

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

July 23, 1987

87-111

Chinese On U.S. Visit  
Remember Past Suffering

By Erich Bridges

SHANGHAI, China (BP)--During the darkest days of his life, Chinese pastor Shi Qigui wondered if Jesus Christ had fallen asleep.

For years the ebullient preacher, composer, musician and lover of poetry lived alone in an eight-square-meter room, separated from his wife and son. He had no Bible, no church in which to worship, no books. He dared not sing or play a Christian hymn on his little pump organ. He labored long days wielding a blacksmith's hammer.

His soft-spoken colleague Lei Tong lived under virtual house arrest, writing daily "self-criticisms" for the Red Guards, who watched him from their headquarters across the street.

The dark days are past now. These are good days for Shi and Lei. The radically leftist Red Guards and their Cultural Revolution are gone, along with their vicious abuse of religious believers, the educated and millions of Chinese. Reopened after more than a decade, Christian churches now number more than 4,000. Shi helps lead Muen Church, in central downtown Shanghai. Lei is one of the pastors at Shanghai's All Saints Church.

In late July the two pastors embarked on a four-week, nine-city preaching tour of the United States. The tour is being sponsored by Cooperative Services International, the Southern Baptist office formed to build relationships with Christians in countries where the denomination's missionaries do not work.

Shi and Lei were young ministerial students when China's communist era began in 1949. Both responded to the call for a new generation of Chinese Christians to take over leadership from departing missionaries.

"Many of my classmates advised me, 'You better not go into church work. Maybe the Communist Party will persecute the believers,'" says Shi, who grew up in a Christian family and attended mission schools. "But I was not afraid. I think when God chooses a man, God will do his job, in any time."

He completed seminary studies and went to work at the stately Moore Memorial Church, Methodists' main church in Shanghai. The church's challenge in those early days, Shi remembers, was proving the continued relevance of Christianity to a new and increasingly hostile society.

In 1958 the Baptist, Presbyterian and Anglican churches nearby merged with Moore Memorial and became Muen Church. That same year, many Chinese pastors were forced to go to work in factories and other places. Shi continued his ministry for several years, but Lei Tong was not as fortunate.

Lei, now 60, became a Christian under the guidance of Southern Baptist missionaries and studied in a Baptist seminary. For five years he ministered, but in 1958 he was put to work in a factory for several years and again at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966.

Because of his "reactionary" commitment to Christianity, Lei was forced to clean the factory grounds, perform other menial tasks and engage in daily "self-criticism" before a portrait of Chairman Mao. Later he was confined to his home.

--more--

One day the Red Guards came for his books. They ransacked his home, overturning shelves and wardrobes, searching for Bibles and anything else pertaining to religion. Lei stood trembling in a corner. "I prayed in my heart," he recounts. "I said, 'My Lord, listen to my prayer. At least you must preserve one Bible for my family. It is our spiritual life. We cannot live in the world without it.'"

The search ended and most of his library was gone, soon to be ashes. Heartbroken, Lei began to straighten what remained in his home. And there in full view, on an otherwise empty bookshelf, lay one Chinese Bible. Lei fell to his knees on the spot, sobbing with joy and praising God.

When his wife came home from work, Lei excitedly showed her the Bible and told her of his desperate prayer. "And what do you think she said?" he asks with a wide grin. "She said, 'Why did you only ask for one Bible? You should have asked for two, one for you and one for me!'"

The Red Guards also left a Greek lexicon and dictionary, not realizing their usefulness in Bible study. For years Lei used his precious Bible, the Greek texts and his solitude to revise problem passages in the Chinese New Testament. The Red Guards assumed he was only writing daily reports concerning his "thought reform."

Lei's scriptural labor of love is now in the hands of Chinese Christian scholars working to produce a new translation of the Chinese Bible.

While Lei endured confinement, Shi toiled in a factory and later as a blacksmith's assistant. Muen Church, closed as a worship center, was used for years as a middle school. Shi's books also were burned, including his Bibles. So he relied on memory, reciting verses as he fought despair.

"In my mind, Jesus Christ was asleep," he admits. "I realized that someday God would calm the storm, but maybe in my lifetime I would not see it. I was very sad because my faith was very weak."

Shi was separated for many years from his wife, a musician in a traveling music troupe, and his son. He shared a dark, tiny room with a bed, a desk and his one consolation: a small pump organ. Since the playing of Christian hymns or other "decadent" music was strictly forbidden, he improvised.

"I mixed this bit of Beethoven with the second line of that hymn, then play this so-called revolutionary song, then continued with Beethoven or Schubert," he explains, demonstrating on his organ with mischievous glee. "I mixed it all up. Ha ha! It was very wonderful! When others asked me what I was playing, I said, 'Oh, just according to my inspiration.'"

Three years after the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976, churches slowly began to reopen. The government reaffirmed Chinese citizens' right to believe in and worship God. And Shi faced anxious questions. Should he return to the pastorate? After so much suffering, would other believers show themselves? Would the new freedoms last? Would new persecution follow?

He asked his wife's advice. "You are a pastor," she admonished him. "If you do not do this work, who will?" Her challenge made things clear.

Still, Shi wondered how many believers would come back as he and his pastoral colleagues mailed invitations to the first public worship service at Muen Church -- the first church to reopen in Shanghai.

At about 3 a.m. on the morning of the first service, he made his way to the church to get things ready. Several Christians already stood at the front gate, patiently waiting. By daybreak, believers lined up far down the street.

"It so moved me," Shi says, his eyes still glowing with wonder. As he begged God to forgive his lack of faith, the people crowded into the sanctuary. Lacking a pianist, Shi sat at the ragged old upright piano and began to play. "When they sang the hymn ... Oh! Tears came down."

Today the joyful music of Shi's choirs flows once again through the open windows of Muen Church, washing over the people who pass by. It is one of 23 churches now open in China's largest city.

Another is All Saints Church, where Lei Tong has worked since 1983. After a lifetime of faithfulness, he was ordained in January 1986. Lei leads a weekly Bible study for some 600 people at All Saints, which has more than 3,500 baptized members.

Muen counts about 3,000 members, with hundreds more preparing for baptism through new believers' training. Shi apparently is making up for lost time. He maintains a breathless schedule of preaching, music ministry and teaching, evangelism, counseling, working with young people, helping edit a national Christian periodical and encouraging other Shanghai pastors. He also helped compile a new Chinese hymnal which contains several of his own compositions.

But all of this, added to the labors of all other Chinese Christians, amounts to only "a drop of water in the ocean" of China, Shi believes. The church, open again for eight short years, has much to do. Come again in 50 years, he advises, and see what the Chinese church has done.

--30--

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

Faith Channel To Begin  
Broadcasting Aug. 1

By Todd Deaton

Baptist Press  
7/23/87

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--When the Faith Channel officially begins broadcasting programs provided by mainline religious groups Aug. 1, the Louisville, Ky., channel will reflect direct cooperation between the city's major denominations.

The three leading partners in the venture are the Kentuckiana Interfaith Community, the Catholic Communications Center of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Louisville and the Ohio Valley board of the American Christian Television Service, operated by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

The three groups have agreed to share programing time on the 24-hours-per-a day channel, which will be channel 30 in the city and 18 in the rest of Jefferson County, on the Storer Communication cable systems.

The programing will primarily come from ACTS, the Catholic Telecommunications Network of America, the Eternal Word Television Network which is Catholic and the World Council of Churches' Communications Commission.

Ohio Valley ACTS, the sponsoring group for Southern Baptist programing on the Faith Channel, began seeking to create an access for ACTS on a Storer channel four years ago. "But those efforts continually failed, because of the lack of interest on the part of the national Storer Communications, Inc. officials," said Jim Morrison, chairman of the channel's board of directors and associate pastor of Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville.

"Eventually, Ohio Valley ACTS learned what we could not do by ourselves, we could do by cooperating with other denominations," he explained.

The agreement comes with some built in advantages, Morrison said. "First, we would not have a Southern Baptist voice in our area without cooperation. And we have a much larger viewing audience for our witness because people of other faiths in our community are more likely to tune in the channel to see what it offers."

But the greatest advantage to local Baptist congregations is the channel offers a direct media access that they did not have before, he claimed.

Since the announcement of the channel's birth in early February, directors of the Faith Channel, comprised of five members from each of the three groups, have solidified an arrangement for a minimum of two years with Storer, hired a full-time operations manager and purchased the necessary equipment to receive the satellite transmissions from the various sources.

--more--

The principal funds for the first year's operational expenses are provided by a \$100,000 grant awarded to the Faith Channel by the Mary C. and Barry Bingham Foundation. Future expenses will be shared by the three religious entities involved.

David Schraffenberger, newly appointed operations manager for the channel, helped the groups organize the channel's headquarters in Mullins Hall of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"Faith Channel will monitor the delivery systems of the mainline denominations and select the best programs from these satellite systems to be videotaped. Then it will send the programs by a microwave signal link with the Storer Cable, to be transmitted to the local communities," Schraffenberger explained.

Presently, Schraffenberger, a four year cable operations veteran, is looking for four master control operators dedicated to providing "wholesome family and Christian entertainment."

Southern Seminary communications professor Robert Don Hughes, a member of the Faith Channel board, said the initial programming schedule will be simple, mainly shifting back and forth between ACTS and Eternal Word programming.

The channel also will broadcast programs from the Kentuckiana Interfaith Community, an organization headed by Ken MacHarg of St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville. KIC represents the voice of the Christian Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Episcopale Diocese of Louisville, the Jewish Community Federation, the Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church, the Salvation Army and the United Church of Christ.

Hughes is enthusiastic about the project, which has brought a full-time channel on the seminary campus. He said, "The Faith Channel will provide not only hands-on training for seminary students and an outlet for their productions, it will also provide an opportunity for Baptist churches to get involved in media.

"The channel's success will lie in its ability to become a vehicle of expression for Louisville's community of faith."

The most significant development, according to Baptist board member Andy Rawls, is that Southern Baptists have formed a good working relationship among a wide variety of religious groups in Louisville.

"The three groups are willing to work together to see their particular message of faith is communicated to the county's residents," he said. "Faith Channel is a common carrier, but certainly it is an uncommon channel. The concept of sharing time is different from other religious channels, which thrive on particular charismatic individuals. Faith Channel offers only the programs of mainline denominations with no solicitation."

--30--

Baptists, Roman Catholics  
Explore World Witness

By Glenn A. Ingleheart

Baptist Press  
7/23/87

ROME (BP)--"The meetings in Rome went well," a Southern Baptist said after the fourth round in a five-year series of conversations between the Baptist World Alliance and the Vatican.

Twelve Baptist and Roman Catholic theologians met in mid-July in Rome to consider the theme "Our Witness to the World."

The conversations were co-sponsored by the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the Commission on Baptist Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation of the Baptist World Alliance.

Karl Muller, professor of missiology at St. Augustin Seminary in the Federal Republic of Germany, presented a paper to the forum on "Evangelization versus Proselytism." Paolo Spanu, president of the Baptist Evangelical Christian Union of Italy (UCEDI), responded. Pablo A. Deiros, professor at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Argentina, presented "Freedom and Its Limits: The Problem of Church-State Relations," with response from Joseph A. Komonchak of the United States.

--more--

Discussions were enhanced by a series of Bible studies exploring "Early Christian Witness in Rome." In this connection, the group visited sites of early Christian witness in Rome, including excavations under St. Peter's Basilica, the Catacombs of Priscilla and the Basilica of St. Clement.

Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, president of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, received the participants in his offices. Greetings from Baptists in Rome were brought by Spanu.

Co-chairmen of the sessions were Bede V. Heather, bishop of Parramatta, Australia, and David T. Shannon, vice president of the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta.

Other Baptists participating were: Noel Vose, president of the Baptist World Alliance and principal of the Baptist Theological College of Western Australia; Glenn A. Ingleheart, the Baptist co-secretary for the sessions and director of missions for the Baptist Convention of New York; and E. Glenn Hinson, professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Other Catholic participants were: Carlo Ghidelli, under-secretary of the Italian Catholic Episcopal Conference; John R. Donahue, Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, Calif.; and John A. Radano, Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity at the Vatican and the Catholic co-secretary for the sessions.

This series of international Baptist and Roman Catholic conversations will conclude in 1988 with discussions on the final report, which eventually will be published. The overall theme has been "Our Common Witness to the World."

Previous meetings were held in 1984 in Berlin, in 1985 in Los Angeles and in 1986 in New York. They considered such issues as evangelism and evangelization, the person and work of Jesus Christ, conversion and discipleship, and the church as koinonia (fellowship) of the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of the conversations is to come to a better understanding of similarities and differences in Baptist and Roman Catholic doctrinal, ecclesiastical, pastoral and mission concerns. They also aim at identifying existing prejudices and improving relations between the two religious bodies.

--30--

Southern Baptist Woman  
Remains A Hostage

By Jerilynn Armstrong

Baptist Press  
7/23/87

DALLAS (BP)--Southern Baptist Kindra Bryan remains a hostage of the Mozambiquean right wing rebels which seized seven foreigners in mid May.

Bryan was part of a Youth with a Mission team working on a farm in a central province of Mozambique when she was seized.

Although the rebels announced on May 20 the seven whites would be freed, they have remained captives.

A spokesman from Second Baptist Church of Houston, where Bryan is a member, stated the church staff received a telex the weekend of July 18 and 19 confirming Bryan's well-being.

Negotiations are continuing for the release of the hostages with hopes of it being resolved in the near future.

--30--