith and pray that many persons will receive our everlasting Savior."

After Moi's remarks, Nyangao rose to preach on "God's promises." He incorporated Moi's emphasis effectively into his own sermon, which he delivered with authority beyond his years.

"I was praying the whole time," he said later. "God answered my prayers."

-30-

The Charm Of This Class
Is Its Spiritual Emphasis

By Johnnie B. McCracken

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—"The first day I went my brother had been picking at me and I was so mad at him," 12-year-old Cassandra King confessed. "Then when I got to the class, they were talking about how to deal with the way people act toward you."

"Class" is a Christian charm course taught by a Woman's Missionary Union organization from Woodlawn Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala. "I came to learn about charm. Then I found out there was going to be Bible study, too. It seemed odd, but I came back every week," King said, admitting the class helped helped change some of her attitudes.

When Lottie Fallin became concerned about neighborhood girls she saw playing in a local park, she approached her newly formed WMU organization about how to reach unchurched in this transitional area.

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Other members agreed to work with Fallin in teaching a weekly Bible class. However, they weren't sure straight Bible study would attract young girls.

Lois Whitten hit on the idea of a Christian charm class so the girls could learn that inner beauty, based on a right relationship with the Lord, was directly related to outward appearance and actions.

The women decided to hold the classes in the recreational center of the local park because they wanted the children to feel they could come without barriers of race or denomination.

They consulted their pastor, James Bruton, about the proposed project which would probably involve a racial mix of children. "He told us to go right ahead with our plans," Aline Walkley said. "He said our hearts are all the same and our ministry should reflect this."

Fallin secured permission from park officials to conduct the classes on their premises. "We never made any bones about our aim," she said. "They knew we would teach the Bible along with the charm course. They gave us a room to use and even let one of their instructors help us with an exercise period at each meeting."

The women discovered a teaching manual and workbooks on Christian charm in a local Baptist Book Store. In addition to the book studies, local specialists volunteered expertise in modeling, nutrition and cosmetology. More than 30 children enrolled for the eight-week course with an average attendance of 20, equally divided between blacks and whites.

"We studied, shared problems and really came to love each other as we practiced walking, sitting, going up and down stairs, table setting and manners. We also taught the beauty that come from a smile on their face, their actions and attitudes and the way they treat other people."

Ten-year-old Rachel Watkins summed up the experience by saying she learned "if we want to be beautiful outside, we have to be beautiful inside. We also need to read the Bible and tell others about it."

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(Johnnie B. McCracken is a free-lance writer in Birmingham, Ala.)

Draper: Broadcasters Must
Complement Local Church

By Stan Hasteley

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WASHINGTON (BP)—Southern Baptist Convention President James T. Draper told the nation's religious broadcasters they must complement rather than compete with the local church if they are to fulfill their mission.

Draper, the keynote speaker to the 40th annual convention of the National Religious Broadcasters, told an estimated audience of 2,800, "the missing link in much of religious broadcasting is the primacy of the strategy of Christ through the local church."

For radio and television preachers to tell their listeners and viewers they can discharge their obligation to tithe their money by sending in a check is neither "godly" nor "biblical."

Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Tex., said that while he personally contributes offerings above the tithe to religious broadcasters and asks his people to do the same, "we must never put those two (local church and broadcasters) in competition...Folks, there's plenty to go around. You do what God tells you to do and you magnify the local church and God will take care of your needs....If that's not true, God is a liar, the Bible is false and Jesus is not Lord."

Draper said further that "to put electronic arms to the churches" instead of "simply binding believers to the personalities of the communicators in television and radio may be the greatest challenge you face for the immediate future."

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He also suggested electronic preachers give preeminence to the Bible and center their message in the Lordship of Christ. "The subtle temptation of the religious broadcaster is the same temptation that I face as a pastor," he said, "and that is to fashion the message to the tastes of the people."

He warned the broadcasters to beware of their industry's "basic principle" of shading the message for the securing of the viewer and the listener." In the setting of religious broadcasting, he declared, that practice "is to be tempted to produce a counterfeit gospel....It contributes to the confusion in the marketplace as people with itchy ears listen for what they want to hear rather than what God wants them to hear."

Noting that the federal government has already deregulated radio and is moving toward deregulation of television, Draper warned the "wasteland" of television "will become even bleaker" as industry executives "make virtually all their decisions marching to the rhythm of a cash register." He predicted that deregulation "will usher in the most tragic days that America has ever seen."

Despite his pessimism, Draper said there are "springs of hope" in the field of broadcasting.

"There are some oases in the desert. There are times when through the media are brought to a sense of outrage over injustices. There are times when we are brought to a sense of conviction about what ought to be happening in our nation."

He declared further: "God has given us the most powerful teaching, witnessing evangelizing tool in the history of humanity. And I believe that God has given us the media for the purpose of sharing his message with lost and dying mankind."