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February 3, 1988

88-18

**HMB President Proposes
Partnership With Men**

By Bill Bangham

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis has proposed a new relationship between his agency and Southern Baptist men.

Referring to recent remarks made at a Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union meeting where he proposed a symbolic marriage between WMU and his agency, Lewis described what he meant by a new relationship with men.

"Let me assure you I'm not proposing marriage to you fellows, please understand," quipped Lewis. "But I am proposing a partnership."

In a moment of levity, participants responded by presenting Lewis with a Royal Ambassador knife and a counter proposal that he use it to become a blood brother with them.

"I will use it to cut my remarks short," he said.

Speaking to a gathering of Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission and state Brotherhood personnel, Lewis challenged men to forge a new relationship with the Home Mission Board to meet Bold Mission Thrust goals. Bold Mission Thrust is the Southern Baptist plan to present the gospel message of Christ to the whole world by the year 2000.

"We get so wrapped up in our work that we forget what our work is all about," he said, "being Christ in our communities, doing what he would do if he were here."

Being Christ in the communities of the nation includes being advocates for people who have no voice -- the poor, the homeless, the hungry -- and being models of ministry for young people; for men, particularly Royal Ambassadors, Lewis explained. Royal Ambassadors is the Brotherhood Commission's missions program for boys.

"We cannot be the body of Christ without being concerned with hurting humanity," he said. "A lot of emphasis will be on the Home Mission Board to be the catalyst to impact the churches to be ministering, witnessing bodies."

Lewis issued a series of challenges to participants. He asked them to become prayer partners with him and to lead other men into that partnership, citing a need for spiritual renewal and awakening in America that can only come through prayer.

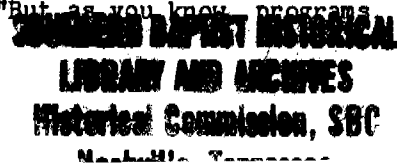
He also challenged them to lead people to faith in Christ, pointing to 1987 as the worst for baptisms among Southern Baptists in 10 years.

"We've gotten away from sharing our faith," he said. "We've gotten sophisticated, elite, too caught up in activities to share our faith."

He pointed to Baptist Men's witnessing units as a way of meeting this challenge, to the 1988-89 "Year of the Laity" in evangelism and ministry emphasis and the 1990 simultaneous revivals as opportunities to tell people about Christ.

"We have the programs, plans and material," said Lewis. "But as you know, programs, plans and materials will not win our people to Christ."

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Mentioning another significant statistical decrease -- a decline of almost 20 percent in the number of volunteers participating in home mission projects -- he promised to spend part of his vacation this year as a missions volunteer and challenged other men to join him.

"One of the things I appreciate about the Brotherhood Commission is your commitment to the involvement of men and boys in missions," he said.

He also challenged men to join the Home Mission Board in establishing new churches: "I think if we win our nation, win our world, it will be through those bodies of Christ where the people are. I'm convinced that we'll never be successful in Bold Mission Thrust unless we plant new churches."

Commenting on Home Mission Board goals of having 50,000 Southern Baptist churches by the year 2000, Lewis said, "We don't need 13,000 new churches if they're not doing anything."

Part of the challenge of starting churches includes God's challenge to all his people to become ministers, he added: "He calls everyone who knows him to service and ministry. I appreciate deeply the commitment of Brotherhood, Woman's Missionary Union and the Home Mission Board to the ministry of all God's people.

"We've got to be committed to starting more Bible-believing, soul-winning, mission-minded churches."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Brotherhood Commission

(Editor's note: Following is the third of a three-part series on Jewish believers in Israel.)

Jewish Believers Travel
Numerous Paths To Faith

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
2/3/88

JERUSALEM (BP)--A Jewish grandmother stops to visit with an American worker and his son near their apartment. She learns the boy's name is Joshua and remarks, "That means, 'God is salvation.'" Then she ventures a question, "What do you think about Jesus?"

Before the American can gather his thoughts, the woman volunteers, "I believe he's my Savior."

The American wonders how the Jewish woman learned about Jesus. "No one told me," she says: "I grew up on a kibbutz, and while I was in the army I found that my trinity of Marx, Lenin and Engels was not sufficient. I saw what they were doing to my people in Russia."

She came across a Bible "and in reading the New Testament, the answer came to me that my new Trinity is God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Some 3,000 Jews in Israel believe in Jesus, or Yeshua (ye-SHU-uh), as they call him in Hebrew. Maybe it is because they are Jews, because Scripture promises them a Messiah, because their heritage includes long eras of agony or because they don't shy away from intellectual inquiry, but every Messianic Jew "has an individual story and an individual calling," as one puts it.

At the same time, there's no "special gospel to the Jew," says another believer. "They're asking, 'How do I find personal peace and happiness in life?' just like anyone else in the 20th century in the Western world."

Amazement often erupts when they find the answer. "My God, Christians don't know what they have," one believer recalls thinking. "This is a mighty, glorious gift from heaven, to know God."

Some remain secret believers. One Hasidic, or ultra-Orthodox, Jew with nine children, for example, chooses secrecy over the possibility of being divorced by his wife and ostracized by other family members, friends and neighbors. Several secret believers live on kibbutzim or other commune-like settlements.

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Many believers, however, rise to the challenge, as one puts it, of "swimming against the whole stream of water, against the whole nation, the neighborhood, people you grew up with." Says another: "I was sure this was the truth I was looking for. I decided to take any sacrifices I needed to concerning family and friends."

David Yaniv, who lives on a Jewish settlement in northern Israel, had the flu when he tuned in a Christian telecast dealing, at that moment, with healing. His right leg had been paralyzed from spinal problems for more than seven years, so he was intrigued by the program, but also dubious. He continued watching for several weeks, closing his door each day so his wife and two sons would not walk in. "Being Jewish, I thought I was doing something wrong," he explains.

One of the program's hosts pointed his finger at the camera one day "and he said to me, 'You've tried everything. You've tried doctors, you've tried psychiatrists. What have you got to lose? Pray with me.' Without even knowing, I found myself kneeling and praying. And then I kept on praying with him every day."

Before long, Yaniv concluded "there must be more than that" to his new faith, so he decided to visit a church in Nazareth. At the town map, the Baptist church caught his eye. But that Wednesday it was locked. He returned on Sunday and was the only Jew in the service. But "from the first moment, I felt at home," he says.

The pastor "asked anyone who would like to give his life to the Lord to come forward," Yaniv reports. He responded without hesitation. To his surprise, he was led through the same prayer he had been praying at home. "The only difference was, now I did it in public," he explains. Several weeks later, he was baptized in the Jordan River.

He continued watching the Christian telecast and was astounded one day when healing was proclaimed for someone paralyzed from the waist down. He didn't feel anything then. But the next morning he could walk normally and without pain, he says. His wife, Sheila, also has embraced his new faith. "We have something to hope for," he says. "And to depend on," she adds.

Various Messianic Jews tell of such supernatural experiences. Shaul Zuela, one of the leaders of a congregation in Tiberias, was a paratrooper when he saw the name of Yeshua across the sky in flaming letters. From his strict Jewish upbringing, he had only the foggiest notion of Christianity.

After leaving the army, he had three dreams in which he saw a man dressed like a high priest and was told, "Here is your Lord, your Messiah." Still later he came across a New Testament, and the more he read about Yeshua, the more he realized: "I know this man. I saw him in the dreams. This is the high priest." A dream also played a part in the conversion of Zuela's wife, Zahava.

Many other Messianics, however, have come to Yeshua in less dramatic fashion. Ilan Zamir, an elder in a Tel Aviv congregation, was grateful to God for answering his prayers at several crisis points. He recalls: "I always believed in God, yet I didn't know who he is. I felt rather selfish towards God ... because after the situation was over, I didn't think about God anymore. I just lived my life for myself. So I said, 'God, I don't really know you, but I want to do things to you just as much as you do to me. I want to know who you are and serve you.'"

David Stern, who immigrated to Israel several years ago and now is a leader of a Jerusalem congregation, was perturbed by a California Christian's insensitive way of asking: "Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?" Stern quickly walked away, but it was "a question no one had ever asked me before."

He later was affected by Romans 10:9, "... if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Several weeks later, Stern reviewed the passage and "discovered that I actually did believe those things."

His wife, Martha, remembers a time of crisis in 1972 in Michigan: "All my friends, when I'd see them, they'd just say, 'How are you doing?' I'd say, 'Great.' And they'd say, 'Well, good, see ya around.'" But a Christian friend had the courage to say, "You look like you need help." It was "such a relief that somebody noticed and actually said something about it."

During the early 1960s, Baruch Maoz, leader of a congregation in the Tel Aviv area, was influenced by a Christian family that moved to Israel from the United States. The father was helping to develop Israel's mining industry, and Maoz remembers the way the husband and wife related to each other and to their children.

He also remembers "the non-arrogant moral standards they tried to maintain, their willingness to admit mistakes and to forgive each other, the beauty of their commitment to God, their willingness to make daily sacrifices for the sake of their Savior."

Maoz later was influenced by a Jewish believer who also maintained "the vitality of his Jewishness."

On a kibbutz west of Jerusalem, a retirement-age woman who lost her parents to Nazi exterminators during the Holocaust tells of meeting a young Christian from Tennessee. "I was full of bitterness against the way Christianity has treated the Jews during these 2,000 years, and she said, 'You're right.' She didn't dispute with me."

The Christian's gentle spirit allowed for heart-to-heart discussions of their religious views. "We could have argued until the year 3000," the Jewish woman recounts, "but I would not have believed."

But the talks stirred serious contemplation. "At a certain point, the Holy Spirit came in and he convinced me," she says. "It took about a year until I said, 'Yes, that's it, the Christians are right, but they are not right. What was written in the New Testament was right. Jesus was whom he claimed to be. But those who call themselves Christians have not conducted themselves in harmony with that story."

"I seldom argue with people about these things. They have to be ready in their hearts, and then God will do the rest."

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

Stanley Not Endorsing
Robertson For President

Baptist Press
2/3/88

ATLANTA (BP)--Charles Stanley is not endorsing Marion G. (Pat) Robertson for president, the former Southern Baptist Convention president told Baptist Press.

Stanley made the comment following a Jan. 19 Baptist Press story in which mention was made that both Stanley and another former SBC president, James T. Draper Jr. of Euless, Texas, had endorsed the Virginia Beach, Va., broadcaster.

Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, and SBC president 1984-85, told Baptist Press: "My In Touch board voted and asked me not to publicly endorse any presidential candidate. I certainly am going to comply with their wishes and not come out for anybody. I will have my private opinion, but will not make a public endorsement."

The reference to Stanley endorsing Robertson came in a story which dealt mainly with the announcement veteran conservative political organizer E.E. McAteer of Memphis, Tenn., has joined the campaign staff of Vice President George Bush for the Republican nomination for president.

Baptist Press first reported that Stanley and Draper had endorsed Robertson in September 1986, following a rally at Constitution Hall in Washington where Robertson announced he would run for president if his supporters met certain conditions, including pledges of financial support. During the rally, Draper, who was present, announced his support of Robertson and read a letter from Stanley, who did not attend the meeting.

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In his letter, Stanley wrote: "I deeply regret that I cannot be present on this significant occasion in your life and the life of our nation. I encourage you to pursue the course to which God has called you, remembering that God always honors our obedience. Keep ever before you the admonition which God gave to Joshua as he assumed the leadership of the nation of Israel: 'Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.' Be assured of my prayers and support."

At the rally, Robertson aides handed out press packets to reporters covering the event, including a news release titled, "Major Figures Endorse Robertson Candidacy." The second paragraph of the release read: "James Draper and Charles Stanley, the immediate past presidents of the 14 million member Southern Baptist Convention, voiced their support of Robertson. Draper read a letter of endorsement from Stanley, who could not attend the meeting."

Based on the text of the letter and the Robertson release, the Stanley statement was widely reported at the time as an endorsement.

In early February 1988, Stanley told Baptist Press the letter had intended only to convey his "prayerful support" of Robertson "as he sought to do the will of God for his life.

"I think a lot of Pat and I certainly want God's best for him. I meant what I said in the letter, that I will pray for him and believe God will do what he wants to do. If he (Robertson) becomes the Republican nominee, then I will have to make some decisions about what I am going to do. But I haven't joined anybody's campaign."

Baptist Press contacted Draper who said he is "encouraging people to listen to what Pat has to say. I believe he is the best candidate in the race." Draper said he will be "doing some things for Pat in South Carolina," but is working as an individual.

Baptist Press also contacted current SBC President Adrian P. Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, who said: "I will not endorse anyone as an outright endorsement, but, obviously, like any good American, I will have to find a candidate and encourage him. Right now I do have some people I am tending toward, but I am watching and waiting."

In another political development, a Bush campaign news release noted a "growing list" of religious leaders who have coalesced behind the Vice President. Included were W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas and president of the SBC 1969-70, and Jack Stanton, director of the Institute of Evangelism at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo., and current SBC first vice president.

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New Orleans Judge Rejects Plea
To Drop School-Funding Case

By C. Lacy Thompson

Baptist Press
2/3/88

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--A New Orleans judge has rejected motions to dismiss a case challenging the use of public funds in non-public school systems in Louisiana, clearing the way for the class-action suit to go to trial.

U.S. District Judge Frederick Heebe has denied motions for dismissal of the case from local, state and federal officials. In one approved motion, the New Orleans Roman Catholic archdiocese was dropped as a defendant in the suit.

The suit was filed against the local, state and federal government in December 1985 by Americans United for Separation of Church and State on behalf of a group of local parents.

The action challenges the constitutionality of using more than \$30 million of public tax money to provide such items as transportation, school textbooks, materials and supplies to non-public school students.

The suit also challenges provisions in the Louisiana constitution that encourage public funding of private, religious schools.

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By rejecting the motions for dismissal, Heebe paved the way for Americans United to continue preparations for bringing the case to trial. Lee Boothby, the attorney handling the case for the non-profit organization, said the case should be ready for trial in five or six months. The case will be heard in New Orleans.

Boothby is encouraged about the prospects of the suit. "I really think we'll be able to prove our case," he noted.

Americans United filed the suit on behalf of four local parents. Since that time, four other parents have intervened in support of parochial schools and are being represented by an attorney for the U.S. Catholic Conference in Washington.

When the suit was filed, Americans United Executive Director Robert Maddox noted the U.S. Constitution "prohibits the use of tax money to support and promote religion. This principle translates here to mean no tax money for religious schools.

"Today, for all practical purposes, there is no wall of separation between church and state in Louisiana education. The citizens and taxpayers of this state are being asked to support a public school system -- where everyone is welcome -- and a private school system which serves only the few."

Maddox noted that while Louisiana ranks low in most public school categories, the state ranks first in the amount of per capita aid given to non-public schools.

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Controversy Causes Decline
In Evangelism, Scholar Says

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
2/3/88

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Continued controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention has caused the denomination's influence as an evangelistic force to wane, a leading evangelical theologian claimed.

Carl F.H. Henry, a visiting professor during a January term at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., noted three adverse effects of the theological/political struggle among Southern Baptists:

-- A public perception of a divided denomination tends to discourage people from identifying with SBC churches.

-- Southern Baptists have lost their leadership role within the broader evangelical community.

-- Energies that would have been devoted to evangelistic efforts have been devoted to denominational infighting.

Henry, widely regarded as a major intellectual spokesman among American evangelicals, said the notoriety the controversy has received from the news media has raised negative perceptions of the denomination.

"People in the secular city (a term coined in the 1960s by theologian Harvey Cox) feel they don't want anything to do with either of this crowd (moderates or conservatives)," said Henry. "They don't want to get involved in a controversy. People are much more inclined to go into a community church where they know their neighbors and know their townspeople and where they know nobody is trying to grab control."

Henry, who chaired the 1984 SBC Resolutions Committee, is a member of Capitol Hill Metropolitan Baptist Church in Arlington, Va., a congregation that is dually aligned with the SBC and the American Baptist Churches, USA.

The 75-year-old editor emeritus of Christianity Today noted Southern Baptists comprise the "largest evangelical denomination in the United States." However, he contended the convention has forfeited its leadership role among evangelicals because some leaders of the moderate faction have attempted to "put distance" between Southern Baptists and the evangelical community.

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"Some of the moderates have insisted that neither they nor the denomination should be called evangelicals," he explained.

The success of Southern Baptists, Henry said, largely has been due to "their consistent evangelistic outreach." Yet he pointed out the convention's number of baptisms has been on a steady decline, asserting that part of the decrease can be attributed to "energies that have been exhausted in controversy."

The SBC controversy has "both theological and political aspects," Henry said. He noted political rhetoric and "pejorative name calling" on both sides create a climate in which no winners exist.

"When the situation is deplored merely as a political contest in which the moderates want to entrench themselves in places of leadership and fundamentalists who are trying to maneuver an apocalyptic takeover, nobody wins," Henry said. "Because whoever wins is left with a situation that many people on the margins of Southern Baptist life want to avoid."

However, the political aspects "aren't necessarily destructive," he noted. By its nature, the SBC is a political structure, he stressed, adding, "part of the genius of Southern Baptist ecclesiology" is that churches send messengers who determine the course of the convention.

"If we are functioning through political structures that are normative in Southern Baptist life, that sort of political involvement shouldn't be disparaged or deplored," he said.

The primary theological issue in the controversy is how the findings of the historical-critical method of biblical study are presented in Baptist seminaries, he said: "If the transitory verdicts of biblical critics are to be taken as normative and timely and virtually given creedal status, that's one thing," he said. "But if critical theories are taught critically and the authority of Scripture is emphasized then that's quite another."

Henry said he has no objections to the teaching of "non-evangelical views of non-evangelical theologians" in Baptist seminaries. However, he emphasized, after the views have been presented a determination must be made as to what is normative for Southern Baptists.

Commitments made by the convention's six seminary presidents in their 1986 "Glorieta Statement" could be a step toward reconciliation in the denomination, Henry added.

"If the presidents of Southern Baptist institutions abide by the commitments of the Glorieta Statement that evangelical views will be represented fairly, then a great deal of the controversy will be mitigated," he said.

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(BP) photo available upon request from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

New Churches Grow Faster,
Research Study Indicates

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
2/3/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--New Southern Baptist churches grow faster than older, established congregations, and new churches have about a 15-year "window of opportunity" before reaching a plateau or beginning to decline, a recent analysis of church growth patterns shows.

C. Kirk Hadaway, urban/church growth specialist in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's research services department, examined 1981-86 statistics from the Convention's Uniform Church Letter survey to compare growth rates of newer and established churches and identify the percentage of membership growth contributed by newer churches.

Among churches organized prior to 1927, only 25.1 percent grew by more than 10 percent between 1981 and 1986. The average rate of growth for these older churches was 4.1 percent.

In contrast, 67.9 percent of churches organized between 1972 and 1981 had a growth rate of 10 percent or higher for the five-year period. The average rate of growth was 47.1 percent.

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Of churches started from 1927 to 1946, 30.3 percent grew by 10 percent or more; of those begun in the 1947-56 period, 36.5 percent grew by at least 10 percent; and of churches started between 1957 and 1971, 45.9 percent increased by 10 percent or more.

The trend of more rapid growth for newer churches in the first 15 years was true in all sizes and types of locations, from open country to urban, Hadaway said.

For the purposes of the study, he categorized declining churches as those whose membership declined by 11 percent or more between 1981 and 1986. Plateaued churches were those whose membership had declined by 10 percent or less or increased by 10 percent or less for the period. And growing churches had experienced membership gains of 11 percent or more.

Reasons that churches plateau at about 15 years may vary, Hadaway said.

"This may be the time it takes to fill up the building," he said. "Or during this period the friendship structures may be set in place or the church's image as a community institution solidified."

From a denominational perspective, the 2,128 churches started or added between 1981 and 1986 contributed 262,375 members. Most of these were begun as new churches, with a few existing churches added from other Baptist groups, he said.

Churches that existed prior to 1981 and still in operation in 1986 contributed a net gain of 758,946 members. And for the period, 1,091 churches were dropped, removing 143,045 members, many of whom presumably joined other Baptist churches.

Considering only the new members added during the five years, 25.7 percent came from new churches.

If Southern Baptists were to start no new churches, he said, projections indicate membership growth would continue but at a diminished rate.

For example, if no new churches had been started between 1981 and 1986, the membership growth rate would have been 4.5 percent rather than 6.4 percent. Projecting growth of existing churches to the year 2001, Hadaway estimated a growth rate of only 3.1 percent for the years 1996 to 2001 if no new churches were started.

After 20 years of no church starts, he predicted, the membership growth rate of the denomination would be cut in half.

A key to the success of Southern Baptists in starting new churches has been that local congregations sponsor new works rather than the primary impetus and funding coming at the denominational level.

"The denomination definitely has a place in the church-starting process, but its role should be that of an encourager and promoter of local initiative," he said. "Denominations which emphasize local-church initiative in starting churches with the support of national and state bodies tend to start more churches than those which use a 'top down' approach."

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(BP) chart mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press

Teleconference Stresses Need
For Volunteers, New Churches

By Susan Todd

Baptist Press
2/3/88

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--One woman has answered the call to volunteer for missions as a result of the 1988 Southern Baptist Home Missions Teleconference.

During the live broadcast of the Feb. 1 teleconference, a former volunteer in missions called to say she thought she had served as a volunteer for the last time, only to hear the need is now greater than ever.

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The teleconference was broadcast from the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union national office in Birmingham, Ala. It was the first live broadcast from the facility. An estimated 30,000 people viewed the program on the ACTS network and Baptist Telecommunication Network.

Viewers heard and saw what the 1988 Southern Baptist Week of Prayer for Home Missions theme, "A Church for Everyone," means in terms of changed lives. Five home missionaries and three Southern Baptist agency executives joined hosts Jay Durham and Esther Burroughs, both of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, to tell the story of starting churches across the country.

Starting churches throughout the nation is a task that Southern Baptists have only begun, the missionaries and missions leaders insisted.

"It's a matter of not doing business as usual," said home missionary Tom Blase of St. Louis, Mo., "but a willingness to go beyond our walls."

Looks can be deceiving, added home missionary James Myers of Grangeville, Idaho. Places that look unpromising can turn out to be fertile areas for beginning churches.

Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis was asked by a caller to pinpoint the area of greatest need for churches. "There's nowhere you can say doesn't need a church," he said. "Anywhere there are people, there needs to be a body of Christ."

Churches are not something to take lightly, Lewis said, noting, "The church is not just another organization, but the body of Jesus."

Cindy Black, a home missionary in Gatlinburg, Tenn., described the varied approaches she and her husband, Bill, use to start churches in resort areas. Sharing the gospel requires meeting people where they are, she said, on ski slopes, in craft shows, in theme parks and in national parks.

Mrs. Black told how sharing "cookie bags" with craft-show vendors brought reactions such as, "This is the most unselfish thing I have ever seen."

That same type of unselfish ministry was seen in the work of home missionary Vince Inzerillo of Seattle, Wash. "I do what I do as a missionary not because there is a need, because there are needs all around, but because I am compelled by Jesus Christ," he said.

Home missionaries Jim and Cathy Ward also told what it means to be compelled by Jesus Christ. To them, ministering and starting churches has meant leaving children and grandchildren in Kentucky to share the gospel with people from many language groups on ranches in Arizona.

"We go about 3,000 to 5,000 miles every month," Ward said. Travel is not always without danger, Mrs. Ward added. "We have to constantly be aware of the sun and snakes."

The Wards underscored the emphasis each home missionary placed on the importance of volunteers. He shared his dream for a "hearts across America" commitment from Southern Baptist churches, re-sounding the plea for every church in the Southern Baptist Convention to sponsor a mission.

Because the Home Mission Board is placing such a strong emphasis on starting new churches, Lewis asked viewers to pray for wisdom for him as he leads the organization. He asked them to pray for God to give him guidance so the board would know directions in which to go.

But most of all, he asked for prayer support for missionaries.

"There are 3,742 missionaries who need prayer support more than they need anything else," he said. "As important as funds and financing are, the need for prayer is the most critical need. We need prayer partners across this nation to pray for us every day."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Woman's Missionary Union

Missouri Baptist Children's Home
To Begin Crisis Pregnancy Center

By Bob Terry

BRIDGETON, Mo. (BP)--The first crisis pregnancy center related to a Missouri Baptist Convention entity is scheduled to open March 15.

The Missouri Baptist Children's Home, in partnership with Cane Creek-Stoddard Baptist Association, plans to operate a crisis pregnancy and family counseling center in Poplar Bluff. A second center is planned for Dexter.

When the center opens, it will be the first crisis pregnancy center in the Southern Baptist Convention to be sponsored by a state convention entity or local Baptist association, according to Robert Parham of the SBC Christian Life Commission. Parham, who directs the CLC's anti-abortion program, noted 12 SBC-related churches sponsor crisis pregnancy centers but added he knows of no center sponsored by a state convention or local Baptist association.

The children's home board of managers voted to authorize the partnership with Cane Creek-Stoddard Association during the board's Jan. 26 meeting on the home's Bridgeton campus. Current plans call for the Poplar Bluff center to be housed in the associational offices. The Dexter center will operate out of First Baptist Church.

The children's home will be responsible for selecting, training and supervising the staffs of the two centers. The association will provide the physical needs.

Initially all staff members will be volunteers. Questions about paid staff or building sites will be considered only after the needs for a crisis pregnancy and family counseling center have been demonstrated, said Robert Kenison, executive director of the children's home.

Cane Creek-Stoddard Association was interested in a crisis pregnancy center because the bootheel area of Missouri had the largest percentage of teenage pregnancies of any area of the state, Kenison explained. He added the association also wanted to offer family counseling.

"The children's home cannot start family counseling centers without first getting approval from the state convention since the home's primary mission is to provide residential care," Kenison told board members. "But we can start crisis pregnancy centers and duplicate these across Missouri."

He described the centers as "logical extensions of our ministry to unwed mothers."

The children's home currently has a toll-free telephone number for girls with problem pregnancies. The home also offers residential care for unwed mothers, medical care, parent training and an adoption service for babies.

"We believe the crisis pregnancy and family counseling center will feed clients into our unwed mothers' program," Kenison predicted.

No fees will be charged by the crisis pregnancy center, but follow-up counseling or family counseling will be paid for on a fee schedule based on the client's ability to pay.

R.L. Robinson, director of missions for Cane Creek-Stoddard Association, said a counseling program was envisioned when the association built its office building in 1980-81. However, those plans had to be abandoned because of the heavy debt load caused by the construction.

As time neared for paying off the building debt, Robinson reminded the association's executive board of the original desire for a counseling center.

"We don't have any Christian counseling in this area," he said. "Our pastors do a good job of telling a person what the Bible says, but counseling is more than that. Many of our pastors aren't trained to do professional counseling, and they don't have time."

Kenison emphasized the partnership between the children's home and the association, "We are able to help each other accomplish goals of increased ministry to Missouri Baptists and to the people of southeast Missouri."

HOUSE MAIL



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