



BAPTIST PRESS

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February 13, 1989

89-23

Church gets boost
from adult VBS

By Frank Wm. White

F-SSB

REKLAW, Texas (BP)--When adults at Reklaw (Texas) Baptist Church spent 12 Wednesday evenings in Vacation Bible School last fall, they joined a growing trend among Southern Baptist churches for increased participation in adult VBS.

The 14 to 20 adults attending VBS sessions at Reklaw Church in rural east Texas were among the 140,874 adults attending VBS in Southern Baptist churches during 1988.

The 1988 total for adult participation was an increase of almost 8,000 from the previous year. VBS materials for adults were first provided by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in 1970.

The adults at Reklaw didn't let age cause them to miss some of the traditions of VBS that many remembered from their own childhoods. They marched into the church with a flag procession, said the pledge of allegiance, sang VBS songs and ate cookies and punch.

Adult VBS at Reklaw Church affirmed one of the advantages of VBS, discovering prospects for Sunday school. Five new prospects attended, and four of those have since joined the church, said Pastor Jerry Wallles.

As with Reklaw, other churches found prospects for Sunday school during VBS last year. Churches reported enrolling 68,575 VBS participants in Sunday school. Another 274,410 VBS participants are being cultivated as prospects.

More churches are increasing efforts to transfer prospects from VBS to Sunday school, said Willie Beaty, consultant for VBS in the board's Sunday school division.

Joe Tramel, who participated in adult VBS at Reklaw Church, said the study of the book of James helped adults see their potential for growth.

"We had an attitude that we've done all we can do. The study convinced us we can do whatever God wants us to do," Tramel said.

Although Reklaw is an older population community, the church doesn't neglect children. This year, the church is considering how to schedule VBS for children and for adults to get the best advantages of each.

The VBS at Reklaw was one of 35,287 church schools, mission schools and Backyard Bible Clubs reported by Southern Baptist churches in 1988, an increase of 169 over the previous year.

While the number of church schools increased by 556, to 28,631 the number of mission schools decreased by 146, for a total of 2,676. Backyard Bible Clubs declined by 241, for a total of 3,980.

A total of 3,351,280 people were enrolled in VBS in 1988, for an enrollment increase of 32,611. Enrollment has increased for five of the past six years.

Churches reported 55,643 professions of faith in Christ made during VBS in 1988, for an increase of 843 from the total for 1987.

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This summer churches are being encouraged for the first time to conduct VBS Summer Explosion -- a church school, mission schools and Backyard Bible Clubs -- to find more prospects for the church or for a new mission or Sunday school, Beaty said.

VBS Summer Explosion has been pilot tested the past two summers by the board and is outlined in the 1989 VBS Planbook mailed to pastors of Southern Baptist churches, he added.

Southern Baptist VBS materials first were introduced in the 1920s and have included a line of materials for older preschoolers, children and youth since the 1930s. The Sunday School Board is introducing a 1989 teacher's guide for younger preschoolers and a 1990 resource kit, said Sue Raley, preschool curriculum design editor.

"We're not recommending that churches push for babies to be enrolled in VBS," Raley said.

Instead, the materials are available to teach babies and toddlers who are at VBS with parents who are workers or with parents attending adult VBS sessions.

"We feel like we need to teach babies rather than baby-sit. In order for workers to do that, we are providing resources for them," Raley said.

The 10-session materials may be used during planning sessions or VBS clinics when babies are attending with their parents who are workers as well as during the Bible school time, Raley suggested.

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Baptists seeking 'New Way'
to reach Hispanic 'yuppies'

By Ken Camp

F - Texas
Baptist Press
2/13/89

DALLAS (BP)--Casa View Baptist Church in Dallas has joined the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Dallas Baptist Association and the Baptist General Convention of Texas in seeking a "New Way" to reach unchurched, upwardly mobile English-speaking Hispanics.

The "New Way" church extension project is a planned east Dallas County congregation designed as a Southern Baptist model for reaching unchurched Hispanics who do not feel comfortable in either Spanish-speaking churches or predominantly Anglo congregations, said J.V. Thomas, coordinator of the Texas Baptist church extension research and development section.

"This pilot project intentionally will be structured from its beginning to provide a fellowship where both English-speaking Hispanics and Anglos will feel at home," Thomas said.

"This new work is not a threat to existing Spanish-speaking churches," said Jim Walters, minister of missions at Casa View Baptist Church, noting his church already has helped start two Spanish-language churches. "On our own church rolls, we discovered 19 families with Spanish surnames who are not involved in the Spanish-speaking churches but are inactive at the sponsoring church.

"Even in the two Spanish-speaking churches, the children's departments are using exclusively English literature. We could see the handwriting on the wall. Young, upwardly mobile married couples with children need something other than the traditional Hispanic congregation. They need a church that doesn't fall into the category of either Spanish-speaking Hispanic or English-speaking Anglo."

Although specific outreach strategies still are being developed, new approaches already are being taken with the young congregation. For instance, leadership is being provided by co-pastors -- one Hispanic and one Anglo.

"We must have more than just an English-speaking church," said Bernie Moraga, Texas Baptist Hispanic church extension consultant who is co-pastor of the new congregation along with Thomas. "We must find new ways of expressing our love and concern for the unchurched and for building the kind of loving fellowship that will allow all members to enjoy a 'family' kind of love."

Currently, Thomas and Moraga plan to meet with a small core group two hours each Sunday evening in a northeast Dallas hotel.

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Non-church-related cultivative events such as picnics and family life conferences will be planned to reach non-Christians. Once regular services are scheduled, the worship style probably will be very contemporary in order to appeal to the unchurched.

"We plan to use the latest in modern mass-marketing technology to reach people without a church background," Walters said.

Although the new congregation will not be "marketed" as a Hispanic congregation, its ethnic makeup largely will be determined by the original core group, which Thomas expects to be about 70 percent Hispanic and 30 percent Anglo.

"Our first step is to discover God's will in finding the laypersons who can become leaders and helpers," Thomas said. "We are praying for 25 dedicated Southern Baptist laypersons. We will meet each week to pray, plan and work until our prayers are answered. God's answer to our prayers will be his affirmation that he wants this church started.

"The next step will be to birth the new church with all our energy focused on reaching the unsaved and unchurched. We are praying that the core group will be made up of a majority of Hispanics, but from the church's 'birthday' forward, our objective will be to evangelize the lost regardless of language, culture or ethnic background."

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Memphis naval station
meets military needs

By Connie Davis

F- (O
(Tenn.)

Baptist Press
2/13/89

MILLINGTON, Tenn. (BP)--Though nowhere near an ocean, young men and women wearing Navy "blues" are a common sight in Millington, Tenn., a city that grew up around the largest inland naval base in the world.

The numbers are staggering. The United States Naval Air Station - Memphis has 10,000 permanent staff members and trains 16,000 - 20,000 personnel each year for the Marines, Navy, Coast Guard and National Guard.

To meet the challenge, Baptists run their largest center for the military in Millington.

Military Oasis Center has 36,000 visitors each year.

Although the statistics are intimidating, Sam Gash, who directs the center for the Memphis-area Baptist association, doesn't seem to be awed.

He is proudest of doubling the number of professions of faith in Christ by service personnel during the past year, to 149.

"We see the greatest needs. This is an untapped ministry that we have," he said. "We welcome them to the gentler side of life here."

"It if weren't for this Oasis Center, I would've probably been long gone," said Miles Monroe of Chicago. Although not a college student, he said he was taking courses that challenged college graduates.

Spending the evening with a friend studying in one of the center's rooms, Monroe added that he had become involved in a local church. He will be based at the naval air station for nine months.

Darrell McDougald of Washington said he had come to the center almost every day since he learned about a Bible study.

The chief of the Navy dropped by Military Oasis Center during a visit at the naval air station, reporting that he had heard of its good work with station personnel.

Another supporter is Navy Chaplain Bob Adair, who explained that he relies on the center as a resource for his work.

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The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board-endorsed chaplain noted the center is "the most unique student ministry in this state." Many military students will go to the most dangerous jobs in the world -- landing \$20 million aircraft on carriers -- many in the terrorist-threatened Persian Gulf. In addition to going around the world, some will become the nation's leaders, he added.

"They are, at sea, about what to do with the rest of their lives," Adair said.

The "young troopers," he reported, are changing -- no draftees, more women and more personnel with families, which also leads to family crises and single parents.

Military Oasis Center, the only service center for NAS-Memphis except the USO, met for 18 years in a rented duplex. A new building opened in 1985 with space for several televisions, games, private phone booths, music room and a kitchen stocked with food. It is located just one-half mile from the base.

The personnel that live off base often run short of funds for food and entertainment and find their way to the center. The location also is convenient for the personnel who don't have cars.

Gash and Assistant Director Lindberg "Lindy" Lopez, open the center seven days per week, including holidays. Their military experiences include a stint as a chaplain in Vietnam by Gash and 23 years of service by Lopez.

To provide for 100 or so personnel each day, however, they rely on Baptist volunteers, who not only provide snacks, but also lead programs, host military personnel in their homes and churches and meet other specific needs, reported Gash.

Financial support for the center comes from the state mission offering, Home Mission Board, Tennessee Baptist Convention and the local Baptist association.

"The feedback," which comes in the form of phone calls, letters and visits from friends made at the center, "is thrilling," said Lopez.

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Baptist photojournalists
practice free-lance faith

By Jim Burton

F-10
(B'hood)

Baptist Press
2/13/89

HARRISBURG, Pa. (BP)--The produce section in a Harrisburg, Pa., grocery store is neatly arranged behind a portable podium; its built-in sound system adjusted for feedback. Everything is set for a media event.

The Pennsylvania secretary of agriculture is due soon. He will encourage citizens to buy Pennsylvania farm products -- pretty heady stuff in the midst of lettuce and cabbage.

With a bag full of Canon cameras, Associated Press free-lance photojournalist Fred Prouser, 37, arrives early to scope the situation. He has covered media events before -- hundreds in fact -- and this one may need all the help it can get.

For Prouser, life is full of events. Some are staged, while others occur naturally. With his wife, Rose, also a free-lance photojournalist, he lives from day to day for newsworthy events. They have no contracts, no guaranteed income.

"Every assignment we have is from one assignment to the next," said Mrs. Prouser. "So we never have worldly assurance of anything money wise. But God provides."

Yet they do have assurance in their Christian salvation and their calling to minister as laypeople.

"They see their call as photographers and they want to use that for the glory of God," said Marshall Chambers, Pennsylvania-South Jersey Baptist Brotherhood/evangelism director. "But they have also felt the need for a church in Susquehanna Township. Church planting came out of a sense of need rather than a call."

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The Prouser's helped start First Southern Baptist Chapel in Susquehanna Township. Without their commitment, northeast Harrisburg still might be without a Baptist presence in Susquehanna Township, said Chambers, a chapel member.

First Southern Baptist Chapel began meeting in the Prouser's home with a handful of others as the charter members. The mission grew, and when a financial base was established, the small congregation rented a house.

"I think it is imperative that we recognize that we have soul competency," said Mrs. Prouser, "that we are each responsible before God and to God for who we are and who we become.

"And we feel it is important to support 7,000 missionaries through the (Southern Baptist) Cooperative Program (unified budget) instead of one. At this stage of the game we couldn't support any."

The events that brought the Prouser's together never made the morning paper. She was a divorced mother with two children working as a hospital nurse. He was single, Jewish and frequently hospitalized for surgery and treatment of Crohn's disease, a progressive ailment that scars the lining of the intestine. The resulting damage inhibits the body's ability to absorb nutrients.

She was led to faith in Christ when her children's babysitter invited her to church. It happened to be a Southern Baptist church, and the visit was a significant event in her life.

"I believe God dropped me into a Southern Baptist church," she said. "He knew that would work with my head."

She met Prouser while he was in the hospital. They got together after a month-long stay in 1975 when he let her pick one of his photographs to be his thank-you gift to his nurses.

He called her to make an appointment to deliver the photograph. She helped minister to college students as a volunteer and invited him to join them for an outing.

"I never had any interest in him except professional," she said. "But Fred never had many people visit him. He needed friends."

When she invited him to go to church, he would attend worship, but not Sunday school.

"Being Jewish, I figured Sunday school was where they got you," he explained.

They fell in love and were married in 1976 before he became a Christian. Both described their first year of marriage as an ordeal.

"I couldn't share with the person who is closest to me the things that are closest to me," she said. "And that, of course, is my relationship with Jesus Christ."

But her new husband was moving toward a significant event in his own life.

"For a long time, I had been under conviction and then one night at home I decided to give my life to the Lord," he said. "Prior to all of this with the disease and being real sick and close to death several times, I had a real fear of death. When I became a Christian, that fear dissipated."

After they married, she made a career change and joined him in the precarious profession of free-lance photojournalism. Not only do they live without guarantees of income, they never know what an assignment might bring.

Their clients include commercial accounts with local businesses, state government and the Pennsylvania-South Jersey Baptist Convention, as well as the Associated Press, newspapers and magazines.

Most assignments are routine. But they face challenges, both to their professional skill and to their faith.

Photojournalists make a living walking in and out of people's lives. The time is short; the brief relationship often artificial. Frequently, the subject is not having a good day.

"I try to be polite, but my job is to get the picture," Prouser said. "There are situations where in a time of concern or anguish that I try to care about the person first and then worry about the picture."

The Prouseres know their photographs communicate to many people.

"As a Christian in the field we are in, we have the chance to impact people's lives for the good by focusing on what is good in life," he said. "We also have to photograph what is bad about life. But we have the ability to search out some of the positive things because we hold ourselves to a high standard. We don't do certain things."

Their personal standards often are tested. When he received an assignment to photograph a nudist camp, he reasoned with the editor and writer that the photograph probably would not be used. The photography assignment was cancelled.

They also receive requests for alcohol-related assignments. They refuse, despite financial hardships.

"I think God keeps giving you the same challenge and lets them come up over and over until you get the right answer -- until you respond the way you should," she said of turning down the beer ads. "Here we are, broke again."

Their standards and goals are set. He will remain a photojournalist while she contemplates her next career move after 10 years as a nurse and nearly 10 years as a free-lance photojournalist.

But whatever vocational changes or unexpected events they may face, they count on at least one constant in their lives -- affiliation with a Southern Baptist church.

"We feel committed to Southern Baptist work," she said. "We think it is the best means for spreading the gospel."

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(BP) photos available upon request from the Brotherhood Commission

Couples minister
to displaced people

By Jim Burton

F- (CO)
(B'hood)

Baptist Press
2/13/89

LEXINGTON, Ky. (BP)--A journey that began more than 20 years ago in Florida has become a quest in Kentucky for Don and Nora Lee Putnam.

The Putnams kept a steady course through the years. A stop in New Jersey tested their will and defined their call before they landed in the Bluegrass State.

They didn't journey for money or fame. Instead, they sought their identity in Christ.

And what they found has brought satisfaction that exceeds silver and gold. They found through the church renewal journey that God has equipped them for ministry with society's displaced people.

"God puts certain things in certain people's hearts," Mrs. Putnam said. "We believe people need a safe place to become whatever they can become."

The seeds of compassion were planted in Florida and nurtured by their pastor, George Ballantine.

"Ballantine made Christ real to us," Putnam said. "Christ became incarnate to us. Then renewal came along and allowed us to experience what was happening.

"Renewal said it was OK to be laypeople and be ministers. We could have a sense of call and not have to go to seminary. It's a way of life. It's a way of truth."

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The spiritual growth through church renewal, a program emphasis of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission and Home Mission Board, brought them to the point that they would even consider moving their family.

"We would have never moved from south Florida to New Jersey until after a renewal experience in discipleship," said Mrs. Putnam. "You can't just laugh off things. They should be prayed about and taken seriously."

He first worked for RCA in Trenton, N.J. Their personal ministry centered around church renewal, serving as volunteer consultants for the Northeast. As they opened their hearts to others through church renewal, they felt led to open their home.

The Putnams made their home a refuge for people who needed a place. Most were juvenile delinquents. Some were addicted to drugs. A few were paroled criminals.

Their pastor in New Jersey, Carl Gustaffson, made ministry to young people in trouble a priority for the church. It affirmed the Putnams calling to ministry.

"We were simply a part of the ministry that Carl brought into the church," Putnam said.

Several relationships formed from their New Jersey ministry have had particular significance for them. A son-in-law once stayed in their home. And they have a 23-year-old son with multiple handicaps that they adopted when he was seven.

When the Putnams were faced with a company move to northern New Jersey in 1975, they opted instead to move to Kentucky when they learned about cleftRock, a retreat center near Lexington.

As staff members at cleftRock, the Putnams led retreats and consulted with churches in renewal. Their personal ministry to displaced people continued as they served as foster parents.

CleftRock originally was designed to be a multifaceted ministry center, Putnam said. Keeping foster children was a part of that strategy. But when the cleftRock administration chose to de-emphasize the foster home ministry, the Putnams resigned.

After serving at cleftRock six years, the Putnams returned to private business in Lexington, Ky., and joined Trinity Baptist Church. There they found another couple with similar interests in handicapped ministries.

Joe and June Richey saw a need among mentally handicapped children. With their pastor's support, Richey started a Sunday school class for them at Trinity Baptist.

Mrs. Richey was a special education teacher in the public schools. Together, their commitment to the mentally handicapped grew.

"I think all of us have different niches in life," Richey said. "I felt comfortable around the retarded person."

Through the years, their understanding of the capabilities and limitations of mentally handicapped people grew.

"They were capable of doing work but there was no work for them," Richey said.

As the Richeys struggled over how to address the problems of the mentally handicapped, they met the Putnams. Together they dreamed of a place for mentally handicapped people that allowed them to develop their potential.

With the support of Trinity Baptist, Quest Farm was founded in 1984.

"We feel like everyone should have the privilege of reaching for their own star," Mrs. Richey said. "Some stars are not as high as others," her husband added.

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Quest Farm, located north of Lexington near Georgetown, Ky., accepts trainable mentally handicapped men and women and calls them farmers. Each farmer has daily responsibilities, including gardening.

When the final residence is built, the farm will have 18 permanent farmers.

In addition, Quest Farm eventually will offer short-term care for mentally handicapped persons while their families are on vacation.

"There is such a need," Mrs. Richey said of the Quest Farm ministry. "It was the right time in my life. I look at it as a kind of calling."

"I had a real desire to make a contribution," Richey said. "I think that a person is obligated if he is able to leave something of himself before he dies instead of just taking."

The Richeys pointed to the influence of the Putnams as a significant factor in their decision to manage Quest Farm.

"Had we not met them, we might not have been here," Mrs. Richey said.

The Putnams serve on the board of directors; she is the treasurer for the corporation. When needed, they serve as weekend house parents.

On Sundays, they teach the Sunday school class for mentally handicapped people that was started by Richey 29 years ago.

"We had been on the front line doing it," said Mrs. Putnam. "Now we are in a separate role -- encourager."

"The responsibility of church is a big part of what we do week in and week out," Putnam said. "Renewal has been a combination of ministries for us. It gives us an outlet for expressing who we are in addition to what we do at church."

And the journey continues.

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(BP) photos available upon request from the Brotherhood Commission

Prof influences world
from seminary classroom

By Chip Alford

F-10
(SWBTS)

Baptist Press
2/13/89

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--David Garland loves to tell about the time he and his wife Ellenor were on a ship headed to Europe.

Mrs. Garland went to the washroom to do laundry and she started talking with two women. The women were headed to Africa as missionaries. Mrs. Garland, sensing the women were Southern Baptists, said her husband taught at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Stunned, both women said their husbands graduated from the seminary. It wasn't long before they realized the husbands had studied with Garland.

Since that time, Garland has believed the quickest way to reach the world for Christ is through his teaching at Southwestern.

Garland, professor of Old Testament, is entering his 31st year of teaching at the seminary. In that time, he has influenced thousands of students in ministry around the globe.

"I think the thing that encourages me the most about Southwestern is that I can stay in this place and go around the world," Garland said. "And perhaps some students will take with them some ideas that I shared or something we have learned together. There is no way I could take it out there alone."

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A native of Memphis, Tenn., Garland attended Union University in Jackson, Tenn., for one year before joining the Navy during World War II. He prepared for the chaplaincy through the Navy's educational training program, earning a bachelor's degree from the University of Arkansas.

But Garland had felt called to pastoral ministry since his middle teens, so soon after the war ended, he entered Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. While completing his seminary work, Garland was pastor of First Baptist Church in West Baden, Ind.

At Southern, Garland concentrated in Old Testament, earning both bachelor of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees. His decision to major in Old Testament mainly was due to the inspiration of one of his professors at Southern, the late Clyde Francisco.

"He made the Old Testament come alive," Garland explained, "and it was very exciting to me."

After his seminary career, Garland was pastor of Baring Cross Baptist Church in North Little Rock, Ark., for more than seven years. And while he thought teaching might be in his future, he was not seeking a position when Robert Naylor, then president of Southwestern, approached him about a position in 1958.

"I thought after a number of years in the pastorate I would spend part of my life in the classroom, but I thought it would be much later in life than it turned out to be," Garland said. "But I felt it was the right thing to do, so I had the privilege of being the first faculty member Dr. Naylor added after he became president."

Garland's knowlege of the Old Testament is evident in his authorship of study guides for Amos, Isaiah, Job and Hosea. He has also written commentaries on Habakkuk and I Samuel.

But his professor's heart is in the classroom.

"If I have any talent or gifts, I think they are probably in the classroom," he said. "I'm most comfortable there, plus I enjoy and appreciate the students. I have a lot of confidence and trust that they are going to make a difference in the world."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary

Pastor uses ukelele to
tune into congregation

By Chip Alford

F - CO
(SWBTS)

Baptist Press
2/13/89

HALTOM CITY, Texas (BP)--What made Tiny Tim famous, costs less than \$50 and strikes the right chord with senior citizens at Glenview Baptist Church in Haltom City, Texas?

It's the four-stringed ukelele, one of the less-heralded strummed instruments that has been a stranger to most church auditoriums. But that may be changing.

Glenview Pastor Dennis Baw borrowed the idea for a ukelele band from his father's church, Baring Cross Baptist Church in North Little Rock, Ark.

Baw talked his own senior citizens' group into giving it a try six months ago, dubbed them The Hallelujah Chorus, and hit the road for a tour of nursing homes, retirement centers and churches. The response has been so overwhelming the group has a full appointment book for the next several months.

"Some of our senior citizens thought they couldn't do it, but once I got a few to try it, they realized they could, and then they became really excited about it," explained Baw, who graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1973.

Church members lease or buy the ukeleles -- \$50 for baritone ukes and \$20 for sopranos -- from a local music store. Most of the band members don't read music, so Baw writes chords for the songs and directs the group's one-hour practice sessions each Sunday evening. The group already has a repertoire of about 10 "old-time religion" tunes, including the crowd pleasing novelty number "The Preacher and the Bear."

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"We're not musicians. We're just a bunch of folks who love the Lord and like to have fun," said band member Bob Taylor, minister to senior adults. "The ukelele is really an easy instrument to learn how to play, and it's a lot of fun, too."

The Hallelujah Chorus currently boasts 20 strummers with 15-20 backup singers. Members, who were drawn from Glenview's Live Longer and Love It Sunday school class, range in age from 65 to 80.

The group will accompany Baw on two revival trips this year and will continue to make about two appearances at local functions each month.

Baw also is writing a musical for the band to perform based on the biblical character Caleb. The musical will be videotaped this summer and aired as a 30-minute special program on the 120-station Christian Family Network.

"It's really turned out to be a great ministry for us," said Baw. "It's teaching our folks to never quit."

And it looks like the ukelele idea will never quit at Glenview, either. Baw said the senior citizen response has been so good the church is starting a band for children.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary

CORRECTION: In the SEC Program in BP dated 2/9/89, please change the convention officers list at the end of the story to read:

Convention Officers:

President -- Jerry Vines, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.
First Vice President -- Darrell Robinson, Pastor, Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala.
Second Vice President -- Rudy Hernandez, Pastor, Metro Baptist Church, San Antonio, Texas
Recording Secretary -- Martin Bradley, Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, Tenn.
Registration Secretary -- Lee Porter, Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, Tenn.
Treasurer -- Harold C. Bennett, President, SBC Executive Committee, Nashville, Tenn.

Thanks,
Baptist Press
