



## BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

### NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee  
901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203  
(615) 244-2355  
Alvin C. Shackelford, 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, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550

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

May 4, 1987

87-68

WMU Officials Lower Goal For  
1987 Lottie Moon Offering

By Karen Benson

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--The 1987 goal for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions has been lowered from \$81 million to \$75 million.

The Executive Board of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union voted by mail ballot in late April to lower the 1987 goal by \$6 million when projections revealed Southern Baptists would not meet the 1986 goal of \$75 million.

As of April 27, only \$67,751,032.36 of the 1986 goal had been received. Projections indicate only \$70.1 million will be given toward the 1986 goal.

The WMU executive board sets the goal several years in advance in order to include the goal amount in all publicity and promotional materials, many of which are produced months or years in advance. WMU officials did not indicate if future goals also will be lowered.

The goal change was made in time to have the revised amount shown on several promotional materials — including the Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions posters and prayer guide — but not in time to get the amount changed in other promotional items, such as ads in Sunday school literature.

WMU leaders and officials at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and Brotherhood Commission have expressed regret that the goal had to be decreased, but they cited the need to be realistic in setting the goal.

"We felt compelled to lower the 1987 goal when the 1986 goal wasn't reached," said Carolyn Weatherford, national WMU executive director. "The big problem is that a lot of people think we set a goal with an allowance for fluff. But actually, there's a place already for every penny of the goal. We know exactly where that \$81 million would have gone."

Even if the \$81 million goal were to be reached, "desperate needs" still would go unmet on the foreign mission fields, Weatherford said: "We know how inadequate \$81 million would have been, and that shows just how much more inadequate \$75 million will be. It's just like sending missionaries out without the tools to do their work."

But because every penny of the goal is budgeted and allocated in advance, "we have to be more realistic in setting goals," she noted. "We can't set a goal that will allow us to dream."

While lowering a missions offering goal is painful, "I have an emotional feeling of rightness of lowering the goal," Weatherford reported. "And I'm grateful that we have the process by which we can say, 'We've dreamed a little too high, and we've led you to dream to high. Now, we need to stop that dreaming and be realistic.'"

Foreign Mission Board President Keith Parks agreed: "The adjustment of the Lottie Moon goal appears to be necessary but is regrettable. Since we budget the entire goal, it is important that it be realistic. When the goal is not reached, we have to cut back on urgent needs which we had hoped to meet."

Normally, Parks said, "we deduct the shortfall from capital needs as the most practical way of adjusting the budget. But even when the goal is met, we have several million dollars of remaining needs. And the growing number of missionaries increases pressure. I trust we can exceed the adjusted goal."

In recent years, the Brotherhood Commission has joined WMU in promoting the mission offerings. President James Smith shares the feelings of regret in having to lower the goal: "I'm disappointed that we had to lower the goal. I don't know if it's the climate of the times, the economy or what, but it always disappoints me when we have to lower a missions goal. It's a step backwards, not forwards."

Officials at all three agencies believe the crises in agriculture and the oil industry are part of the reason that the 1986 goal, as well as goals of recent years, have not been met. In fact, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal has not been met or surpassed since 1981.

"When Bold Mission Thrust (the SBC plan to present the gospel to everyone on earth by the year 2000) came into being, we began to set bolder goals that we thought were realistic," Weatherford said. "Each year, we set bolder and bolder goals."

But the realities of Southern Baptists' giving patterns demanded that the goals be re-evaluated, she said. Actually, offering goals have been lowered several times in the past few years.

But there is some good news among the bad, Weatherford said. In 1988, Southern Baptists will pass the \$1 billion mark in accumulative receipts for the Lottie Moon offering.

It took about 92 years to reach the first one-half billion dollars, which was passed in 1980. It will only take another eight years to reach the other half, she said.

And Southern Baptists have shown throughout history that they can weather crisis, she added, noting, "When Southern Baptists lift our sights beyond the immediate needs at home, we seem to come through with what we need."

Also, when Southern Baptists realize that the goal does not include any "fluff" — that it truly represents "desperate needs," Weatherford said, "then I really feel confident that we can realize it."

WMU leaders across the nation are gearing up to make that prediction possible. Helen Allan, executive director of Ohio WMU, said the word "missions" constantly is being kept before Southern Baptists in that state, and they are "upping the amount of money given to foreign missions."

Joy Fenner, executive director of Texas WMU, has vowed to "double our efforts to reach the goal." While Texas has suffered economically, "I believe we have the resources, if we can just channel them to the right places," she claimed.

—30—

NOTE TO EDITORS: A graph to accompany this story is being mailed to you separately from national WMU. It is being provided in two sizes.

CLC Announces New  
Abortion Initiatives

By Tim Fields

Baptist Press  
5/4/87

NASHVILLE (BP) — The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has taken two new initiatives designed to give "urgent attention to the abortion issue," announced N. Larry Baker, executive director of the moral concerns agency.

The initiatives include the assignment of the abortion issue as a major staff responsibility and a national consultation on abortion May 28-29 in St. Louis.

"Robert Parham, director of hunger concerns for the commission since January 1985, has assumed staff responsibility for the abortion issue," Baker said. "Elevating the abortion issue to a major program assignment is the first step in the Christian Life Commission's commitment to provide additional help for Southern Baptists."

"Parham has already written on abortion and prepared materials for Sanctity of Human Life Sunday and will be responsible for the national consultation on abortion," Baker explained. "The consultation will bring together the entire commission program staff and two dozen other Southern Baptists who represent conservative positions on abortion to chart new courses of action on the issue."

—more—

Parham will continue to be responsible for the world hunger issue, Baker said, noting, "The abortion and hunger issues are expressions of the same commitment to the sanctity of human life.

Responding to his new position, Parham said: "Knitting a seamless garment on pro-life issues is a long overdue assignment for the Christian Life Commission, which I accept with a sense of urgency. Abortion and hunger are two of the foremost threats to human life."

"Regrettably, many of us have worked at one end of the continuum while ignoring human life at the other end. I plan to work with all Southern Baptists in the creation of a community where all human life is valued."

—30—

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the SBC Christian Life Commission

Unprecedented Input Sought  
For Baptist Hymnal Content

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press  
5/4/87

NASHVILLE (BP)—A new Southern Baptist hymnal expected to reflect "unprecedented input" from denominational members will be released by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in 1991.

Wesley L. Forbis, director of the board's church music department and editor-in-chief of the hymnal, said a random sampling opinion research project will be conducted by the board's research services department.

Additional research questionnaires distributed throughout the summer at Ridgecrest and Glorieta Baptist conference centers and through state music secretaries will provide "unprecedented input from the grass roots of Southern Baptists," he said.

"Informally," he added, "Southern Baptists are encouraged to participate by submitting original hymns and by sending us their preferences in hymnal content."

The hymnal is expected to reflect "a unity in evangelistic message and the diversity of worship practices that characterize music in Southern Baptist churches," Forbis said.

While similar questionnaires were used prior to publication of "Baptist Hymnal, 1975," the more extensive distribution of forms is expected to begin with pre-Southern Baptist Convention meetings this year.

Forbis also announced the selection of Terry W. York as hymnal project coordinator. York has been a youth and adult music consultant and a literary design editor during his three years in the church music department. He holds the doctor of musical arts degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Publication of the hymnal will coincide with the 100th anniversary of the Sunday School Board and the 50th anniversary of the church music department.

Official unveiling of the hymnal is planned for March 11-14, 1991, during PraiSing II, a four-day celebration of the church music department's jubilee. To be held in Nashville, PraiSing II will feature vocal and instrumental presentations by groups and soloists, along with mass congregational singing. A similar event introduced "Baptist Hymnal, 1975," the last hymnal published by the Sunday School Board.

Forbis said theology of the new hymnal will be foremost in determining works for inclusion. A committee on theology and doctrine will be chosen, and the Baptist Faith and Message Statement will be the basis for textual decisions.

"Each text will be examined line by line," he said, "and only those texts which meet the test of the Baptist Faith and Message will be included in the hymnal. "Materials selected for inclusion will conform, unapologetically, to the evangelical mandate of Holy Scripture."

Forbis said there is no plan to rewrite texts to more frequently sung traditional hymns because of the desire "to preserve the historical context in which they were written, preserve our Christian heritage and to avoid imposing forced and artificial poetic structure."

—more—

The committee may recommend changes in less-familiar texts to replace words that are "so outmoded the original doctrinal meaning has been obscured," he reported.

"In keeping with the long-standing, Judeo-Christian concept of God, texts will reflect the Fatherhood of God and the priesthood of all believers," he said.

Observing the Southern Baptist Convention is "a cooperative body comprising many cultures, ethnic groups and worship practices," Forbis said both texts and music will reflect the musical styles of the convention body.

Hymns, both text and music, will be selected from all major historical periods and from today's hymn writers.

Content is expected to come from published hymnals, song books, excerpts of larger musical works, adaptations, folk music, newly created materials, various mission fields, unsolicited manuscripts and commissioned works.

Among committees to be named in July are those which will deal with theology, design and format, worship aids, new materials and music.

Suggestions about the new hymnal should be addressed to Hymnal, MSN 170, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234.

—30—

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

Servant Leadership Urged  
For Education Ministers

Baptist Press  
5/4/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--"You can't be a solo artist in the Kingdom of God; the job is too big to do yourself," Richmond, Va., Pastor Peter James Flanning told more than 750 ministers of education at their first national conference in Nashville.

Educators from more than 30 states alternately were cautioned and encouraged regarding a biblical view of success that depends on recruiting help, developing church members and sharing the responsibilities of ministry.

Methods and models for developing personal ministry styles were presented in more than 40 special-interest conferences and general sessions, all under the theme, "Servants and Equippers in Shared Ministry." The conference was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Conference leaders advised ministers of education to adopt servant leadership ministry styles which often are ignored in favor of popular, power-related leadership styles. Caution was urged for ministers who choose worldly success standards over biblical models.

"All of us want to be successful, but let us be successful as the Master would," stressed Morton Rose, retired vice president of church programs and services at the board and visiting professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.

"Abandon a leadership success standard of strong, superior and supreme, which is so easy to assume," Rose continued. "Instead, link leadership success to a more basic commitment which says offer, share and give — in a style consistent with the servant leadership of Jesus Christ. We must give our best away."

Sunday School Board President Lloyd Elder said: "I wonder how much we have adopted the standards of the world rather than those of Jesus of Galilee. Too often we want to be somebody, even at someone else's expense.

"Self-giving service after the pattern of Christ is the true course of leadership and the standard of greatness."

—more—

Ted Ward, professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill., said: "All ministers must begin with a heart of compassion and great concern, like (the prophet) Nehemiah. If we equip people to be servant leaders, we listen, are patient and respect them to share the glory that is Jesus Christ in unity and commitment.

"Even when we see flaws in people, we must see them as important," he added. "If Southern Baptists are serious about the priesthood of the believer, then we need an education mentality to empower others and broaden their ministry roles in the church."

Involving people in church activities is the key to reaching out for Jesus Christ. To get them involved, they must be recruited, speakers said.

"Every Christian minister has to be a recruiter, not a mechanic or organizer," explained Flaming, pastor of First Baptist Church of Richmond. "Jesus Christ gave us the pattern when he recruited his own fellowship. The secret is in whether you love the people. And the people will love folks who love them.

"I see you as being Christian, catalytic leaders," Flaming added. "Our Lord never had his eye asleep to the potential of people. If we are in rhythm with who the Lord is, we will be recruiting a growing fellowship. Then you can delegate, develop and equip."

Although achieving this ideal servant leadership style is not easy, Flaming encouraged the educators that their job "is the same as the one who recruited the small band of fishermen, tax collectors and others. You need all the help you can get, because the needs are so great and our energy and time are so limited."

William Hendricks, professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said in the closing session of the four-day conference the ministers should be patient and persistent in their ministry and guard against an erosion of their calling.

"You need to say, 'This is my ministry, I'm called of God and I'm doing his will, his work and his way,'" Hendricks said. "Stay where you are and make a lasting contribution, because you are doing it for God."

—30—

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

3rd Time's Charm  
For Wally Jones

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press  
5/4/87

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Wally Jones hopes the third time is the proverbial charm when the Southern Baptist Convention comes to St. Louis this summer.

The June 16-18 affair will be the third SBC annual meeting for which he's been local arrangements chairman.

That's a modern-day record, reports Convention Manager Tim A. Hedquist.

But Jones, pastor of Fee Fee Baptist Church in St. Louis, takes a low-key approach to the honor: "Somebody needed to do it. And I'm familiar with the process."

Jones chaired his first SBC local arrangements committee when the convention visited St. Louis in 1971. He was tapped again in 1980. So he was the natural choice to provide on-site leadership again this year.

"It's a real asset to have a person who has the experience and willingness to take on a job like this," Hedquist explains.

That job is one that has occupied Jones' attention for at least six months, when his committee began detailing all the steps it needs to take to make the annual meeting work. His job hasn't been too difficult, he says, because "some of the people who occupied key subcommittee positions before still are in the area" and have been willing to serve again.

—more—

Together, they will coordinate the work of about 400 local Southern Baptist volunteers who will do a variety of jobs to help the convention run smoothly. The volunteers will come from five Southern Baptist associations of churches in western Illinois and eastern Missouri. They will work for about 10 subcommittees that will manage everything from day care for children to first aid to ushers in the convention hall.

They're preparing to serve a crowd of SBC messengers that will outnumber them almost 80 to one. "We have tried to gear our preparation to the maximum capacity of the facilities, which is 30,000," Jones reports.

The best part of the job is the reward of providing a helping hand, he says: "I think the idea of being a help to the messengers is my favorite aspect of this work. I know what it's like to go to a strange setting and not know where things are. ... Where families attend, there is the added problem of preschool, day care and reasonable housing. The main thing I enjoy is being of help."

On the other hand, Jones' worst headache is the messengers' worst problem -- parking. "The thing we have the least control over is the one that is the most difficult, and that's parking," he notes. "Probably there is more plain work involved in preschool care, but you can do something about that. You can't do anything about the competition for downtown parking."

Apart from the near-futility of overcoming the parking problem, coordination is the key to success in preparing for the mammoth annual meeting, Jones says. For example, intricate plans are made and training is given so ushers can spot medical emergencies and help first aid workers get to the scene as soon as possible. "That kind of coordination is necessary but not seen," he explains. "But if the coordination doesn't exist, the help doesn't get there."

Jones also praises another form of coordination -- "the assistance we get from the SBC staff. This would be a horrendous job if Tim Hedquist and his staff were not helping out."

By the time the convention arrives, Jones, Hedquist and a host of volunteers will have spent countless hours preparing for the thousands of Southern Baptists who will descend on St. Louis.

For that day, Jones offers advice based on experience. "Wear comfortable walking shoes."

—30—

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers from Baptist Press central office.

Missions Professor To Lead  
European Church Growth Center

Baptist Press  
5/4/87

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A professor of missions and world religions in Texas is accepting a new challenge - directing the new Institute of World Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

Earl Martin, a 26-year veteran of missions in East Africa who has taught at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, since 1982, is expected to be reappointed as a Southern Baptist missionary May 19 in Richmond.

He is scheduled to assume his duties at the institute in September.

The institute's initial programs should begin in early 1988, said Isam Ballenger, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

"There's a great deal of optimism toward this new work," Ballenger said. The institute will offer evangelistic training to pastors and laypeople from Western and Eastern Europe. Programs also may be designed in cooperation with the directors of European foreign missions agencies.

Martin and his wife, Jane, were missionaries in East Africa from 1956 to 1982. They worked in Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda.

They were the third Southern Baptist couple to work in Kenya.

—more—

In Tanzania, they and another missionary couple launched Baptist Seminary of East Africa in Arusha in 1962. They taught there 12 years.

In 1977, they became the first Southern Baptist missionaries to Rwanda and worked closely with missionaries from Denmark. Today there are 21 Southern Baptist workers in Rwanda.

Martin was nominated for the position by Gunter Wagner, a longtime faculty member and current interim president of International Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon.

The institute, which will adjoin the seminary, will be housed in Baptist Center facilities at Ruschlikon.

--30--

FCC Gets Tougher  
On Radio Obscenity

By Tim Fields

Baptist Press  
5/4/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--Recent action by the Federal Communications Commission to crack down on "shock radio" deejays who use indecent or obscene language on the air may be a breakthrough for anti-pornography forces.

For the first time in recent years, the FCC asked the Justice Department to investigate a radio station for possible prosecution for broadcasting material containing graphic depictions of sex acts. The commission said the broadcast was indecent "and may have crossed the line" to obscenity.

The FCC also issued warnings to two other stations, including one which airs morning-show personality Howard Stern of New York. Stern's program mixes sexual innuendo, music, news, weather and traffic reports. The Stern show is one of a growing number of highly profitable "shock radio" shows which uses crude, obnoxious and sometimes illegal material on the air.

"Shock radio" deejays compete to build ratings and earn higher advertising revenues for their stations and salaries for themselves.

The FCC's passivity related to these and other indecent radio and television broadcasts is viewed by anti-pornography groups as a major factor in the erosion of suitable family programming in prime time.

Various groups have exerted pressure on the FCC in recent months to enforce existing federal statutes related to the broadcast of indecent or obscene programs.

Although the FCC was not in the limelight of the recent Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, it was mentioned several times as an agency which could use its powers more aggressively. The report's focus on "hard-core" pornography was reflected in recommendations that the FCC use its power against dial-a-porn companies and cable and satellite television.

The FCC's action is a warning to radio stations across the country that the commission will be imposing stricter standards for compliance of laws prohibiting the broadcast of indecent or obscene material.

The move by the FCC drew guarded praise from N. Larry Baker, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. The CLC for years has fought for higher moral standards for radio and television programming.

"Technology has moved the obscenity and pornography problem well beyond the printed page," Baker emphasized. "The Christian Life Commission welcomes any sign of responsible enforcement of current federal obscenity statutes.

"Although the action is not as substantial as we would like," he said, "it represents a clear change in the mood of the FCC which through deregulation has very candidly supported a marketplace theory of regulation. That approach has been an abdication of the social responsibility embodied in obscenity statutes."

--more--

Baker said the latest FCC action may become a battleground for the FCC and the radio industry: "'Shock radio' means big money for radio personalities and the stations. Two leading deejays who work as a team split an annual salary of \$750,000 and another team has signed a multimillion dollar five-year contract.

"The obscenity movement has moved from 'adult' bookstores into our homes via radio and television," Baker said. "Hopefully the FCC and the rest of the federal government will begin more consistent enforcement of public policy against obscenity which our laws embody.

—30—

State Convention Presidents  
To Convene In St. Louis

Baptist Press  
5/4/87

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)—Southern Baptist state convention presidents will meet in St. Louis on the eve of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in June.

The meeting will begin at 5 p.m. June 15 at the Missouri Athletic Club in downtown St. Louis, said Frank Gunn, president of the fellowship group and president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. The meeting will include a meal, discussion of common problems and solutions within state Baptist conventions and prayer time.

Gunn is pastor of First Baptist Church of Biloxi, Miss. Lawson Hatfield, pastor of First Baptist Church of Fordyce, Ark., and president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, is vice president of the group.

The group, which also meets during the February and September meetings of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee in Nashville, began in 1985, when Charles Pickering of Mississippi called other state convention presidents together to see what they could do to help bring about reconciliation within the SBC. An April prayer retreat that year in St. Louis brought about the idea for the SBC Peace Committee, charged with seeking solutions to the theological/political controversy within the convention.

—30—

Italian Baptists Challenge  
Pope's Emphasis Upon Mary

Baptist Press  
5/4/87

SANTA SEVERA, Italy (BP)—Italian Baptists have bemoaned Pope John Paul II's re-emphasis of adoration of the Virgin Mary within the Roman Catholic Church.

A resolution expressing their concern was adopted during the Italian Baptist Union's conference on evangelism in April. The pope has proclaimed 1987 as "The Year of Mary" and re-emphasized the adoration of Mary in a recent letter to the bishops.

"While we acknowledge and hold in esteem the figure of Mary, the mother of Jesus, exactly as she is presented in the New Testament, we nonetheless refuse these attempts to make her divine," the resolution notes.

The resolution states the pope is wrong to accord Mary "honors and powers which the Bible assigns only to God, to Christ and to the Holy Spirit."

In their emphasis on Mary, Catholics "exalt the creature to the detriment of the Creator (Romans 1:25)," they take away "the unique and unrepeatable nature of the work of Jesus Christ, the one and only Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5)" and they do "a dishonor to Mary herself, the 'handmaiden of the Lord' (Luke 1:48)," the resolution notes.

It adds the pope's action "makes the way more difficult and problematic for those of us who believe in ecumenism among Christians from different denominations."

—30—



Librarians Organize  
SBC-wide Association

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Librarians and archivists from across the Southern Baptist Convention have organized the Southern Baptist Library Association. Meetings of the organization, which began informally in 1979, will be held annually to share professional interests and pursue common goals relating to the collection, preservation and management of libraries and archives.

Officers are Irvin Murrell, Campbellsville College, president; Tony Coursey, SBC Home Mission Board, vice president/president elect; Myrta Garrett, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, secretary; Janet Freeman, Meredith College, treasurer; Jane Gressnickle, Grand Canyon College, newsletter editor; Edward Scott, Furman University, membership chairperson; and Kathy Grena, Belmont College, social chairperson.

Membership is open to staff members of Southern Baptist affiliated libraries or archives. The next meeting will be April 26-27, 1988, in Nashville.

--30--

Missionary In The Gambia  
Witnesses With Pit Toilets

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press  
5/4/87

FARAFENNI, Gambia (BP)--Putting in pit toilets may not be glamorous work, but Southern Baptist missionary Chris Austin feels that is exactly what God has called him to do in The Gambia in western Africa.

The missionary from New Orleans and his 10-man team of helpers are proficient pit toilet installers. They have put in 300 of them in the past two years as part of a public health program that includes installation of water wells, instruction in gardening, health screening and other measures.

As Austin talks with area residents about public health, he also tells the staunch Muslims how a Savior named Jesus can solve the needs of their spiritual health. The New Life in Jesus Baptist Church which Austin and his wife, Karen, have started is comprised only of his 10 workers he has led to faith in Christ. But their steadily maturing Christian faith holds promise for future growth.

Baptist work has gone slowly in The Gambia and neighboring Senegal because of Islam's presence. Although Southern Baptist missionaries have work in the Serekunda area near Banjul, the capital on the coast, most believers there are from other African nations. Austin's workers are Gambians.

A sliver of a country smaller than Connecticut, The Gambia is surrounded by much larger Senegal on Africa's western coast. The country stretches about 300 miles along both sides of the Gambia River but is only 15 to 30 miles wide. The Gambia sprang into American consciousness several years ago when author Alex Haley's book, "Roots," was published, followed by the television miniseries. The tale's opening chapter on Haley's ancestor was set in the tiny Gambian village of Juffure.

The Gambia is a poor country. In rural areas, half of all children die before the age of 7, Austin says. Most die from diseases that elsewhere are successfully treated: measles, pneumonia, malaria. Polio and meningitis still are common. But chronic malnutrition often makes these diseases worse. Ignorance also is a factor. When a baby has measles, mothers often wrap the baby warmly, despite the intensely hot climate, and lay the baby out in the sun.

"Most babies are healthy till they're about 4 to 6 months old," Austin reports. "When they start eating solid food, they go down, because they drink dirty water and eat dirty food."

Limited medical facilities are available, but 80 percent of the total national healthcare budget goes for the support of just two hospitals. Even if more physicians were available, they would wind up treating the same patients repeatedly because so much sickness is caused by poor sanitation and dirty water. One physician serving in the Farafenni area confessed to the Austins that he was distressed because he can cure the sick people but can do nothing about what makes them sick.

--more--

That's where Austin comes in. By putting in properly designed pit toilets, many diseases and parasites can be controlled. "For me this is one of the most satisfying things we're doing, because nobody is helping with waste disposal," says Austin, who holds master's degrees in both tropical medicine and public health.

Working in villages within six miles of Farafenni, he first discusses with village leaders how to work together to get the pit toilets constructed. To assure proper maintenance and understanding of keeping each unit sanitary, villages are required to dig the hole and provide sand and rock for a concrete top.

Austin provides a concrete top with lid that he designed himself and is built at his workshop. He used chicken wire as reinforcement in the lid at first but has found fibers from rice bags work just as well and are much cheaper. Because the thin concrete looks weaker than the traditional log-topped toilet Gambians are accustomed to, Austin often must get five or six men to stand on the completed unit -- to prove it is sturdy. Each unit costs the equivalent of about \$10 or \$12.

Along with the installation, Austin advises the owners how to add ashes to keep down smell and urges that they keep cooking fires well away from the area.

In some cases, the pit toilets have made dramatic differences. For example, at one school with 1,200 students, no toilet facilities of any kind were offered until Austin installed several pit toilets.

Even more appreciated than the pit toilets, though, have been the wells Austin has installed throughout the area. He especially seeks out smaller villages overlooked by other aid projects working in the country. "In one village, people walked more than three miles for every drop of water," he says. Between 40 and 50 people lived there. "Water is the life of a village. If there's no water, people will migrate away, and the village will die. Water is a main concern."

As with the pit toilets, villagers must agree to dig the wells themselves, although Austin provides shovels, crowbars and a tripod pulley for hauling out buckets of dirt. Austin and one of his three two-man well-drilling crews top it off with a concrete collar.

Austin also is experimenting with gardening plots to teach area residents how to grow better, more varied crops, including citrus fruits. And he is experimenting with drying certain crops, which would help extend the food supply beyond just the few weeks they are harvested. Reforestation is a long-range goal.

He and his wife also do routine health checks in the villages, checking the weight of babies to make sure they are developing well. Stool samples of children help identify parasite infestation, a common problem. Such routine checks turned up a measles outbreak just starting in one village last year; by alerting health officials, they headed off a possible epidemic.

A dental clinic has been constructed in Farafenni, and the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board is hoping a career missionary dentist can be appointed to serve there soon.

Amid the other work, Austin is slowly developing rapport with village leaders in the area and gradually teaching them about public health. It is slow work, changing habits followed for centuries and telling people who have never been to school about germs -- something which they cannot see.

As they discover he has told them the truth about health matters, he hopes they will discover he has told the truth about Jesus, also.

—30—

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