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Lewis affirms role of women,
asks WMU to help tell them

By Susan Todd

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Southern Baptist Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis affirmed the role of women in church and in society in his address to the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union executive board Jan. 8.

"We need your help in communicating to women that the Home Mission Board strongly affirms and supports the involvement of women in missions and in evangelism and in ministry," he told them.

"Through the Home Mission Board, women serve in every missionary role except that of local church pastor. We need your help in clearly communicating to Southern Baptists that the Home Mission Board affirms and supports women in ministry and in missions."

Lewis referred to information on changing roles of women in America presented by Home Mission Board researcher Orrin Morris.

"The thing that troubles me most is his estimate that there are at least 12.7 million 'angry women' in the United States -- and I think I've gotten letters from most of them," Lewis said.

"Some of them are angry at the Home Mission Board. Some of them believe that the Home Mission Board is anti-women. Nothing could be further from the truth. I say that seriously, and I say that sincerely."

Lewis challenged WMU to join the Home Mission Board in a renewed emphasis on three topics in the decade of the 1990s -- volunteerism, ministries and evangelism within cities, and spiritual renewal and awakening.

Lewis told the group they should not be surprised to learn that more women than men were involved in missions service through the Home Mission Board last year.

"A grand total of 23,079 women were involved in missions service through the Home Mission Board, compared to 21,869 men. It is no surprise to you that women lead the way in missions service. I am encouraged by our progress in the involvement of women in missions. But we need to do so much more," he said.

America's cities illustrate another area of home mission work where Southern Baptists need to do more, Lewis noted.

"Our research indicates 76 percent of the people in America live in urban areas. Yet only 12,000 of our churches and missions are located in those areas, compared to 30,000 in our rural areas," he said.

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A new emphasis must be placed on establishing churches in the black and ethnic areas of cities, he stressed.

"To do this, more blacks and ethnics must assume in our denomination key leadership roles," he said. The day of tokenism for ethnics and blacks is over. We must root out any hint of racism or prejudice and press forward with initiatives that encourage and affirm leaders from the 88 language and cultural groups that worship in Southern Baptist congregations each Sunday."

The Home Mission Board cannot minister to America alone, Lewis said. "We work in partnership with other Southern Baptist Convention agencies, including Woman's Missionary Union, with the state conventions and with associations," he said.

Lewis gave an example of the difference WMU can make in the local church and in the state convention.

"A recent study in Kansas-Nebraska revealed that churches with a WMU organization gave 123 percent more per member to the Cooperative Program unified budget than churches without a WMU," he said. "And they gave 83 percent more per member to home missions through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering than churches without WMU."

The 60 percent of Kansas-Nebraska churches that have active WMU program's give 92 percent of the total Cooperative Program receipts in their convention and 91 percent of its Annie Armstrong Easter Offering total, he said.

"I think this affirms that which all of us know. There is nothing more important in a church than mission action, mission support and mission education," he said.

The 1990s will be not only a decade for volunteerism but a decade for spiritual renewal and awakening, Lewis said.

"God is up to something," he insisted. "I can't comprehend it fully, and I don't understand it completely, but God is beginning to move among his people. And we must be responsive to the leading of his spirit. We must not quench the spirit."

Lewis asked the group to join him in calling Southern Baptists to make the 1990s a decade of prayer.

"The time is far past due for genuine repentance and rededication on the part of Southern Baptists," he said. "It is time to humble ourselves, to seek God's face, to turn from our wicked ways."

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Southern Baptists must not ignore
'angry' women, researcher Says

By Susan Todd

Baptist Press
1/9/90

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--The most revolutionary change taking place in society today is the changing role of women, said a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board researcher.

"It is evident that our opinions regarding the role of women are in transition, and emotions are high on many of the underlying issues," said Orrin Morris, director of the HMB research division.

Morris spoke to the national executive board of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union during its Jan. 8-11 meeting and elaborated on the implications of his research findings in an interview following the presentation.

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The most important recent finding regarding the changing role of women is "the 10 to 15 percent of angry women" in the country, Morris said.

These women include the woman who today feels less respected as a woman than she did 15 years ago; the woman who feels a husband should turn down a career advancement for him if it means relocation and having to leave her career; and the woman who believes the husband should give up his job if she gets a job demanding relocation.

The women who are "angry" also insist on a woman boss and strongly disagree with the statement, "It is better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family."

The 10 percent to 15 percent of women who fall into the category of angry women constitute what Morris described as "a critical mass." These 8 million to 12 million women are the equivalent of all women age 18 and over in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia.

"In light of the strong negative views regarding men held by these women, it is highly likely that most of these women will not hear and respond to the gospel unless witnessed to by a woman," Morris said.

"No matter how eloquent James Smith is, Larry Lewis is, or Orrin Morris is, they'll only listen if witnessed to by a woman." Smith is president of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission and Lewis is president of the Home Mission Board.

"When we consider Bold Mission Thrust, we are saying, 'Let everyone, every person in the United States have an opportunity to hear and respond to the good news of Jesus.' Now the big issue is: Can we? Will we?" Morris said.

"What do they (the 10-15 percent of 'angry' women) care about church, as long as it is male-dominated? These women will not be reached by the "traditional Southern Baptist church doing things in the traditional manner."

Other of Morris' research findings include:

-- A majority of women began to feel an improvement in societal respect for them in the late 1970s. However, 18 percent of women and 15 percent of men feel women were less respected in 1985 than they were in 1970, Morris said.

-- Most women will fight for the right to get a job, but they will not exercise that option for the sake of everyone in the family -- unless economics demands it.

-- The issue of women's rights extends to the right to have a career. In 1977, 60 percent of women agreed a wife's career was secondary to her husband's. By 1986, only 37 percent of women agreed with this stance.

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Southern Seminary declares
student's charges untrue

By David R. Wilkinson

Baptist Press
1/9/90

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's trustee executive committee has affirmed President Roy L. Honeycutt's determination that recent charges against a seminary professor are "completely unsubstantiated."

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In a called meeting Dec. 27 via telephone conference call, the executive committee approved two recommendations from a special ad hoc committee appointed to review the seminary's response to the charges.

In a letter addressed to Daniel O. Aleshire, seminary director of professional studies, Clark D. Kirkbride, a theology student from Jeffersonville, Ind., requested that he be withdrawn from the Louisville, Ky., school.

Kirkbride then accused seminary ethics professor Paul D. Simmons of a series of statements and actions regarding the sexuality of Jesus. According to Kirkbride, the statements were made in a course on "The Church and Sexuality" taught by Simmons during the fall semester.

Honeycutt said the seminary has declined to be specific about the accusations because "they have been found to be totally unsubstantiated and, in my judgment, libelous."

An investigation of Kirkbride's charges by School of Theology Dean Larry L. McSwain concluded that each of the accusations was "patently untrue." In addition to conversations with Kirkbride, Simmons and a director of missions who received a copy of Kirkbride's letter, McSwain conducted personal interviews with 38 of the 58 students in the class taught by Simmons. None of the students' testimonies, he reported, corroborated any of Kirkbride's charges.

McSwain said he plans to interview the remaining members of the class before formally closing his investigation.

In its called meeting, the trustee executive committee voted to "affirm" Honeycutt "for following established procedures and for responding in a prompt, thorough and responsible manner" to Kirkbride's charges. The committee, which received a written report from Honeycutt, also voted to "affirm (his) report concluding that those charges are false."

The committee adopted a second recommendation requesting the seminary administration to develop a trustee procedures manual by the date of the trustees' annual meeting in April.

That recommendation was made by the ad hoc committee following discussion in its meeting about the involvement of trustees in the Kirkbride issue.

Kirkbride's letter to Aleshire indicated that copies were sent to Honeycutt, Southern Baptist Convention President Jerry Vines, three local seminary trustees, two Baptist state newspapers and four other individuals.

Several days before Honeycutt received his copy, however, copies of the letter were sent by the three trustees to the seminary's 60 other trustees.

Honeycutt said he is "deeply troubled" that "false reports have been circulating throughout the Southern Baptist Convention."

He said circulation of the student's accusations "has been unfair to Dr. Simmons, who is totally innocent of the charges, and to his faculty colleagues who are trying in a politically charged denominational climate to be faithful to their calling to the ministry of teaching."

Read Bible in '90,
Bennett asks Baptists

By Marv Knox

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists should join Christians from around the world in reading the entire Bible this year, urged Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee.

The U.S. Congress has passed a joint resolution authorizing and requesting President Bush to issue a proclamation declaring 1990 the International Year of Bible Reading. Bush is expected comply by the end of January, Bennett said.

"The Bible is God's message to our world," Bennett noted. "The Bible is God's word of love, hope, direction and fulfillment in a world of hate, despair, confusion and dissatisfaction. That message from the Lord is needed now, more than ever."

Bennett has read through the Bible a number of times and follows the practice of reading through each new translation he receives.

"Holy Scripture is an infinite source of strength and guidance for me," he said. "And reading from another translation never fails to highlight messages and stories in new and refreshing ways."

Messengers to the 1989 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting last summer adopted a resolution designating 1990 as the International Year of Bible Reading. Among its assertions, the resolution states:

-- "Baptists believe that the Bible is the inspired written record of God's revelation to men.

-- "The Bible has made a unique contribution in shaping the United States as a distinctive and blessed nation and people.

-- "Deeply held religious convictions springing from the Holy Scriptures led to the early settlement of our nation.

-- "History illustrates the value of voluntarily applying the teachings of the Scriptures in the lives of individuals, families and societies.

-- "The Bible provides a major source of hope for the poor and repressed people of the world.

-- "The renewing of knowledge and faith in God through Scripture reading can strengthen international relationships."

The statement resolves to "call upon Southern Baptists to recognize the importance of reading through the entire Bible ... and participate in and encourage international Bible reading in 1990."

The resolution passed by Congress states: "The Bible has made a unique contribution in shaping the United States as a distinctive and blessed nation and people. Deeply held convictions springing from the Bible led to the early settlement of our nation. The history of our nation clearly illustrates the value of voluntarily applying the teachings of the Bible in the lives of individuals and families."

The 1990 emphasis on the Bible has been promoted by the International Bible Reading Association, a non-denominational organization based in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

The association plans several events to highlight reading the Bible, including Bible-reading marathons on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem and on the steps of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, and continuous reading of the Bible by volunteers around the clock the entire year.

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Consumption of alcoholic beverages
declines between 1977 and 1986

Baptist Press
1/9/90

ATLANTA (BP)--Per capita consumption of all alcoholic beverages in the United States declined between 1977 and 1986, according to a report from the national Centers for Disease Control.

The CDC reported that alcohol consumption increased annually from 1977 to 1980, leveled in 1980 and 1981, and began to decline in 1982. Alcohol consumption in 1986 was 2.3 percent below the 1977 level.

The most recent complete statistics available are from 1986.

The report noted that in 1986 "the decline in consumption of distilled spirits in the United States was greater than for any year since 1956, in terms of both actual cases sold and percentage decrease." Per-person consumption of hard liquor in 1986 was at its lowest level since 1959.

"The decline in spirits consumption may represent changes in the drinking patterns and preferences in the drinking-aged population," the report said. "These changes were reflected by greater interest in beverages with reduced-alcohol content," such as "light" beers and wine coolers.

Sixty-six percent, or two out of every three, adult Americans drink. However, one of every 10 drinkers "accounts for half of all alcohol consumed in the United States," the report said.

The CDC report has good news for pro-health and pro-safety advocates, said Robert M. Parham, associate director for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission responsible for alcohol concerns.

"We hope the decline signals increased awareness within the American public about alcohol-related health problems such as chronic liver disease and fetal alcohol syndrome, as well as the problem of drunk driving," he said.

Research shows alcohol is the second-leading cause of premature death in the United States, behind only tobacco, Parham said.

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T.A. Patterson
dies in Dallas

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
1/9/90

DALLAS (BP)--T.A. Patterson, 83, executive director of the 2.4-million-member Baptist General Convention of Texas from 1961 to 1973, died Jan. 8 in Baylor Medical Center in Dallas, after a long illness.

During Patterson's tenure as executive director, Texas Baptists began a program of disaster relief that has provided trained volunteers to feed disaster victims throughout Texas and as far away as Mexico City and Honduras.

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He also helped begin the Rio Grande River Ministry, which has provided medical, dental, agricultural and other aid to improve conditions for millions of people along the 900-mile stretch of the Rio Grande River from El Paso to Brownsville, Texas.

Patterson was director of the Orient New Life Crusade in 1963, the first large-scale involvement of Baptist laypeople in overseas missions.

Fellow Baptists said he emphasized evangelism on a world scale, the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget of missions support and the need for endowment income for Baptist institutions. After retiring as executive director of the Texas convention, he was executive vice president of the World Evangelism Foundation, founded by W.H. Jackson, a former foreign missionary to Japan.

In recent years, Patterson also was chaplain and missions teacher at Criswell College in Dallas.

Since 1979, as a resident of Trew Home in Dallas, he led a ministry of counseling and Bible study.

During his 44-year ministry as pastor and denominational leader, Patterson was pastor of First Baptist Church of Beaumont, Texas; East Grand Baptist Church of Dallas; Evans Avenue Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas; First Baptist Church of Colorado City, Texas; First Baptist Church of Hollis, Okla.; First Baptist Church of Roscoe, Texas; and McComb Baptist Church and Dixie Baptist Church, both of Whitesboro, Texas.

He earned the bachelor of arts degree from Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, and the master of theology and doctor of theology degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. He also held the honorary doctor of divinity degree from Hardin-Simmons.

The Thomas Armour Patterson chair of missions has been established in his memory at Criswell College.

Patterson is survived by his wife, Roberta Mae Patterson of Dallas; a son, Paig Patterson, president of Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, Dallas; a daughter, Dorris Dawn Connelly of Topeka, Kan.; a foster son, David Amad of Baytown, Texas; and four grandchildren.

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Graduates exhorted
to seek biblical faith

Baptist Press
1/9/90

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Nearly 200 December graduates of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary were urged to seek faith and avoid "extreme alternatives" in their approach to ministry.

Biblical faith leads people to "discover the mission of God in the world," said Milton Ferguson, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. That type of faith also places people "in step" with God's people and guides them toward "a way of life best embodied by the stranger from Galilee," he said during the 164th commencement at the Louisville, Ky., school.

Life involves a process of learning, analyzing and decision-making, but some Christians try to avoid these issues by turning to the views of either the "rigid traditionalist" or the "radical modernist," he said.

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The "rigid traditionalist" simplifies life by claiming to know all the answers, he said. "He or she is not interested in the very essence of life, choice and process."

The "radical modernist" refuses to make a commitment and tends to "treat all of life as if it were a game." Such a person never risks being wrong, because he or she never takes a stand, Ferguson said.

The graduates must remember they are called to work toward reconciling others to God, he said: "We stand as if in Christ's shoes saying, 'Be ye reconciled to God.' We are ambassadors of Christ."

During stressful times, ministers must keep in mind that "God was in Christ, reconciling himself to the world," said Ferguson. "You can live by that. You can die by that."

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Southern Seminary awarded
trustee development grant

Baptist Press
1/9/90

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has received a \$24,400 grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. to expand and strengthen its ongoing program of trustee development.

The Louisville, Ky., school was one of 40 North American seminaries selected for the \$791,000 grant program by the Indianapolis-based charitable foundation, which has a longstanding interest in American religious institutions and non-profit leadership. It was the only Southern Baptist seminary to be selected as a winner of the grant program.

The seminary will use a major portion of the grant to help fund a trustee retreat in 1990 that will be focused exclusively on trustee development. Trustees will hear reports on the history of Southern Seminary, the seminary's institutional plan and demographic factors impacting seminary admissions.

The endowment grant also will help underwrite the cost of a survey of trustee perceptions of the seminary's trustee development program. Trustees will be briefed on the results of the survey at the 1990 trustee retreat.

Southern Seminary's trustees for 20 years have been involved in programs aimed at assisting them in their understanding of the seminary and their trusteeship. Trustee retreats have been held annually since 1986 to provide an opportunity for personal relationship-building and a more intimate context for discussion of the seminary's mission and purpose.

"The expansion of Southern Seminary's trustee development program will aid the seminary in meeting the challenges of the future," said seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt. "I believe that our program of trustee development has helped foster the positive relationship that we have experienced with our board during a decade of controversy within the Southern Baptist Convention."

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Texas Baptists begin
toll-free prayer line

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
1/9/90

DALLAS (BP)--Callers throughout the United States can receive and leave prayer requests on a new two-way intercessory telephone line sponsored by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

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By dialing the nationwide toll-free number, (800) 288-PRAY, callers can hear a two-minute prayer request concerning some aspect of Mission Texas, the long-range emphasis on reaching people, developing believers, strengthening missions and ministering to people.

Each recorded message will provide the name and address of someone involved in a specific Mission Texas ministry so that callers may write and let him or her know about prayer support.

Messages will be changed daily. The prayer line will not duplicate prayer lines of the Southern Baptist Home and Foreign mission boards.

Following the recorded message, callers will have an opportunity to record an individual prayer request. All requests will be prayed for by intercessory prayer partners at the Texas Baptist Building in Dallas. The prayer room there will be staffed constantly by volunteers during regular business hours.

The toll-free prayer line will be operational seven days a week, 24 hours a day. It is made possible by the Cooperative Program unified budget plan for missions support.

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Teleconference focuses on needs
of sixth graders in Sunday school By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
1/9/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--Churches' dilemma of how best to minister through Sunday school to sixth graders -- who may feel they have outgrown the children's division but are not quite ready for the youth division -- was explored in a live Baptist Telecommunications Network teleconference Jan. 7.

The most important considerations in where to place sixth graders are the ability to meet their needs and help them to feel important, said Beth Taylor and Becky Martin, consultants in children's and youth Sunday school work, respectively, at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

The consultants answered questions from viewers and host Doug Merritt, youth Sunday school BTN design editor, during the hour-long teleconference.

The session focused on the physical, mental, emotional-social and spiritual needs of sixth graders.

Taylor and Martin have studied the special needs of sixth graders because many churches consider moving them into the youth division, following the lead of school systems that place sixth graders in a middle school with seventh and eighth graders.

Also, Taylor pointed out, church leaders often are pressured by parents to move sixth graders into youth activities.

However, Taylor noted that even though school systems have placed sixth graders in a middle school, they are in their own classrooms and do not mix with the older students at school, Taylor said.

Churches also should be cautious about mixing the pre-teens with youth before they are ready, she said.

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Martin warned the involvement with older students creates new pressures for the sixth graders that they may not be able to handle.

"They feel more secure in a small group. They may be most comfortable with their own group -- not with the younger children and not with the older middle schoolers," Martin said.

As sixth graders are facing physical, mental and emotional changes, they need to be challenged more than they may have been in earlier children's Sunday school classes.

"Don't treat them like babies. They need to get into the Bible, use a Bible dictionary and other resources," Taylor said.

She cautioned that curriculum should be chosen wisely for sixth graders. Youth material is written for seventh and eighth graders, not sixth graders, she pointed out.

In the board's Foundation Series, "Bible Searchers" materials are designed specifically for fifth and sixth graders. "Children's Bible Study" in the Convention Uniform Series is designed for first through sixth grades.

In smaller church situations where sixth graders are in the same class with younger children using Children's Bible Study, the sixth graders can be challenged as class leaders or teacher's aides, Taylor suggested.

With curriculum improvements to be introduced in October 1991, materials will have more helps for teachers of sixth grade Sunday school, according to Taylor and Martin.

To meet the pressures to involve sixth graders in youth activities, sixth grade workers should plan special activities, they said.

"Don't do youth activities, because they will get burned out on them by the time they are older youth," Taylor said.

The consultants suggested special activities for different times of the year, such as a get acquainted round-up, a church clean-up party, a Sunday school-related activity to improve Bible study and other fun activities that are special for sixth graders.

Martin suggested a pre-teen retreat with teachers and parents involved to help parents understand some of the special needs facing adolescents.

Taylor and Martin have written a brochure, "Meeting the Needs of the Middle School Sixth Grader," and lead conferences on dealing with the special needs of sixth grade Sunday school.

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Professor notes churches
helped crush Berlin Wall

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
1/9/90

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Reaching East Germany just as the Berlin Wall began to fall, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Glen Stassen found a movement of persistent prayer, quiet study and brave confrontation that helped shatter the barrier that divided Germany for more than two decades.

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Few Westerners realize the crucial role East German churches played in helping to bring about democratic reforms in the communist state, said Stassen, a professor of Christian ethics at the Louisville, Ky., school. He traveled to East Germany in November to address Baptist and ecumenical peacemaking gatherings and lecture at the Baptist seminary in Buckow.

In addition to providing the pro-reform activists a place to meet, the churches also played a significant role in helping the protestors articulate their demands and keeping the demonstrations non-violent, Stassen said.

An ecumenical coalition of churches worked two years to produce a document that spelled out demands dealing with democracy, human rights, peacemaking and environmental issues, said Stassen. The document was presented to the government despite threats that the churches would lose some of their freedoms if they persisted with their demands for reform.

"The government was afraid of it and also threatened by it," said Stassen. The churches "knew they were engaging in serious confrontation, and they didn't know what would come out of it."

East German churches also had been studying the U.S. civil rights movement and reading the works of non-violent leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi, he said.

Protestors, many of them non-Christians, assembled in churches before attempting outdoor rallies. Churches urged that protests be kept non-violent in a country where non-violent protest lacked a history, Stassen stressed.

New attitudes by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, the opening of the Hungarian border and the exodus of East German citizens also played a part in the German reforms. But Stassen pointed out the East German churches made preparation for the reforms not knowing when change would come.

Reformers had to "prepare in faith and hope" not knowing when a breakthrough might occur, he said. "You don't know when, but you do the deeds of Jesus now."

East German Christians need to know that people outside their country are concerned about their fate, said Stassen. "It mattered a great deal to them that the two peacemaker groups" at his home church in Louisville "had a daily discipline to pray for East Germany," he noted.

Now, he said, East Germany needs to begin the process of building a new economic system and forming a democratic government. Because free churches, such as Baptists, have experienced democracy in their congregations, they may make a "good school for learning democracy," Stassen observed.

Although he sensed that East Germans are "vigilant not to make Christianity a political movement," he said Christians are in prominent places in the new political parties that are forming.

Meanwhile, German churches are reaching out to communists who are now scorned by many people in German society. "The churches are welcoming communists, and they are coming in saying that this is the only place we are accepted," he said. Some pastors are also inviting members of the security police force to come to their churches and confess their sins, he added.

Stassen talked with few East Germans who were calling for reunification with West Germany. East Germans have lived under authoritarian rule for 40 years and want a chance to "shape their own lives," he said.

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Churches aid victims
of high-rise blaze

By Connie Davis

Baptist Pr ss
1/9/90

JOHNSON CITY, Tenn. (BP)--A late-December fire that killed 16 people, injured 50 others, and displaced all the residents of a high-rise retirement center mobilized Southern Baptists in Johnson City, Tenn.

Volunteers are essential because about 20 of John Sevier Retirement Center's 145 residents still are displaced, housed at a local hotel.

The American Red Cross didn't have enough volunteers to meet the needs and can only meet "immediate emergency needs of people involved in a disaster," reported Jane Harris of the Johnson City office.

Members of Central Baptist Church, located just two blocks from the center, were holding their Christmas Eve service when the fire was discovered. They helped residents find shelter in a Methodist church across the street from the center, and transported victims to homes of family and friends and a local hotel.

Two Central Church members were killed in the fire.

Mountain View Baptist Church Pastor Jim Cambron learned about a need for counselors from a church member who worked for the Red Cross, and 14 members of the church counseled with victims.

"The people were so distraught. They just needed someone to talk to," said Cambron. "I had no complete understanding of what it means to walk out of a burning building at night and not have glasses, pocketbooks, nothing. And a lot of them were elderly people. You just don't move them around like that."

Initially about 45 residents had no alternative housing.

About 100 volunteers from Central Church, Mountain View Church and Southwestern Baptist Church delivered meals donated by restaurants, medication given by pharmacies and clothing donated by social agencies, and they transported people to hotels.

Volunteers "became friends" to the residents, said Cambron, noting they accompanied residents to the center to retrieve belongings, assisted them in a Red Cross-sponsored shopping spree and even helped them relocate.

Few apartments are available in the college town said Lee Ray Robertson of Central Church. One member supplied several months' rent for a relocated resident, and Central Church began a fund for other needs.

Some volunteers helped residents complete paperwork to allow them to enter other government-subsidized housing in the area, Robertson said. Some were unable to interpret the forms, but others were "too nervous or shook up" to do it, he added.

Church members began staying during the night in the hotel, just to comfort the displaced elderly people.

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"Unfortunately, part of what we've seen is an uninvolved on the part of families," said Cambron, referring to the difficulty of finding housing for some of the victims. Many hope to return to the center, which already is being renovated.

In addition to one man making a profession of faith in Christ, results of Mountain View Church's involvement have been a deeper sensitivity and bonding "as we see each one using their gifts," said Cambron.

Robertson noted that Central's involvement can be traced to its emphasis on volunteer missions, both local and overseas. "And it's a new opportunity to witness to some of those people," he added.

"We were just showing Christian love and compassion to people in need," said Cambron.

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Church of the Nations
reaches out with gospel

Baptist Press
1/9/90

BATON ROUGE, La (BP)--"What is this book?" the Chinese man asked, pointing to the Bible on the table. "I have never seen this book.

"What are these numbers?" he inquired, referring to the indicated chapters and verses. Then, pointing to the name on the open page, he asked, "And who is Jesus?"

Like many others who have visited Calvary Baptist Church of the Nations in Baton Rouge, La., the man from China was a visiting scholar at Louisiana State University who had never heard the gospel. A friend, also Chinese, who had accepted Christ while attending the international mission, had invited him to Bible study.

Others have visited from such countries as Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, India, Kenya, Morocco, France, Chile, Cuba, Brazil, Iran and the Virgin Islands. The majority of them return to their countries after completing their studies or assignments in the United States.

"It is our hope that they will take the gospel of Christ back to their countries with them," said Allen Paine, pastor of Church of the Nations and a student in the Doctor of Theology degree program at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. "We may not always see the harvest of them coming to know Christ while they are here, but at least seeds are being planted."

Because of such a transient nature, Church of the Nations' membership is small, currently seven; but more than 80 percent of the 25 to 40 people who attend are not Christians. Some must cross cultural, political and even religious barriers to make a decision; and for others, the choice to follow Christ may mean persecution.

Paine, a native of Baton Rouge, said most of those who attend "begin coming because we speak in very simple English and try to help them learn the language. Also, many of those who attend from areas of Asia have been taught that Christianity is a Western religion; and as newcomers to the United States, they want to learn all they can about our culture.

"Many of them, however, after attending a few times, continue to come because they want to hear more about Jesus."

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A Japanese woman with a Buddhist background began attending more than a year ago. The more she saw the Christian life lived out in a close friend, a Japanese member of the mission, the more she realized Jesus' reality. She listened intently to the Bible studies and sermons, and read the New Testament through three times in a period of only a few months.

During her recent baptism at Church of the Nations, she told those gathered, "As I read the Bible and learned of God's love, it was as water flooding the dry desert of my heart."

The three-year-old mission is sponsored by University Baptist Church in Baton Rouge. Currently, two couples from that church, Ted and Izora Holmes and Jim and Mary Ellen Colvin, help teach Bible study.

Among its other functions, Church of the Nations holds an International Student Night at the beginning of each school semester to introduce new students and their families to the church; an International Coffee House twice a month, hosted by area churches; and occasional trips. The purpose of these functions is to allow the internationals to hear about Christ in a non-threatening environment. Many who attend these functions would not normally attend a church service.

In a current MasterLife course for Christians taught by the pastor's wife are women from Chile, Malaysia and Japan. All but one are members of Church of the Nations and each has expressed her desire to teach the discipleship course in her native country.

"It is so exciting to me to think that here in Baton Rouge we are paving the way for disciples all over the world," said Paine's wife, Breena, daughter of medical missionaries to Paraguay W. Thomas and Judith Kent. "The goal of foreign missions has always been to train native leaders to keep the church work going; Calvary Baptist Church of the Nations is trying to do just that."

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BP photos available upon request from New Orleans Seminary

85-year-old involves 100-plus
in nursing home Bible studies

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
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DALLAS (BP)--She has traveled to 32 states as a motivational speaker. She has won diamonds and minks as top saleswoman for Mary Kay Cosmetics. But 85-year-old Mary McDowell of Belmont Baptist Church of Odessa, Texas, has found her greatest joy in directing up to five outreach Bible studies each week.

"It is the most satisfying thing I've ever done in my whole life," she said.

McDowell started her first nursing home Bible study a little over a year ago. Currently, she coordinates a team of 21 volunteers from Belmont Baptist Church who lead several classes at nursing homes each week involving more than 100 residents.

She began visiting the nursing homes out of heartfelt concern for the neglected residents there.

"I saw the opportunity because so many people are put in nursing homes and forgotten. Many of them have nobody to visit them at all," she said.

As a part of her ministry in the nursing homes, McDowell buys 40 pounds of bananas every Friday morning to deliver to residents.

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"In the nursing homes, so many of the people cannot eat cookies or candy because of diabetes and other health problems, so I bring them each a banana since that's something they don't get normally," she said.

"They call me the banana lady. So many of them aren't visited by anybody else. They look forward to seeing me coming with the banana. When I first started, I couldn't believe a little thing like a banana could mean so much to them."

Leading Bible studies and visitation at Odessa nursing homes is only one of the many activities involving McDowell.

She is a national leader among Mary Kay Cosmetics sales directors and holds the world's record for Christmas season sales. She has qualified 23 of the last 24 years for Mary Kay's "Queen's Court" for annual sales exceeding \$32,000, earning several minks and diamonds valued at \$90,000.

However, with the exception of one diamond, she has used the proceeds from all her sales incentive prizes to provide scholarships for ministerial students at 10 Baptist colleges.

In the spring, the Tennessee native will return to her home state to spend a week addressing ministerial students at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City.

"I'll stay in a dorm there and eat in the cafeteria with all the rest of the kids," she said.

In addition to the nursing home Bible classes, McDowell also teaches a weekly Bible study in her home and a Sunday school class for singles ages 50 and older. In the near future, she plans to start an apartment Bible study.

"In some ways, that's even more fulfilling than the nursing homes. At the nursing homes, most of the people we reach already are Christians, but at the apartment house, so many people are not. The apartment house could be a wonderful place to win people to the Lord."

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