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May 23, 1989

89-83

China's Protestant leaders
back student demonstrators

By Erich Bridges

N-FMB

NANJING, China (BP)--China's Protestant leaders have thrown their support behind the thousands of students and other citizens demonstrating for democracy on the streets of the nation.

A statement praising the students was released May 23 by Bishop Ding Guangxun (K.H. Ting), head of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, Chinese Protestants' two representative bodies.

"We wholeheartedly affirm the student demonstrations in Beijing, Shanghai and other cities in recent days," said the statement, dated May 18. "The hunger strikes are a patriotic activity. Their demands arise from a feeling of patriotism.

"We sincerely hope and call upon the top-level leaders of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council to carry on a dialogue with the students as soon as possible."

Ding added a personal statement specifically supporting the participation of Chinese Christians in the historic call for democracy. Students from the national Protestant seminary in Nanjing have taken to the streets daily with tens of thousands of other Nanjing citizens demanding new freedoms.

"I am glad that Christians are making their presence felt in these demonstrations," Ding said. "I am very glad the students in the Nanjing Theological Seminary are taking an active part. They not only join the demonstrations but also try to serve their fellow students by sending them drinking water and bread. I understand the Christians of Beijing are also playing an active role."

Long recognized as China's top Protestant leader, Ding also commands influence in political circles. He was elected last year as a vice president of the National People's Congress, a broad-based official body that advises government leaders.

Ding joined some 40 other members of the congress' standing committee in calling for an emergency meeting to discuss the crisis "so that the democratic process could be facilitated and bloodshed avoided," he said.

Ding's statement immediately was backed by the Amity Foundation, the Protestant-sponsored social service organization that earlier had urged government and Communist leaders to negotiate with the students.

The bishop also thanked the people of Hong Kong for their "patriotic action" in support of democracy in China and asked world Christians to "remember us in their prayers."

Up to 1 million Hong Kong residents -- one-sixth of the colony's population -- marched May 21 in solidarity with Chinese demonstrators. About 10,000 Hong Kong Christians met for prayer before joining the rally, reportedly the largest in Hong Kong's history.

"God needs a courageous Chinese church to stand up for the Chinese people," Hong Kong Baptist pastor Gandhi Kwong told his congregation. "Today's Beijing is tomorrow's Hong Kong."

Hong Kong is scheduled to revert from British to Chinese rule in 1997.

MasterLife impact
cited around globe

By Linda Lawson

N-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--Testimonies of how MasterLife discipleship training is impacting people and churches positively in the United States and more than 100 countries were featured in the first MasterLife Growth Clinic Teleconference transmitted live May 21 on the Baptist Telecommunication Network.

MasterLife is a 26-week adult discipleship training course introduced in 1980 by the church training department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. More than 175,000 people in the United States have taken the course, which also is being taught in 110 countries and has been translated into almost 50 languages.

Avery Willis, manager of the leadership development section in the board's church training department, and Jimmy Crowe, senior projects coordinator in the section, were hosts of the two-hour teleconference. It included live telephone conversations from MasterLife alumni in other countries as well as several guest panelists and phone-in questions from viewers.

"MasterLife is being used greatly in Africa," said Carroll Shaw, a Southern Baptist missionary to South Africa in a telephone call. "Lives are being changed, souls saved and churches strengthened."

MasterLife is being translated into eight other African languages, with a goal of having the materials in 26 African languages within 10 years, Shaw said.

Harry Monro, national coordinator of Crossover Australia, a goal of the Baptist Union of Australia to share the gospel with every person in the nation by the year 2000, said more than 3,000 people have received MasterLife training in Australia. Monro also has conducted a MasterLife workshop in Papua, New Guinea.

In New Guinea, "we're using simple English materials we get from Kenya, so this is quite an international undertaking," said Monro.

Bill Wagner, Southern Baptist growth and evangelism consultant for Europe and the Middle East, said MasterLife has been translated into 13 languages in 17 countries in the last five years. In Hungary, 95 percent of the Baptist pastors have received training.

Mike Pennington, a Southern Baptist missionary to Venezuela, said, "Our convention has adopted MasterLife as the basic ingredient for reaching 1 million people by the year 2000."

From only 3,000 Baptists when the goal was set, Pennington said, the number has grown to 14,000. "Multiplication -- the principle of one Christian discipling others -- does work," he said.

One viewer called in to ask about the six-month length of the course and requirements for daily study along with weekly meetings.

"It is tedious. It's long. It's hard," said Emerson Wiles, pastor of First Baptist Church of Fayetteville, Tenn. "It's probably one of the hardest things you will ever do, but it's worth it."

Peggy Chapman, a dental hygienist and member of Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville, has led four groups through MasterLife since she completed the course. A person better understands MasterLife principles through teaching the course, she said.

Marion Wilson, a dentist and member of First Baptist Church of Old Hickory, Tenn., said MasterLife "has revived our church. Our laypeople have been strengthened."

Prisons represent an important mission field for MasterLife, noted Don Dennis, an ex-convict, MasterLife alumnus and ordained Baptist minister from Ennis, Texas. He has helped establish MasterLife groups in three Texas prisons and has more than 300 prisoners in 24 prisons who have signed up for the course.

"I need MasterLife teachers," appealed Dennis. "I will teach them how to go into the prisons. I'll go in with them for the first two weeks."

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Willis said he hoped the teleconference would generate interest among people who have not taken MasterLife and also motivate some who have taken the course to lead others through it.

Second Baptist Church of Houston, Texas, leads all churches in MasterLife participants, he said. In April, Mack Boykin became the 1,000th member of the church to complete the course.

A teleconference to introduce the new LifeGuide for Discipleship and Doctrine will be held Sept. 10, and a teleconference for more than 10,000 members of the National Prayer Corps is scheduled for Sept. 17.

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Missions no joke
for comedian Clower

By Tim Bearden

N-CO
(B'hood)

Baptist Press
5/23/89

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Comedian Jerry Clower understands the importance of Christian expression.

Throughout his career, he has remained true to his Christian convictions. He also has been a friend to High School Baptist Young Men, a Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission missions education program.

"I love to help young men be all that God wants them to be," said Clower. "If my encouragement and help will guide one boy or one young man in the right direction, then I'll give it my best."

Clower, a former counselor in the Southern Baptist Royal Ambassador missions organization, is the featured speaker at the annual Brotherhood Breakfast, Wednesday, June 14, at the Las Vegas (Nev.) Hilton Hotel. He also will present the 1989 National Jerry Clower Award to Kendall Shuler of Mansfield, Mo., the High School Baptist Young Men's Missions Speak Out winner. The award was named for Clower in 1984.

"Jerry's commitment to missions education for young men is important to the Brotherhood Commission and Southern Baptists," said commission President James H. Smith. "Young men need positive role models who have a high profile and stay true to their Christian convictions."

Born in Amite County, Miss., Clower was typical of country boys all over America, he said. But his imagination was cultivated early, as he and his friends developed their own entertainment by playing 'gator or Tarzan down at the creek.

After high school, he joined the Navy and began telling stories to reduce the tensions of his friends in combat. He saw action aboard the carrier Hornet in the South Pacific and won a Presidential Unit Citation with three battle stars.

Afterwards, he received his college education at Southwest Mississippi Junior College and Mississippi State University. He was a well-known campus figure, made good grades and was involved in a host of campus activities including football. And he continued telling his stories.

After graduation, Clower was in charge of the 4-H Club program in Lafayette County, Miss. Later he became a sales executive for a chemical fertilizer firm. While a salesman, Clower recorded his stories to increase his sales. His friends heard the tapes and encouraged him to record his first album.

The Grand Ole Opry star has made numerous records and is an artist for MCA records. He was co-host of the nationally syndicated TV show, "Nashville on the Road," wrote three books, currently appears in radio and TV commercials and is the host of "Country Crossroads," the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission's Christian country radio show, which is broadcast on more than 2,800 stations.

Reservations for the Brotherhood Breakfast in Las Vegas can be made through the Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn.

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Photo mailed to Baptist state papers from the Brotherhood Commission.

International Legion of Honor
created for RA workers

MEMPHIS, Tenn.--(BP) State and national leaders of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission have approved the Royal Ambassador International Legion of Honor for volunteer adult workers in Royal Ambassadors, a missions education program for boys in grades 19.

The Legion of Honor will recognize personal involvement and years of service of dedicated adult RA workers, provide a means of support to further the work of RAs in the world, and provide fellowship opportunities for RA leaders, Brotherhood Commission leaders said.

"There are hundreds of Southern Baptist men and women across the country who have given countless hours of volunteer missions service and touched the lives of thousands of boys working in the Royal Ambassador program," said Commission President James H. Smith. "The Royal Ambassador Legion of Honor is a way we can recognize these unsung heroes who make Royal Ambassadors in the local church a success."

Membership in the Legion of Honor is open to any man or woman who has five years of continuous service in RA work at the church, state, national or international levels. Applicants must be recommended by their local churches, and/or state Brotherhood departments for membership and provide a one-time contribution to the organization.

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North Carolina minister
honored as poet laureate

N-CO
(B'hood)

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ELKIN, N.C. (BP)--L. Grady Burgiss, retired North Carolina pastor and missions director who started 43 churches and missions during 50 years as a minister was honored on his 87th birthday recently as "poet laureate of Yadkin County."

On his 50th anniversary as a minister, Burgiss compiled data indicating that 37 of the churches he started still are ministering in North Carolina, reporting more than 450 baptisms and giving more than \$500,000 per year to missions.

Burgiss is the author of seven volumes of poetry and an autobiography, "A Planter of Churches." He was ordained in 1925 and started his first church in 1936 after a 10-year bout with tuberculosis.

He was the first full-time director of missions for Yadkin Baptist Association and was pastor of churches in North Carolina for more than 30 years. Most of his books have been written since retirement.

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Parenting overseas:
the other side of prayer

By Tim Seanor

F-CO
(B'hood)

Baptist Press
5/23/89

PUERTO VARAS, Chile (BP)--Missionary parents cope with stress as many Christians do -- through faith and prayer. But these aspects of Christian life have special meaning to foreign missionaries Archie and Caroline Jones.

Parenting overseas presents unusual and exciting family challenges. "I feel a tremendous responsibility trying to weigh my role as a missionary and as a parent," said Mrs. Jones about raising their 5-year-old adopted Chilean daughter, Libby.

"It would be easy to be available for everybody and everything and the thousands of jobs that need to be done and not be available for Libby," Jones said. "I catch myself having to put on brakes as a missionary and go back into 'parent gear.'"

As with families everywhere, the Joneses' experience times which are valued by them as blessings from God.

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"The most exciting time in our family was moving into our house because it gave us a sense of permanence," related Mrs. Jones of their home in southern Chile purchased with Southern Baptist Lottie Moon Christmas Offering money. "We lived in a downtown apartment on the fourth floor in a building with no elevator for almost four years. Libby never had a dog. She had a swing that somebody gave her but we had to attach it to our doorway inside our apartment.

"We moved into this house, and it was like being a real family, with a real house, with a real yard and a real dog, which was something we had never experienced."

While they have many similarities to families everywhere, foreign missionaries have unique child-rearing concerns.

"Last furlough, Libby was in the back seat of a car with a cousin who handed her a penny," recalled Jones. "She said, 'How sweet. It has a picture of Jesus on it.' She was informed by her 4-year-old cousin that it was a picture of Abraham Lincoln.

"We want Libby to think like North Americans think, so we are beginning to work on teaching North American history and celebrating North American holidays -- even though the world around us doesn't."

Missionary parents also see positive aspects in raising children overseas.

"We could put Libby in the worst school at the end of the tiniest dirt road in Chile, and still she's growing up with some super advantages that she wouldn't have if we weren't missionaries," said Mrs. Jones. "She's growing up trilingual because of speaking English in the home, Spanish as the national language and German taught in her school. She is bicultural, a world traveler, and knows more about math at age 5 than I did in the eighth grade."

Family relationships often provide the best way a foreign missionary can show Christ's love for all people, she added: "We have an interesting facet to our parent-child relationship. Libby is our adopted Chilean child. She came to be a part of our family when she was 3 weeks old. But we never considered how the Chileans would react to us adopting a Chilean baby.

"Most people assume that whatever we do as a family that is different from Chileans is because we are North American. But after we get to know them, we get to explain that all North Americans don't function exactly like we do. We weave into the conversation that we are Christians."

Missionary parents experience loneliness while they are isolated from their own parents and siblings they have reported. When illness strikes loved ones in the United States, missionary families must deal with feelings of helplessness, discouragement and sometimes anger. Mrs. Jones recalled her feelings when a grandmother was facing surgery: "It was one of those days when everything that could go wrong did. I found myself looking out our window at the lake and the volcanos. We had the most beautiful sunset which made the volcanos turn pink. Archie was out of town, and I was standing there looking at that gorgeous sunset, tears streaming down my face."

She prayed: "I don't want to be here. Don't show me the sunset. I want to live down the street from my sister. Yes, I know the lake is gorgeous, but I'd like to be sitting in Granny Ruth's hospital room right now because she needs us. Yes, I know that it's summer and everything is green again and the lake is covered with ducks. I know all these things are beautiful, but I want to be with family."

Later, she recalled: "I let myself have a good cry, and things started coming back to me -- things I had learned from my family in childhood like Matthew 19:29, 'Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother ... will receive a hundred times as much.' There was enough faith on the inside, a solid foundation, knowing that I may be a long way from family, but I'm not a long way from God.

"I grew up praying, 'God bless the missionaries,' And I'm finding out what it's like to live on the other side of those prayers. I don't understand it. But there are certain moments in our lives when it's almost as if you hear 'Hang in there. I am hearing thousands of prayers on your behalf, I will answer them.'"

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Photos mailed to Baptist state papers by SBC Brotherhood Commission.

Maryland's Wood
tackles ministry

By Jim Burton

F - CO
(B'hood)

FRUITLAND, Md. (BP)--Dow Wood is a big man, almost too big for Maryland, the state he calls home. He's certainly too big for the two-door imported car he drove more than 180,000 miles throughout Maryland and Delaware promoting the Southern Baptist Brotherhood organization.

He's big enough to tackle tough ministries, but not so big he can't kneel down and pray with someone who is hurting.

Within his 6-foot-2-inch frame, worn from years of construction work, is a bivocational pastor with a heart for missions that was first nurtured when he was a 25-year-old military man.

"I had been a leader of volunteers in the service," recalled Wood, "and I felt there was no reason why those same abilities could not be used in the Lord's work."

Stationed in Belleville, Ill., in 1949, he was influenced by the ministry of E.P. Pratt. The pastor dreamed that one day church members would get out of the pew and begin to minister like ministers, Wood noted.

That exposure as a young man to lay ministry led to Wood's active participation in missions.

"Saturday afternoons was street service, singing and current testimony," said Wood, 61. "Sunday afternoons, we'd do nursing homes. One evening a week would be a jail service. Then we'd make calls on senior citizens a couple nights."

Wood described the years following his time in Belleville as "sort of like a roller coaster." Secular employment took him to Maryland.

"With the change about 10 years ago in church renewal, it brought back to me everything that Dr. Pratt had been trying to teach us," he said. "Because of it, I believe stronger in mission programs than most people do."

Wood now is unable to spend Sundays on the road speaking to breakfast meetings of the Baptist Men organization. Instead, the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission trustee fills the pulpit at First Baptist Church of Fruitland, near Salisbury, Md.

The church had suffered some difficult experiences. It was broke and without a pastor. Two of the three deacons had been active in associational Brotherhood work and knew Wood. Three years ago, they asked him to preach.

"I had to turn them down," said Wood. "The next Tuesday or so I found out that because I hadn't spoken they hadn't gotten anybody else."

Wood, who began preaching in 1949, soon began supply preaching regularly at First Baptist, which averaged 12 people in attendance. He since has been called as pastor and has been ordained. Attendance has grown to about 50 people.

Wood accepts no salary but does receive a car allowance. Along with his wife, Mary, he is committed to nurturing First Baptist back to health -- both financially and as a ministering church.

"One of the things we wanted to do was not only tithe, but double it," said Wood. "It amounts to Mary and I giving this church the same salary they were giving the predecessor."

But their greatest investment is in the lives of other people, in the church and on the job.

"I've got one boy at work who was severely burned as a child, his mother abandoned him and left him in the flames," said Wood. "He needed someone to listen and talk to like a father would. By working with people you have an opportunity to talk to them."

And when the big man talks, people listen.

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(BP) photos mailed separately to state Baptist newspapers by the Brotherhood Commission.