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Doctor Turns Bible Translator
To Help Tribe Read The Word

By Robert O'Brien

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)—Sam Cannata knows the need for doctors is great. Two days a week he practices medicine among slum dwellers near Nairobi, Kenya. But the rest of the week, he translates the Bible.

"I've seen thousands of patients, preached thousands of sermons and done a lot of other things in my career," said Cannata, 55-year-old physician turned translator. "But if Ginny and I can help leave a tribe of people a New Testament—the Word of God—which they can read and understand, it'll be our biggest contribution."

It's not that Cannata doesn't care about physical needs. He and his wife, Ginny, have shown concern for physical needs throughout a 27-year career that has become legendary among Southern Baptists. They've persevered through political upheavals and imprisonment while continuing work in medical missions, literacy evangelism and discipleship training.

But they're really excited about their latest undertaking, which began with the Murle (mor-leh) tribe in a remote section of the Sudan and continues from a new base of operations in Kenya, which some jokingly call "the Sudan Baptist Mission in Exile."

The Cannatas, each heading up a translation team, are translating the New Testament into Murle. It's the fourth African language they've learned in a career which has led them through Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Sudan and now back to Kenya because of unrest in the Sudan.

The opportunity for the Bible translation project came last January when the Wycliffe Bible Translators asked Southern Baptists' permission for the Cannatas to return to the Sudan from furlough to salvage a Murle translation project which had stalled for lack of personnel.

But the motivation for it was born during their previous term among the neglected, 99 percent illiterate, Murle in Pibor Post, Sudan. He worked as a physician and she taught literacy. Both emphasized evangelism and discipleship training which resulted in a church.

Then furlough time came, leaving them torn. "God called us to make disciples, and we made disciples, and then when furlough came we felt we couldn't just say, 'Toodle de loo—we'll see you in heaven someday,'" Ginny said.

"The Murle didn't know anything about the Bible, and they really wanted to grow, but they couldn't because there wouldn't be anyone there to teach them and they had only partial Scripture portions available in Murle."

The Cannatas left tearfully because they planned to be gone at least a couple of years to take care of some personal needs. But they returned joyfully, sooner than expected, because of the challenge to provide a Murle New Testament and leave something lasting.

First they underwent intensive study at Wycliffe's Summer Institute of Linguistics. He always has had a gift for languages, but she has had to struggle, admitting she fought missions in the beginning because she didn't think she could learn a language.

"I thought God had a tremendous sense of humor when I found myself among all those linguists in graduate study," she said.

"Ginny has learned Murle better than I have because of all the intensive work with the Murle people in literacy training," her husband added.

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The Cannatas reestablished residence as the only Southern Baptist missionaries in the Sudan last September and eventually assembled five co-workers to divide into two teams. They include four African Murle speakers and a Wycliffe volunteer knowledgeable in Greek and Hebrew.

Murle translators faced difficulties from the beginning because the nature-worshipping Murle lead a simple lifestyle, don't have much of a spiritual vocabulary and have no concept of "holiness" and "righteousness." But the previous Wycliffe translator, Jon Arenson, completed nine books of the New Testament and a lot of language development groundwork.

With that start, the Cannatas set up operation in Juba, unable to return to their people, or their household goods, at Pibor Post, which rebel hostilities have sealed off. It's the third time political problems have caused them to lose most of their possessions during a move.

Now they've got a crate of possessions enroute to the Sudan. They won't be there to receive it and don't know if they can get it rerouted, but they're undeterred. "The Lord has taught us material things don't really mean that much," Cannata said.

The move from the Sudan to Kenya with their co-workers came about seven months after their return because increasing rebel hostilities raised doubts they could continue unhindered and keep their teams intact. They departed shortly before the country went under martial law—considerably better timing than in 1977 when he spent 16 days in a communist prison in Ethiopia before he and his family could leave the country.

Twice a week Cannata takes a break from translation, dusts off another language—Kiswahili—and treats Kenyan patients. He works with the Mathare Valley slum dwellers at the Baptist clinic recently reopened by Southern Baptist missionaries Nancy Jones and Betty Evans.

"I've got to keep up-to-date in medicine," he said. "Medicine got us into translation. If we hadn't gone to the Sudan for medical work and grown to love the Murle people and learn their language, we wouldn't be in translation now. Maybe medicine will open the door to another tribe someday when this project is finished "

The Cannatas believe drafts of the Murle New Testament will be ready in about a year. "After that, we aren't sure where our careers will lead us," he said. "But we know that discipleship training will continue as our major thrust whatever we do.

"I don't care what your vocation is, you should invest your life in the lives of individuals, as Jesus did, and help them grow as Christians so you can look back and see you've left something behind you," he declared.

That's what the Cannatas discovered they did at Pibor Post. Even though they can't get back there, the discipleship and literacy work they planted has continued to mushroom beyond their greatest expectations as their disciples carry on.

When their people get hold of a complete New Testament, there's no telling what they can accomplish.

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

La. PR
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Louisiana Children's Home
Given \$1.6 Million

Baptist Press
8/2/84

MONROE, La. (BP)—A \$1.6 million endowment gift has come to the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home of Monroe. It was the largest single cash bequest ever made to an agency or institution of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

Orcutt G. Lively, who was a member of Florida Boulevard Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, La., died in 1979 leaving the bulk of her estate to the Baptist Home. The \$1.6 million placed in the endowment fund in June 1984, came from the sale of approximately 35 acres of land.

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Tanner Says Politicization
Of SBC Will Hurt Missions

By Jim Newton

ATLANTA (BP)—Lamenting a trend toward "politicization of the Southern Baptist Convention," SBC Home Mission Board President William G. Tanner called for unity within diversity in Baptists' efforts to reach the nation and world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In an address to the agency's board of directors, Tanner said he is deeply concerned politicization of the denomination would "render our efforts in missions and evangelism ineffective," and insisted, "We must maintain our missions priorities as an agency and not become trapped in politicization.

"We must stop assaulting each other with counterfeit labels and start assaulting the gates of hell," Tanner declared. "We must maintain an attitude of genuine Christian caring for each other. No issue should overshadow the fact that there are infinitely more things and deeper things that unite us than divide us."

He challenged directors of the board "to join me in seeing that this organization (the Home Mission Board) does not become so entangled in controversy or paralyzed by polarization that we default on this trust of sharing our Saviour with this nation.

"If we become so galvanized as a denomination that we will not tolerate differences of opinion regarding Baptist tradition, different approaches and models for ministry, different interpretations to theological truth based on revelation from the Holy Spirit, then this inflexibility will eventually nullify our ability to speak to the diversity of spiritual needs in America and the world," he said.

In his first address to the directors since the Southern Baptist Convention met in Kansas City, Mo., last June, Tanner offered seven "benchmarks" which he said were "extremely important considerations" in the agency's efforts to reach America for Christ.

"These are not profound statements, rather they are simple, honest observations that I hope will evaluate where we are as an agency and what we must do to fulfill our role...."

His seven benchmarks, briefly, included: (1) commitment to the SBC Cooperative Program, (2) emphasis on the denomination's Bold Mission Thrust, (3) the need for Christian fellowship, (4) emphasis on Christians caring for each other, (5) maintaining mission priorities instead of politics, (6) remaining close to Baptist history and heritage, and (7) working for unity.

Tanner stressed in his opening statements his personal commitment to "a Bible-centered, conservative theology," and to the principle of "unity within diversity."

"Southern Baptists have always subscribed to a Bible-centered, conservative theology and we have also maintained a unity within our diversity," he said. "But I have never believed that being conservative has supplied me with either the credentials or the mandate to disenfranchise everyone else who did not agree with me."

Throughout its history, the Southern Baptist Convention has consistently maintained unity in diversity, operating for its first 80 years without any statement or confession of faith, Tanner observed. The first statement of faith adopted in 1925 by the SBC in Memphis, Tenn., followed the famous Scopes trial (on evolution) in Tennessee amid a "modernist-fundamentalist" controversy. But that statement, and another adopted in 1963, avoided "exclusivistic terminology" and allowed for "latitude of interpretation," Tanner said.

"Historically, Southern Baptists have discovered they can find unity around a broad doctrinal statement and a specific missionary and evangelistic purpose," he said.

The Home Mission Board as an agency has had a reputation for "our willingness to not only tolerate, but to welcome diversity within the framework of our programs," Tanner said.

"Our unity at the Home Mission Board is not defined as all of us being 'lookalikes,' 'soundalikes,' 'actalikes,' or 'believealikes,'" Tanner said. "Our unity comes from having a right relationship with the Holy Spirit and with each other."

Calling for unity based on Christian fellowship, Tanner observed Southern Baptists always have had their differences, but "despite our diversity there has been a welded unity based in part on Christian fellowship as we have allowed the gifts and talents of every person to be utilized in helping build churches, witness to our land, and evangelize the world."

Commenting on a resolution on ordination of women adopted by the SBC in Kansas City, Tanner stated: "It is my hope that ordination will not become a criteria or a test of Baptist faithfulness, fellowship or service."

Pointing out many sincere, Bible-believing Christians differ on what the Bible says about ordination, Tanner stressed the Home Mission Board maintains ordination is a local church matter. The agency, which appoints 3,700 missionaries in all 50 states, does not require ordination of either men or women to serve as missionaries. For more than 130 years, ordination has not been a determining factor in appointment of missionaries, he said.

He observed many women, however, are viewing the resolution adopted by the convention "as a rejection of them for any Southern Baptist ministry and are questioning whether there is a place for them in Southern Baptist work. "It would be unfortunate," he said, "if in the ongoing discussion of ordination we alienate women from their support of and participation in home missions.... We could neither finance nor carry out home missions as we know it without the leadership and participation of women."

Tanner said he came away from the Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City feeling that both the Home and Foreign Mission Boards' reports to the convention were given "polite but inconsequential hearings." He added: "I did not feel the response to either (mission) report by our convention indicated a great sense of burden, urgency or expectancy that has been characteristic of our people in days gone by."

Emphasizing the need for commitment to the denomination's Bold Mission Thrust plan to preach the gospel to every person in the world by the year 2000, Tanner said Bold Mission Thrust is too important to be subordinated to a power struggle among Southern Baptists.

"It appears to me that it (Bold Mission Thrust) not only has been hustled off center stage in our emphasis, but it is being pushed by other agendas outside the theater altogether."

"It would be a sad commentary," he continued, "if someday we looked back at the decade of the 80s and realized we forfeited and lost the spiritual battle for our age because we refused to work together as Southern Baptists to maintain Bold Mission Thrust as our major approach for winning our nation and world to Christ."

Tanner also challenged elected leaders of the convention, including trustees and directors of the agencies, to strongly support and actively promote the Cooperative Program, the denomination's unified budget financing missions and evangelism. "I want to challenge those who have been elected to demonstrate their leadership and confidence in the cooperative effort of Southern Baptists to reach this world by giving priority in their churches to the Cooperative Program channel for supporting world missions," he said.

In recent years, he observed, Baptists have been misinterpreting the Cooperative Program, talking of giving "to" rather than "through" it. "The Cooperative Program is a channel; a means to an end and not an end in itself," he added. "I honestly believe it is the most effective stewardship means ever conceived by a religious body to impact a lost world."

Finally, Tanner challenged the board of directors to "work for unity so that we do not become divided and pass the point of no return and as a consequence discover our leadership role in God's redemptive plan for this land and the world has been taken from us."

He cautioned if Baptists do not continue their main focus on missions and evangelism for any reason, or for lack of reason, God will "move on to others who will honor him. God doesn't have to have Southern Baptists" to accomplish his purposes in the world, Tanner said.

The board of directors responded with a standing ovation following Tanner's presentation, which he described not as an address or sermon, but as a "position statement" on where he feels the agency is and should be headed in the future.

HMB-N

SEC Needs Harmony,
Stanley Tells HMB

By Michael Tutterow

ATLANTA (BP)—In his first address as Southern Baptist Convention president, Charles F. Stanley appealed for denominational harmony for the sake of missions.

Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, told directors of the SEC Home Mission Board denomination bickering hinders effective Southern Baptist outreach. "We've got to stop fussing and fighting and carrying on like a bunch of children," Stanley declared.

"Southern Baptists need to stop arguing with each other and start praying for one another," he said. "You can't fight a man you pray with, you can't even argue with a man you pray with and you can't criticize a man you pray with. If you pray long enough, you'll love (that person)."

Attracting people to the church will require a visible love on the part of Southern Baptists, Stanley said.

"If we're going to have an impact on this nation, the one thing this unbelieving world has got to see from us is love and fellowship and forgiveness and acceptance among one another," he stated. Preaching that is full of criticism and comments on denominational life won't meet the needs of people, he added.

Southern Baptists need to put their resources into carrying out Jesus' command to reach all people with the gospel rather than feuding over denominational policies, he noted.

"We have the greatest organization and the greatest resources; the question is will we do what we know how to do in the power of God or will we let a day of opportunity pass us," Stanley asked.

He called on Baptists to repent and "stop calling each other names" while committing to "love and accept one another and put all of our resources and all of our leadership into winning this country to Jesus Christ."

Stanley's comments followed the summer meeting of HMB directors. In business actions, board members elected Gary Eugene Farley of Shawnee, Okla., associate director of the rural-urban missions department; James Charles Elder of Conyers, Ga., director of mission property services; Gary Steven Jones of Kansas City, Mo., director of counseling services, and Louis Dean Doster of Nashville, Tenn., associate director of personal evangelism.

Board members also appointed eight missionaries, eight missionary associates and 18 church planter apprentices and approved 36 persons to receive church and language pastoral assistance.

Farley, a professor of sociology at Oklahoma Baptist University since 1978, replaces Robert E. Wiley, who was promoted to associate director for the associational missions division earlier this year.

Farley, 48, was pastor of French Broad Baptist Church in Dandridge, Tenn., before accepting a professorship at O.B.U. in 1978. He also was associate professor and later professor and department chairman of sociology at Carson-Newman College and has been a pastor and schoolteacher in Missouri.

Farley, a graduate of the University of Tennessee, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, the University of Missouri at Kansas City, and Hannibal-LaGrange College, will assume duties Aug. 15, 1984.

Elder, pastor of First Baptist Church, Conyers, Ga., will become director of mission property services, effective Sept. 1, 1984.

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Elder, who has pastored the Conyers church since 1960, will represent the board in matters involving contracts for repairs and improvements and in all transactions for the acquisition or disposition of rights or interest in mission properties owned by the HMB. His duties also will include securing insurance coverage, maintaining and renewing leases and administering mission property loan funds.

Elder, who has served on the HMB board of directors since 1979, has been a pastor of churches in Georgia and Kentucky and is a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Luther Rice Seminary and Mercer University. Elder also submitted his resignation from the HMB board of directors, effective Sept. 1, 1984, during the August board meeting.

Jones, pastor of Wornall Road Baptist Church in Kansas City, will assume his duties Sept. 1, 1984.

He fills a two-year vacancy in the HMB's counseling services and will provide counseling services for HMB missionaries, staff and their families, as well as psychological testing and evaluation for field and staff personnel.

Jones has been pastor of churches in Missouri since 1969. He is a graduate of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southwest Baptist College and Crowder College, all in Missouri.

Doster, associate director of the Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes, will assume his new post Oct. 1, 1984. He replaces Doug Metzger, who resigned to become pastor of Southside Baptist Church in Savannah, Ga.

Doster will develop and implement strategies, services and materials for church, associational and state convention use of TELL (Training for Evangelistic and Lifestyle Leadership) and Lay Evangelism Schools.

Prior to joining the staff of the Tennessee Children's Homes, Doster was associate pastor at Englewood Baptist Church in Jackson, Tenn. He has also been pastor of churches in Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee as well as a computer programmer and accounting supervisor for two firms in Milan, Tenn. He is a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Bethel College.

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FMB-F

Soviet Baptists Seek To Live
For Both Christ And Country

By Martha Skelton

Baptist Press
8/2/84

U.S.S.R. (BP)—Tension between a felt need to work within the system and yet maintain their Christian principles has shaped the development of the Soviet Union's registered evangelical churches.

Baptists, as part of the evangelical group, are constantly trying to balance their lives between doing what they believe pleases God and also fulfilling their roles as Soviet citizens.

"From early in my life, I realized only Christians can solve the problems of mankind," said Jacob Dukhonchenko, 53, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Kiev and superintendent of the union of 1,500 Baptist churches in the Ukraine region. "I dreamed to be a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Thirty-three years ago he and his fiancée, Luibov ("Love"), had a serious talk. "I told her my dream was to be a servant of God, and I was not sure whether I could create for her a better life," he said. They considered the matter separately before marrying.

Leaders like Dukhonchenko know many of their countrymen's needs are in a realm beyond sociology and economic structure. But at the same time they feel a strong sense of civic responsibility to stay within the laws of the land where atheism is the official "religion."

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In major cities Soviet officials have set up museums visibly packaging Christianity in displays linking it to ancient superstition and high-church corruption. The people have been freed from this past, citizens are told. A newer eternal value is proclaimed, another central figure glorified: "The name and acts of Lenin will live forever! Communism will win!" proclaim banners strung across intersections and buildings.

Lenin's tomb is a shrine. His image is painted onto buildings, chiseled into statues and woven into cloth.

Some evangelicals in the Soviet Union believe the doctrine of atheism stands immovably between the government and Christians. In 1960 the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists split over this question. The 5,030 churches remaining in the council follow government requirements for church registration.

Those refusing to cooperate formed a second group, the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. There are several sub-groups in the unregistered church movement and some churches that have registered with the government but remain unaffiliated with the All-Union Council. The church in Kiev of which Georgi Vins was a pastor is in the latter category. Vins, who now lives in the United States and has been widely quoted, has taken a strong stand against registration.

Churches which do register send the state's religious affairs office their membership lists and reports on numbers of baptisms, weddings, funerals and the like. Financial statements and church property inventories must also be made available.

Registered churches are required to center activities in church houses. No public rallies or meetings are allowed. Most churches hold multiple meetings each week. Membership in All-Union Council churches officially is reported as 545,000, the largest Baptist Union in Europe.

These churches focus evangelism efforts on family members, friends and co-workers. The Soviet government forbids social ministries, since that is the state's domain. "All our members live to have contacts with nonbelievers," says one pastor, Peter Konovalchik of Leningrad. "We cannot be quiet. We understand that not every member can explain everything about Christ, but at least he can invite someone to come (to church)."

"Our testimony is not in vain," he adds. "We invite people to 'come and see.' Now is just the preparation for awakening."

Alexei Bichkov, general secretary for the All-Union Council, believes cooperation with the government is biblical. The council takes the position that working within the laws accomplishes more for the kingdom of God than living in confrontation. "It is important good leaders find out what it means to render to Caesar and God," says Bichkov. "Jesus Christ didn't regulate what and how. He invited people to find the way."

Inner convictions make Christians honest and industrious workers. Their abstinence from alcohol sharply contrasts with a society struggling with a major drinking problem. They teach and exercise high standards of personal morality. Such productivity and moral awareness parallel government standards.

People outside believing families make decisions for the gospel and are baptized each year. More young people are attending, asking questions and aligning themselves with the church. Several observers point to essentially the same reason--something within the young people themselves.

Youth is a time for spiritual searching, explains Nikita Jerome of Alexander Nevsky Lavra, an Orthodox monastery-seminary complex in Leningrad. "I don't think the increased number of young people belongs to the church," he says. "It belongs to the young people themselves, who come to the church in spiritual need."

Every Sunday and many week nights, young people are part of the thousands of Soviet citizens gather for worship. Bearded old men and babushkas (grandmothers) in kerchiefs are seated alongside teenagers, new parents struggling with squirming little ones, and middle-aged men and women. Their services are long and punctuated with fervent prayer time.

Church leadership evolves through local churches with training provided by correspondence courses through a new department of education started five years ago; there is no Evangelical Christians-Baptists seminary.

Preaching ability is an important factor in pastoral selection, but Soviet Baptists place a high priority on spiritual living. "When we consider a candidate, we search his life," Dukhonchenko explains. Living the gospel is imperative.

Pastors are selected by the local churches with consultation from local superintendents. Leaders in the church arise through a system of deacons, lay preachers and pastors found in evangelical churches throughout the country. A church usually will have several pastors, a number of lay preachers and deacons. As vacancies occur, the congregation selects a new leader based on its choice from among those who have risen through the network of practical experience and informal training.

Pastoral candidates are questioned thoroughly and their theology is studied. A year of interim work culminates in the new pastor's ordination, if the congregation so chooses.

Dukhonchenko knows living the Christian life is not the easiest road he could have picked, but he has no regrets. "I have never felt miserable, pitiful that I decided to be a servant of God," he says. "The highest name for all servants, whatever their place, is slave of the Lord."

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(Martha Skelton, associate editor of The Commission, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board magazine, and special assignment photographer Don Rutledge spent a month visiting Soviet Baptist work.)

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

Soviet Christian Families
Under Constant Scrutiny

FMB-F

Baptist Press
8/2/84

LENINGRAD, U.S.S.R. (BP)—To Soviet believers, being the light of the world is more than a metaphor.

Families are under constant scrutiny from those around them. "Our lives are visible for everybody," says Peter Konovalchik, pastor of the Baptist church in Leningrad. "They look at us attentively. Everybody is watching. They know who we are, where we are going, and our relationships with our wives and children."

Great friendships develop among church families, who serve as support groups for each other. Children in the churches are best friends and spend much of their free time together.

Soviet Christian families live their witness. Church is almost an extension of home for the Konovalchiks. They spend hours each week worshipping and enjoying fellowship with their extended family. The three teenage girls sing in the choir. The mother, Antoninya, is available to help those who need her.

Konovalchik himself came from a Baptist family. One of 10 children, he became a Christian at age 14 and was baptized at 19. He started work as a lathe cutter and later served in the naval branch of the Soviet army.

Konovalchik felt the desire to preach before he went into the army. He was invited to work with young people and organized Bible studies outside Leningrad. He began to preach during the fellowships, and was elected as pastor of his church in 1979.

He devotes some entire church meetings to discussing family life with married young people, dealing with husband-wife and parent-child relationships. He teaches about living in holiness. "You never separate your testimony from your Christian life," he says. "You should live according to Christ."

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Time spent together is a must for Soviet Christian families. "We don't have a Sunday school. It is the responsibility of the family to have church at home—prayer, reading the Bible, explaining things. (Families) should be spiritual developers," Konovalchik explains.

Konovalchik's church is located in an area called Poklonnaya Gora. The name means a mountain bowing down, describing how conquered people bow down to their conquerors. Says one church member: "Now we do it to God; he conquered us."

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Southeastern Seminary
Names Forrester Chaplain

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Baptist Press
8/2/84

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)—Donna Myra Forrester of Raleigh, N.C., has been named chaplain at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.

Forrester, presently a clinic coordinator, will assume her responsibilities in mid-August.

Randall Lolley, seminary president, said: "I am grateful to our trustees for their encouragement to strengthen this ministry. It has been an endeavor of prayer and searching to discover the person God wants for this work. I am excited the Lord has led us to Dr. Forrester, who has so many gifts and skills for the task ahead."

Forrester, 34, has served as a psychiatric nurse, a minister of youth, and a pastoral counselor. She is a native of Johnson, S.C., and a graduate of the University of South Carolina (B.S.N.), Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., (M.Div.) and Southeastern Seminary (D.Min.). She earned the basic unit in clinical pastoral education from South Carolina Baptist Hospital and four advanced units from North Carolina Baptist Hospital.

The daughter of a Baptist pastor, she is also an ordained Baptist minister and a registered nurse.

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N.M. Indians Train
For Reservation Evangelism

By Michael Tutterow

Baptist Press
8/2/84

HMB-F

TIJIQUE, N.M. (BP)—Mud, not sawdust, filled the tent aisles, but in most other ways the 39th annual New Mexico Indian Camp resembled a typical Southern Baptist tent revival.

More than 700 Indians from several tribes throughout New Mexico reservations and urban areas flooded Inlow Youth Camp in Tijique, about 60 miles southeast of Albuquerque, to participate in Indian Celebration '84, the first statewide Indian evangelism training and spiritual awakening conference.

The meeting, organized by New Mexican Southern Baptist American Indians, was designed to train Indian leaders in areas of evangelism so that "every Indian who knows Christ will return to the reservation to share Christ with other Indians," stated conference evangelist Eddie Lindsey, a Creek Indian studying at Oklahoma Baptist University who also works with the Oklahoma Baptist Convention's language missions division.

Heavy rains failed to discourage attendance for this year's meeting. A record number of adults, youth and children pitched tents and unrolled bedrolls after camp facilities became overcrowded.

Conferences, sandwiched between morning Bible study and evening evangelistic services, offered Indian pastors and church leaders training in growing evangelistic churches, using evangelism in Sunday school programs, developing personal evangelism skills and leading mission education in the church.

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Southern Baptist Convention leaders, including former Woman's Missionary Union president and former SBC vice president Christine Gregory, led small group conferences designed to equip Indian leaders to sponsor mini-evangelism workshops for their own congregations.

The meeting reflected progress of Southern Baptist home mission efforts among American Indians during the past 20 years, noted Oscar Romo, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's language missions division.

In the mid-1960s, only 15 Indian churches existed in the state, with only two or three Indian pastors, he explained. Today Southern Baptist Indian congregations in New Mexico number 45-50 with 80 percent of American Indian mission work led by Indians.

"This meeting is significant in that it is a statewide effort to provide development for Indian leaders in local churches," said Romo.

He added that the large attendance indicated that "something new is happening among American Indians all over America in response to evangelical Christianity. Romo explained that a similar meeting this year in Oklahoma drew more than 2,000 American Indians.

"The task of evangelizing the American Indian is the responsibility of the American Indian," Romo told conference participants. "Leaders must come from among American Indians who understand the culture, history, language, sociology and psychology and can transpose it from one culture into another. It is not our task to make you like we are, but to show you all you can be in Jesus Christ."

He added that Southern Baptists need to develop Bible materials in the context of the Indian culture. He also encouraged Indians to get involved in every facet of Southern Baptist life "so that we may be able to win American Indians to Christ and so that you may have a part in winning America to Christ."

Conference planners had invited tribal leaders to discuss reservation conditions and how Southern Baptists could support progress among Indian people, but only one tribal leader accepted the invitation.

James Bowen, SBC language missionary in Albuquerque and one of the Indian camp coordinators, said he hoped those attending the camp would return to their reservations "with a new zeal and make a difference."

"This (camp) has been a dream of many of the missionaries and Indian leaders that we could have a massive evangelism effort to reach Indians for Christ," said Bowen.

"It's our prayer our people will become so sold out to Jesus Christ and committed to his world mission program they'll return to the reservations with a deeper burden and boldness to not only share Christ, but let their Christian influence be effectively felt in all areas and strata of Indian life on the reservation, their communities and in the cities," Bowen said.

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CORRECTION--In (BP) story, "Largest Volunteer Project Enrolls More Than 16,000," mailed 7/31/84, fourth paragraph should read: Police recovered a rented car taken in the robbery and arrested two suspected robbers before James Cecil, the Foreign Mission Board coordinator for the project, left the island. The car's owner also told Cecil police knew the whereabouts of two other suspects.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

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