



BAPTIST PRESS

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Prayer Necessary,
Lay Leaders Say

By Ken Camp

BELTON, Texas (BP)--Baptist lay leaders from six states focused on the necessity of prayer for spiritual awakening during a conference at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in mid-August.

The Spiritual Awakening-Renewal Celebration, the first meeting of its kind on a Texas Baptist university campus, drew nearly 200 lay leaders from Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, New Mexico, Georgia and Tennessee.

The lay renewal, sponsored by Texas Baptist Men, was designed to inspire and equip laypersons to lead their churches toward spiritual awakening through prayer, according to Bob Dixon, TBM executive director.

Concentrating on the theme, "Beholding, Becoming, Being," participants joined in what Dixon termed a "celebration of 12 years on the renewal journey." Emphasis was placed on "beholding Christ, becoming his instruments and being all he would have us be."

"Wouldn't it be something if people stopped us on the street and said, 'You sure look like Jesus. You sure act like Jesus,'" Dixon said, rhetorically.

General conferences on "The Mind of Christ," "Praying Like Christ" and "Gifts of Christ" were led, respectively, by T.W. Hunt, professor of church music, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; Don Miller, director of Bible-Based Ministries, Fort Worth, Texas, and James Smith, president, SBC Brotherhood Commission, Memphis, Texas.

Hunt invited his listeners to seek to have the mind of Christ, beginning by asking them to "think about your thoughts."

"How would you like to spend all eternity frozen in that mindset," he asked.

Hunt stressed that having the mind of Christ gives believers peace by freeing them from the bondage of sin and by allowing them to focus attention on things that honor God.

"Christ's freedom within me facilitates the mental quality of attention," he said. "God's goal is my freedom."

Miller invited his listeners to spend a minimum of one hour a day in prayer, saying prayer is "the only thing that will whip the devil." He said most Christians--and most churches--do not place the proper emphasis upon prayer.

"If the church house in not a house of prayer, whose house is it?" he asked. He said believers should become more concerned about others and allow that concern to be expressed naturally through prayer.

"Most prayers are never answered because they are prayed from unconcerned hearts," he said. "Unconcerned prayers go nowhere."

Miller stressed Christians must resist the temptations of the devil in order to have effective prayer lives.

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"I have never met a proud prayer warrior," he said. "It's hard for God to hear you and to fill you until you come to him with empty hands and empty hearts."

Smith began his discussion of the gifts of Christ by explaining the roles of the Trinity as expressions of God's grace.

"Jesus was God's love gift to the world," he said. "The Holy Spirit is God's enabling gift to those of us who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ."

Smith said every believer has received a grace gift from God. He said each Christian has one gift, which he distinguished from talents or ministries.

"The spiritual gift is a motivating factor," he said, "not a talent or ability."

He went on to say the cause of many problems in homes and in churches is the "failure to appreciate that we're not all motivated the same way."

"As each has received a grace gift," he said, "let each employ it in serving one another."

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Indian Fellowship Fulfills
Kaneubbe's Dream

By Chris Potts

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PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)—In many ways, Southern Baptists' oldest missionary endeavor is probably their least successful.

The American Indian, an object of particular missionary zeal and affection among Baptists since Roger Williams first spearheaded denominational efforts among their tribes in the 1500s, remains an elusive target for evangelism. Of 14 million American Indians, only about 156,000 are known to have accepted Christ as personal Savior. Of those, only 3,000-4,000 are members of Baptist churches.

"There's been something wrong with our work," says Victor Kaneubbe, pastor of the First Indian Baptist Church of Phoenix. "We've been in the work over 400 years and only three percent (of the Indians) are converted. It seems like we ought to have more Indian Christians than we do."

Toward that goal, Indian leaders have taken what Kaneubbe and others hope will prove to be a significant step by establishing the Native American Southern Baptist Fellowship--the first national Indian organization ever formed by Baptists. Kaneubbe was elected as the fellowship's first chairman.

The idea behind the fellowship is simple: give Indian Christian leaders a say in determining how best to lead other Indians to Christ. It's an idea that's been slow to settle with Baptists.

"The Southern Baptist Convention is the most successful evangelical denomination in reaching the Indian people," says Kaneubbe. Despite that, only 95 of the nation's 495 tribes have been evangelized. There are only 480 Indian Southern Baptist churches, and only half a dozen of those have more than 100 members.

Kaneubbe says the reason for such figures is twofold.

"(Southern Baptists') first problem has been in not letting Indians lead," he said, explaining many Indian churches have folded when whites attempted to incorporate them into their own congregations without regard to the unique worship and fellowship needs of the Indians.

"I think they've thought we would try to set up a separate and independent convention--which we would never do," said Kaneubbe. "Deaf people, Koreans, Spanish, and blacks all have their own churches. Why shouldn't Indians have their own church?"

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The second factor which has weakened Indian evangelism, according to Kaneubbe, has been what he calls a "parental attitude" on the part of Baptist leaders, hesitant to let the Indians do things for themselves. That attitude, he feels, has sprung in large part from that of the U.S. government, which, for example, entered Indian evangelism around the turn of the century by assigning all the Indians of a given state to one particular sect. New Mexico was assigned to the Roman Catholics, Arizona to the Lutherans, etc.

Among Baptists, though, the "parental attitude" is beginning to change, says Kaneubbe, as witnessed by the formation of the Fellowship.

"Indian ministry training has really been slow," he says. But now "we have a lot of young Indian preachers who are educated, who are going to college." The fellowship, Kaneubbe feels, will help "to set up training programs in all...areas. Missionary pastors will do the training."

The fellowship's stated goal is 840 churches by the year 2000--a goal based on estimates projected by Indian missionaries and churches, and one receiving strong financial support from the congregations as well. Many Indian churches are giving 50 percent and more of their tithes and offerings to missions through the Cooperative Program.

"We're getting our churches together and getting them behind winning more Indians to Christ than ever before," Kaneubbe said.

The fellowship is the culmination of a dream nourished by Kaneubbe since his conversion, nearly 50 years ago.

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(Potts, a graduate student at the University of Arizona, is a free lance writer from Phoenix.)

Hiroshima Pastor Dies
40 Years After Blast

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FUKUOKA, Japan (BP)--Buntaro Kimura, 79, who was pastor of Hiroshima Baptist Church when the atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima, died Aug. 8.

Kimura was visiting his family in the country when the atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima the morning of Aug. 6, 1945. But he rushed back to the city when he heard of the disaster, risking his life in rescue and relief work. His church lay in rubble.

After World War II ended Kimura led the survivors in his small congregation to rebuild the church, with financial help from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

As a pastor in Hiroshima and Fukuoka, and later as president of the Japan Baptist Convention, Kimura helped lead Japanese Baptists to grow from 16 churches with 500 members to a current total of 276 churches and missions with 28,000 members. The convention is now self-supporting and sends missionaries to Indonesia and Brazil.

"My father did not leave his family any great wealth," said Kimura's son, Yoshiki Kimura, who is principal of a Baptist high school in Fukuoka. "He was a poor man, having served as a pastor all his life. But he gave us just one thing: a legacy of faith. It is enough."

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Two Southwesterners Called
To Historic Church In Rio

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--One recent doctoral graduate and a current doctoral student have been called to ministry positions at the historic First Baptist Church of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Fausto Vasconcelos, a 35-year-old Brazilian and current doctor of philosophy student, will become the fourth pastor of the 101-year-old church in August.

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Isodora Lessa de Paula, also Brazilian and a summer doctor of musical arts graduate, will become minister of music at the church as well as director of Niteroi Seminary's school of music in Rio de Janeiro.

The church is to Brazilian Baptists what First Baptist of Dallas is to Southern Baptists, said F.B. Huey, associate dean for the PhD degree. "It is the pioneer Baptist church in Brazil."

William Bagby, Southern Baptists' first missionary to Brazil, organized the church Aug. 24, 1884, and was its pastor for 16 years.

From 1900 to 1933, Francisco F. Soren was pastor. He was also the first president of the Brazilian Baptist Convention.

His son, John, succeeded him. The younger Soren is a former Baptist World Alliance president and served as president of the Brazilian Baptist Convention 11 times.

Vasconcelos holds degrees from South Brazil Seminary and Southwestern seminary. Prior to coming to the United States, he was pastor of First Baptist Church, Copacabana Beach, Rio de Janeiro.

De Paula holds music degrees from Brazilian Conservatory of Music, Federal University of State of Rio de Janeiro, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and Southwestern seminary.

First Baptist of Rio de Janeiro, with 2,800 members, is not the largest Baptist church in Brazil, but is "the most prestigious congregation" because of its history, Vasconcelos said.

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Secular Attention
Ups SBC Hunger Funds

By Leisa A. Hammett

Baptist Press
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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Recent secular media attention to famine in Africa has prompted Southern Baptist giving for world and domestic hunger, according to a Southern Baptist leader on hunger in America.

Nathan Porter, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board national consultant on domestic hunger, reported Baptists gave nearly \$500,000 to domestic hunger during the first six months of 1985. Last year gifts for hunger in the U.S. were approximately \$600,000, he noted.

Porter predicted if Southern Baptists continue the giving patterns established the first half of 1985, funds for domestic hunger may total one million.

Porter also attributes giving increases for domestic causes to emphases given by local church pastors and state Baptist conventions. Porter said several local churches and state conventions have increased the percentage of Hunger gifts allocated to domestic hunger.

Until recently, explained Paul Adkins, Home Mission Board associate mission ministries director, 100 percent of Southern Baptist gifts to "world hunger" were given to the SBC Foreign Mission Board which distributed the funds overseas since, until recent clarification, the term "world hunger" had been interpreted as applying to overseas and not to the U.S.

Some state conventions are changing this, Adkins said, by distributing 80 percent of the designated hunger receipts to world hunger and 20 percent to domestic hunger.

Media exposure, said Adkins, has also highlighted additional "pockets" of need on the home front including various islands and sociologically identifiable groups such as the elderly.

Porter, said the "overwhelming media-generated interest in Africa has had a very positive connotation on hunger relief in the United States." Since January, a number of Hollywood and Christian celebrities, teamed with secular news media, have focused on the problem.

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"It's extremely encouraging to have a strictly secular area in the entertainment field become genuinely concerned and do something about it," Porter said, referring to "USA for Africa," a collection of secular musicians who teamed their talent to produce an album for which proceeds are designated to feed the starving. Ten percent of the album proceeds are allocated for hunger in America.

"I don't want to say that I regret (Southern Baptists) were not the leaders, but we ought to take notice. It's taken secular media to help us. But that doesn't mean (Southern Baptists) have not been doing anything," he added.

Media focus on the (African) problem has resulted in "an attitudinal change" among Southern Baptists the last few months, said Porter.

According to a June 3 Newsweek magazine article on hunger, two million Africans have already died as a result of hunger. F. Bradford Morse, African relief coordinator for the UN, said if the problem persists an entire generation of Ethiopians, where the problem is greatest, may be lost.

Morse continued that three-fourths of the deaths resulting from hunger are African children under five. More Africans may die from this famine than in World War I, which would total ten million deaths--seven million of them children.

Until recently Porter said there has been a tendency to "refuse" knowledge of the wide spread hunger problem in America.

"(Now) Africa's hunger and human suffering have become a reality and it hasn't been as easy for us to deny it exists here," said Porter.

Last year, 35.2 million people in America (15 percent of U.S. population) were below poverty level, said Porter. The U.S. Bureau of Statistics defines poverty level at \$10,178 for a family of four. Porter observed that U.S. poverty figures are the highest since 1954.

Even though more monies indicate increased concern and awareness for the problem in America, Porter maintained Southern Baptists are far from burdened about human suffering in their country.

"It's my conviction," said Porter, "that relieving hunger and human suffering is not a priority of Southern Baptists. In confronting so much human need, we're getting to know the scriptures and that the gospel (of Jesus Christ) can't be limited to words. We have to touch human lives and minister to the whole person."

He added that a contemporary Christian theology he described as "success cultism" leans toward a "negative" approach to poor people.

"Sometimes it's very difficult," explained Porter, "for a person who loves the Bible to love poor people because he's gotten his culture mixed up in the Bible." When "success cultism" becomes fused with the Bible, Porter added, the poor are looked down on.

A prevalent attitude among Christians today, said Porter, is that all a person has to do to be materially successful is believe in Jesus Christ. "I believe that attitude is changing," Porter interjected, "we are accepting poor people and identifying with them."

"It's easy to give dollars to Africa," said Porter, "but, it takes a converted human being, who really knows Christ, to take someone into their home or champion the cause of welfare people and poor kids in this country."



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