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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
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. Hasteley, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

July 20, 1987

87-109

Home Missions Conference
Emphasizes Winning Cities

By Sherri A. Brown

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Winning America's cities by starting churches and reaching people was the theme throughout the annual Southern Baptist home missions conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

"More than half the people in America live in 6 percent of the land area -- our cities," said Larry Lewis, newly-elected president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Lewis spoke during the opening session of a special conference on winning the cities -- a new emphasis at the board, initiated in response to action taken last October by HMB trustees who asked the agency "to explore to the fullest" reaching America's cities.

"There are 88 million unsaved people in the 44 largest cities. Southern Baptists have not effectively reached our cities. Today we have work in every state, but we do not have a national denomination until we have committed ourselves to the cities," Lewis said.

Lewis pointed out the nine major Southern Baptist states -- Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Texas -- boast 21,000 Baptist churches. Los Angeles, New York City and Chicago, with more people than the total population of all nine states, have only 683 Baptist churches.

"Southern Baptists are relative newcomers to the cities. We are a rural people groping our way into the city. But we cannot ignore that as the greatest mission field perhaps in the world," he said.

Lewis listed four things necessary to reach the cities.

First, Southern Baptists "must start churches in the cities. Only 18 percent of our churches are in these 44 cities, with more than half the U.S. population," he said.

"Then we must evangelize the cities. We must use creative evangelistic methods to reach the unique places in their context," he said.

Lewis pointed out the successful ethnic strategies in the cities. "While the current Southern Baptist ratio of baptisms to church members is one to 44, the ethnic ratio is one baptism to 10 church members," he said.

Third, Southern Baptists "must minister in the city. Ministry is the door of opportunity to the door of the unsaved," he stressed.

Then finally, Southern Baptists "must have a strategy for reaching the cities. We must tailor-make an approach for each situation," he said.

Bobby Sunderland, HMB director of the direct evangelism division, pointed out to start 1,500 churches a year, there will have to be 1,500 church sponsors a year. He challenged participants to "give up our money. Starting 1,500 churches a year is going to take money.

"And we're going to have to learn cooperation," he said. "There is no room for turf-protecting Goliaths if the mega-focus city program is going to succeed."

Conference registration of more than 3,300 people was a record-breaking count for the home missions conference.

Black Southern Baptist
Churches Show Growth

By Bill Junker

ATLANTA (BP)--"Black churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, using SBC methods, are growing churches faster than other Baptists, either black or white," said Emmanuel McCall, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's black church relations department.

"The board is trying to maximize this growth in every way possible, now that every state convention is open to helping start and grow black Southern Baptist churches," he said.

McCall spoke during the Black Church Relations Conference, held for the first time during the annual home missions conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center. About 200 black pastors and church leaders, most of whom are related to one of the 1,200 black SBC churches, participated in the triennial conference.

"We have two purposes for the conference," McCall explained. "One is to introduce people to SBC life, the conference center and resources of the SBC. The other is to provide training in needed areas of church ministry and growth."

In addressing the conference on the present-day challenge of black cults, Willis Polk of Versailles, Ky., told conferees: "Folks out there are struggling. They have questions. If they can't find answers in the churches, they turn to other religious forms."

Polk referred to "eight major world religions, 2,000 to 2,500 cults and thousands of other deviant 'occult' groups" as constituting the religious threat to all Americans.

"We tend to shy away from members of these groups if we don't understand them," Polk observed. "But 95 percent of those involved in cults came out of someone's church."

Churches need to counter the influence of cults and other religions by finding out what people are looking for, Polk said.

"A lot we do in church doesn't have to do with ministry," he added. "If a church can find out what people are looking for, that's the ministry. If you want to know what to do with your youth, find out what youth are interested in. If you don't deal with it, someone else will."

Polk contended churches need to provide more education in the Christian faith: "You can sit under great preaching all your life and still not know anything. We have great whooping in many black churches, but great whooping won't build a church."

Carlisle Driggers, HMB regional coordinator for the eastern United States, spoke from "a life-long search to find out why some churches are effective, some mediocre and some failures."

"Churches that organize their work to meet specific needs of the community are going to be effective," he insisted.

Every church has both relational and functional needs. "Relational needs are people who are hurting, lonely, left-out," he explained. "The source of greatest satisfaction is relational, while the source of greatest tension is functional. Yet the usual church spends most of its time talking about functional needs. Then they wonder why they don't grow.

"Even if the church is hard to locate and facilities are not the best, people will continue to come if the church loves them and provides for their relational needs," he said.

Leadership for a dynamic church must start with the pastor, maintained Joe Coates pastor of Glendale Baptist Church in Miami.

"An alternator can't get started from a dead battery, and a battery is powerless until you put water in it. The Holy Spirit is to the preacher and the church what water is to a dead, dry battery. The Holy Spirit brings power," Coates said.

"We think we have a dynamic church if we have large numbers, but a dynamic church is powerful in the Holy Spirit. If it isn't doing what God says, don't brag about the numbers."

'Limited' Bus Ministry
Lauded For Effectiveness

By Terry Barone

DALLAS (BP)--A limited bus ministry is one way churches can help spread the gospel to unchurched pockets in their communities, according to a Texas Baptist Sunday school leader.

Bernard M. Spooner, director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Sunday school division, said unchurched people in every community could benefit from a church that sponsors a limited bus ministry.

In a limited bus ministry, churches limit the number of bus riders to no more than 10 percent of the average Sunday school attendance.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Southern Baptists gave the method of evangelizing people through bus ministry a major trial run, Spooner said. "Many churches found they could reach people in ways that they had not seen in many, many years. Baptisms began to soar and Sunday school enrollment began to increase. As bus ministries developed, there seemed to be no limits placed on how many to reach."

Because of this, Spooner explained, too few workers and too little Sunday school space disrupted the life of the church and people who had once "rejoiced in this method of evangelism were disillusioned."

First Baptist Church of Carrollton, Texas, has had a bus ministry for more than 10 years. Pastor Wayne Allen said: "It (the bus ministry) has been a real blessing to us. It is probably one of the best vehicles for reaching prospects, especially lost people."

The church averages 1,500 in Sunday school weekly, and the bus ministry reaches between 150 and 175 people.

Allen said 10 to 15 percent of the baptisms he performs each year are the result of the bus ministry. Even though the ministry is directed toward children, adults have been reached, he added.

Because of the bus ministry to children, Allen said First Baptist started a bus ministry to senior adults who otherwise would not be able to attend church.

"Our bus ministry has done as much as any other ministry we provide in impacting our community," Allen said. The bus ministry has "put us in touch with people whom our members would not normally come in contact on a daily basis."

Allen said he believes the bus ministry has helped First Baptist be more like a "New Testament church" that ministers to the "poor and needy."

If a church limits the number of participants, the church can manage problems and provide a stronger personal ministry and witness to both individuals and their families.

Spooner said as many as 50 percent of Texas Baptist churches could have some form of limited bus ministry which could increase substantially outreach and personal witnessing to people.

"This kind of ministry offers unbelievable potential for penetrating many pockets of our community which are not receiving the gospel today," he said.

He also said that with a limited bus ministry, churches could concentrate on the total family. "By limiting the number of persons involved in a bus ministry, a better relationship could be developed with the individual rider and the family from which he or she comes," he explained.

Many churches today have little or no vision for reaching their communities, Spooner said, noting this ministry should be viewed as community outreach.

The approach calls on the church to provide some form of transportation and should target a special or specific group or groups to reach--more--

"I don't see this as a church-growth emphasis," Spooner said, "but a community ministry of Outreach and evangelism to unchurched persons."

The fundamental approach for solid growth in a church is to reach families and adults who provide leadership within the home and church, he said: "We should in no way weaken our outreach to the total family with a great emphasis on adults. But we cannot overlook our responsibility and opportunity for providing ministry to as many who do not come with families who may be poor or even of another racial group."

Groups which could be targeted include language or ethnic groups, senior adults, children or the mentally retarded. "The possibilities are limitless," Spooner said.

He added most churches could easily absorb 10 percent of their average attendance into the Sunday school with few adjustments and/or demands on either space or leadership.

"Most churches would have little expense in providing vehicles for transportation," he added.

He explained that small churches with an average attendance of 50 to 100 that were reaching up to 10 people could use one or two station wagons or a small van for transportation. Larger churches could use larger vans and school-type buses.

By limiting the ministry, Spooner said the church body will be more willing to "sustain the ministry on a continuing basis because it would not burden the church in the areas of space, leadership or finances."

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Payday For Prayer
Comes For Galloway Family

By Ferrell Foster

Baptist Press
7/20/87

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (BP)--This fall, Bryan and Karen Galloway will board an airplane bound for the Far East and a mission field. Passage was all but booked 30 years ago when his parents prayed.

In 1957, Bryan, a 4-week-old infant, lay in a Paducah, Ky., hospital with a 50-50 chance of survival. He had pneumonia.

His parents were members of First Baptist Church of Metropolis, Ill., and they were losing their pastor to foreign missions. But Charles and Erica Morris, on their way to the Paducah airport and a life overseas, made time for one last pastoral call -- on a baby boy named Bryan.

That day, Morris voiced the prayer, but the commitment was from the child's parents. "I told God that if he would spare his life, Bryan was his to use, no matter what the call was," his mother said. Bryan recovered.

This year, the Morrises came home for good from Malaysia. Later this year, the younger Galloway will leave for Malaysia. The new missionaries will -- in a sense -- replace the retiring veterans.

"We knew full well what we were doing," Galloway's mother said of their prayer at the hospital. "You don't ask God for things unless somewhere down the road you expect a payday."

But Zelious and Berna-Dean Galloway kept their prayer a secret from their son. They wanted any ministry decision he might make to be genuine.

At age 7, he developed another health problem. He was hospitalized for a biopsy, and the Galloways "reminded God" of the prayer in Paducah. Once again, he recovered.

The call to the ministry came when he was 12.

But he says today: "I did not respond to that call. ... I did not let anybody know."

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Six years later, he witnessed a car wreck where several people were hurt. "I was asked to help, and I refused." That evening, God "really convicted me of my apathy and lack of concern," he said. "I committed myself that same night to the call I had received."

While in the process of calling Galloway, God was moving a young woman by the name of Karen Gully of Vance, Ala., in the same direction. Her call came at age 13, and she responded.

The two met in a religion class at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala. They married eight years ago. He later graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and was pastor of Corydon (Ky.) Missionary Baptist Church.

Their desire in missions was to work with Chinese people, specifically those speaking Mandarin Chinese, he said. When they selected northern Malaysia as the place where they would serve, they did not yet know of his connection with the Morrises 30 years earlier.

The Morrises served 23 years on the island of Borneo, pioneering evangelical work for Southern Baptists. They spent their final years as missionaries in northern Malaysia, where Morris wrote theology textbooks and trained church planters.

Galloway's role in northern Malaysia will include church planting and theological education. The Galloways will not take the Morrises' place, but they will be building on and expanding that ministry.

"Thirty years ago God, in his sovereignty, saw that there would need to be a replacement," Morris said. "It is a very fulfilling experience for us that God moved in that way."

Galloway said: "It really speaks to me that God is in control of this world. ... He is aware, more than we ever realize, of what we're able to do, gifted to do, capable of doing."

For Galloway's parents, the letting go began 30 years ago when they prayed. But now, as their grown son's departure for overseas nears, they have had to deal anew with their commitment.

"It overwhelms you so," said his mother. "You have to come back to God."

Once again, as they have through the years, the Galloways are praying for a son who God spared for his greater service.

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(Ferrell Foster is associate editor of the Illinois Baptist.)

Scripture Distribution,
Evangelism Go Together

By Jim Lowry

Baptist Press
7/20/87

CEREDO, W. Va. (BP) -- For Southern Baptists, Scripture distribution might be the catalyst which sets in motion new progress toward winning the world to Jesus Christ.

In Ceredo, W.Va., members of First Baptist Church are reaching out in their community by giving away New Testaments in nearly every situation where they contact prospects or make visits.

"Good News America, God Loves You" New Testaments are given away by church members during weekly visitation, as well as in visits to hospitals, senior adult retirement homes and to youth who "hang out" in the downtown area.

Use of the New Testaments has been cultivated as a lifestyle for church members by Pastor Wade Armstrong, who said he has seen people grow in confidence and security where fear formerly controlled their witnessing efforts.

"People become more confident when they give the Word," Armstrong said. "They know they have sown the seed that is the sword of the Lord."

He added that when people give the Bible, it quickly goes beyond the mechanics of giving away a book. "Enthusiasm carries over into their personal lives and the life of the church."

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In one service, copies were provided to church members to mark and use in witnessing. Armstrong preached from one of the New Testaments, encouraging members to make personal notes so they would remember how to organize their witnessing efforts.

The "Good News America, God Loves You" testaments, which are published by the Holman division of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, are marked with the plan of salvation to help individuals understand how to accept Christ. These testaments also are provided as pew Bibles in the church's new auditorium.

Preaching from the marked copies gives his messages "a two-pronged approach," Armstrong said. "It fortifies church members with resources and allows lost persons to watch and learn how to be saved."

Associate Pastor Charles Reber has coordinated the Scripture distribution effort. He said some 100 church members participate in the witnessing efforts.

"We give copies to new Sunday school members, newly saved persons and to new church members on the day they join," Reber said. "Several members have asked for copies to mail to unsaved relatives or give to neighbors."

Scripture distribution gives shy members an outlet -- almost an excuse -- to witness where they normally wouldn't do it," he continued. "There is just something about a Bible that makes people accept it and not throw it away. There is a reverence which opens up another step, another visit."

In the 18 months of Scripture distribution, adults and youth in the church has been involved, Reber said. Youth have witnessed to other youth who have joined the church. Median and senior adults have had their personal witnessing strengthened.

In all of this, a new unity has developed in the church, which has experienced steady growth in an economically depressed area where a significant number of people have moved away over the past few years.

The participation in Scripture distribution was prompted by the partnership between the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists and the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. A gift of 10,000 New Testaments was made to West Virginia Baptists by the North Carolina convention.

Reber said Ceredo church members not only increased their efforts in evangelism, but in prayer as well through the Scripture distribution project. Church members have matured through intercessory prayer instead of focusing on themselves.

"Handing out Scriptures breaks down barriers of fear for witnessing," Reber concluded. "It also gives church members a sense of accomplishment, affirmation and an avenue of obedience for expressing their commitment."

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