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Missionaries' Son Urges
Emphasis On 'Generic Missions'

By Alane Fitzgerald

WACO, Texas (BP)—"Generic missions" could become a new trend in Southern Baptist mission work abroad, says Gerald Fielder, the son of two former Southern Baptist missionaries to China.

Fielder, now a political scientist at Baylor University, made that prediction after a late summer trip with his mother and other family members to his birthplace in Zhengzhou, China.

It had been more than 40 years since Fielder had seen the home where he was born to Wilson and Maudie Fielder, Southern Baptist missionaries from 1912 until the Communist Revolution forced them to leave in 1949.

While in China, Fielder noted the sweeping changes within the country that have returned a form of religious freedom to the nation. He observed that traditional means of bringing the gospel to the communist nation might no longer be the best means of reaching the Chinese for Christ.

"The greatest challenge Southern Baptists have in that country is to reestablish our ties with the Christian community in China in a non-institutional way—not through regular mission programs," he said.

"I like to call this 'generic missions.' This is the way Christianity was spread throughout the world—not by institutions, but by lay people who were devoted everywhere they went."

Southern Baptist laymen are becoming more and more involved in witnessing efforts during their travels, Fielder said. "When an oilman goes to China on business, he can find ways to witness. Teachers who go to China find they have a circle of influence. That's a great challenge—and a great opportunity."

Despite the years in which Christians have been severely persecuted, the church never has been exterminated, Fielder said. "Not only is it alive and well, but there is a greater response to the gospel now than in all the history of Christianity in China."

One Sunday, Fielder and his party visited Zhengzhou's only open church. "The small auditorium was packed, and the courtyard was filled to capacity with people standing," Fielder recalled. "This happens three times on Sunday morning, and they also have a Wednesday service."

The modern Chinese church is a "three self" institution, he said—self-financing, self-ruling and self-propagating. However, the government still maintains a certain amount of control over the churches by printing Bibles and hymnals and by issuing permits to the churches.

Yet, pastors have the freedom to evangelize, Fielder said. "They are totally free in terms of preaching, as long as they do not oppose or criticize the government."

After the Communist Revolution, many church locations were seized for governmental use. Since the death of Chairman Mao, 22 church buildings have been returned to the congregations, Fielder said. "Also, \$150,000 in American dollars has been given to the churches for back rent for buildings the government has occupied. They are paying \$1,000 a month for buildings that are still occupied."

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"It's unthinkable the degree to which people have been freed," Fielder observed. "We never felt a sense of being watched or spied on all the time we were there. And we didn't have any travel restrictions. Visitors were able to come to our hotel rooms freely and were able to talk freely of the Cultural Revolution and their bitter experiences without any fear."

Fielder has been an associate professor of political science at Baylor since 1978. Previously, he spent 23 years as a professor at Seinan Gakuin University in Japan, a school established by Southern Baptist missionaries in 1916.

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(Alane Fitzgerald is a student writer in the Baylor Office of Public Relations.)

BJCPA Panel Praises Staff
For Role In Equal Access

By Stan Hasteley

Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)—Members of the executive committee of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs have commended their Washington staff for its role in the recent passage of the equal access law and for helping write guidelines for its implementation.

The 14-member executive committee, here for its annual October meeting, also praised the leading roles played by congressional sponsors of the measure guaranteeing secondary school students who wish to meet for religious purposes the same access to school facilities enjoyed by other non-academic, extracurricular student groups. The full BJCPA conducts its annual meeting in March.

Singled out for praise were U.S. Senator Mark O. Hatfield, R-Ore., and U.S. Representatives Don Bonker, D-Wash., and the late Carl D. Perkins, D-Ky. Hatfield and Bonker were the original sponsors of the equal access bill, while Perkins, as chairman of the powerful Education and Labor Committee, pushed the measure through the House.

The legislation passed the Senate, 88-11, and the House, 337-77, and was signed into law by President Reagan in August.

The BJC statement also commended pastors, editors and other denominational workers who publicized and promoted the bill and called on Baptist conventions and conferences who participate in the work of the Baptist Joint Committee to assist in informing Baptists of the practical consequences of the new law by distributing the guidelines for its implementation.

Most of the statement, however, was devoted to the BJC staff and what the committee called its "leading role" in securing passage of the measure.

"Members of our staff worked continuously for enactment of this needed new law from early 1982 until its passage this summer," the statement read, adding: "This effort was in direct response to our call in 1981 for a positive initiative on behalf of the free exercise rights of secondary school students."

"It is important to note," the statement continued, "that this Baptist Joint Committee-led effort began well before our staff came under serious attack for its opposition to a prayer amendment which would have returned state-sponsored and state-mandated religious exercises to our public schools." The committee referred to the highly publicized opposition to President Reagan's proposed school prayer amendment rejected by the U.S. Senate last March.

"Staff opposition to that measure was, indeed, the direct result of our unanimous position statement of March 1982 opposing any and all such amendments to the Constitution," the committee declared.

But besides opposing the prayer amendment, in the subsequent battle for an equal access law, "the (BJC) staff worked enthusiastically as the catalyst that brought together a remarkable coalition of widely diverse religious groups in support of the measure. We are proud of that role."

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The committee further commended its staff "for bringing together all interested religious and educational parties in an intense effort to hammer out practical guidelines for school boards, school administrators and classroom teachers, guidelines that will greatly assist proper implementation of the new equal access law."

In other actions, the BJC executive committee approved the subject of government intervention in religious life for the agency's 20th Religious Liberty Conference, Oct. 7 and 8, 1985.

Also authorized was a major new religious liberty educational effort in local churches. BJC Executive Director James M. Dunn told the committee, "Baptists need a crash course in Baptist identity," particularly "a focused emphasis upon religious liberty and church-state separation."

According to an outline of the new emphasis, the Baptist Joint Committee will provide religious liberty resources to local congregations and will, in turn, enlist local church members to become personally involved in the battle for religious liberty.

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Robison Leaves
Eules Congregation

By Toby Druin

Baptist Press
10/5/84

EULESS, Texas (BP)—Chafing under what he describes as constant discussion of his ministry by the staff and made to feel "I must sit there and be quiet or I might be misunderstood," evangelist James Robison said he will move his membership from First Baptist Church, Eules, Texas, to Lake Country Baptist Church, Fort Worth, where he will be involved in the new satellite ministry of the church planned for northeast Tarrant County.

The controversial evangelist, whose ministry has shifted in the last two years to an increased emphasis on healing, deliverance from demons and spiritual gifts, told the Baptist Standard, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, he would join the Lake Country Church sometime in October.

The new ministry will begin Oct. 14 in a Hurst school building. Robison said he had intended to join on that day but will be in Denver. His family will join, however, he said, "and I will join this month even if I have to do it by proxy."

Lake Country Church, also a Southern Baptist congregation, is led by pastor Jim Hylton with whom Robison is now associated, along with Dudley Hall in a seminar ministry. Hall also will join the new satellite church, Robison said.

He, Hylton and Hall have been praying about establishing the ministry for a year and a half, Robison said. He declined to give details, saying negotiations for property were at a critical stage, but added the location would be north of the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport in an area he did not consider to be in the First Church, Eules, church field.

William B. Lucas, director of missions of Tarrant Association, told the Standard he was unaware the Lake Country Church was beginning a new satellite ministry until he read it in the Fort Worth Star Telegram.

Robison's status in the Eules church has been the subject of much discussion over the past two years as his ministry has taken on characteristics not traditional by Southern Baptist standards. During much of that time the Eules pastor, James T. Draper Jr., was president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Draper told the Standard he was not surprised by the news of Robison's plan to leave the church. He acknowledged he had refused Robison permission to hold one of his seminars in the church and that they had extensive discussions over the last three weeks about the possibility he would move.

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"I think it will be a good thing," Draper said, noting some of his members may follow Robison. "Those who want that kind of option (Robison's emphases) will have it. I think it will give people a place to go and those who have been unhappy in the fellowship of our churches will stop being unhappy and go somewhere where they can be happy."

Draper said he didn't expect to lose many members, but added it could be "50 to several hundred." The Euless church has a membership of about 7,000 and averages more than 2,500 in Sunday school.

The Euless pastor said, "I just told James I cannot support him anymore or stand with him, particularly on his approach to the condemnation of local churches and pastors."

During his presidency, Draper advocated a set of bedrock beliefs to determine who is a Southern Baptist. Regarding Robison and his charismatic emphases, the former SBC president said that while the evangelist doctrinally "would not be that different from most of us," his emphases now are "not typically Southern Baptist."

Robison said he resents any attempt to "pull creedilism on me" and resents contentions that Southern Baptists do not believe in miracles today, that spiritual gifts do not apply as they did in New Testament times or that anyone who speaks in tongues has been "satanically deceived."

He has come to his new emphases from studying the Scripture, he said, and not because he has been convinced of its validity by Milton Green, a former Tennessee carpet cleaner who Robison credits with praying for him and freeing him from a "claw in the brain" in 1982.

Robison and Green participated in Bible seminars until Robison joined Hylton and Hall in their own seminar ministry last spring. Green continues his own ministry but, according to the Houston Chronicle, was asked to leave a black Houston church when the pastor charged he was teaching a "negative philosophy."

Robison said Hylton will be pastor of the new Lake Country satellite ministry and Hall will be "pastor/teacher."

"All I want to be is an evangelist and a member of the church, and I'll be free to minister in the church," Robison said.

He said Draper was always kind to him but "I couldn't do anything at First Baptist, Euless. I guess they didn't know what to do with me."

Robison also denied being against the local church as had been charged. "I am 100 percent behind the local church," he said. "If I'm going to leave one local church and go to another local church and every Sunday work with two or three local churches, how can I be accused of being against the local church?"

Robison said he's never spoken in tongues but added, "I believe I can. I believe any believer can. The Scripture indicates that clearly. It also teaches it is not something you push on somebody. It's the working spirit."

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'Go Ye Therefore'
Means Hawaii, Too

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
10/5/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—When Charles O'Neal mentions "Hawaii" and "the will of God" in the same breath, he is likely to get laughs.

But O'Neal, visiting the mainland to seek help for his church to build an educational facility, cautions Southern Baptists who might be "fooled by the beauty" of the islands.

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"We pray for and feel for the desolate, impoverished areas," said O'Neal, pastor of the Lahaina Baptist Church on the island of Maui. "There are no fewer hurts in the midst of beautiful places."

Less than four years ago, when O'Neal and his wife, Barbara, began their work, the church had 28 members. Today, almost 100 members worship each week, along with a weekly average of 125 tourists from all over the world. The sanctuary, a roof supported by latticed walls, permits persons outside the building to see and hear worship services in spite of the usual overflow crowd. An additional three Sunday morning services are conducted for tourists at beach-area hotels.

Besides the O'Neals, only one other church member has been reared a Baptist. In an area that has strong Buddhist and Catholic families, O'Neal is likely to find himself being called "Father O'Neal" by persons who don't know how they should address him.

Southern Baptists just now are beginning to gain credibility in Lahaina, O'Neal said. Though there has been Southern Baptist work in the area for 25 years, in Hawaii, he said, "it takes so long to gain some kind of credibility. Too many other groups have come and gone."

O'Neal said he has found persons accept him as a Christian individual more than they will accept him as a Southern Baptist. Misconceptions about the denomination, he said, have included the ideas that Southern Baptists are extreme pentecostals, exclusively white or exclusively black.

Today's congregation, which has quadrupled in a relatively short time, needs educational space badly, O'Neal said. The cost of land and a no-frills building will be approximately \$500,000. Members have managed to raise \$65,000 to pay for the land, but funds are lacking for the expensive building materials that must be imported. Through contacts in Texas, Tennessee and Georgia, O'Neal hopes to gain additional help through missions committees of local churches.

"I have never stood where Baptists are strong," O'Neal told Sunday School Board employees in a recent chapel service. The son of the late Jack O'Neal, for 20 years director of work with National Baptists for the Southern Baptist Convention of California, he has always viewed the denomination from a "new work" perspective.

But O'Neal is convinced a day of greater acceptance and better understanding will come in the outer islands of Hawaii. "Beneath the tourist scene it is like any other city," he said. "There are people there who need the gospel of Jesus Christ."

For Charles O'Neal, "Go Ye Therefore..." means "even into Hawaii."

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