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89-75

Even in crisis, rural churches
give more to missions, study says

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

ATLANTA (BP)--Despite drought, farm crisis and grain embargoes in the past decade, rural Southern Baptist churches have consistently increased missions giving, four researchers reported.

New research from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board indicates that rural Southern Baptist churches gave a larger percentage of their income to missions during recent tough economic times than metropolitan churches did in comparatively good times.

The study was done by Gary Farley and Ray Dalton of the Home Mission Board in Atlanta along with Gregory Hoover and Michael Carter of Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn.

"Our hypothesis was that when things got tough, rural churches would cut back on missions giving," Farley said. "But that was proved wrong.

"This study indicates that when rural people get in a bind, they're more mindful of the needs of others. Instead of becoming selfish, they gave more than ever before."

The four researchers studied more than 10,000 Southern Baptist churches in Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina and Georgia. They focused on 1,400 churches in counties with agriculture-based economies.

Financial data was taken from the denomination's annual statistical survey for the years 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1987. Farley explained that 1975 was the "boom of rural agriculture," while the latter years were marked by drought, lower commodity prices and farm foreclosures.

Missions expenditures included all giving to ministries outside the local church, such as to the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions.

The average total membership of rural churches grew slowly from 1975 to 1985 and plateaued the following two years, the study said. In contrast, metropolitan churches grew steadily in membership from 1975 through 1987.

During that 12-year span, both agriculture-dependent churches and non-agriculture-dependent churches increased the proportion of their church budgets given to missions, Farley said.

However, churches dependent upon agriculture consistently gave a slightly higher share of their budgets to missions despite declining local economies, he added. Missions giving in rural churches increased from nearly 15 percent to nearly 17 percent.

During the same time, missions giving in metropolitan churches increased from 14 percent to slightly more than 16 percent.

The study did not seek reasons for the increase in rural mission giving, Farley said. However, he offered some personal interpretations.

"It appears that when you're suffering, you're more sensitive to the hurting of others," he said. "I feel a little guilty on Sunday when I walk into a nice suburban church that has just redecorated and bought a new organ while cutting back on missions giving.

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"Also, the mission of the church is more likely to be central in the lives of rural and small-town people than it is for metropolitan folks," Farley said. "Baptists in metropolitan areas face a greater temptation to be like secular people.

"We need to recognize that historically our missions endeavor has been supported by many small, plain churches made up of working people who really believe in the Great Commission and have given their sons and daughters and dollars and have uttered their prayers to make missions happen."

"Behind this data are hundreds and thousands of families of pastors who have not had all the luxuries of an urbanizing lifestyle. They have believed in the missions enterprise and have led the church to maintain its missions giving.

"Cooperation and caring are just more natural to the lifestyle of people living in agricultural settings."

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NOTE TO EDITORS: This is the first of four stories on Uganda's fight against AIDS and the assistance Baptists have provided. Photos released by the Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press relate to all of the stories.)

AIDS threatens Uganda's
hopes for stability

By Craig Bird

N- FMB

Baptist Press
5/9/89

KAMPALA, Uganda (BP)--The winds of war have died down in Uganda, but the even more terrible devastation of AIDS threatens the newfound peace and fragile economic boom.

The pragmatism of President Yoweri Museveni's government, which has fostered more peace and prosperity than the country has known in 20 years, is coping with the oppressive AIDS threat.

"If we don't talk openly about AIDS, we can't educate our people about how to stop it," says Samuel I. Okware, head of Uganda's AIDS Control Program. But when we are honest, the rest of the world points at us and says AIDS started here. It's as if they want to blame Uganda for the existence of the disease."

Negative publicity has caused many countries to suppress AIDS news coverage or public discussion, but Uganda's leaders have determined that survival is more vital than public image.

Okware credits a booklet written by Southern Baptist missionary physician Richard Goodgame as a key component of Uganda's fight to survive. Goodgame is a professor at Makerere Medical School in Kampala. The booklet, titled "Medical Science and God's Word Give ANSWERS To Questions Related To AIDS," has been translated into Uganda's 12 major languages, and more than 2 million copies have been distributed.

The critical nature of the problem is reflected in a World Health Organization report which conservatively estimates 10,000 new cases of AIDS in Uganda every month for the next six years, for a total of 720,000. The death toll from Aids rivals Idi Amin's eight years in power (1971-79), when 500,000 Ugandans were slain, and the five years of rule by Milton Obote, marked by an additional 300,000 killings.

"Health education is the only chance we have, so we have been extraordinarily frank," Okware states. "Nothing has been censored."

Bright colored posters declaring, "I wish I had said 'no' to AIDS...my quick pleasure led to a slow, painful death," or similar slogans are plastered throughout the country in 12 languages. Daily radio programs discuss the problem. At Museveni's direction all senior government officials and employees include comments on AIDS at all public meetings -- and funerals. Anyone applying for any government job must take a test on basic AIDS knowledge. Stiff penalties have been legislated for those who knowingly spread the disease.

The booklet by Goodgame, probably the most widely used weapon in Uganda's AIDS educational arsenal, relays key AIDS facts. It emphasizes, for example, that AIDS is spread by sexual contact, blood transfusions and unsterilized needles, but not by mosquitoes, dishes, clothing or caring for an AIDS patient.

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Six of the booklet's eight pages quote the Bible on such topics as God's plan for sex and marriage, how to control sexual behavior and a person's responsibility toward people with AIDS. In the last section there's an explanation of Christian faith: "How Can I Live Forever If I'm Dying From AIDS?" Printing and distribution of the booklet, along with a related Bible-distribution program, was funded through a \$250,000 grant from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

"I'd say one-third to one-half of our work (in the government's anti-AIDS efforts) has been possible because of Rick Goodgame and the Answers project," Okware says. "Not only did he write the booklet and his mission board pay for it, he was the one who sensitized me to the problem of AIDS -- he gave me the push I needed to take it seriously because he recognized the problem earlier than most of us through his work at the hospital."

The Baptist Mission of Uganda's encouragement to other groups to distribute the brochure has made it possible to reach many more people than the relatively small number of Baptists could have reached alone. Anglicans, Catholics, Seventh-Day Adventists, Pentecostals and even some Muslims have helped share the booklet. "I have no doubt Answers was a gift from God," says Goodgame, who has been in Uganda since 1980. "I knew we had to cover this land with a Bible-oriented response to AIDS."

Beyond fostering new patterns of sexual behavior, Answers has resulted in many professions of faith in Christ, as well as a deepening sense of commitment among people who were already Christians, whether they are dealing with the disease on a personal basis or caring for AIDS patients.

Linda Rice, a missionary in Uganda since 1971, knows a number of Christians afflicted with AIDS. Their prayers, she says, are not focused on material possessions. "They only pray for physical strength ... they pray for the salvation of others and the power to stand and be faithful in their Christian witness."

Both strength and witness will be vital in the coming years. Despite the government effort against AIDS, Uganda faces a long-term struggle simply to survive as a nation.

The nature of the disease allows an infected person to carry the virus -- and infect others -- for an average of six or seven years before becoming ill. That means most of the 120,000 new cases predicted for 1990 became infected in 1983 or 1984. Even if transmission of the AIDS virus stopped completely in 1989, there would be no decrease in the number of cases until 1995 or later.

And the disease is concentrated in the 25-45 age bracket and in the urban areas where the educated leaders live. The disease will be most devastating among the very people needed to continue Uganda's long climb out of two decades of war.

But the government mixes optimism with its pragmatism -- even if that necessitates a long look ahead.

"I think with continued health education we can survive," Okware insists. "We are seeing changes in the sexual behavior of the population already. The cases of sexually transmitted diseases (such as syphilis) reported by the clinics have dropped to almost zero, and the bars that two years ago were full of prostitutes are now quiet places where men drink by themselves.

"Also, half of our population is below the age of 15 and there are almost no cases of AIDS in that age group. If we can educate them to be sexually responsible and if we can get our blood supply (for transfusions) screened, I expect things to improve -- in 10 years."

A numerically small but significant boost to Uganda's hopes is coming from Ugandans who are returning to help rebuild the country after fleeing the chaos of earlier years. Among them are Elly Katabira, who had qualified to apply for British citizenship, and Richard Kabazi, a worker with International Students, a ministry based in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Katabira, a physician who now teaches at Makerere Medical School, established the country's first AIDS clinic and has organized an AIDS counseling service. Kabazi, a Baptist, is working with numerous evangelical churches in southern Uganda to open orphanages, schools and clinics.

Museveni, who is briefed regularly by Okware on the government progress in fighting AIDS, likewise voices optimism. "Despite the global bleak situation of AIDS, let us look into the future with hope," he told the nation in a radio address last December. "Africa has suffered many fatal diseases before and suffered through a slave trade in which millions of able bodies were lost. But we continue going strong."

Ten years is a long time to wait for the death rate to begin dropping, a long time to wait for the government to be able to use funds for development and education instead of health care. But Uganda waited 20 years for the wars to stop. It waited 10 years for the opportunity to enjoy new roads and repaired railroads and for overseas investment income to finally begin trickling back into the country.

So it will wait for AIDS to be defeated by education, while hoping for the discovery of a cure.

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Uganda's AIDS agony
punctuated by joy

By Craig Bird

F - FMB

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KAMPALA, Uganda (BP)--Joy is coming in the mourning in Uganda.

Agricultural production is hampered by too many work days lost attending funerals. Roadside carpentry shops that once displayed cabinets and beds now concentrate on caskets (two basic sizes, adult and infant). A shortage of barkcloth, the traditional burial wrapping, looms. Still, there is ample evidence of quiet, peaceful joy.

The Christians of Uganda are trusting in things not seen; their life-after-death hope is a heaven where there will be no weeping and no gnashing of teeth -- in other words, no AIDS.

AIDS is the primary producer of pain and sorrow in Uganda, and its death grip on the nation will continue to tighten for at least the next decade, according to even the most optimistic scenarios.

Truck drivers and high government officials, prostitutes and respected housewives, slum dwellers and the rich all are dying from AIDS in increasing numbers. There is no cure for those who contract the disease, no vaccine to form an immunity to it. There is only a string of infections that break down the body.

In the hospital wards, however, Christian AIDS patients astound the other victims by singing hymns of praise to God. Shivering with pain, these believers clutch their Bibles and whisper "hallelujah" when prayers are said over them.

And Christians are knocking aside the myths and prejudices which would isolate those with AIDS, denying them human contact.

They stand in stark contrast to non-believers who spend their fortunes on witch doctors only to die anyway, leaving their families destitute; or to others who secretly vow to infect as many others as they can with AIDS before they die; or to those who refuse to let a family member sick with AIDS remain in the house for fear of contamination.

"Soon in Uganda there will be two kinds of people with AIDS," says Linda Rice, a Southern Baptist missionary from Virginia who has worked in Uganda since 1971. "There will be the hopeless and the joyful."

Ugandan Christians share in numerous ways. A group of Baptist students in Kampala has written and produced a play, "The Cross and The Virus," confronting the myths of how AIDS is spread (not by mosquitoes or touching the sweat of someone with AIDS but by sexual contact). The play challenges family and friends to care for victims instead of shunning them. And it presents the need to accept God's offer of salvation. "Today. Don't wait."

The country has been saturated with an eight-page booklet called "Medical Science and God's Word Give ANSWERS To Questions Related To AIDS" that concludes with a section informing AIDS victims how they can attain eternal life.

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But perhaps the most powerful means of witness is by dying Christians in the day-to-day living out of their faith and their hope:

-- Nalongo, who died recently, was the first person in her village in southern Uganda, 18 miles from the Tanzanian border, to become a born-again believer. She was ostracized from her community but continued to witness until her husband, her seven children and 40 neighbors also became Christians. Two years ago, a year after being saved, she became ill with AIDS.

Too weak to sing, she tapped time on her Bible as her children gathered around her to sing, "praise God because He is very good -- his love is everlasting." Her whispered prayer, interrupted by surges of pain, asked God to strengthen her so she wouldn't get discouraged. Her children smiled as they sang.

-- Emmanuel, now dead at age 25, was saved two months after becoming ill. He had a vision that death was near and eagerly told his pastor how he wanted his funeral conducted. No one was to cry and only "saved people" were to stand around his casket to testify to his salvation. Approaching his house, the joyous singing of his family could be heard. Only his wife was grief-stricken, her face solemn in contrast to the smiles around her. "She is not yet saved," someone explained quietly.

-- Eddie has buried his wife, one of his three daughters and a brother -- all AIDS victims. He became sick in 1988, two years after a dramatic salvation experience when he burned all the idols and witchcraft items in his house. Family and neighbors insist AIDS is his punishment for offending the gods by burning the idols. He cries gently when he talks of how he misses his wife. But he smiles when he tells of his father becoming a Christian or of the response of his Muslim neighbors to twice-a-week Bible studies he hosts. He prays that Ugandan Christians will send missionaries to Zaire and Sudan to tell about Jesus Christ.

-- Justin, described by everyone who knows him as "sweet-spirited," also has buried his wife and only child, both claimed by AIDS. Christians who first witnessed to him remember him as selfish and cruel. They are amazed at how easily he now shares with anyone he meets what Jesus can do. Three or four times AIDS has confined him to bed for weeks at a time. Each time he has regained strength and resumed asking people if they are saved. Though poor, he never prays for food for himself or anything material; he prays for the salvation of others. "If everyone in the world could meet Justin, there would be no prejudice against AIDS victims," Sharon Pumpelly, a missionary from Kentucky, says.

The lists go on and on. Christians have not been exempted from the disease which may kill millions of Ugandans in the next few decades. But they obviously have been empowered to rejoice in a God stronger than death.

"Christians don't want to die any more than non-Christians," says Richard Goodgame, missionary doctor from Florida who wrote the Answers brochure. "But they have experienced grace and know there is something beyond this life -- something much better."

So, tears of sorrow run down faces in Uganda that smile with hope; gasps of pain come from the same lips that offer praise. There is joy in the mourning.

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AIDS expands Goodgame's
education, ministry

By Craig Bird

F - FMB

Baptist Press
5/9/89

KAMPALA, Uganda (BP)--Rick Goodgame's education was as good as America offers.

But nothing prepared the Southern Baptist missionary physician for what has consumed nearly a decade of his life -- the fight against Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

Goodgame came to Uganda in 1980 with an impressive background. After graduation from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., he earned a medical degree from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and undertook advanced study at Harvard Medical School. He even did a stint in the West Indies with the Rockefeller Foundation to get a better grasp on Third World medical problems.

His education was just beginning.

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"When we got to Uganda no one, anywhere, had heard of AIDS," says Goodgame, who in nine years at Makerere Medical School in Kampala, Uganda, now has diagnosed and treated thousands of AIDS patients.

The first cases in the United States were documented in 1981. "The early literature seems almost funny now," Goodgame says. "AIDS was thought to be a disease limited almost exclusively to American homosexuals, drug users and Haitians."

But in 1983 the first diagnoses were made in Kampala. "We were slightly bewildered," Goodgame recalls. "We wondered why this 'American disease' was showing up in Africa." Within a few years, there was mounting evidence the Uganda-Zaire-Tanzania area likely had the highest concentration of AIDS cases in the world.

The spiral has been steadily -- and rapidly -- upward ever since. Three years ago there were only a few hundred confirmed cases of AIDS in Uganda. By January 1988, very conservative official reports listed only 4,000 confirmed cases.

Now projections warn of 10,000 new cases a month.

AIDS fell full force on Mulago Hospital in Kampala, where Goodgame teaches, straining the already overloaded centerpiece of Uganda's health care system. As the death count climbed Goodgame faced two emotions foreign both to his personality and his theology: depression and fear.

The depression came first.

AIDS robs a doctor of hope that some combination of medicines will produce a cure for the patient. "The death rate from AIDS, anywhere in the world, not just Uganda, is 100 percent," Goodgame points out.

By early 1988, the normally upbeat Goodgame was despondent. "The NRA (the government of President Yoweri Museveni which had come to power in 1986) was floundering, the economy was floundering, the destructive war in the north showed no signs of letting up and then AIDS on top of it all.

"I even pretended to be sick -- all I wanted to do was play tennis."

Instead, when his wife Susan went to Namibia for a publications workshop, he spent the five days studying the Bible and writing. When she returned, the depression was gone and in its place Goodgame had an eight-page brochure: "Medical Science and God's Word Give ANSWERS To Questions Related to AIDS."

Two million copies, in the 12 major languages of Uganda, have been printed. Goodgame regards the brochure as "a gift from God -- a way to cover this land with an evangelical witness while informing people about AIDS."

The final question in the booklet asks, "How can I live forever if I'm dying from AIDS?" The answer is relayed solely through scripture quotations: Repent of your sins, put your faith in Jesus, be born again in the Spirit and receive assurance of eternal life.

The brochure's impact is reaching outside Uganda. A Ugandan government official speaking in Mexico in 1988 at a worldwide conference on AIDS took thousands of copies of the Answers brochure and distributed them to delegates from around the world. And the interdenominational Navigators ministry has asked permission to reprint it for use all over the world.

An encounter with fear, however, was still ahead for Goodgame. The depression had resulted from Goodgame's concern for those around him, but the fear struck at a deeply personal level.

He and Susan had determined when they first came to Uganda that "nothing can happen that will make us look at God's love for us differently, that our understanding of God's love did not depend on our children being spared when bullets were flying, or our house and car being exempted when gangs of thieves were roaming the streets."

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So when Goodgame began waking up at night in a cold sweat with the itchy skin and aching mouth common to AIDS victims, he didn't feel God had betrayed him, but to his very core, he feared he had contracted the disease.

"In the early years there wasn't much data about transmission of AIDS," he says. "The first four years out here I worked most of the time without gloves or mask." Since his specialty is internal medicine, he was in direct contact with the blood and body fluids of thousands of AIDS victims.

Both he and Susan are the children of doctors and have brothers who are doctors and they received numerous phone calls from family members. "They told me I was going to get AIDS and give it to Susan," he recounts. "They were concerned because they love us, but it had to be our choice. You can't have faith for someone else and they can't have faith for us."

But in early 1988, "when it finally clicked how intense my exposure had been," fear stalked him through several nights.

Finally, Goodgame quietly went to a German colleague and asked him to check his blood for HIV (the AIDS virus). "I knew I had it," Goodgame remembers. But the test was negative.

"I had a pretty good idea it was a fragile virus and difficult to transmit from one person to another except through sexual contact or blood transfusion," he says. "Now I'm more convinced than ever."

But if the test had been positive, Goodgame feels his reaction still would be shaped by the vow he and Susan made when they came to Uganda, that their relationship with God wasn't built on personal safety and comfort. He has since seen too many Christians die with AIDS -- with a joy totally contrary to the pain they were suffering -- to change his mind now.

The Goodgames soon will leave for Houston, Texas, where they will live during a year's furlough. Goodgame will be teaching at the Baylor Medical School there.

Goodgame is uncertain whether he and his family will return to Uganda, despite his key contributions to the fight against AIDS.

"We feel led to go where there are few or no missionaries, where there are few or no Baptist churches; where more traditional missionaries cannot or will not go; and where there are major or critical needs in medical education," Goodgame says. "We want to go where people agree the need is critical."

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Response of church vital
in stemming AIDS spread

F-FMB

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The church of Jesus Christ, as a force able to be mobilized worldwide, could play a key role in stemming the spread of AIDS around the world, missions experts say.

In the United States alone -- one of more than 125 nations where AIDS cases have been reported -- the surgeon general has estimated that by 1991, about 145,000 patients with AIDS will need supportive services costing at least \$8 billion and perhaps as much as \$16 billion.

In parts of Africa, where the disease has wiped out entire villages, and in Asia and Latin America, the impact on future government budgets is not even foreseeable. The average cost of treating two AIDS patients in the United States, for example, exceeds the annual budget of the largest hospital in the African nation of Zaire.

Worldwide AIDS statistics vary drastically, some more conservative than others, but missions researcher David Barrett projects two million cases of AIDS and 50 million AIDS carriers now exist worldwide.

Some missionaries recognize AIDS as a test for the church. The church can move in and make an impact, they say, or shrink back further from touching the world where it hurts.

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Rick Goodgame, a Southern Baptist missionary physician who organized a Bible-based public information campaign against AIDS in Uganda, is writing a manual for use in training village workers to screen and work with AIDS patients. He hopes the World Health Organization and the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board will provide the funds to publish it and that it can be adapted for worldwide use.

"There's a sense in which AIDS is a modern-day leprosy," says William Gaventa, a former missionary physician to Nigeria, who directs the Foreign Mission Board's missionary health department.

The church pioneered work with leprosy victims and spent much money and energy on them, and it could be the only worldwide force able to be mobilized behind such efforts with AIDS victims. The world's 1.7 billion Christians include 500 million active Christians in 56 global networks, according to Barrett's research.

Gaventa projects a dim future for AIDS victims, if Christians allow themselves to believe that the choices of many AIDS sufferers concerning morality makes them unworthy of large-scale ministries of compassion.

At a time when AIDS patients are open to the gospel, the church must treat them as Jesus Christ himself would, said Uganda missionary Jim Rice. The credibility of Christians as a whole, he added, could rest with how they respond to AIDS victims.

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Prestonwood calls
Graham as pastor

By Ken Camp

N-Texas

Baptist Press
5/9/89

DALLAS (BP)--Prestonwood Baptist Church of Dallas, whose founding pastor Billy Weber resigned last October after confessing to marital infidelity, called Jack Graham of West Palm Beach, Fla., as pastor May 7.

Graham, 38, has been pastor of First Baptist Church in West Palm Beach since 1981. Previous pastorates include First Baptist Church of Duncan, Okla., and East Side Baptist Chapel in Cross Plains, Texas.

Graham, a native of Conway, Ark., was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1970 at Sagamore Hill Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, where he later served as associate pastor.

He is an honors graduate of Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas, and of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, where he earned master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees.

In addition to involvement on the associational and state levels, Graham also has been on the Southern Baptist Convention committee on committees, has been chairman of the SBC tellers committee and currently is a director of the Home Mission Board.

He is married to Deborah Sue Graham of Mineral Wells, Texas, and they have three children: Jason Matthew, 15, Kelly, 11, and Joshua, 5.

Graham said he personally is committed to the Cooperative Program, the Southern Baptist unified budget plan, and that he hopes to lead his people to become "pacesetters" in missions giving.

Asked at a news conference following his call about his involvement in Southern Baptist Convention politics, Graham confirmed that he had attended several meetings in the southeast called by leaders of the convention's conservative wing. "But I have not been in any smoke-filled rooms making political plans," he added.

Graham said he has no plans for involvement in denominational politics in Texas, noting that he has "enough to do" as pastor of Prestonwood and that he is "very supportive of the denomination."

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Graham, who will assume the Prestonwood pulpit June 4, succeeds Weber, 46, who resigned after admitting he had been guilty of adultery. At the time, Weber announced he would enter a period of "restoration and recovery" for six months to a year before considering a return to the ministry.

Weber and his wife, Robin, recently began teaching a weekly Tuesday evening Bible study class in Richardson, Texas, which reportedly attracted 300 persons.

Weber began the nucleus of Prestonwood Church in 1977, holding meetings in homes and later at a recreation center. In 1979, the church was founded in an affluent north Dallas neighborhood.

In 11 years, the congregation became one of the fastest-growing Southern Baptist churches in the nation and gained widespread recognition for its innovative approach to reaching young, upwardly mobile professionals. At its peak, the church had a Sunday School enrollment of more than 11,000 and was adding members at a rate of 110 per month prior to Weber's departure.

William Tolar, dean of the school of theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, served as Prestonwood's interim pastor.

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BPRA presents top awards,
elects Wilkinson president

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DALLAS (BP)--Baptist Public Relations Association awarded top honors to communicators from the Southern Baptist Sunday School, Home Mission, Foreign Mission boards and Woman's Missionary Union during its annual workshop this spring.

Judges selected the best entries from among award winners in five major categories in the organization's Wilmer C. Fields Awards Competition.

Martha Skelton of the Foreign Mission Board received the Frank Burkhalter Award in writing for a feature series, "Soviet Union: When Will the Bells Ring Again"

The Arthur S. Davenport Award in public relations and development went to the communications group of Woman's Mission Union for "WMU Centennial."

Ron Lawson of the Home Mission Board and Ken Lawson of the Foreign Mission Board earned the M.E. Dodd Memorial Award for audiovisual production for "The Darkness Shall Turn."

Phyllis Thompson of the Home Mission Board received the Albert McClellan Award in print media and design for "Missions USA" magazine.

The Fon H. Scofield Award for publication photography went to Jim Veneman of the Sunday School Board for a black-and-white photo, "Let Us Be Thankful."

In other action, BPRA elected as president David Wilkinson, vice president for seminary relations of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Wilkinson, a BPRA member since 1977, is a two-time recipient of the organization's Frank Burkhalter Award.

Other new officers are awards chairman and immediate past president, Anita Bowden, director of print department, Foreign Mission Board; program vice president, Leonard E. Hill, managing editor, The Baptist Program; membership vice president, Robert O'Brien, overseas correspondent manager, Foreign Mission Board; newsletter editor, Mark Wingfield, assistant director of new and information, Home Mission Board; secretary, Pam Parry, associate editor, Baptist True Union; and treasurer, Mark Wyatt, director of public relations, California Southern Baptist Convention.

Barbara Owen, public relations coordinator for the Tennessee Baptist Convention, continues as BPRA administrative and placement service coordinator.

New officers assume duties following BPRA's annual breakfast June 14 in Las Vegas, Nev., during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

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There goes the neighborhood says nightclub owner when Baptists plant new church

By Ken Camp

FF - TEXAS

DALLAS (BP)--Although zoning regulations and opposition by a local nightclub owner could have meant the premature demise of the new Parkway Hills Baptist Church in Carrollton, Texas, the congregation rose to life in an open-air service beneath a tent Easter morning.

Parkway Hills, a mission of First Baptist Church of Hebron, Texas, had been meeting as a Bible study for several weeks in the homes of core-group members, looking forward to its first worship service in a leased facility on Easter. The only problem was the building's proximity to a nightclub.

Pastor Samuel Dennis and representatives of the mission negotiated a lease and thought that everything was in order, even though they knew the building was within 300 feet of the nightclub.

"Of course, the ordinance originally was designed to protect churches, to keep a bar from building next to them," said Dennis. However, the fledgling congregation soon discovered the law cut both ways when the nightclub owner contested the church's lease.

"The nightclub owner said, 'I don't want a church going in there. They'll hurt my business,'" said Dennis. "I told her I'd gladly exchange members with her if she wanted to."

Rather than create bad publicity and hard feelings by fighting the nightclub owner, Parkway Hills decided to find another location. Within 10 days, a new meeting site was secured for an outdoor Easter Sunday service, and the Baptist General Convention of Texas loaned the church a tent for shelter.

"I stood out all alone out there at 9:15 on Easter morning. It was my first time to ever pastor a church, and I wasn't sure anyone was coming," said Dennis.

His spirits were lifted when a member of the core group arrived with a boutonniere in his lapel, announcing that he was ready to serve as an usher and help park cars. Within a short time, 114 people gathered under the tent for a worship service.

Dennis first felt a calling into the pastorate when William M. Pinson Jr., executive director of the Texas Baptist Convention, spoke at the church where he was administrator. Soon afterward, Bill Tinsley, director of missions in Denton Baptist Association, contacted Dennis about helping to start a new mission.

"God used both those men to show me his will for my life at this time," he said.

Parkway Hills currently is meeting each Sunday at an automobile dealership, but a church committee already is investigating the possibility of purchasing a building site in southeastern Denton County.

The church has received a "start-up gift" from the state convention, made possible by Texas Baptists' gifts to missions through the Cooperative Program unified budget and the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions.

"It's such a privilege to be a part of Texas Baptists and the Mission Texas effort to start new churches," Dennis said.