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March 29, 1989

89-49

RTVC cuts staff by 20%
after ACTS sale fails

N-CO

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission will reduce the size of its staff by 20 percent, effective March 31.

The cuts are the result of a budget crunch created when the sale of the commission's ACTS television network failed March 14, said officials of the RTVC, located in Fort Worth, Texas.

The RTVC will drop 12 full-time and six part-time employees through a combination of attrition and layoffs, RTVC officers said. The cutbacks will reduce the RTVC staff from 91 employees to 73.

Trustees voted to continue operating the RTVC's American Christian Television System after the sale of the cable TV network could not be completed. Friends of ACTS, a group based in San Antonio, Texas, had contracted to buy ACTS for \$34 million but could not raise the money by the mid-March deadline.

"Extraordinary expenses" related to the attempted sale of ACTS caused the budget problem, RTVC officers said.

Those expenses included legal fees paid to RTVC attorneys, fees paid to auditors to prepare for the sale, a \$435,000 exit penalty incurred when ACTS left the Spacenet satellite transponder and moved to the Galaxy III satellite requested by Friends of ACTS and continued employment of people who would have been let go when the sale originally was to be completed last fall, said RTVC Executive Vice President Richard T. McCartney.

"We needed to trim the 1988-89 budget by almost \$500,000, and that made it necessary to reduce personnel as well as other operational expenses," McCartney said. "The Radio and Television Commission has a loyal and talented staff, and we regret that we are unable to keep everyone at this critical time."

Some employees elected to take early retirement, and the commission helped others find alternative employment in the Fort Worth area, he said.

The process of deciding on employee cuts and other cost-saving measures has taken about two months, McCartney reported, noting RTVC officers and managers "have been working on where we needed to be if the sale did not go through."

"The bottom line for each director has been to cut according to what we could get by with for the next six months," he said. Managers were involved in the discussions because "the people having to suffer ought to get to participate in the decision-making process," he added.

The payroll percentage of the \$500,000 savings "is not computed," McCartney said. Other cuts include postponement of the annual ACTS ceremony awards until the fall, after the start of the next fiscal year; elimination of "internal services" for RTVC departments, such as program promotion and gifts offered to program listeners; and delayed production of some RTVC programs until the next fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1.

"We're looking to the next six months, to get into the next budget year," McCartney explained. "The \$500,000 cut this year is to be restored next year, except for the \$113,000 to be cut from the Cooperative Program." The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' unified budget, which helps fund convention agencies and institutions. Its basic budget is to be reduced by 2.05 percent in the next fiscal year.

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Following the \$500,000 reduction, the RTVC annual budget is \$7.8 million, McCartney noted.

"Although we will not be able to do many of the things we would like to do in the next few months, most people will see very little immediate difference in the look of the network," he predicted.

Remaining staff will spend their time and energy on priority projects, and other activities will be put on hold until funds are available, he added.

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Pastors' Conference
focuses on challenges

N-CO

Baptist Press
3/29/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--"Facing Our Challenges with Confidence" will be the theme for the 1989 Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference June 11-12 in Las Vegas, Nev.

The Pastors' Conference is one of several meetings that will precede the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, to be held June 13-15 in Las Vegas. Both the Pastor's Conference and the SBC meeting will be held in the Las Vegas Convention Center.

The Pastors' Conference theme speaks both to opportunity and need, said conference President Ralph M. Smith, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, Texas.

"We're in a prime position -- as the largest evangelical denomination in the United States, with a strong Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board, seminaries and other agencies -- to build churches and reach people for Christ during the final years of this century," Smith said.

The challenge of building those churches and reaching those people is two-pronged, he said: "We live in a day when people are much more susceptible to hearing the Christian gospel. But many people do not have a Christian background and are devoid of Christian morality. Society is a lot more secular than before. People are not anti-church; they're just ignorant of church and Christianity."

From a positive perspective, that means presentation of the Christian gospel is more clear-cut, he added: "Formerly, we had to have a 'double conversion' -- from semi-Christian teaching to Christian teaching. That's not true anymore. We now have an opportunity to convert people directly from paganism to faith in Christ."

Consequently, Christians live in a world of "tremendous possibilities, Smith said, noting the potential of world mission endeavors, opportunities for sharing the gospel in America, and media technology and other developments that enhance evangelism and church development.

"The next two decades are our best decades for winning the world to Christ," he stressed.

The Pastors' Conference also has been planned to strengthen pastors, Smith said: "I want the Pastors' Conference to be upbeat, encouraging and non-political. If a pastor attends the conference, I want that guy to be encouraged and to know he has a great calling and a great opportunity -- that if God is for him, he cannot fail; he must succeed."

The theme has been divided into four sub-themes, one for each of the conference's sessions.

"The Pastor's Motive" will be the topic for the opening session Sunday night, June 11. Speakers will be Johnny Jackson, vice president, Paul Jackson Evangelistic Association, Little Rock, Ark.; Howard Gates, pastor, First Baptist Church, Fort Walton Beach, Fla.; John C. Click, pastor, Immanuel Baptist Church, Topeka, Kan.; and Charles Stanley, pastor, First Baptist Church, Atlanta.

Speakers at the Monday morning session will focus on "The Pastor's Ministry." Sermons will be delivered by Neal T. Jones, pastor, Columbia Baptist Church, Falls Church, Va.; Larry Lewis, president, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Atlanta; Darrell Gilyard, pastor, Shiloh Baptist Church, Garland, Texas; and John Bisagno, pastor, First Baptist Church, Houston.

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Focus of the Monday afternoon session will be "The Pastor's Message." Messages will be presented by Gordon Graham, pastor, First Baptist Church, New Braunfels, Texas; Tom Elliff, pastor, First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla.; Rick Warren, pastor, Saddleback Valley Community Church, Mission Viejo, Calif.; and Joel Gregory, pastor, Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

The final session, Monday night, will examine "The Pastor's Mandate." Speakers will be James F. Eaves, professor of evangelism, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth; J. Harold Smith, evangelist and president, Radio Bible Hour, Newport, Tenn.; and Adrian Rogers, pastor, Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn.

Most of the speakers are new to an SBC-wide pulpit, Smith noted: "I have tried to pull in about half the speakers that have not been preaching before at our conferences. I think that every year we ought to pull in new speakers -- from coast to coast, from a variety of states with varied backgrounds. ... I'm well pleased with who is coming in."

The speakers who will close each session -- Bisagno, Gregory and former SBC presidents Rogers and Stanely -- "are the people who were named most" by people who wrote Smith with suggestions for the conference and by people who responded to an informal survey he conducted. Lewis was chosen to give attention to the upcoming SBC "Here's Hope, America" simultaneous revival effort, Smith added.

Some recent Pastors' Conferences have been accused of taking sides in the 10-year political/theological dispute within the convention, but Smith said he has encouraged each speaker "to bring a message that is Bible-centered, positive, inspirational and non-political."

"I want whoever walks in there -- no matter what kind of pastor, from no matter what kind of church -- to feel this conference has helped him," he said.

In addition to Smith, other Pastors' Conference officers are Rob Zinn, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, San Bernardino, Calif., vice president; and Rick Ferguson, pastor of First Baptist Church, DeSoto, Mo., secretary/treasurer.

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Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference
Las Vegas Convention Center
Las Vegas, Nevada
June 11-12, 1989

N-CO

Theme: "Facing Our Challenges with Confidence"

Sunday Evening, June 11, 1989

- Ralph M. Smith, presiding, pastor, Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin, Texas
- 5:45 Concert, Danny Martinez, director, Immanuel Baptist Choir and Orchestra, San Bernardino, Calif.
- 6:00 Congregational Singing, Joe T. Carrell, minister of music, Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin, Texas
- 6:05 Welcome and Prayer, Michael Rochelle, pastor, West Oakey Baptist Church, Las Vegas
- 6:10 Solo, Johnny Hall, music evangelist, Overland Park, Kan.
- 6:15 Message, Johnny Jackson, vice president, Paul Jackson Evangelistic Association, Little Rock, Ark.
- 6:45 Presidential Greeting, Jerry Vines, president, Southern Baptist Convention, pastor, First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.
- 6:55 Choral Praise, Immanuel Choir and Orchestra
- 7:05 Message, Howard Gates, pastor, First Baptist Church, Fort Walton Beach, Fla.
- 7:35 Congregational Singing, Joe T. Carrell
- 7:40 Solo, Johnny Hall
- 7:45 Message, John C. Click, pastor, Immanuel Baptist Church, Topeka, Kan.
- 8:05 Congregational Singing, Joe T. Carrell
- 8:10 Offertory Prayer, Ted Cotten, pastor, Lodi Avenue Baptist Church, Lodi, Calif.
Choral Offertory, Immanuel Baptist Church Choir and Orchestra

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- 8:20 Solo, Martha Branham, soloist, Dallas
- 8:25 Message, Charles Stanley, pastor, First Baptist Church, Atlanta
- 9:00 Benediction, Jay Strack, evangelist, Dallas

Monday Morning, June 12

- Rob Zinn, presiding, pastor, Immanuel Baptist Church, San Bernardino, Calif.
- 8:30 Concert, Todd Bell, director, youth choir, Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala.
- 8:45 Congregational Singing, Joe Estes, minister of music, First Baptist Church, Van Nuys, Calif.
- 8:50 Scripture and Prayer, Paul Stephens, associate pastor, Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin, Texas
- 8:55 Solo, Joe Estes
- 9:00 Message, Neal T. Jones, pastor, Columbia Baptist Church, Falls Church, Va.
- 9:25 Congregational Singing
- 9:30 Solo, Andrew Culverwell, music evangelist, Nashville
- 9:35 Message, Larry Lewis, president, Home Mission Board
- 10:00 Choral Choir, Phillip Landgrave, director, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.
- 10:15 Congregational Singing
- 10:20 Offertory Prayer, A.J. Kennemer, pastor, First Southern Baptist Church, Glendale, Calif.
Choral Offertory, Southern Baptist Seminary Choir
- 10:30 Solo, Andrew Culverwell
- 10:35 Message, Darrell Gilyard, pastor, Shiloh Baptist Church, Garland, Texas
- 11:05 Congregational Singing
- 11:10 Solo, Madeline Jones, music evangelist, Longview, Texas
- 11:15 Message, John Bisagno, pastor, First Baptist Church, Houston
- 11:45 Benediction, Lonnie Chavez, director of language church extension, California Southern Baptist Convention, Fresno

Monday Afternoon, June 12

- Ralph M. Smith, presiding
- 1:15 Concert, Joe T. Carrell
- 1:30 Scripture and Prayer, Ken Morgan, pastor, Manor Baptist Church, Tucson, Ariz.
- 1:35 Congregational Singing
- 1:40 Choral Praise, Alan Celoria Family Singers
- 1:50 Message, Gordon Graham, pastor, First Baptist Church, New Braunfels, Texas
- 2:20 Congregational Singing
- 2:25 Choral Praise, Alan Celoria Family Singers
- 2:35 Message, Tom Elliff, pastor, First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla.
- 3:00 Congregation Singing
- 3:05 Offertory Prayer, Frank Lewis, pastor, Green Valley Baptist Church, Las Vegas
Choral Offertory, Hyde Park Baptist Church Choir and Orchestra
- 3:20 Election of Officers
- 3:45 Solo, Joe T. Carrell
- 3:50 Message, Rick Warren, pastor, Saddleback Valley Community Church, Mission Viejo, Calif.
- 4:20 Congregational Singing
- 4:25 Solo, Madeline Jones
- 4:30 Message, Joel Gregory, pastor, Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas
- 5:00 Benediction, Brad Allen, pastor, First Baptist Church, Duncan, Okla.

Monday Evening, June 12

- Ralph M. Smith, Presiding
- 6:30 Congregational Singing, John McKay, music evangelist, Keller Texas
- 6:35 Scripture and Prayer, Bill Jagers, director of evangelism, Kentucky Baptist Convention, Middletown, Ky.
- 6:40 Choral Praise, Alan Celoria Family Singers
- 6:50 Message, James F. Eaves, professor of evangelism, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
- 7:20 Congregational Singing
- 7:25 Solo, Amy Brantley Sheehan, soloist, Park Hills Baptist Church, Austin, Texas
- 7:30 Message, J. Harold Smith, evangelist and president, Radio Bible Hour Inc. Newport, Tenn.
- 8:00 Congregational Singing

8:05 Offertory Prayer, Joe S. Ratliff, pastor, Brentwood Baptist Church, Houston
 Choral Offertory, Hyde Park Baptist Church Choir and Orchestra
 8:15 Presentation from Broadman Press
 8:20 Choral Praise, Joe T. Carrell
 8:30 Message, Adrian Rogers, pastor, Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn.
 Introduction of New Officers
 Benediction, New President of Pastors' Conference

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Bible in hotel casino
 points pair to Christ

N- CO
 (Nev.)

Baptist Press
 3/29/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--A Bible is one of the last things gamblers in Las Vegas, Nev., expect to see. But a couple from Canada accepted Jesus as their savior after they watched a young woman pass through a casino with a Bible in her hand.

Cindy Still, Nevada Baptist Woman's Missionary Union director, was leading a youth evangelism conference in Las Vegas and was staying in a large hotel casino.

Taking the only route to the exit from her room, Still was stopped in the casino by a retired couple from Toronto. The man approached her and said he had a "weird question" to ask her and asked if she had been through the casino the previous night with a Bible in her hand.

Still answered positively only to be asked if she believed in God and were a Christian. "Yes, I believe in God and I'm a Christian because of Jesus Christ," she replied.

With tears running down their faces, they asked if she had the time to talk to them.

Still spent more than an hour listening and sharing with the couple.

Plagued with family problems and an absence of peace, the couple told of traveling for months with little direction or purpose in their lives. After Still shared her Christian testimony and explained about the saving grace of Jesus, the couple bowed their head at the table and asked Christ to come into their lives.

Still then went to her room, took her New Testament Bible to the couple's room, marked it and gave it to them.

They told her they had been searching a long time and had attended several church services, but until she told them about Jesus, they never had heard the plan of salvation.

Still, who was thanked repeatedly for being available when they needed her, later said: "I believe it is important to be consistent in your Christian lifestyle. People are always watching you."

In reference to the Southern Baptist Convention coming to Las Vegas in June, Still added, "Hopefully, this type of experience will happen over and over to the messengers coming to Las Vegas."

Still, who has given the name of the couple to a church in Toronto, told of the change that came into the couple's lives. When in the hotel room, the wife told her mate, "Honey, I don't believe we should put any more coins in those machines down there."

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Baptist surgeon finds
life challenging in Yemen

By Irma Duke

F - FMB

JIBLA, Yemen (BP)--Jesus spent a lot of time meeting physical needs. So does Jean Dickman, the only certified surgeon at Jibla Baptist Hospital in Yemen.

"It might be the most effective way to break down barriers," the Southern Baptist physician says about her work in the Middle Eastern nation, where Christian evangelism is illegal. Churches and steeples are not seen in Yemen, a Muslim country where only expatriots are allowed to practice Christianity.

The Daytona Beach, Fla., native says her job is very different from what it would be in the United States, where general surgeons often refer cases to specialists. Dickman has no other surgeon to take her referrals. She may perform five or six operations a day, sometimes with a medical book nearby because she's never done the operation before.

"It's definitely not boring," she says.

Dickman is frustrated when she has to delay a surgery because of overload, particularly since many patients come in with advanced illnesses. During clinic duty, she sees enough surgical needs in one day to keep her busy for a week. "The needs are practically unlimited," she acknowledges.

Five other physicians and contract workers pick up some of the slack, but two of them are nearing the end of their contracts and another plans to go into mobile clinic work.

But what bothers Dickman most is having to send a patient out of the country for medical care when the needed facilities and expertise are not available at Jibla or any other hospital in Yemen.

One man was referred to the hospital with a tumor in his face. His eyeball protruded and his sinuses were swollen. But Dickman knew of no one who could help him, because radiation therapy is not yet available in Yemen.

"It's hard to forget that he won't have the same medical opportunities as others," she says.

Jibla Baptist Hospital has a good reputation with many people who drive for hours and pass other hospitals to get there. The 75-bed hospital and clinic are fairly well equipped and the patients get good nursing care, according to Dickman.

"If you're going to practice medicine, you've got to be in the upper 10 percent of quality in the country. Otherwise, you don't glorify God's name," she says. "We can't do second best."

Dickman first heard about overseas work as a small child in church. She remembers building sandboxes of African villages with thatched-roof huts and palm trees. She accepted Christ as her savior when she was 5 years old and dedicated her life to full-time Christian service while in high school.

She intended to marry, but "that didn't work out," she explains. In fact, she broke up a relationship with a young man because he changed his mind about living overseas. "God had worked so many miracles to get me through my medical training that I couldn't give up what I'd gone to school for," she explains.

Southern Baptist workers in Yemen have requested additional surgeons and medical personnel to relieve Dickman and others. At 61, she plans to retire in a few years. Ideally, someone already should be training to take her place.

She prays that God will send more surgeons, "quick."

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

D'Amico urges Christians
to hear 'urban longings'

By Pat Cole

N- (CO
(SBTS)

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Christians should be sensitive to the "urban longings for salvation" that exist in the world's major metropolitan centers, emphasized a Southern Baptist urban evangelism specialist.

David D'Amico, executive director of the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association, said much evidence exists in urban areas of an "overwhelming religiosity of the human soul that seeks God in forms and rituals but finds no satisfaction."

D'Amico, who will become the Billy Graham professor of evangelism at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in August, addressed the Louisville, Ky., seminary's seventh annual Congress on Evangelism in March.

D'Amico enumerated several reasons why Christians must evangelize urban areas:

-- Major cities have an "enormous concentration of human need." Cities are home to the "blessings of culture, media, sports and economy" that exist alongside "the curses of poverty, AIDS, drug traffic and homelessness."

-- The apostles in the early church evangelized the great population centers of their time. In those cities, the apostles "planted churches and gathered people to fill those churches."

-- Most of the world's population resides in urban settings. With 55 percent to 60 percent of world's population living in cities, D'Amico noted the advancement of the gospel is closely related to how the "witness of the Lord Jesus Christ fares in the cities of our shrinking planet."

-- Many churches of the evangelical tradition have foresaken the cities. Thus the cities have been left "to the designs of cults, drug dealers, unscrupulous politicians and real estate developers."

Efforts are being made to reach the cities with the gospel, D'Amico said. He noted: the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board has "placed its best minds and its dwindling resources to reach the cities of the USA for Christ;" the Lausanne Congress on Evangelism that meets in July in Manila, Philippines, will "deal with the urban needs of our world;" and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association has always held "major campaigns in urban centers to reach the largest number of people."

Jesus sensed the "longings of urban persons" and wept over Jerusalem, D'Amico noted, asking "Can we do otherwise?"

In dealing with the needs of the cities, Christians today must ask the question the Apostle Paul raised in his epistle to the Romans: "How shall they hear without a preacher?" he said.

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High court reaffirms worker's
refusal of Sunday employment

By Kathy Palen

N- BSC

Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court has reaffirmed an individual's right to refuse Sunday employment based on personal religious beliefs.

In a unanimous opinion issued March 29, the high court overturned an Illinois Court decision that denied unemployment benefits to William A. Frazee, who refused to work on Sunday because of his "personal faith in the Lord."

The state panel rejected Frazee's free exercise claim because he was not a member of an established religious sect with a tenet or belief against Sunday work.

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Writing for the court, Justice Byron R. White said, "Undoubtedly, membership in an organized religious denomination, especially one with a specific tenet forbidding members to work on Sunday, would simplify the problem of identifying sincerely held religious beliefs, but we reject the notion that to claim the protection of the free exercise clause, one must be responding to the commands of a particular religious organization."

None of the Supreme Court's previous decisions in cases involving individuals who refused to perform certain work because of religious convictions relied on whether those individuals' refusals were based on a specific church tenet, White wrote.

"Our judgments in those cases rested on the fact that each of the claimants had a sincere belief that religion required him or her to refrain from the work in question," he continued. "Never did we suggest that unless a claimant belongs to a sect that forbids what his job requires, his belief, however sincere, must be deemed a purely personal preference rather than a religious belief."

A number of religious and civil liberties organizations, including the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, filed a brief in support of Frazee's right to refuse Sunday employment.

Oliver S. Thomas, BJC general counsel, called the Supreme Court decision a "well-deserved rebuke of the Illinois Court of Appeals and a ringing reaffirmation of one's right to follow the dictates of conscience."

"The decision to protect an individual's beliefs -- even when a majority in the church might disagree -- is of particular importance to Baptists whose most cherished doctrines are the lordship of Christ and the priesthood of every believer," Thomas said.

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'Good things' hinder
revival, leader says

By Sarah Zimmerman

N- CO
(OK'd)

Baptist Press
3/29/89

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--"A whole lot of good things are standing in the way of revival" in Southern Baptist life, a denominational leader said during a regional conference on prayer for spiritual awakening.

"We dream our dreams of what we want to do for God," said Henry Blackaby, director for prayer and spiritual awakening.

While those dreams may be good, he noted: "the good often is the enemy of the best. We come to God with our plans and say, 'Lord, empower us.' Can you imagine a servant asking that of the master? The servant never tells the master what he wants to do."

About 100 people attended the conference held in Oklahoma City. The conference was sponsored by Council Road Baptist Church, the Home Mission Board and the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma.

Blackaby, who has been at the board for six months, said his job is to "create an atmosphere where people will experience God deeply and personally and make the necessary adjustments."

"My primary responsibility is not to organize people and get them involved, but to lead them into a relationship with God who will tell them what to do," he said. "The movement of God rests on the degree to which you lead people to a relationship with God."

"Prayer is a by-product of that relationship. I pray not in order to have a relationship but because I have a relationship."

To build a praying church, Blackaby said, church leaders must be praying people: "Is your prayer life as a leader of such a nature that others will want it? The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray because they knew he prayed and what they saw in him they did not want to miss." "People will rise no higher in prayer than their leadership."

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Also churches do not become praying churches overnight. That requires long-term commitment and willingness to work with individuals," Blackaby said, noting, "Lead people one by one -- get one person aflame with the presence of God."

Prayer is essential to spiritual awakening, he said, adding "there has never been a great movement of God without prayer preceding it."

Although controversy continues in the Southern Baptist Convention, Blackaby said he senses the convention is beginning to experience spiritual awakening.

"What God is doing will determine the course of the Southern Baptist Convention, not the actions of the left or the right," he said.

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Telemarketing produces largest
new church in Florida history

By Barbara Denman

F- (CO
(FLA))

Baptist Press
3/29/89

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--Four new Florida Baptist churches, including the largest new church in Florida Baptist history, were begun during March as a direct result of telephone-marketing campaigns that "reached out and touched" more than 60,000 Florida households.

In addition to the four new churches, at least three existing missions used telemarketing to add new members to their church rolls. All three doubled their previous high-attendance marks.

Following one successful telemarketing campaign that dialed 18,701 homes, 341 people attended the first service of First Baptist Church of Weston, making it Florida Baptists' largest church start ever. Sponsored by Sheridan Hills Baptist Church in Hollywood, the Weston congregation's first service was held Easter Sunday in a theater and led by David Hughes, mission pastor. Two people made professions of faith in Christ, and six others rededicated their lives during the service.

Over the past two years, telemarketing has been used throughout the United States to add hundreds of thousands of people to church rolls of numerous denominations. The most popular telemarketing campaign, "This Phone's For You," was developed in California by Norm Wahn, a Quaker businessman-turned-minister.

Wahn was the keynote speaker for a telemarketing training session sponsored by the Florida Baptist Convention last November. All seven of the churches that reported gains in March were represented at the November conference.

Telemarketing uses an advertising/marketing principle called the law of large numbers -- the more people called, the higher the number of positive responses.

"I can get 200 people to come to a dog fight," Wahn said at the November conference. "When you ask 20,000 people, you can get at least 200 to do anything."

The process allows churches to start and grow at an accelerated rate.

A quick-start approach was exactly what was needed in Weston, a new planned community near Fort Lauderdale. The Arvida Corporation, developers of the community, gave Southern Baptists the opportunity to purchase five and one-half acres of land in Weston if a building could be under construction within two years. The land was purchased for \$200,000 with funds provided by the Florida Baptist Convention and Gulf Stream Baptist Association. Sheridan Hills agreed to repay the cost within two years.

Pine Island Community Church in Sunrise held its first service March 19 with 114 people present. Members of First Baptist Church of Sunrise and Coral Baptist Church in Coral Springs, co-sponsors of the new congregation, used 12 phone lines and 60 people to make 21,927 phone calls in the predominately Jewish and Catholic community.

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Steve Parris, pastor of First Church, will lead services at the new church until a pastor can be found. He is enthusiastic about the telemarketing approach. "It's an opportunity to get more people involved in a quicker period of time than the traditional way," he said. "It would have taken us a couple of years to build a group that size."

In Valrico, bivocational minister Larry Chadwell will be pastor of Sonlife Baptist Church, which had 92 people attend its initial service March 5. Telemarketing is the "best way I have found to identify the unchurched; the number of people who came is not as important as the number of people we have on the mailing list," he said.

The Valrico mission, sponsored by First Baptist Church of Brandon, has 950 families on the mailing list who have said, "We don't go to church anywhere and we are willing to hear from you," said Chadwell. But telemarketing is "not a quick road to success," he warns. It requires follow-up and discipleship, because the ministry reaches mostly unchurched people.

Although the people who attended the first service in Valrico had different reasons for being there, each "had a basic need in their life that has been unmet," Chadwell said. "We contacted them at the moment that need was pressing in on them, so they gave us a chance."

Tampa Palms Baptist Church, sponsored by the Forest Hills Baptist Church in Tampa, had its first service March 3 for 105 people who responded to the church's 6,054 calls.

James Springfield, who is pastor of the fledgling congregation, noted that out of those calls, only about 5 percent gave negative responses, a percentage that surprised him and the callers. "It really excited us that so many people were positive," Springfield said.

Three missions -- Northside Baptist Church in Lakeland, Fellowship Baptist Church in northwest Broward County and West Kendall Baptist Church in Miami -- each conducted telemarketing campaigns to discover more prospects.

For the past eight months, about 18 members of Northside Church have met in a renovated barn on the outskirts of town. When the telephoners began calling households, many of the people who were reached did not want to wait until the designated Celebration Sunday, March 12, but began coming to services almost immediately.

"There are lots of folks out there who are just waiting to be asked to church," said Pastor Don Allen. "And we are asking."

On Celebration Sunday, the congregation moved to a local elementary school. A total of 130 people attended, doubling any previous attendance.

But not all responses to the phone calls are positive, said Franklin Beam, Florida Baptist church extension consultant for South Florida, who made some calls for the Pine Island Church.

One woman he called wanted to know why a church had not asked her to visit 12 years before. Now her children had left home, her husband was dead and she was preparing to move back to New York. She needed a church then, she told Beam, but now she was beyond help.

"How many others are like that?" Beam asked.

A Gallup Poll recently determined 167 million unchurched people live in the United States. "But one-half of these people said they would come to church if only they were invited," Beam added. "We hope through telemarketing to ask that 50 percent in South Florida."