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N-HMB

Think globally, act locally,
associational directors urged

By Jim Newton

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Directors of missions for more than 200 Baptist associations of churches were challenged to become part of a global missions strategy team during a meeting at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

Bill O'Brien, executive vice president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, issued the challenge during a conference sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's associational missions division.

O'Brien urged the associational missions directors to become part of a global missions strategy team that crosses denominational lines and programs.

"If the Baptist association is to function effectively, it must see itself in a global context," O'Brien said. "The only effective associations will be those led by leaders who are able to think globally and act locally."

O'Brien painted a picture of a world in need of the Christian gospel, reciting statistics and showing charts and graphs to make his points.

Of the world's 5 billion people, only about one-third -- 1.7 billion -- consider themselves Christians or members of Christian churches. These 1.7 billion "Christians" earn 62 percent of the world's income, he added.

An additional 2.1 billion people, or 41 percent of the world's population, have had an opportunity to hear the gospel through churches, missionaries, radio, or printed literature including the Bible, but they have not yet become Christian. These, O'Brien said, have been described as the "evangelized, but not Christianized" people of the world. They earn 23 percent of the world's income.

The rest of the world -- more than 1.3 billion people -- are unevangelized and have never heard the gospel. Many of these have never even heard of Jesus Christ, O'Brien said. These people, comprising 21 percent of the world's population, earn only 15 percent of the world's income.

"Can you imagine how the unevangelized world views those of us in the Christian world -- especially the large numbers of believers in the United States, Canada and Europe -- who control so much of the world's income?" he asked.

Christian churches basically are working "in a self-gratification mode" and are "blinded and paralyzed to that reality because we are so religious," he said.

He pointed out that Americans give 3 percent of their income to charitable causes -- 1 percent each to their churches and denominations; 1 percent to 18,000 para-church or para-denominational organizations; and 1 percent to secular philanthropic causes.

But of the 1 percent given to churches and denominations, 99.9 percent is spent on "ourselves," and only 1/100th of 1 percent is spent on proclaiming the gospel to the 1.3 billion people who have never heard the gospel, he said.

These 1.3 billion unevangelized people have been categorized into about 3,000 specific population segments, O'Brien said.

About 2,000 of these are people groups who speak languages that have no Bible translations, missionaries who speak their language or churches that appeal to their group. About 500 of these people groups have never heard the name Jesus Christ.

Currently, 252 nations or geo-political states exist in the world, and 67 of these are restricted or limited-access countries where traditional western missionaries have almost no opportunity to live and serve.

By the year 2000, the number of limited-access countries will increase to 100, O'Brien said. An average of three countries per year are closing their doors to traditional missionaries. By the turn of the century, seven of the 17 largest cities will be Muslim strongholds basically hostile to the Christian gospel.

"The most shocking fact of all is that 83 percent of the unreached people of the world will be in these 100 limited-access countries," O'Brien said.

In an effort to respond to that challenge, O'Brien said the Foreign Mission Board is creating what it calls the non-resident missionary who will learn the language and culture of people groups within limited-access countries and seek to work with others in trying to proclaim the gospel to those people.

Calling it "one of the most exciting innovations that has come down the track," O'Brien said the board hopes to appoint 10 non-resident missionaries this year, 25 next year and 300 by the end of the century.

The mission agency also is committed to working with other Christian groups who share Southern Baptists' concern for world evangelization, he added. For example, FMB President R. Keith Parks is convening a consultation in Singapore next January to talk with leaders of Christian groups that have developed world evangelization plans.

Research by FMB consultant David Barrett has revealed 788 plans by Christian groups to evangelize the world, including 250 such plans that are now operative and 70 plans O'Brien described as mega plans that would be financed by \$40 billion.

About 95 percent of these plans were developed without the realization that the other plans existed. About 30 percent of the plans were developed by Christians in Third World underdeveloped countries, O'Brien said.

"God is up to something big" in the Third World, O'Brien said, noting Christians in Third World nations have sent out 20,000 missionaries across tribal, cultural and geo-political lines. By the end of the century, O'Brien said, Third World countries probably will send out more missionaries than the 38,000 currently supported by Christians in the United States.

Although most people don't realize it, O'Brien said, the world today has shifted from an east-west axis to a north-south axis. The mass of the world's population now lives in the southern hemisphere, where the Christian church is growing most rapidly.

By the year 2000, 100 million Christians will live in South America, and about 350 million Christians will live in Africa. The churches in Africa are growing one and one-half times faster than the population, he said.

Southern Baptist leaders must learn to think globally in developing missions strategy for the future, O'Brien said. "We've got to be so sensitive to what God is up to in the world that we will not be left defending outmoded denominational structures after God is through with them," he explained.

In a dialogue period after his two presentations, O'Brien said he did not believe the Southern Baptist Convention would merge its Home and Foreign mission boards into one world mission board in his lifetime. "We're too entrenched for that," he said.

Sometime in the future the SBC might move toward a Global Missions Commission that has domestic and international missions areas working under one umbrella, he said, adding, "The two mission boards (home and foreign) work very differently, but I hope there would be some sort of entity out there in the future that would show the cooperative relationship between the two."

Texas Baptists share Christ
with 'The Land Down Under'

By Ken Camp & Terry Barone

N-Texas

DALLAS (BP)--Two hundred years after Capt. Arthur Phillip and the "First Fleet" sailed into Sydney Harbor to establish Australia as a penal colony, more than 630 Texas Baptists traveled half-way around the world to help Australian Baptists share the liberating power of Jesus Christ with "the land down under."

About 500 Texas Baptist volunteers -- joined by workers from at least eight other states -- teamed up with churches in New South Wales, and an additional 133 Texans served in Western Australia during the 1988 Texas-Australia Partnership Missions Bicentennial Crusades, July 24-31.

Although the exact number of commitments to Christ has not been tabulated, a number of decisions were reported as people stood to testify at partnership missions victory rallies in Sydney and Perth Aug. 1.

"What a joy to realize that in these last eight days, there have been hundreds of people who have been translated by the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of our Lord," said Norm Nix, director of evangelism and church growth for the Baptist Union of New South Wales. "The angels in heaven rejoice, and there is no verse in the Bible that says we cannot rejoice with them."

"We are thankful for the preparation that has been made here in New South Wales, for the preparation made back in Texas and for all that God has been able to do through us as a result," said Bill Gray, coordinator of partnership missions for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

John R. Robinson, general superintendent for the Baptist Union of New South Wales, told Texas Baptists at the Sydney rally he had been impressed by their warmth, their sensitivity, their generosity, their spirit of cooperation, and their ministry to Australian churches and pastors, as well as to non-Christians.

Although a record amount of rain greeted Texas Baptists to Western Australia, it didn't dampen the spirits of Texas or Australian Baptists involved in the crusades, Partnership Missions participants testified at the Perth rally.

Bob Clark, general superintendent of the Baptist Union of Western Australia, said the partnership helped churches in Western Australia learn they are part of a "bigger Baptist family" since Perth and Western Australia are among the "most isolated cities and territories in the world."

Charles Todd, a member of South Georgia Baptist Church in Amarillo, Texas, once lived in Perth and returned to Western Australia for the crusades. "This has brought us together closer as brothers and sisters in Christ," Todd said. "It is helpful to know that even though we are 10,000 miles apart, we still are part of the same family."

Ken Wright, a layman and Western Australian coordinator of the partnership missions effort, said he was encouraged because almost one third of the Baptist churches in Western Australia responded to the call to participate in partnership missions.

"This partnership has developed enthusiasm to look at other ways to present the Christian witness that is not normally done in our country," said Wright. "But because the Texas teams were here, we felt a sense of confidence to attempt them. I believe this is the most significant occasion in evangelism Western Australia has ever seen," he said.

Arthur Payne, pastor of Lesmurdie Baptist Church and president of the Baptist Union of Western Australia, said: "The partnership effort was planned to be the central most important week in the life of Lesmurdie for evangelistic outreach.

"We've had non-Christian contact at every occasion with all age groups, and this week has been a great opportunity for evangelism. And the Texas partnership team has capitalized on this in every way and has done it in an acceptable way. The team has fit into the Australian culture, and they have been able to communicate very clearly."

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Activities during the eight-day crusade included home visitation, Scripture distribution, breakfasts for men, morning teas for women, home Bible studies, outreach dinners, crafts classes and "fun nights."

One unique experience of many missions volunteers was sharing testimonies in public schools during "Scripture Class," a weekly part of the school curriculum.

"We feel Jesus has done so much in our lives we want to come share him with others," said Roger Sikes, a mission volunteer from First Baptist Church of Seguin, Texas, to a class at Birrong Girls' High School in the suburbs of Sydney. "He is our friend, or as you would say, our mate."

A popular activity at many churches during the crusade was an outreach dinner in which church members invited their non-Christian neighbors to be their guests for a church supper or a meal in a private home.

An unusual variation on the typical church dinner was the "First Fleet" evening at Mortdale Baptist Church in the southern suburbs of Sydney. About 200 people -- including a large group of non-Christians -- attended the event in which church members dressed as convicts and bush rangers. Later in the week, the Texas team serving at Mortdale led a similar costume celebration called a "Pilgrim Fathers' Night."

Another unusual church-sponsored meeting was the Saturday night "bush bash" thrown by Castle Hill Baptist Church on the western edge of the greater Sydney area. The party, which featured hand-clapping, boot-scooting country music by the Gospel Mountain Band drew about 200 people, about one-fifth of whom were known to be non-Christians.

In another unique approach to outreach, ventriloquist Lee Pitts of Brunswick, Ga., used her wooden friend, "Nicky," to share the gospel as part of a student/recent graduate team from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. The team served at Hornsby Baptist Church, north of Sydney.

Due in great part to a home fellowship meeting sponsored by Haberfield Baptist Church in Sydney, an Orthodox Jewish woman in her fifties accepted Jesus as her savior.

"Tania has two daughters who are Christians, and I know they are jumping for joy," said Bob Morton of Audubon Park Baptist Church in Garland, Texas, who led her to faith in Christ. "I'm sure her daughters had been praying for her, just as the members had been at Haberfield."

Calvin Hogue, a Southern Baptist church planter and pastor of The Lakes Baptist Church in a Perth suburb, challenged the new congregation in its service on the last Sunday of the partnership to have 200 people in attendance, reflecting Australia's bicentennial year. The congregation, which meets in a primary school, had 8,000 brochures printed, and church and team members spent the week distributing them to the community in hopes of reaching the goal.

"We had 220 in attendance, and 15 to 20 were first-time families," Hogue reported. "We praise God for it."

Bruce Irving, pastor of First Baptist Church of George West, Texas, whose team served in Karratha, 1,000 miles north of Perth, said, "We had a great time and probably have done some things that Australians have not done ... like eat kangaroo stew."

Irving told of a man for whom the Karratha Church had prayed for two years who came to know Christ as his savior during the week.

D.L. Lowrie, director of the Texas Baptist State Missions Commission challenged Texas and Australian Baptists at the final night victory rally in Sydney to let God take their lives and lead them.

"As we come to the close of this partnership, I hope we'll be able to go back home with a commitment not to feel rest, not to find a place of comfort until all those billions out there who have not heard know what we know," he said. "This is no place to stop."

Partnership Missions becomes part
of Vacation Bible School curriculum

By Terry Barone

F-TEXAS

DALLAS (BP)--Vacation Bible Schoolers at First Baptist Church of Denver City, Texas, learned about Australia as a mission field July 25-29 while seven church members were part of a partnership missions group serving in Perth, Western Australia.

Since the VBS was conducted the same week of the Partnership Missions effort, the team from Denver City would electronically transmit information about the day's events back to the church for use during the mission study time.

Randy Butler, minister of music at the Denver City church and leader of the team, said the trans-continental effort was possible because of the 13-hour time difference between Western Australia and Texas. When the time is 5 p.m. in Perth, it is 4 a.m. in Denver City.

About five each afternoon, Butler would write a letter telling about what the team had been involved in the night before and during the day. He also would include specific prayer requests and an Australian word or phrase for the students to discuss.

Since many of the oil-related companies in Denver City have facsimile or FAX machines, Butler could FAX the letter back home. Butler said he and the church's minister of education, Phillip Golden, worked out the details.

"This was a tangible way the church, and the Vacation Bible School in particular, could be involved in the partnership missions crusade," Butler said. "This was a unique way for all of this to fit together."

Another way the Vacation Bible School will be involved is by sending to the children at Bedford Park Baptist Church in Perth, where the team served, all of the craft and art projects made by the VBS students during the week. And the VBS offering will be sent to the Australian congregation to help in its "preschool and children's area, Golden said.

"We really wanted to involve our church and make them a part of this partnership effort," Butler said.

"I feel the letters, prayer requests and Australian facts really involved the kids in this year's VBS," Golden said. "They seemed to be more interested because they could personally relate to the team which was part of the partnership missions effort."

Golden added he thought the children were more interested because they realized "children in Australia just like themselves were also learning stories about Jesus and how Jesus loved them."

Because the children knew the offering was to be sent to the Australian church, Golden said he felt it helped define for the children a way they could personally be involved in telling others about Jesus.

"We had set a goal of \$200 for our offering, but we received \$388," Golden said. "I think the reason they gave was because they knew the money was going somewhere to help boys and girls just like them.

"Everyone was involved with Australia. Some children wrote letters to children in Australia, some made Bible markers and others made posters. Even the 4-year-olds learned to say, 'G'day.' Everyone seemed to enjoy it and have a good time."

Volunteers change
young inmate's lives

By Orville Scott

F-Texas

BROWNWOOD, Texas (BP)--The teenager from Mexico was three months pregnant, her boyfriend had committed suicide and her parents had kicked her out.

She had been convicted of a crime and was in the statewide reception center of the Texas Youth Commission in Brownwood pending assignment to a permanent facility.

She asked to talk with a minister; so Mickey Harr, who is chaplain at the center, had an opportunity to tell her through an interpreter that Christ died for her sins.

The teenager accepted Christ as her savior and ran outside rejoicing in her new-found salvation. The interpreter said, "Will you share Christ with me, too," and she also made a profession of faith in Jesus.

During the past year more than 600 criminally convicted young people have made professions of faith at the reception center before going on to serve their sentences in detention centers across the state.

Mickey and Jean Harr, who have been Southern Baptist Mission Service Corps consultants for the Brownwood area since 1984, were first permitted to conduct Sunday worship services at the reception center about 16 months ago through the Gideon Bible ministry.

Soon afterward, he was asked to be full-time volunteer chaplain. Mrs. Harr spends an average of an hour a day as a volunteer, explaining to the young people their rights and doing religious surveys which are given to Harr and the chaplains of the institutions to which the inmates are assigned.

Among several volunteers who assist in the ministry at the reception center are David and Doris Dupriest, former Mission Service Corps volunteers to Israel.

More than 500 Texas Baptists are among the 1,109 Mission Service Corps volunteers serving through the Southern Baptist Home and Foreign Mission Boards. Since Mission Service Corps began a decade ago, volunteers have served in all 50 states of the United States and in 60 foreign countries.

"They are making a tremendous contribution to Mission Texas and the Southern Baptist goal of reaching every person on earth with the gospel of Jesus by the year 2000," said Texas Mission Service Corps Coordinator Sam Pearis of Dallas.

Mission Service Corps volunteers provide their own support, but Texas Baptists support the ministry through their annual Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions which supplies administrative funding.

While at the reception center, about 70 percent to 80 percent of the youthful inmates voluntarily attend Sunday services, said Harr.

"Many of them are children who've never known real love," said Mrs. Harr. They often hug the Harrs in joy and appreciation. "It's a wonderful new experience for them to give and receive love with a newfound Christian friend."

One of the girls told the chaplain at the Gainesville state school, "I never knew what love was till I got to the reception center," Harr said.

The Harrs are native Texans. He is from Cotulla, and she is from Cherokee. They met at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, where both were involved in the Baptist Student Union.

During the early years of their marriage, they took their three young children to Oregon where they spent the summer leading lay revivals and building up the churches. Another summer was spent in Rhode Island with a team that started five churches in the Providence area.

They joined Mission Service Corps in 1977 in Albuquerque, N.M., where he was area manager for the Federal Aeronautical Administration.

Mrs. Harr worked with Indian children through the Woman's Missionary Union of Hoffmantown Church in Albuquerque, and Harr worked with the Baptist Convention of New Mexico, training Christians to deal with cults.

After 31 years with the FAA, Harr took early retirement so they could enter full-time Christian service. They moved back to Texas in 1983.

"He sells real estate to support our religious habits," Mrs. Harr explained.

"The Lord has blessed us and really been good to us, healthwise and everything," she added.

As volunteer chaplain, Harr has young inmates tell him, "I've got things going around in my head, and I can't think straight and can't sleep."

Once he was called at midnight to counsel with two girls who had "seen monstrous things crawling on the walls." As a result of Harr's counseling, one of the girls accepted Christ as savior, and the other rededicated her life to Christ.

"Both went back to their rooms, went right to sleep and slept all night," Harr said.

Of the 2,700 inmates who go through the reception center in a year, a large percentage of them are there because of alcohol and drugs or drug-related crimes, said Harr.

Many are devil worshipers. Harr recalled one young man who had been given a New Testament but kept dropping it on the floor.

"My problem is that I'm an atheist," the inmate explained. Then, after a pause, he confessed, "Really, I'm a devil worshiper."

"God's Word was too hot for him to hold," said Harr.

The youth made a profession of faith in Christ and left holding his fingers on John 3:16 and the 23rd Psalm.

The Harrs encourage others to use the fruitful, golden years of retirement in Christian service and even to take early retirement as they have done to serve in Mission Service Corps.

"I'm enjoying every minute of it," said Harr.

"It's not anything we've done," said Mrs. Harr. "It's strictly the Lord using us. We just try to be available, and he's using us."

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New Orleans Seminary course
examines China's open doors

By Breena Kent Paine

F-10
(NOBTS)

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--China has opened its doors to the world during recent years, sparking the interest of many American Christians and seminary students. As a result, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has offered a new course on "A History of Christian Missions in China."

"Most missions courses touch on China for two or three days, but this is the first course offered only on China," said Lewis Myers, director of Cooperative Services International, a branch of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board that sends Christians as professionals to countries not open to missionaries.

The class, taught by Myers and A.J. Glaze, professor of missions at New Orleans Seminary, was offered during the seminary's July term and attracted 19 students, including foreign missionaries, pastors and students from Asia.

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Students studied the historical and cultural background of China, Christian missions in China and China from 1949 to today.

Glaze said, China has seen three basic periods of Christian missions -- the penetration in 535 of the Nestorians, a church of the East adhering to the doctrines of Constantinople's Patriarch Nestorius; the Roman Catholic influence, from 1294 to 1369 and from 1583 to 1736; and Protestant entrance in 1807.

A goal of the course is to help students understand Chinese culture. They watched films about China, ate Chinese food and listened to a Chinese tell of her experiences in that country.

The course also sought to help students "understand the philosophical background of the Chinese mindset," said Glaze, "and in this way understand the Christian penetration and its initial failures and 20th-century difficulties."

"Up until 1912, China was ... bound together culturally rather than racially," he said. "Any foreigner that would come into China and accept her culture was assimilated culturally, and there was no basic distinction racially."

"The initial Christian impact was that of a foreign culture that refused to (adhere to Chinese culture). Nestorians and early Roman Catholics maintained 'foreignness' and loyalty to the pope," he continued.

"China considered itself to be the ... most cultured, and only through Western commercial and military power was China opened. Missionaries that went in were considered to be part of the foreign matter which was not wanted."

China closed its doors to the world during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, and many Chinese suffered persecution, including Christians.

As a result, "Christians identify with the people," said Myers. "Everybody participated and were victims of the Cultural Revolution," including Christians, so they hold a common bond; and both Christians and non-Christians alike are "all are trying to find their way of cultivating 'new China.'"

In this new China, churches have emerged from the Cultural Revolution in a unique form. Chinese call their churches "post-missionary," said Myers. The churches are Chinese, led by Chinese pastors, not missionaries from other lands.

Chinese churches also are "post-denominational," said Myers. "There was a time when denominations were in China, but that is no longer true."

The churches are autonomous and "not characterized by uniformity but ... by mutual respect," he said. Although churches may worship or practice ordinances in different ways, each respects the other. For instance, Myers said in reference to baptism, some Chinese jokingly say, "We emerge in the summer and sprinkle in the winter."

In addition, churches in China "authenticate the gospel in the marketplaces where they live and work," said Myers. "They emphasize greatly how many Christians were recognized by their work unit as model workers. ... Last year, over 200 Christians were recognized in Shanghai alone."

Chinese Christians' "role or style of evangelism is the lifestyle-response mode," he said. "A response mode is not passive; you are to actively ... stimulate questions through lifestyle."

To illustrate his point, Myers told the story of a man who set a sack full of money on the desk of a bus clerk. When the clerk asked about his odd behavior, the man responded he was paying back his debt for all the years he had ridden the bus and not paid. He explained he had become a Christian the day before and was setting his life straight as a new person in Christ.

During the course, Myers also shared with students Chinese Christians' concerns for leadership, orthodoxy, depth of new believers and new seminary students, and commitment to evangelism in China.

New Orleans Seminary plans to offer the course again in 1990.

Fort Worth's country club church
scores with service of love

By Mark Wingfield

F. HMB

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Anyone who argues that the church is nothing but a country club now has evidence to settle the score. Hulen Street Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, really is a country club, complete with tennis courts and a swimming pool.

Hulen Street did not build the recreational facilities, but it maintains them as an outreach to the community. The 12 clay tennis courts, olympic-size swimming pool and clubhouse came with the land the church bought from the financially troubled Racquet Club of Fort Worth in 1984.

Now players find love in more than the tennis scores. Hulen Street members use their 14-acre facility as a way to reach Fort Worth with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"The principle is very sound," says Josef Solc, pastor at Hulen Street for eight years. "We try to gain people's attention and witness to them."

The result is attendance at Hulen Street is four times larger than it was four years ago when the church relocated to its current site. Sunday school rooms are filled to capacity most Sundays, and the two-year-old sanctuary soon will be too small for the crowds, Solc says.

When Solc came to the church in 1980 at the old location, he became the congregation's 11th pastor in 20 years. The church had waxed and waned under the brief tenure of each new pastor.

In addition, the residential area around the church was fast giving way to office buildings and highways. Attendance had dropped to as low as 50 people on Sunday mornings.

"There was no stability," Solc says. "After the first three years, I got discouraged. But I was determined to see this church grow and make it."

A developer had offered Solc \$500,000 for the church property. But Solc wasn't interested because the congregation had opposed the previous pastor's efforts to relocate the church.

Then one day a church member called to tell Solc about a man who needed to sell the racquet club. The club, located in a growing area of southwest Fort Worth where no Southern Baptist church existed was on the verge of bankruptcy.

When the church's deacons gave their approval, Solc and the church began to look seriously at their options. "For the next three months, I was more of a real estate agent than a pastor," Solc says.

After extensive negotiations, he finally worked out a deal: The church would sell its property for \$1.3 million and buy the new property for \$1.1 million, leaving \$200,000 for renovations and construction.

"I knew it would not work if we had no money," Solc says. The church's annual budget was only \$40,000.

When put to a final vote, 70 percent of the church wanted to move. But of the 50 people who transferred to the new location, 45 left within the first year.

"The first year was tough," Solc admits. "Some people thought we would see immediate growth. When that didn't happen, they got discouraged and left."

But Solc and the few who remained persevered. When people who had been members of the club would come by to use the facilities, Solc told them about Jesus. Several found Christ, were baptized in the swimming pool and joined the new church.

Church members began canvassing the surrounding residential areas, inviting people to use the recreational facilities and to attend church. With time, attendance and baptisms began to increase.

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Today, more than 200 people attend Sunday morning Bible study at Hulen Street. Some classes meet in the converted locker rooms, offices and bar of the clubhouse. Others meet in the education/worship building built partially with excess funds from the sale of the original property.

Solc wears an unusual array of hats in his pastoral role. As the only full-time paid staff member, he is preacher, tennis coach, swimming instructor and sometimes groundskeeper.

But Solc is ideally suited for his role. A native of Czechoslovakia, he is a former professional tennis player. He left his homeland just prior to the Communist invasion of 1965 to study theology because the Czechoslovakian government had denied him permission to attend seminary there.

He earned two degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth and now is pastor to some of the school's students.

Solc realizes his church's unique facilities are both an advantage and a liability. Some people have told him to fill the pool with dirt because a Baptist church has no need for one. Others visit the church simply to find out what's going on and are so impressed they join.

Solc admits the church hasn't learned how to maximize the ministry potential in its facilities. But each year members learn a little bit more, he says.

Hulen Street recently called a part-time youth minister who will work additional hours in the summer witnessing to teen-agers who come to swim or play tennis. Solc also plans to send Continuous Witness Training teams to visit in the homes of everyone who uses the facilities.

Although Hulen Street is making good use of its recreational facilities, Solc doesn't advise every church to take a similar plunge.

"I would certainly not advise our seminarians who are graduating to look for 12 tennis courts and a swimming pool," he says. "Unless the Lord is in it, it will not work."

But he encourages the ministerial students in his congregation to be innovative in their witness. "We definitely need to find new ways to reach people for Jesus Christ," he says.

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