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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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July 11, 1988

88-108

Musician Bartlett
dies at age 70

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Eugene M. Bartlett Jr., 70, longtime Southern Baptist musician, died Sunday, July 10, in Oklahoma City after a lengthy battle with Parkinson's Disease.

Graveside services were to be held July 12 in Oklahoma City, and a memorial service also was to be held at Trinity Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, where Bartlett was a member and formerly was music minister. Music was to be provided by The Singing Churchmen of Oklahoma, a choir of church musicians founded by Bartlett in the 1960s.

Bartlett was director of the church music department of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma from 1954 until he retired in 1980. He directed the music at Falls Creek Assembly during that time and wrote many of the Oklahoma Baptist assembly's theme songs. When he first joined the Oklahoma convention staff, he also directed student work.

A few of the many songs and arrangements he published include "Set My Soul Afire," "Grace So Amazing," "Every Day is a Better Day" and "God Has Something to Say to You." Another song, "Tell the Good News," was premiered during the Southern Baptist Convention in 1968. Four of his songs were included in the 1975 edition of the "Baptist Hymnal." He was one of three Oklahomans on the hymnal committee. In the 1970s he arranged several "old fashioned singing" selections.

Among Bartlett's many honors was the W. Himes Sims Award for meritorious service in church music. In 1979 he was invited to the White House by then-President Jimmy Carter for a "gospel music singing." He served two years as president of the Southern Baptist Church Music Conference.

Born in Greenwood, Ark., Bartlett received degrees from John Brown University and Oklahoma Baptist University. OBU gave him a doctor of music degree in 1971.

One of two sons of E.M. Bartlett, composer of the famed "Victory in Jesus," Bartlett became a Christian in Hartford, Ark. in 1929. He was music and education minister of churches in Arkansas and Oklahoma. He was in the U.S. Navy during World War II.

A book about his life, "Grace So Amazing," is to be published by Broadman Press in early 1989. It was written by his wife, Emma Jean.

Survivors include his wife of Oklahoma City; sons, Larry and Reggie; a daughter, Frances, and five grandchildren.

Memorial gifts for the Bartlett Bell Tower at Falls Creek may be sent to the BGCO Church Music Department, 1141 N. Robinson, Oklahoma City 73103.

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'Lifestyle prayer' key
to Witnessing-Giving Life

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
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NASHVILLE (BP)--Prayer provides the key to sustaining Christ's church in today's world, Minnette Drumwright told participants at two national evangelism and stewardship seminars.

"Prayer is absolutely essential," said Drumwright, director of international prayer strategy for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. "Again and again, we confront the fact that God does his work in the world in response to the prayers of his people."

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Drumwright addressed about 600 Southern Baptists at Witnessing-Giving Life seminars at Ridgecrest, N.C., and Glorieta, N.M. Witnessing-Giving Life, a Southern Baptist emphasis for 1991-95, will be the middle phase of Planned Growth in Giving, a 15-year stewardship/spiritual growth campaign targeted to climax at the dawn of the next century.

Southern Baptists need to adopt "lifestyle prayer," she said: "Prayer is basically and foremost a relationship that exists at all times between a person and God. Now we tend to think that prayer is a time of communication and words, and it is. But it is more, much more.

"Just as our relationship with anyone to whom we are close continues whether we are actually in communication with that person or not, so it is with God. Our relationship with him exists at all times. Communication happens because of that relationship."

Prayer is the gauge of that relationship, she noted, explaining lifestyle praying involves spending time alone with God, joining with fellow Christians in prayer, listening to God and speaking to God spontaneously throughout the day.

But lifestyle prayer is not exclusively for the individual believer, Drumwright added: "Prayer must be interwoven throughout the fabric of the church. In fact, prayer is the church's main business.

"What if our churches called us to pray and taught us to pray as the body of Christ, in agreement with him about his purposes?" she asked. "It is remarkable how much God gets done with our small amount of praying. How much could he do if we really prayed?"

Focusing specifically on the seminar's theme, Drumwright stressed prayer empowers Christians to be stronger witnesses for Christ and more generous givers to his kingdom. She pointed to early Christians, whose prayers led them to lead thousands of people to faith in Christ and to give of their means to carry out a joint ministry.

"Look again at our people and churches today," she said. "Does our praying lead to witnessing and giving? Almost daily, I hear of seemingly ordinary folks whom God is using in extraordinary ways. They bear testimony that God, through prayer, instilled within them a desire to witness and to give in ways that call for sacrifice.

"We have scores of stories from missionaries and volunteers who are witnessing here and overseas and are doing remarkable giving -- and it all started with some prayer emphases. Many of us testify that our witnessing and giving patterns were revolutionized after a renewal of prayer's meaning in our lives.

"It is a dependable premise of the Christian life: Earnest prayer causes the kingdom citizen to seek out witnessing opportunities in everyday life. It causes spiritual growth that makes that person generous, and even sacrificial, in giving. Prayer creates witnesses and givers."

That is caused by prayer's basic effect on the person who prays, she said: "Biblical prayer changes our perspective so that we begin to think God's thoughts after him. ... Authentic, biblical prayer is a means God uses to give us what he wants us to have and grow us into becoming what he wants us to be."

Prayer comes with strings

NASHVILLE (BP)--Prayer comes with strings attached, a Southern Baptist prayer leader stressed.

"Prayer has conditions," Minette Drumwright told participants at two Witnessing-Giving Life seminars. Witnessing-Giving Life, which will emphasize the need for evangelism and stewardship in every Christian's life, is the next phase of Planned Growth in Giving, Southern Baptists' 15-year stewardship/spiritual enrichment campaign.

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"God has given us guidelines for prayer that, when followed, enable him to respond to our prayers without compromising his character or our well-being," said Drumwright, director of international prayer strategy for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Drumwright identified six conditions for prayer:

-- Abiding in Christ. "Abiding means intimate, constant fellowship with our Lord," she said. "Abiding in him and absorbing his words into our beings provide the resources we need for obedient, meaningful living as well as for effective praying."

-- Being cleansed from known sin. "We tend to take lightly our need for repentance and continual cleansing. We gloss over our problems of ego, competitiveness, jealousy, criticism, envy, irritability and negativism. ... We must be quick to confess and repent. This means 'agreeing with God' about our sin."

-- Praying in Jesus' name. "Jesus' name represents his character and work. When we pray in his name, it means that, knowing what we know about his character, mind and name, we pray only those prayers that we are confident he will endorse and approve."

-- Praying according to God's will. "Prayer is the means by which our desires can be redirected and aligned with the will of God. God does not make his will a secret. His will is revealed in his word (the Bible). It is seen in the revelation of his nature and the way he does his work in the world. ... Ultimately, his Holy Spirit reveals his will to us."

-- Praying in faith. "Our praying must evidence that effortless confidence in him and recognition of his power. Another way of saying this is that God does not answer our prayers; he answers our lives."

-- Praying in humility. "Praying in humility means acknowledging our helplessness, brokenness and total need for God."

"Only when an abiding, cleansed life approaches God in Jesus' name, seeking God's will, can we have the assurance that God will do what he says," Drumwright said. "He is utterly trustworthy."

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Hong Kong Christians
worried about Basic Law

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HONG KONG (BP)--Christians in Hong Kong are beginning to wonder whether China will keep its promises of religious freedom in the colony after 1997.

Concerns stem from the recent release of the Basic Law, a proposed constitution that will govern Hong Kong for at least 50 years after July 1, 1997. That is when Hong Kong returns to Chinese control after a century and a half of British sovereignty.

The draft constitution formalizes much of the 1984 Chinese-British joint agreement on Hong Kong, which guarantees economic, social and religious freedoms. But several vaguely worded qualifiers in the new document could undercut those guarantees, observers worry.

"The foundation looks solid, but the devil lies in the cracks," warns an editorial in Asiaweek, a weekly newsmagazine.

The 1984 joint agreement stated that Hong Kong religious organizations could own and operate churches, schools, hospitals and welfare institutions without interference from the government or religious bodies in China and could continue unhindered relations with foreign religious groups.

The Basic Law restates much of those provisions, but with a crucial new factor: the government will not interfere with religious internal affairs and activities "which do not contravene the laws" of post-1997 Hong Kong.

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Those laws ultimately will be approved, interpreted or revised in Beijing, not Hong Kong. "As it is not possible to foresee the ever-changing policies of the Beijing government, who can say what internal affairs of the churches of Hong Kong would contravene the laws?" asks a Hong Kong Catholic priest.

The proposed document also drops the earlier pledge that religious bodies in Hong Kong and China will not interfere with each other. This omission alarms many Hong Kong Christians, who remain suspicious of Christian organizations and leaders in China.

One addition, however, is being welcomed. Article 31 of the Basic Law draft promises, "Hong Kong inhabitants shall have freedom of religious belief and the freedom to spread religion and to hold and participate in religious activities in public." Religious believers in China, by contrast, have the constitutional right to believe and worship but no explicit right to spread their faith.

Besides the condition placed on religious freedom, the Basic Law indicates the rights of free speech, press and assembly may be restricted to ensure national security, public order, public health or morals. Critics also charge that the document envisions a non-independent judiciary, a weak local legislature and a legal process which will leave all the final decisions up to China.

One Hong Kong Baptist leader cautioned against a hasty response from the church. He reported pastors and religious groups are meeting in seminars and discussion groups to carefully evaluate the Basic Law. The Christian response, he said, should express concern not only for religious liberty but also fundamental "human rights and freedoms and human dignity."

Hong Kong's people have until September to debate the constitution and voice their opinions. China's National People's Congress eventually will vote on a final version. The Baptist leader's main fear is that as more groups in Hong Kong find problems in the the Basic Law, the whole consultation might collapse.

"The pastors will face a difficult task of how to preach and teach the people to have even greater faith in God under these circumstances," he said.

Lack of confidence in Hong Kong's future already has hurt the churches. Many pastors and talented lay leaders have joined the "brain drain" of middle- and upper-level professionals abandoning Hong Kong for the United States, Canada and other countries. Yet even as they close the door on Hong Kong, new doors for ministry and witness in the colony are opening.

"The pressures of 1997 continue to create a responsiveness to Christianity," said one missionary. "Churches and missionaries feel this will increase proportionately as July 1, 1997, approaches, sharpening our own intensity for sharing the gospel."

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Crosspoint brings activity,
bonding to island youth

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
7/11/88

GRAND ISLE, La. (BP)--When summer hits the tiny island of Grand Isle, La., 300 or so students free from classes until fall discover a void in their new-found leisure.

Skating rinks, bowling alleys, even municipal swimming pools have not made their way to the isolated seven-mile strip of land in the Gulf of Mexico.

"Most of the kids would do nothing but hang out," said outgoing Mayor Tommy Marullo, who sees Crosspoint camp activities as a reprieve from the stale summer the children might otherwise endure.

Crosspoint camps are sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church recreation department. The camps offer opportunity for fourth- through 12th-graders to learn basic athletic skills and understand more about the Christian life.

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A traveling team of 13 college students, recent graduates or mission workers, serve as the staff for the 11 weeks of Crosspoint camps conducted in various areas of the country throughout the summer.

About 130 children attended the Crosspoint camp at Grand Isle Community Center this year, said George Feazell, pastor of First Baptist Church of Grand Isle, the only Baptist church on the island.

Feazell, who knows half the city's population of 3,000 by first name, was approached last year by a Louisiana Baptist Convention representative and asked to consider coordinating a Crosspoint camp on the island.

"I told him no one here had any money, but that didn't seem to matter to him," Feazell said.

Much of the income on the formerly oil-rich island is earned through shrimping, fishing or manual labor jobs. Although the children are not poverty-stricken, the opportunity to attend off-island camps is not available to many of them, Feazell said.

"The Lord really dropped this thing in our laps," he said of the Crosspoint camps. "I didn't even know what it was."

Each morning during the camp, the younger children gathered at Grand Isle Community Center, spending the day improving their skills in a sport of their choice, playing games, singing and briefly listening to a Bible story. At night, it was the older ones' turns.

Naturally, the weeklong camp became a time of bonding for island school children, but the community also learned the importance of working together.

"I have noticed ever so slightly a change in the local people's attitude toward each other because their kids are coming together for a common bond," Mayor Marullo said. "The community is talking about it because they see that good things are happening."

Camp participants represented the four religious groups on the island -- Baptist, Methodist, Catholic and charismatic -- as well as many with no religious background.

Several had not heard of Jesus Christ, one traveling staffer said.

Because the children were not charged to attend the camp, the \$5,500 needed to pay staffers and take care of general expenses was put up by the city through its recreation fund and by the Grand Isle Youth Program, an independent organization that raises money through various activities such as carnivals, Feazell said.

"We had the blessing of the town council last year, but this year they became more involved when they voted to give \$3,000 through the recreation fund," Feazell said.

A committee from the community was formed to solicit food for snacks for the children and lunches for the staffers. Many of the mothers and some church members volunteered to cook noontime meals for the staffers and put them up in their homes for the week, the pastor said. Several restaurants in the area fed the staff free at breakfast and supper.

At least during the week of Crosspoint camp, the children of Grand Isle were not just hanging around and modeling older adults who spend their time at bars and get into trouble, the mayor and the pastor agree.

"They are meeting some older young people who are modeling dedication, commitment, love and acceptance," Feazell said.

The mayor added, "Watching these 20- to 25-year-old staffers doing something good is in itself a big promotion for the Lord's work."

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

Now it is his turn
to die from AIDS

KAMPALA, Uganda (BP)--Twelve days ago, his wife died from AIDS. Three months earlier, his 5-month-old baby died. Now it is his turn. But during this Sunday worship service, Justin Kabandana is singing and dancing.

Infected by the plague that promises during the next 10 years to wipe out a sizable chunk of the world's population, Kabandana goes to bed knowing he may die during the night. "My attacks are more frequent. Weakness and pain are increasing," he says. "Pray for strength."

Yet, in the midst of misery, Kabandana is rejoicing.

"Heavy sorrow wants to make me weep," says Linda Rice, a Southern Baptist missionary from Christiansburg, Va., working in Kampala, Uganda, the capital city, with her husband, Jim. "Even more weighty than the sorrow, though, is the incredibility of our God. How has he filled Justin Kabandana's heart to sing like this? Who is God, that he can do this?"

AIDS renders the body's immune system ineffective, but victims may not know they have it for some time. Because of this, and because some African social systems encourage sexual relations at an early age, AIDS was rampant among the general population before anyone knew what it was.

Development experts fear its effects. Scenarios picture the African continent in the year 2000 with social and economic structures in total upheaval because of mass death. Reports out of African nations indicate the church will suffer from the scourge, barring a cure. Much of the growing church in Uganda is made up of relatively new members, who have been practicing Christian morals for only a short time.

A refugee from Rwanda who had grown up in Kampala, Kabandana lived close to Kampala Baptist Church when Rice met him in 1986. That was the same year he committed his life to Jesus Christ and married another Rwandan refugee, who at one time had professed to be a Christian.

At first Kabandana's new wife showed little evidence of Christ in her life, Rice says. Only months after they were married, serious trouble broke out in their relationship. Relatives told him to send his wife away. But church members stood with Kabandana, convincing him through the Scriptures that he must keep his wife even if it was unpleasant and others disapproved.

By this time she was suffering from chronic fever. But Kabandana grew in his faith, and his devotion to his wife became a testimony to the community. Their baby was born, immediately became ill, and died. Finally in the pain of this, his wife repented and was reconciled to God and to Kabandana.

But her fever and weakness grew, and her appetite and weight dwindled. Kabandana spent many hours caring for her -- washing, cooking, carrying food to the hospital. Then, during a bout with severe sickness, tests showed she had AIDS. She was buried the day before the Rices returned to Uganda from furlough in the United States.

At the airport, the Rices were met with this news: "You cannot believe Justin's testimony, how he loved his wife with a love like we have not seen before," friends said. His community watched him try to satisfy her every need, with no thought for himself. Symptoms of the chronic asthma Kabandana had experienced all his life never appeared during the three months he cared for her, Rice says. Her life became a testimony, too, as she stood firm in faith, praying with other patients, sharing the gospel. "God gave me the power to care for her," Kabandana says. "It was not I working. He has taught me perseverance using prayer and the word."

Kabandana fought fear concerning his own future after his wife died. But now he feels peace, thinking more about those around him than himself. "We pray to God for so many needs, and God cares for those needs," he says. "But he is revealing to me now to cease praying for myself, and to concentrate on my unsaved neighbors."

His requests for prayer reflect this. "Pray that our church will be stronger in the word of God, and in going out with it. Pray that I know God and his word, and that I see it work in my own life so as to help others see him," Kabandana says.