



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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May 31, 1989

89-87

HMB commissions 104 students  
for summer church starting

N-HMB

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--In a Home Mission Board Praxis commissioning service, Texas pastor Joel Gregory urged seminary students to dispell ignorance about the Christian gospel by starting churches.

Gregory, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, addressed 104 students during a joint commissioning service for Praxis participants from the six Southern Baptist seminaries. The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and seminaries cooperate to send student church-starting teams across America through the Praxis program each summer.

The name "Praxis" refers to the point at which learning and practice intersect, said Dan Crawford, Praxis director at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. "This summer students will put into practice what they have learned in the classroom," he explained.

The Home Mission Board sends Praxis participants for 10 weeks of ministry in communities targeted for church starts. Mark Clifton, national Praxis coordinator, likened the students to Marines. "They hit the beachhead before anyone else gets there," he noted.

Gregory warned the students they will encounter ignorance of the gospel in this task. "Most people do not know the elements of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ -- not even the simplest things about it," he said.

Although the United States has more ordained ministers than any other nation and is saturated with Christian literature, "you can stand on a corner of this church property and throw a rock and hit a house where the residents do not know the simplest elements of the gospel," he said.

"Make the simple message clear. Don't fool yourself into thinking they all already know it.

"I hope as you go out you carve a niche. It doesn't have to be a big niche, but a niche that when you leave there, you could say they heard the word of the Lord."

This summer, Praxis teams will work with 19 state Baptist conventions from California to New York. The teams include 47 students from Southwestern Seminary; 15 from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.; 13 from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in New Orleans; 11 from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.; and nine each from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

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Convention program  
to be in Braille

Baptist Press  
5/31/89

N-CO

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--For the first time the program of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting will be offered in Braille.

Charles Couey, director of blind ministries at Park Avenue Baptist Church in Nashville, wanted a schedule for the June 13-15 SBC annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nev. He arranged to received the program by telephone modem into his VersaBraille, a storage device that can be hooked up to the church's Braille printer.

Couey and his church will provide copies of the SBC program in Braille to blind people who will attend the convention. People who want copies should contact Park Avenue Baptist Church, 44th and Park Ave., Nashville, Tenn. 37209, phoe (615) 297-5336.

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He hopes blind Baptists will begin attending the SBC annual meetings, noting plans to organize a Southern Baptist Conference for the Blind at 1990 SBC in New Orleans.

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Golden Gate  
graduates 112

By Eddy Oliver

N-CO  
(GGBTS)

Baptist Press  
5/31/89

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary graduated 112 students, one of the largest graduating classes in the school's history, during its 41st annual spring commencement May 26.

Herschel H. Hobbs, pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, presented the commencement address, "Magnify Your Calling."

Hobbs told graduates they must magnify their ministry by appreciating the privilege to minister and having the proper understanding of how to function as "career ministers."

"I'm hearing things within the Southern Baptist Convention that are strongly un-Baptistic relating to the authority of the pastor," he said.

Referring to a resolution passed at the 1988 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas, relating to the priesthood of the believer, Hobbs said it was used "to dive into the pool of pastoral authority."

The only authority a pastor has in a church is leadership, Hobbs said, noting, "There is no place for a boss in a New Testament church."

Hobbs, who is 81 and celebrating 60 years in Christian ministry this year, was chairman of the committee that drafted the Baptist Faith and Message statement adopted by the SBC in 1963. He also was a member of the SBC Peace Committee that reviewed the current convention controversy.

The graduating class had 42 people from an ethnic background and included 14 doctor of ministry and four doctor of philosophy candidates.

Golden Gate Seminary is an agency of the SBC accredited to issue degrees in theology, religious education and church music. More than 5,000 students have attended classes at the Seminary since its founding in 1944.

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Urban challenge presented  
to N. American Baptist Men

By Jim Burton

N-CO  
(B'hood)

Baptist Press  
5/31/89

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Baptist churches that flee to suburbia for bigger, more ornate facilities stand in open defiance of the "whosoever will" doctrine, said research consultant Chris McNairy.

"It is ironic that the projected image of the 21st century Baptist church is almost identical to that of the 19th century Catholic church -- a limited number of large selfish church memberships with large church facilities whose only outreach to those outside its walls is the sign with the church's name," McNairy said.

McNairy spoke during the Baptist World Alliance's North American Baptist Men's Fellowship meeting at Graceland Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn.

"Claiming the Cities for Christ" was the theme of the meeting. The Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission was host for the meeting, which attracted about 150 men from seven Baptist denominations in the United States and Canada.

McNairy was raised in the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. and ordained by the Progressive National Baptist Convention. When he moved to Memphis several years ago, he found his niche for Christian service when he discovered Southern Baptists, he said.

He is a bivocational assistant pastor of Westhaven Baptist Church. He has written a manuscript on black urban church growth after visiting 20 North American cities.

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"We love to preach at the city, but we somehow avoid preaching to the city," said McNairy. "If we preached to the city, we would feel the hurt of an 11-year-old girl who finds herself in the delivery room of the maternity ward."

To win the cities, McNairy said, Baptists will need the vision, initiative and compassion to lift up Jesus.

His challenge to lift up Jesus was echoed by Walter Cade, outgoing North American Baptist Men's Fellowship president. "When we lift up Jesus we will draw all men to Christ," Cade said.

The North American Baptist Men organization is faced with three challenges, said Cade, a member of Eighth Street Baptist Church in Kansas City, Kan.:

- To recognize that its harnessed power can spiritually change the problems of the world.
- To get more pastors to utilize this untapped resource of men in local churches.
- To urge its members to become strong, more aggressive witnesses for Jesus Christ in the streets.

Rick Tobias of the Canadian Baptist Federation warned conferees that urban ministry cannot happen without ruffling some feathers.

"We have built traditions in the church and ways of doing things that don't always work well in the city," said Tobias. "When you come into the core of a large city and try to work to develop strategies that do work, you sometimes find yourself up against tradition."

Tobias is coordinator of Evergreen Center in Toronto, which includes Yonge Street Mission, a drop-in community facility for street children and teens.

"Often in the city Christians lose the right to speak," said Tobias. "Our lack of credibility, integrity, spirituality or participation in structures and systems that may or may not be viewed as oppressive causes people to look at us and say you don't have the right to speak, so they pull out our tongue. When we have no tongue, the gospel demands demonstration."

During the closing session, Archie Goldie, the Baptist World Alliance's division director of Baptist World Aid and secretary to the North American Baptist Fellowship, identified the gospel as an urban document of Christ's ministry from city to city. Now Baptists are facing the first urban generation, he said.

"We as Baptists are losing contact with the whole urban movement," said Goldie. "When we move out, we have abdicated our responsibility to share the gospel in the city."

Brotherhood Commission President James H. Smith led conferees in street witnessing at LeMoyné Gardens, Memphis' largest public housing project.

"This conference pierced the heart of today's greatest ministry challenge," said Smith. "When we meet the urban ministry challenge, then God will say, 'Well done, my good and faithful servants.'"

Ed Bohstedt of the American Baptist Convention was elected president of the fellowship. New vice presidents are Bill Rhoads of Atlanta, Southern Baptist Convention; Wayne Travis, Canadian Baptist Federation; Forestal Lawton, National Baptist Convention of America; Sam Richardson, Progressive National Baptist Convention; Tommie Williams, NBC, USA, Inc.; Harold Wolgast, American Baptist Churches; and Kirk Looper, Seventh Day Baptists.

Ken Merrick, a Southern Baptist from Rockledge, Fla., is secretary-treasurer, and W.J. Isbell, a Southern Baptist from Bessemer, Ala., is director of the Baptist World Alliance Baptist men's department.

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Photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers from Brotherhood Commission.

Church liability su real danger,  
attorney warns pastors, lay leaders By Jacqueline Kersh

N-C  
(Fla.)

DELAND, Fla. (BP)--A caster falls off of the church piano and a five-year-old boy is injured. The result: a \$90,000 settlement against the church.

A church member is hurt in a fall on the sanctuary steps. The result: a \$78,000 judgment against the church.

A visiting evangelist is shot by a member of the congregation. The result: \$135,000 against the church.

A youngster is injured running a church-sponsored obstacle course and becomes a quadriplegic. The result: a \$2 million judgment against the church.

A litany of recent church-related liability cases was recited by attorney William Colbert of Sanford, Fla., to more than 40 Florida pastors and lay leaders participating in the Church and Law Conference May 4 at Stetson University in DeLand.

Colbert's illustrations made one point clear to conference participants -- churches, pastors and staff members can be sued and can be found liable.

Speaking on the topic "Issues of the Pastorate and Liability," Colbert, chairman of deacons for First Baptist Church in Sanford, warned that pastor malpractice "is particularly in vogue."

"You need to be sensitive to it and equipped to deal with it," Colbert said, citing a California case, Nally v. Grace Community Church of the Valley.

In that case, a non-therapist counselor who gave advice to a suicidally inclined person was not held liable when the person killed himself. The case, just concluded after 10 years of litigation, is both a reassurance and a warning, Colbert said.

Because the case involved the issue of pastoral counseling and was decided in favor of the church, many see it as vindication, Colbert said. He warned, however, that the case was decided only on the basis of a particular set of facts. Different facts easily could result in a different decision.

"Do not believe there is nothing you can do in a counseling capacity for which you can be held liable," Colbert said.

He also urged participants not to assume that churches are immune from suits brought by members. "Many would never think of it, but a few may not be of the same mind," he said.

The best defense, Colbert said, may be awareness of the possibility of liability and prompt action to minimize exposure.

Howard Oleck, professor of law emeritus at Stetson's College of Law in St. Petersburg, Fla., also advocated preventive action in his overview of the law as it relates to the church.

"Bring lawyers in your congregation into your advisory groups, especially those specializing in your areas of concern," Oleck advised. "Go to law schools near you and ask for help. It's incredible what you can get by just asking.

"Operate like an organization as well as a religious body. Borrow the good and useful aspects of business organizations. As religious people, you consider the individual, but often you must deal with groups."

Oleck, author of the legal text "Nonprofit Corporations, Organizations and Associations," recommended the compartmentalizing of a wide range of church activities, such as a foundation for the building fund and a corporation for fund raising. "You need not be concerned that you legally will be viewed as a business unless there is gross abuse involved," he said.

Colbert advised the adoption of and careful adherence to written procedures for various church activities and the formation of lay groups to assist the pastor. The latter he called vital to a functioning church.

"You should have an insurance committee, regardless of the size of the church, to make sure you have adequate coverage; a personnel committee to write job descriptions, see that jobs are done and to help the pastor with discipline and dismissal; a house and grounds committee to provide an inventory of assets and oversee repairs and maintenance; a transportation committee if you own one vehicle; and, in a larger church, a safety committee," Colbert said.

"I don't want to sermonize, but remember that the law is unforgiving. As Christians, you have a tendency to forgive and forget, but we live in a society of laws. And the Scriptures teach us to be responsible stewards of our assets."

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Jacqueline Kersh is director of public relations for Stetson University.

Attorney cites measures  
to cut church liability

By Jacqueline Kersh

N- (O  
(Fla.)

Baptist Press  
5/31/89

DELAND, Fla. (BP)-- Church leaders are not helpless in today's lawsuit-prone society, Sanford, Fla., attorney William Colbert told participants in the Church and the Law Conference at Stetson University in DeLand, Fla.

He listed several preventive measures as examples:

-- Against inadequate supervision charges, churches should have a written policy on the ratio of supervising adults to participants in any sponsored activity and follow the policy at all times, Colbert urged.

-- Against grounds and building liability, be alert to hazards, such as a water hose across the walkway, drama props blocking doorways, burned-out light bulbs on stairways, missing or malfunctioning fire extinguishers, protruding bolts or jagged edges on playground equipment and lack of handrails. Ask the kind of questions lawyers would ask if someone got hurt, then do some maintenance, he said.

-- Against hazardous activities, such as hayrides and obstacle courses, take extra precautions, like using an unpaved road for the hayride, following the vehicle with a car and having the vehicle owner drive it. Use common sense and consider doing something less hazardous, Colbert stressed.

Parent-consent and waiver-of-liability forms can be useful to ensure that a parent knows what the child is doing, but the form does not absolve the church of all responsibility, he said. Ask an attorney to draft the form, and use a new one for each activity, he added.

-- Against vehicle liability, have the vehicle inspected often, keep it in top condition, be certain the driver is licensed and has a good driving record, and check insurance coverage, Colbert noted.

-- Against employee negligence, be careful who is hired; check references; obtain permission to check credit and arrest records; use a written application form regardless of the position; have job descriptions for every job; get rid of any employee not doing the job, he said. Any full-time or part-time worker, if paid, is considered an employee.

In sexual harassment cases, remember it is not what is actually said or done, but how the victim perceives it, he explained.

-- Against inadequate insurance coverage, know what the church assets are and what replacement costs would be; identify potential liabilities; be sure everyone -- pastor, staff, members -- is covered; add a rider to the church policy covering ministerial counseling liability and personal business property located on church premises; consider special coverages such as disability and accident, he said.

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Prepare for bivocational ministry,  
volunteerism leader urges students

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

ATLANTA (BP)--College students torn between a call to ministry and a love for their major can choose both, according to a Baptist missions leader.

Jeff Lewis, associate director of Mission Service Corps for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, has called on Christian students to plan ahead for bivocational ministry.

Mission Service Corps is a denominational program comprised of adult volunteers who raise their own support to serve more than one year as missionaries. One branch of Mission Service Corps is Tentmakers, a support system for bivocational missionaries.

"There are hundreds of students struggling because they love their majors but are pulled toward missions," Lewis said. "They think they have to choose between the two. "It is possible to find total fulfillment in both.

"We need to see every talent and gift God has given us as an avenue God could use to open the door to missions. Instead of narrowing our concept of ministry, we need to give God full opportunity to enhance those talents for ministry."

Future Southern Baptist ministers must break from the traditional pattern of studying religion in college and then going to seminary to study religion again, Lewis said. Instead, people called to ministry should develop vocational skills in addition to studying theology.

"We think these vocational skills are the things that entangle us from doing God's call," he said. "But they really are the things that could allow us to answer God's call."

Southern Baptists have recognized the potential for getting missionaries into closed foreign countries through vocational skills, Lewis said. "We have closed areas at home too -- those closed by finances and changing cultures," he added.

Tentmakers especially are effective in new-work areas where young churches cannot afford to pay staff members, he explained. Home missions leaders have agreed the denomination never will have enough money to start the number of new churches needed in America with fully salaried missionaries.

To meet this challenge, changes first must occur on the college campus, Lewis said: "Seminary is too late. In college, students are deciding upon majors and deciding whether to develop marketable skills."

Southern Baptists currently graduate 2,400 students annually from their six seminaries to serve in about 1,300 full-time paid positions open each year, he noted.

The problem is not that seminaries train too many ministers or that students misunderstand God's call, Lewis said. Rather, too many students expect to answer God's call by serving in a traditional staff position within 100 miles of their hometowns.

At Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, 36 percent of the requests coming to the church-minister relations office are for bivocational ministers, said Associate Director Carl Barrington. Requests for bivocational workers could rise to 50 percent by the late 1990s, he predicted.

"The people in most demand in the next generation will be those who can wear more than one hat," Barrington said. He suggested college students select majors in fields projected to have the greatest job growth, such as health care, computer science and education.

The Tentmaker program is a good support system for people who choose bivocational ministry, Lewis said. Tentmakers become part of a larger mission force, receive special orientation, have the program and prayer support available to paid missionaries, can receive emergency assistance and are eligible to participate in a group insurance plan with the Southern Baptist Annuity Board.

HMB names first volunteer  
consultants with senior adults

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

ATLANTA (BP)--Responding to increasing opportunities for senior adults in missions, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board has named Ed and Re Jackson as Mission Service Corps national consultants for senior adults.

The Jacksons, from Garland, Texas, have been Mission Service Corps volunteers since 1986, working through the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

In their new role, the retired couple hopes to raise awareness among senior adults about opportunities as volunteer missionaries. "Health is not the primary reason senior adults do not volunteer," Jackson said. "We haven't educated them, and we haven't led them."

The Jacksons will target local associations, national Southern Baptist agencies and local churches with their message. Their first goal is to help every association enlist a senior adult as a volunteer senior adult missions coordinator.

This coordinator would be a resource for all the association's churches, leading in mission-action projects and mission education. "Tours and trips aren't the only things senior adult church groups can do," Jackson said.

"As I look at the problems of society, the biggest resource I see to meet these needs is senior adults. If hunger is a problem, senior adults can help solve it. If literacy is a problem, senior adults can help solve it."

Jackson, who retired at 56 as senior vice president of Overhead Door Corp., said he believes hundreds of other Southern Baptist senior adults have time and talent to give to missions. In 1988, one half of all U.S. men between the ages of 55 and 65 no longer were working, he said.

"This is a resource Southern Baptists are not grabbing hold of. People who retire at 55 have at least 25 good years left to do mission work," Jackson said.

Senior adults can do some missionary jobs better than anyone else, Mrs. Jackson added. As an example, she cited a discipleship program led by senior adults in a Texas prison, where the average age of inmates is 26. "A couple with maturity who goes in as sort of a parental figure can give hugs and affirmation that a younger person couldn't," she said.

Home Mission Board volunteerism leaders said senior adults are essential to Southern Baptist mission efforts.

One-third of the 1,200 long-term volunteers currently serving through Mission Service Corps in the United States are 65 years of age or older. Also, one-third of the 14,500 short-term Christian Service Corps volunteers are senior adults.

Senior adult mission volunteers perform a wide range of ministries:

-- Truman and Lena Webb work with "snowbirds" who spend winters in the Caliente Casa De Sol recreational vehicle park in Florence, Ariz. During the peak months of January and February, 76-year-old Webb preaches to 600 people -- half the winter population of the desert resort.

The Webbs make hospital visits, teach Bible studies and lead the senior adults in ministry projects within the community. "Many of our senior residents have found Christ as savior, and others have found a closer walk with him," Webb reported.

-- Irene Jordan from Concord, N.C., helped missionary Jerry Cruce start Mary Martha's Place, a home for battered women in Lawrenceville, Ga. Jordan, 69, previously served short-term assignments with Baptist Friendship House at New Orleans, as a housemother for six summer missionaries in Rapid City, S.D., and as a housemother for resort ministries in Orlando, Fla.

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-- Pat and Dav Selvy from Lambert, Miss., taught literacy classes with Missionary Carolyn McClendon in New Orleans. "No football player can be more proud of his winning team's touchdown than I was each time Sam learned a new word," Selvy said about one of her pupils. "One morning he mastered 'hospital,' and that afternoon he needed the word when his brother became ill."

-- Zelma Kuntz, 69, moved from her home in Arkansas to Buffalo, N.Y., where she works as secretary for Frontier Baptist Association. Without a volunteer, Director of Missions Terry Robertson would have no help keeping up with the 30 congregations scattered across seven counties.

In addition, Kuntz gave a boost to the Southern Baptist church she joined in Buffalo, Robertson said. She looked for a church committed to weekly evangelistic outreach and immediately started knocking on doors.

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Note to editors: Mrs. Jackson's first name is Re.

Church starting can be  
easy as a children's rhyme

By Susan Todd

F- (O  
(Wmu)

Baptist Press  
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PHENIX CITY, Ala. (BP)--A children's rhyme chants: "Here's the church. Here's the steeple. Open the door, and here are the people."

But for a new church in Phenix City, Ala., the rhyme chants backwards. Members found the people, opened the door and then began a church -- all because of one woman.

"I realized that the church I would go to somebody else might not go to," said Onezima Everritt, the former Woman's Missionary Union director of Russell Baptist Association.

A mission study challenged her to identify where churches were needed in her community, she said.

Although Phenix City has its share of churches -- including 16 Southern Baptist churches to minister to a population of almost 30,000 -- Everritt was haunted by the thought that a pocket of people somewhere in town who might not have a Southern Baptist church to call their own.

Her suspicions were confirmed in a survey of neighborhoods. The combined efforts of a state denominational worker, the director of missions and a pastor/layperson team from each church in the association pinpointed eight locations throughout the association that needed a church.

At the top of the list was the need for a black Southern Baptist church. The association already operated a Baptist center in the neighborhood targeted as a good central location for the community it wanted to reach.

"The people in this neighborhood were used to coming to the center," said Joycelyn Carrell, home missionary and director of the center. "People are hungry to study God's word, and it is more accessible to get it here because many of them lack transportation."

More than 2,200 people live in the apartments within walking distance of the center, Carrell said. "Within three blocks of us in one direction is a Southern Baptist church. Within three blocks in the other direction is another Southern Baptist church. They are doing a good job of reaching the predominantly white community. And even though we are close to those churches, we can offer a place where the blacks can have a sense of belonging."

So, the doors were opened, and the Russell Baptist Mission was started. It met for the first time Nov. 6, 1988, making it the only Southern Baptist church in Russell Association with a predominantly black congregation.

Seven months later, the mission boasts 43 people in Sunday school, a place to meet and hopes of calling its own pastor soon, Carrell said.

The mission is dedicated to providing many Southern Baptist activities -- visitation, choir, Vacation Bible School, a Baptist Women chapter and teacher training.

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The missions education organization for adult women is older than the church by one year, Carrell said. And again, Everritt had a part.

"It just suddenly dawned on me one day, 'Why can't we have a Baptist Women's group at the Baptist center?'" Everritt said. "Joycelyn was sitting on 'ready' when I mentioned it to her." So, Everritt began meeting with the women to study missions.

Almost two years later and 28-members strong, the group still meets to study missions using Royal Service, the magazine for Baptist Women published by Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

But now, the group affiliates itself with the mission instead of the center.

"The group is eager to learn about missions and the Bible," Carrell said. Loubbertha Kyle, a regular participant in of the Baptist Women's group and Russell Baptist Mission, said praying for missionaries is her favorite part of Baptist Women meetings.

Carrell said she dreams of the day when the church will have missions organizations for every age. She also dreams of the day when the mission will have a place to call its own.

The center literally stands in the shadow of a possibility. A Methodist church building next door to the center will be vacant as soon as the congregation relocates to a new suburban facility. But even if the Baptist congregation could afford the building, Carrell said she fears it would be too costly to operate.

The mission is financially solvent, Carrell said. But the projects for which it is saving its money include projects that are less costly than maintaining a church facility -- hymnals, a sign to put out front, a revival service in the fall and missions literature.

Even though the struggles of beginning a mission are current and real, this mission is just a beginning point for the neighborhood, Carrell said.

"We don't expect this mission to be a permanent part of our center," she said. After it matures and becomes implanted as a full-fledged church, more needs to be done.

"We hope our next mission will be a language church," she said.

And again the chant will begin, "Here are the people ...."

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Photos mailed separately to state Baptist newspapers by Woman's Missionary Union in Birmingham.

Evangelist to seminarians:  
'hate sin, head judgment'

By Breena Kent Paine

N-60  
(NOBTS)

Baptist Press  
5/31/89

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Americans must recognize God's holiness, hate sin and heed the judgment that is to come if they are to experience revival, Jerry Johnston told students and faculty at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

"Adolescent experts tell us the highest-risk age group living in America right now is ... 15 to 24 years of age. Life expectancy for that group continues to lessen year by year," said Johnston, youth evangelist from Lenexa, Kan., who was in New Orleans to hold revival services and rallies for teen-agers.

"There are so many teen-agers that are searching through such diverse ways for peace, and many of them have no idea that the only thing that can settle that emptiness is the Lord Jesus Christ," he said, noting, "1000 U.S. teens attempt suicide every day in our country."

In such a nation, Christians should help others focus on the holiness of God, Johnston said: "We now live in a generation where the fear of the Lord is a thing of the past. We don't need to fear Satan. We don't need to fear satanism. We must fear God. And we must live every day as if he, his character, is seeing everything that we do. When we see his character, it produces within us a hatred for sin."

Most people hate such sins as murder or teenage satanism, he said, but they forget about less-accented sins, such as pride or gossip.

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Focusing on the holiness of God also produces "a heed of judgment to come," Johnston said. "It was Billy Graham's wife (who) wrote the words, 'If God doesn't judge America, he will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.'"

Christians should ask God to give them a burden for those who do not know Christ, "the kind of burden that would send us to literally see our mission field as we've never seen it before," he said, for "when we see the holiness of God, then we see some day a man will stand accountable."

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Ohio church 'Rock of Faith'  
to city's weary neighborhood

By Bill Bangham

F - HMB

Baptist Press  
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COLUMBUS, Ohio (BP)--East End, an inner-city community of Columbus, Ohio, wears its weariness like a badge.

Peeling paint and boarded windows, empty streets and vacant lots, crack houses and credit stores, pandering and prostitution mark the neighborhood.

But pastor Bob Duckens would rather change the environment than leave.

"God didn't come into my life for me to remain the same," he tells his congregation. "He came into my life to shape me and mold me. And that's what he's come into your life to do."

Duckens is pastor of Rock of Faith Baptist Church in East End. In the heart of a community that has faded and crumbled, he seeks to lay fresh, lasting foundations.

Duckens left a \$60,000-per-year salary as a labor-relations manager for Borden Company when he came to Rock of Faith for \$175 a week. One of his supervisors asked him if he was crazy and reminded him that he was being groomed for a vice president position. But Duckens felt a strong call of God.

In 10 years, Duckens has baptized 300 people, grown a congregation of 683 from scratch and moved it two times -- once from a rented one-room building to an old theater and then to an abandoned cathedral.

Built in the 1890s at a cost of \$10 million, Rock of Faith's current building was once Holy Rosary, cathedral church of the Roman Catholic diocese of Columbus. It features 70-foot ceilings and an Italian marble altar with cedar of Lebanon canopy.

After Holy Rosary closed, the building sat empty for 20 years, becoming a place for prostitutes plying their trade. Duckens bought the building for \$25,000 down on \$100,000 and the promise it would never be used for anything but a church.

Changes are taking place now. A pulpit is centered in front of the altar, and a baptistry resides in one corner. Church members are restoring the old building.

As a foundation for ministry, Rock of Faith not only dominates East End in size, but also in action. It is the hub where the needs of the community begin to be addressed.

Those needs are multiple, Duckens explains, "People need housing, clothing, food, employment, help with their budget, help with their children on drugs."

He points to a street corner across from the church where four young men have died in drug-related incidents during the past year.

And it's not only the young men who have problems. "There are so many young girls in this community with babies," he says. "If they have a child by 15 or 16, they'll have three or four more by the time they're 21 or 22."

"Fifty-five percent of the households in this community are single parents -- mamas with babies -- and there's not a day-care center in this area. None."

And the elderly, the middle-aged and the young families all dangle in a web of unemployment, underemployment, poverty and despair, Duckens explains.

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In his mind, he cannot separate the spiritual life from the rest of life. "Evangelism is about meeting people where they are," he says. "Once you meet people where they are hurting, they'll automatically be drawn to you and want to be a part of you."

To meet the needs of the community, Rock of Faith has many of the ministries expected in an inner-city church: food for the hungry; literacy and high school equivalency classes; classes in upholstery, cooking and sewing.

But Rock of Faith has taken one step further by going into business. Members have set up a not-for-profit corporation called Diversified Community Services, which owns stock in several for-profit, competitive businesses:

- Diversified Community Properties, which buys houses and renovates them for sale, in addition to working with new construction.
- Diversified Community Waste Disposal, which handles waste for business and industry.
- Covenant House and Semi-independent Living, facilities for mentally handicapped adults.
- Small Business Service Center, which offers counsel to help community businesses thrive.

The idea behind these enterprises is to build an economic base in the community. All provide jobs and services and, in return, income for families.

"What we're doing is funding social programs with business," says Duckens. "Somehow we've gotten the idea that because we're Christians, we can't be involved in business. But this is business. God's business."

Despite Duckens' background and the level of expertise of people he has gathered around him, the business ventures of Rock of Faith still face serious financial problems.

It comes down to a common problem, he says: "You can't rebuild an area with low-income housing. You've got to find ways of attracting Yuppies and Buppies (black urban professionals) into the community."

Once those groups begin to come back into an area, it has a ripple effect. The area begins to change. Businesses open with job opportunities for others. The neighborhood regains hope for a new vitality.

Rock of Faith has achieved its accomplishments without investment capital, Duckens notes. The plan is at a second step now--finding a financial base.

"Getting that financial base is more important than anything," Duckens says. "I'm still convinced what we're doing is right and we'll crack through that wall."

He points with pleasure at the men and women around him who have captured for themselves his dream of utilizing their abilities to evangelize and restore East End.

"That's what Christianity is all about," he says, "to take what you have been gifted with into the world and use it for the Lord."

"We're called to be fishers of men. And you catch fish out in the deep waters. Yet it's so much safer between the walls of the church."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist papers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press. Adapted from MissionUSA magazine.