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February 22, 1990

90-26

Lebanon's civil war worsens;
Baptists help feed victims

N - FMB
By Art Toalston

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--As Lebanon's 15-year civil war takes another turn for the worse, Southern Baptists have allocated \$45,000 in hunger-relief funds for victims of the latest artillery battles among dueling Catholic factions.

The fighting killed more than 650 Lebanese and left thousands homeless during the first three weeks of February. More than 125,000 have been killed in the war, which began in 1975.

Badaro Street Baptist Church in East Beirut received extensive damage when an artillery shell struck the building and another shell exploded nearby, said Jean Boucheble, associate pastor of Bikfaya Baptist Church and director of the Lebanon office of the Christian relief organization World Vision.

Homes of several members of Badaro Street Church and cars of two Baptist pastors also were damaged, Boucheble said.

"I haven't seen so much destruction in all the years of the war in Lebanon," Boucheble said after surveying Ain al-Rummaneh, a suburb of East Beirut. He said the fighting completely destroyed at least 2,000 homes, many in buildings several stories high.

In one relief project, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board will provide funds to Lebanese Baptists who will work with World Vision to provide food to about 500 families in the town of Dbeiyeh north of East Beirut. About 300 homes there were destroyed and 200 damaged to the point of being temporarily uninhabitable.

In another project, the 12 Baptist churches in Lebanon will distribute food to victims of the strife in their areas.

"We're working to get some emergency help into Lebanon as soon as we possibly can," said Pete Dunn, one of 24 Southern Baptist missionaries who worked in Lebanon until 1986, when the U.S. State Department suspended passport privileges for Americans there. The restriction remains in force, and Dunn and a number of the other missionaries have relocated in Cyprus.

"We need (to send) medicines, food, water," Dunn said. "We need missionaries in Lebanon where they can be of help."

The February flare-up is the worst among Catholic factions since Lebanon's civil war began. Previously, so-called Christian and Muslim factions had warred and other nations such as Syria and Israel as well as the United States had heightened the complexity of the strife.

Catholics and other Christians once lived throughout Lebanon but now are confined to less than 20 percent of the country, essentially in East Beirut and the surrounding areas.

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The vast majority of Lebanon's 3 million people, as usual, are on the sidelines, powerless to stop the strife, according to observers. The Lebanese Army led by Gen. Michel Aoun and the Lebanese Forces militia commanded by Samir Geagea are the combatants. Many East Beirut residents have fled into predominantly Muslim West Beirut. Those remaining in the battle zones, meanwhile, regularly retreat to bomb shelters.

The strife stems from Aoun's refusal to accept a government that emerged from a conference of Christian and Muslim Lebanese leaders last fall. The government is internationally recognized and supported by Syria, which has deployed troops in Lebanon. However, Aoun insists that Syria withdraw.

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Dentist became a missionary
but never reached Africa

By Donald D. Martin

N- FMB

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Dentist James Shell felt called to foreign missions, but he died before he could reach the field.

After he and his wife, Gail, were appointed as Southern Baptist missionaries to Benin, a routine chest X-ray found black spots in his lungs. Doctors diagnosed the spots as lung cancer.

Shell died Feb. 13 at age 40. He left behind a family and friends in Shreveport, La., who attest that even though he never reached an overseas mission field, he was in missions all his life.

When he was a young child, he convinced his parents to go to a Southern Baptist mission church because he liked the music he heard during an earlier visit. They became Southern Baptists because of that visit.

His father worked in the oil fields of Wyoming and South Dakota and the family moved from town to town. "He grew up moving from mission church to mission church, and that's where his love for missions started," said his wife, now an elementary school teacher in Shreveport.

Shell practiced dentistry in Shreveport. He started considering full-time mission work after returning from his second trip to Mexico as a volunteer medical worker. His church, Broadmoor Baptist in Shreveport, sponsored the first trip for evangelism and medicine. The second trip was not a Christian-sponsored medical trip.

"The differences in those two trips made a real impression on him" about the value of the Christ-centered approach, Mrs. Shell said. "I saw a difference in him. He came home and said: 'This is what the Lord wants me to do. I want you to go and see.'"

The Shells, whose call to missions was confirmed during two more trips to Mexico, were appointed in August 1987 but were delayed leaving for the field while he closed out his dental practice.

Eleven months later, a standard medical exam detected the signs of lung cancer -- on July 22, 1988, the birthday of Shell's youngest daughter.

Shell, a lifelong non-smoker, began chemotherapy, which shrank the cancer cells in his lungs. His health improved, and he was able to return to his practice. But soon the cancer spread to his brain.

He endured more chemotherapy and new radiation treatments that drained his strength. For long periods of time he could not control shaking in his hands and therefore could not practice dentistry.

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Again the chemotherapy shrank the cancer cells, but the cancer would not go into remission. In June 1989, when the spread of cancer was evident, the Shells resigned from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Then in July, he gave up his practice but not his missionary spirit.

The youth director at Shell's church made a point of keeping him involved. He continued to teach a youth Sunday school class, and the church asked the Shells to be sponsors on a youth summer mission trip.

"Even though Jim wasn't really well, he went," Mrs. Shell recounted. "He had to rest a lot, but that was real special to him.

"You could see how the young people felt about Jim at the funeral. The place was packed with kids. And before that, at Christmas time, when Jim was able to come home from the hospital, the young people came and caroled in our front yard."

Shell received the affection of many young people because he tried to be patient and positive with them, she said. He was a father figure for more people than just his two daughters, Kelley, 13, and Tracy, 11.

After Southern Baptist missionary Jurhee Philpot's husband was killed in Mexico in 1985, she and her 17-year-old daughter, Jill, lived in Shreveport on furlough. "We went there (Broadmoor Baptist) for healing of our hurts and putting our lives back together after my husband's death," Mrs. Philpot said.

The church held a youth discipleship training weekend in the homes of church members and youth leaders just after Mrs. Philpot and Jill moved to Shreveport. Jill stayed at the Shell's home. "Jim was the kind of loving male figure that Jill needed in her life at that time," Mrs. Philpot said.

"Jill delayed her own grieving until she was with Jim and Gail after his first chemotherapy treatment. She had to come to grips with the fact that life does end. It doesn't always go on forever -- not in the physical sense. That was really hard, but she came to grips with her daddy's death."

Mrs. Shell said she does not understand why this has happened, but she is thankful for the way God has seen to her smallest needs.

"Every little need we've had, the Lord has been there," she said. "Even the way he died was a blessing. He had been out of it for a couple of days but came to at the end. He heard what I was saying; looked me straight in the eye. Then a tear came down his cheek, and he kissed me good-bye.

"He was at peace with what was happening. He didn't have an answer for being called and not going, but he had said he knew what his first question to the Lord would be."

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

Families need nurture,
workshop leaders stress

By Ken Camp

N- Texas

Baptist Press
2/22/90

DALLAS (BP)--Christian homes should be devoted to the nurture of families, according to conference leaders at the 1990 statewide workshop of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, Feb. 19-20 at Calvary Baptist Church in Garland.

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Charles Petty, president of Family Success Unlimited in Raleigh, N.C., was keynote speaker. Recording artist Cynthia Clawson of Houston provided the theme interpretation.

Petty pointed to the father in the parable of the prodigal son as a good example of a nurturing parent. The father took the initiative in looking for ways to "be family," valued relationships more than things, said warm words and did loving things, Petty noted.

"The world is starved to death for warm words. But we must also do warm things. Love without compassion is meaningless," he said.

Successful families are based on biblical principles, Petty stressed, adding, "A lot of our families never work right because we've never read the instructions."

To keep from drifting apart, families must understand the importance of commitment, forgiveness, sensitivity to both facts and feelings, concern for personal health and fitness, purposeful exclusion of others from the marital relationship, and establishment of proper priorities, he emphasized.

"Sometimes the most Godlike thing you'll ever do is go out in the yard and throw a ball with a child or sit down and have a tea party," he said.

"Understanding Parents, Relationships and Sex in 90 Minutes" was the subject of a youth forum led by Petty and Lane Powell, associate professor of family sociology at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala. They emphasized that sexuality includes physiology, attitudes and relationships, not just physical intercourse.

"God wants what is best for each of us. Sexuality is one of God's good gifts," Powell said, noting the gift carries responsibilities and is to be exercised according to God's instructions.

"Love is doing what is good, right and best for the other person," Petty said. "As children of God, we don't have any right to use or abuse another person made in the image of God."

One in three females and at least one in 10 males in the United States will have been sexually assaulted or abused by someone they know by age 13, said Deana Blackburn of Kerrville, Texas, who led a workshop on help for abusive families.

To minister to victims of family violence and sexual assault, ministers must realize the importance of praying, sharing information about available resources, staying informed about the problem of abuse and preaching against the sin of family violence, she stressed.

"Emphasize scriptures which prohibit violence, incest, sexual abuse and other forms of victimization. Don't assume that church people do not need to be reminded of biblical teachings on these subjects," she said.

"Also, be aware that virtually every time you teach or preach, you are addressing victims of family violence and sexual assault."

Family ministry should be part of the "mainstream" life of the church, not a peripheral program, said Britton Wood, minister to single adults and families at First Baptist Church of Oak Cliff in Dallas.

"Sunday school needs to be the family-life education vehicle in the church," Wood said, noting that it should major on strengths rather than on dealing with crises.

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"If we aim our family ministry exclusively at helping the hurting, they'll leave the church when they get better. We need to aim our ministry at the healthy people, helping them build skills so they can help the hurting," he said.

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Lecturers discuss future of theology,
ways Jesus communicated his gospel

N-60
(SWBTS)

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2/22/90

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Anticipating the future of theology prepares churches for ministry in the coming decades, an evangelical scholar said during the annual Day-Higginbotham Lectures at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Millard Erickson, executive vice president, dean and professor of theology at Bethel Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., said exploring "theological futurism" enables Christians to be ready for coming trends.

"I have a sense of anticipation about what God is going to be doing in the future, particularly in the field of theology," Erickson said.

Theological futurism "helps us shape, develop our concept of God and affects the way we preach and develop the nature of the Christian life," he noted.

Citing popular movements such as New Age, Erickson said theological futurism gives theologians a head start in combating false doctrines.

"Those who saw the New Age Movement coming were forewarned, therefore, forearmed," he explained.

Other reasons for anticipating the future of theology, Erickson said, include: enabling churches to respond more calmly to changes, helping denominations "avoid falling into the opposite error in the other direction," and enabling Christians "to utilize the opportunities when they come."

But Christians must not be passive about changes, he said, noting "We should help in bring them about.

A major factor affecting theological change, Erickson said, is shifts in denominations.

"Changes within your denomination affect theological development," he said, "Other religious influences (also) impact the environment in which theology is taking place."

In predicting theological change, Erickson said he first determines a pattern of theological movement.

Secondly, a theory of change must be formulated -- examining what causes people to change their views, Erickson said. The third step is developing "a theology of your theology," he added.

Among other factors affecting theological change, he noted, are political developments and science.

During his second lecture, Erickson spoke on major future developments in theology.

He predicted a strong, continuous emphasis on God's power and a simultaneous shift toward emphasizing God as finite.

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Erickson also predicted a growing emphasis on the humanity of Jesus. Along with that trend, he said, sin will be seen as a social concept and less as something religious.

Salvation will be viewed as less-supernatural and less-restricted, he added.

But Erickson encouraged the seminary audience to "be not conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

"I hope it will be increasingly true that Southwestern will help to make certain that as the shifts take place in evangelical circles, that there will be those who will be true to the intentions and plan of God."

During the Northcutt Lectures, held in conjunction with the Day-Higginbotham Lectures given by Erickson, Wayne Ward, professor of Christian theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., spoke on "How Jesus Got His Message Across."

To improve their sermons, Ward said, pastors should take a communications lesson from Christ.

Among those lessons is the use of such tools as epigrams, or "pronouncement sayings," and humor, he added.

"God made us so that pithy, to-the-point sayings, often with a humorous twist, hook in our minds like nothing else," Ward said. But he urged caution when using humor, adding, "You are only really safe when you use it on yourself."

Jesus also lived his message, Ward said, encouraging Christian ministers to do the same.

"If you do not learn, as a preacher, teacher or administrator, that the things that you do will outweigh the things that you say, then you'd better back up and start over again," he said. Jesus knew this truth, Ward said, adding, "Nothing ever spoke louder than that day when he took the cross."

Other elements mentioned by Ward that Jesus used to convey his message included parallelism, or "creative repetition;" the narrative or story; symbolic language; analogy; signs; and double meanings.

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Nashville layman Rich Murrell
ministers to AIDS patients

By Lonnie Wilkey

F- (O
(Tenn)

Baptist Press
2/22/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--A Texas housefly led Rich Murrell into a life-changing ministry.

In 1983 Murrell was living in Fort Worth, Texas, while attending Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. During that time he was involved in a local hospice organization, a group that deals with terminally ill patients.

One day he was asked to visit a patient dying of AIDS. "I didn't even know what AIDS was then," Murrell said.

The patient's parents left the house while Murrell visited their son. During the visit, a housefly landed on the young man's forehead.

"I reached over and brushed the fly off his head," Murrell recalled, noting the young man grabbed his hand and said, "You're the first person other than my doctor who has touched me in six months."

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That was "a life-changing" experience, Murrell affirmed. "I couldn't imagine people being so phobic that they wouldn't touch someone."

But God "began speaking to me at that time" about a ministry to AIDS patients, he said.

"I have a personal call to minister to AIDS victims. I didn't have a vision. I just saw a fly on someone's forehead," he explained.

After graduating from Southwestern Seminary, Murrell joined the staff of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, where he works in the discipleship training department.

He became involved once again in a hospice program, but eventually learned of Nashville CARES, a non-profit community-based AIDS service organization created in 1985 by concerned citizens of Nashville and Middle Tennessee in response to the growing health crisis presented by AIDS.

The United Way organization does "a holistic type of work," Murrell explained. Some of his time is spent providing transportation, buying food or performing housecleaning chores for AIDS patients. Most of all, however, he is a friend to the AIDS patient he is paired with through a "buddy system."

Murrell's involvement with the volunteer program has surprised others in Nashville CARES, he noted.

"Their perception is that Southern Baptists have little sympathy or compassion for people with AIDS," he said.

Related to that perception, Murrell observed, is the reality that some Southern Baptists believe "sin" caused a person to contract AIDS.

"Southern Baptists have got to go beyond looking at AIDS as a result of sin in one's life," he said, adding that many AIDS victims are people who received a blood transfusion or are babies whose mothers were infected with the virus.

"We can't be judgmental. We all have sins that need God's grace and mercy." Christians must look at AIDS patients as "people with a terminal disease who may or may not be Christians," he said. If they are not Christians, he added, Christians need to help them know Christ as their personal Savior.

And although Murrell has received some criticism for ministering to "those" people, his church has been most supportive, he said.

Murrell, a Sunday school teacher at Immanuel Baptist Church in Nashville, said members of the church and his class have contributed financially to Nashville CARES and some have even visited AIDS patients with him.

In addition, the church recently approved a plan through which domestic hunger funds from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta would be channeled through the church to help AIDS patients.

The process, which also involves going through Nashville Baptist Association and the Tennessee Baptist Convention, has been approved, and the first funds have been received, he said.

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Those hunger funds are vital for ministry to AIDS patients, Murrell said, noting that about five years ago the primary ministry was caring for the dying.

Now, AIDS patients are living longer; thus health and nutrition are major concerns, he said.

Murrell has received tremendous blessings from his ministry to AIDS victims, he noted.

And he hopes other Southern Baptists eventually will be more willing to minister to AIDS patients as they learn they face little danger themselves.

While acknowledging he uses precautions when cleaning an AIDS patient's home or in other instances, Murrell stressed: "AIDS is hard to catch. I know that touching people and showing them care and compassion is not going to endanger me."

Through his AIDS ministry, Murrell has learned the people he deals with are diverse, but one prevailing fact is evident, he said.

"We have to minister to them, accept them, and love them when no one else will."

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Church shares love of Christ
in New Orleans' French Quarter

By Breena Kent Paine

F - (O
(NO 875)

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--A drunken man lay on a doorstep in New Orleans' French Quarter.

A slight chill in the air caused him to curl into a ball to keep warm. His clothes were filthy and full of holes, his beard was stubble, and his face and hands were scabbed and scarred. He was so undernourished that his bones formed sharp angles.

"Hey, do you feel all right?" asked Darren Watson, a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary who lives only a few yards from where the man lay. The man grunted in answer.

"Have you been this way long?" Watson asked him.

"Yeah," he said as he made an effort to raise his head.

"Aren't you tired of it?"

"Yeah, I'm sick of it." The man pushed himself into a sitting position.

"You know it doesn't have to be this way," Watson said. "There is another way," and he sat on the step, beside the man, to tell him how he could know Jesus.

Watson does not have any special background or training to minister to people in the French Quarter. As with the other seminary students who live at Vieux Carre Baptist Church and are involved in its ministry, he comes from a suburban church background. But his love for Christ and his caring heart step beyond his own experiences to relate to street people.

"I don't believe a doctor has to have his appendix out in order to operate on me," said Roy Humphrey, pastor of Vieux Carre Church and a graduate of New Orleans Seminary. "I don't believe a person has to be an alcoholic to understand an alcoholic. I don't believe that a woman would have to have been a prostitute in order to effectively help one. I do believe that we have to have a concern in our hearts."

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From Poplarville, Miss., Humphrey lived on the streets of the Vieux Carre, or "old square," as a teenager. Years later, he accepted Christ through the witness of his wife, Virginia, and after receiving his master of religious education degree and being pastor of churches in Mississippi and Louisiana, he returned to New Orleans as pastor of Vieux Carre Church.

In the first 14 years of the church's history, it had seen 13 pastors, so Humphrey fought a discouraging battle to gain the Quarter people's confidence. After 15 years at Vieux Carre Church, however, he now has won that trust through his caring spirit and his knowledge of handiwork -- fixing neighbors' cars, leaky roofs, dryers, and other broken items, his neighbors reported. Those who know him know they can count on his help in their times of need.

One man, Wally, had lived on New Orleans' skid row for 18 years. "The day I caught him, he was taking a coat off of a passed-out drunk. For seven months, we walked the streets together," Humphrey said, noting he formed a binding friendship with the man.

Wally accepted Christ and now is the caretaker at Vieux Carre Church and "the finest Christian I know," Humphrey said.

Humphrey believes in friendship and lifestyle witnessing, as do the seminary students who work with him at Vieux Carre Church -- Watson, of Shreveport, La.; Craig Mann, of Montgomery, Ala.; Tammy Wilkinson, of Brandon, Miss.; and Leroy Baxter, of Tampa, Fla.

As a worker at a corner grocery store in the Quarter, Watson is able to meet residents daily "on their turf," allowing him to "establish relationships and proclaim the gospel to people I couldn't normally proclaim it to."

Daily encountering homosexuals, prostitutes, satanists, drug addicts and alcoholics, the students have discovered the frustrations of dealing with "truly unrepentant" hearts. For example, one alcoholic Watson helped "sober up and get back on his feet again" returned to the bottle only three months later.

"I'm learning that it's not all cut and dry. They still have a lot of problems," Watson said. "They don't just come out of it a polished Christian."

In addition, Mann said many street people feign accepting Christ hoping to get free meals from the people sharing the gospel with them, usually college students or members of church groups that "blitz the streets for a week."

Others, such as one woman Wilkinson befriended, have heard the gospel many times before, but are "turned off because they 'Bible bang.'" Wilkinson has spent time becoming her friend and continually showing her the love of God.

"We haven't won the Quarter," added Humphrey, whose church is home to only 13 members. "I don't see any difference in the street than there was 15 years ago, except a few different faces."

Perhaps that is because most of the people to whom Vieux Carre Church ministers are in the French Quarter "for all the wrong reasons." When one accepts Christ, church members try to send him back home, away from the quarter atmosphere.

"There are numerous voodoo shops," Baxter said. "People (in the quarter) have written (Vieux Carre Church) letters saying, 'Why are we there ruining their fun when we could be in the suburbs with the rest of the churches?'"

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But Baxter has found an avenue for growth through the Quarter's children. He and his wife, Jonnie, hold Backyard Bible Clubs at the church. As a result, some of the children have accepted Christ, and Acteens and Girls-in-Action Missions groups have been formed to help them grow in their faith.

Most of these children come from single-parent or no-parent homes, with a sister or a grandmother caring for them, Baxter said. Three of the children who accepted Christ and joined the church come from "the sturdiest" of French Quarter family life: "sort of a common-law father."

With such unstable backgrounds, the children grow up without knowing the meaning of love. "We can offer them a love that's worth finding," Baxter said, "and not just a quick or superficial love."

Most Quarter people are "looking for something to ease their pain, peace for their heart," he continued. "We offer the only true peace to fill that void -- Jesus."

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Merger brings healing
to splintered church

By Ken Camp

F - Texas

Baptist Press
2/22/90

DALLAS (BP)--God healed raw wounds and knitted together a frayed fellowship through the successful merger of Calvary Heights Baptist Church and First Baptist Church in The Colony, Texas, according to Pastor Bill Wilks.

About three years ago, internal problems within First Church resulted in a split and the creation of Calvary Heights Church. Wilks, who had been youth minister at First Church, became pastor of the new congregation.

Calvary Heights, which functioned as a mission of Lakeland Baptist Church in nearby Lewisville, grew, eventually averaging more than 200 in Sunday school. But many of its members continued to long for reconciliation with First Church, he said.

"We still loved each other," Wilks said.

After the leadership personnel changed at First Church, the two congregations agreed to begin negotiations toward a merger. With the assistance of Bill Tinsley, director of missions for Denton Baptist Association, the two congregations created a merger committee and began the process of reuniting.

"Three members of Calvary Heights and three members of First Baptist Church met together to write the merger proposal to be brought before both churches," Wilks said.

The terms of merger included a merging of church staffs, with the secretary and youth minister coming from First Church and the pastor and ministers of education and music supplied by Calvary Heights.

The merger proposal also called for the appointment of three deacons, creation of a fellowship committee and creation of a nominating committee that would fill vacancies with an equal number from Calvary Heights and First Church.

Both churches voted to merge, and the two congregations came back together in January 1989.

"It's one thing for two congregations to merge. This was a situation where there had been a church split and there was a real reconciliation. There seemed to be a general spirit of acceptance on the part of both congregations," said Tinsley.

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Although a few families left the reunited church initially, the congregation has experienced exceptional growth since the merger, Wilks noted. The church was among the statewide "pacesetters" in baptisms in 1989, and the congregation recently broke ground to build a new 650-seat worship center.

"A whole lot of healing has taken place. We've seen 'we and them' become 'us,'" Wilks said.

Prayer, biblical teaching on forgiveness, organized fellowship activities and a renewed emphasis on evangelism all were factors in the healing, he noted.

"We've made it a priority to focus on reaching out to the community, not focusing on problems within," Wilks said, adding that the building program for the new worship center also gave members a common purpose.

"We've seen prayers answered. God's hand has blessed the healing, forgiveness and coming together here. It has been a tremendous witness to our community," he said.