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Supreme Court hears
'right-to-die' case

N-BJC
By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court is faced with deciding whether the Constitution provides a right to refuse medical treatment, including food and water.

The high court heard arguments Dec. 6 in a dispute that has come to be known as the "right-to-die" case.

The case involves Nancy Cruzan, a 32-year-old Missouri woman who suffered severe brain damage in a car accident in 1983. She has been in a "persistent vegetative state" since that time.

Shortly after the accident, Cruzan's parents agreed to allow doctors surgically to insert a feeding tube. As a patient at a state rehabilitation center in Mount Vernon, Mo., Cruzan continues to receive all her food and water through that tube. Doctors estimate she could live another 30 years if artificial nutrition and hydration are maintained.

In late 1987, Lester and Joyce Cruzan asked a state probate court for a judgment that would allow them to have the feeding tube removed from their daughter's stomach.

After hearing three days of testimony, Jasper County Judge Charles E. Teel Jr. issued a judgment authorizing the Cruzans, as their daughter's co-guardians, to request that nutrition and hydration be withheld.

Teel found that Cruzan's brain damage is irreversible, permanent, progressive and ongoing. He also found that Cruzan has no cognitive or reflexive ability to swallow food or water and will never recover that ability. Under those circumstances, he held, the provision of food and water through a surgically implanted tube is "medical treatment."

In his judgment, Teel also said Cruzan's "lifestyle and other statements to family and friends suggest that she would not wish to continue her present existence without hope as it is."

But the state of Missouri appealed the case to the Missouri Supreme Court, which overturned the circuit court ruling in a 4-3 decision. The majority held Missouri has an "unqualified" interest in life and that no person can assume the right to privacy choices for an incompetent person in the "absence of the formalities required under Missouri's Living Will statutes, or the clear and convincing, inherently reliable evidence absent" in the Cruzan case.

Cruzan's parents appealed, asking the nation's highest court to overturn the decision by the Missouri Supreme Court.

At issue is whether a state may mandate invasive medical treatment that is contrary to the wishes of the family, ignores evidence of what the patient would have wanted and has no specific state interest except a general interest in life, William H. Colby, attorney for the Cruzans, told the Supreme Court.

In a case such as Cruzan's, Colby argued, the family should have the right to decide about medical treatment. Under questioning, he said the state could set up a process for reviewing such cases but should not remove the family from that process.

But Robert L. Presson, Missouri assistant attorney general, told the justices such decisions should be made by a judicial court rather than the family. The court, he said, could weigh the evidence to determine whether medical treatment is in the best interest of the patient.

Specific questioning by the justices dominated the hour-long argument.

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Justice John Paul Stevens, who directed a host of questions to the state's attorney, asked if circumstances might ever justify the withdrawal of treatment without proof of the patient's wishes. Rejecting Presson's response that such things as discomfort to the patient and the effectiveness of the treatment might be considered, Stevens implied the state's primary consideration would be the expense of the treatment.

Justice Anthony M. Kennedy said he did not see why the state could not require a mechanism to make a decision about a patient's prior wishes. If those wishes are not clear, he said, then the state could opt for life.

When Kennedy asked if a state could override a competent individual's wishes, Presson said no one -- competent or incompetent -- has a right to refuse food and water.

Although supporting Missouri's position, U.S. Solicitor General Kenneth W. Starr told the justices he would not say a person could never reject food and water. He did say, however, that state standards regarding refusal of medical treatment should be allowed as long as they are reasonably designed.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor expressed concern that "it is not clear what the standard is that the state of Missouri has set."

When O'Connor asked if a state may require "clear and convincing" evidence of a patient's intent, Colby said, "With Nancy Cruzan, her liberty interest is as important as her right to life."

He added that Missouri's standard of an unqualified interest in life is "such a high standard that the state will always win."

O'Connor asked Presson if the state can ever say it will never listen to evidence from the patient's family. Although saying, "No," he later reversed his answer in response to a question from Justice Antonin Scalia.

Scalia compared the case in question to cases involving Christian Scientists or Jehovah's Witnesses who refuse medical treatment for their children. He said he did not see the difference between a court overriding a parent's religious belief and it overriding a parent's philosophical belief that if the quality of life is not good, medical treatment should be stopped.

A decision in the case is expected before the end of the court's current term next summer. (88-1503, Cruzan v. Director, Missouri Department of Health)

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The three following stories, which analyze developments in Eastern Europe, were prepared by Mike Creswell, European correspondent based in Brussels, Belgium, and Art Toalston, Foreign Mission Board staff writer.

Editor's Note: The author of the following article, Mike Creswell, is the Baptist Press European correspondent, based in Brussels, Belgium. He traveled extensively across Europe this year and visited the Berlin Wall shortly after it opened. This is his eyewitness account of the "unthinkable" changes in Europe.

Analysis

Thinking the unthinkable:
rusty Iron Curtain crumbles

By Mike Creswell

F - FMB

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12/8/89

BRUSSELS, Belgium (BP)--Question: "Why was the sun so happy when it came up this morning?"
Answer: "Because tonight it will set in the West!"

That little joke, now making the rounds in Poland, reflects the bittersweet attitudes of many Eastern Europeans in these days of heady change.

Western Europe has collectively gasped during recent months as thousands of Eastern Europeans have fled West, and as Poland, Hungary, East Germany and now Czechoslovakia have turned away from communism's failed promises to seek futures lit by democracy and other Western values.

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Things have happened in Europe that redefine the word "unthinkable." Americans long have worried about a "domino effect" in which one Western European country after another would fall prey to communism. Instead, the world may be witnessing a "reverse domino effect," with one country after another abandoning communism to try at least a more democratic form of socialism.

In Poland and Hungary, democracy has moved quickly from being an elusive dream to a possible reality. The unthinkable has happened there. Hungary, for example, opened its border with Austria, leading thousands to flee from East Germany.

By the end of November, Czechoslovakia announced it would tear down the fence along its border with Austria, also unthinkable just weeks before.

But Nov. 9 brought the most unthinkable thing of all: the Berlin Wall was opened and a million East Germans poured into West Berlin to be dazzled by full stores, fresh bananas and liberty's twinkling neon lights. East Berlin Christians walked across the border to visit churches they had not seen in 29 years. Pastors from both sides of the wall met the following week.

Late into the night Nov. 10, cars lined up for 15 miles at the border between the Germanies, mostly East Germans out to sample the West.

In Berlin, thousands of citizens were gathered shoulder to shoulder, celebrating the opening of the wall. Normally reserved Germans hugged each other and wept openly in the street. The crowds stood for hours to applaud every car or group that crossed the border into West Berlin. Visitors carried home little chips of concrete from the wall -- souvenirs of one of the key events in this part of the 20th century.

Non-Germans at the wall that weekend felt as if they had showed up at another family's long-delayed reunion. Witnesses to the depth of long-repressed German feelings were not surprised when West German leader Helmut Kohl unveiled plans for reunification of the two Germanies -- unthinkable scant weeks ago.

What does it all mean for Christians? More specifically, what does it mean for mission-minded Southern Baptists? Here are some possibilities:

-- A reunified Germany. This topic is one of the hottest potatoes on the menu of changes being debated in Europe. As Western Europe heads toward greater unity in 1992 -- a unity that may include a single monetary system and virtually no trade barriers among the dozen European Community countries -- some see a reunion of the two Germanies as a threat. They fear West Germany, already the trade leader in Western Europe, could become strong enough to go its own way. The Soviets say it won't happen.

Regardless of whether reunification occurs, West German churches will experience turmoil and unparalleled opportunity. The country has been overrun by more than a quarter-million new settlers from East Germany, many of whom have no religion at all -- a major evangelism challenge.

Further, West German Baptists expect around 100,000 Soviet citizens to move to West Germany each year during the next decade. Up to one-fourth of the arriving Soviets are Baptists and Mennonites, but they tend to organize their own churches rather than unite with the West German Baptist Union.

Meanwhile, many East German Baptist churches -- already small -- have been weakened by the exodus of some members to the West. Southern Baptists may need to consider developing special programs to aid East German Baptists, who will need help in training, education and other areas.

-- Great mission opportunity in Europe. Missiologists say uprooted peoples are the ones most likely to be open to spiritual decisions. If so, the new situation in Germany and elsewhere in Europe constitutes one of the greatest evangelistic opportunities in 40 years.

Christian missions and evangelism in Western Europe have seen painfully slow progress in this century. Yet Christianity has survived and in some cases grown despite government resistance in the East. Could this new situation be the opening Baptists and other evangelical Christians have sought to break through Western Europe's hard, secular shell? If it is, will Christians mobilize forces quickly enough to respond during the few months or years that people can be reached?

In light of Southern Baptists' new cooperative relationships with other "Great Commission Christians," could cooperative approaches be developed to allow more rapid deployment of personnel and funds?

-- Continuing political change and instability. At Checkpoint Charlie -- amid a swirl of West Berliners cheering the arrival of East Germans -- an off-duty American soldier shook his head in disbelief as thousands streamed through what once had been a tightly controlled, heavily secured area. "This will change our entire mission," he said.

Already newspapers hint at a major reconfiguration of U.S. military forces in Europe. A withdrawal of large numbers of American soldiers from Western Europe will impact English-language churches that Southern Baptists have established across the continent. But it would not affect all of them, since many increasingly minister to English speakers from many countries.

Many Europeans are excited about the change but worried about accompanying instability. Nowhere is the instability more evident than in the Soviet Union itself, where nationalistic tendencies have sparked rebellion in outlying republics. Some of the "satellite countries" aligned with the Soviet bloc may begin their new lives not as unified countries but as clusters of different cultural-linguistic groups, threatening to fly apart at any moment. Border questions considered long-solved have arisen again.

And with so many former allies abandoning the Soviet ship of state, can holdouts such as Romania remain afloat?

-- Dark economic days ahead. If projections prove accurate, Southern Baptists may be asked to provide hunger relief in Eastern Europe as well as Ethiopia. Poland, Hungary, East Germany and Czechoslovakia are turning to democracy with ailing, bankrupt economies. After 40 years of communist rule, some sections of the East have economies scarcely better than some Third World countries. Most economists say conditions will get worse before they get better; some communist countries may see soup kitchens before prosperity.

From a Christian standpoint, the situation offers a chance to serve. Christian agencies may be able to send hundreds of English teachers, technicians or business leaders to Eastern Europe.

-- Many Christian groups in the East, including Baptists, desperately need trained leaders. Romania, still closed, has only about 185 pastors for some 1,100 churches, for example. Southern Baptists may need to assess ways to help with pressing religious education needs in Eastern Europe.

Major printing needs will arise among Baptists hungry for Bibles and other Christian literature in their own languages. Opened borders may mean big publishing opportunities. Southern Baptists already have provided equipment to Polish Baptists for publishing their own materials and launched a major Bible distribution effort in the Soviet Union. Perhaps other such ventures will follow in lands long closed to outside assistance.

Will access to some Eastern bloc countries allow access to other countries still closed to Christian work? Time will tell, as Europeans go through one of the most exciting periods since the close of World War II.

Czech Baptist leader Jan Pospisil sees the upheaval as God's way of "answering our prayers" that Eastern Europeans have a chance to hear the gospel freely. Will Southern Baptists miss the chance to minister where zealous Baptists have prayed and struggled against overwhelming odds for decades to maintain a Christian witness?

Unthinkable.

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BP graphic sent to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press to accompany this and two other Eastern European stories.

Eastern bloc churches unsure
about 'perestroika' impact

By Art Toalston

F- FMB

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Most of the world can only marvel at the political upheaval under way in the Soviet Union and the rest of Eastern Europe. For many in the midst of it, however, uncertainty blunts moments of rejoicing.

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Christians in the Soviet Union, for example, have held outdoor baptisms and organized youth meetings, although laws to thwart such activities still are on the books. Only Mikhail Gorbachev's promise of new freedoms has moderated the laws for now.

"That makes religious people somewhat nervous," says Isam Ballenger, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board vice president for work in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. "They don't really know what freedoms they're going to have in the future."

Christians and fellow citizens around them also share uncertainty over basic needs for survival, says Keith Parker, who works under Ballenger as director of Baptist work in Europe.

It's wintertime across Europe, Parker reminds, and "in most of the (socialist) countries there are increasing problems with food and medical supplies. The changes are continuing at a breakneck pace, with surprises almost every day. There's a tremendous amount of rejoicing. But as high as the joy is, there's an equally low cruel reality."

The reform movement sweeping across Eastern Europe is "like a mighty storm, perhaps even a tornado," Parker says. "No one knows where it's going to blow and what's going to be left afterwards."

"It would be very difficult for the changes to be taken back," says John David Hopper, who worked through the Foreign Mission Board's Eastern Europe Mission for nearly 20 years until he became president of Baptist Theological Seminary in Switzerland in 1988. "Only the army probably could do that. Even then, revolutions might break out."

(The Eastern Europe Mission dates back to the late 1940s. The number of Southern Baptist workers assigned to the mission has increased to 10 in recent years, with some residing in Eastern bloc countries. They are involved in a range of cooperative endeavors with Baptists in most of these countries.)

The "bloodless revolution" may not transform these socialist states into Western-style democracies, says John Eibner, Eastern European research coordinator for Keston College, a London-based watchdog of church-state affairs in the Eastern bloc. But, he says, "Militant atheism as it has been practiced in the Soviet Union and in several other Eastern bloc countries probably will not come back to haunt these nations in the immediate future."

Tom Bettag, executive producer of CBS Evening News, told USA Today, "There's a major religious revival at work (in Eastern Europe), and it's undermining communism." Others say churches have been just one factor.

Olga Hruby, co-editor of a journal, Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, notes that churches have provided "the only expression for nationalism" in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe because, for the most part, they have been "the only existing organized associations that are non-Marxist."

Changes sweeping Eastern Europe, Ballenger says, have resulted from "a groundswell from the masses," not church members emphasizing a born-again faith. "Every man wants to breathe free -- secular man as well as Christian man."

Eastern bloc freedoms vary
from country to country

By Art Toalston

F-FMB

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A review of Eastern European nations, as change sweeps the continent, reveals a wide range of church-state developments:

-- Soviet Union: Mikhail Gorbachev, in a speech before his Dec. 1 meeting with Pope John Paul II, acknowledged that the Soviet Union held a mistaken view of religion in the past. The New York Times quoted Gorbachev as saying, "The moral values which religion generated and embodied for centuries can help ... our country, too." Soviet law, Gorbachev promised the pope, will be rewritten to guarantee religious freedom.

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Under perestroika, says Ed Plowman, who edits National & International Religion Report, "seminaries have been approved for Soviet Protestants, Bibles and religious books are pouring in, churches are operating the equivalent of Sunday schools for the first time in decades, pastors and leaders are conducting meetings and concerts in public halls and stadiums ... and millions of non-believing Soviet citizens, including ... intellectuals and members of the arts and media communities, have embarked on a spiritual quest."

The Soviet Union's main Baptist body, the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, has pioneered social ministry in hospitals and launched a newspaper with six regional editions. The union encompasses more than 5,500 congregations with 600,000 members in this country of 289 million people.

In some places, communist authorities continue to mete out harsh treatment to Christians who refuse to register with the government, Plowman reports.

-- East Germany: In the only Eastern European nation with a Protestant majority, churches have had almost complete autonomy since communists took power in 1949. But church members often faced discrimination in career and educational opportunities.

Churches played a key role in opening up the Berlin Wall and, in early December, bringing Communist Party domination to an end. "Leipzig's St. Nicholas (Lutheran) Church is the center of the mass pro-democracy movement," Plowman says. "And churches served as forums and gathering places for large rallies of activists who spilled onto the streets to demonstrate for reforms."

The opening of East Germany's borders prompted eight leaders of one Baptist congregation in East Berlin to draft a statement that "the desire to leave this missionary land ... does not come from the Lord." Even before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Gerd Rudzio, leader of West Germany's Baptist Union, was reporting, "In some (East German) churches, no one has left; in others, as many as 10 percent of the membership have emigrated to the West, and these are mostly young people." The Baptist Union encompasses more than 200 churches with 19,700 members in this country of 16.6 million people.

-- Poland: The government now is in the hands of the Solidarity labor union, but last May, when communists controlled, Poland became the first Eastern European country to enact broad religious freedom guarantees. More recently, the secret police unit that monitored church activities was disbanded.

Christians often lost job opportunities to people favored by communists. But largely because of the strength of the Catholic Church -- 95 percent of Poland's 38 million people -- Poles have had freedom to worship -- usually limited to the confines of the church -- and to print Bibles and literature.

But Poland's small Baptist community -- 56 churches with 3,000 members -- and similar groups wonder whether difficulties may arise with the Catholic Church if the church seeks to use its close ties to the Solidarity government to lessen competition from evangelicals.

Southern Baptist cooperative ventures with Polish Baptists include dispatching volunteer teams to help build an educational center near Warsaw.

-- Hungary: Restrictions on churches have been eased in recent years, and discrimination against Christians has lessened. The government has promised a new constitution to include a Bill of Rights-like guarantee of religious freedom and other liberties. The once-repressive Office for Church Affairs has been abolished.

This summer, the European Baptist Federation Congress attracted some 5,200 Baptists from 42 countries to Budapest, the first such gathering in an Eastern bloc nation. The communist national assembly president told the group that Hungarian Baptists are contributing to "a new society" in the country. The meeting ended in Budapest's People's Stadium, where 90,000 people heard Billy Graham preach and 25,000 responded to his invitation to receive Christ.

The International Baptist Lay Academy in Budapest is scheduled to open in July, offering biblical and theological studies for Eastern European church leaders. A Southern Baptist couple is assisting at the institute. Hungary, a country of 10.6 million people, has 12,000 Baptists in 250 churches.

-- Czechoslovakia: Church officials were promised new freedoms in extraordinary meetings with communist leaders Nov. 30. Jan Pospisil, leader of the Baptist Union of Czechoslovakia, reports that a seminary can be launched. He says Baptists intend to press for additional freedoms to print books, broadcast on radio and television and establish senior citizens' homes.

For years, the state has controlled the licensing and salaries of pastors. Churches will face a new challenge, Pospisil says, if new freedoms require them to assume responsibility for paying their pastors.

Baptist leaders protested to the government when police beat demonstrators in Prague in November. They called the action "an abuse of human dignity and an attack on freedom of conscience and freedom of speech." Some 4,000 Baptists belong to 28 churches in this country of 15.6 million people.

-- Romania: Staunch Communist Party leader Nicolae Ceausescu, who has led Romania for more than two decades, shows no signs of embracing perestroika.

"Religion is not illegal in Romania," says John Eibner, Eastern European research coordinator for Keston College, a London-based watchdog of church-state affairs in the Eastern bloc. "But all religious groups operate under tight state supervision." Several religious groups, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and the evangelical Lord's Army movement within the Romanian Orthodox Church, are illegal, while the Roman Catholic Church has no legal status "but is tolerated," Eibner says.

Ironically, Baptists, with 160,000 members in 660 churches among Romania's 23.2 million people, comprise the second-largest Baptist union in Europe, behind the Soviet Union's. "It's one of the stronger Baptist unions from the standpoint of evangelism and personal piety," says Stanley Crabb, director of European Baptist Press Service.

Not surprisingly, the Baptist Union badly needs pastors. Some pastors are responsible for as many as nine churches, while untrained lay preachers lead many other churches. The union is hamstrung by government restrictions limiting enrollment at its seminary, which currently has only 16 students.

-- Yugoslavia: Freedom to worship, to conduct Sunday schools and to print Bibles and other religious materials are but some of the progressive legacies of the late Josip Broz Tito, who had led the country for more than three decades and kept it out of the Warsaw Pact.

Yugoslavia's most worrisome problem involves its competing nationalisms -- further complicated by religious divisions. Macedonians, Montenegrins and Serbs make up most of 7 million Orthodox. Croats, Slovenes and Hungarians make up most of 5 million Roman Catholics. And there are 2 million ethnic Albanian Muslims. Five official languages and two alphabets are used in this country of 23.7 million people. More than 3,500 Baptists -- spanning all nationalities -- belong to 123 churches in Yugoslavia, reports Nela Williams, a Southern Baptist worker based in Zagreb. Baptists "are not in disunity," she says, adding, "This is a testimony" in Yugoslavia.

-- Bulgaria: Observers anticipate reforms in the wake of longtime Communist Party leader Todor Zhivkov's recent fall from power. But at present, Christians can only meet for worship led by government-licensed clergy in government-recognized churches. Sunday schools, evangelistic rallies and printing of religious literature are illegal. Until this year, church leaders were regularly denied permission to travel to other countries. But a small delegation of Baptists traveled to Budapest this summer for the European Baptist Federation Congress. The country has 670 known Baptists in 10 churches in this country of 9 million people.

A fledgling reform organization known as the Independent Committee for the Defense of Religious Rights, Freedom of Conscience and Spiritual Values, has come under severe pressure from the government, according to press reports.

-- Albania: This country occupies the "bottom of religious freedom charts," Plowman says. Religious institutions and activities have been banned since Albania's communist rulers declared in 1967 that the predominantly Muslim nation would become the "world's first atheistic state."

Radio broadcasts beamed toward Albania remain the key means of offering the gospel to the country's citizens. No information is available about any Baptists or Baptist churches in this country of 3.2 million people, according to the Foreign Mission Board's Keith Parks.

Some Western tourists, but none from the United States, have been allowed into Albania recently, and "that's a sign of hope," Parker notes. Eibner adds that tourism may open the door "for certain types of mission activity."

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Sunday school leaders seek
push to develop growth

By Frank Wm. White

N-SSB

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Sunday school leaders hope a final push for their current enrollment effort and plans for the next five-year emphasis will break a three-year enrollment plateau.

Concentrated efforts, innovative approaches and spiritual commitment are needed to move beyond stagnant enrollment growth and reach unchurched people in America during the 1990s, Harry Piland, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday school division, told state convention Sunday school leaders meeting in Nashville Dec. 4-6 for annual planning sessions.

Piland and other Sunday school leaders are seeking ways to break the three-year stall in enrollment that interrupted a six-year climb started in 1979.

Piland believes Breakthrough, the Sunday school emphasis for 1990-95, can move Southern Baptists back to Sunday school growth.

"We need a breakthrough in evangelism. We need a willingness to get the gospel out," Piland said.

The emphasis focuses on the need for Southern Baptists to undertake evangelistic efforts to involve more people in Bible study.

Major elements of the plan are Sunday school program and curriculum improvements and a project to have a growth consultation with every church and mission in the convention.

Before the Breakthrough emphasis begins in October 1990, Sunday school leaders plan a four-month finale to Challenge 10/90, the 1985-90 goal of 10 million people enrolled in Bible study by Sept. 30, 1990, that Piland said could "catapult us into a true breakthrough."

The Challenge 10/90 goal has been elusive; the plateau was reached early in the five-year emphasis. Enrollment has remained just below 8 million for the past three years.

In the Final Four, a June-to-September 1990 emphasis, state conventions, associations and churches will be encouraged to promote enrollment and outreach efforts to involve more people in Sunday school.

Part of the effectiveness of the Final Four can be in the intensive focus, said Joe Haynes, consultant in the Sunday school growth and administration department.

"The benefit for the churches will be in increased enrollment and involvement in outreach," Haynes said.

Piland said he believes the Final Four push can change the pattern and provide the momentum to begin the Breakthrough emphasis. The goal for 1990-95 is a Southern Baptist Sunday school enrollment of 11 million by 1995 -- an ambitious but attainable goal, he reported.

Rather than promote the national goal as has been the practice with previous efforts, annual church goals for enrollment, attendance and other areas will be the focus of promotion efforts.

Piland expressed optimism that a breakthrough for Sunday school growth is possible.

"I see an opportunity for breakthrough where we can have an impact on our world," he said. "We've got to go outside our churches. We need to start new Sunday schools, Vacation Bible Schools, Backyard Bible Clubs and outreach evangelism. We must go where the people are, because they won't come find us inside our churches."

Improvements in curriculum and program design to be introduced in 1991 have an increased focus on evangelism and application of the Bible that will encourage Sunday school class members to be more evangelistic, he said.

In an unprecedented attempt to conduct a training session in each of more than 42,000 Southern Baptist churches and missions, the Sunday school division hopes to train as many as 7,000 volunteer consultants for the Great Commission Project.

"This is not a hit-and-run approach. There will be pre-event planning with church leaders, a two-day conference and then follow-up after the event," Piland said. "We haven't even touched the potential for reaching people that we can do through this."

Following a challenge from Piland for a commitment to achieving a breakthrough in enrollment and evangelistic outreach, state Sunday school directors offered unified support.

Ron Palmer, director of the Sunday school program for the South Carolina Baptist Convention and president of the state directors association, announced the state directors had adopted a covenant to pray each Monday at 9 a.m. for breakthrough growth in their states and in the Southern Baptist Convention.

The directors will share prayer concerns with each other as part of their prayer commitment, Palmer said.

In his challenge, Piland emphasized the need for prayer: "We need a breakthrough in the prayer life of our people. The breakthrough will come from God through us if we are prepared and ready to do his will."