



BAPTIST PRESS

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. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

July 21, 1983

83-109

Pittsburgh Peace of '83
Encourages Most Editors

By Craig Bird

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The editorial pages of the state Southern Baptist newspapers were awash with optimism following the annual meeting in Pittsburgh--though much of that optimism was guarded.

"What happened at Pittsburgh this year means God is not through with Southern Baptists," C. R. Daley of the Kentucky Western Recorder, wrote. "As the meeting progressed from one happy session to another, messengers looked at one another in amazement, hardly believing what they were experiencing."

"It was good to hear us laugh again," said Al Shackelford of the Tennessee Baptist and R flector, while Theo Sommerkamp of the Ohio Baptist Messenger noted, "it wasn't manufactured laughter either--people were just in a good mood."

Don Turner, Colorado Rocky Mountain Baptist, felt the messengers, "relaxed somewhat from the high-revving concerns of ongoing scripture controversy," a process aided, according to Fletcher Allen, Maryland Baptist, by the fact, "most who attended the sessions seriously got something they wanted or needed. Most also got some things they didn't want."

Unity and "at least 95 percent sanity" prevailed in Pittsburgh, wrote Edgar Cooper, Florida Baptist Witness. "It was the first time in several years divisive bickering and an unhealthy tension between so-called conservatives and moderates did not color every act and decision of the convention."

While the Baptist state editors were agreed the 1983 meeting was a good one, many also warned there was no evidence the bitter theological and political struggles of the past five years are over.

Bob Terry, Missouri Word and Way, admitted it would be "foolhardy to say the divisiveness...is a thing of the past. Yet one can pray the hallmarks of this convention... will be true of the 1984 annual meeting."

For some, the calm of Pittsburgh was just "a thin veneer over suspicions, labeling, distrust and name calling," John Roberts, South Carolina Baptist Courier, wrote. "But it represents an important beginning toward finding common ground." David Simpson, the Indiana Baptist, thought the feelings of "optimism and realistic hope that positive relations among fellow Baptists will increase and continue," since "nobody's side" lost at Pittsburgh.

The editors also gave a universal stamp of approval to James T. Draper Jr. with the adjective "fair" showing up again and again in descriptions of the SBC president.

Hudson Baggett, the Alabama Baptist, described Draper as, "a model moderator in showing kindness," while Julian Pentecost of the Virginia Religious Herald, said, "much of the credit for the good spirit is due to Draper. We covenant to pray for him and cooperate with him."

"His main contribution," according to Lynn Clayton of the Louisiana Baptist Message, "was not his words of urging but his example of spirit and attitude." Several pointed out Draper started work long before the first session of the 1983 meeting. "He worked hard for a smooth convention and got it," Don McGregor, Mississippi Baptist Record, said.

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The editors also had kind words for the resolutions committee and Joel Gregory, while the Committee on Boards report and the SBC Executive Committee drew negative comments.

Elmer Gray, the California Southern Baptist, said the new process for handling resolutions was "the greatest improvement in this year's meeting" and praised the committee for writing, "some of the best, both in content and wording, we have had for years."

Richard McCartney, Oklahoma Baptist Messenger, said Gregory's, "plain talk and clear expositions of the scriptures had much to do with the peaceful conduct of the convention."

The professor of preaching from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, "made the theme (Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace) come alive," said Everett Sne d, Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine.

The refusal of the Committee on Boards to spread out some of its appointments geographically drew some of the strongest comments.

Committee Chairman Charles Stanley said the committee was "looking for Godly men" when it made its selections, causing Robert Hastings, Illinois Baptist, to ask, "does that mean there are no Godly men west of the Mississippi?" J.B. Fowler, the Baptist New Mexican, declared the failure of the committee to appoint two westerners to the Public Affairs Committee meant, "the West was disenfranchised."

Jack Harwell, Georgia Christian Index, warned, "in later years we may learn this bad news is far more weighty than all the other good news from Pittsburgh...the takeover plan (by fundamentalists) launched five years ago was helped along swimmingly by Charles Stanley's committee on boards."

Extended debate over a new building in Nashville to be shared by eight SBC entities, was caused by a lack-luster presentation of the need for the building by the Executive Committee, many editors said. Presnall Wood, Texas Baptist Standard, expressed a common view when he wrote: "the Executive Committee learned a lesson from the floor that people cannot and will not be presumed upon. Poor and inadequate presentation of the need for the building almost sent that proposal down to defeat."

Even matters which took up only a few minutes of convention time drew comment from some editors. Herb Hollinger, Northwest Baptist Witness, admitted the request by one messenger to change the name of the SBC, had slim prospects of being approved.

But, he asked, "what would folks in Mississippi think if we (Southern Baptists from the Washington-Oregon area) started a congregation in Jackson and put up a sign which read, 'First Yankee (Northern) Baptist Church?' "

The overview for most of the editors seemed to be expressed by Gene Puckett, North Carolina Biblical Recorder, who noted, "the haunting question remains, how deep was the peace, how sincere the spirit of unity?"

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Missionary's Final Message
Continues To Live In Africa

By Robert O'Brien

Baptist Press
7/21/83

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands (BP)--Moses Chimfumpa came to Amsterdam for the International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists (ICIE) with Larry Thomas' final message of reconciliation in his mind and on his lips.

Chimfumpa has carried that message everywhere he has travelled since Thomas, a cancer victim, died in 1982 in Nairobi, Kenya.

Several months before his death, Thomas, then a Southern Baptist missionary in Tanzania, came to Zambia to help Zambian Baptists and fellow missionaries resolve some relationship difficulties.

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"Larry's death was a terrible shock," said Chimfumpa, executive secretary of the Baptist Convention of Zambia. "We thought he would continue to help others as he helped us.

"He told us we are one body in Jesus Christ and we should have fellowship," Chimfumpa recalled with emotion. "He gave us ideas for planning and strategy which helped us develop a model for working together in our situation."

Now missionaries and Zambian Baptist leaders meet together for joint planning and fellowship sessions, Chimfumpa said. "That has lessened the distrust and brought good relationships. When you come together there's a fellowship of believers which allows the Holy Spirit to unite you."

But Zambian Baptists, shocked at Thomas' premature death, wondered why his life ended before he could take the message of reconciliation and joint cooperation to others.

Then they began to realize their responsibility to keep Thomas' final message alive. "His death made us more anxious than ever to spread his messages," Chimfumpa said. "We don't want it to stop with us. We want Zambia to be a model so his message of harmony will live on."

Since Thomas' death, Chimfumpa has carried the message to other African Christian Leaders who face some of the same situations amidst the cultural differences, nationalistic spirit and difficulties of Third World ministries.

Chimfumpa tells them how they can work together and resolve differences with their African and missionary colleagues--and they listen.

He brought that message to the general council meeting of the Baptist World Alliance last year in Nairobi. He brought it to a Southern Baptist Masterlife discipleship training seminar for Africans and missionaries in Limuru, Kenya early in July.

And he brought it to Amsterdam to the International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists, sponsored by evangelist Billy Graham, July 12-21, to help some 4,000 traveling evangelists improve their ministries.

About 1,000 Africans from 33 countries numbered among the nearly 4,000 ICIE participants from 132 nations.

As Moses Chimfumpa moved among them, he sought to enhance ICIE emphases on harmony and fellowship among Christian leaders around the world. In doing so, he followed in the footsteps of missionary Larry Thomas.

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EDITOR'S NOTE----The Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press mailed a photo 7/21/83 to Baptist state newspapers to accompany (BP) story "Baptist Leaders See Benefits In Coordinated World Effort" mailed 7/20/83.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Big A Club Follows Kids
To Dalton Video Game Room

By Nancy Carter McGough

Baptist Press
7/21/83

DALTON, Ga. (BP)--From 3:45 to 5:00 each Thursday, the "bings" and "bongs," of Donkey Kong and Pac Man cease. A lesson about Jesus Christ is being taught at a video game room.

That's because a Big A Club is in session. Sponsored by Woman's Missionary Union of First Baptist Church, Dalton, the club is geared toward grade-school children. The majority of the 23 who attend regularly rarely go to church.

The name "Big A" is based on the club's motto from Matthew 22:37. "You must love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

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Big A Club materials are published at the WMU national headquarters in Birmingham, Ala.

Although a video arcade is an out-of-the-ordinary setting for a Big A Club, it was made available because the owners, Betty and Barry Whittemore, were concerned about the children who came to play video games.

"The Lord answered my prayer," says Barry Whittemore, a former assistant Methodist minister. "It's been so beneficial to the children."

The arcade is located in the highest crime rate area in Dalton--one-half of all police calls in the city originate from this section.

Since the beginning of the first Big A Club, church members have been enthusiastic. WMU members are now involved in six other clubs in various locations and two other clubs are in the planning stages.

"We have just begun, but to date at least 116 boys and girls have learned about a loving, caring Saviour," said Dot Reich, WMU director.

There is also a desire to reach the families of the children.

"Some of our women have expressed a concern for the mothers of Big A Club children, and want to begin some type of ministry to them" noted Glenda Kessler, Baptist Women president. Each child is given a Bible to keep so every family has at least one Bible in their home.

"One of the most exciting outreach ministries of our church in recent months has been the starting of these clubs," observed the pastor, Billy Nimmons. "It has given those involved a greater vision of the local mission field. It has reached so many unreached children, and the vision of needs is spreading to other ministries of our church."

Interest in the clubs came about indirectly because of a mission trip to Edinburgh, Scotland, a few years ago. Twelve adults made the trip to conduct Good News Clubs for grade-school children who did not attend Sunday school, and to train members of a Scottish church to continue to work.

Jerry Chiles, minister of education and administration at First Baptist, organized the trip. He recalls, "As we began to rejoice over how God had blessed us and the Morningside Scottish Baptist Church, I asked myself the question, 'What if they ask how many Good News Clubs we have in Dalton?'

"The Holy Spirit began to show me this idea was something that needed to be done in Dalton, Georgia, as well as in Edinburgh, Scotland. "Who would have guessed we would have to go to Scotland to discover how to minister in our own town."

When the group returned home, Chiles approached two of the members of the Scotland team, Clovis Burks and Ruth Chen, about the need. They heard about Big A Club materials and realized they were exactly what they needed.

"We found many of these children do not attend church at all," Burk explained, now Big A Club director. "Our workers made visits in each home inviting them to church and encouraging them to involve their families in Bible study."

There has been a positive response from both children and parents. One mother came to a club leader and insisted on giving a donation. When the hostess explained the church was paying for all the supplies but the mother insisted, "I want you to use this donation somehow. My husband and I both work on Sunday and can't go to church. I'm so happy my son can attend your club." The money was accepted and used to purchase more Bibles.

In addition to the weekly individual meetings of the seven groups, an occasional joint activity is planned. "We schedule times when we can bring all of the clubs together for fun, fellowship and skating at our family life center," Burks said.

The church had two Big A Club day camps this summer. Th church bus picked up the children at their club meeting places each day and WMU members served a hot meal.

"We have visions and big dreams for this outreach ministry," says Birks. "Words cannot express the blessing of being a part of this exciting ministry in our church."

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(Nancy Carter McGough is a free-lance writer in New Orleans.)

Survival Skills Taught
To Future Rural Pastors

By Bill Roberson

Baptist Press
7/21/83

DAVAO, Philippines (BP)--To keep pastors from leaving their pulpits, Philippine Baptists have begun teaching seminary students how to support their families when their churches can't provide a full-time salary.

Poverty is one of the toughest foes facing pastors in rural Mindanao, where nine million Filipinos live. For years new pastors have been forced to seek other work when church members were scarcely able to support themselves, much less their church.

But now, in a project designed to last at least five years, the Davao branch of the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary will teach future pastors how to oope with rural poverty. The two-year crash course will show how to raise enough food for a family on a small plot of land, how to correct simple health problems and how to pass these tips on to other rural people. The program's designers hope it will prevent dropouts from the ministry.

About 600 Southern Baptist churches on Mindanao are located in rural areas now. And Baptist leaders expect about 300 of the next 350 new churches on Mindanao will be rural, also.

Called Rural Evangelism-Agricultural Leadership (REAL), the new program will be centered next to the existing campus. The property purchase for REAL came so smoothly the seminary president, Harold Matthews, said he thought God was saying, "What have you been waiting for?"

When the facility is complete, five housing units will hold 30 single students, and six small houses will hold 12 couples.

About 80 certificate-level students will graduate from the program during the next five years. When they go to their first churches, graduates will possess a storehouse of personal experience enabling them not only to be pastors, but also to provide for themselves and teach others to do so.

Per capita income in the poorer sections of the Philippines often sinks to \$100 per y ar. Most rural folks are unable to raise sufficient food to feed their families. They know very little or nothing about nutrition. Their seed is inferior, their fertilizer is costly and their livestock is of poor quality.

Others besides certificate-level pastoral students will be allowed to take selective courses in practical food production, health care and nutrition. Also, about 150 degree- and diploma-level students will be trained during the next five years to assist hungry and malnourished people who collect around small towns, larger cities and provincial capitals.

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

CORRECTION----In (BP) story "Chinese Materials Urgently Needed," mailed 7/19/83, please change "Taiwan" to "Hong Kong" in fourth paragraph.

Thanks,

Baptist Press
