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January 22, 1990

90-11

'Missions is Masculine' highlights  
'90 Baptist Men's teleconference

By Tim Yarbrough

N-10  
(B'hood)

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--While a truck stop might not be the first place Southern Baptists think of to spread the gospel, truck stop owner Jerry Brown of Oklahoma says it's just one example of a missions field ripe for harvest right in America.

"We're in the real life," Brown told viewers of the 1990 Baptist Men's Teleconference Jan. 21. Brown is a former Marine who operates a chapel ministry at his truck stop. The ministry results in up to 100 professions of faith in Christ each year.

"The average citizen who is in our local Southern Baptist church would not know what goes on out on the interstate highway system," Brown said. "In my heart I believe it's the greatest missions field in America. Everything that Satan has ever devised that has come out of the pit of hell is put on these truckers every day. As a result of that, it has caused me to love them even more."

The theme for the live telecast was "Missions is Masculine." Brown, along with Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission President James H. Smith and other guests, discussed the importance of the involvement of members of the Baptist Men organization in lay missions.

"This thing of volunteerism and personal involvement is on the increase," Smith said. "It's captured the imagination of so many, many men across our nation."

When laymen reach out to help others, the kingdom of God is glorified, Smith noted.

"When we minister to needs in the lives of people, we immediately open the door so we can share the good news," he said.

Isaac Torres of Texas, a Mission Service Corps volunteer who coordinates missions projects in Mexico for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said men can rest in the promise that if God calls them to missions he will give them the tools to be effective.

"When God calls a person, we have to believe in his word that he will equip us," Torres said. "He never calls anybody that he's not going to use. I believed on that, so he did the miracle in my life."

Doug Knapp of Florida said men should learn to accept the call of missions, then let God do the rest of the work. Knapp is a former agricultural missionary to Tanzania who saw 60,000 professions of faith in Christ.

"We began by developing a demonstration farm to show modern crops and livestock. We cleared land," he said. "People were fascinated with what we were doing. That's what opened the door for us to begin to witness among them."

Adrian Burk of Massachusetts, a former National Football League quarterback who threw seven touchdown passes in one game and a former NFL referee, said his work as a Mission Service Corps volunteer is by far the most satisfying experience in his life.

God "was preparing me and my wife so that he could put us into a place and use us," Burk said. "We're not special people. I've had my name in the paper through my athletic background, but that doesn't mean anything at all when you go to a fellow up in New England and say I want to talk to you about the Lord. He wants to know what you have to say about Jesus."

Burk encouraged Baptist laymen to "make themselves available" to be used by God.

"You have to mean it," he said. "He'll take you and use you if you do mean it."

South Carolina Baptist Brotherhood director Ben Connell spoke via telephone. Many needs are still present in South Carolina following Hurricane Hugo last year, he said.

"We need prayers for the victims and for the men who will come to help, (and) also for the churches that will be able to take advantage of the opportunities presented for ministry through this disaster," Connell said.

Many churches still need repair work, and many families still live in temporary housing, he said. He encouraged volunteers to contact their Baptist state Brotherhood departments so that reconstruction crews and other work teams can be organized to go into the state.

The need in South Carolina may continue for up to two years, he added.

In addition to guests, the teleconference featured videotaped segments on the Southern Baptist response to the Hugo disaster, a ministry to actors in Hollywood and a Texas prison ministry.

Richard McCartney, executive vice president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, hosted the 90-minute broadcast. Volunteers from the Texas Baptist Men organization answered more than 100 telephone calls during the live call-in question-and-answer segment.

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All Christians are missionaries,  
Lewis says at HMB commissioning

By Mark Wingfield

N - HMB

Baptist Press  
1/22/90

ATLANTA (BP)--The call to salvation is a call to service, Larry Lewis told 47 newly appointed home missionaries and members of Eastside Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga.

Lewis, president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, spoke at a missionary commissioning service at the suburban Atlanta church. The host church's pastor, Clark Hutchinson, is a member of the HMB board of directors and is its former chairman.

Lewis affirmed Eastside as "one of the great missionary-ministering churches in the nation."

In his charge to the missionaries, Lewis also challenged the congregation. Using Ephesians 4 as a text, he asked, "Is there anybody here who is not a missionary?"

He answered: "We are all missionaries to our communities, to our families. Every one of us is a missionary if we know the Lord."

He described the call to salvation and the call to Christian service as interrelated. Christians are saved to serve in the same way people are born to live, he said.

God's call is sometimes heard in an audible voice, but more often in simple ways, he noted.

God speaks through the voice of a lost world, he said -- "the voice of a multitude of people crying out in the night, 'Come help me.'"

He challenged the congregation to imagine 200,000 people standing outside the church doors, representing the number of people added to the world's population in the previous 24 hours. Then he asked them to imagine 1.4 million people waiting in front of the church next Sunday, representing the number of people that would have been born in a week's time.

"Who's going to share the gospel with them if we don't?" he asked. "Every one of them is a precious soul for whom Christ died. Surely we must hear their cry."

Lewis also described a call from below -- the cry from souls in hell to tell their loved ones of the judgment to come. He cited the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16 as an example, affirming it as a literal story.

"I don't think a person will be in hell 30 seconds until he's an evangelist," he said. "But it will be too late."

Lewis also cited a call from within. Even without an audible voice, God may be speaking through a simple impression, he said, explaining that such an impression can be validated if it is consistent, persistent and insistent.

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The 47 missionaries commissioned will work in 16 states and Canada as church starters, church and community ministers, evangelists, resort ministers and associational directors of missions. Their work will be supported by gifts to the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

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Congressman calls for Christians  
to battle drugs, pornography

N-SSB

Baptist Press  
1/22/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--U.S. Congressman Bob Clement has called for help from the grassroots to battle immorality that is pervading the nation today.

Speaking in Jan. 19 chapel services at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Clement, a Democrat who represents Nashville's 5th district, said: "I need your help. The government cannot solve all the problems."

Clement referred specifically to the use and sale of drugs among adults and children and to pornography, which he said has infiltrated the country.

"We all have to stand up and fight," he stressed. "It is important for us to do our part, whether locally, on a state basis or national."

Clement recounted a visit he paid to a "middle-income" Nashville elementary school where several third- and fourth-graders told him their parents and other relatives use drugs. One child told Clement a neighborhood resident was soliciting the child to sell drugs.

"Then, this fourth grade kid got up and said, 'Congressman Clement, what are you going to do about this drug ice?'

"I didn't even know what ice was, but he knew what it was," said Clement, who explained the drug is a strong derivative of cocaine.

"We hear so much about crack and cocaine and heroine and all that, and here comes another drug we are going to be faced with."

The nation's drug problem will not be solved by "more laws on the books," Clement said.

"It's going to have to be you and me, our families, our neighborhoods, our friends, our city, our country and our world, saying, 'No,' and meaning it."

Meanwhile, Clement urged Sunday School Board employees to actively oppose pornography, specifically dial-a-porn.

Clement criticized a U.S. Supreme Court decision that partially struck down a law passed by Congress that would ban all dial-a-porn.

"The U.S. Supreme Court says if it's obscene, Congress has a right to ban dial-a-porn, but if it is only indecent, then we have no such right, and they put them back into business," he said.

But pornography is "destroying the moral fiber of our country," he added.

Clement, who is a member of Christ Church in Brentwood, Tenn., said Christianity and public servanthood go hand-in-hand.

"I don't see how you separate the two," he insisted. "Christian responsibility and being a public servant are the same.

"We all serve the public in a different way. And what we do or what we fail to do, we must be accountable for. We don't have enough risk takers in our society today. Too many people want to sit on the sidelines and be spectators rather than participators."

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

Hard work, God's blessings  
revitalize dying church

By Ken Camp

F- Texas

DALLAS (BP)--About five years ago, the once-vibrant Heights Baptist Church in Texas City, Texas, encountered a series of near-fatal problems.

Charismatic influences led to a church split, a church leader was confronted with moral indiscretions, the church was deep in debt and facing litigation for payments past due, and attendance plunged to about a dozen.

But when the church celebrated its 50th anniversary last year, it also celebrated a tenfold increase in attendance, an outstanding number of baptisms and a return to sound financial footing.

"There weren't any gimmicks or anything flashy. Our people just worked hard, and God blessed," said Pastor Mark Bass Redd.

When Redd was called to Heights Church, first as interim and later as pastor, he brought with him an evangelistic vision and a plan of aggressive outreach.

"I had worked on church staff before, but this was my first pastorate. I didn't know any better than to do some of the things we did, and the Lord seemed to bless," he said.

Redd led the church to close its school, which had become financially burdensome, and to sell "everything that wasn't nailed down" to meet its past-due payments. Once the financial integrity of the church was restored in the eyes of the community, the church started its evangelism outreach in earnest.

Heights Church began a Sunday school enrollment and attendance effort in March 1988 that continued through March 1989. By the end of the "March on to March" campaign, enrollment increased from 91 to 207, and attendance grew from 45 to 142. The church recorded a high of 172 in attendance on "Great Day in the Morning."

Overlapping the "March on to March" effort, in January through March of 1989 the church launched its "100 Club" contact campaign. Ten Sunday school classes each were challenged to make 100 contacts during the quarter. The initial goal of 1,000 contacts later was met and increased to 2,500, which then was met and increased to 3,000.

"Everything we've done has been through the Sunday school," Redd said.

The two campaigns climaxed with "60 Days in the Field" as part of Texas Baptists' statewide Share Jesus Now personal evangelism effort.

During the Share Jesus Now emphasis, Heights Church trained 34 people who presented the plan of Christian salvation more than 200 times. In the first quarter of 1989, the church baptized 18 people and added 11 members by letter or statement. By the end of the year, 48 people were baptized.

"Share Jesus Now made a big difference in our church. It was a real turning point for us. It has moved our vision out beyond ourselves," Redd said.

Heights Church plans to have at least 60 members trained in personal evangelism who will witness as part of Share Jesus Now Phase Two this year.

Missions giving also has made a dramatic about-face at Heights Baptist Church in the last five years. When Redd arrived as interim pastor, the church had quit giving through the Cooperative Program and was in strained relations with the local association.

Today, the church gives 9.5 percent of undesignated gifts to missions through the Cooperative Program unified budget plan and 2.5 percent through Galveston Baptist Association. The church has met or surpassed all its goals for state, home and foreign missions offerings during the last two years, is active in associational work, and the Baptist Women and Girls in Action groups have been revived.

"We are continuing to grow in giving as we learn more about what is done through cooperative missions in our association and through the Cooperative Program," Redd said.

Median age at the church has gone from 60 years old in 1985 to about 30 years old currently, and the congregation is continuing to attract young couples. However, even as the church grows, Redd praised the handful of senior adults who held the congregation together through its darkest times.

"God gave us some really sweet people here. Many of them can't be as active in making contacts, but they're the ones who worked together and who continue to pray for the church and support it financially," Redd said.

"They're the ones who had patience with me and kept me in line when I got here. If it weren't for them, we wouldn't be here today."

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Southwestern Seminary students  
stay in good company with troupe

By Pam Alewine

F-60  
(SWBTS)

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Dennis Parrish knows wherever he goes with Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's acting troupe he's in good company.

For the students who make up The Company, the pulpit literally becomes their stage as they travel the country performing at churches and conferences.

"I call it the systematic theology class of the communications department," said Parrish, instructor in communication arts at the Fort Worth, Texas, school and director of The Company.

The group began as an acting class and expanded to an extracurricular group in 1985.

"Our goal when we started the class was to create a unique and creative worship environment in the church service," Parrish said. Response to the group's performances was so positive Parrish wanted the group to continue.

The Company was formed and still exists as a class. It also is recognized as an official organization on campus.

The purpose of the group is not to "perform" or to make "stars," but to minister, Parrish said. To maintain that focus, the students adopted Psalm 68:11 as their theme: "The Lord announced his word, and great was the company of those who proclaimed it."

"Our sole purpose in The Company is to edify the body of Christ and to reach the lost," Parrish said. The group accomplishes its aim by using characters with whom people identify.

"After performing, so many people have come up to me and said that they really needed to hear what my character had to say -- that the person I was playing was really them," said actor Bret Scott of Collierville, Tenn. "Drama can go further than we think. It's powerful."

At youth rallies, conferences for groups such as youth ministers, single adults, drama groups and college students, and in worship services, The Company communicates the gospel.

"We do preach, but we do it in a dramatic form. We visualize the gospel for people. Jesus himself was a great storyteller and dramatist as he taught," Parrish said.

"Drama communicates on a different level than words do. It's able to get to the heart of the matter quickly," said troupe member Tim Pickens, from Wesley Chapel, Fla.

Counseling opportunities occur after performances, such as those with college students, an audience with which The Company is especially popular.

While working on his thesis in communications, student Glenn Post of Millington, N.J., has written several sketches the group has performed, including some that were performed at Mission '90, a missions conference for college students.

"I've seen that drama works," Post said. "It can communicate the message that the church has been trying to communicate for centuries."

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And while The Company is well received by Baptist audiences, members' talents are recognized beyond the denomination. Last year, they were the first religious group to perform at a major secular theater festival.

For many groups, that's a hard act to follow.

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Photo mailed to Baptist state papers by Southwestern Seminary

Southwestern students form  
'Construction Company'

By Chip Alford

F- (C)  
(SWBTS)

Baptist Press  
1/22/90

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A group of students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary have organized a construction company, but they hope to build something more important than houses -- Christian character in children.

The students are producing a children's television show titled "The Construction Company" through Southwestern's Center for Christian Communications Studies.

The program started as a group project last spring in a studio operations class at the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary and blossomed into a department-produced endeavor this fall tied to the TV drama for children class.

The show features communications student Denise Boyd of Pleasanton, Texas, as hostess, an ensemble of seven fourth- and fifth-grade children as regular cast members, and several puppet characters such as Charlie Crew Chief, Frank and Berry, and Willie. The students plan to have three 30-minute programs taped for the ACTS network.

"It's been a lot of hard work, but I'm really enjoying it," said Boyd, one of the original participants in the project. "I like acting, and I've enjoyed helping write the scripts."

Four scripts have been completed dealing with a variety of issues facing children today. They include "Feeling OK in New Situations," "How to Deal with Anger," "Fears and Phobias" and "Deafinitely Different," a program dealing with attitudes about hearing-impaired people and other handicaps. The children and puppet characters are used in finding answers to specific problems in each show.

The show has involved a wide segment of the seminary community, Boyd said, including members of The Company, Southwestern's drama team, who volunteered to play characters; members of the TV drama for children class, who help with camera work, lighting, set decoration and a variety of other chores; and even her roommate, Pat Morrow, who composed the show's theme song.

But the show stealers, Boyd said, are the puppets who are brought to life by communications student Jeff Fitzwater from Alaska.

"Puppetry is part of my lifeblood right now," said Fitzwater, who worked four years for a national puppet production company that traveled the country teaching churches to use puppets in ministry. "We're trying to make the puppets more life-like, to let the camera be the stage. It's been exciting to push my artistic limits and really work to make the characters believable."

Darrel Baergen, professor of communication arts, and his wife, Adjunct Communications Instructor Judy Baergen, are executive producer and producer of the show respectively.

"I'm very pleased with the work that they are doing," Mrs. Baergen said. "It's been an excellent learning experience that has involved the thought process of the whole class. We're really hopeful that the program will continue."

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Photo mailed to Baptist state papers by Southwestern Seminary