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89-16

Lack of cooperation takes toll
on world evangelization efforts

By Art Toalston

F- FMB

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Great Commission has not been fulfilled because Christians, in their 22,300 denominations and 4,000 foreign mission agencies, have failed to cooperate.

That assessment reverberates throughout the pages of a new book, "Seven Hundred Plans to Evangelize the World," by David Barrett and James Reapsome.

Barrett, an Anglican missionary from Wales, is a missions researcher who has been based at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board since 1985. Reapsome is the editor of two missions publications, Evangelical Missions Quarterly and World Pulse.

Barrett and Reapsome provide an array of information examining various plans by Christians over the centuries to carry out the Great Commission, Christ's command to share the gospel with all peoples. Of 788 plans, 401 have failed and 133 are "in danger of collapse," the authors state.

The greatest challenge facing global Christianity, the authors write, is this: Can Great Commission Christians agree to use their massive resources to tackle major problems such as spreading the gospel in countries closed to traditional missionary work or among 1.3 billion people throughout the world who have never heard it?

The book's publisher, New Hope, is an arm of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union. New Hope has released six other books on the status of world evangelization at the end of the 20th century.

The book was one of several background documents for the Global Consultation on World Evangelization by AD 2000 and Beyond, attended by 314 Christian leaders from 50 countries Jan. 5-8 in Singapore. In a "Great Commission Manifesto," they confessed that "pride, prejudice, competition and disobedience" have afflicted world evangelization efforts.

Barrett and Reapsome list 56 global networks of Christian groups with computer capability and with various commitments to fulfilling the Great Commission. On a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being "full networking with all Great Commission Christians," 50 of the global networks were rated from 0 to 2. The other six fared a bit better, receiving either a 3 or 4 rating on Barrett and Reapsome's scale.

Southern Baptists garnered a 3, which, according to the authors, means that they participate in three of nine "meganetworks," such as "Protestant" or "evangelical," but they exhibit "hostility to more" involvement.

A key avenue of Southern Baptist computer networking is its World Evangelization Database, through which a number of other Christian groups have been accorded access to information on unreached and largely ignored population groups.

In today's world, computer networking to exchange missions information is the "acid test for Great Commission effectiveness," Barrett and Reapsome state. Almost 10 percent of the 42 million computers owned by church members or Christian agencies worldwide are in Southern Baptist hands, according to the authors' estimate.

Long before computers became widely available during the 1980s, however, Christians had a "pathetic" track record in networking to fulfill the Great Commission, the authors contend.

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"This absence of any network is catastrophic," they write. "It is probably the major single cause of the fiasco of today's unevangelized world of 1.3 billion" people who remain "untouched from one year to the next" by the gospel.

Two-thirds of the 788 plans to evangelize the world since the time of Christ have tried to go it alone, and 96 percent of the plans have shunned cooperation with Christians who differ on doctrine or "a host of other factors," the authors report.

Christians with a "stand-alone" mentality are "avoiding Christ's categorical desire and prayer, 'That they may all be one,'" Barrett and Reapsome write.

Christians also have spent 90 percent of missions-related resources on themselves; they have "evangelized and re-evangelized themselves on their own territory," the authors observe.

In dollars, Christians are spending \$125 billion per year on their own church activities, \$5 billion on new buildings and \$8 billion on evangelizing people already familiar with the gospel, but only \$100 million a year -- less than 0.1 percent of the total -- on unreached people who are still without a Bible translation, for example, or religious broadcasts in their language, according to Barrett and Reapsome.

Of all the Bibles and New Testaments ever printed, they add, 85 percent have been in English, which cannot be read by 91 percent of the world's population.

Focusing on world evangelization plans that have failed, Barrett and Reapsome state, "In almost all cases Christians and their churches were directly to blame: administrative fiascoes, personality clashes, irrelevant doctrinal disagreements, prayerlessness, apathy, shortages of funds, embezzlements, absence of workers, rise of other agendas, diversions to other interests."

In short, the authors state, "Christians cannot blame external circumstances for their 1,950-year failure to obey their Lord's commission."

Barrett and Reapsome offer 14 recommendations "for a new strategy for world evangelization." Several focus on the need for Great Commission Christians to seek greater acceptance of each other and affirm good aspects of each other's global plans. Christians also must work together to reach each of 3,030 people segments identified by missions researchers as unevangelized. These encompass 1.3 billion people in 30 countries, 1,000 major cities and 2,000 ethnolinguistic people groups where Christian influences are minimal or nonexistent.

Barrett and Reapsome urge organizations to do a self-appraisal of their world evangelization plans, as well as a "peer appraisal" by other Great Commission Christians. These studies could boost Christian effectiveness by weeding out activities that duplicate efforts by other groups, for example, allowing for a greater focus on the unevangelized.

Organizations should make greater use of their computers to gather available missions data, to move toward decision-making based on accurate information, Barrett and Reapsome state. And new strategies must be employed, such as the use of nonresidential missionaries. The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board already has named several of these workers who live outside a region where traditional missionary efforts are severely restricted, but seek to develop ways to evangelize an unreached population in the region.

"If we could all agree on some such new overall strategy," Barrett and Reapsome write, then Christians may finally be "on track for fulfilling the Great Commission by the year 2000."

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Third World Christians
also have global vision

F - FMB

Baptist Press
1/31/89

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Christians in North America and Europe are not the only ones concerned for world evangelization. Christians in the Third World have produced 22 percent of all global plans for spreading the faith, a research/writing team reports.

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Missions authors David Barrett and James Reapsome in a new book, "Seven Hundred Plans to Evangelize the World," write that such plans "throughout 20 centuries of Christian history (have) sprung from every continent and corner of the globe."

World evangelization, they state, has been a "genuinely international" movement.

Their book catalogs 788 plans by Christians since the first century for spreading their faith throughout the world. Barrett is an Anglican missions researcher, and Reapsome edits two evangelical missions publications.

Plans have originated in 40 Third World nations, compared to 23 Western nations and 10 communist nations, Barrett and Reapsome write.

And during the 1980s, Third World Christians have initiated 30 percent of all new plans for world evangelization, the authors note.

Not all plans have moved forward. Of 788 plans they list, Barrett and Reapsome say 401 have collapsed and 133 are in decline.

Barrett, in an interview, said Third World Christians have fewer resources, thus their plans tend to be less "grandiose." But, he said, their plans prove to be about as successful as those originating in the West.

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Attorney says churches wise
to screen child-care workers

By Kathy Palen

N BJC
Baptist Press
1/31/89

WASHINGTON (BP)--Churches should consider screening all child-care workers, as well as other employees placed in direct contact with children, to verify they have not been convicted of child-related crimes, advised a Baptist church-state attorney.

Oliver S. Thomas, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, said churches would be wise to determine whether such employees have been convicted of sex offenses or other crimes involving children or of committing acts of abuse or neglect.

Thomas pointed to a current court case involving a Norfolk, Va., congregation. The parents of a 10-year-old girl, who was raped and sexually assaulted repeatedly by a church employee, sued the church and its pastor, charging that the church knew or should have known of the employee's past child-related criminal offenses.

The defendants moved to dismiss the complaint on grounds that the church is a charitable religious organization and thus immune from liability. A trial court agreed and dismissed the case. But the Virginia Supreme Court reversed the lower court and ordered the case set for trial.

"Traditionally, claims against a church for the abusive acts of its employees have met with little success," Thomas explained. "Such acts are said to lie outside the employee's 'scope of employment,' and, therefore, the church has not been held accountable. The rationale is that the employee's actions are so bizarre -- so beyond the employer's reasonable expectations -- that normal principles of agency do not apply.

"Only if the employee's actions are incident to or naturally connected with his employment will the employer be held liable. If, for example, the employee ran into someone else's car while on an errand for the pastor, the church might well be liable. If, on the other hand, the employee robbed a bank, the church would not be liable."

But the case involving Victory Tabernacle Baptist Church -- a non-Southern Baptist congregation -- is different, Thomas said. Rather than asking that the church be held responsible for the acts of its employee, the plaintiffs are asking that the church be held responsible for its own act of placing an unfit person in a job involving an unreasonable risk of harm to others, he explained.

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"Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case," he said. "More than 100 claims involving sexual abuse of children already have been filed against churches nationwide, and the numbers appear to be increasing. While we may not want to admit it, the unspeakable is occurring in religious as well as in secular child-care centers."

The information needed to conduct a screening, Thomas said, should be a matter of public record and available through local criminal and civil court clerks. In some localities, both criminal and civil records are handled by a single clerk often designated as the "circuit" or "district" court clerk, he said, adding that in other jurisdictions, records are available through the sheriff's office.

"At worst, the screening process should require no more than a brief trip to the courthouse," Thomas said. "Once there, the question is rather simple: 'Has John Doe ever been convicted of a crime involving children or found to be abusive or neglectful?' The minor inconvenience to the employer will be outweighed by the knowledge that he has taken extra precautions on behalf of the children placed under his care and has protected the church from potential liability."

Some states already have acted to make such screening mandatory, Thomas said, citing as an example Florida's recent enactment of legislation requiring child-care centers to screen employees to determine whether they have committed particular criminal acts or acts of abuse or neglect as recorded in the Florida Abuse Registry.

"While the law does not apply to churches, the Florida Baptist Convention wisely has encouraged its members to consider voluntary compliance," he said. "Even if the law were made applicable to churches, it is at least arguable that the state's interest in protecting children would outweigh the churches' First Amendment right to be free from governmental regulation."

Although not suggesting a formal screening process for all Sunday school teachers, choir workers and other lay volunteers, Thomas advised churches to exercise extreme caution in selecting anyone who is to have frequent and direct contact with children.

Churches also should provide training for their child-care workers to equip them to protect children from other potential abusers, Thomas said, explaining that one legal theory commonly advanced in child molestation cases is that employers have been negligent in training and supervising their child-care workers. He suggested providing a brief course on preventing youth exploitation such as Kenneth Wooden's "Child Lures."

"The stakes are high for both the children and the churches," Thomas said. "On the human side, one incident of abuse can scar a child for life. On the financial side, the potential cost to the church is staggering. More than \$100 million in claims have been filed against one diocese alone for the acts of a single priest. Settlement costs in the case are estimated to be as high as \$10 million.

"The time to act is now -- both to protect our children and to protect our churches from excessive personal injury claims. I suspect that if we do not take steps to police ourselves soon, a number of states may decide to do it for us. As a church-state practitioner, I would prefer the former."

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Note to editors: This article is based on a column in the February 1989 issue of Report from the Capital magazine.

Volunteers key to reaching nation,
Lewis tells Brotherhood leaders

By Steve Barber

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(B'hood)

Baptist Press
1/31/89

ATLANTA (BP)--Volunteers will be the "feet and legs" of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's newly refocused efforts to reach the nation for Christ, HMB President Larry L. Lewis told state Baptist Brotherhood leaders.

Those efforts include starting new churches and meeting the needs of the poor and hurting, Lewis said, noting, "We will be involving both the (Southern Baptist) Brotherhood Commission and Woman's Missionary Union in developing and implementing ways to meet these specific ministry needs."

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His remarks came at the annual Brotherhood Leadership Conference Jan. 24-28, hosted in part this year by the Home Mission Board in Atlanta.

"Our plans and strategies need to include one another. We are completers, not competitors," he said. "Everything we do must be tied to winning this nation to Christ, and we can do much together."

Brotherhood Commission President James H. Smith, in his reponse to Lewis, said Southern Baptists' hopes for evangelization hinge on mobilizing thousands of volunteers.

"The Home Mission Board must provide the places we can send them," Smith said.

One of the strategies referred to by Lewis is the board's marketplace evangelism project, introduced to Brotherhood leaders with the help of two longtime Southern Baptist students of evangelism, Leonard Sanderson and Findley Edge.

Sanderson called marketplace evangelism "the most significant and far-reaching approach we Southern Baptists have used in our history" to reach the lost.

"Where are the 167 million lost people in our nation?" asked Sanderson. "They are in the stores, shops, offices, farms and factories. And God's people are in the same places."

Christ used the laity to advance his kingdom, and Paul followed Christ's example, using lay people as workers in his "new church starts," he said.

Edge reinforced Sanderson's remarks by urging Christians to go beyond the "institutional ministry of the church" to help people who are hurting: "We must go outside the walls of the church and minister to more than each other. The church should be seen as the equipping place."

Once outside, Christians must find specific and significant ministries to which they are called, and that they consciously choose, he said, noting, "Incidental ministry -- simply doing good things on an occasional basis -- is a cop-out."

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Another country joins
foreign mission force

N-FMB

Baptist Press
1/31/89

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay (BP)--Baptists in Uruguay joined others involved in world evangelization when they sent two seminary students as temporary missionaries to Argentina in December.

Carlos Seoane and Reuben Blanco are the first missionaries sent out by Uruguayan Baptists, said Southern Baptist missionary Wally Poor. They will work with Southern Baptist missionary Steve Smith and the churches in the Argentine province of San Juan. Some of their work in the mountainous province will be in an area where Southern Baptists provided relief for earthquake victims a few years ago.

Uruguayan Baptists raised about \$500 to support the two missionaries for several months. Seoane and Blanco will return to Uruguay in March and report on their work. Baptist leaders hope the reports will boost churches' giving to the missionary offering enough to fund at least one career foreign missionary.

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Three nations participate
in biggest Uruguay crusades

N-FMB

Baptist Press
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MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay (BP)--Eight hundred people committed their lives to Christ during a week of evangelistic crusades in Uruguay involving Baptists from three other nations, including Southern Baptists from Texas and Georgia.

The late 1988 crusades, held at 43 churches and mission points, brought Baptist preachers from Brazil, Argentina and the United States, reported Southern Baptist missionary Wally Poor.

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The crusades were the largest in the 77-year history of Uruguayan Baptists, Poor said.

The effort's success spurred many of the 29 Brazilian pastors participating to say they would link their own churches in fraternal relationships with Uruguayan churches. One Brazilian pastor said he planned to seek missionary appointment.

Edgar Barreto Antunes, vice president of the Brazilian Baptist Convention, said mission efforts like the one in Uruguay will continue "until we will win the world to Christ."

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Former employee sues
San Angelo center

N- CO
(TEXAS Standard)
Baptist Press
1/31/89

DALLAS (BP)--A lawsuit filed by a former employee of Baptist Memorials Geriatric Center in San Angelo, Texas, charging sexual and religious harassment and neglect and abuse of nursing home patients by the center and President Taylor Henley is "without foundation and fact," Henley said.

Mary A. Collins, who was dismissed in March 1988 after two years as personnel director at the Texas Baptist retirement center, filed the suit in federal district court in San Angelo Jan. 17 asking \$3.5 million in damages and back pay, reinstatement in her job, court costs and attorney's fees.

The suit also seeks a permanent injunction against Henley to prohibit him from harassing employees in the future.

Collins charges in the suit that Henley sexually harassed her and other female employees, that he and the center showed favoritism to employees who joined the Baptist church and that they neglected and abused some patients.

Henley, who has directed the center for more than 28 years, told the Baptist Standard, Texas Baptist weekly newsmagazine, the charges are "total fabrications without foundation and fact."

Collins filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in El Paso earlier this year, which the agency refused to act on, Henley said.

"And regarding her charges about patient care," he said, "care here has been so outstanding that our nursing homes have been awarded superior ratings, the highest in the state, by the Texas Department of Health."

Frank Sanders, San Angelo banker and immediate past chairman of the center trustees, told the Standard: "We are in agreement on the board of trustees that Taylor Henley and the center are innocent of the allegations. We feel the allegations are false and have referred them to an attorney for defense."

Hank Scott, pastor of Bacon Heights Baptist Church in Lubbock, who was elected chairman of the trustees in late January, said, "The trustees feel the lawsuit has no merit at all. We have confidence in Taylor Henley as our administrator."

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North Korean opening
might help Christians

By Erich Bridges

F - FMB

Baptist Press
1/31/89

PYONGYANG, North Korea (BP)--The on-again, off-again contacts between North and South Korea are on again, offering new hope to Christians concerned about the isolated church in the communist-controlled north.

Government overtures from both sides of the 38th parallel have stepped up in the months since the Olympics were held in the south, following a tense period leading up to the Games.

South Korea's new president, Roh Tae Woo, has issued several proposals for easing the 35-year standoff between the two Koreas. In January, North Korean leader Kim Il Sung invited Roh and six southern political and religious leaders -- including Roman Catholic Cardinal Kim Suh Wan -- to a conference.

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Talks apparently won't start at the top as proposed, but are scheduled to proceed at high levels. They might bear some fruit this time around, according to observers. Roh faces domestic political pressure to increase contacts, and North Korea may see advantages in opening its borders in order to progress economically.

Meanwhile, tentative contacts between North Korea's tiny Christian community and the outside world continue. Highlights from 1988 include:

-- Two church buildings, one Protestant and one Catholic, were constructed in the northern capital of Pyongyang with aid from the World Council of Churches. They reportedly are the first churches to stand in the north since the partitioning of Korea in 1945. North Korean Christians have been meeting in homes.

-- U.S. Presbyterian mission leader Syngman Rhee, who was born in North Korea and has visited there several times in recent years, estimated about 10,000 Christians live in the nation of 22 million people. Earlier estimates put the number at 5,000.

-- Ethnic Korean Christians living in the northern Chinese region of Manchuria continued to report the existence of numerous house churches meeting in North Korean villages. The house groups rarely exceed 20 believers, according to the visitors from China, and they meet in secret using hand-copied Bible portions.

-- A North Korean Catholic association reportedly was formed as a counterpart to the Protestant Korean Christian Federation. Both groups are controlled by the government, visitors say. Two South Korean priests were allowed to visit the north last fall and celebrate Mass in the new Catholic church in Pyongyang.

-- More than 500 hours of Christian radio programming were made available to the north each month, including verse-by-verse reading of the Bible at dictation speed. Whether anyone heard them is questionable. Incoming radio broadcasts are not jammed by North Korea, but radios are difficult for common people to obtain and are preset to a single government station, observers say.

-- International Christian groups continued to visit the north, but under official supervision.

-- A "Love North Korea" symposium, said to be the first of its kind, was held in Seoul in September to urge world Christians, especially Koreans, to pray for the opening of the north and for believers there.

Christianity flourished in the north until the communist takeover at the end of World War II, when most Christians fled south or were killed. Churches were destroyed and Bibles burned, according to those who escaped.

Today North Korea is one of the most isolated nations on earth and is still ruled by Kim Il Sung, who took power with Stalin's support in 1945 and invaded the south in 1950 to begin the Korean War, observers say. A quasi-religious personality cult surrounds Kim, known as the infallible "Great Leader," and his son and heir apparent, the "Dear Leader" Kim Jong Il.

Kim is in his 70s and reported to be ill, however, and the reported rumor of his death last year was believed by some to indicate a government power struggle in the north.

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FMB appropriates record amount for hunger, relief

N- FMB

Baptist Press
1/31/89

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptists appropriated a record \$10.9 million for overseas relief and world hunger last year, surpassing the amount in 1985 during the Ethiopian crisis.

The money supported a record number of Foreign Mission Board projects -- 245 in 50 nations. About 91 percent of the total went for hunger relief and 9 percent went for general relief needs not related to hunger, said John R. Cheyne, director of the board's human needs effort. About one-third of the funds went to the eastern and southern Africa area, as missionaries continued to distribute food in Ethiopia and provided aid to Mozambique refugees.

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Appropriations were nearly 40 percent higher than the 1987 figure of \$8 million, but only some \$10,000 higher than the 1985 figure. Giving, at \$8.4 million, was almost 5 percent higher than in 1987. Of the total, more than \$700,000 was given for general relief.

Because of the magnitude of several disasters, the Foreign Mission Board was forced last fall to dip into a contingency account for \$172,500 when the general relief balance sank to near \$50,000. Two strong hurricanes in the Caribbean region, a devastating flood in Bangladesh and numerous cyclones in southern Asia caused increased needs for shelter, clothing and medicine, Cheyne said.

The board uses money for general relief only if it has been designated as such, Cheyne said, noting money given for world hunger is spent only for projects relating to hunger needs.

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Adams sees agriculture
as key to missions future

By Ken Camp

F-Texas

Baptist Press
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WACO, Texas (BP)--In a world threatened by deforestation and famine, Bob Adams believes agriculture may be the greatest missions vehicle of the future.

Adams, national coordinator for the Fellowship of Baptist Agriculturalists, directs the Center for the Study of Famine and Agricultural Alternatives at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

His responsibilities at the center include research placing him on the cutting edge of biotechnology, as well as day-to-day liaison work that help to solve practical problems of agricultural missionaries in developing countries.

Adams is working on research in two areas: conservation of genetic resources from tropical plants expected to become extinct and development of new crops for Third World countries.

"As deforestation of the tropical rainforests continues, one-fourth of all existing species there are expected to become extinct," Adams says.

In order to save the genetic makeup of those plants, Adams and his associates are isolating and storing genes from tropical plants in an international DNA bank. Those genes may be used for developing future hybrid strains, or the plants from which they are taken may have pharmacological uses that have not been discovered yet.

As the center works with the World Hunger Farm near Waco in the other areas of research -- developing new crops for the Third World -- the key consideration is appropriate technology. That means developing multi-purpose plants that have their own built-in resistance factors, produce their own fertilizer and can be grown and harvested with available tools.

The goal, Adams says, is to liberate developing countries from dependence upon commercial chemical fertilizers and insecticides and to develop plants with components that can be used for food, shelter and firewood.

"For instance, we had a request for grain sorghum seed from an agricultural missionary in Burkino Faso. The first thing that came to mind was the type of grain sorghum that we grow here in Texas," says Adams.

"But then he went on to say he wanted a plant with a tall stalk that could be fed to cattle and used for making adobe bricks or for burning. But it needed to be a variety without a head at the top of the stem because the birds would eat the headed grain. And it needed to have a built-in resistance to insects and disease."

Handling that kind of request is a big part of Adams' job at the center. Sometimes, it means working as a liaison, putting a missionary in the South Pacific in touch with an agriculturalist in Africa. Other times, he must apply biotechnology to developing a new plant strain.

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Adams' interest in using scientific agricultural techniques to attack world hunger grows in part out of his personal experience with agriculture. Reared on a dairy farm, he holds a graduate degree in botany from the University of Texas at Austin and farmed in the Texas Panhandle for two years.

A more important motivation for his work, though, is the commitment he made to Christ as a 15-year-old boy at a Missionary Baptist church in the Piney Woods of East Texas. Adams hopes to instill that same devotion to missions in the Pioneers and High School Baptist Young Men groups he leads at Calvary Baptist Church in Waco and in the men with whom he is associated through the Fellowship of Baptist Agriculturalists.

Southern Baptist agriculturalists should take advantage of worldwide missions opportunities by becoming personally involved in missions projects, supplying garden seed packets to missionaries in developing countries and storing commodities for famine relief, Adams says.

"I see the Lord moving, creating opportunities around the world for agricultural missionaries," he says. "Agriculturalists have the opportunity to take the gospel and penetrate some countries that are closed to traditional missionaries.

"An experienced farmer in this country has skills that are invaluable in developing countries. There are a lot of Baptists who would be willing to take off and go if they just knew the amount of good they could do in just two weeks to a month."

Adams hopes that in the future Baptist farmers can do more to fill requests from foreign missionaries for specific types of garden seeds. He also hopes to develop a network through the Fellowship of Baptists Agriculturalists involving farmers who can store commodities for world hunger relief.

"There should be some kind of check-off program -- a grain bank, a commodity bank set up," he says. "We've got to get Baptist agriculturalists more involved."

Adams is convinced Baptist farmers would willingly become involved in missions if they were informed. His greatest frustration as coordinator for the agriculturalists' fellowship is getting the information to uninvolved Baptists.

"It is so difficult to get the word out. The average group of Baptist Men doesn't know we exist. Our membership should be so much greater," he says. "I guess a hundred years ago, Woman's Missionary Union was pretty small too."

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Baptist double transplant patient
receives Christmas gift of life

By Ken Camp

F-TEXAS

Baptist Press
1/31/89

HOUSTON (BP)--Sheila Millikan and her family believe prayer is the reason she received a special gift for Christmas.

Mrs. Millikan, a member of Park Ridge Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, suffers from primary pulmonary hypertension. She received a phone call at 9:20 a.m. on Dec. 24 telling her an organ donor was available and she was scheduled to receive a long-awaited heart/lung transplant at Methodist Hospital in Houston.

"The doctor said, 'The organs you need are here if you want them,'" Mrs. Millikan recalled. "I said, 'We'll be there in two hours.'"

After being transported by air ambulance from Fort Worth to Houston, Mrs. Millikan entered surgery at 5 p.m. Christmas Eve. At 1 a.m. Dec. 25, she was brought out of the operating room with a new heart and lung.

Only after the operation did the Millikans, who have been involved in the Texas Baptist Men lay renewal ministry since 1983, learn that prayer seminar leader Don Miller of Fort Worth had asked Christian leaders across the United States, Australia and South Africa to pray that God would grant her a miracle on Christmas Day.

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"God's network is simply unbelievable," said Mrs. Millikan. "It's amazing the people he had brought into our lives."

"Literally thousands of people have been praying for Sheila and our family because of our lay renewal work," said her husband Rob. "It's the prayers of people all over the country and around the world that have made the difference. Those prayers have encased us in a fortress where the enemy can't get to us with his weapons of doubt and fear."

"We've gone through this ordeal in perfect peace. It has been such a powerful manifestation of God's power."

After 18 days in the intensive care unit, Mrs. Millikan currently is in a private room on the transplant floor at Methodist Hospital. Although she is improving, she and all her prayer partners realize the next few weeks are critical.

The days ahead will be anxious ones, but the Millikans are growing accustomed to living with stress. For much of the last year, she has been required to stay in the Houston area near her doctors while her husband and their two children, Justin and Melissa, have been at home in Crowley, Texas.

Fortunately, through contacts made by Don Gibson, lay ministries director for Texas Baptist Men, Mrs. Millikan has been able to live with Michael and Angel Cope of Second Baptist Church in Houston when she has not been in the hospital.

Another factor which has helped sustain Mrs. Millikan is the friendship and prayer support she had found at College Park Baptist Church, the congregation she has been attending in Houston, and among members of her patient/family support group at Methodist Hospital.

"One by one, God has sent people into our lives to be a friend," Mrs. Millikan said.

"This experience has taught me a lesson in totally trusting the Lord. I've had to absolutely let go of everything else that I had been trying to hold on to -- my health, Justin, Melissa and Rob. And I couldn't make a donor. That was out of my hands. I've had to let go of everything and refocus on the Lord."

"I've found out that when God's all you have, he's all you needed in the first place."

It is from their unknown prayer partners around the world that the Millikans draw their greatest comfort.

"The biggest battle we face now is organ rejection. We would ask people to pray that the Lord would allow the doctors to control the rejection with medication and that the other organs would keep on humming," said Millikan. "Also, pray that other organ donors will be found, and that people will discuss organ donation with their families before it's too late. There are many people in our support group at the hospital who are still waiting."

"There's no way of knowing who all is praying for us. Every now and then, we find people in remote places who tell us they have been praying for us. We don't know them, but we know we're all part of the family of God."