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**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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 Nashville, Tennessee**

October 27, 1989

89-155

Chinese Christians celebrate
 decade of reopening churches

By Michael Chute

SHANGHAI, China (BP)--As the government commemorates the 40th anniversary of "New China," Chinese Christians are celebrating the 10th year since permission was granted to reopen churches following the Cultural Revolution.

More than 6,000 Protestant churches have opened in China since 1979 -- a rate of three churches opened every two days.

"Sympathy in society for the church is a very important factor" in churches being reopened, said Ding Guangxun (K.H. Ting), president of the China Christian Council and Protestants' Three-Self Patriotic Movement. "As far as the central people's government and provincial governments are concerned, I think there is a desire to implement the principle of religious freedom."

Ding said the government's actions are "not because of any high opinion of religion, but because they know it's the only way to maintain unity. The Communist Party wants to unite as many Chinese as possible to work together for the prosperity of the country. For that unity to be possible, minority characteristics, including religious faiths, must be respected and tolerated."

During the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution every church was closed down and its property confiscated. Of the 6,000 Protestant churches reopened in China, about two-thirds meet in buildings returned to church ownership. One-third meet in new buildings located mainly in rural areas where a church building did not exist before. In addition, at least 15,000 church groups meet in homes throughout China.

When attempting to reclaim a church property, local Christians usually raise the question with authorities about use of a church building. Many of these former church buildings now are used as factories, schools, hospitals and warehouses. Congregations have the legal right in China to reclaim property, but church officials admit reclamation often is a long process.

Each reopened church has a dramatic story to tell, like these congregations in Shanghai:

-- New Grace Church was used as a warehouse for 23 years, housing possessions confiscated from wealthier Chinese during the Cultural Revolution's anti-bourgeois campaign. On National Day, Oct. 1, the church opened for its first worship services since 1966. At the 7:30 a.m. service, more than 1,000 people crammed the 600-seat auditorium, pouring out into the church courtyard. Hundreds crowded around windows and doorways to hear the pastor's sermon.

-- Nantong Church was turned into a restaurant. When pastor Lin Yenren led church members to reclaim the property, the restaurant refused to give up the building. The local government agreed with the congregation's contention that the restaurant owed years of rental payments for use of the building. With the money in hand, the church bought another piece of property and built an even bigger building designed by Lin, who also is an architect.

-- The West Shanghai Church building was demolished during the Cultural Revolution. Now the local government is rebuilding the church facility to its original size. Congregation members wanted the government to build a bigger building because they have grown in number, but the government agreed to replace only what it took.

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"That shows a different side of the government, a side that you don't hear," said Ronnie Winstead, a teacher in Shanghai sponsored by Cooperative Services International, a Southern Baptist aid organization. "In some circles there are people who don't want to hear that. But in China the church is able to work with the government in a similar fashion that the government works with the church in the United States, by recognizing their right to exist."

Chinese Christians recognized the 10th anniversary of the church's reopening in different ways. In Shanghai, more than 3,000 Christians marked the occasion with a special service in Huang Pu sports stadium. They came from the 24 reopened churches in Shanghai, one of three municipalities directly administered by the national government.

Unlike Cultural Revolution days, when Christians meeting secretly in houses were afraid to sing hymns, 10 choirs of 400 people sang old and new songs during the praise service.

"It's a victory. You see this is freedom for us," said Xu Minghan, director of the China Christian Council's Shanghai office. The Huang Pu stadium "is a public place. Anyone can go there. Our government implemented the policy of religious freedom, and if we have no freedom, we could not hold this service in this public place."

"A hundred hearings does not compare with one time to see," Xu emphasized, quoting a Chinese saying.

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Michael Chute, BP correspondent for Asia, recently visited China.

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

Bible a 'hot item'
among Chinese

By Michael Chute

Baptist Press
10/27/89

NANJING, China (BP)--If China had a book of the year, the Bible probably would be it. It's a "hot item," according to Chinese Christians.

Evidence of the Bible's popularity among Chinese can be seen in numerous ways:

-- Bibles are sold in many bookstores in China, although Bibles printed by Chinese Christians' Amity Press are not yet available in stores. The vast majority of the stores are government-owned.

-- The Bible is on the book counter of the Nanjing Public Library.

-- The Xinhua bookstore chain, operated by the New China News Agency, stocked Bibles until they sold out.

-- In northeast China the \$1 price tag on Amity Press Bibles can soar to 13 times that price because of demand.

-- Christians often are asked by non-Christian co-workers to buy Bibles for them. Also this year, nearly 200 students have come to the Nanjing Christian seminary from nearby Nanjing University to buy Bibles.

-- Some young scholars in Beijing, all non-Christians, edited and published a book titled "The New Word of the Bible" containing articles on the Bible and Western thought as expressed in literature, philosophy and ethics. A major portion of the book is quotations from the Bible.

-- Another group of non-Christians is revising the 1919 "Union Guanghai" version of the Chinese Bible because many words in the old version are different from modern Chinese word usage.

-- Book publishing companies operated by the Chinese government recently have printed five books of selected Bible stories.

"Intellectuals are interested in the Bible because they're interested in the West and consider the Bible a very important source for Western culture," explained Peter MacInnis, a United Bible Societies employee who lives in China. "You can trace the roots of our (Western) legal system, many of our idioms and even our holidays to the Bible. There's a lot in the Bible from a cultural standpoint."

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China seminary, studio
produce audio Bible stories

By Michael Chute

NANJING, China (BP)--The narrator spins his stories in traditional Chinese storytelling style.

His voice is excited, filled with expression. His intonation rises and falls with the flow of the story. Huddled around a small table, the Chinese family stares intently at the tape recorder from which the sound of his voice emerges. They hang on every word, their faces reflecting the emotional peaks and valleys.

The taped storyteller is not telling tales of China's revolution, or the triumphs of the Warring States Period, or even stories of famous Chinese philosophers. No, these narratives come from the Bible.

The Chinese Christian seminary in Nanjing has produced 3,000 cassette tapes featuring Bible "histories," or stories, from the Old Testament. They include the "Lost Garden" -- Garden of Eden -- stories of Samson, Moses and Jeremiah, and selections from the Psalms. The cassettes sold out quickly and more have been ordered.

In August, a Nanjing commercial recording studio approached the seminary with the idea of producing a cassette tape of Bible stories. For the studio, the venture was commercial, related to the widespread interest in the Bible among Chinese. For Christians at the seminary, it was a way to reach beyond the school's walls.

"This was done through personal relationships, an outgrowth of the Chinese way of witness -- building relationships or respect between Chinese Christians and non-Christians," said Charlie Wilson, educational resources coordinator for Cooperative Services International, a Southern Baptist aid organization active in China.

One of those relationships made the cassette venture possible, Wilson added. "Someone who worked with the recording studio knew someone at the seminary and these two (groups) came together" to produce the tapes.

Two graduates of the seminary, Xu Fu and Wang Xiaoyin, wrote the Bible passages in narrative form. Another student, He Huibing, selected the music for the tape. A professional announcer provided the narration.

The tapes are sold through the seminary. Some were bought by non-Christians interested in learning more about the Bible. Others were purchased by church groups to use in worship services.

Many of the churches meeting in homes in China "are led by lay workers, especially those in the towns and villages," explained Wang Weifan, a New Testament and theology professor at the seminary and senior editor of the Nanjing Theological Review. "Most of these lay leaders haven't had a chance to get theological education, so they want material to help them. Also, we realize that ... many Christians in China, especially in the countryside, can't read but they can hear and understand."

"The Bible is a tough nut to crack if you don't know what you are reading," added Peter MacInnis, a United Bible Societies employee working in China. The tape "is a wonderful way to get the word out."

The project is one of many ways the Christian church in China is trying to meet the needs of its members and help non-Christians learn more about the Bible.

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Amity Press prints
millionth Chinese Bible

By Michael Chute

Baptist Press
10/27/89

NANJING, China (BP)--The need to smuggle Bibles into China is a thing of the past, according to the Amity Press, now that the 1 millionth copy of the Chinese Bible has come off its printing presses.

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"No one in China is worried about Bibles being distributed here," said Peter MacInnis, manager of the Amity Press in Nanjing. "It's all legal. For those people who want daring escapades, that probably takes some of the excitement out of it."

Chinese Christians and other citizens began Amity Press to print Bibles, Christian literature and other books beneficial to Chinese society.

"All our Bibles have a government stamp that says this is a legitimate book," said MacInnis, a United Bible Societies employee assigned to Amity. "Assuming the supply is there, it just makes better sense to do it that way."

The key word is supply. Amity Press took 21 months to produce its first million Bibles. Chinese officials hope the second million will come off the press in just 15 months. Amity must average 66,000 Bibles a month to print another million by the end of 1990. The press now produces between 60,000 and 70,000 Bibles a month.

Amity's production is steady, but MacInnis admits Bibles are back-ordered by about 100,000 copies.

"We're one to two months behind right now," he explained. "But that's not a bad thing. We're keeping up. What that means is that we're not going to run out of work. It's nice to be a month or two behind because in that time we're taking more contracts" for Bibles.

Amity Bibles are not yet sold through bookstores in China. Chinese churches must order the Bibles through the China Christian Council, which operates four distribution centers. The churches then sell the Bibles to groups and individuals. The Christian council petitions the Chinese government for permission to print Bibles and approval for the number of copies to be printed in each press run.

Chinese Christians can buy an Amity Bible for about half the production cost. The United Bible Societies subsidizes paper costs. The "old script" Chinese Bible, a translation dating to 1919, sells for about \$1. Amity's newer "simplified-character" version of the Bible costs \$1.35.

Amity prints Bibles not only in the predominant Han language in China but also in minority languages of peoples in China's northeast and southwest regions. The minority-language Bibles include Jingpo, Lisu and Korean texts. Amity also prints New Testaments in the Meo and Yih languages. All these languages have non-Chinese scripts.

"The 1 millionth copy of the Bible shows the potential of the Amity printing press to serve the Chinese Christian community," Amity Foundation director Han Wenzao told a gathering of Chinese and foreign observers during Oct. 14 celebrations. "It helps the China Christian Council serve better the congregations wherever they meet, either in church buildings or in homes throughout China."

United Bible Societies became involved with the Amity Foundation in 1987, when it donated equipment and paper to the Bible printing project. At that time, Amity's partner was Jiangning County Industrial Corp., which made land available for the printing plant, worked with construction companies in building it and provided staff. A year ago United Bible Societies bought out the corporation, becoming Amity's partner in the joint venture.

Prior to the Amity Press opening in 1987, the China Christian Council estimates the council had published more than 2.3 million copies of the Bible and New Testament during the previous six years. The council used a variety of printers. At one point, the presses of the People's Liberation Army were contracted to print 100,000 Bibles.

Although printing Bibles is Amity's main function, the press also produces Christian hymnals in several languages. In addition, some religious literature is produced, although Sunday school materials currently are not being printed in China. During the summer, the press completed a four-volume set of textbooks for Nanjing Theological Seminary. Printing more textbooks, a dire need for Chinese theological education, is projected.

When United Bible Societies first joined the Amity project, a serious distribution problem existed. The Christian council operated just one distribution center. Almost 200,000 Bibles were stockpiled in warehouses. United Bible Societies allocated \$200,000 so Bibles could be shipped immediately upon receipt of an order. The warehouses emptied and have stayed empty.

"A million Bibles is not enough," MacInnis acknowledged during the celebration. "But the ability of the China Christian Council to move that many Bibles is limited. Right now the (council) is moving Bibles faster than we are printing them. We're just beginning to find out what the market is like."

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

State court upholds
clergy malpractice

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
10/27/89

WASHINGTON (BP)--A state appeals court has ruled clergy malpractice suits may be filed against pastoral counselors.

In a recent unpublished opinion, the Ohio Court of Appeals reversed a lower court decision that dismissed charges of professional negligence against a Seventh-day Adventist pastor.

The dispute involved Leroy and Garnet Byrd, a couple from Knox County, Ohio, and Richard P. Faber, pastor of Hill Church there.

The Byrds claimed they sought marital and personal counseling from Faber in 1984 and continued in counseling with him through early 1987. Throughout that period, the couple said, Faber told them he was a qualified marriage counselor and discouraged them from seeking counseling elsewhere.

The couple alleged Faber used information he gained during counseling sessions with them to induce Garnet Byrd to engage in sex with him against her will. The Byrds also alleged the Seventh-day Adventist Church knew or should have known of Faber's inclination to commit such actions and thus was negligent in allowing him to assume the position of pastor.

In reversing the trial court's decision, the appeals panel held an earlier Ohio Supreme Court opinion, *Strock v. Pressnell*, does not preclude legal action against a pastoral counselor if that counselor is negligent in treating a patient.

"It is clear that *Strock* was not intended to prohibit the filing of clergy malpractice actions where the facts support such a claim," the court wrote. "Additionally, *Strock* recognized that a church could be held liable on agency principles for the tortious acts of its employees committed in the course of employment."

The ramifications of the case, which is under appeal to the Ohio Supreme Court, are serious, said Oliver S. Thomas, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

For one thing, damages in these cases can be severe, Thomas said. "In a recent Alabama case, for example, the husband, upon learning of his wife's sexual relationship with their counselor/pastor, committed suicide," he explained.

Such cases also present First Amendment problems, Thomas said.

"When a couple is in marriage counseling and the counselor begins having sex with one of the counselees, the counselor should expect to be held liable," he said. "The fact that the counselor happens to be a minister should be irrelevant. These cases, however, should not be termed 'clergy malpractice.'"

The term "malpractice" means falling below the established standards of conduct for a particular profession, Thomas explained.

"The rub comes in determining the standards for clergy," he said. "Courts are wholly incompetent to establish standards for a spiritual enterprise such as pastoral counseling, and the Constitution strictly forbids their even attempting such tomfoolery."

"There are existing legal theories such as 'outrageous conduct' and 'breach of fiduciary duty' for handling such cases without encroaching upon the First Amendment."

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Thomas said the U.S. Supreme Court's refusal earlier this year to review a clergy malpractice case from California led many church-state practitioners to believe such challenges were dead.

The high court's decision left standing a unanimous ruling by the California Supreme Court that individuals who are not licensed as counselors or therapists cannot be held legally liable for failing to provide proper advice or for failing to refer their counselees to licensed therapists.

"After California had finally put the specter of clergy malpractice to rest, it's unfortunate that Ohio has conjured it up once again," Thomas said.

In a related action, members of the BJC recently adopted a resolution in support of court rulings that have dismissed suits alleging clergy malpractice.

Citing a recent proliferation of professional malpractice suits -- including suits brought against ministers, priests and other church personnel -- the resolution says such suits "tend to burden the free exercise of religion; hamper pastoral counseling; discourage the process of repentance, confession and forgiveness; and generally disrupt the clergy/parishioner relationship."

Court decisions dismissing such suits "constitute wise public policy, as well as prudent adherence to precedent, and pay due respect to the First Amendment guarantee of religious liberty," the resolution concludes.

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Montana fellowship
opposes abortion

Baptist Press
10/27/89

BILLINGS, Mont. (BP)--Messengers to the annual meeting of the Montana Southern Baptist Fellowship adopted three resolutions opposing abortion during their second meeting Oct. 2-3 in Emmanuel Baptist Church, Billings.

The fellowship has held 28 annual meetings since Southern Baptist work began in the state, but the 1988 annual meeting was the first for it to function independently. In 1988, the Northern Plains Baptist Convention -- composed of Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota and South Dakota -- dissolved into three regional fellowships.

A fellowship is a state or geographical grouping of churches prior to the area becoming a convention. Generally, when a fellowship reaches 100 congregations and 13,000 members, it is eligible to become a convention.

Montana, led by Executive Director James Nelson, currently has 88 congregations -- 70 churches and 18 missions -- and a total membership of 9,800.

In addition to adopting the resolutions opposing abortion, messengers also adopted a budget of \$711,620, of which \$207,000 will come from the congregations affiliated with the fellowship. Of the gifts from the churches, 20 percent will be sent to support the worldwide missions, evangelism and education ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention, the same percentage as last year.

Nelson said Montana Baptists decided to give 20 percent through the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program when they began to function independently. The Northern Plains Convention had given 13.5 percent to the national unified budget.

Messengers also re-elected Grant Jackson, a layman and member of Central Baptist Church of Lewistown, as president. Jackson, an agronomist, is director of the Northern Montana Research Station at Moccasin.

Don Jones, pastor of the host church, was elected vice president.

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In the resolutions opposing abortion, messengers urged the Montana state legislature to enact legislation restricting induced abortion; urged the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and other state conventions to promote passage of such legislation; and restated opposition to legalized abortion and called for appropriate state and federal legislation or a constitutional amendment prohibiting abortion except to "prevent the imminent death of the mother."

The 1990 annual meeting will be Oct. 10-11 in Great Falls.

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Missouri Baptists launch new
Cooperative Missions Program

By Philip Poole

Baptist Press
10/28/89

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Missouri Baptists launched a multi-year emphasis on the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified budget plan, during their 155th annual meeting in St. Louis Oct. 23-25.

Messengers also adopted resolutions supporting the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and the sanctity of human life. A layman was elected president for only the third time in convention history.

A statewide task force presented a communications plan that was the culmination of a two-year study. The plan is designed to "educate Missouri Baptists about the cooperative way of supporting missions," task force Chairman John Gilbert, pastor of First Baptist Church of Poplar Bluff, told convention messengers.

"In our study, we discovered that many Missouri Baptists did not fully understand what the Cooperative Program is and does," Gilbert said. "This plan is designed to educate and ultimately to have an impact on our giving. It is not just to raise more money; it is for education and understanding."

The top priorities of the plan are to reverse declining church percentage giving to the Cooperative Program and to increase CP giving annually, based on inflation rates, Gilbert said.

Other goals include involving five new churches each year in supporting the Cooperative Program, establishing a recognition program for CP support from churches and associations, making the convention's executive board staff more responsive and accessible to churches and associations, and developing a profile of successful CP-giving churches that can be used to help other churches increase their understanding and support of the program.

Under the theme, Cooperative Missions Program, the plan includes a speakers' bureau, addition of toll-free telephone numbers to the state convention office, special inserts in Word and Way, the convention newsjournal; and a liaison program between state convention staff members and churches.

In a sermon presented as part of the task force report, Paul Brooks, pastor of First Baptist Church of Raytown, called the Cooperative Program a "Jesus program, a Holy Spirit program, a Bible program, a missionary program, an educational program and a social program."

"Millions of Baptists in thousands of churches have pooled their money together to advance the word of God and to extend the kingdom of Jesus Christ," he said. "We have an obligation under God to cooperate together for causes none of us can do on our own. I know of no other reason why we should give to the Cooperative Missions Program."

Missouri Baptist giving barely maintained pace with inflation rates during the previous five years, Brooks noted. At the same time, resident membership in Missouri Baptist churches has declined about 3 percent, or 12,000 members.

"Fewer folks have had to carry the load," Brooks said. "Since there aren't as many of us who are left, those of us who are left must do more. Until Missouri Baptists have reversed this decline, we won't grow."

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Earlier, messengers adopted a budget that increased the percentage of gifts from Missouri to Southern Baptist causes. Although the \$15 million budget represents no increase over the 1989 budget, 35.2 percent will go to the national budget, up from 35.167 this year. If the total budget is achieved, Missourians will contribute \$5.3 million to Southern Baptist causes.

Messengers adopted with no discussion and few dissenting votes a resolution affirming Southern Baptist Convention involvement in the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a Washington-based religious liberty organization comprised of nine denominations.

The resolution noted the historical relationship between the two entities and a 1987 SBC action calling for a continued relationship to the Baptist Joint Committee through the SBC Public Affairs Committee.

The resolution called on messengers to:

- "Express our continuing appreciation of the work" of the Baptist Joint Committee.
- "Voice our strong reservations about any attempt to reduce or terminate" the SBC-Baptist Joint Committee relationship.
- "State our disappointment at the SBC Executive Committee's recent proposal that the SBC Christian Life Commission be given the assignment of religious liberty matters."

The action called for copies to be sent to each member of the SBC Executive Committee with a request for a response from the committee.

Other resolutions dealt with the sanctity of human life and opposition of the use of government-issued educational vouchers to fund private school tuition.

The sanctity of human life resolution acknowledged "the sanctity of all human life" and encouraged churches to train and inform individuals and congregations about the "biblical and ethical facts regarding abortion and the sanctity of all human life."

The educational vouchers resolution relates to a federal lawsuit in Kansas City seeking public reimbursement for students in the Kansas City school district to attend private schools in order to achieve court-ordered desegregation.

The resolution cited "continued support of the constitutional principles of the separation of church and state and religious liberty" as the basis for opposing the vouchers.

Messengers discussed a motion which would have prohibited the use of Holiday Inns for the annual meeting. The motion was a result of a national boycott against Holiday Inns "which offer in-room pornography on a continuing basis."

Roger Alford, pastor of New Salem Baptist Church in Winfield, said the intent of the motion was "to take a stand as Missouri Baptists in the fight against pornography." He called Holiday Inns the "largest in-room pornography, smut dealers in America today."

Opponents to the motion cited factual and parliamentary errors. The motion would not have affected convention arrangements until 1993 because of existing contracts and bylaw provisions that require cities and sites to be selected at least four years in advance. Previous conventions already had voted to hold meetings in Cape Girardeau in 1992 and Joplin in 1993. Neither city would meet convention-adopted guidelines as a host city without the use of Holiday Inns.

John Hughes, pastor of First Baptist Church of Independence, said: "The issue is not whether or not we are opposed to pornography. All of us are."

After defeating an amendment that would have broadened the prohibition to include any facility offering pornographic movies, messengers affirmed a request to withdraw the original motion.

Alford, who made the original motion, said he was withdrawing the motion "for the sake of the body today. I still believe in the principles stated, but I want to avoid confusion."

In one of the closest presidential elections in recent convention history, St. Louis layman W. Lee Beaver was elected president by five votes in a run-off with Richard Wakefield. Wakefield, pastor of First Baptist Church of Camdenton, later was elected first vice president.

A member of Edmundson Road Baptist Church in St. Louis, Beaver previously had been second vice president of the convention. He also was a trustee of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., including a term as board chairman. He is retired chief financial officer of Sachs Electric, a St. Louis-based corporation.

The last layman elected convention president was in 1977. A layman also was convention president in 1948-49.

Final registration was 1,833, including 1,415 messengers and 418 visitors.

The 1990 annual meeting will be Oct. 24-26 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Kansas City.

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(Contributing to this story were Bob Terry, Brian Quinn and Brenda Sanders.)

Carter calls churches to higher
ministry levels, moral standards

By Joe Westbury

Baptist Press
10/27/89

ATLANTA (BP)--Former President Jimmy Carter, observing that one-third of the gospel narratives are devoted to healing, called for the nation's churches and synagogues to assume a greater role in relieving spiritual and physical suffering in their communities.

Carter, a Southern Baptist from Plains, Ga., made the remarks during a national symposium of denominational leaders at the Carter Center at Emory University in Atlanta.

He called on the denominations to take a stand against illicit drug use, push for spiritual and medical ministry to AIDS victims and become involved in raising the quality of life of the nation's working poor.

Regardless of the root of suffering, believers have a spiritual mandate to help others through redemptive ministry, he told the crowd of 200 invited participants.

"I am familiar with the issue of AIDS and how it impacts on religious beliefs," he said. "I have a problem accepting AIDS because it involves homosexuality, sex outside marriage and the use of filthy needles to inject illicit drugs into one's own body."

"As a Christian, it causes me great discomfort, but it is not unlike the reality of leprosy of 2,000 years ago and the victims of biblical times. The lepers were even more outcast and despised than an AIDS victim of today."

While Christ did not approve of leprosy, "he embraced them and had no hesitation in touching them," Carter said. "He ministered to them, showing them and us his love for them."

"I don't see that this ministry should be an obstacle to our churches, no matter how conservative you might be on the issue of homosexuality."

The 39th president used the AIDS issue as a springboard to urge all faiths to promote healthy lifestyles and thus eliminate premature deaths.

"The most addictive drug among the American people last year was responsible for the deaths of 390,000 Americans," Carter said as he attacked the American tobacco industry.

"It saddens me to know that more Colombians died last year from American cigarettes than Americans died from Colombian cocaine," he charged.

Stressing the church's role in improving the quality of life, Carter cited a San Diego, Calif., community that underwent a psychological analysis of the suffering of its residents.

"As the study was completed, it was determined that 35 percent of the deaths could not be accounted for due to environmental conditions such as drugs or crime. Those individuals simply died from a lack of hope," he said.

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"They didn't have any faith that they could change their own destiny. How could we separate this kind of circumstance from the true and unavoidable responsibility of the church?"

"God knows, if this is not our responsibility as religious leaders, what is?"

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Acting surgeon general urges churches
to stress relation of spirit to body

By Joe Westbury

Baptist Press
10/27/89

ATLANTA (BP)--Acting U.S. Surgeon General James O. Mason called on the nation's denominational leaders to become more active in instilling moral values in their members as a way of lowering the country's escalating medical costs.

Mason, speaking to the interfaith gathering at the Carter Center at Emory University in Atlanta, challenged the leaders to stress the connection between the spirit and body and the need for promoting good health. The meeting was one of Mason's first speaking engagements since outspoken Surgeon General C. Everett Coop retired Oct. 1.

"Churches and synagogues are uniquely equipped to make a major difference in the health of the nation. They should articulate the health benefits from their various traditions in order to improve the health of their people," he told the group of 200 participants.

"We must not back away and abrogate our God-given responsibilities. If God had believed in a permissive society, he would have given Ten Suggestions rather than Ten Commandments."

Mason noted that two out of three Americans younger than age 65 die from preventable illnesses: "We are not dependent upon additional medical knowledge and research breakthroughs to achieve enormous improvement in health. The application of what knowledge we have is where the gap is widest."

Citing examples from the Old and New testaments, Mason outlined the biblical model for personal hygiene. God commands believers to take as good care of their bodies as their spirits, he reminded.

"Moses gave direction to ancient Israel on both treating and preventing disease," he said. "In the New Testament, Paul taught that the body is the temple of God.

"And most contemporary churches ... including Seventh-day Adventists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and others have proscribed tobacco, alcohol and other addicting substances; encouraged diets rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains; and prohibited use of meats or recommended sparing use."

Mason, himself a Mormon, said action and responsibility for control of behaviorally based disease ultimately lies at the community, church, family and individual levels.

"Unlike past plagues -- such as the bubonic plague -- modern plagues are behaviorally driven. The choices we make on a day-to-day basis largely determine whether we are incapacitated by addicting substances, suffer from sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS, become pregnant teenagers, die prematurely from cancer or heart disease, or suffer traumatic injury or death," he said.

"The point should be obvious to church and synagogue leaders. Behavior is value laden. If schools are compelled to maintain a mythical 'value neutrality,' how will our children and adolescents learn to behave in positive ways that do not put them at risk for life-threatening diseases?"

Keys to good health in the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures "are as valid today as they were 2,000 to 3,000 years ago," Mason said. "We need to help people, especially our young people, understand that many diseases and illnesses are direct or indirect results of behavior that we've been told to avoid.

"But beyond talking about it, we have to be good role models ourselves."

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Leaders cite increasing trend
to instrumental music in church

By Charles Willis

NASHVILLE (BP)--The rapidly increasing variety of musical instruments used in Southern Baptist worship services has moved into small churches as well as large ones, local church leaders have reported.

Musicians and pastors meeting at Belmont College in Nashville Oct. 19-21 for a regional instrumental workshop said they see churches taking seriously the biblical instruction to praise God with a variety of instruments.

"I see within our church an increase in the use of instruments in a variety of ways in all worship services," said Allen Walworth, pastor of First Baptist Church, of Huntsville, Ala. His church does not limit the use of instruments in addition to the traditional organ and piano to special occasions such as Christmas and Easter.

"In all sizes of churches I think we are beginning to see a lot of instrumental support for worship," he said. "Witness how when we go to Southern Baptist Conventions and our state Baptist meetings that almost any choir has an orchestra with them. This puts a model in front of us to go back home and discover the way God can bless instrumental music as a means of encouraging worship and praise."

Billy Appling, minister of music at Red Bank Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tenn., said his church members "found in our city there are many Christian musicians looking for a place to play, and we just offered an opportunity for Christians to give back to God through the talent they've been given."

Marty Hamby, instrumental associate at Red Bank, said churches "don't have to have a full orchestra to have an instrumental music program. We have some ensembles, or a couple of flutes and a piano may do an offertory."

"I've seen people on the outside or the edge of church involvement find a place within the church through the instrumental program," observed David Gaines, pianist at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala. Instrumental music "can be their ministry -- their contribution to the life of the church -- and they can be blessed as well as blessing us with their talent," he said.

John Gage, minister of instrumental music at First Baptist Church of Atlanta, acknowledged: "Not every church can do everything. But I do believe every church can do something.

"In every community, there is a junior high, high school or college band program from which you can draw instrumentalists and teachers. Every church has neighboring churches with musicians who would be glad to share their abilities once in a while with your church.

"In almost every church I'm familiar with, there is some young person who plays flute or trumpet or clarinet or something. These young people need to be used, either as a soloist when they're ready or as an accompanist to congregational singing or a choir anthem."

Walworth recalled that when he was a high school student his home church of about 30 members encouraged him to play the trumpet to accompany the youth choir.

"I was given the opportunity to use a talent I was very interested in, but more than that, I was given the reward of knowing that ability wasn't just for the marching band," he recalled. "It was something I could use for God. Looking back, I think the Lord -- in ways I couldn't imagine at the time -- was planting seeds in my own spirit that came to bloom in a calling to ministry when I was 17."

Appling agreed that giving people a personal sense of purpose and worth in church involvement has proven its value repeatedly in his church, emphasizing, "The end results of an instrumental ministry are outreach and evangelism."

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"The Old Testament is so full of references to instrumental music being used in worship, in praise, in calling the people together and in signaling for battle," Gage said. "I really believe if we're going to be a scriptural church today, we need to allow our instrumentalists to be used in worship. I really think we do our people an injustice if we don't allow them to use their God-given talents in worship."

The instrumental workshop was sponsored jointly by the music departments of the Alabama, Kentucky and Tennessee Baptist conventions, Belmont College and the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

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Music should spark
emotion, Red says

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
10/27/89

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Church music should spark the emotions of worshippers without conjuring up feelings of false sentimentality, stressed Southern Baptist composer Buryl Red.

"Music, whatever it does, ought to elevate people and stir people in a way that can't happen any other way," said Red. "There's something in music that can move people in a way that nothing else can."

Musicians should always "strive to stress feelings and emotions about our faith in a way that has depth and strength and gentleness, but not in a way that plays up sentimentality through the trivial," he said.

Red, who has composed numerous musical dramas, choral cantatas, anthems and hymns, lectured at the 29th annual Church Music Institute at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. During an interview while on the campus of the Louisville, Ky., school, Red noted that if "you use music to make things trivial, it is misused. Simplemindedness is not enough to convey your faith." On the other hand, he said, musicians should realize that "complexity doesn't always equal art."

Red is concerned that many times congregations hear or sing familiar songs and never ponder the meaning of the words: "Sometimes we sing them as if they were a jingle ... when we may be singing some of the most profound words ever written," he said. Red often composes new tunes for familiar songs, hoping the change in tune may lead to gain a new appreciation for the lyrics.

Red's music gained notoriety among Southern Baptists in the 1970s when he and lyricist Raga Courtney wrote "Celebrate Life," a youth musical about the life of Christ.

More than 350,000 copies of the musical have been sold since its introduction in 1972, making it one of the all-time best selling Christian musicals.

It recently has been updated with new orchestrations by Red.

Unlike many of the folk-style youth musicals that proliferated in the '70s, "Celebrate Life" has a "classical element within a folk idiom" that has contributed to the musical's longevity, Red believes.

"I made a special point not to use the musical cliches of the day," he emphasized.

Adult choirs also are performing the musical, he said: "People who were youth in the 70s are now adults and want to perform again. Because of the classical quality, it doesn't sound like it is exclusively for youth."

Red pointed out that youth musicals helped introduce churches to new types of church music. "Youth musicals certainly freed up the musical vocabulary in churches, and churches became comfortable with more musical styles," he said. "What was then revolutionary has now become mainstream" in churches.

As youth musicals became less of a novelty, their popularity began to wane, he said. He noted fewer youth now are available to sing in youth choirs than in the 70s.

In addition to church music, Red, who owns his own production company in New York City, also has excelled as a composer of secular music.

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He has supervised, directed and written music for more than 100 syndicated television programs and for music specials on the three major television networks.

He also has been involved in the production of educational records.

Yet Red said composing church music has always been a priority for him.

In his church music, he likes to use his Southern Baptist "roots and traditions, but I hope what I do speaks to all."

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Baptist Young Men
meet in Amory Jail

By Tim Nicholas

Baptist Press
10/27/89

AMORY, Miss. (BP)--The idea for a ministry developed when a member of Travis Murray's MasterLife discipleship course went to jail. The inmate, a church member, told Baptist Men's director Ken Holmes he knew the church was involved in missions but asked and "Why aren't we involved over there (at the jail)?"

Holmes said his first answer to the inmate's question was, "We didn't want to be. My attitude was they were in jail for a reason and I didn't need to be there. That changed after I got a friend over there."

That was nearly three years ago. Since then, First Baptist Church of Amory, Miss., along with three other churches hold Sunday morning services weekly. Holmes is teaching courses leading to high school diplomas for the inmates and Murray is leading a Baptist Young Men's group -- in the cell.

The GED high school classes have been going about a year. Already two inmates have graduated with diplomas and a couple more are readying for their exams. Holmes held a pizza party for the class when the first two graduated.

Holmes said another man was doing quite well, but dropped out the day he escaped from the jail. He was shipped to the Mississippi state penitentiary in Parchman after he was captured and the program lost a bright pupil.

Murray, Royal Ambassador director for the church and an accountant and programmer for American Funeral Assurance Company, said: "There was nothing going on in the jail as far as rehabilitation. These guys are sitting in a room 24 hours a day with nothing to do."

The men are assigned 20 or so to a cell with nothing to keep them occupied. Those with lower bunks string blankets across the fronts of their beds for a bit of privacy.

Added Holmes, who works as an oil jobber for Amoco, "I always thought criminals were terribly bad. You should lock them up and throw away the key. I found I was wrong. With no chance for parole there's nothing you can do to rehabilitate that person ... no hope." With a parole system, a prisoner might say, "If I'm good or if I've learned something, perhaps I can get out."

Holmes also is teaching math to David, an inmate enrolled in Ohio University's bachelor of science "incarcerated division." Holmes's wife serves as his proctor.

There are eight in the class right now with abilities ranging from 3rd grade to 12th grade levels, with the program administered by Itawamba Community College. Holmes uses the stipend he gets from Itawambao to pay for refreshments and materials.

The Baptist Young Men's group which meets at the jail has an enrollment of seven. These are Christian men who want to participate in missions while in jail. Since the group organized a few months ago -- with the sponsorship of the Baptist Men's group at First Church of Amory -- they've elected officers (one officer said someone in his cell of more than 20 men swiped his list of duties). They've completed Vigil, a personal spiritual examination form. They've studied together a Brotherhood Commission missions book "Let the Journey Begin," and they've begun several missions projects.

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One mission project is giving away New Testaments which are provided by the Gideons to other inmates. Murray says another case of Bibles is on its way. David said one man to whom he'd given a Testament, recently walked out of the jail a free man and "all he had in his hand was that Bible."

The group is repairing toys to give out to children in need during Christmas. A number of local churches are helping provide the toys. The sisters of St. Helen's Catholic Church in Amory have volunteered to distribute the truckload of toys donated so far.

In addition, the men in the group desperately want to counsel teenagers who are traveling down the road they traveled which led the men to prison. "Twelve years of drinking, doing drugs, having free sex with anyone, and being 'cool' got me 40 years," said David.

"He got so cool he froze," added Poochie, drawing a laugh from the group. Poochie said he'd been witnessing to his brother who was behaving the same way he'd done. Poochie, with a natural gift for art, had begun drawing personalized birthday cards for nursing home residents. After the material for this story was gathered, Poochie was sent to Parchman for behavior problems, said Murray.

"What we want to do is minister to young people who have been in trouble with the police at least one time," said David. Murray said he is trying to get the sheriff's approval for youth court offenders involved with drugs or alcohol to get counseling with these men.

Hash, who said he got his nickname as a teenager for a drug arrest, said "This is the pits ... the bottom." He said he wants to scare teens away from the lifestyle he followed. He said it was his drug habit plus "smoking, drinking Georgia moonshine, doing it alone ... There were promises I made to God that I didn't keep. I'm being punished now for lying to God," said Hash.

Other mission projects are sending cards to nursing home patients, and attempting to get Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous groups started at the jail. And the men are examining several discipleship guides to determine which to study next.

"The Baptist Young Men's group is learning more about worship," said Murray, who returns to the jail most Sundays, often bringing his High School Baptist Young Men's group. Murray said the inmate group members are more open about inviting other inmates to the services. They are taking more of a lead in planning and carrying out the worship services.

Holmes said that even in the GED classes, he often has a chance to speak of the gospel message. "I don't think I can hit them over the head with religion, but by their knowing I'm from First Baptist Church and caring for them -- that means more to them -- by living a life that means I care about them, maybe they'll listen to what I say about Jesus."

For Murray, "The main joy for me is the new outlook on people it's (the jail ministry) given me and learning of the need for Christian leaders to be involved with people with problems.

"For me it was a real nice orderly world I lived in until I started ministering in jail. I could choose to get involved or not. Now, there's no choice. They know pretty quick how committed you are to Christ and for caring for them."

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