



- - BAPTIST PRESS

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March 21, 1968

88-47

Religious Educators
To View Their Vision

N-CO

SAN ANTONIO (BP)--"Our Vision: Expanded and Renewed" will be the theme for the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association annual meeting and related seminars June 11-13 in San Antonio, Texas.

The meeting, expected to attract up to 800 religious educators from across the Southern Baptist Convention to the Alamo city, will be held immediately prior to the SBC annual meeting.

Four sessions June 12 and 13 in Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center will explore various aspects of the religious educators' professional vision, announced association President Irene Bennett, minister of education and youth at Evans (Ga.) Baptist Church.

Topics for those sessions and the keynote speakers who will interpret each session's theme are "Through Our Calling," Harry Piland, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday school division; "Through Our Relationships With Church Members," Brooks Faulkner, manager of the Sunday school board's vocational guidance section; "Through Our Leadership Skills," Mark Short, executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention; and "Through Our Ministry to One Another," Bob Edd Shotwell, minister of education at Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, Texas.

The meeting's theme, as well as the specific emphases of the sessions, developed because meeting planners feel "people need a broad vision of their work," Bennett said. "I hope our participants will have a feeling of renewal about their work and some vision for the future. We hope all four sessions will help people think in terms of what we'll be doing in the future."

In addition to the thematic emphasis of the four major sessions, participants will choose from 12 workshops that will treat the theme from specific viewpoints or ministerial situations, she said. Workshop leaders have been asked to include time for participants to brainstorm about how their areas of focus relate to the overall theme as well as their organization.

"There's a lot of variety," Bennett said of the meeting. "There are four entirely different topics in four sessions. There's something there for the novice as well as the experienced person. The four major speakers all are highly qualified in the areas they are addressing; they all have decades of experience."

Each major session will begin with a "brief, humorous, dramatic introduction" led by Dennis Parrish, instructor in communication at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, Bennett reported. Parrish and Southwestern students are preparing and will present the dramatic introductions, she said.

Participants also will have the chance to attend one of three pre-meeting seminars June 11.

A free seminar for religious education professors will be held at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Topics of discussion will be "Supervising Field Experiences for Students," "Making Effective Use of Computers in Teaching" and "Religious Educators and Their Vocational Image."

Two seminars will be held at the Radisson-Gunter Hotel. "Computers and the Church" will be led by Lewis Fitts, church administrator for Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas, and "Communicating with Your Public" will be led by Floyd A. Craig, president of Craig and Associates, Inc., of Raleigh, N.C. Cost for each seminar is \$30 for association members and \$50 for non-members.

For more information on the meeting or the seminars, contact the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association, P.O. Box 330369, Fort Worth, Texas 76163; phone (817) 292-7371.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
 San Antonio, Texas
 June 11-13, 1988

Theme: "Our Vision: Expanded and Renewed"

Radisson-Gunter Hotel

Saturday Afternoon, June 11, 1988

- 1:00 The Church and the Computer: Lewis Fitts, administrator, Prestonwood Baptist Church, Dallas
 Communicating with Your Public: Floyd Craig, president, Craig & Associates, Raleigh, N.C.
 4:30 Adjourn

University Center, University of Texas at San Antonio

- 2:00 - 6:30 Professors' Meeting

Henry Gonzalez Convention Center -- Fiesta Room

Sunday Afternoon, June 12 -- "Through Our Calling"

- 2:00 Registration
 3:00 Music/Welcome
 Dramatic Introduction: Dennis Parrish, instructor, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas
 3:25 Major Speaker: Harry Piland, director, Sunday school division, Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville
 4:00 React and Respond Cluster Conversations
 4:30 Adjourn
 4:30 New-member Orientation

Sunday Evening, June 12 -- "Through Our Relationships With Church Members"

- 7:00 Music
 Dramatic Introduction: Dennis Parrish
 7:15 Major Speaker: Brooks Faulkner, manager, vocational guidance section, Sunday School Board, Nashville
 7:45 Panel: Don Dendy, minister of education, Park Cities Baptist Church, Dallas; Larry Williams, minister of education, Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, La.; Sid Smith, manager, black church development section, Sunday School Board, Nashville
 8:30 Business
 9:00 Fellowship

Monday Morning, June 13 -- "Through Our Leadership Skills"

- 8:30 Music
 Dramatic Introduction: Dennis Parrish
 8:45 Major Speaker: Mark Short, executive director, Louisiana Baptist Convention, Alexandria
 9:15 Business
 9:45 Break
 10:00 Workshops
 "How to Brighten Your Vision That is Growing Dim," Al Parks, professor, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth
 "How to Build a Professional Network to Support Your Ministry," Will Beal, consultant, church administration, Baptist General Association of Virginia, Richmond
 "Getting Along With Difficult People," Cecil Marsh, director, department of church administration, Baptist General Association of Virginia, Richmond
 "Priority Planning," Keener Pharr, Church Growth Priorities Inc., Jacksonville, Fla.
 "The Educational Minister as Educator," Jack Terry, dean, School of Religious Education, Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth
 "How to Get Results from Volunteer Workers," Margaret Slusher, director of church development, Noonday Baptist Association, Marietta, Ga.
 "Relating to Members with Non-Baptist Backgrounds," Dan Watkins, minister of education, Columbia Baptist Church, Falls Church, Va.
 "Working with People Who are Different from Me," Leroy Gainey, professor, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif.

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- "The Educational Minister as Theologian," Dan Aleshire, professor, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.
 "Balancing Work and Family," John Hewett, pastor, First Baptist Church, Asheville, N.C.
 "Dealing with Competing Claims of Combination Staff Roles," Dennis Parrott, minister of education and administration, Green Acres Baptist Church, Tyler, Texas
 "The 'Yuppy' Lifestyle or Mindset," Ken Meyers, minister of education and outreach, Redland Baptist Church, Derwood, Md.

11:30 Lunch

Monday Afternoon, June 13 -- "Through Our Ministry to One Another"

1:15 Music

Dramatic Introduction: Dennis Parrish

1:30 Major Speaker: Bob Edd Shotwell, minister of education, Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin, Texas

2:15 Business

2:45 Workshops Repeat

4:15 Adjourn

Radisson-Gunter Hotel -- Crystal Ballroom

6:30 Banquet

8:30 Adjourn

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N-BJC

Congressmen Address Ethics,
Budget During CLC Seminar

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
3/21/88

WASHINGTON (BP)--Ethical standards and budget priorities were addressed by two U.S. congressmen -- both Baptists -- during a Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission seminar.

Rep. Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., told seminar participants that when discussing ethics and elected officials it is important to recognize the difference between sainthood and corruption.

"You are never going to have an ethical House (of Representatives) if your standard is sainthood and above," he said. "You can have an ethical House if your standard is corruption and below."

The No. 1 problem in talking about ethics in the House of Representatives is that "we all work in the same room," Gingrich said. Some members fear possible retribution for speaking out about others' ethics violations, and others hesitate to do so because they realize the House's complex rules make it impossible for anyone to function without breaking rules, he said.

A further complication is a current scale of change so large that it could be considered the "third great transformation of human history," Gingrich said. "Many of the ethical concerns we are faced with in politics are brand new and revolutionary."

Americans have begun to assert that their standards of justice and ethics can apply anywhere in the world, Gingrich said. But, he argued, if those standards are going to apply everywhere, they also must apply to the United States, which he said has three great "zones of decay" -- an "urban poor in ghastly moral condition," a drug trade "as severe a challenge to democracy as communism" and decay of the powerful, including government and congressional officials.

"The values revolution of the 1960s shattered middle-class morality and the certainty of Victorian standards," Gingrich said. "Up through the middle of the 1960s, the middle class in America knew what it believed, was quite willing to fight for its beliefs and was willing to impose its beliefs on the young and on the poor."

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"In the middle of the 1960s, a whole series of things -- the free speech movement, the civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam movement, the rise of the drug culture, the development of the pill -- all collectively shifted the way in which we think about life, and under Lyndon Johnson's leadership we lost our nerve. And we have never fully regained it. We have accepted situation ethics ever since, and we've accepted social rather than absolute standards.

"The collapse of our willingness to impose our will has led, in fact, to all the decay which is the crisis. The values of the permissive society and the collapse of absolutes, I think, led to a decay of behavior that will haunt us for at least two more generations. Once a society gets into this kind of a morass, it doesn't get out of it quickly."

Discussing another national problem, Delegate Walter E. Fauntroy, D-D.C., said Americans are faced with the challenge of changing a package of public policies that has resulted in two enormous deficits -- a balance-of-trade deficit that has the country buying \$200 billion more in products from foreign countries than it sells and a series of budget deficits that have increased the national debt to \$2 trillion.

"If we don't do something about changing that package of public policies, the future of our nation's young will be that of living on a vast plantation called America owned by foreign investors and as high as a kite on drugs," Fauntroy said.

He argued the policies are based on three faulty theses: the poor have too much money, the rich have too little money and problems abroad lend themselves to military solutions.

"The reason we're in this difficulty is, quite frankly, that we have failed to understand that the problems in this country are not the result of our spending on the old, the young, the sick and the poor," he said. "But the problem is the greed and opportunism of the rich. The problem is not that we spend too much on training young people who have the minds but not the money to go to college, but rather that increasingly the American colony is shaped by the linkage of our financial system with the system of global capital markets and international institutions and relationships."

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Directors Of Missions
To Focus On Excellence

N-60

Baptist Press
3/21/88

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--Associational directors of missions from across the Southern Baptist Convention will focus on excellence in leadership when they convene for their annual meeting June 12-13 in San Antonio, Texas.

"Committed to Excellence" will be the theme for the 27th annual meeting of the SBC Directors of Missions Conference, to be held at La Mansion del Norte Hotel immediately prior to the SBC annual meeting.

"We're going to talk about the director of missions as a leader and commitment to excellence in his leadership," said conference President Carl Duck, executive director of Nashville Baptist Association.

"This theme is important because of who the directors of missions are and the importance of the association in the total life of the denomination," Duck said. "He must see himself as a missions strategist and committed to leadership and missions outreach."

Associations are local or regional organizations of Southern Baptist churches. The convention has about 1,200 associations, whose work is coordinated by about 800 directors of missions.

Highlights of the conference will include two keynote addresses, Duck said: "The Association Committed to Excellence," by Robert E. Wiley, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's associational missions division from Atlanta, and "The Director of Missions -- A Model for Excellence in Leadership," by Walter Shurden, a church historian and dean of Mercer University's department of Christianity from Macon, Ga. Duck's president's address also will emphasize the theme.

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The conference also will include two Bible studies by Joel Gregory, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. Four directors of missions -- Bill Tinsley of Denton, Texas; Russell Bennett of Louisville, Ky.; Albert Creel of Madisonville, Tenn; and Gerald Blackburn of Mobile, Ala. -- will present reports on applications of the theme to specific associational ministries.

About 500 directors of missions are expected to participate in the conference, Duck said.

The organization will provide an additional "ministry" to its members who stay in La Mansion del Norte during the SBC annual meeting -- free shuttle service from the airport hotel to the downtown convention center, he said.

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONFERENCE OF DIRECTORS OF MISSIONS
La Mansion Del Norte Hotel
San Antonio, Texas
June 12-13, 1988

Theme: "Committed to Excellence"

Sunday Afternoon, June 12, 1988

- Carl Duck, director of missions, Nashville (Tenn.) Baptist Association, presiding
- 1:30 Registration -- Maurice Flowers, director of missions, Jones Baptist Association, Laurel, Miss.
- 2:00 Call to Order
Hymn -- Randy Edwards, minister of music, First Baptist Church, San Antonio
Prayer -- Doyle Braden, director of missions, Orange County Baptist Association, Orange, Calif.
Welcome -- Robert Schmeltekopf, director of missions, Hill Country Baptist Area, Fredericksburg, Texas
- 2:10 "The Association Committed to Excellence" -- Robert E. Wiley, director, associational missions division, SBC Home Mission Board, Atlanta
- 2:40 Special Music -- Randy Edwards
- 2:45 "The DOM - A Model for Excellence in Leadership" -- Walter Shurden, chairman, department of Christianity, Mercer University, Macon, Ga.
- 3:25 Break
- 3:45 Business -- Carl Duck
Treasurer's Report -- Robert Wainwright, director of missions, Flat River Baptist Association, Oxford, N.C.
Report of "Open Circuit" -- Paul Camp, director of missions, Macon (Ga.) Baptist Association
- 4:00 Hymn -- Randy Edwards
- 4:05 Examples of Excellence:
"In Starting New Work," Bill Tinsley, director of missions, Denton (Texas) Baptist Association
"In Communicating the Association" -- Russell Bennett, director of missions, Long Run Baptist Association, Louisville, Ky.
- 4:25 Bible Study -- Joel Gregory, pastor, Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas
- 5:00 Benediction -- Timothy Logerquist, director of missions, Yuma (Ariz.) Southern Baptist Association
- Mack Smoke, director of missions, San Jacinto Baptist Association, Baytown, Texas, presiding
- 6:00 Dinner
- 6:45 Invocation -- Charles Nunn, director of missions, Richmond (Va.) Baptist Association
Introductions and Announcements
- 7:00 Baptist Sunday School Board Presentation
Benediction -- Harold Shoulders, director of missions, Cumberland Baptist Association, Clarksville, Tenn.

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Monday Morning, June 13

- Dewey Mayfield, director of missions, Columbia Baptist Association, Dothan, Ala., presiding
- 8:00 Registration -- Maurice Flowers
- 8:25 Hymn -- Randy Edwards
Prayer -- Lawrence Clegg, director of missions, Southeast Louisiana, Hammond
- 8:30 Bible Study -- Joel Gregory
- 9:15 Special Music -- Randy Edwards
- 9:20 President's Address -- Carl Duck
- 9:40 Break
- 10:00 Hymn -- Randy Edwards
- 10:05 Business -- Carl Duck
Report of Nominating Committee -- Nolan Johnston, director of missions, Greater New Orleans Baptist Association
- 10:30 Examples of Excellence:
"In Missions Involvement," Albert B. Creel, director of missions, Sweetwater Baptist Association, Madisonville, Tenn.
"In Strengthening Financial Support," Gerald Blackburn, director of missions, Mobile (Ala.) Baptist Association
- 10:50 Special Music -- Randy Edwards
- 11:00 Message -- W.E. Thorn, Thorn Evangelistic Association, Palacios, Texas
- 11:30 Benediction -- Leslie Huff, director of missions, Green Valley Baptist Association, Henderson, Ky.
- 11:45 Lunch -- Guests of Southern Baptist Insurance Trust, Donald Bowles Sr., representative, Dallas, host
Meeting of New Officers

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Zimmerman Joins
Baptist Messenger

N- CO
(OKID.)

Baptist Press
3/21/88

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Sarah Zimmerman, 26, a 1983 graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University, has been named assistant editor of the Baptist Messenger, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma.

At the Messenger, she will write feature stories, edit and write articles, handle advertising and assist in layout and news coverage. She fills a slot left vacant when associate editor Norman Jameson accepted a position with the North Carolina Baptist Children's Homes.

Since May of 1985, she has been medical reporter for the Tyler (Texas) Morning Telegraph and Courier Times. Previously, she was lifestyle editor and general assignment reporter for the Edmond (Okla.) Evening Sun.

At OBU, Zimmerman was a magna cum laude graduate. She edited the student newspaper, The OBU Bison, was a feature writer for the Shawnee (Okla.) News-Star, and public relations writer for the Gordon Cooper Area Vo-Tech School.

Zimmerman is the daughter of Roy and Martha Zimmerman of Lawton, Okla., and is a graduate of Lawton High School.

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CORRECTION: Please change the first graf of the 3/18/88 Baptist Press story titled "Fuller: Southern Baptists Need 'To Alter Our Course Again'" to read:

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention needs an alteration in the course ...

Note, the words "Peace Committee" should be omitted.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Chaney Describes
Needed 'Revolution'

N-CO
(MWBTS)

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--America needs leaders for a "spiritual revolution," Charles L. Chaney told students at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.

"We desperately need people who, wherever they go and whoever they meet, they're building little fires that burn for God and truth and right in the souls of the people they come into contact with," said Chaney, dean of the Redford School of Theology at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo.

He spoke to students about revolution, the kind that changes people on the inside.

One kind of revolutionary is a person who believes everything that society and culture has built up must be torn down, he said.

In the 1960s, "there were a lot of people running around saying, 'Let's tear down the structures that exist.' And usually they had fantastic programs for tearing things down and very few programs for building things back up," Chaney said.

The other kind of revolutionary is a person who believes that "if you really want to change your culture, if you really want to change your society, something has to be done on the inside of men. Men and women must be changed from the inside," he explained.

"I am that kind of revolutionary," Chaney said.

Reading from the New Testament book of Acts, Chaney discussed the last time Jesus spoke to his disciples before his ascension into heaven.

"What Jesus had to say to those gathered disciples ... were words of revolution," he said. "He suggested that there are some things that must be true of us if we're going to be that kind of people."

First, Chaney said, Jesus implied that if Christians are to be the kind of people who change their society, their culture and their world, they must be controlled by an entirely different priority than that which controls non-believers.

Jesus was talking to people whose priority was, "When will the kingdom be restored to Israel?" Chaney noted.

Jesus indicated his disciples needed to stop speculating about the future and demonstrate his love in the present.

"It's very easy for us to give ourselves to other priorities," Chaney acknowledged. "But the priority of the church of Jesus Christ is to be eyewitnesses of what Jesus has done and is doing in our lives. We never will be the kind of people who turn the world around if we do not give ourselves to that priority."

Secondly, Chaney said, Jesus suggested that "if we're going to be revolutionary, we need to have a new kind of power."

The question the disciples asked Jesus, about restoring the kingdom to Israel, was a question about political and military power, he said. They wanted to return to the days of King David, when Israel was a free and powerful nation.

But Jesus warned them against trying to restore the past and encouraged them to focus on transforming the present, Chaney said.

He related he was a pastor and student in Chicago in the 1960s. During that time, he said, "I had many friends on the liberal end of the political spectrum who were saying, 'If we can, we'll get political power, and we will change this country.'"

They were frustrated, he said.

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Now, he noted: "The pendulum has switched, and there are people on the other side -- on the right politically -- who are saying, 'If we can get political power, we can change this country.'

"I want to say, with all my heart and soul, that what we need is not political power. What we need is spiritual power."

Third, Chaney said, Jesus indicated his disciples needed a new hope and a new prospect: "They had been taught all their lives that someday the Messiah would come, and when he came, things would be different. ... They had come to believe that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

"When he started ascending into heaven, some of them started to say, 'Lord, don't leave! Come back!' Two men appeared and said to them, 'You go back and do what he's told you to do.'"

The message of the two men was an encouragement to the disciples to live in the light of a new hope, he said.

Jesus' words to his disciples at that time hint at one final suggestion for people who want to change their world, Chaney added: "If we're going to be revolutionaries, we're going to have to experience and realize a new kind of presence, his presence, in our lives. Incarnation means that if he was going to be in one place, he couldn't be in another at the same time. He was saying, 'It's to your advantage that I go away so I can be with you in a new way.'

"Jesus Christ is with us. Many of us live day by day as if we're all by ourselves, ... but he is with us. When we realize that, it transforms us."

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Louisiana Baptist Camp Offers
'Meals-On-Wheels' Ministry

By Gary W. Griffith

F-10
(La)

Baptist Press
3/21/88

DRY CREEK, La. (BP)--Dry Creek Baptist Camp will prepare and serve more than 250,000 meals during 1988, up from 23,000 just four years ago. The almost 11-fold increase is attributed to a ministry that is believed to be unique among Southern Baptist encampment programs.

Dry Creek Manager Albert Hagan reports about 1,000 senior adults in three Louisiana parishes sit down to a lunch each week that is "more than just a meal -- it's a ministry."

Dry Creek Nutrition Service, Inc., was launched in 1985 as a non-profit ministry, providing lunches to 500 Calcasieu Parish senior adults by contract with the Calcasieu Council on Aging.

"We feel like our food service is a ministry," Hagan says. "Our drivers deliver the meals, and many of them go into deplorable situations out there where this meal may be the only meal those people get all day long.

"We had never done anything like this, had never heard of another camp doing anything like this. But it looked like something that could be worked out."

The service also has contracts with councils on aging in Beauregard and Allen parishes. Ten drivers deliver lunches to about 350 homes and 17 community centers where senior adults meet each weekday. "The meal times (at the centers) are designed to be a social thing also, when the elderly gather and have fellowship together," Hagan says.

Participants in the program "must be 60 years or older, and they must be physically limited," he says. "The participants are asked to make a contribution. They are not required to pay for the meal, but that contribution goes back into the program and makes possible to have more meals."

Five cooks start preparing meals each day at about 2 a.m., says Henry Hebert, distribution and service coordinator. "It's a real challenge in the kitchen to pull it off when summer camps get underway," he notes.

But inactivity in the kitchen was what Hagan hoped to end when he considered the program four years ago: "We have this large kitchen sitting here nine months out of the year when summer camp is not going on. It is seldom used except for weekend retreats."

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"It appeared to me it would be good stewardship to use our facilities more than just that limited amount of time."

The camp has not made money from the service, although certain benefits have resulted, such as the camp being able to buy more kitchen equipment. Also, the camp's purchasing power has increased through volume purchases, and the service has created "some jobs for people in our community who desperately need jobs," Hagan says.

But the most important aspect of the food service remains ministry, he notes: "We get letters from people that are heart-warming. They tell us how much they appreciate that person bringing that meal by and giving them a friendly word or two. Maybe that fellow or lady bringing that meal to the door may be the only contact they have with somebody all day long. Some situations are really discouraging to see."

The service is the only thing standing between some of the shut-ins and a nursing home, Hebert says. "A lot of them cite the service as a factor in them not being institutionalized. Many of them would have to go to a nursing home because they don't have the ability to prepare a halfway decent meal for themselves."

The meals apparently meet the taste standards of the participants. "The program in Allen Parish was struggling for participation before we got the contract," Hagan says. "Now they are trying to figure out what they are going to do because they have so many participants that they don't have enough money to pay for it all."

"Word had gotten out on how good our meals are, and now they're serving about 70 more people a day than what they have budgeted for."

Driver Mel Creekmore offers more proof on the quality of the food. He reports only one negative response from a recent questionnaire sent to food service participants. "The lady just wanted more chicken each week," he says.

Such a ministry requires much organization and consistency, Hagan maintains: "Once you start this thing, you're in it. We do this every day of the week, except a few major holidays. It takes so much organization to keep it going, and there is always something to be done."

The ministry may not be a good idea for all Baptist camps, and that depends on the individual camp's situation, resources and personnel, he says. But camp managers should "look at opportunities to create revenue and to be good stewards of their equipment."

"I've tried to make sure it does not interfere with our other ministry, because our first priority is our camp and retreat ministry. But these senior adults need our services, too."

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Donated Fish Feeds
Modern-day Multitude

N-20
(F12)

Baptist Press
3/21/88

WINTER HAVEN, Fla. (BP)--About 4,000 pounds of fresh fish were given away to 600 needy families in central Florida during February through the efforts of disaster-relief workers in Winter Haven. The fish -- mostly grouper, redfish and red snapper -- were donated by a shipping company after its unsuccessful venture into the wholesale fish business.

Ron Patterson, pastor of Lynchburg Baptist Church in Winter Haven and a regional disaster-relief coordinator, said Sea Traders, an aviation transportation company, "tried to get into the fish business and didn't know how to go about it."

Sea Traders purchased the fish in the Central American country of Belize but was unable to sell it in the United States. The company gave the shipment, which was in cold storage in Tampa, Fla., to Lynchburg Baptist Church Feb. 12. The church completed distribution 10 days later.

Patterson said the fish were given to needy people in four central Florida towns.

"It made a lot of people happy and fed a lot of people," Patterson said.

Although the project was successful, Patterson said it probably won't be repeated, since Sea Traders "is now out of the fish business."

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Baptists Urging Kremlin
To Stop Sponsoring Atheism

By Art Toalston

N- FMB

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Soviet law governing church-state relations may undergo its first revision since 1929.

Alexei Bichkov, who represents more than 500,000 Baptists in the Soviet Union, said he was one of about 10 religious leaders who met with Ministry of Religious Affairs officials in January about the possible revision.

Baptists will ask the government to stop sponsoring atheism, Bichkov said: "Atheism ought to be the same voluntary organization like religion -- self-supported, self-governed."

Officials encouraged the religious leaders "to express ourselves (to the) maximum about what we need in new legislation," Bichkov said.

Bichkov is general secretary of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the Soviet Union. He visited the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board after the March executive committee meeting of the Baptist World Alliance in Washington.

Baptists also will ask for a "declaration of freedom of conscience" that is "very short, very dynamic, very concrete," Bichkov said. And they will suggest that religious groups formulate bylaws appropriate to their traditions.

Baptists will request removal of prohibitions against religious education work with youth and children and against church-organized ministry in hospitals and homes for the aged and disabled. Baptists want to establish their own "mercy action groups," Bichkov said.

The idea of revising church-state law still faces strong opposition from atheists, Bichkov said, adding that "it may be one, two years" before any changes are enacted.

Bichkov also was one of three religious leaders named by Soviet officials to their delegation for this year's session of the United Nations' Commission on Human Rights. A mid-February meeting of the delegation gave him another chance to express Baptist concerns, he said.

In a written statement for a press conference after the meeting, Bichkov expressed hope that Baptists "as well as other churches and religious organizations will occupy their due place in our society, particularly in affairs of charity, in virtue and in the general social life of the country."

This year's celebration of the 1,000th anniversary of Christianity in the Soviet Union has grown beyond a Russian Orthodox celebration to a national event, Bichkov noted.

The All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists has penned a special message for churches highlighting the "spiritual contribution" of Christianity to Russian music, art and literature, Bichkov said.

The arts often reflected a "spirit of meaning of God, meaning of life, meaning of Christ" that has provided "a first point of contact for many non-believers." Strong religious images are found, for example, in the writings of Leo Tolstoy, a humanist from a Russian Orthodox background, and Feodor Dostoevski, a Russian Orthodox believer.

Bichkov said he still senses a "deeply hidden interest in Jesus Christ" among Soviet writers, poets and composers. One noted author, a Muslim, recently penned a moving description of Christ, Bichkov reported. Asked why, the writer said Mohammed was a great man who advanced his ideology while Christ used only his love for people.

During his trip to the United States, Bichkov also thanked the Baptist World Alliance executive committee for the 100,000 Bibles the BWA is sending to the Soviet Union this year in a joint project with the United Bible Societies.

Half the Bibles already are being distributed, he reported. He also said the Norwegian Bible Society and other Scandinavian groups are shipping 150,000 three-volume Bible and commentary sets into the Soviet Union.