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February 15, 1990

90-21

Overseas baptisms up
almost 15 percent

By Donald D. Martin

N-FMB

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Baptisms in overseas churches related to Southern Baptist foreign mission work increased 14.9 percent in 1989, reversing a 3 percent decline the year before.

Overseas churches baptized 227,437 new believers in 1989 -- an average of nearly one baptism every two minutes -- up from 197,863 in 1988.

The 1989 total, a record, reflects a ratio of one baptism for every 10.7 church members overseas, compared to one baptism for every 40 members of Southern Baptist churches in the United States, said Jim Slack of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's research and planning office. Slack prepares the annual statistical survey of foreign missions.

In other highlights of the 1989 survey, overseas Baptists' church membership increased 16.4 percent during the year, climbing by 345,818 members to 2.4 million and bringing average church membership to 115.4 per church.

Overseas Baptists added three and a half times as many new members as Southern Baptist churches in the United States, said FMB President R. Keith Parks. "Southern Baptists need to know that the spiritual, human and financial resources they are investing in foreign missions are being multiplied and utilized by God's spirit in a significant way," he said.

The number of Baptist churches overseas grew from 19,199 in 1988 to 21,239 in 1989 -- a 10.6 percent increase in net church growth. The actual number of churches started in 1989 was 1,059. The other 981 additions came from more accurate church counts in a number of countries.

Sunday school membership grew from 1.5 million to almost 1.9 million, a gain of 356,535 members, or 23.4 percent.

Discipleship training in 1989 saw an increase of 1,120 participants, to 19,764. Training includes the use of programs such as MasterLife, Bible Way and Survival Kit for the Christian Journey.

But Slack expressed concern about the low number of mission congregations or "preaching points" that matured into churches during the year. Although 1989 saw new preaching points grow from 18,250 to 21,234, only 5.4 percent of the preaching points counted in 1988 became churches in 1989.

That percentage is extremely low compared to work by other mission groups, noted Slack, who said a realistic rate is 20 percent. "This points out that we are good at starting, but poor at maturing. We have started concentrating more on the maturing of new units into churches," he said.

The need for better discipleship training in the early stages of church growth does not mean efforts at starting new preaching points should be neglected, Slack added.

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"It is a basic principle of church growth all over the world that as you evangelize farther and farther from the center of your work, the greater your returns will be," he said.

Baptist work moved into 135 cities previously untouched by Baptist outreach -- up from 110 new cities in 1988. And the new non-residential missionary program had placed 14 couples overseas by the end of 1989. They are working to evangelize unreached people groups in restricted regions with a total population of more than 120 million people from bases outside those regions.

"These kinds of outreach demonstrate new dimensions in our mission program," Parks said.

Southern Baptists sent 310 new missionaries and more than 10,000 short-term volunteers abroad last year.

The appointment and reappointment of 310 missionaries fell below the 371 total in 1988, bringing the total Southern Baptist missionary force to 3,780 at the end of 1989 -- a net loss of 87 from the previous year after subtracting retirements, resignations, completions of service and deaths. It was the first net loss in the mission force since 1972.

"Our career personnel picture is not as positive as we wish it was. We have had a steady decline in appointments the last five years," Parks said. "However, the prospects for this year are encouraging. We never know with certainty this early in the year how many the Lord will call out. We do know that the numbers of those in contact with us who have the possibility of appointment are more encouraging than in recent years."

Southern Baptists spent \$5.2 million for overseas hunger and relief projects in 1989 -- less than half of 1988's total. The money supported 191 projects in 44 nations.

The drop in money spent for hunger and relief ministry occurred partly because a number of major projects were finished in 1989, said John Cheyne, who coordinates the board's human needs program. Completion of food distribution projects in Ethiopia and Mozambique and a development project in Brazil accounted for a significant part of the decrease, he reported.

Medical missionaries and workers treated almost 1.4 million patients. Missionaries and Baptists produced 51,000 television and radio broadcasts on 483 stations last year. They distributed 6.5 million Christian periodicals, 3.9 million books and 19.5 million tracts.

Overseas church offerings decreased from \$99.8 million in 1988 to \$86.9 million last year, a 12.8 percent drop. The decrease resulted primarily because Baptists in 15 countries did not report their 1989 offerings, Slack explained. In some of these countries, political unrest has caused such turmoil that accurate reporting is impossible.

The number of overseas Baptist pastors increased by 850 to 18,411 in 1989. That's a 4.8 percent jump, but below 1988's growth of 5.2 percent. And existing churches and preaching points need 42,473 pastors -- more than twice as many as are available.

A total of 12,439 Baptists studied in theological seminaries, Bible schools and institutes in 1989, compared to 12,222 in 1988. The number studying in seminary extension courses rose by 796 students to 15,796. If church growth is to reach Southern Baptists' Bold Mission Thrust global evangelism/missions campaign goals, the number of pastors now studying in Baptist seminaries must grow considerably, Slack said.

Brazilian Baptists led in baptisms, with 64,349, accounting for more than a fourth of all baptisms counted in the 1989 report. Baptists in Nigeria ranked second, with 31,460 baptisms, followed by Kenya, with 19,089; Tanzania, 17,121; and Zimbabwe, 8,994. These top five countries accounted for 62 percent of all baptisms.

Brazilian Baptists also counted the highest number of churches, 4,252, followed by Nigeria, with 3,325; South Korea, 1,409; Kenya, 1,380; and the Philippines, 1,282. Of 117 countries reporting, 64 started churches; 53 reported no new churches organized.

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FMB trustees elect Law,
hear of overseas growth

By Robert O'Brien

N - FMB

Baptist Press
2/15/90

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees heard reports of upsurges in overseas baptisms and other mission results, elected a woman vice president and honored R. Keith Parks on his 10th anniversary as board president at their February meeting.

They also authorized reopening missionary work in Nicaragua and opening work in Denmark, appointed 29 missionaries, reaffirmed the board's longstanding policy against appointing divorced people as missionaries and made requirements for the missionary associate program more flexible.

Trustees and staff opened the three-day meeting with a half-day "solemn assembly," based on the Old Testament practice of calling people to repentance and prayer. Prayers, Scripture reading and presentations during the assembly resulted in deepened relationships and set the tone for the rest of the meeting, according to participants.

"A good bit of private confession occurred that caused staff and trustees to face our personal relationship with Christ and, as always, this results in a closer relationship with each other," said Parks. "We learned some of our perceptions about each other weren't accurate."

"Our goal was to take a spiritual inventory ... and break down barriers between trustees and staff," said trustee John Jackson of Anaheim, Calif., who chaired a committee that planned the assembly. Noting those barriers are beginning to fall, he said: "God met us in our solemn assembly, and I believe there was something that touched each of our hearts. If we're responsible for millions of dollars being spent and for sending missionaries around the world, we as trustees need to have a heart for God."

The trustees closed their meeting with a tribute to Parks' 10 years of leadership as president, following a celebration held earlier by staff.

A statistical review of 1989 reveals an upsurge in baptisms, church membership, churches, Sunday school enrollment and discipleship training in churches related to Southern Baptist foreign mission work, Parks said.

Overseas churches baptized 227,437 people -- an increase of 14.9 percent over 1988 and a ratio of one baptism for every 10.7 church members. The ratio is one for every 40 members in Southern Baptist churches in the United States.

The number of Baptist churches overseas increased 10.6 percent, from 19,199 to 21,239. Overseas membership went up by 345,818, a 16.4 percent increase, to 2.4 million. Meanwhile, Sunday school enrollment added 356,535 new members, a 23.4 percent increase to 1.9 million, and discipleship training saw an increase of 1,120, to 19,764.

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Although mission congregations or "preaching points" increased from 18,250 to 21,234, only 5.4 percent of the congregations counted in 1988 became churches in 1989, said Jim Slack of the board's research and planning office. Slack, who said a realistic rate is 20 percent, noted that the board has "started concentrating more on the maturing of new units into churches."

Betty F. Law, 61, associate area director for Spanish South America, was elected with two dissenting votes as vice president for the Americas. She will oversee mission work in Middle America, Canada, Brazil, the Caribbean and Spanish South America and participate in the board's Global Strategy Group, a long-range planning body of top administrators.

Parks, addressing trustees before Law's election, noted that some trustees had questioned whether a woman should have leadership and authority over men. He urged them not to apply interpretations of Scripture to leadership roles beyond the local church.

"The Foreign Mission Board is not a church," he said. "We have spiritual dimensions. We have spiritual functions. But we are a business organization. We are an agency of this denomination." The board has other women in supervisory roles and has women among its 90 trustees, he added.

Law's 25 years as a missionary in Cuba and Spain with her husband, the late Thomas Law Jr., and nine years as a board administrator gave her the insight and experience needed for her new job, Parks said. He added that her missionary homemaker experience would give the Global Strategy Group a perspective needed for relating to missionary wives who are assigned as church and home workers. They make up the largest percentage of the foreign missionary force.

Parks also addressed concerns voiced by some trustees that Law has not earned a seminary degree. The degree had been a job requirement for the post and is required for many missionaries she will oversee. The board has to look at the whole picture when filling a staff position, not just one requirement, Parks said.

The "lack of a degree has been more than compensated for in her own personal study and experience," he said. Law has a master's degree in Spanish literature and completed 18 hours of seminary study.

Bob Claytor, a trustee from Rome, Ga., and member of the board's committee on the Americas, said the committee questioned Law in depth about her views on theology and current issues and was "extremely satisfied with her ability to handle that (and) with the soundness of her theology. The bottom line for us, especially for me, was that she (demonstrated) the scriptural knowledge necessary" for the role. "However she's gotten it, she's got it."

On the question of divorce, trustees decided unanimously to continue the board's policy of not appointing people who have been divorced. The action, following a yearlong study, came in response to a motion at the 1988 an evaluation of the board's divorce policy.

The 29 new missionaries, including six with ethnic backgrounds, bring the total foreign missionary force to 3,777.

"The increase in missionaries with ethnic backgrounds is encouraging because it reflects who we are as a denomination," said Jerry DeOliveira, a native of Brazil and director of ethnic church relations for the board. "We're one of the most ethnically diverse conventions in America."

The board will seek missionary personnel to enter Nicaragua and Denmark as soon as possible.

Southern Baptists will have missionaries in all Central American countries when the board assigns a missionary in a liaison role in Nicaragua. The liaison will "minister in partnership with Baptist communities in Nicaragua," said Joe Bruce, area director for Middle America and Canada.

No Southern Baptist missionaries have been assigned there since 1983, when the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua advised furloughing missionaries not to return because their physical safety could not be guaranteed. At that time, political tensions were mounting between the United States and Nicaragua following the 1979 Sandinista revolution there.

Since then, the board has maintained contact with Nicaraguan Baptist leaders and provided funds for disaster and hunger relief and literature ministry, Bruce said. He and other board officials have visited Nicaragua several times, including a disaster survey trip following Hurricane Joan in 1988. Two teams of Southern Baptist volunteers have just returned from Corn Island, Nicaragua, where they rebuilt historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, which Joan demolished.

For Denmark, the board needs a missionary to serve as pastor of a new English-language congregation in Copenhagen and as a liaison with the Baptist Union of Denmark. The missionary needs to be capable of teaching in such areas as evangelism, church growth and discipleship. A Southern Baptist volunteer couple launched the congregation in 1987.

Trustees also unanimously approved changing the qualifications for the missionary associate program, which employs personnel for four-year renewable terms overseas rather than as career missionaries.

The changes, which lower the minimum age for missionary associates to 24 and allow for more flexibility in balancing skills and experience against formal education, are expected to open the way for more Southern Baptists to serve overseas.

One change would allow a spouse of the person with the primary missionary assignment to be employed without education beyond high school if certain requirements are met. That means a pastor's wife who has a high school diploma and demonstrated leadership ability could be employed without further education. Certain other assignments also may allow employment of a missionary associate without a college degree if the person has the required skills and experience.

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Speakers urge compassion,
ministry for people with AIDS

By Louis Moore & Linda Lawson

N- CO
(CLC)

Baptist Press
2/15/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--As it continues to spread rapidly and worldwide, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome calls individual Christians and churches to respond with attitudes and actions that reflect both the holiness and compassion of God, speakers at the first Southern Baptist national conference on AIDS said in Nashville.

The Bible is clear that God's compassionate nature expects Christians to be Good Samaritans and not bypass individuals who suffer with various ailments such as AIDS, speakers told more than 200 conference participants.

At the same time, the Bible is equally clear that God's holy nature rejects homosexuality, promiscuity and drug abuse -- the primary ways AIDS is spread -- as morally unacceptable, speakers said. Various speakers also said that AIDS impacts the lives of tens of millions of people, including many in Southern Baptist churches, in addition to those who have the virus.

"AIDS is a crisis of great magnitude that must be faced by our families and our churches," said John Sullivan, executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention from Jacksonville.

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"Each of us will be touched, affected, however small, but still affected" by AIDS, said William Tillman, a professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

During the Feb. 12-13 conference at First Baptist Church of Nashville, pastors, laypeople and denominational employees told about being called upon to minister to people with AIDS and their friends, family members and fellow church members.

Noting more people in America have died of AIDS than died in the Vietnam War, Belinda Mason, a Southern Baptist layperson from Kentucky who contracted AIDS through a blood transfusion, said: "These are not numbers or even panels on a quilt. These are people."

The conference, "AIDS: Crisis for Church and Family" was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, the missions ministry division of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and the family ministry, discipleship training, church administration and student ministry departments of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

"AIDS probably is one of the most difficult diseases that makes us stand off and not want to deal with these people," said Gaynor Yancy, director of Christian social ministries for the Greater Philadelphia (Pa.) Baptist Association.

Because so many victims of AIDS are either homosexuals, drug abusers or members of minority racial groups, "the temptation is to deny the presence of the disease by denying those who have unpopular standing in society, those who have gotten the disease in unethical ways," Tillman said.

"AIDS is not and cannot be limited to only one or two subpopulations in our society," he said. "To think so is incredibly naive." While she and her family have experienced acceptance and love from their church, East Hartford Baptist Church in Hartford, Ky., Mason said many other people with AIDS have experienced rejection and alienation from Christian people.

"If this doesn't trouble us, I worry about us," she said. "Many of us who have stood silent while people have been driven from their homes will be called to account. Maybe we can look at AIDS as a test, not for the people infected but for the rest of us."

Richard Bridges, pastor of First Baptist Church of Bowling Green, Ky., told about his brother-in-law's death from AIDS. Bridges called the disease "an opportunity for people called Southern Baptists to demonstrate the power of the love of God."

Several speakers said they are uncomfortable with statements by Christians that AIDS is a judgment from God.

Sullivan said AIDS is not the judgment of God on individuals but on permissiveness in general. "The church, not just Southern Baptists, have taken a permissive attitude toward sexuality and toward the social problems of life," he noted.

Southern Baptist medical missionary Richard Goodgame said: "We don't know why there's AIDS, or breast cancer, or diarrhea or all those things. We do know about one judgment of God -- that Jesus Christ will separate the sheep from the goats.

The goats go to hell, and the sheep to everlasting life. You can count me to be a sheep. I'm going to treat people as if they were Jesus -- every AIDS patient, every AIDS family -- so I won't have to fear that judgment."

Goodgame, Sullivan and other speakers said one way Christians should respond to the AIDS epidemic is by emphasizing sexual purity before marriage and sexual fidelity after marriage.

America's main admonition to practice "safe sex" to combat the spread of AIDS might prevent the AIDS virus from being transmitted somewhat but "doesn't fulfill God's plan for sex and marriage," Goodgame said.

Churches must counter this "safe sex" approach in today's culture by emphasizing the "just say no" message as contained in the Bible, he said: "AIDS is a case of bad VD (venereal disease). You get it from sleeping around. You don't get AIDS from (being around) AIDS patients. You get AIDS from perfectly beautiful, wonderful, attractive, satisfying, lovely sex partners."

In Uganda, Goodgame responded to the AIDS epidemic ravaging that country by writing a pamphlet, "Medical Science and God's Word Give Answers to Questions Related to AIDS."

Uganda has no drug addiction or homosexuality but much heterosexual promiscuity, he said: "Women are demanded to have sex. If you're a secretary in the office, you have to sleep with your boss. If you're a student in the college, you have to sleep with your teacher."

Beverly Hammack, director of the missions ministries division of the SBC Home Mission Board, urged Southern Baptists to bridge the gap from believing they should care about people with AIDS to becoming Christian care givers.

"The message from the church is, 'We care,' but there is a big gap. We must build bridges of relationships with people," she said.

The 350 Southern Baptist home missionaries working in church and community missions have all received basic training in AIDS ministry, she reported, adding, "Southern Baptists have a tremendous challenge to educate people and equip them to minister with all persons."

Morlee Maynard of the Sunday School Board's family ministry department said acceptance and confidentiality are keys to helping a family that has a child with AIDS.

"Are our congregations courageous enough to offer acceptance to these families?" she asked. "Do we have the courage to integrate the child with AIDS into the active live of the church? Do we have the courage to work with the family of someone who is going to die?"

The growing number of children with AIDS, which they contracted from their mothers requires church nursery workers and preschool workers to become better acquainted with hygiene practices for preventing the spread of any communicable disease.

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Also contributing to this story were Dan Martin and Marv Knox of the Baptist Press Central Office; Kay Moore, a free-lance journalist from Nashville, and Jim Lowry of the Baptist Press bureau at the Sunday School Board.

Speakers say AIDS signals
failure of sexual promiscuity

By Louis Moore

N-CD
(CLC)

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2/15/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--The sexual promiscuity of the American culture places the nation's heterosexual population at great risk to the spread of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, speakers told a national Southern Baptist conference on AIDS in Nashville.

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Richard Goodgame, a Southern Baptist medical missionary who served in Uganda, said perhaps 1 million people in the African country where he worked are infected with the HIV virus that causes AIDS. That is about the same number of people as are estimated to have contracted the virus in the United States. Uganda, however, has a population of 16 million compared to 235 million in the United States. In some parts of Uganda, 30 percent of the population has AIDS, he said.

Unlike in the United States, where AIDS is spread mostly through homosexual contact and intravenous drug usage, in Uganda AIDS is spread through heterosexual contact, Goodgame said.

The spread of AIDS in Uganda is tied directly to the promiscuous heterosexual lifestyle in that country, he said. Heterosexual spread of AIDS will become more normative in the United States as a result of the nation's widespread sexual promiscuity, he added.

Goodgame described an education program designed to help AIDS patients face death and to help Ugandans know the consequences of sexual immorality and how to change that behavior.

"In Uganda, almost everyone acknowledges the Bible is the word of God," he said. "But only a small number know what the Bible says, and only a fraction of the people live it."

John Sullivan, executive secretary of the Florida Baptist Convention from Jacksonville, said the AIDS epidemic calls for churches to state more clearly and forthrightly the issue of sexual purity.

"The most dominant theme in the United States is sex, and sex is involved in the AIDS issue," he said. "Part of the problem in the church is that we are not dealing with it (sex) as clearly as we should."

"If I am a prude or outmoded in calling for sexual morality, then call me a prude or outmoded. The gospel of Christ makes moral demands on the life of the believer. Salvation doesn't allow me to do anything I want to. Salvation requires me to do everything I ought to."

A number of speakers voiced concern about America's teen-age population.

Teaching today's teen-agers about abstinence is a "hard, hard project," said Richard Ross, a youth consultant in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church administration department.

The teens' own biological impulses as well as poor models of sexual behavior work against older Christians who try to encourage teen-agers to save sex for marriage, Ross said.

Nevertheless, he offered principles for helping youth abstain from sexual relationships until they are married:

-- "Begin with a two-pronged approach," he said. "Simultaneously tell them, 'God says premarital sex is wrong,' and, 'It's dumb to have premarital sex.'"

-- "Stress the advantages of waiting. Young people are just as motivated by positives as negatives, but they haven't heard many reasons why it is good for them to wait."

-- "Guide parents of youth to express appropriate affection to teen-agers."

-- "Guide parents to share with teen-agers how they established their own sexual values. Teens are impressed when parents say how they made up their minds who to have sex with."

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-- "Help teen-agers develop personal guidelines for expressing affection on dates. Predetermined rules regarding display of affection will help teens maintain appropriate limits."

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Also contributing to this story were Marv Knox of the Baptist Press Central office, Linda Lawson of the Baptist Press bureau at the Sunday School Board and Kay Moore, a free-lance journalist from Nashville.

Call to AIDS ministry
comes in variety of ways

By Louis Moore

N-60
(CLC)

Baptist Press
2/15/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--The call to minister to people affected by Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome comes to Christians in a variety of ways, more than 200 participants at the first national Southern Baptist conference on AIDS were told in Nashville.

For one, the call came as a telephone call from a brother-in-law who was dying of AIDS and wanted help in dealing with the rest of the family.

For another, it was the innocent act of brushing a fly off the forehead of a sick young man, which precipitated a revelation about how even family members were fearful of touching him because of the AIDS diagnosis.

For still another, it was the tragic news that a contaminated blood transfusion had given a church member AIDS.

Richard W. Bridges, pastor of First Baptist Church of Bowling Green, Ky., described his "personal walk through the valley" in the death of his brother-in-law from AIDS in 1986.

Bridges said his brother-in-law was a homosexual who as a young boy had made a profession of faith in Christ and been baptized into a Southern Baptist church.

His brother-in-law found strength in remembering his salvation experience and the promises of Scripture, Bridges said. "We talked about the passages where homosexuals take it on the chin," he recalled. But they also talked about the overwhelming nature of God's love and how "Jesus always hated what people did but loved the people who did the bad stuff."

Rich Murrell's personal call to minister to people with AIDS came in an elegant Fort Worth, Texas, home in 1983.

He was participating at that time in a hospice program for terminally ill patients and didn't even know what AIDS was. When he touched an AIDS patient's forehead to brush away a fly, the young man told him, "You're the first person other than a doctor who has touched me in six months."

"That broke my heart, and it broke my way of doing ministry," said Murrell, a design editor in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship training department. He urged other Christians to heed the call to minister to people with AIDS.

William Holladay, pastor of East Hartford Baptist Church in Hartford, Ky., encountered AIDS when church member Belinda Mason accidentally received a contaminated blood transfusion. Mason was recovering from complications of the birth of her second child when doctors told her she accidentally was given a blood transfusion contaminated with the AIDS virus.

"The true demand on Christians has to do with people who are not like us," said Mason, president of the National Association of People with AIDS and a member of the National AIDS Commission.

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"It is not easy to love God's children who are different from us, but that's what we are called to do," she said.

Holladay told conference participants that he at first wept with Mason and then became the shoulder for her to cry on.

"Let God provide through you a shoulder for someone who needs it," he said.

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Also contributing to this story were Marv Knox, Dan Martin and Linda Lawson.
BP photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Christian Life Commission

Task force named, pretest planned for Great Commission Breakthrough By Frank Wm. White *N-SSB* Baptist Press 2/15/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--A task force has been appointed and pretesting will begin soon on a national plan to offer church growth training to each of more than 42,000 Southern Baptist churches and missions.

Developed by the Sunday school division of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, the Great Commission Breakthrough project will be conducted in most churches and missions between 1992 and 1995. A pilot project with 300 to 500 churches will be conducted between October 1990 and September 1991.

The three-day event will be customized for each church by the pastor and a Breakthrough specialist to help the church use its Sunday school to stimulate church growth, said Harry Piland, director of the Sunday school division.

The specialist will work with a church for up to a year with pre-event planning, the three-day church event and follow-up evaluation.

In the planning phase, the specialist will collect data about the church, meet with the pastor and church leaders, identify needs of the church and community, identify strengths of the church and plan the focus event.

The pastor and specialist will lead the three-day event. The specialist will make several visits to the church in two- or three-month intervals to help the church celebrate achievements and to agree on additional steps to be taken.

Garry Insko, field service specialist in the Sunday school division, will be task force manager. Task force members are Jerri Herring, Steve Harbin, Joe Haynes and Willie Beaty, growth consultants in the Sunday school growth and administration department; and Alan Tungett, consultant in the adult Sunday school program section.

Ex-officio members of the task force are Wayne Etheridge, Sunday school growth and administration department; Jay Wells, black church development section; Ernest Adams, field service strategy and coordination section; Earl Waldrup, special assistant for church relations in the Sunday school division; and James Lackey, director of the Sunday school growth and administration department.

Task force members will give priority to Great Commission Breakthrough responsibilities and will be released from some other responsibilities through the pretesting and pilot phases of the project, Piland said.

Pretesting will be conducted in as many as 50 churches by September 1990. Waldrup is working with churches that may become the first to be involved in the pretesting. Initial pretest events may be conducted as soon as early April, Insko predicted.

Pretesting will be conducted in various sizes and types of churches in different areas of the country, he said.

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Results of the pretest will be used to plan the pilot phase with between 300 and 500 churches between October 1990 and September 1991.

Breakthrough specialists for the pilot project will be trained in October 1990, with one specialist for each pilot project church.

Pilot project specialists will be enlisted from the Sunday school division, state convention staffs, directors of missions and other key leaders, Insko said.

"The pilot will tell us whether using volunteers will work or not," he reported. Unlike other Sunday school field service events, specialists will not be paid an honorarium. Expenses will be shared by the Sunday school division, state Baptist conventions and participating churches.

"We hope people will be compelled to do this as an effort to get churches involved in evangelism," Insko explained.

For the actual project, as many as 7,000 specialists will be needed to conduct Breakthrough events in the 42,000 Southern Baptist churches and missions, Insko said.

Piland first presented the Great Commission Breakthrough project to state Sunday school directors meeting in May 1989. He called together a planning group of 30 people including state Sunday school directors, ministers of education, directors of missions, seminary professors, pastors and lay Sunday school leaders, in July 1989 for initial planning of the project.

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Brotherhood initiates
St. Croix project

By Jim Burton

N-CO
(B'hood)

Baptist Press
2/15/90

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission has targeted St. Croix in the Virgin Islands for continuing disaster relief response following devastation incurred by Hurricane Hugo.

Brotherhood Commission volunteers will roof about 100 homes, said Mark Sly, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board disaster relief coordinator for the U.S. Virgin Islands. The board coordinates Southern Baptist ministry on St. Croix because it is a U.S. protectorate.

"This will be working with the Mennonite disaster services," said Sly. "They have compiled a list of over 200 families who need assistance right now with over 100 of them who have materials on site waiting for labor to come down and replace their roofs."

"The St. Croix project will be very similar to the 1989 Jamaica relief effort coordinated by the Brotherhood Commission and Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board," said commission President James H. Smith. "We will have a large number of volunteers rotating through the island with a specific task assignment."

M.B. and Cathryne Howard of, Covington, Tenn., will be on-site coordinators for the project. Howard is the National Fellowship of Baptist Men's construction coordinator and a member of the Tennessee Baptist Convention executive board.

Mike Robertson, short-term volunteer department director, said the board will offer financial assistance to establish the on-site coordinators on St. Croix and upon request will assist the Commission in volunteer recruitment.

Volunteers will stay at a central location and travel daily to their work sites. Maximum travel time will be 20 minutes, said Sly.

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"We have a church, Grace Central Baptist Church, that can sleep 50 men easily," he said. "Volunteers will have to bring their own cots or sleeping bags."

Jim Furgerson, the commission's national disaster relief coordinator, said crews will start going to St. Croix April 16. Plans call for six to eight teams of four to six men to go each week through May 30. Each volunteer will be required to contribute \$75 for food and bring his own tools. Negotiations are underway with airlines for reduced fares.

Many houses need trusses and rafters rebuilt before the customary tin roofs are put in place, said Furgerson.

Sly said Bill Steckley, the Mennonite on-site coordinator, welcomes Southern Baptist's assistance on St. Croix.

"The Mennonites came down and sought this project on their own," said Sly. "They did the survey, found the need, advertised in the paper and were swamped with requests. They have groups coming down now but not nearly enough."

Southern Baptists have two churches on St. Croix, Grace Golden Baptist Church and Grace Central Baptist Church.

Furgerson said volunteers interested in the St. Croix project should contact their state Brotherhood directors.