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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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88-156

Ethnics to start 3 churches  
in Las Vegas by June 1989

By Joe Westbury

N- HMB

ATLANTA (BP)--Leaders of three Southern Baptist ethnic fellowships have announced plans to start new churches in Las Vegas prior to the convention's annual meeting there next June.

The three churches will be the first congregations in the city among American Indians, Cambodians and Romanians, said Oscar Romo, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's language missions division.

Bobby Sunderland, director of the board's direct evangelism division, said the new congregations will increase to seven the number of language churches launched in Las Vegas in the past few months. A new Filipino congregation has baptized 17 people since its recent founding, he added.

The strategy dovetails with Home Mission Board goals of starting 25 churches in the state prior to the mid-June annual meeting.

Sunderland praised the ethnic fellowships for accepting the challenge of starting new churches. "Of the 25 new church starts in Las Vegas, no doubt some of the strongest will be language congregations," he said.

Simultaneous revivals, Scripture distribution and sponsorship of the church-type missions are some of the activities planned prior to the convention. The evangelistic emphasis, which continues to gain support among ethnics, will be part of the "Here's Hope. Jesus Cares for You" national revivals set for the spring of 1990.

The church-starting announcement was made in Atlanta during a workshop that brought together 19 ethnic leaders from across the denomination. The three-day meeting was sponsored by the board's language missions division.

The plans were unveiled by Victor Kaneubbe of Phoenix, Ariz., president of the American Indian fellowship and former first vice president of the denomination; Sok Doeung of Fort Worth, Texas, president of the Cambodian fellowship; and Alexa Popovici, pastor of the Romanian Baptist Church in Chicago and president of the Romanian fellowship.

During the workshop's opening session, Romo stressed the need for commitment, communication, mutual respect, joint planning and cooperation between the denomination and the fellowships.

He challenged the ethnic leaders to lead their churches to participate in Southern Baptist life, contribute to world missions through the denomination's Cooperative Program unified budget, and to draw from Southern Baptist's programs to meet the needs of their congregations.

The meeting marked the first time a representative of Southern Baptist work with Africans in the United States had attended the ethnic leaders meeting. Patty Lane, a catalytic missionary with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, attended the sessions to learn ways to communicate the gospel among Africans.

Lane, a home missionary serving as multi-ethnic consultant with Texas convention, reported Southern Baptists have established seven African congregations in the state since the work first began two years ago.

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In addition, she has assisted Texas Baptists in starting three Ethiopian-language congregations in the past three years.

The meeting also marked the first time representatives from all major Southern Baptist agencies were present to provide information on their programs with the language leaders.

Thad Hamilton, associate director of mass evangelism for the Home Mission Board, praised the ethnic leaders for taking a lead role in supporting the upcoming "Here's Hope" simultaneous revivals.

The revivals, to be sponsored by the board, are scheduled for March 18-April 28, 1989.

Hamilton announced that some revival preparation materials for pastors will be translated into Spanish, Korean, French-Haitian, Vietnamese, and basic English for deaf and all other ethnic groups.

In other matters, the ethnic leaders passed a resolution that expressed disapproval over the showing of the movie "The Last Temptation of Christ."

Dmytro Marychuk of Hartford, Conn., president of the Ukrainian Baptist Convention, called for the resolution on the basis of it being "one of the worst things that could happen in Christian America."

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Racial statements distort  
SBC stand, ethicist says

By Marv Knox

N-10

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NASHVILLE (BP)--A Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission trustee's recent statements about Martin Luther King Jr. and apartheid have raised questions about the convention's stand against racism, according to the agency's interim executive director.

Curtis W. Caine Sr.'s comments "have raised serious questions about Southern Baptist racial attitudes and actions," wrote Robert Parham in a statement released Sept. 28.

Caine, a medical doctor from Jackson, Miss., made his comments during the commission's annual meeting Sept. 14. He delivered an impromptu speech in which he warned his colleagues about the use of "traditional words used to deal with programs of this commission."

Speaking of "race relations," Caine said: "We have to be very careful that we do not get caught in the trap that is closing in around us about apartheid in South Africa, which doesn't exist anymore and was beneficial when it did, because it meant separate development.

"We have to be very careful that we don't be caught up in the endorsement of -- quote, 'the reverend,' unquote -- Martin Luther King." He called the martyred civil rights leader a fraud.

In his announcement, titled "A Statement: Southern Baptists and Race Relations," Parham wrote, "These statements stand in sharp contrast with the accomplishments attained during the previous four decades, have offended many inside and outside the convention, have planted seeds of doubt about the authenticity of the Christian life of Southern Baptists and may prove injurious to the denomination's Christian witness at home and abroad."

Parham conceded Southern Baptist history includes dark days of racial strife. The convention was formed in 1845 by Baptists who felt missionaries should be allowed to own slaves. And many Southern Baptists in this century have agitated for segregation.

"We are a denomination born into a family of slaveholders and nurtured by segregationists," Parham admitted. But he added: "Our heritage has influenced, but has not determined, our present course. We are an imperfect people on pilgrimage out of darkness into newness of life.

"Our tracks disclose where we have been and where we are going:

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-- "Eighteen Southern Baptist Convention resolutions from 1937 to 1986 have deplored un-Christian racial practices, repudiated groups fomenting racial strife and division, committed ourselves to working against racial injustice and correcting racial inequalities, and called for involvement of blacks and other minorities in the work of the denomination.

-- "'A Statement Concerning the Crisis in Our Nation' was adopted in 1968 by the SBC, calling for resistance to prejudice, respect for inherent dignity and worth of every individual, affirmation of the equality of human and legal rights for every person and commitment to the pursuit of reconciliation.

-- "A 'Declaration of Human Rights' was adopted in 1978 by the SBC, saying in part: '... Our concern for tortured, unjustly imprisoned and politically oppressed persons abroad is matched by our concern for the rights of women, blacks, ethnic minorities, the poor, the aging, the sick, and abused children in our midst. ... We are determined to be courageous defenders of human rights who will not be deterred in the fight to make all people free.'

-- "'A Call to Concern about Apartheid,' issued unanimously in 1985 by 16 individual Southern Baptist representatives from the Christian Life Commission, Southern Baptist Foundation, Baptist World Alliance, Baptist Sunday School Board, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Home and Foreign mission boards, expressed support for the Baptist Union of Southern Africa, which spoke against the 'gross immoralities of apartheid.' The 10-point statement added, 'We cry for justice for the blacks of South Africa who have been long abused by the oppressive system of institutionalized racism forced on them by the white minority government.'"

Although Caine's remarks have stirred controversy, Southern Baptists have "a unique opportunity to refocus on the issue of race relations," Parham said. "Out of this, God can work for good through us at a number of points.

"First, we must remember that what takes place in the backyard of our agencies may be seen as national tragedies on the denomination's front porch. What is said in Nashville can be heard and can be harmful around the world.

"Second, we must re-examine our own hearts, seeking to rid them of evil, struggling to understand the words of those who are angry and frightened and searching for ways to be ministers of reconciliation.

"Third, we must recommit ourselves to the elimination of racism and racist structures from Jackson to Johannesburg:

-- "Through the proclamation that all are created in the image of God and that Christ died for all, tearing down the dividing walls of hostility, creating a new people and calling us to walk in newness of life.

-- "Through education about the sources and consequences of injustice.

-- "Through association with congregations of other languages and cultures.

-- "Through mission projects around the world.

-- "Through nonviolent political and economic actions."

Parham challenged members of his denomination: "Southern Baptists are a national denomination with a global vision. We must strive to be a light set upon a hill, illuminating the darkness with our commitment to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God."

Fear keeping Burundi  
refugees in Rwanda

By Craig Bird

F - FMB

BUTARE, Rwanda (BP)--They don't look like refugees.

More than 50,000 refugees who have fled northward across the Akanyaru River from Burundi to Rwanda are not starving. They did not travel for weeks without food and water to get to safety. They are getting medical care and two meals a day of beans, rice and sorghum. The majority could walk home in hours.

But most are afraid to return to Burundi -- and therein lies the tragedy of the massive exodus from one small, landlocked African country to another.

Planting season has arrived; the long rains have started. Yet the refugees stand and stare across the narrow river at the now depopulated hills of Burundi. Their fields -- and their future -- lie fallow, within eyesight but beyond their reach.

"These are people without a future," says David Hooten, Southern Baptist missionary from Tifton, Ga. "They left their homes because they were being chased by soldiers with rifles and machetes, but this government doesn't want them to stay here because Rwanda is already the most densely populated country in Africa."

Whatever their future, Hooten and other Southern Baptist missionaries are responding to current needs, feeding 17,000-plus refugees in three camps where they have been asked to help.

First-term missionaries Ron and Gloria Murff, from Mobile, Ala., and Whitwell, Tenn., respectively, were listening to Armed Forces Radio news at 11 p.m. Aug. 14 when the report came that 10,000 refugees were streaming into Rwanda. They immediately went across the road and woke up Bob and Alice Snyder, from Ann Arbor, Mich., and Auburn, Ala.

The two men decided to check out the situation the next day. As a result, Baptists were invited to a meeting with government officials to plan a response to the crisis.

The Baptist Mission of Rwanda requested and received \$5,000 in hunger relief funds from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Almost immediately, John Faulkner, the board's area director for Eastern and Southern Africa, approved another \$55,000 to carry the feeding project through three months.

Hooten, who had just completed language school, agreed to coordinate the feeding project, and Murff, a medical doctor, began working alongside government medical personnel. Hooten's task includes locating and purchasing food and getting it to the camps. Government officials and soldiers take care of distributing it.

In addition to rice and beans, Hooten also hauls in stacks of religious tracts and boxes of Bibles. Six Rwandan Baptist evangelists, two in each of the camps assigned to Baptists, live alongside the refugees in tents, holding worship services, witnessing and counseling.

"Every time I come out, they tell me they need more tracts, more Gospels of John, more Bibles," Hooten says. "These people are very responsive to the gospel, and if we just take care of their physical needs, we are missing the boat -- these people need something for their hearts, too."

Governmental response has mixed humanitarian concern with political reality. No one who makes it across the river into Rwanda is turned away. But the camps hug the river bank, and the refugees are pinned within two miles of the border to keep them from resettling in the interior of the country.

From the time the refugees began streaming northward in mid-August, the Rwandan government insisted the situation was temporary and that the people would return home in a matter of weeks. But by mid-September, the refugees were vacating the school rooms they had been using for housing and being relocated into nine camps.

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Since promised tents have not arrived, the refugees are building huts of banana leaves -- huts that will not stand up to the heavy rains the next few months will bring.

Hooten believes many of the refugees will be there a long time. "Burundi Tutsi officials are urging the refugees to return, saying the trouble is over," he says. "Of course, some will return and be successful in resuming their life there, but others have too much fear to ever go back."

What they fear is the continuing legacy of ethnic warfare.

Two tribes make up 99 percent of the population of both Rwanda and Burundi -- the Hutu, about 85 percent, and the Tutsi, 14 percent. Rwanda is dominated by the Hutu, but the Tutsi are integrated into society by laws that tie access to education, jobs, government positions and the military to the percentage of each ethnic group in the total population.

Burundi, however, continues to maintain the centuries-old structure where the minority Tutsi have overwhelming dominance over the majority Hutu. An attempted coup in 1972 resulted in the massacre by the Tutsi army of an estimated 100,000 Hutu, including practically all of the educated and/or leaders.

The precise spark that set off the latest violence is a matter of dispute, although the majority of stories say Hutu attacks on Tutsi in northern Burundi generated a military response that got out of hand.

A Rwandan told one Baptist missionary he attended a wedding in Burundi Aug. 14 where another visiting Rwandan began inciting the Hutu crowd, warning them another massacre was imminent.

The Burundi Hutu, already tense because the Tutsi army had been patrolling their area for several weeks, responded by killing some Tutsi who lived in the area. Then the army moved in, either to restore order or take advantage of the situation to kill traditional enemies.

The Burundi government says unnecessary killings by the army were isolated and regretted, an explanation officials of the U.S. State Department have accepted.

Refugees tell of helicopter gunships strafing villages; of soldiers with "short knives," possibly bayonets, stabbing fleeing men, women and children; of civilian Tutsi killing Hutu they catch attempting to cross the river into Rwanda.

"You can talk to anyone in any of the camps, and they can tell you of one to five people they know personally who were killed," Hooten points out. A boy standing nearby underscores his point, explaining he and his parents escaped, but all his brothers and sister had been killed.

Within two weeks of the outbreak, thousands of people were dead. The Burundi government puts the figure at 5,000, while refugees and Rwandan military spokesmen say 30,000.

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Photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Counselors: discoveries come  
from premarital counseling

By Terri Lackey

N-SSB

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Engaged people who want to discover secrets about their future mates before they are married need only attend a few sessions of premarital counseling, two counselors agreed.

"Premarital counseling (or 'engaged couple enrichment') opens lines of communication and allows couples to talk about things they otherwise might not discuss," said Ron Mumbower, minister of counseling and family life at First Baptist Church of Jackson, Miss.

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Among the most important discoveries a couple will make is the "family system" each comes from, agreed Mumbower and Stanley J. Watson, professor emeritus of psychology and marriage and family counseling at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Both led seminars at the Sept. 23-25 Fall Festival of Marriage in New Orleans.

"The home is the training ground of relationships. You really get a concept of relationships by watching your parents," Mumbower said. "A person usually imitates how he saw mom and dad interact, communicate, show love and deal with conflict."

Watson, now living in Picayune, Miss., said people come from one of four family types -- traditional, enmeshed, individualistic or companionship.

In a traditional family, one person -- the mother or father -- makes the decisions for the family, Watson said. In the enmeshed family, "each person is controlling and critical of the others."

In an individualistic system, everybody makes decisions for themselves; and in a companionship family, all members work together as partners in the decision making.

In premarital counseling, it is important to help couples realize their family backgrounds and point out how each person is likely to react to the other's handling of family matters, Mumbower said.

"We like to help couples realize the potential dysfunction and take them and create new ground for a new system," he said. "When two people from different backgrounds come together, it can become a conflict right away."

While individual partners may not choose to change their ways, counseling enables each to become aware of the other's background, Mumbower said. He added he believes the comfortable environment of counseling brings out many issues couples might have not talked about earlier in their relationship -- family systems, personality, communication, conflict resolution, sexual understanding and money matters.

"The expectations of marriage and the other person is also usually discussed," said Mumbower. "But when we ask couples to visualize what they want in a partner, most have never thought about it. They just believe they want this person sitting beside them."

"That's part of what counseling is about -- making the person aware of what they are about to do, so they will not enter the relationship blindly."

About 300 people attended the marriage conference, sponsored jointly by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry department, the Mississippi and Louisiana Baptist conventions and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.