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FMB-F

Missions Week Participants
Challenged to Let Light Shine

By Marty Croll

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)—In Romania, the light of God's truth is shining in revival fires despite Communist persecution, according to an exiled Romanian Baptist evangelist.

John Moldovan, speaking at the closing service of the Aug. 1-6 Foreign Missions Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center, challenged American Christians to stand up for what they believe because, "There is no difference between a Communist and a Christian when the Christian is silent," he said.

Moldovan, now a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, described how he was imprisoned for his uncompromising belief in Jesus Christ. During his nearly month-long torture, he was beaten with a rubber club and indoctrinated concerning the "craziness" of belief in God.

At one point a part of him cried to compromise, but he refused to yield to fear. "I was able to pray shortly before I collapsed, 'God, have mercy!' and received strength and peace from God then and looked at his tormentors through new eyes with compassion and pity," he said.

"I'm not sure if you can understand, but when Christ takes the place of your flesh, the flesh is out and Christ is in. You don't worry about anything. It's his faithfulness which counts. He was there."

More than 100 people responded to invitations during the missions week, including 64 who committed themselves to career missions service. Nineteen were preachers ready to be general evangelists, the greatest need overseas.

The Sunday morning offering of \$5,289 represented the largest single offering taken during a foreign missions week at either of the convention's national conference centers.

Throughout the week, participants were reminded through special songs, dramas, video productions, prayers and testimonies that the light of Christ is transmitted only through people sensitive to his voice and willing to follow the path God has designed for them.

"The thing that frightens me is we Christians in America may be paralyzed by a spirit of apathy," said Bill O'Brien, FMB executive vice-president. "Have we been numbed and paralyzed by affluence, by ease, by freedom causing us to forget we are partners first of all with God, in a great redemptive purpose for all mankind?"

"What Tuesday night visitation program will penetrate the plastic shantytowns and lean-tos across an urban sprawl like Mexico City (28 million population predicted by the turn of the century)?" O'Brien asked. "We sit warmly in the box on Sunday mornings and quote slogans of proclaiming the gospel to everyone in the world."

To do that will take financial sacrifice, O'Brien warned. "We're going to have to learn how to free up more and more of our resources for this great task. Our budgets--personal, family, congregational and denominational--become the spiritual barometers of who we are."

In evening services the various facets of Southern Baptists' missions program were paraded before the people. Participants were shown how Christ's light is reflected worldwide through career missionaries, auxiliary personnel, families and volunteers.

A recurring theme during the conference was that of partnership with other Christians in spreading the gospel to all people.

"The time for one-way missionary work is over," said Moldovan, the Romanian. "We need to join hands, even in those places we didn't believe it is possible.

"I do not believe there is an iron curtain, or a bamboo curtain, or any kind of curtain to stop your love and your prayers, and that's very important. We cannot live and work alone. The Bible teaches us we are members of the body of Christ, and when one member suffers, all the body suffers.

"It's time for us to look for every opportunity. The Russians are not ashamed to send their missionaries around the world to spread the lie," said Moldovan. "Are you and I to be ashamed of the gospel? How much more we can do here, and our churches can be awakened, if we understand God loves the world, not only America."

Missionary Faye Pearson, a religious education teacher in Taiwan, told how Christ's light shines through nationals in Taipei as "A supreme court judge stands on a busy street each Sunday evening sharing his faith as part of his church's--my church's--evangelistic outreach."

She also told how "some 25 years ago a (Southern Baptist) missionary taught an English class in a small chapel, and a man came to practice his English. He heard the gospel and believed. In May of this year, that man became vice-president of the Republic of China. Vice-President Lee is a very bold and effective light bearer."

Missionary Jim Slack of the Philippines said his recent term overseas had been one of the most fruitful he's had. "We live in a country whose time has come in the providence of God to be reached. People who walk the streets, if they find out you are born again, they will ask you, 'Tell us about Jesus Christ.'" Conference rooms in almost every high-rise office building in an area of Manila are so crowded for noon Bible studies that people must come early to find a seat, Slack added.

Jan Barnes, extended term volunteer doing student work in Kenya, told how she made herself available for God. "One of the things that was my prayer was, 'Lord, please make your presence so evident in my life that that's what people will see.'

"I was encouraged to be a fragrance of Christ. That kind of fragrance can penetrate any barrier. My idea was the Moslem world was impossible to penetrate, but God showed me that's not what the Word says, that his fragrance and aroma can penetrate anything."

Such is the characteristic of the light of Christ, noted Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks. But, he told participants at the conference, the light will continue to spread through them only by active choice.

"You will decide if you will independently dissipate the spiritual energy of (Christ's) light, or if you will put it in concert with others across the world, to be a concentrated beam destroying the corruption of sin," he said. "The choice is still ours. You have to decide if you will let your light shine."

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*N.M. Pyle
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Baptist Convention Of New Mexico
Seeks Executive Director

Baptist Press
8/8/84

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (BP)--The executive board of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico has elected a search committee to find a successor to Chester C. O'Brien who has resigned, effective December 31, to become associate pastor of First Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas.

John Parrott, pastor of First Baptist Church in Las Cruces, is chairman. Other members are Calvin Partain, James Tidenberg, Darryl Rames, Don Wheat, Charles Price and Eugene Elder.

The committee is seeking recommendation for a person to fill the position. Recommendations must be accompanied by resumes and current black and white photos. This information should be sent to Parrott at Box 427, Las Cruces, New Mexico, 88004.

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for August 31.

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Baptist Worship
Called Passive

By David Haywood

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—Worship in Baptist churches does not adequately focus on God, ministers of music were told during the second Church Music Leadership Conference at Ridgecrest, N.C.

According to Dan Hall, director of the church music department of the Mississippi Baptist State Convention, Jackson, Miss., "Most of the worship service in the Baptist church is addressed to the congregation. We talk to each other about God and the only time we focus on God is when we pray.

"Worship should be active, but we have made it passive," said Hall. "Southern Baptists have never given proper attention to worship but we are beginning to and I feel we will be giving more attention to worship between now and the end of this century."

He believes the most important time in the week is when the church meets to worship. "We need to return and renew praise in our worship services with the emphasis on God, praising and adoring him and his sovereignty. Worship should focus on God. God should be on the stage but instead we leave him in the wings.

"The problem has come from two sources," Hall explained. "The first source is Baptists' free church background which has drawn its forms of worship from many different traditions with no set theology. The second is the lack of tools which has been given to pastors to help them plan and guide worship.

"Pastors have virtually no training in worship planning or leadership because our seminaries have not been teaching in this area. They are now beginning to offer courses in worship planning and the theology of worship and I find that very encouraging," Hall said.

In order to change, Baptists must first develop a strong biblical theology of worship, he explained.

Churches need to set aside time for training the congregation in worship, just like we train Sunday school teachers and train our people in discipleship, Hall said. "This is not easy but must be seen as a priority."

Planning is one key to making worship more meaningful. According to Hall, there are four levels of planning. The first is involving the congregation once or twice a year in evaluating the services and allowing them to offer suggestions for improvement.

The second level is setting up a worship evaluation committee. This committee would work with the worship leaders in planning worship experiences.

A weekly worship planning team comprises the third level. This team includes the pastor, the minister of music and accompanist. Together they plan the service and coordinate the various parts of the service.

Finally, the minister of music and the accompanist should rehearse the service. When worship takes on the central role of the church and is given priority, the other ministries of the church will take on a new life, Hall said.

The conference was sponsored by the church music department of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

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

CORRECTION: In Baptist Press story, "Australian Nominated As EWA President," mailed 8-6-84, please correct the following error. The man nominated as the EWA president is named G. Noel Vose, not Dose as reported.

Thank you,
Baptist Press

House Passes
Hunger Bill

By David Wilkinson

WASHINGTON (BP)--House legislation which implements some recommendations of the President's Task Force on Food Assistance has been welcomed by a Southern Baptist hunger expert as "a hopeful indication the desperate pleas of America's poor and hungry are being heard."

W. David Lockard, who coordinates world hunger education and action for the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission, said the Hunger Relief Act, approved 364 to 39, represents "a step in the right direction." He emphasized, however, the legislation "will become a moot issue" without action in the Senate.

The measure would provide small increases in aid to the hungry by returning the basis for calculating food stamp benefits to 100 percent of the Thrifty Food Plan, the Agriculture Department's lowest cost, nutritionally adequate diet. In fiscal 1982, benefits were based on 99 percent to the cost of that plan.

The change, which had been recommended by the presidential task force, would mean an additional 63 cents a month next year for the average food stamp recipient.

Two particular groups which would benefit from legislation are working mothers and the homeless. The bill would make more aid available to working mothers by raising the deduction that can be counted for child care and shelter costs in the calculation of benefits.

Another section clarifies existing law to ensure that the homeless are not excluded from food stamp benefits simply because they have no fixed address.

Estimates vary on the number of homeless nationwide. A controversial Housing and Urban Development study released in May reported 250,000 to 350,000. But groups such as the national Coalition for the Homeless insist the number is somewhere between one and three million.

Bard Shollenberger of Bread for the World, a Christian anti-hunger organization which lobbied hard for the benefit increases, admitted the odds for comparable action in the Senate are "pretty dismal." The measure has been opposed by the Reagan administration since it would reverse some of the budget-trimming restrictions pushed through Congress three years ago.

Nevertheless, Shollenberger noted the bill received strong bipartisan support in the House, which "should send a clear message to the Senate that something needs to be done about the hunger problem in America."

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Baptists Present Bibles
To Nation's GovernorsBaptist Press
8/8/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Holman Bible Publishers donated Bibles to each of the nation's state executives at the recent National Governors' Conference in Nashville, Tenn., as a witness to the commitment to Scripture distribution by the 14.1 million member Southern Baptist Convention.

Lloyd Elder, president of the Baptist Sunday School Board, which owns Holman Bible Publishers, said the Bibles were provided in the name of all Southern Baptists because of our belief that "Holy Scripture not only shows the way to eternal life, but gives wisdom in every area of human life."

"We wanted to give a gift in behalf of Southern Baptists to this significant representative group of governmental leaders from across our nation," Elder said. "We think a gift of Holy Scripture is one of the finest contributions we could make in this area of American life."

Each governor received a red-letter edition, New American Standard version of the Bible, bound in leather and embossed with his or her name. The Bibles were one of several gifts representative of the state of Tennessee, which hosted the meeting.

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Uncommon Commitment Requested
As Texas Church Plans To Grow

By Linda Lawson

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—"Year of Uncommon Commitment" is the 1984-85 theme at First Baptist Church, Conroe, Texas, and plans include starting 33 new Sunday school classes and departments the first Sunday in October.

Growth is the primary purpose of this complete reorganization that includes moving from two Sunday schools to one with many departments meeting in rented buildings, according to Wayne Jones, minister of education.

"The ability of any Sunday school and church to reach people effectively depends largely on how well that Sunday school and church has organized itself for growth," said Jones while attending a Sunday School Leadership Conference at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center.

Also, the church is making plans to move to a new location in two years and the reorganization is part of preparations for new facilities. However, Jones is quick to emphasize this reorganization won't be the last before the move takes place.

"My philosophy is you ought to reorganize the Sunday school every year," said Jones. "However, as rapidly as we're growing, we may have to reorganize even sooner."

The 3,500-member church located 40 miles north of Houston has averaged enrolling eight new Sunday school members each week since October 1983 and 300 persons have joined the church since February of this year when Marshall Edwards became pastor. Jones joined the staff in April.

Jones said work on the reorganization has included identifying the need for 23 new adult classes, two new children's departments and eight new preschool departments, along with enlisting 100 more workers.

However, a myriad of other details are demanding attention. These include renovating existing space and enlisting guards to assist children in safely crossing streets to nearby buildings. A van will make regular rounds to transport first-time visitors to their classes.

For emergencies an open telephone line will be maintained between the schools and the church office. Department and class leaders meeting in rented space will be given a portfolio and a carrying case to transport Bible study materials.

Jones listed four results he hopes will be achieved from the reorganization.

"I hope with the additional space we'll be able to reach people we're not reaching now due to a lack of space," he said. "Also, I hope we can break through this psychological barrier to growth that develops when space is not available."

Jones added the new classes and departments will facilitate growth in contrast to the present structure in which many had reached maximum enrollment ceilings. Finally, "involving more people in working in the Sunday school helps them in growth and commitment," he said.

The 23 new adult classes will not be created by dividing existing classes, Jones said. Instead, the Adult Start-A-Class Plan will be utilized in which a teacher, outreach leader and two members will be enlisted to begin each class.

"I have found that people are less resistant with this method than by dividing a class," said Jones. "I think many middle-aged and older adults have been in situations where someone made them divide their class against their will. They have a mental block against it. There is less resistance to creating new units."

Jones is optimistic that the reorganization will be implemented smoothly and will result in continued growth of the church.

"With our new emphasis on enrollment and our preparation for a new church facility, we expect our enrollment to climb very rapidly in the next few months," he said.