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89-45

U.S. religious pluralism demands
interfaith witness, Leazer says

By Mark Wingfield

TAMPA, Fla. (BP)--Interfaith witness is one of the Southern Baptist Convention's most important mission programs because of the growing religious pluralism in the United States, a home missions leader said.

Gary Leazer, director of the interfaith witness department at the SBC Home Mission Board, addressed about 60 people attending the SBC state interfaith witness coordinators' meeting in Tampa.

"Things have changed," Leazer said. "We used to talk about taking the gospel to the world, but now the world has come to us. I see interfaith witness as one of the most important programs of the Home Mission Board because of the growing religious pluralism in the United States."

Leazer cited several statistics to illustrate the changing religious condition in America.

Islam, the fastest-growing religion in the world, hopes to gain at least 50 million U.S. converts, he said. Currently 4.6 million Muslims live in the country.

By A.D. 2000, the number of Muslims in America will be greater than the number of Jews, he said. That number is now 5.75 million.

Leazer also cited an increase in deviations of the Christian religion: "By the year 2000, there will be hundreds of short-lived millennial religions in the United States. I think we're going to see panic among our church members."

Leazer and other interfaith witness leaders said last year's proclamation by Edgar Whisenant that Christ would return between Sept. 11-13 prompted more inquiries to the HMB than any other interfaith issue.

Because of the wide range of sensitive issues it addresses, interfaith witness is "probably the most misunderstood program at the Home Mission Board," Leazer said. "We're going to have to have a clear vision of the task before us."

He called for greater lay participation, better strategic planning, more creative approaches and greater SBC inter-agency cooperation in interfaith witness ministries.

This year's conference was the first national meeting since interfaith witness was transferred from the HMB missions section to the evangelism section. The change was made during a recent reorganization of the board's Atlanta staff structure.

Bob Banks, HMB executive vice president, urged interfaith witness leaders to look for positive aspects in the change.

"I see interfaith witness continuing to serve in the excellent way it has in the past," he explained. "The things that have been done need to keep being done. However, I see opportunities for expanding into a broader evangelistic witness."

"The thing we're seeking to do is to bring us all together to focus on a single task, although we do it in different ways. We are bound together by a common goal of trying to reach people for Jesus Christ."

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Banks encouraged the group to look for new opportunities rather than "become immobilized by predictions of the future that tend to be negative."

"There is a danger of tunnel vision which views only a small part of a larger mission," he warned. "The big issues are far too important for any of us to be immobilized."

"At times we can become overwhelmed by the lack of money, resources and staff. At these times, we need to be encouraged by someone who brings us a word of hope. Keep hope alive," Banks said.

Three individuals were honored at the meeting for outstanding service in interfaith witness ministries. William Hern of North Carolina and Kate Ellen Gruver of Georgia were named state interfaith coordinators of the year. Mildred S. Patterson of South Carolina was named interfaith associate of the year.

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Polish Baptist leader says
freedoms may be codified

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
3/21/89

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Baptists and other evangelicals in Poland are hoping negotiations between the government and Roman Catholic leaders will put more religious tolerance into Polish law.

Konstanty Wiasowski, president of the Polish Baptist Union, said the freedoms practiced by Poland's churches are "much ahead of what is written in (the nation's) documents."

But incorporating greater freedom into Polish law depends, Wiasowski said, on the success of negotiations over legalizing the Solidarity trade union and the launch of other political and economic reforms, as well as Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's success in achieving broad reforms in Poland's large neighbor to the east.

Wiasowski visited the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va., in mid-March to make final arrangements for a partnership with North Carolina Baptists, enlisting their help for two or more years in building a Baptist educational center in the Warsaw suburb of Radosc.

North Carolinians won't be the only foreign volunteers in Poland, Wiasowski noted. Young Catholics from Western Europe are helping to build a large facility in Warsaw honoring Pope John Paul II, the only Polish pope in Roman Catholic history.

The Polish Baptist Union consists of some 3,000 members of 56 congregations -- a tiny minority in a country of 38 million people, at least 90 percent of whom are Catholic.

Any fruits of the negotiations between government and Catholic officials will apply to all denominations in the country, Wiasowski said. Authorities may liberalize laws concerning public meetings, censorship and prison ministries, he said.

The Polish Baptist Union already is sponsoring the writing or translation of religious books for adults and children. Last year the union published eight titles, Wiasowski said. Also, 3,400 copies of the union's Word of Truth magazine are circulated each month. The new educational center will have a small printing press.

Radio broadcasts also have been aired, although Wiasowski said government officials have warned, "Don't talk to communists or atheists, because they are not listening. Talk to believers."

Baptists also have begun ministering in prisons, Wiasowski said. In the past, such efforts also were discouraged by Polish officials, who asked, "If there are no Baptist prisoners, why bother the others?"

Two mistaken notions in Poland pose a stiff ongoing challenge to Baptists, Wiasowski said. The first is the idea that "every good Pole is a Catholic." Most Polish Catholics feel, "I have been born such and I will be as my forefathers were," he explained. Parents sometimes disown children who become evangelicals.

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The second misconception is the accusation that Baptists are an American sect, "because Baptists are usually connected with America," Wiasowski said.

"Every minority has such problems," the Baptist leader said. "You have to go against the current. The power of the majority is influencing the minority. You have to really know what you believe."

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Baptist MK volunteer dies
in Ethiopia truck accident

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
3/21/89

MEZZEZO, Ethiopia (BP)--A Southern Baptist volunteer in Ethiopia died March 17 shortly after he plunged down a mountainside trapped in his pickup truck.

The volunteer, Stan Cannata, reportedly died about 20 minutes after the fall. An Ethiopian co-worker and a local farmer took 10 or 15 minutes to reach his body, which had been thrown from the truck, said John Faulkner, who directs Southern Baptist mission work in eastern and southern Africa.

Cannata, 27, was trying to free the truck from soft mud at the edge of a cliff about three miles from the village of Mezzezo. The incident occurred about 2:30 p.m. Ethiopian time.

Cannata and Ethiopian co-worker Wossenseged Berhanu had been driving out of the Ethiopian highlands toward Addis Ababa, the capital city. Cannata pulled off the road to shoot photographs of surrounding canyons.

Early reports from Southern Baptist missionaries indicated Cannata had shoved Berhanu out of the truck as it started to roll or slide off the edge. But an investigation by missionary Paul Gay, administrator for Southern Baptist work in Ethiopia, indicated the Ethiopian might already have been out of the truck before the incident occurred.

Members of the local farmers association helped Berhanu carry the body and luggage back up the mountain and into Mezzezo.

Cannata, a child of missionaries who grew up in Africa, began a planned one-year stint in Ethiopian water development work last May. He was engaged to be married this summer to Elizabeth Chism of Dallas.

Most recently, Cannata had been working in the Lalomedar area capping springs to produce clean water. With an Ethiopian team there, he was helping to prepare a Baptist center that eventually will offer veterinary and agricultural assistance.

Berhanu is one of a handful of Ethiopians who helped Southern Baptists open their first feeding operation at Rabel during Southern Baptist famine relief efforts in 1985.

Cannata was the son of Southern Baptist missionaries Sam and Ginny Cannata, whose most recent assignment has been on the island of Zanzibar, Tanzania, just off the African mainland. The Cannatas worked in medical evangelism for several years in Rhodesia, now called Zimbabwe, and in the Ethiopian highlands. They also worked in Kenya and the Sudan. He is a medical doctor from Waco, Texas; she is from Hollandale, Miss.

Contacted just hours after their son's death, the Cannatas decided he should be buried on Ethiopian soil. Missionaries secured a burial plot next to that of Southern Baptist missionary Troy M. Waldron Jr., who was killed in August 1987 in a helicopter crash just north of Addis Ababa. Waldron was flying to survey crops with Ethiopian officials in one of the regions where Southern Baptists operated feeding stations.

Cannata was born in Sanyati, Zimbabwe. He received the bachelor of science degree from Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas. He met his fiancée at Highland Baptist Church in Waco while studying for his master of science degree in geology at Baylor University in Waco. She works as a news tape editor for a television station in Waco.

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Chism and her father arrived in Ethiopia at about 6 a.m. March 20 for the funeral that afternoon. U.S. Embassy officials in Rome personally escorted them through customs without a visa. In Addis Ababa, Ethiopian government officials met them at the airport.

Besides his parents, Cannata is survived by a 29-year-old brother, Michael, of Nome, Alaska, and a 24-year-old sister, Catherine Buchanan, of Fort Worth, Texas. His family asked that any memorials in his name be sent to the Foreign Mission Board designated "Water for Africa."

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

Baptists, mission workers
in Africa remember volunteer

Baptist Press
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NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--Missionaries and Baptists in Africa came together in at least two places to recall the contributions of Southern Baptist volunteer Stan Cannata and pray for the people who were close to him.

Cannata, 27, died after his truck tumbled off an 1,800-foot cliff near the Ethiopian village of Mezzezo. He was the son of Sam and Ginny Cannata, Southern Baptist missionaries to Tanzania.

The volunteer had been trying to free the truck from soft mud near the edge of a plateau. The Ethiopian traveling with him was not in the truck as it fell and was unhurt.

In Nairobi, Kenya, Southern Baptist missionaries from Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya bridged a gap of 700 miles through a prayer and song service March 20, the same day Cannata was buried in Ethiopia.

In Ethiopia, local Baptists and missionaries listened as friends and co-workers of Cannata told of his love for Ethiopians.

"We thought we knew our son until today, but as we've heard these guys tell about how he invested his life in their lives, the Lord has taught us a whole bunch about who our son really was," said Cannata's father, a doctor who has worked in several African nations.

"All we can do is praise God that he's in control," the elder Cannata said. "We've done a lot of crying, and yet the Lord ... has just worked in our lives and given us a peace and a joy we didn't know was possible."

Missionary Paul Gay, administrator for Southern Baptist work in Ethiopia, talked to Ethiopians in the Mezzezo area who knew Cannata. Some of them remembered him from the years he spent growing up there as his missionary parents worked in the province. Others knew him more recently as the "guy who always waved at them from the green truck as he traveled through town," said Gay.

Cannata, a geologist, had been working on water development projects as a volunteer assigned to a one-year stint.

In Kenya, missionary Bill Curp read a Scripture passage from II Samuel 12, telling how David picked up the pieces of his own life after the death of his infant son by saying, "I shall go to him, but he will not come to me."

"We are not praying for Stan, because he is in a much better place than we are -- the presence of Jesus," Curp said. "We are praying for those who loved him to be wrapped in the loving arm of God, and for the people of Ethiopia he loved so much."

Missionary Tim Tidenberg, who attended high school with Cannata at Rift Valley Academy in Kenya and was his college roommate at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, remembered how Cannata's "deep love" for Ethiopia and its people caused him to plan even in college to return there to work.

"This is where he would have chosen to spend his last days on earth," said Tidenberg, a church developer in Tanzania.

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Korean government approves
50-acre site for seminary .

By Ginny Whitehouse

TAEJON, South Korea (BP)--Korean government leaders have cleared the way for relocating the Korea Baptist Theological College and Seminary in Taejon to a larger campus 10 miles away, a move that eventually could double the student population.

Seminary President Huh Kin announced March 20 that the Korean Ministry of Education has approved the new 50-acre site. Neither the move nor sale of the existing property could go forward without the ministry's clearance, Huh said.

The Baptist institution already is among the world's largest seminaries. Within 10 years, the new campus will be able to accommodate 3,000 students, compared to the 1,500 who now study in cramped facilities on a 15-acre site. Groundbreaking is expected to be held in April, with the first phase of construction to be completed by spring 1991.

"Because of restrictions placed on our work with limited facilities, we have not been able to provide all the thorough and constructive educational programs that we want to," Huh said.

Southern Baptist missionary Arnold Peterson, associate seminary president, said the next step will be finding a Korean development firm to buy the existing campus in the central downtown area and to contract the building of the new \$18 million facility. Baptists hope the existing campus will sell for between \$12 million and \$16 million, Peterson said. Donations will cover the cost difference between construction and property sale, he said.

The new campus also will provide continuing education for experienced pastors as Korean churches develop, as well as a missionary training center for graduate students throughout Asia, Huh said. Korean Christians are leaders in the growing Asian missionary movement.

"Up until now, we have had to limit our work to training young people. We can now provide all aspects of training throughout their ministry," Huh said. "The timing is right to provide the educational needs for missionary expansion throughout Asia."

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Ginny Whitehouse is a Southern Baptist journeyman in South Korea.

Korean-American Southern Baptist
Pastors to visit North Korea

By Jim Burton

Baptist Press
3/21/89

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Fourteen Korean-American Southern Baptist pastors have received an invitation to visit the Peoples Republic of Korea, March 24-29, representing a first for communist North Korea which has forbidden the practice of religion since it was separated from South Korea in 1945.

"Not only is this the first Baptist group to be invited to North Korea, it is the first time in North Korea's history to host a Korean ministers group of any denomination," said Choong Lin Chun, publisher of New Korea Times in Toronto.

Chun, also chairman of the Organization for Reunification of Separated Korean Families, acted as liaison between the North Korean government and the Southern Baptist delegation.

According to Chun, the government approved invitation comes from Ko Kijung, general secretary of the Korean Christian Federation in Pyung Yang, North Korea's capital city.

Dan Moon, a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board consultant for Korean church growth and church-planting and director of ethnic Brotherhood programs, will lead the delegation.

Moon, who lives in Memphis, said the delegation will meet with Communist Party executives to deal with four issues.

-- A communique will be delivered from the president and general secretary of the Korean Baptist Convention in South Korea inviting North Korean delegates to attend the 1990 Baptist World Alliance Congress in Seoul, Aug. 12-16.

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-- The delegation will deliver a letter from Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary, requesting the North Korean government to allow Eastern European Baptist BWA messengers to travel through North Korea by train to the 1990 Congress in Seoul.

-- Permission will be sought to build a chapel in Wonsan, North Korea, which Moon called the cradle of the 100-year-old Baptist movement in Korea. The chapel would be funded jointly by the Council of Korean Southern Baptist churches in North America and the Korea Baptist Convention in South Korea.

"The church itself is a symbolic structure where underground Christians can begin to see hope," said Moon. "They can come out of the shell of their hiding places to start assembling in one spot."

-- The delegation will seek ways to reunite separated family members between the United States and North Korea. Moon said at least 20 percent of the Southern Baptist Korean pastors in North America were born in North Korea.

"This is not a luxury trip or Holy Land pilgrimage," said Moon. "This is what I call missions in context."

The delegation's itinerary includes spending Easter in Pyung Yang where they hope to lead a worship service.

In addition to Moon, the Korean Southern Baptist delegation includes: Don M. Kim, pastor, Berendo Street Baptist Church, Los Angeles; Timothy H. Park, coordinator of Korean Ministries for the Maryland-Deleware Baptist Convention; Daniel D. Lee, First Korean Baptist Church, Washington; Paul C. Im, First Korean Baptist Church, Irvine, Calif.; Seung H. Pak, Pilgrim Korean Baptist Church, Alhambra, Calif.

Tommy Y. Sohn, First Korean Baptist Church, Dallas; Sang Hoon Lee, Central Korean Baptist Church, Cleveland; Yong Soon Nam, Riverside Korean Baptist Church, Riverside, Calif.; Won Ki Kim, Korean Baptist Church, Washington; Paul Whan, Korean Baptist Church of Valley, Woodland Hills, Calif.; Chang Sun Moon, Tacoma (Wash.) Korean Baptist Church; David Y. Gill, Concord Korean Baptist Church, Martinez, Calif.; and Chang Kun Behk, Seh-Moon Korean Baptist Church, Astoria, N.Y.

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Helping churches cope with AIDS
focus of cooperative strategy

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
3/21/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--A coordinated, cooperative strategy to help Southern Baptist churches cope with the impact of the AIDS crisis is in the beginning stages of development, according to four denominational leaders.

Doug Anderson, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry department; Richard Land, executive-director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission; Roy Edgemon, director of the SSB church training department; and Joe Stacker, director of the SSB church administration department, announced they will work together on the plan.

Anderson, convener of the group, said efforts are being made to involve other agencies that may have interest in the effort to provide information about AIDS as well as suggestions about ministry strategies.

The plan will address concerns already being faced in many churches about how to minister to AIDS victims and their families and will provide information about the sociological, psychological and spiritual impact of the disease, he said.

"We hope the result of our work will be that Southern Baptists will have an informed, Christian-value-based awareness about AIDS," said Anderson. "Also, our goal is that pastors, church staff members, deacons and others will be educated about key pastoral-care issues related to AIDS."

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The group named five subteams made up of staff personnel from their respective organizations to develop plans for the strategy. The subteams are Baptist Telecommunication Network, conferences, promotion/awareness, periodical support and undated resources.

Stacker, chairman of the BTN subteam, said a national teleconference will be held early this fall "to provide information about AIDS and to challenge church leaders about the kind of response they can make in their communities."

While neither the date nor teleconference personnel have been selected, Stacker said the program will include opportunities for viewers to call in questions.

Land, who chairs the conferences subteam, said a follow-up to the teleconference will be regional conferences in early 1990. Longer-range plans for varied types of conferences and seminars will be developed, he said.

"Our goal is a sustained, broad, comprehensive approach to meet needs," said Land.

Edgemon, who heads up the promotion/awareness subteam, said the assignment is to develop a "total awareness and promotion plan for the project, beginning this summer at Ridgecrest (N.C.) and Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist conference centers with providing information about the fall teleconference."

Also, Edgemon said his group will explore a "fast-track approach for getting information into periodicals."

Anderson chairs both the periodical support and undated products subteams.

"A key issue in printed resources will be the fact that they will quickly become outdated as information changes," said Anderson. He estimated a two-year life span for printed products and one year for audio and video resources.

In periodicals, Anderson said, plans will utilize the publications of all involved agencies to provide information targeted to readers -- pastors, deacons, families and others.

AIDS in the United States is continuing to spread among many segments of the population, although some predictions of explosive increases have not taken place, statistics indicate. A March 1989 report from the Centers for Disease Control estimated a total of 87,000 cases of AIDS have been diagnosed.

The 1.3 million intravenous drug users in the United States represent the segment of the population where AIDS is spreading most rapidly. As a result, the number of infants being born infected with the AIDS virus also is on the increase.

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Baptists must help
AIDS victims: missionary

By Pam Parry

Baptist Press
3/21/89

BALTIMORE (BP)--Southern Baptists soon may be doing more than discussing ministry to people with AIDS, due to the changing nature of the incurable, terminal disease, a medical missionary told Baltimore Baptists gathered at Woodbrook Baptist Church in Baltimore March 7.

Fred Loper, a medical doctor employed by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, addressed the "When AIDS Comes to Church" conference, sponsored by Baltimore Baptist Association and Woodbrook Church.

Trends indicate AIDS soon may become less prevalent among white male homosexuals, while moving more into other segments of the U.S. population, Loper said.

In Africa, AIDS is rampant, affecting as much as 35 percent of the population in some countries, but 98 percent of those infected contracted the disease not from homosexual activity, but through blood transfusions and heterosexual promiscuity, Loper said.

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"It's a sexually and blood-transmitted disease," he added.

AIDS in the United States soon may follow the path of the disease in Africa, occurring in smaller numbers among the white male homosexual population, because homosexuals are educating themselves about AIDS and are taking precautions against spreading the disease, Loper said. Ironically, if the end plays out, it may make it easier for Southern Baptists to respond to AIDS once the stigma associated with the homosexual lifestyle is removed from the illness, he added.

The home missionary warned participants they live in an incredibly promiscuous society. "I can guarantee you if AIDS has not happened to your church, it is going to. ... And I am not talking about strangers who visit your church, but people who you know now," he said.

"In the last year, there has been a big interest among Southern Baptists to talk about AIDS," he said, but as a group, the nation's largest Protestant denomination has done little about the epidemic.

The question foremost on the minds of Southern Baptists at conferences he has led still is: "Should we minister to people with AIDS?"

Loper pointed out the medical profession, as well, still grapples with the question. But he urged Maryland/Delaware Baptists to follow Jesus' example and "touch" people with AIDS.

"For many churches, the issue will be something that falls on the shoulders of a few rather than the whole congregation because of the confidentiality factor," Loper said.

Many Southern Baptists ministers across the nation have told him they would lose their jobs if they addressed the AIDS issue because their congregations are so scared of the disease, he added.

Proactive ministry to AIDS victims "is going to be costly for some of us," because of Southern Baptists' fear of anything sexual, and especially homosexual, he said.

"I am not suggesting we should be any less than God's people," he explained. "But we must tell them that God loves them no matter what their behavior in the past. It's not our job to beat people over the heads for their lifestyles but to tell them that God is a forgiving God. Homosexuality is no less forgivable than alcoholism or pride.

"Homosexuality is not a viable Christian lifestyle, but neither is being proud, and I am sometimes proud," he added. "We need to condemn the sin; not the sinner."

Finding a niche in ministering to people with AIDS is an important part of preparing for the task, because God calls Christians "to carry our (own) cross," Loper said. Some churches may be called to minister to homosexuals stricken with AIDS and their families. However, God may use others to touch newborns, intravenous drug users or hemophiliacs, he explained.

In a group response to a case study, conferees brainstormed ministries to a hypothetical young man in their church's with AIDS entailing personal contact and care, churchwide education, sharing God's love, financial assistance and securing a job or something productive for the individual to do. Loper observed those responses are not unusual church ministries. In fact, they are things the local church has been doing for a long time and what Christians "do best," he asserted.

"Why is it that we are so late in arriving on the scene in taking care of people with AIDS?" Loper asked.

AIDS was first reported in the United States in 1981, and since that time, more than 33,000 cases, with about 58 percent resulting in death, have been reported to the Public Health Service. Up to 1.5 million people are infected with the AIDS virus, Loper said, noting recent figures indicate the largest growth of the disease is among children under 13.

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In 1987, new cases of AIDS appeared in 4 percent of the heterosexual population, 19 percent among intravenous drug users and 68 percent with white homosexual males, he said. While it will probably not show up statistically in the immediate future, Loper predicted in the long run. "We will see less and less of this disease in white male homosexuals because as a group they are much less promiscuous, and they are using condoms."

Heterosexual promiscuity, on the other hand, is prevalent in American society, not excluding evangelical churches, he said. A teen sex survey of 1,438 white students, who earned A's and B's in school, revealed 26 percent were sexually active at age 16, 35 percent at age 17 and 43 percent at 18. Loper noted the teens came from stable homes, and 82 percent professed to know Jesus Christ as personal savior. Eighty-three percent attended an evangelical church weekly.

Southern Baptists ought to lead out in areas where others are afraid to venture, he said. That is true with AIDS, he said, lamenting that is not the case.

"And yet, I know we have a Lord that can do that," he said. "I am not suggesting Southern Baptists can take care of all this, because we cannot. But we can set an example."

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Court to re-examine
dispute over peyote

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
3/21/89

WASHINGTON (BP)--For the second time, the Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case involving the religious use of the drug peyote.

The nation's high court ruled almost a year ago that it could not decide whether the U.S. Constitution protects the religious use of peyote by Native Americans in Oregon until that state's high court determined if the practice violates Oregon law.

Last October, the Oregon Supreme Court held that while state law makes no exception for sacramental use of the drug, "outright prohibition of good-faith religious use of peyote by adult members of the Native American Church would violate the First Amendment directly and as interpreted by Congress."

The dispute arose when two drug counselors were fired for ingesting small amounts of peyote during rites of the Native American Church. Alfred L. Smith and Galen W. Black had been employed by the Douglas County Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment, which required counselors to abstain from using alcohol and non-prescription drugs.

After being dismissed from their jobs, Smith and Black applied for state unemployment compensation benefits. The employment division of the Oregon Department of Human Resources denied their requests, ruling the men were ineligible because they were fired for work-related "misconduct."

A state appeals court and the Oregon Supreme Court held that denying unemployment benefits violated the men's First Amendment right of free exercise of religion.

After considering the case, the Supreme Court sent it back to the Oregon high court for a determination of whether state law protects the religious use of peyote. At the same time, a majority of the justices suggested the First Amendment's free exercise guarantee does not apply generally in cases where criminal laws are violated.

In appealing the state court's second decision, Oregon Solicitor General Virginia L. Linder, said allowing exemptions for religious drug use threatens "to make state and federal laws patchwork quilts of only partially enforceable prohibitions."

But attorney Craig J. Dorsay, who represents Smith and Black, asked the high court to uphold the Oregon Supreme Court's ruling that "the state cannot enforce its interest in proscribing controlled substances through the state unemployment statutes and procedures."

Oral argument in the case is expected next fall. (88-1213, Employment Division v. Smith)

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WMU renews commitment
to be multilingual

By Susan Todd

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Saying something in a different language involves more than using the correct words. Communication also includes how the words are used and the spirit in which they are said, according to an ethnic expert.

"We communicate out of a given cultural context," said Daniel Sanchez, missions professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. "The message we are trying to communicate is encoded in our language."

Sanchez spoke recently to Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union leaders who work with non-English-speaking organizations. The leaders gathered to identify ways WMU can produce better programs and materials for language groups.

"Spend time simplifying the language," Sanchez said. But more than focusing on the language, he reminded them to be conscious of commonly accepted practices within a language group.

"We approach time differently in different cultures," he said. "In making decisions about programs, activities, events, be sure to schedule enough time. And be aware of the fact that there are different ways to make decisions."

Two groups don't necessarily have to do things the same way in order to be moving toward the same missions goal, he added: "Make sure the standard of your work is not the goal but the content. Whatever you do, tie it to the word of God -- not just because WMU says (do missions) but because Jesus says."

WMU has renewed its commitment to doing quality work with language groups, said Lynn Yarbrough, WMU publications section director.

"We acknowledge the fact that this is the fastest-growing segment within our convention," she said. "And in light of the emphasis on new work, we recognize many will be language churches."

Producing materials in languages other than English is not new for WMU. Long ago, WMU and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board recognized the importance of providing missions education materials for Spanish-speaking women, Yarbrough said. The monthly magazine, Nuestra Tarea, has been published for 34 years.

WMU and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board also have provided joint leadership for the group for 21 years through the work of a WMU language consultant.

From time to time, WMU has also produced materials in as many as 10 languages -- Chinese, Laotian, Vietnamese, Japanese, basic English, French Haitian, Romanian, Spanish, Korean and Arabic.

Although WMU has been a pioneer within the Southern Baptist Convention in producing language materials, much more needs to be done, Yarbrough said.

Language priorities for WMU will include more consistent materials and programming in Korean, basic English and Asian languages, Yarbrough said.

"Missions education is important in language churches," he noted. "We have a responsibility to help bring that about."

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