



- - BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #2
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2300
Alvin C. Shackelford, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Marv Knox, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

September 6, 1988

88-143

Missionaries share flood
with millions in Bangladesh

By Marty Croll

N-FMB

DHAKA, Bangladesh (BP)--A Southern Baptist missionary couple has sought refuge in the mission guest house in Dhaka, Bangladesh, as rising floodwaters filled their ground-floor living quarters below.

Jim and Betty McKinley, from Louisville, Ky., share the plight of 50 million Bangladeshis driven from their homes as three major rivers have overflowed in the southeast Asian country of 110 million people. The homes of other Southern Baptist missionaries have been virtually untouched by floodwater.

The McKinleys' living quarters, with guest rooms rising several stories above, and administrative offices for the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in Bangladesh are in a compound built less than 10 years ago on reclaimed lowlands.

Mrs. McKinley has not been outside of the compound since the flooding began. McKinley uses a boat he boards in the stairway of the guest house to obtain water and supplies. They have no electricity.

"On Aug. 30, in the afternoon, we knew we were in for real trouble," McKinley wrote to Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board officials in Richmond, Va. "The water began entering our yard, and by night had entered our house. Eventually it reached 40 inches inside the house."

Flooding is commonplace in Bangladesh in late summer after monsoon season sets in. Last year, officials reported the worst damage in 70 years. But Bangladesh President H.M. Ershad has called this year's devastation much worse than last year's damage.

Southern Baptists do not know yet how they can help the country rebuild. "What to do when the water recedes is more than my mind can manage at this point," McKinley wrote.

The Foreign Mission Board plans to send a human needs representative to Bangladesh within weeks to plan immediate hunger relief programs as well as long-range programs to help the people recover. The board has authorized the release of \$25,000 in emergency funds, said John Cheyne, the board's director for human needs.

"It seems only right to say that some predict millions will die in the next few months," he wrote. "I doubt that, but I may doubt, simply not wanting to admit such a possibility."

In Dhaka, 200 people have made their homes in the Immanuel Baptist Church building. In the area of Gopalganj, Christians are living on a road north of the town.

More than two-thirds of the nation is reported to be under water that is rushing southward to the Bay of Bengal. As it destroys crops and livestock in its path, it brings with it rats and poisonous snakes. People are huddling wherever they can find dry spaces and are being forced to drink polluted water.

Some villages are said to be 10 feet underwater. People are standing in water up to their hips to receive aid. Stomach disease, drowning and poisonous snakebites have been major contributors to deaths.

Bennett urges
partnership

N-(CO
(SBTS))

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptists need to remember they are "partners in ministry for Jesus Christ," stressed the president of the convention's Executive Committee.

Addressing fall convocation services Aug. 30 at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., Harold C. Bennett noted prayer is a key element in the cooperative work of Southern Baptists. He also reminded students, faculty and staff their individual ministries are helped by the prayers of others.

"Others who have prayed for you will help you become the type of minister for Jesus Christ you ought to be," he said.

Bennett also emphasized the centrality of the Bible in the mission of Southern Baptists. "The book is central to what we are about," he said. "It is our guiding light to live by. It is God's holy word to us."

He added the Bible "directs its readers and hearers to the person of Jesus Christ."

In addition to Southern Baptists' devotion to prayer and the Bible, Bennett said the Southern Baptist Convention seriously should commit itself to the task of starting of new churches. He pointed out the denomination, which now has 38,000 churches, has set a goal of 50,000 churches by the end of the century. However, the SBC had only a net gain of 107 churches last year.

"If we are going to reach 50,00 new churches by the end of this century, we must do more than we are doing now," he said.

Also during convocation services, six professors who were granted tenure by the seminary's trustees last spring signed the Abstract of Principles, the seminary's statement of faith.

Those professors are Molly Marshall-Green, assistant professor of Christian Theology; Pamela Scalise, assistant professor of Old Testament; Elizabeth A. Bedsole, associate professor of church music; Paul A. Richardson, associate professor of church music; Robert D. Hughes, associate professor of communications and mass media; and Ronnie F. Prevost, associate professor of Christian Education.

The document contains the names of all tenured professors at the seminary since the school was founded in 1859.

Another faculty member granted tenure last spring, church music professor Boyd M. Jones II, signed the Abstract earlier this year since he is on sabbatical during the fall semester.

--30--

New literature presents
cultural background

By Frank Wm. White

N-SSB

Baptist Press
9/6/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--The language may be the same, but the word pictures and visual images of a new Sunday school periodical for American Indians present the gospel in a way most readily understood by native Americans.

"We feel the Scriptures speak to American Indians as much as to anyone else, but to reach Indians, we needed to relate materials to that culture," explained Russell Begaye, writer for the October-December 1988 quarter.

"Adult Bible Study -- American Indian," follows the adult Life and Work Series curriculum and is produced by the special ministries department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. Although written in English, it is presented from an American Indian perspective.

It is the first Bible study material to be produced from an Indian culture perspective, said Begaye, who is national consultant on Indian affairs for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

--more--

"Indians have always taught by using stories which revolve around nature and the environment. Indian languages have always been very pictorial and concrete in nature," said Begaye, a member of the Navajo tribe.

Because of the lack of abstract terms in Indian languages, Begaye said Christian concepts are best understood by American Indians when explained with word pictures such as in the Oct. 2 session on "What is the Gospel?" where sin is described as "the darkness of the heart."

The art design of the material also attracts Indians, Begaye said, noting, "They see it and immediately know it is for them."

The quarterly is illustrated by Jimmy Anderson, an Indian church developer with the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. Anderson is a Creek Indian who has exhibited paintings in Indian art shows throughout the United States and has a painting on exhibit in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.

Developers of the American Indian periodical hope the new material will help reach Indians from different cultural backgrounds and the 497 tribes in the United States, Begaye said.

A variety of Indian writers will help relate to different tribes and varying situations. Begaye, for instance, grew up on a Navajo reservation and has spent his adult life in metropolitan areas. Writers for other quarters will include urban, rural and reservation Indians as well, he said.

Currently, 500 Southern Baptist American Indian congregations include 97 tribes in 25 states. Although 210 of those congregations are in Oklahoma, others are scattered throughout the South, East and North as well as in the Southwest.

"The thing that makes this exciting is we can place this literature in the hands of Indian chiefs and governors as an outreach tool," Begaye said. "It can be used by non-Indian congregations to start Indian work. It is so flexible it can be used in many ways."

Other Life and Work adult curriculum resources can be used in conjunction with the American Indian literature.

"This curriculum is an important statement in language publishing," said Bill Banks, director of the special ministries department.

The material is the first language-related material produced by the special ministries department using English to relate to a particular cultural group, Banks said.

The plan for the American Indian periodical began in 1985 with an American Indian strategy meeting. Bible study material for American Indians was identified as a critical need for reaching the convention's evangelistic and missions objectives.

By the end of August, 1,600 copies of the first issue of "Adult Bible Study -- American Indian" had been sold.

--30--

Merger breathes new life
into Miami congregation

By Greg Warner

F-10
(F10.)

Baptist Press
9/6/88

MIAMI (BP)--The future looked bleak for Sierra Norwood Baptist Church, a white congregation in a mostly black Miami neighborhood, until its struggle to survive found a solution 200 feet away at an overcrowded black mission church. The result was an unusual union of race and culture.

The slow death that haunted Sierra Norwood Church in recent years weighed heavily on Bob Norman. He was concerned not only because he was the pastor, but because he had grown up in the church.

--more--

"I was called to be a Christian in this church in 1967," he explained. He also was baptized and married at Sierra Norwood. But that was before the church's neighborhood changed from predominantly white to predominantly black.

Norman returned to the church of his spiritual heritage in 1986 to become pastor, but he watched helplessly as attendance dwindled and hope died.

Like many of Miami's churches in transitional neighborhoods, Sierra Norwood faced severe financial stress and little prospect of reversal. Its simple but ample facilities were paid for, but even maintenance was a burden for the 100 members who remained.

"We could have hung on for two or three years playing church," Norman said, but that would have meant severely reducing the church's ministries and outreach. "The only other choice was to close the doors, and I didn't want to do that."

Fellow pastors counseled him to "leave quietly," Norman recalled, but he feared that would seal the fate for the struggling congregation. Instead he sought help.

Across the church's parking lot, less than 200 feet away, another Southern Baptist congregation was struggling. Calvary Baptist Church had been started in 1986 as a mission to meet the needs of the Jamaicans and other West Indians moving into the neighborhood. Each Sunday its 100-plus members crowded into a community recreation center adjacent to Sierra Norwood's property.

With too many people for too little space, Calvary Church looked like an answered prayer for Sierra Norwood, which had too few people for too much space. They decided to merge the two congregations and build on their strengths.

The initial plan was to have both Norman and Richard Ledgister, leader of the Jamaican congregation, as pastors. But during negotiations, Norman was called as pastor of First Baptist Church of Key Largo, Fla. That meant Jamaican-trained Ledgister would be pastor for both the Anglos and Jamaicans in the new Sierra Norwood Calvary Baptist Church.

As odd as the arrangement sounds, it's not the first multiethnic merger in Miami. Although it's the first Anglo-Jamaican merger, as many as four dozen other ethnic unions have occurred in the Miami Baptist Association since social changes began in Miami two decades ago.

That's not good news to Doyle Wetherington, director of missions for the association, who says mergers rarely work. "Generally, I'm against mergers because it means you have one less station preaching the gospel," he explained. "When you join two weak churches, you get one weak church."

Still, Wetherington said, Sierra Norwood and Calvary churches "are doing everything they can to avoid the pitfalls" of problematic mergers, and that should work in their favor.

Norman sees the union as a practical solution to inevitable changes. "It would have been silly for us to keep on struggling as an Anglo congregation in an area that is becoming black," he said.

Five years ago, no blacks were members of the church and few lived in the neighborhood, Norman said. As the racial makeup of the neighborhood changed, many church members who might have opposed the merger moved away, Norman said, leaving less resistance when the idea came up. "The Lord moved those people out so we wouldn't have that," he said.

Through careful study and negotiations between the two congregations, Norman said, Sierra Norwood slowly was able to overcome initial opposition to the plan. "There was a 99 percent vote to merge in June, but it took three months to get to that point," he noted.

The congregational marriage was completed July 3. At the first joint worship service, about 250 people attended, more than the sum of recent attendance figures at the two churches.

Members of the new congregation invited those from other area churches to join them for a celebration service July 31. Both Norman and Ledgister spoke to the afternoon crowd of 350, as did representatives from five other denominations and the Miami Association.

Ledgister told participants the celebration service was a "great tribute" to Norman. "God sent him here for one purpose and one purpose only -- to bring about the merger of Sierra Norwood Baptist Church and Calvary Baptist Church," Ledgister said.

Ledgister, who was associate pastor of Miami's Metropolitan Baptist Church for six years before moving to Calvary, later said the chance for his "mobile" congregation to move into Sierra Norwood's abundant facilities "is like street people moving into a palace."

The move also will improve outreach, he said, since many people are reluctant to attend worship in a community center.

The new congregation is only starting to work out the details of the new arrangement. Normal racial differences are augmented by the Jamaicans' island culture. So far, the approach seems to be cooperation and compromise, as demonstrated by the Anglo pianist and Jamaican organist who played at the celebration service.

Ledgister insisted the two-in-one church faces no more obstacles than any other congregation in Miami. "There are certainly things we have to iron out," he said, but he predicted the cooperative spirit of the members would overcome their differences.

Given the shift in the neighborhood's population, however, the new church may become predominantly Jamaican, Ledgister conceded. He said he hopes the strong base of Sierra Norwood members will allow the congregation to continue to reach Anglos.

Mike Jones, who was minister of youth for Sierra Norwood and now for the joint congregation, said cooperation between the two groups is the key to reaching the community, which he said is now half black and half white.

"The only way to be effective in ministering to this neighborhood is if we come together," he said. "One color is not going to do it."

--30--

(BP) photo available on request from the Florida Baptist Witness.

13-year-old shares faith
with Brazilian general

By Art Coalston

F-FMB

Baptist Press
9/6/88

AMARILLO, Texas (BP)--An eighth-grader from Amarillo, Texas, knows at least one reason why he felt a sense of urgency to go to Brazil.

Kale Phillips, 13, helped a general in Brazil's air force make a decision to follow Christ.

"I really felt God's calling to go to Brazil," Kale recounted. He was among 80 Southern Baptists who assisted 25 churches in the city of Campinas in evangelistic efforts during the first two weeks of August.

Paramount Baptist Church in Amarillo supplied half the group from the United States, including Kale and his father, Rick.

Finances made the trip seem out of the question for Kale and his father earlier this year. The family -- Kale, his parents and three younger sisters -- already had made arrangements for a home missions trip to Wisconsin in June.

But Brazil remained on Kale's heart. "I'm just going to trust God to work it all out," he told his dad.

Paramount's pastor, Shad Rue, invited Kale's father to tell of his son's desire to minister in Brazil during a meeting at the church in May. "That night I got a phone call and someone had paid my way," Kale recounted. Little by little, his father's expenses also were covered.

--more--

Kale said he prepared for the trip every way he could: "I prayed a lot. That was probably the most important, praying that God would prepare me."

After arriving in Brazil, Kale said, he discovered "The people are real open. Even though they may not believe in what you're there for, they're going to welcome you to their homes."

Southern Baptist missionary Dan Burt struck up a friendship with Kale and invited the youth to go along to an air base where they would seek permission to conduct services. They first talked with a colonel who had become a Christian two years earlier. The colonel said the base's general would have to make the decision.

The general "was real busy at the time, but he allowed us in, and we talked," Kale said. The general ruled out any services on the base because Brazil's secretary of defense would be visiting the base in several days.

"Before we left, I gave the general one of my testimonies," Kale said. It was a tract with his testimony translated into Portuguese. "And Dan said, 'Let's pray before we go.'"

"I just thanked God for the general's openness, for him allowing us to come into his office, even though he was busy," Kale recounted. "I prayed that the general would always accept God's authority in his life, that although he has much authority, he would always go to God for his decisions."

And Kale prayed "that the general hopefully someday would come to know the Lord."

Burt translated the youth's prayer into Portuguese, sentence by sentence, and then added a prayer of his own.

Tears welled up in the general's eyes. He said he was touched by their visit. He invited them back in two days to "share with me about this Jesus Christ."

The missionary and the youth, along with Rue, a Brazilian pastor and a couple of others, returned to the general's office at the appointed hour.

The Brazilian gave the general a New Testament. Rue then talked about faith in Christ, pausing as his words were translated into Portuguese.

And Kale talked again with the general. "I told him, 'This is probably the last time I'll be able to come to share with you.'" His return flight to Amarillo was that night. "Even though you may be busy ... if you really know that you need to accept Christ into your life, which I hope you do, you need to do it today, at this moment."

No one knows when his time on earth may end, Kale reminded the general.

The general was asked if he wanted to receive Christ. "Yes, I would, very much so," the general said, noting, he had been lonely and searching. He prayed his own prayer for salvation. Several days later, he made a public profession of faith at Central Baptist Church in Campinas.

Kale said he was impressed that a general -- someone with so much authority -- would embrace a higher authority. But Kale wasn't too astounded, either.

In sharing his faith in Brazil, he encountered many people who were "just so hungry to hear the word of God, so hungry to find what they need in life."