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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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December 2, 1985

85-151

Colombian Toddler's Picture  
Stirs Queries About Adoption

IBAGUE, Colombia (BP)--The toddler was crying, "Mami." He had been separated from his mother for a week; perhaps he'll never see her again because of the wall of mud and debris that buried the town of Armero in Colombia's Andes Mountains.

His picture, taken by Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board photographer Joanna Pinneo, has stirred national attention. It was distributed by the Associated Press and carried in newspapers in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and 600 to 700 other cities.

"NN" is the only way he's identified in the state hospital at Ibague, 70 miles south of Armero, where 25,000 to 40,000 people lost their lives when a mudslide roared down the slopes of volcano Nevado del Ruiz after its Nov. 13 eruption.

Numerous inquiries were received at AP bureaus from people wanting to adopt him. But children who lost their parents in the mudslide are likely to be assimilated into Colombian families, according to Bryan Brasington, FMB director for western South America, who visited Colombia in late November.

"It's much better for them to be in an environment where their language is spoken and they do not have to make additional adjustments so abruptly," Brasington said.

"There still is some hope for some of these to be reunited with family members or close relatives," he said. On Nov. 26, for example, a mother, who thought her husband and several children were dead, was reunited with a 12-year-old son, who also had thought he was alone.

Engaging in a ministry of hope to survivors young and old are students from the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Cali in southwest Colombia.

Each week, teams of about 10 students are traveling to Ibague in west-central Colombia, where many of the injured and homeless are located.

The seminarians are "trying to give (the victims) assurance and hope that there is a future, that God loves and has a great concern for them personally," Brasington said.

The first team arrived Nov. 25. Working with each group are several Southern Baptist missionaries.

The students are visiting in hospitals and shelters and, when addresses are available, homes and apartments where victims have taken refuge with relatives.

The teams are looking for opportunities to provide food and other assistance, Brasington said.

Assessing the outlook of many victims, Robert Edwards, Southern Baptist missionary physician, said, "They seem to be in a state of hopelessness. They don't know where all their family is--or if they're still alive. They're concerned about having a home again and finding work." Edwards traveled from Barranquilla, where he directs the Baptist Clinic, to treat patients in Ibague's state hospital.

For some victims, prayer has been their best help, said Adriana Robledo, chief nurse at the Baptist Clinic's emergency room who came with Edwards to Ibague. "They feel that God is hearing them, God is going to help them," she said. "They're not going to give up."

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The seminarians' help is needed because there's just one Baptist congregation in the Ibague area, a sad fact as far as James Giles, Southern Baptist disaster relief coordinator in Colombia, is concerned. "In all our efforts to share the gospel in Colombia, we Southern Baptists hadn't gotten to Armero in 44 years," the length of time missionaries have been assigned to the country.

It might have taken another 20 years before missionaries or a Colombian Baptist church had started a mission there, "because of limited personnel and resources," he said.

A request for a missionary to work in a nearby region in west-central Colombia has gone unfilled for eight years, Giles said.

In Ibague, rehabilitation looms as a major need for survivors who lost limbs after gangrene set in and for others "in their physical, emotional and spiritual adjustment," Brasington said.

"We should get together and talk about the future of these people," Ramiro Lozano, a gynecologist who heads Ibague's Red Cross, told Giles. To date, no statement has been issued by the Colombian government concerning needs that evangelical groups may fill as the recovery continues.

To brighten the Christmas season for children who survived Armero, Brasington took more than 200 musical toys to Ibague donated by Sunday school classes at First Baptist Church, Richmond.

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

Baptist Colleges Are  
'High Priority,' Says Study

Baptist Press  
12/2/85

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)—North Carolina Southern Baptists believe their church colleges and universities should remain a high priority for support, while also affirming that an education in a N.C. Baptist college "...is equal or superior to an education in a state-supported school."

The findings were compiled from a statewide survey among Baptist pastors and church lay leaders from 735 representative churches located in all parts of the state. More than 20 percent responded to the mail survey, with an identical survey published in the Baptist newsweekly, the Biblical Recorder, yielding virtually the same results.

The N.C. Baptist convention supports Wake Forest and Campbell universities and Meredith, Mars Hill, Gardner-Webb, Wingate and Chowan colleges. The state Baptist convention gives approximately 22 percent of its undesignated budget to the seven schools.

The 19-question survey covered such issues as the future of church colleges among Baptists, success of graduates from Baptist colleges and denominational funding of the schools.

Almost 99 percent of those surveyed said Christian colleges should remain a high priority in North Carolina Baptist life, with more than 90 percent saying "they would strongly recommend or encourage a child or grandchild to attend a North Carolina Baptist school."

Over 90 percent of the respondents said they believe the quality of education at Baptist schools is equal or superior to an education at a state-supported institution. More than 80 percent rated the overall programs of the church colleges as outstanding or good.

When asked to rate the success of graduates from a North Carolina Baptist college, 83 percent said they believe "they do well or very well."

The three main strengths of Baptist schools, the survey said are: quality of education offered, Christian commitment of faculty and spiritual emphasis on the campuses.

The most-often cited weakness of Baptist colleges is the cost of education at the private schools as compared to the tuition and fees at state-supported institutions.

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More than three-fourths--77 percent--also said they favor the new "covenant relationship" between the state denomination and Wake Forest University, a plan approved in 1979 whereby individual churches may designate part of their gifts to the denomination for the university rather than the money automatically going to the school.

About one-half of the survey respondents were church lay leaders and 84 percent of the total respondents were from churches with membership between 100 and 999.

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Shared Ministry  
Tops Annual Meeting

By Jim Lowry

Baptist Press  
12/2/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The New Testament concept of shared ministry can undergird the entire issue of leadership for Southern Baptists, Joe Stacker told state church administration consultants at their annual meeting in Nashville.

Church growth, financial support, missions and discipleship all are supported by shared ministry, explained Stacker, director of the church administration department at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Stacker told the state consultants shared ministry will be a priority of the church administration department for several years, because, "We must teach Southern Baptists to be New Testament leaders.

"Shared ministry sets the pace and pattern for where Southern Baptists need to be as a people of God," he said. "If Southern Baptists do a better job with shared ministry, forced terminations will decrease and ministers will begin to trust, delegate and share with staff members, deacons and church members."

"We're committed to making shared ministry our banner for the indefinite future, because the emphasis doctrinally, biblically, and theologically supports everything Southern Baptists do," he added.

Also addressing the state church administration consultants was Sunday School Board President Lloyd Elder and John Lee Taylor, pastor of West Jackson Baptist Church, Jackson, Tenn.

Elder spoke briefly about the interdependent nature of the agencies and components which comprise the Southern Baptist Convention. He said working together is healthy, strong and appropriate.

The local church, however, is the basic reason for the existence of any Southern Baptist agency or component, he continued. "The Great Commission is given to the local church, not any agency or convention."

Elder also said the Sunday School Board is not just in program work, even though methodology is good. "The Sunday School Board is in business to change lives. We want to make a difference along the way."

Taylor, whose church is one of nine Southern Baptist churches in Jackson, Tenn., involved in a class action lawsuit related to churches being perceived as political action committees, recounted his involvement in the successful effort to defeat a liquor-by-the-drink referendum.

The Baptist churches, plus four other churches, are presently appealing a ruling against them by the Chancery Court of Madison County, Jackson, Tenn. The ruling says the churches should be considered a political action committee, and consequently should file financial disclosure forms.

Taylor said he and the other church representatives believe liquor-by-the-drink is a moral issue to which the churches need to give spiritual leadership. He said the designation of the church as a political action committee is the basis for the lawsuit because it puts the government in the position of defining what is a church.

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Resolving the issue has been made more difficult, Taylor said, because this is the first time this particular issue has surfaced in U.S. legal history. The case is now in the Tennessee Court of Appeals.

Taylor advised the church administration consultants to check laws in their states to avoid a similar dilemma for some of their churches.

It has been a demanding year, physically, he said, because of the time required to deal with the lawsuit. Although the battle has taken its toll on pastors and church representatives, Taylor said the Jackson churches are determined to pursue their cause, since they see the present ruling as a potential infringement on moral, not political issues.

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Pageant Of Peace  
To Include Creche

Baptist Press  
12/2/85

WASHINGTON (BP)--For the second consecutive year, the federally sponsored Christmas Pageant of Peace will include a nativity scene.

Despite protests from religious and civil liberties groups, the Pageant of Peace board voted Nov. 25 to include a creche in the display, which will be erected near the White House.

The board based its decision on a 1984 Supreme Court decision that held government sponsorship of nativity scenes to be constitutional, said Sandra Alley, a National Park Service spokesman. The board considers the inclusion of a creche to be "historically and legally appropriate," Alley explained.

During a public hearing Nov. 1, several witnesses expressed opposition to such action.

Joel H. Levy, American Jewish Congress representative, stated the inevitable effect, intentional or not, of such a display is to "secure governmental approval for a particular religious message and for religion in general."

While conceding such action by the National Park Service may not violate the Constitution, Levy insisted, "What is constitutional is not necessarily wise or desirable, either for government or religion. The Christian religious message is hardly advanced if it depends on governmental approval for its validity. This is one of those instances where what is constitutional and what is sound public policy do not coincide."

In his testimony, Barry W. Lynn, legislative counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union, argued last year's Pageant of Peace nativity display did a significant disservice to the American tradition of religious pluralism and the constitutional requirement to keep "a decent distance between religion and government."

"The presence of a central symbol of one religious tradition in a federally sponsored celebration cannot help but give the appearance of placing the blessing of government on that religious faith," Lynn declared. "Its presence demonstrates far more than religious tolerance or neutrality."

Sally Greenberg, a civil rights counsel for the Anti-Defamation League, asserted such a display makes Jews and members of other religious minorities "feel like isolated, second-class citizens."

She countered, however, that adding more religious symbols to the Pageant of Peace would be inappropriate and could lead to a "war of the symbols."

"Such interreligious competition for representation, for limited time and space on public land, brings government into the position of selecting among religions," Greenberg stated.

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## Volunteers Changing Missions, Says Parks

RICHMOND, Va.— A new kind of missions is taking place because Southern Baptists in the pew are beginning to assume responsibility for home and foreign missions, says Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks.

"If that continues to happen it will not only change what's happening on the mission fields, it will radically change what's happening in our churches," Parks told about 70 Southern Baptists who gathered in Richmond, Va., Nov. 20-23 to look at Southern Baptist lay volunteer involvement overseas.

The Foreign Mission Board brought together key volunteers and denominational leaders with an interest in the program to help evaluate their working relationships and talk about ways Southern Baptists can use volunteers overseas more effectively, said Ed Bullock, associate director of the board's volunteer enlistment department.

The fast growth in the program, the rapid influx of hunger and relief funds and the increased number of Baptists going from traditional "mission fields" to do missions in other countries are some of the most significant happenings in missions in the last four or five years, Parks told the group.

Owen Cooper, Yazoo City, Miss., industrialist and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, issued a call for "activating the pew into meaningful involvement in the things that Christ put upon our shoulders to do."

Instead of classifying Christians as ordained and unordained or professionals and volunteers, he suggested that there are only two kinds of Christians, those who are involved in Christian ministry and those who are "AWOL" (Absent Without Leave).

If Christians followed Jesus' example of servanthood, it would place an awesome responsibility on the unordained, said Cooper. "We are all ministers, all of us, and we have a tremendous responsibility." Christians may have different functions, but all have the same responsibility, he said, citing Jesus' commission to his followers to be his witnesses in all the earth. "He (Jesus) didn't put a geographical limitation on my responsibility."

Besides hearing from other denominational leaders like Carolyn Weatherford, Woman's Missionary Union executive director, and James Smith, Brotherhood Commission executive secretary-treasurer, conference participants heard testimonies of former volunteers and pastors whose churches had been changed through overseas volunteer activities.

Frequently during the conference participants broke into study groups to discuss particular facets of the volunteer program and make suggestions for improvement.

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NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION