



-- FEATURES

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83-106

Other Brandon Recovering
From Rare Liver Disorder

By Brenda S. Hall

TOPEKA, Kan. (BP)--Fourteen-month-old Brandon Botts is taking swimming lessons this summer, nattily turned out in red trunks and a brief terrycloth top. He splashes enthusiastically when his mother lowers him into the water.

A thin scar stretching part way across his rotund abdomen is the only obvious evidence of the ordeal Brandon and his parents, Robert and Beverly, have undergone in the past 12 months.

Brandon Botts shares not only the same name and age, but also the same ailment as Brandon Hall, a Memphis, Tenn., toddler who captured national media attention in May when his struggle for life ended days after a liver transplant.

Both were born with biliary atresia, a disorder that occurs in one in 8,000-10,000 live births when a child is born without liver ducts which drain into the intestine. The prognosis is grim: the disease claims 75 percent of its victims, most within their first year.

Brandon Botts, a cheerful, chunky 25-pounder who is growing and developing normally for a child his age, is among the 25 percent who survive biliary atresia. His doctors can offer no scientific explanation but his parents believe Brandon's recovery has happened as a result of the prayers of the many people who knew of his condition.

During Brandon's eight-week checkup in June 1982, pediatrician Dennis Cooley noticed Brandon was jaundiced. When blood tests showed an abnormally high bilirubin count, Brandon was hospitalized for more tests and three days later was taken to a Kansas City, Mo., hospital for surgery to create the needed ducts.

The family was told the surgery was risky. Half the children who have it never lose the jaundice and die within a year. Another 25 percent lose the jaundice but it returns later, the liver fails and death results. The remaining 25 percent recover completely.

Friends filled the waiting room while Brandon was in surgery. Others from across the U.S. stayed in touch by phone. "There were people praying for him all over the country," Mrs. Botts said. Even teenagers working with Terry McIlvain, Mrs. Botts' supervisor, on a joint youth summer mission project in Nebraska, waited for news to pass along to their home churches.

Brandon remained at the hospital for nearly two weeks. Friends Bob and Kristen Gray Desbrien of Kansas City, who were attending the 1982 Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans, left their home and a car available to the Bottses.

"People were sympathetic and concerned and very supportive," Mrs. Botts said. "We didn't get any comments like 'If you've got enough faith, Brandon will be healed.' Rather, people encouraged us by saying things like 'If it's the Lord's will, Brandon will be all right, then he will be,'" she said.

Eight weeks after the operation Brandon's bilirubin count dropped only to 8.5. It had been 8.0 before surgery and 11.0 immediately afterwards. Normal is between .5 and 1.

Holder told them any positive sign about Brandon's condition should have appeared by then. In his 20 years as pediatric surgeon he'd known only one child who had gone longer than eight weeks before a positive sign appeared, Mrs. Botts said.

"He didn't give us any hope at all," she said. "He told us 'You can hope, but don't expect anything.' He was very honest with us." That was when the Bottses "told the Lord we'd tell what happened to Brandon, whatever the outcome would be."

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In following months, Brandon had periodic checkups and experienced the minor health problems usual for children his age. "About the only sign that would show Brandon's improvement was lessening of the jaundice. We also were given a description of symptoms that would appear as his condition worsened. They were pretty gruesome," Mrs. Botts said.

The Bottses determined early on to live as normal a life as possible and do their best not to be overly-protective of their son.

"We had our days. Some days one of us would fall apart and some days both of us would. At least for me, from the very beginning, I felt Brandon would be all right. I still do. That doesn't mean I thought it would be easy. It hasn't been," Mrs. Botts admitted.

She returned on a part-time basis to her job as secretary in the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists' youth evangelism department, and Bob continued his work as a general agent for an insurance company. Brandon stayed with several other children at a sitter's while his mother worked.

"There wouldn't be any purpose in altering our lifestyle so dramatically that all we did was sit and watch Brandon. And it wouldn't have done Brandon any good. We felt even his being at home with me day in and day out would have deprived him of contact with other people, especially children his own age," Mrs. Botts said.

The Bottses followed through with plans to take a business-related trip to Greece ("Because we needed it for ourselves as a couple"). Mrs. Bottses' mother, Mrs. Annie Dixon, and her aunt, Mrs. Julie Herrington, came to Topeka from Dublin, Ga., to stay with Brandon.

The months passed. At Brandon's nine-month checkup, Cooley thought he looked less jaundiced than usual and ordered another blood test. It showed the bilirubin count had dropped to .9. By Brandon's 12-month checkup, the count had dropped still further to .8.

The Bottses are grateful for Brandon's recovery, but know there still could be problems. Brandon's liver and spleen are enlarged and therefore more susceptible to damage. A liver transplant remains a possibility, should it become necessary to save Brandon's life.

After Brandon Hall's death following his liver transplant, the Bottses remembered their decision to tell their Brandon's story. They discussed it with their pastor, Gene Hawkins, of Topeka's First Southern Baptist Church. Hawkins, in turn, contacted the Topeka Capital-Journal and later that week a story and photo of Brandon appeared on the front page. Response to the article has been positive, the Bottses said.

They were encouraged by a letter from a Sublette, Kan., woman who told them her 10-year old son, born with biliary atresia, had undergone three operations, now plays football and baseball and leads a life normal for a boy his age.

"It will never be over (the possibility of future problems). It'll still come back to us on occasion," said Mrs. Botts. "But we have come to the place where we can let it rest with the Lord, and we want people to know that sometimes good things happen."

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(Brenda Hall is editorial assistant on the Baptist Digest, news publication of the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists.)

Layman Smoothes a Path
For Missionaries to Mali

Baptist Press
7/15/83

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A Southern Baptist layman's friendship with a top government official paved the way for Southern Baptist missionaries to begin work in Mali, West Africa Sept. 1.

Oliv r Reece, a miner from Albuquerque, N.M., became friends with Maki Tall, Mali's ambassador in Washington, as he made arrangements for his firm to set up mining operations in Mali. About the same time, Southern Baptist missionaries Norman and Beverly Coad were learning a trade language for their work in Bobo-Dioulasso, Upper Volta.

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After Reece contacted Tall, the two struck up a friendship which brought them "as close as brothers" and interested Tall in having Southern Baptist missionaries work in Mali, said John Mills, the Foreign Mission Board's director for West Africa.

From his government contacts and Reece, Tall heard what Southern Baptists had done across West Africa to help people--such as Sanwabo project in Upper Volta (which joined Southern Baptist missionaries and Tennessee Baptist volunteers built a dam)--teaching people how to read, farm and care for their families better. He wanted that kind of mission work in Mali.

Th ambassador wrote the Foreign Mission Board asking for missionaries in Mali, but was recalled by his government before Mills could meet with him. Mills could have told him Southern Baptists were already considering sending missionaries there.

The missionaries Mills asked to start work in Mali were the Coads. The language they were learning is spoken by most people in Mali. They had already learned French, official language for both Upper Volta and Mali. And Norman Coad was the man who had dreamed up the Sanwabo project which had impressed Tall.

In May the Coads, Mills and Billy Bullington, the board's associate director for French-speaking West Africa, met with Tall and Reece in Bamako, Mali's capital. Tall, a grandson of the last king of the ancient Mali empire, had returned to Mali to become director of international cooperation in the ministry of foreign affairs, one of the government's top posts. The group discussed a common vision of helping the people of Mali through one-step-at-a-time projects they could continue themselves.

Tall promised to expedite visas and ask government ministers to cooperate with Southern Baptist missionaries. He assured the group his country practices religious freedom--they can be as evangelistic as they wish.

Th Coads will transfer Sept. 1 to Bamako, where Coad will work as a general evangelist. They envision a ministry based on Baptist centers where the Mali people, mostly Muslim, can learn new skills, participate in recreation or discuss religion. They're also considering agricultural and health projects and have requested a center director, field evangelist, agriculturalist, physician's assistant, public health nurse and dentist be sought for appointment to Mali.

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Girgis An Angel
In Medical Garb

By Norman Jameson

Baptist Press
7/15/83

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Lydia May Girgis' boss told her she was more social worker than doctor. He told her co-workers the laughing, hugging, helping Baptist was "an angel."

Girgis, a medical doctor from Cairo, Egypt, is a master of arts in communication student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. She is the second Egyptian to study at Southwestern. Her father, Seddick, was the first. He graduated in 1931 with a master of divinity degree and is thought to have been the first Baptist in Egypt.

When Lydia felt the Lord telling her, as she walked to work each day, she should be going to seminary, there was no question where she would go.

"Where else would I go but where my father went?" she asks. "This is very personal to m. I am the second Egyptian here. Maybe someday a son or daughter of mine will be the third. If it weren't for Southwestern Seminary, there wouldn't have been a Baptist work in Egypt."

Unlike other doctors in Egypt's national health system, Girgis involved hers lf with her patients. "I hugged them, I kissed them, I laughed with them. The patients loved me."

Occasionally, she took one home for medicine she had stored in a cabinet or gave one money to buy the medicine she prescribed. She railed at nurses and orderlies who treated patients crudely in the national hospitals. But always, she felt constrained by the Muslims around her.

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"I couldn't witness to them with anything but my love," she said. "Everybody around me was Muslim. We are forbidden by law to witness to them."

Ninety percent of Egypt is Muslim. By law only two of the 50 national ministers of state can be Christian. Residents carry identification cards that include a designation of religion. Job applications require a person to declare his faith.

Such an attitude of restriction frustrated Girgis, who was very active in one of nine Baptist churches in Egypt. She led dramas, wrote, taught and used a movie camera to record important events in church life.

She came to seminary intending to major in music or religious education and was surprised to learn of the communications degree offered. Because so much of what she did in church was communications related, the master's degree was a natural for her.

When Girgis returns to either Cairo or Fayoum, her father's hometown, she plans to open a private clinic which will "give the best for the least."

Even there she will not be able to witness openly about Jesus Christ, she said. But she intends to have Christian literature in the office and pipe Christian music through speakers.

The fanatical Islamic faith fomented in Iran which is causing distress in much of the Middle East appears in Egypt in about 10 percent of the Muslims, Girgis says. She cannot understand women wanting to "live in a tent" as they travel outside the home in long, hooded dresses with only slits for eye holes.

She thinks most Egyptians are pleased with the treaty that secured the return of the Sinai Peninsula from Israel and would be reluctant to fight again to secure land for the Palestinians. "We don't have enough blood in our veins to fight again," she said. "We got our land back. If we fight again, we are fighting for somebody else's land."

She sees no solution in the Middle East "until the Lord returns."

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary.

Students Comprise
Mission Field

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
7/15/83

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--College students comprise a mission field for Southern Baptist churches in witnessing, ministering and caring.

Four men committed to church ministries with students are Ian Chapman, pastor of Third Church, St. Louis; Mike Sheppard, minister to students at the church and on the St. Louis University and Washington University campuses; Charles Johnson, secretary of national student ministries of the Baptist Sunday School Board, and Charles Baker, pastor of University Heights Church, Stillwater, Okla.

Chapman became convinced his century-old church in mid-town St. Louis needed to be ministering with students two years ago as he performed a wedding in which the party included two medical doctors and a tax attorney. "It dawned on me we had a golden opportunity to shape the movers and shakers of our community and we weren't doing anything about it," Chapman said.

Out of his concern was born a cooperative relationship with the Missouri Baptist Convention in which Sheppard was employed as a student minister to the campuses and also worked on the church staff. Describing his role as a reproducer of disciples, Sheppard said one outgrowth of students becoming involved in prayer and discipleship groups on the campuses is "they realize the need to be involved in a church."

Baker knows the significance of churches ministering to students because "that is how my life was first touched. Baptist Student Union helped it along."

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Years later, as an associate in the student department of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, he became concerned "we weren't making the best churchmen and this is important in the long run. I saw the need for healthy churches around college campuses."

When he became pastor of University Heights, he stepped into a church which had been started in 1954 primarily to minister to the students at Oklahoma State University. "We are a community church but our ministry is focused without apology to the 23,000 students on the OSU campus," Baker said. "One of the ways I see my job is as assistant BSU director. BSU and University Heights work together so a student never has to choose between the two."

Johnson agreed cooperation, not competition, is the key to effective ministries with students which include both BSU and local churches. Also, he noted, "We may have churches ministering to students on campuses where there is no BSU. In these situations, the church ministry becomes the student ministry."

While based on the same conviction, ministries of Third and University Heights are different, to meet the needs of each situation.

Bible study at the church on Sunday morning is where the campus and church ministries are tied together, according to Sheppard. "We have faced the whole goal of campus work being an extension of the church.

"We look upon this as a mission," said Chapman. "The church can't be concerned only for its immediate present but must also care about the future of the church and nation."

Sheppard cited one student he meets with weekly on the St. Louis University campus who has a goal of starting a business near the church to employ students and others in the inner-city community. "He's caught that goal by working through the church," Sheppard said.

Baker pointed to 15 former students and church members now enrolled in Southern Baptist seminaries, 22 who are serving on the foreign mission field and one who, as a layperson, helped to start a church in Sweden.

"Southern Baptists must understand the local church will not itself see a lot of long-term results, but we must look beyond ourselves and see the world," said Baker. His rationale for ministry is simple and direct: "Can you show me any other place in our society where people are making more major decisions in a four-year period?"

Baker characterized today's students as "eager and ready to respond." Among Christian students, he cited a "holy dissatisfaction. They are asking how they can help the church live up to its potential. We're at a good point in student ministry," Baker said. "We've emphasized discipleship, grown to a healthy point in evangelism and have not lost our emphasis on social concerns."

Johnson said his department will work closely with the Sunday school, church training, music and other departments at the board, "encouraging student ministry in the church as an emphasis program of the church." Also, he said, "We will be encouraging churches to involve themselves directly on campuses."

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SBC Releases 16 Hotels
For Individual Reservations

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
7/15/83

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Sixteen Kansas City hotels with contracts with the Southern Baptist Convention Housing Bureau were made available to individuals July 15.

The annual meeting of the SBC will be June 12-14, 1984 in Kansas City, Mo.

The SBC retained contracted space in 32 hotels. Those 4,000 rooms will be allocated to people mailing in room requests to the SBC Housing Bureau after Oct. 1, 1983.

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"These 16 hotels still have contracts with the SBC and most are offering special rates to SBC messengers," said Tim Hedquist, director of financial planning for the SBC Executive Committee and director of the SBC Housing Bureau.

The 1983 SBC meeting in Pittsburgh authorized changes in the housing procedure. Under the new policies the number of rooms reserved by the Housing Bureau was reduced.

"There are approximately 13,000 hotel and motel rooms in the greater Kansas City area," Hedquist said. "Obviously the 48 hotels we had contracts with don't account for all 13,000. Obviously those hotels who did not choose to participate with the Housing Bureau will still take reservations from individuals."

The 16 hotels and their phone numbers (all in area code 816 unless noted) are:

Alameda Plaza Hotel, 756-1500; Best Western-KCI, 464-2525; Blue Ridge Inn, 763-0600; Blue Valley Manor, 229-6363; Granada Royale Homotel, 756-1720; Heritage Inn, 331-1200; Hilton Airport Plaza Inn, 891-8900; Hilton Plaza Inn, 753-7400;

Holiday Inn-KCI, 464-2345; LaQuinta Motor Inn, 913-492-5500; Marriott Hotel-KCI, 464-2200; Raphael Hotel, 756-3800; Regency Park Resort, 913-649-7000; Sheraton-KCI, 741-5900; Skyline Inn, 741-5500, and Summit Inn, 525-1400.

The hotels not released by the Housing Bureau are: Adams Mark, Arrowhead Inn, Ball Park Inn, Best Western Antioch Inn, Best Western Hallmark Inn-Liberty, Best Western Stadium Inn, Capri, Century Inn (formerly the Executive Inn), Dixon Inn, Embassy on the Park-Sheraton, Hallmark Inn-Olathe, Holiday Inn Center (where the WMU will meet), Holiday Inn Fun World,

Holiday Inn Sports Complex, Holiday Inn Towers, Howard Johnson's-Central, Howard Johnson's-Downtown, Howard Johnson's-East, Howard Johnson's-North, Howard Johnson's-Southwest, Hyatt Regency, Inn at Executive Park, Mission Inn, Phillips House, Radisson Muehlebach (headquarters hotel), Ramada Inn-Overland Park, Rodeway Inn-Overland Park, Royale Inn, Travelodge-Downtown, Travelodge-Gateway, Travelodge-Midtown and Westin Crown Center.

Hedquist indicated released rooms are expected to be reserved quickly.

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Full Senate To Consider
Two Prayer Admendments

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press
7/15/83

WASHINGTON (BP)--Without recommending passage of either, the Senate Juciciary Committee has voted to send two proposed constitutional amendments on school prayer to the floor for consideration by the full Senate.

The 14-3 action avoided endorsing either President Reagan's proposal to allow vocal prayer in public schools or a silent prayer and meditation version sponsored by Sen, Orrin Hatch, R-Utah. It also left some proponents doubtful either measure can attract the two-thirds approval requir d for a constitutional amendment.

"The chances of either passing now are diminished," Hatch said afterwards, adding he would have preferred the committee to report out one amendment favorably rather than have two competing versions go to the floor without recomendation.

As originally proposed, the Reagan amendment would have permitted state-written oral prayer in public schools but the committee agreed to a White House approved modification designed to deal with government authorship of school prayers before send it to the floor.

The one-sentence addition would bar the United States or any state from composing "the words of any prayer to be said in public schools." But Hatch and other panel members, including ranking minority member Joseph R. Biden Jr., D-Del., charged the modification doesn't actually solve the problem of school prayer authorship.

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The new sentence "does not do anything at all," Biden said. "It still will allow a teacher to pick up a Koran and insist everyone either leave the room or recite the Koran."

Under the modified Reagan proposal, Biden said, teachers also could select a prayer from the "most outrageous" religious group on the left or right or use the Bible or the Lord's Prayer. The change, he charged, fails to "lift the onus from the notion that children be either forced to move out of a room or put their heads down or identify themselves as being different from the rest of the class."

Hatch contended his proposal, which calls for equal access to the use of public schools by all voluntary student groups as well as silent prayer and meditation, would have stood a better chance of passage had the panel sent it to the Senate alone with a favorable recommendation.

But conservative prayer lobby groups and White House officials maintained pressure on the committee to pass the president's proposal to permit vocal organized prayer exercises in public schools. "In their zeal to have their amendment at all costs," Hatch said, "they may have very well diminished the chances of passing a constitutional amendment."

There is still a chance one or the other will pass the Senate, Hatch added, but called the chances "more remote." The Utah Republican also challenged a contention by North Carolina Republican John P. East that the constitution's first amendment bars the national government, but not state governments, from establishing their religion.

Asked during the mark-up session by Biden if it were the intention of framers of the constitution to permit North Carolina to establish Catholicism as the official religion of that state, East replied, "Absolutely."

Afterwards, Hatch disagreed, saying the constitution's framers opposed establishment of religion by either the federal government or a state.

Neither amendment is expected to be considered by the Senate before this fall. At that time, some judiciary committee members who voted to prevent the proposal to go to the floor have announced they will oppose either or both measures.

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Burnout: A Fact Of Life
For Baptist Pastors

By Nancy Barcus

Baptist Press
7/15/83

WACO, Texas (BP)--The stress level among Southern Baptist pastors is higher than ministers of most other denominations, according to James Landes.

Landes, former executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and now distinguished professor of religion at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, says he is acutely aware of the problem and he's made a personal vow to change it.

"Our completely autonomous church government structure means all the weight falls on the preacher to keep the churches running," he said recently. "Did you know the stress level among Baptist preachers is higher than among preachers in churches with more hierarchy in their structure?" he asked.

Today, 80 percent of the difficulty in churches comes from staff conflicts, he said. "The pastor never knows what will happen during a Wednesday night church meeting."

Landes feels an urgent need to teach young ministers how to take better care of themselves. "At a recent statewide meeting, the Red Cross was checking blood pressure as a public service and Baptist leaders were amazed at the dangerously high levels among pastors.

"Statistics indicate nearly all our ministers have suffered some kind of stress or personal crisis by age 40," he said.

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While pastors are expected to turn to God when they experience conflict, they also need practical assistance with their lives--including advice on how to manage their families, their finances and their health, Landes pointed out. "They're human beings, and they lead the most stressful lives I know anything about," he said.

Burnout among pastors is a subject Landes understands well. He's spent most of his adult years as a pastor in churches throughout Texas and Alabama. He remembers those years as good ones, he says, including his nearly 20 years at Wichita Falls' First Baptist Church. But he knows from the inside the pressures of the job.

He knows, too, the idealism dedicated young Christians bring to their first pastorate. As president of Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene in the mid-1960s, he came to understand the fresh and enthusiastic outlook these future pastors have. That exposure, plus a longstanding love for Baylor, may explain why he selected Baylor's religion department for his first step in fulfilling his vow to be of help.

When he retired from his post as executive director of BGCT earlier this year, he carried with him one vow--to do everything in his power to prepare young pastors for the lifetime of stress he knows awaits them.

In his courses, he talks to students about what lies ahead--the stresses they will have to manage as they encounter staff and congregational conflict. "First, these young ministers need to know how to get the job done," he said. "Then, they need to know how to function when the water hits the wheel.

"Our Baptist young people are capable, articulate, dedicated, and they respond to challenge," he said of his students today. "The younger they are, the more they like a 'big, big job' with lots of risks--and stress."

So, when they begin hitting the bumps, Landes wants to be there. His long-range goal is to set up seminars and counseling centers where these talented and idealistic young leaders can receive enough help to stay with that first love--the church.

"Yes, our Baptist church autonomy makes it harder for them" he said, but he added, "Show me a system that works better! Our churches are standing the test."

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Foreign Board Pursuing Witness
To Nations With No Missionaries

By Bill Webb

Baptist Press
7/15/83

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptists probably will never have missionaries in all the world's countries, but they do have a plan to reach them for Christ.

It is called the Ministry Development Plan, and it reflects the increased initiative the Foreign Mission Board has taken to minister in countries where missionaries do not or cannot live and work.

Many of the guidelines in the plan emerged as board staffers considered how Southern Baptists could give spiritual encouragement to Christians in China, said Charles Bryan, head of the Foreign Mission Board's overseas operations. China is closed to missionaries but open to tourists and visits from professionals in medical and other fields.

"We've got to keep an eye on the whole world, our vision on the total task," he said. "We can't go into all countries but we can be in contact with them."

A board-sponsored study of the 2,200 largest cities in the world, to be completed in 1985, will challenge Southern Baptists to develop effective strategies for winning cities already open to missionaries as well as the hundreds more in closed countries, he believes.

But evangelizing countries where missionaries don't live means trying different approaches.

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For instance, Southern Baptists maintain contact and fellowship with eastern European Baptists primarily through John David Hopper. The fraternal representative and his family live in Vienna, Austria, and he travels in and out of Eastern Europe.

Baptists in some western European countries don't feel they need American missionaries but welcome partnership crusades involving Southern Baptist ministers and laymen.

Baptist laymen may be the only evangelical links to people in some countries. The board, through its Laity Abroad program, briefs Baptists who are employed in secular jobs overseas and want to witness in their international settings.

The best hope for continuing Christian witness in China and other countries may be Baptists who can provide services and consultations in their professional fields and share a witness along the way. In countries closed to any form of evangelistic effort, Baptist tourists can share a personal witness.

Non-missionary clergy often work as chaplains in English-speaking expatriate communities, such as in some Middle East countries that welcome American companies but adamantly refuse to allow Christian missionaries.

The Ministry Development Plan makes each of the board's eight directors of mission work responsible for developing goals to provide contact with countries in his area which do not have missionaries.

Ministries may range from literature distribution and leadership training to medical care, education and food production programs. In addition, the board will notify Southern Baptists of Christian opportunities in such countries through the prayer network, Bryan said.

"Our overarching goal is for everyone to hear the gospel," he added. "The China situation gives us an example. It's closed to us--but not to the Lord."

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Growing Singles Population Offers New Ministry Challenge

By Barbara Little

Baptist Press
7/15/83

ATLANTA (BP)--Charlie Zerbinopolous of Atlanta wakes each morning, gets dressed and goes downstairs to fix breakfast, alone. He remembers how he enjoyed fixing breakfast for his son, Andy, while his wife slept. But that was before the divorce.

Meg Mosteller, a 25-year-old research assistant in Birmingham, drives to work planning her day--jogging, meeting a friend for supper and shopping afterwards. She relishes her independence.

Although the lifestyles are different, both represent the fastest growing segment in society--single America. Census figures indicate 74.5 million Americans 18 years and older, or one-third of the nation's population, are single--never married, divorced or widowed.

At a recent National Think Tank on Evangelism with Singles, Larry Rose, director of the Center for Urban Church Studies, said, historically, Southern Baptists have been suspicious of singles. "The person who is single does not fit in our mold. If they are 24 and not married, we ask 'why?' If they are divorced or separated we are even more uncomfortable."

Nearly 19 million singles live alone, an increase of 75 percent (eight million) over 1970. Singles compose nearly 50 percent of the population of big cities such as Atlanta, New York, Chicago and Dallas where their lifestyle is catered to.

The rising single population can be attributed to the trend of marrying later in life. In 1970, the median age of men marrying for the first time was 22; now it is almost 25. The median age of women marrying for the first time was 21 in 1970; now it is 23.

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The number of divorces has more than doubled in the past decade, according to the census bureau, another contribution in the upsurge of singles in our nation.

The upsurge in the number of singles has the Home Mission Board gearing up to reach them for Christ. Dan Crawford, national evangelism consultant for singles, has been given the task.

One of the first actions taken by Crawford was to sponsor a National Think Tank on Evangelism with Singles. Among the 25 participants were: Charles Baker, Stillwater, Okla.; Robert Cannon, Mill Valley, Calif.; Doug Cole, Raleigh, N.C.; Roy Fish, Fort Worth, Texas; Bob Johnson, Kansas City, Mo.; Paul Royal, Dallas; Steve Seelig, Phoenix, Ariz., and James Williams, Fort Worth.

Crawford said, "Southern Baptists have always believed the church is to take the God-ordained initiative in reaching people. Therefore, the role of the church is indispensable to the evangelizing of single groups. God has commanded us to reach. The number (of singles) simply intensifies our challenge."

The unique needs of singles encourage a specialized approach, Crawford said. "The key in reaching singles is to motivate other singles to witness."

He has produced a seminar to equip and motivate single adults. "EvangLife: A Seminar in Lifestyle Evangelism" has been used with numerous groups. Videotapes of the seminary are available from the Baptist Video Tape Service.

Due to the heavy demand, Crawford has already begun training others to lead the seminar around the nation. One person from South Dakota, recently trained by Crawford, scheduled four EvangLif seminars with churches in the Northern Plains Baptist Convention within two weeks.

"Singles respond to challenge instead of guilt," Crawford said. "Lifestyle evangelism is a challenge."

"Churches must consider alternative lifestyles, divorce, singleness and God's redemptive love before they can accept singles. They must find if they really want to have a singles program, or if it is merely a fad," he said.

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CORRECTION....In (BP) story "Don't Despise 'Rescue Work', Miller Tells SBC Educators" mailed 7/14/83, in fourth line of second paragraph please change name of Miller's second speech to "The Demon of Elitism" instead of "The Dream of Elitism" as sent.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

SPECIAL FEATURE

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SERVICE OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

NEWS ANALYSIS

July 15, 1983

New School Prayer Model Should Be Scrapped Too

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--Comparing President Reagan's new school prayer amendment with last year's model brings to mind a comparison between the 1969 and 1970 Volkswagen beetles--each was distinct but not much different.

The president and his staff apparently believe the newer, shinier prayer amendment will have a smoother ride than last year's now discarded model. They are already finding the ride to be rough.

This can be attributed basically to a disturbing reality--neither model of the amendment answers the basic question of who will write the prayers school children will be expected to recite as a part of their daily routine.

Last year, when the first model was unveiled, the White House--on the advice of the Justice Department--told too much about the product. In words more revealing than Mr. Reagan or his advisers realized, they correctly observed that state governments and local school boards would be free to compose their own prayers for public school use. "If groups of people are to be permitted to pray," the White House document read, "someone must have the power to determine the content of such prayers."

That bit of truth in advertising came back to haunt the president and his men. Some defenders of separation of church and state, such as James Dunn of the Baptist Joint Committee, wouldn't let them forget the product's main deficiency. For his trouble in defending principle, Dunn was made a target of Religious Right leaders both within and without the Southern Baptist Convention.

Yet before the 1982 model of the prayer amendment had been on the road for a year, its designers recalled it in favor of the new version. They were forced to admit that what had been said about the older model was true.

Now Mr. Reagan and company offer the American consumer a version of an amendment that conveniently comes without a warning like that on the first one. They do not tell the people this time who would write the prayers, except to say that it would not be Congress or the state legislatures.

But the consumer is not likely to be fooled this time either. Even Sen. Orrin G. Hatch, a Reagan Republican from Utah, believes the new model is not much better than its predecessor and predicts it too will fail the road test in the Senate.

It deserves to fail, not because school children don't need to pray, but because they don't need zealous adults who reflect the prevailing local religious majority writing their prayers for them.

No one has made that point more convincingly than Charles Ashcraft, the retired executive secretary for Arkansas Baptists. In a 1980 letter to then--SBC president Adrian Rogers, who was supporting an effort by Sen. Jesse Helms to strip federal courts of jurisdiction in school prayer cases and leave the matter in local hands, Ashcraft noted that such local option would favor Baptists in the Bible Belt states, where they can "outvote by virtue of their vast majority any minority."

But in a state like Utah, he pointed out, Mormons constitute such a huge majority of the population that Mormon prayers would prevail. Any school board in Utah, he said, would have "a 90 percent Mormon majority and any ruling on prayers would be Mormon in content and intent...."

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SPECIAL FEATURE

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Ashcraft, whose earlier days in the pastorate were spent in Utah, added this: "My own children will carry the scars of Mormon persecution in the school system of Utah to their graves and I do not intend to stand still and be silent when our faithful pioneer preachers and their families suffer...."

More recently, SBC President Jimmy Draper was likewise correct when he declared he could not support a prayer amendment which fails to guarantee no agent of the state will be allowed to compose the prayers to be recited.

That, Draper emphasized, includes local school boards and classroom teachers. "Anyone who works for the school is the agent of the state."

Mr. Reagan would be well advised to drive his new model amendment out to the salvage yard to join the ill-fated 1982 model.

In its place he could examine more closely what is looking more every day like a luxury model, the bill proposed by Oregon's Sen. Mark Hatfield to allow groups of high school students equal access to class room space for religious gatherings.

Hatfield's view that religious students who voluntarily gather for worship or Bible study should not be discriminated against is one that most Americans, including most opponents of prayer amendments would find acceptable.

One thing appears nearly certain--the people's representatives in Congress are not going to accept a prayer amendment, not even during Mr. Reagan's term in office. They know the new amendment, like the 1970 beetle, is a distinction without much of a difference.