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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Marv Knox, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041

DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996

NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300

RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151

WASHINGTON Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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World Baptist Leaders
Visit Christians In China

NANJING, China (BP)--Nearly 200 Baptist leaders from 21 nations have returned from a midsummer "listening expedition" to China.

The leaders, including many from the Southern Baptist Convention, were participants in the Baptist World Alliance Friendship Tour. They joined Chinese Christians for a conference in Nanjing which may have been the largest gathering of foreign Christians in China since 1949.

"Never before have so many friends from abroad spent so much time with us," said Bishop Ding Guangxun (K.H. Ting), president of the China Christian Council. Ding attended all of the conference sessions at Nanjing's Jin Ling Hotel, where the foreigners stayed.

Twenty of the Chinese participants also stayed at the hotel during the five-day conference in July. That provided a rare opportunity for informal discussion and interaction with the overseas Baptists, who came from the United States, Europe, Asia, Australia, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Africa.

Chinese pastors, theologians and seminary students gave most of the addresses, Bible studies and testimonies of the conference. Nearly every speaker closed by asking the visitors to "pray for us."

Baptists learned much as they listened to their Chinese colleagues, according to tour coordinator Denton Lotz, director of the Baptist World Alliance's division of evangelism and education.

"The Bible is important" to Chinese believers, Lotz said. "In earlier days, when the Bible had to be hidden so it would not be burned, reading God's Word encouraged and preserved the faith. Recently 2.1 million Bibles have been printed."

The Chinese Christians "revealed Christ as the center of their belief and experience," Lotz continued. One Chinese pastor said, "By following Jesus as Lord in our daily life we can cope with the devil's temptations. Through the Word of God we can receive the power of the Holy Spirit to be mature and look ahead to the crown of life."

Students from the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary took turns telling the Baptists how God called them to ministry. One seminarian gave his testimony in this third-person narrative:

"In his childhood he was told religions were a poison. One day he picked up a selection of Western literary masterpieces and the mysterious kingdom of the Bible became an adventure. He was deeply moved by the story of Job and thought this part was not poison. As no Bibles were available during the Cultural Revolution, a friend gave him an old King James Version to read. The Bible was a good book! So finally he confessed his sins and accepted Christ as his Savior."

The Chinese Christians emphasized their "post-denominational" status and "three self" practice of self-support, self-government and self-propagation. They believe these approaches have gained them respect and credibility in a society which once viewed Christians as converts to a foreign religion and puppets dominated by outsiders.

Today, Lotz observed, Christians are striving to disprove the 19th century phrase, "one Christian convert, one less Chinese citizen," by building an indigenous Chinese church which both glorifies Christ and contributes to China's progress as a nation.

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

One visible sign of their effort is the Amity Foundation, begun by Chinese Christians to render social service through a variety of development, publishing, teaching and training projects. The publishing effort includes Bible printing.

The foundation, which encourages international involvement, has helped put 12 teachers from the United States, Canada and West Germany to work in various parts of China. Amity director Han Wenzao said 40 more international teachers were scheduled to arrive in August to teach at 36 universities. The group includes several Southern Baptists.

Ding put the latest total of open Protestant churches in China at more than 4,000, with more new congregations starting daily. "Our churches are full," he said, "and this creates a problem. We can't do our pastoral work except on a mass basis."

Many more believers "prefer the intimacy of home meetings," Ding added. "Many new Christians have never worshiped in a church (building)."

Eastern European Baptists attending the Nanjing conference found interchange with Chinese Christians especially meaningful, observers said. The two groups compared their lives as believers in communist states, the structures and outlooks of their churches, leadership training and Christian literature.

"They were able to 'compare notes' in a way that many of us in North America would not be able to do with the same depth," said Lewis Myers, a Southern Baptist representative.

Myers is director of Cooperative Services International, the office formed last year by Southern Baptists to channel skilled personnel and resources to countries, such as China, where missionary presence is not possible.

Myers offered the help of Cooperative Services International to Baptist leaders at the Nanjing conference, especially those who might want to contribute to China with personnel or other aid. Baptist representatives from Australia, Canada, Sweden and several other European countries already are considering involvement, Myers reported.

The conference participants attended Sunday worship services in Nanjing churches. About half of the Baptist group also toured other cities in China. Thirty attended churches in Beijing, Shanghai and Guilin.

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Black Church Starters
Express Joy, Frustration

By Lisa M. Lee

Baptist Press
8/15/86

ATLANTA (BP)—Black church starters from across the nation discussed their successes and frustrations during a two-day forum at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

The forum, the first of its kind, attracted 13 church starters. Sponsored by the board's black church relations department, it was designed to discover areas that need re-evaluation and added support from the Home Mission Board.

Marshall Truehill, pastor of Faith in Action Baptist Mission in New Orleans, cited several problems unique to black church starters.

He and several other participants listed such problems as lack of space, lack of committed members, confronting different mindsets in the black community and the tendency of both blacks and whites to be paternalistic and to resist the paternalism of others.

Truehill also cited the need for financial provision for a pastor/musician team rather than a single pastor. "Music is practically a necessity in the black church experience," he said.

Michael Cox, a church starter from Ohio, told the group an "understanding of different leadership styles" and a "nurturing relationship" between the starting church and the sponsoring church is the optimum situation.

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"The relationship can be much more than financial support," Cox said. Cox also insisted the sponsoring church must provide statistical information needed by the new church pastor, as well as the resources needed by a growing church.

The idea of continuing the sponsorship process was reverberated by speakers throughout the forum. "We are not only mission pastors, but all of us are to be sponsoring churches, doing for others," Cox said. "I don't always want to be on the receiving end."

Led by Willie McPherson, national consultant for new church starts, the program combined presentations by various church starters and open discussion.

Gerald Palmer, vice president for missions at the board, welcomed the group and noted the changes he had seen at the board in the last 20 years. Reflecting upon the time not long ago when the Home Mission Board hired its first black secretary, (who later was unable to attend the annual banquet because it was held in a non-segregated restaurant), Palmer said, "We've come a long way in relation to where we've been, but not in relation to where we're going."

Palmer also told the group: "We who are steeped in one tradition need to learn the black church tradition, and vice versa. You are our communicators and apologists. As you know us and you love us, we need you in the middle of things to say to people, 'understand them.'"

The church starters, in return, expressed a sense of brotherhood with the Southern Baptist Convention. "I appreciate Southern Baptists because they are not only interested in winning souls, but in creating disciples," said Truehill.

Palmer expressed hope that black and white Southern Baptists would work closer together as partners in missions. "We are still crossing barriers and entering new frontiers in the name of missions," he said. "At one time, the picture was of a white contingency of missionaries crossing the frontier. We're not quite there yet, but we're moving toward a mixed contingency."

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(Lee is a summer intern in the Home Mission Board's editorial department.)

Pastoral Leadership
Key To Longer Tenure

By Jim Lowry

Baptist Press
8/15/86

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)—Longer tenure among Southern Baptist pastors may be due more to economics than improved skills, said Dwayne Conner, pastoral ministries consultant at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

A new study in pastoral tenure released by the church administration department of the Sunday School Board showed the average tenure for pastors in Southern Baptist churches is now 4.6 years, up from the 2.7 years in a previous study.

Conner, in a conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center on keys to longer pastorates, said the longer tenure revealed in the new study likely does not reflect any significant improvement in ministry skills.

"There is evidence that the increase is due to economics," Conner explained. "More pastors own their homes; it is harder to sell homes between moves, and congregations face financial limitations on the amount of money they can spend to relocate ministers."

A minister moving to a new church needs between five and seven years to become the pastor and not just the preacher for church members, he said. This is achieved not only because of time, but because the authenticity of the pastor is tested and trust is mutually achieved between the pastor and church members.

"Pastors need improved leadership skills to increase average tenure to the point where church members and the pastor can find fulfillment in a growing church," Conner said.

"The tendency in the Southern Baptist Convention has been that significant contributions have been made by pastors with long, healthy tenures," he continued. "Short tenure tends to be repeating a cycle of hope and frustration."

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"Pastors who only have short tenures are so absorbed in surviving that there is no fulfillment," he said. "They are always thinking the next situation will be better."

Conflict and the failure to deal with problems are two of the primary causes of short tenure, Conner explained. Instead of dealing with conflict, many pastors find it is easier to move every three or four years and repeat the same material over and over.

"The quality of pastoral leadership is the key issue for Southern Baptists right now," he said. "That is the reason we are seeing such a high percentage of inactive church members."

"Ninety percent of Southern Baptist churches are not growing to any appreciable extent. I think it is at least partially because of the conflict in churches and the denomination and forced terminations," Conner claimed.

"The direction of the denomination will be affected by the quality of pastoral leadership in churches," he continued. "Pastoral leadership can positively affect healthy growth."

"Without hope, churches are not growing or reaching out," he added. "Church members are not convinced pastors will stay, so they think it is not worth the effort to grow."

"Pastors have to spend time to earn trust and the privilege of decision-making authority. It takes five to seven years to become the pastor. Even then, the trust has to be constantly re-earned with new members and new leaders in the church."

"One key to longer pastorates is a shared calling between the pastor and the church members," Conner continued. "The pastor must be committed to the church and the church committed to the pastor. It's almost like a marriage."

"There also must be a shared vision of the potential of the church through a leadership style which draws people into the dream and goals of the church," he said. "Churches and pastors must learn to deal with conflict and not be torn apart. They must learn to win together and believe that both pastor and members have the best interests of the church at heart."

"Finally, the pastor and church members must share a sense of renewal which keeps the ministry fresh for everyone," Conner said. "This is done through constant caregiving and sharing the dream."

"Pastors and congregations which make the investment to achieve longer tenures will benefit, regardless of the size or location of the church," he said. "Longer tenure allows time to deal with Christian concerns instead of just survival."

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

Evangelist Vance Havner
Dies In North Carolina

Baptist Press
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GREENSBORO, N.C. (BP)—Vance H. Havner, 84, longtime Southern Baptist evangelist, author and Bible conference speaker, died Aug. 12 in Greensboro, N.C.

Havner's ministry, which began during his adolescent years as pastor and writer spanned seven decades. His pastorates included First Baptist Church in Charleston, S.C. Later he became a full-time evangelist and conference speaker whose services were sought throughout the United States. For 10 years he wrote a weekly column for the Charlotte (N.C.) Observer entitled "Havner's Reflections." He wrote 38 books, most of which are still in circulation.

Havner was born in Catawba County, N.C., Oct. 7, 1901. He attended Gardner-Webb College, Boiling Springs, N.C.; Catawba College; Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N.C.; and Moody Bible Institute, Chicago.

His wife, the former Sara Allred of Greensboro, died in 1972. Survivors include several nieces and nephews.

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The family has requested memorials be made to the Vance H. Havner Scholarship Fund, P.O. 1048, Greensboro, N.C., 27482.

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Southwestern Seminary Gets
Record \$2.47 Million Gift

Baptist Press
8/15/86

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, received its largest single cash gift—\$2.47 million—Aug. 4.

The gift is partial distribution of the estate of Mr. and Mrs. Carl McEachern of Austin, Texas.

The McEacherns' interest in Southwestern Seminary primarily was motivated by Ralph Smith, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin and a Southwestern graduate. Four years ago, Smith had invited John Seelig, vice president for public affairs, to visit the McEacherns in an Austin nursing home.

"Dr. Smith ministered to these church members in a remarkable way that involved counseling them to include Baptist causes in their life estate," Seelig said. McEachern, a cotton farmer and rancher, bequeathed his 1,800-acre family farm to the church, Southwestern, Buckner Baptist Benevolences in Dallas and several distant relatives.

A cash sale of 950 acres was completed Aug. 4, with the seminary receiving 40 percent of the proceeds, the church 50 percent and Buckner 10 percent. The remaining 750 acres are on the market and should yield at least another \$3 million for Southwestern, Smith and Seelig said.

McEachern's first wife, Susanna, died 10 years ago. His second wife, Billie, also preceded him in death. McEachern died in 1984 at the age of 94.

McEachern was on the board of directors for the Bluebonnet Co., for 40 years, was a bank director and deacon at Hyde Park Church. Both wives were active Christians, Smith said.

After his first wife died, McEachern decided to will the bulk of his estate to the church. But Smith persuaded him also to include Southwestern and Buckner.

Ironically, McEachern and his first wife had influenced already Southwestern through two professors. J.W. MacGorman and James Crane both knew the McEacherns while attending the University of Texas.

MacGorman, professor of New Testament, met Susanna McEachern at a Baptist Student Union convention in Dallas. She was a frequent speaker at state Baptist gatherings. The couple took an interest in MacGorman and their home became his "home away from home" during college, he said.

Crane, adjunct professor in missions, lived with the McEacherns for six years while working as a page in the Texas legislature and going to college. He first met Susanna McEachern when he took a church study course she was teaching. Soon afterward Crane began living with her elderly parents in a home next to the McEacherns'. Her father, J.M. Earls, had been a pastor in North Carolina and Texas for 50 years.

The \$2.47 million gift is a contribution to Upward 90, five-year, \$50 million campaign. Major projects to be completed include renovation of Scarborough Hall, an addition to Cowden hall, construction of a conference and visitors center and several advancements in academic programs.

Although Southwestern Seminary has received several single gifts in excess of \$2.47 million, no gift this size has ever been given in cash.

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901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

LYNN MAY HQ
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
901 COMMERCE
NASHVILLE, TN 37203

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