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January 25, 1989

89-13

Biblical imperatives conference  
cancelled; reset for May 1990

N-CO

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--The Conference on Biblical Imperatives, planned by the six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries for April 24-27 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center has been cancelled.

The conference was to be the third of three planned by the seminaries as part of the Glorieta Statement issued to the SBC Peace Committee in 1986. The first, on biblical inerrancy, was held in 1987, and the second, on biblical interpretation, was held in 1988.

According to the two seminary presidents who were co-chairmen for the cancelled conference, a May 1990 conference is being planned to focus on many of the issues of biblical imperatives as well as the need for renewed commitment and cooperation among all Southern Baptists.

After high attendance at the first conference and reduced interest in the second, there had been no advance registrations for the third. Planners added the decision was made to cancel the meeting after two key speakers cancelled around the first of the year and to reschedule a 1990 conference focusing on many of the same themes.

Milton Ferguson, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo., said: "We're facing a serious crisis in confidence, commitment and cooperation within our Southern Baptist family. Our 1987 and 1988 conferences focused on the inerrancy and interpretation of the Bible as the word of God.

"Our challenge now is to restore trust and confidence within our Southern Baptist family. We can do so by reaching out to include all members of that family and by revitalizing our covenant of commitment and cooperation under the lordship of Jesus Christ."

Ferguson and the other co-chair, William O. Crews of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., have invited fellow SBC agency executives to join them in the 1990 conference. Ferguson added the response of the other leaders was "positive and enthusiastic."

"It is our intention to focus on the topics we were going to use in the 1989 conference," Ferguson told Baptist Press. "But whether we call it a conference on biblical imperatives remains to be seen. But we will focus on the lordship of Christ, the urgency of world mission, peace with justice, the cry of human needs, the spiritual authority of the churches.

"These are at the heart of who we are as Southern Baptists."

He also noted the seminary presidents were concerned with the erosion of trust in the SBC, and said: "The real issue is no longer the Bible, but whether or not we can and will find ways to re-establish trust among ourselves.

"I really believe the time has come for us to reach out to one another with understanding and forgiveness. I believe it is time to listen and hear one another. I believe many of our people are weary of this choosing up of sides. Southern Baptists are ready for their agency leaders to band together with pastors and leaders of all persuasions to call for a renewal of our cooperation.

"By rescheduling and staying with the same basic focus, it may be the Lord can use this."

Leaders praise SBC acceptance,  
black church responsiveness

By Frank Wm. White

N-90

NASHVILLE (BP)--Two leaders of work with black Southern Baptist churches praised the Southern Baptist Convention for its present spirit of inclusiveness during an interview on National Public Radio.

Sid Smith, manager of the black church development section at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, told interviewer Scott Simon in the interview broadcast Jan. 21 on NPR's "Weekend Edition" he is a Southern Baptist because he believes in what Southern Baptists stand for today.

Simon interviewed Smith and Sam Beene, project coordinator in the board's black church development section, at the end of a week that included a holiday honoring Martin Luther King Jr. and a Southern Baptist conference on race relations sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"A denomination that was once known for its racism has managed to turn itself around so it is now attractive to a significant number of ethnic minorities," said Smith. "There has been a tremendous change in this convention."

He cited non-Southern Baptist research indicating the convention is the most integrated denomination in the nation.

The SBC membership of 14.7 million includes about 300,000 blacks, which Smith cited as an accomplishment.

As a white Southern Baptist, Beene said, he became part of the black church tradition in the 1970s when several women -- members of a black Southern Baptist church, Emmanuel Baptist of San Jose, Calif. -- ministered to his wife. Through that friendship, his family became involved in the church.

Beene later became minister of education at the church. He now is a member of Priest Lake Community Baptist Church, a black Southern Baptist congregation in Antioch, Tenn.

Beene cited the "celebrative" worship tradition of the black church and a responsiveness to human needs as aspects that have drawn him to involvement in black Southern Baptist churches.

"The historical perspective of the black church has been committed to social ministry and social justice. That was attractive to us, and we found it exhilarating," Beene said.

Smith said the interview was a good opportunity to focus on the achievements of Southern Baptists in integration.

"He (Simon) was surprised when I told him we are a leader in integration. That wasn't what he expected to hear. So many people look at the history of Southern Baptists and don't see where we are now," Smith said.

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900 volunteers enlisted  
for Las Vegas witnessing

By Joe Westbury

N-HMB

Baptist Press  
1/25/89

ATLANTA (BP)--More than 900 Southern Baptist laypeople and pastors have signed up for door-to-door evangelistic visitation prior to the denomination's annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nev., June 13-15.

Nine hundred forty volunteers nationwide have responded to the call for help in reaching the convention city with the Christian gospel, said Bobby Sunderland, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's direct evangelism division.

Mission volunteers Stan and Beverly Clark from Pioneer, Ohio, recently moved to Las Vegas for six months to coordinate the witnessing venture. The couple will divide the city into sections so as many of the area's 200,000 households will receive a visit as possible, Sunderland said.

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The Nevada Baptist Convention, working in cooperation with the Home Mission Board, hopes to reach each Las Vegas household with an evangelistic witness before the year's end. The pre-convention blitz will help reach that goal, Sunderland noted.

The evangelistic thrust, aimed at involving laypeople in sharing their Christian faith, is part of the denomination's 1988-89 Year of the Laity emphasis. The witness training that volunteers receive should prepare greater numbers of laypeople for involvement in the "Here's Hope" national revival emphasis in 1990, Sunderland said.

"We are asking these volunteers to arrive in Las Vegas two days early to help reach the city with the gospel. Following an hour of orientation on June 10, the individuals will fan out to specific neighborhoods to share their faith on a door-to-door basis," he said.

In addition to providing an evangelistic witness, the volunteers will conduct a survey of the neighborhoods. That information will help Southern Baptists start churches in the communities and strengthen existing congregations, he added.

The volunteers will not arrive in Las Vegas unprepared, Sunderland said. Before they leave their hometowns, volunteers may view a video on how to use the survey and witnessing tract.

The video, which will be available through Baptist associational offices, is designed to alleviate the fear of a door-to-door witnessing encounter.

While some volunteers are joining the project as individuals, churches and associations are enrolling groups of their laity and traveling together on discount transportation fares, Sunderland said.

Gene Swinson, pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Augusta, Ga., has enrolled 40 laypeople and pastors from five churches to participate in the project.

The group, which will include 13 from Hillcrest, will arrive early and has committed four days to door-to-door visitation. Baptist Brotherhood and Woman's Missionary Union members will use the experience as a mission action project, Swinson said.

"This will be a good opportunity for our laypeople to experience hands-on evangelism," he said. "The most difficult place to do soul winning always seems to be at home. But when you've been involved in several days of concentrated soul winning like this, it gives confidence to reach more people back home. It lights the fires of revival when you return.

"Before this trip is over, our people are going to get a good taste of evangelism and missions in Las Vegas."

In addition to recruiting volunteers, Sunderland said, the board has distributed individual pages of the Las Vegas telephone book to 6,089 Southern Baptists who have pledged to pray for residents of the city. The prayer volunteers have committed to pray for each individual on the page by name prior to the opening of the convention.

Laypeople and pastors who desire to join the door-to-door witnessing effort or wish to be a prayer volunteer should contact Sunderland at the Home Mission Board, 1350 Spring St. NW, Atlanta, Ga. 30367-5601.

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Remember blacks, non-farmers  
in rural ministry, leaders say

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB  
Baptist Press  
1/25/89

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. (BP)--Rural Southern Baptist churches must not overlook blacks and non-farmers, rural ministry leaders said during a regional conference sponsored by the denomination's Home Mission Board.

About 30 pastors, associational directors of missions and state convention leaders gathered in Myrtle Beach, S.C., to discuss changing ministry in rural America. The conference was sponsored by the Home Mission Board's rural-urban missions department.

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Speakers focused on three issues related to rural ministry in America's Southern states: unmet needs of the "Black Belt," an increase of the non-farming population and "upwardly transitional" communities.

Ray Dalton, associate director of the Home Mission Board's program research department, described the Black Belt as a region of counties where 30 percent or more of the population is black. Shown on a map, the Black Belt forms a crescent that stretches from Arkansas and Louisiana across the Deep South and up the Atlantic coast to Virginia.

Dalton said these 282 counties lag behind other U.S. counties in almost every measurable area: economics, education, family income and population growth.

However, 12.8 percent of all Southern Baptist churches are located in the Black Belt. To minister effectively in rural counties in the South, churches must reach out to blacks, he said.

Clarence Hanshew, retired director of missions in South Carolina's Savannah River Baptist Association, told the group how he had become aware of the need to minister among blacks. During 22 years of work along the South Carolina coast, Hanshew and his wife developed a ministry to blacks on isolated Daufuskie Island.

Although Southern Baptists have made significant progress in race relations, prejudice still exists, he said. Hanshew, who is white, described an unannounced visit he made to a black Baptist church recently. When the pastor discovered Hanshew was a minister, he invited him to sit on the platform, read Scripture and help administer communion.

Hanshew lamented that white churches in the same town might not have been as kind to a visiting black pastor as the black congregation was to Hanshew. In fact, the black pastor might not have even been allowed to sit on the back row, he said.

"We need to remember that blacks are people. And Christ died for people," Hanshew said.

Non-farmers make up an increasing portion of the rural South's population, speakers said.

Ron Wimberley, a sociology professor at North Carolina State University, told the group that rural and farm are not synonymous.

"Agriculture and rural are often spoken of as if they were the same thing, and they're not," he said. He explained that rural America today is home to 10 times more non-farmers than farmers.

"Farming really doesn't spread evenly across rural areas," he said. "What we do to help farmers does not necessarily help rural areas."

Steve Fowler, pastor of First Baptist Church of Frisco, Texas, spoke about churches in "upwardly transitional" rural areas. These are communities where expanding metropolitan areas now are infringing.

Frisco lies 23 miles north of downtown Dallas and will be impacted by the relocation of J.C. Penney Co.'s national headquarters to Plano, Texas.

"Several years ago, if you wanted to make any money in Frisco, you had to have about 3,000 acres and some wheat. Now you better hang on to that land until a developer comes along to buy it," he explained.

The Frisco church has doubled its Sunday school attendance in the past five years.

Fowler, who is working on a doctoral thesis about upwardly transitional churches at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, said changes in the community create changes in the church.

"The power the old-time city fathers don't want to give up to newcomers, your church fathers don't want to give up, either," he said. "Much of the change that has taken place in our church has been painful to see."

However, Fowler said, rural churches must adapt to their changing communities to survive. He suggested continually evaluating and expanding the church's vision.

"It's not very far from caretaking to undertaking," he said. "We've got to continue to be risk takers while doing caretaking."

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F-10 (F10)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Following is the first of a three-part series on child abuse.

Child sexual abuse:  
The price of silence

By Greg Warner

Baptist Press  
1/25/89

(BP)--Victims of child sex abuse learn early the price of silence.

From the onset of abuse, typically at 3 to 8 years old, the victim is convinced her world hinges on "keeping the secret" that she doesn't understand, according to the people who have helped her restore her life. No price is too high when she believes her silence is all that keeps the abuser from acting out his threats:

"I'll send you to jail."

"I'll kill your mother."

Those few victims who reject the abuser's threats and tell the secret find the grown-up world isn't ready to hear it, they later report.

This new threat of unbelieving adults sends the child running for cover, counselors say. She buries her secret. Silence becomes her refuge. This time, the price is guilt, shame, loneliness and loss of self-esteem.

The abuser often goes unpunished, according to people who work with abuse victims. The victim retreats into self-doubt and recrimination. By now convinced she is either at fault for the abuse or undeserving of better treatment, it's little wonder she is likely to be victimized again and by more than one abuser.

Burning inside the child all the while is an innate compulsion to tell, abuse workers report. But she usually carries the secret into adulthood, eventually hiding it even from herself. But a pattern of seemingly unconnected behaviors persists: social isolation, fear of intimacy, sexual dysfunction, promiscuity, a fatalistic attitude, exploitation by others, self-destructive behavior and anger.

It is here, in adulthood, that the victim typically becomes aware of her secret, abuse counselors say. Decades of denial give way to a renewed compulsion to tell -- to find someone who will believe and love her anyway.

What she finds, however, is a society no more ready to hear her than before, victims report. And if she goes to a church for help, she is likely to find yet another deaf ear, they add.

By ignoring the cries of the abused, Christians -- shocked and overwhelmed -- compound the victims' pain and make them victims again, according to abuse expert Marie Fortune of Seattle. "If they're not believed at church, (that means) they've been further victimized," she explains.

Christians are guilty of "a complicity of silence," says Fortune, a minister and author. "We've been part of the problem. There's no question about it."

Many victims agree.

"When your family turns its back on you, and the church fails in its responsibility, then where do you go?" asks Liz Mattern of Fort Myers, Fla., who was a victim of sex abuse as a child. She now works with a support group for incest survivors.

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Mattern, who helped organize a sex-abuse workshop for pastors and teachers at Cypress Lake Baptist Church in Fort Myers, says: "The thing that touches me the deepest is how the churches turn their backs on them. Now most of them have turned their backs on the church. They say, 'I don't need this.'"

Christians have perpetuated society's silence because they have responded to child sexual abuse as others have -- with shock, fear, disgust and embarrassment, abuse workers say.

But the problem remains. Victims' advocates agree on two things: The problem is pervasive, and it's time to admit it.

They cite statistics to support their claims: Twenty percent of children -- 10 percent of boys and 38 percent of girls -- will be molested sexually by age 18.

"We cannot look at those figures any longer and presume those high numbers mean it's someone else," Fortune says, warning that Christians are among the abused and the abusers.

Southern Baptists also are affected, Baptist counselors say. "Child sex abuse is not only in society and the Christian community, but in Baptist churches," says Bob Barnes, director of Sheridan House Family Ministries, a counseling and treatment ministry of Sheridan Hills Baptist Church in Hollywood, Fla. He estimates child sex abuse has invaded one of every seven families counseled by Sheridan House.

Still, many Baptists and other Christians are convinced they are immune, counselors say. And by adopting society's misinformed stereotypes of child molesters, many Christians have developed a false sense of security by teaching their children to shun strangers and keeping them surrounded by trusted adults.

But while abduction by a stranger is the most feared avenue of abuse, 90 percent of all child sexual abuse takes place within an ongoing, trusted relationship, surveys reveal. At least 50 percent is incestuous abuse within the family.

The typical molester outside the family is a 20- to 40-year-old churchgoer who is gainfully employed and well-respected in the community. If he is male, he likely is neither sex-starved nor homosexual, even if he molests boys. He is married, has a normal sexual relationship with his wife and does not abuse his own children.

Child molesters go to great lengths to establish trust with their intended victims, often placing themselves in occupations or situations where trust-building is natural, observers report. In fact, sexual abuse is more likely to take place within schools, churches, day-care centers and youth organizations precisely because parents trust these institutions.

None of these "trust centers" are as likely a setting for abuse as the home, however, and the vast majority of workers in these institutions are trustworthy, caseworkers say. But the presence of molesters in trusted settings makes the abuse possible and detection unlikely.

The National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse reports an estimated 337,500 cases of child sex abuse in the United States in 1987. But abuse workers say that's just the tip of the iceberg. Reported cases account for only 20 to 30 percent of all actual abuse, they warn.

Sex abuse knows no socio-economic boundaries, although it is more frequent in modern "blended families," researchers note. A girl is almost seven times more likely to be molested by her stepfather than by her natural father, according to one study.

In perhaps the cruelest irony, sexually abused children tend to become sexual abusers in adulthood. One study found that 81 percent of adult sex offenders had been sexual victims in childhood. Also, women who as child sex victims learned to measure their self-esteem in relation to a dominating, abusive male later unwittingly pass the legacy of abuse to their own children by marrying men of similar character, who often become abusers.

Rather than being immune to the problem of child sex abuse, Christians may be more prone than most to feel its effects. As Grant Martin, author of "Please Don't Hurt Me," points out, "Adult male offenders tend to be very devout, moralistic and conservative in their religious beliefs."

Abuse workers say several factors make child sex abuse -- particularly incest -- more likely to occur in Christian homes: The prohibition against sex outside of marriage sometimes makes the child the target of sexual abuse. And a stringent belief system and a dominant, controlling father also can contribute to the likelihood of abuse.

Religious commitment can be used by abusive families to undergird family loyalty, an important factor in maintaining the all-important "family secret."

As one adult survivor explains: "We're taught that you have to obey your parents, even when the father is raping you every night."

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(BP) photo illustration sent to state Baptist newspapers by the SSB bureau of Baptist Press  
Other photos available upon request from the Florida Baptist Witness.

Texas retirees on vacation  
 build missionary home

By Ken Camp

F - TEXAS

Baptist Press  
 1/25/89

DALLAS (BP)--Twenty retirees used their vacation time away from the Texas Baptist Men Retiree Builders to do what they enjoy most -- "building for the glory of God."

Although their labor for the year with the organization was completed, the 10 couples worked from Nov. 28 to Dec. 10 to build a home near Lorena, in central Texas, for Bill and Doris Foster, retired Southern Baptist missionaries to Belize.

The project was initiated by members of Cottonwood Baptist Church in Lorena when they learned the Fosters wanted to return to Texas to retire in the rural Cottonwood community. Mrs. Foster had inherited a tract of land near the church, but the couple could not afford to build a home.

"Some time ago when we were still serving in Central America, I wrote a letter to my wife's cousin, Charles Hansen, about our retirement plans," said Foster, who was a Dallas-area pastor and an army chaplain in Germany before being appointed a foreign missionary.

Hansen discussed the Fosters' needs with fellow Cottonwood Baptist Church members Guy and Virginia Williams and Clifton and Viola Kramer, who work with the Texas Baptist Men Retiree Builders. They contacted several other Retiree Builders with whom they had worked, and soon building plans were under way.

Officially, the construction year for Retiree Builders ends just prior to the annual Texas Baptist Men Convention and does not resume until after Jan. 1, so the building program was adopted as a Texas Baptist Men Vacation Builders project under the sponsorship of Cottonwood Baptist Church.

In the last 10 years, the Texas Baptist Men Retiree Builders, working under the direction of 81-year-old founder Olen Miles of Austin, have built more than 125 churches. Their work has given rise to other volunteer builder groups, including the Texas Baptist Men Vacation Builders and the Texas Baptist Men Weekend Builders.

"The Fosters paid for building materials, and the volunteers supplied the labor," said Mrs. Williams. "Cottonwood Church furnished the noon meals for two weeks, serving from the fellowship hall."

"Cottonwood Church served as the catalyst that brought everything together," said George Crews of North Richland Hills Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. "The key to a project like this is for it to be under the sponsorship of a local church."

Nine couples worked to build the two-bedroom home, and another retiree couple arrived at the end of the construction project to build cabinets.

The Fosters, who had served as Southern Baptist missionaries in Korea, Venezuela and Belize, said the completed project surpassed their wildest dreams.

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"It's just a miracle," said Foster. "We've never had a home. We've always lived in a parsonage or in a military chaplain's living quarters.

"Many people have been kind to us in our 40 years of ministry, but this is just too much. I told one builder, 'I'm so overwhelmed, I don't know how to express my thanks to you, so I'm just thanking the Lord for sending you all to us.'"

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God has no Iron Curtain,  
cross bearer Blessitt says

By Orville Scott

*F-Texas*

Baptist Press  
1/25/89

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Arthur Blessitt, who has carried a 90-pound wooden cross while walking 26,000 miles in 101 countries, said God doesn't have an Iron Curtain.

"I grew up hearing about the (Russian) 'Big Bear' and the Iron Curtain, but God doesn't have an Iron Curtain," Blessitt told participants in the Texas Baptist Evangelism Conference in Fort Worth. "It's in our mind."

Blessitt recalled that in 1987 he carried a 12-foot cross through China, preaching the gospel.

"Last June," he said, "I carried the cross into Russia and preached in Red Square. The KGB and police were shaking my hand."

Blessitt addressed about 10,000 pastors and laypeople at the evangelism conference, which marked the start of "Share Jesus Now," the largest simultaneous personal soul-winning effort in Texas Baptist history.

The statewide goal is to have 89,000 trained Christian witnesses from 3,000 churches sharing the gospel with at least 1 million unchurched Texans in February and March of this year.

Blessitt challenged each person attending the conference to pledge to tell at least 11 people about Christ during "Sharing Jesus Now."

He then led the 10,000 participants to accept the soul-winning challenge by symbolically taking the first step toward their goal.

Blessitt, who said that speaking at the evangelism conference was harder than getting into Lebanon, wept for several minutes, deploring the fact that he had been treated at the conference as a "mini-hero" when all he wanted to do was love Jesus and serve him.

Blessitt first made an impact carrying the cross and preaching in the 1960s in the drug culture of Sunset Strip in Los Angeles.

He first was taught about Jesus' Great Commission in Southern Baptist churches, "but then they started telling me what I couldn't do with it and where I couldn't go with it," he said.

"They forgot one thing: Jesus said, 'I establish my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' I have seen the amazing, awesome, glorious power of God."

He has carried the cross three times in Lebanon. When he and his son, Joshua, arrived in besieged Beirut in 1982, "Yasser Arafat came to see us," said Blessitt, "and we spent hours talking to him."

When the father and son carried their crosses into Libya, they were told that they would be killed.

"It wasn't like that," said Blessitt. "The people love us. We arrived in Tripoli on Palm Sunday, and they put us on a plane and took us to see Khadafi. We're going back in about two months, because we didn't walk through eastern Libya."

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Decade of perseverance  
strengthens rural church

By Mark Wingfield

F-HMB

ELLINGTON, N.Y. (BP)--Home missionaries Jerry and Janice Jones have lived in a trailer with holes in the floor, salvaged their church building from a flood and shoveled manure to clear space for new Sunday school rooms.

Fortunately, all this did not happen on the same day.

Instead, these events and others just as unusual have filled the 10 years the couple has devoted to establishing a Southern Baptist church in Ellington, a rural community in southwestern New York, near the Pennsylvania border.

Within the next year, Baptist Church of Ellington hopes to move to its new location -- a renovated barn located on the main highway into town.

That's where the manure comes in. The Joneses and other church members have provided the labor to turn the barn's downstairs cattle stalls into Sunday school rooms and upstairs dance floor into a sanctuary.

Southern Baptist Christian Service Corps volunteer Bill Crofts drew plans for the renovation. Volunteer mission groups from Georgia and Alabama also have helped with labor and materials.

Ellington is a community of 1,900 people located on rich farmland washed with multiple colors in the fall and uniformly covered with snow in the winter. Amish farmers ride horse-drawn buggies down the same two-lane highways traversed by modern cars.

Starting a church in Ellington takes time, Jones said. It requires walking with farmers tending to their Holstein cows, sitting on porches making small-talk and mingling with the customers at Reynolds Restaurant, where almost everything on the menu costs less than \$3.

The Joneses had no intention of starting a church when they moved to Ellington in 1978. Both previously had been summer missionaries at Camp IronBell, a small Christian campground near Ellington. After college, they returned as camp caretakers.

"We had no money. The camp had no money. Nobody had any money," Jones recalled. They found the trailer with the holes in the floor, which an anonymous donor bought.

When Sunday came, the Joneses discovered no Southern Baptist church in their area.

"We decided to help God find a building if he would provide a preacher," Jones said. "God laid it on our hearts that he wanted an evangelistic church in this community."

They found the Oddfellows hall on the town square for sale and purchased it for \$5,507. An anonymous donor from North Carolina heard about the need and sent a check for \$5,500.

The new church opened its doors July 4, 1979, without a preacher. Two young girls appeared for Sunday school. Before the morning worship was completed, two adults also had come.

"God really began to put the squeeze on me that he already had the preacher, and it was me," Jones said.

Within four weeks, attendance had jumped to 20, and the future looked bright. But on Aug. 9, Ellington was hit by a major flood -- the type that history shows occurs every 100 years in some areas.

The creek behind the church rushed through the bottom floor of the old three-story building, taking part of the wood siding with it and leaving half the foundation sunk 21 inches below where it had been.

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Even after the waters rose again the next week and did additional damage, the community rallied behind the young congregation to fix the building. The church received \$3,000 from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board to help with repairs. Members kept \$2,000 to fix the church and gave \$1,000 for other repairs in the community.

With a new foundation on the building and among the community, the church began to grow. Jones became the church's full-time pastor, gradually leaving behind his camp responsibilities.

Bill Jenkins, church growth consultant with the Home Mission Board, visited Ellington to conduct a new-church growth Probe, a program that assesses growth potential and needs.

After surveying the situation at Ellington, Jenkins wrote the church a list of suggestions for church growth. Jones, who had no seminary training and had not planned to be a pastor, tacked the letter to the wall of his office and followed it step by step, he said.

In one year, the church grew from 49 to 100 in Sunday school attendance, recently hitting a high attendance of 111. Jones baptized 10 new converts last year.

"We're following the New Testament example, and it has changed our community," he said.

The church still lacks about \$40,000 to complete the renovation of its barn but is committed to keep working as weather and finances allow.

"I made a promise to the Lord when we started that I would never bail out just because things got difficult," Jones said.

"Starting a new church is like working a water pump. You pour in a little water and pump furiously. Then you pour in some more water. And if it works, water begins to flow out, and you can fill your buckets."

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

Growth Spiral called tool  
for planning for growth

By Frank Wm. White

N-SSB

Baptist Press  
1/25/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--More than 200 Southern Baptist churches currently are participating in a church growth planning system designed to increase Sunday school enrollment, attendance, baptisms and offerings, reported Andy Anderson, Sunday school growth promotion specialist for the convention's Sunday School Board.

Since it was introduced in 1980, the Sunday School Growth Spiral has been used by almost 2,000 churches to organize and plan for growth by using basic Sunday school principles, said Anderson, who developed the plan.

The 207 churches reporting Growth Spiral information for the quarter ending in September 1988 showed baptism increases averaging 105 percent since they began the program, Anderson said.

In Alabama, the Growth Spiral has given new life to churches and turned some declining churches into aggressively growing churches, said Andrew Smith, associate director in the Sunday school department of the Alabama Baptist Convention.

Smith recently presented awards to 12 churches that reported increases averaging 517 in enrollment, 194 in attendance, \$4,881 in offerings and 26 in baptisms.

Those churches had participated in the Growth Spiral for an average of two and one-half years. They include churches in large cities, small towns, changing communities and new areas, Smith said.

As an example, West Side Baptist Church in Bessemer started the Growth Spiral in October 1987 and in November 1988 reported an enrollment gain of 183 for a total Sunday school enrollment of 501. Weekly offerings were up from \$5,000 to \$13,167, while baptisms moved from none in the year before using the program to nine for the year on the program.

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Anderson first used the program with 16 churches in California. Since then, more than 700 California churches have participated in the Growth Spiral, and conferences in the state have been specialized for language groups.

Texas had 28 churches on the most recent report, for the largest number of any state convention. Those churches reported net enrollment increases of more than 12,000 since they began the Growth Spiral.

Participation involves reporting a list of 13 statistics to Anderson for a quarterly evaluation.

Some churches drop out of the reporting process, and others run out of meeting space and have to stop, Anderson explained.

He described the spiral as an evaluation, planning and administrative tool: "There's nothing but the basics here. The Growth Spiral doesn't have any new programs. It uses the programs that already exist."

By indicating the number of prospects, teaching units, workers and meeting spaces needed to reach goals in Sunday school enrollment and attendance, worship service attendance, weekly offerings and baptisms, the program helps a church plan for growth, he said.

While the results of the Growth Spiral are measured in quantity, the emphasis is on the quality of church programs, he said, noting, "Without the quality, you can forget the quantity."

The quality is involved in creating smaller Sunday school units, training for Sunday school leadership, weekly workers' meetings, visitation, ministry and proper use of literature.

The enrollment emphasis impacts baptisms because an average of half the people enrolled in Sunday school through the use of the program are non-Christians, Anderson said. Usually, one out of every two nonChristians enrolled in Sunday school accepts Christ within the first 12 months, he said.

He predicted churches using the Growth Spiral will double their baptisms within the first year.

Anderson conducts about 75 growth conferences each year. Completing the program's chart is the first step, but "thousands of churches have filled out the spiral form and don't know what to do with it," he said.

The information on the chart can help a church plan worker enlistment and training, space development and other needs that will be encountered by the growth that is projected, he said.

Anderson predicted that when used properly, the spiral can cut administrative planning time in half by indicating the most immediate needs.

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