



BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

March 23, 1990

90-43

'Here's Hope' revivals
begin with expectation

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptists nationwide launched a six-week period of simultaneous revivals March 18 with expectations for results and momentum built by a national media blitz.

Between March 18 and April 29, about 80 percent of the denomination's 37,000 churches will host revivals with the theme "Here's Hope. Jesus cares for you." The simultaneous revival emphasis is sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

The board hopes Southern Baptists nationwide will lead 175,000 people to faith in Christ, start 1,000 new churches and distribute 15 million pieces of Scripture during this year's simultaneous revivals.

This year marks the eighth time the board has sponsored simultaneous revivals in Southern Baptist churches. Previous revivals were in 1950, 1951, 1955, 1959, 1964, 1969 and 1986. The 1986 revivals carried the theme "Good News America: God loves you."

During the "Good News America" revivals, Southern Baptist churches recorded 145,000 professions of faith with 103,000 baptisms. Seventy-seven percent of all SBC churches participated.

Prior to this year's revivals, a national media campaign on the "Here's Hope" theme began with advertisements in magazines and newspapers, and on local radio and television stations.

For more than a month, churches have jammed the board's customer service center phone lines with orders for "Here's Hope" products such as marked New Testaments and evangelistic tracts. The board has added extra telephone lines and temporary workers to meet the crunch, said Director of Marketing Jerry Wolverton.

Callers who cannot get through on the "Here's Hope" order line -- (800) 346-1990 -- may use the board's regular customer service line: (800) 634-2462, Wolverton said.

As of March 12, more than 1 million "Here's Hope" items had been shipped to churches from the customer service center in Atlanta.

As the revivals started nationwide, churches began to report a variety of victories, ranging from unusually high attendance to restoration of broken fellowships to large numbers of professions of faith in Christ.

Ron Zamkus, pastor of First Baptist Church of Boonville, Mo., reported his church saw an average revival attendance of 175 people -- higher than the church's average Sunday school attendance of 170.

And on the first day of the revival, the church broke a record for Sunday school attendance that had been set in 1971. The previous high attendance was 270 in 1971; the new record is 273.

The Missouri church also recorded six baptisms and two other professions of faith during the revival. Three people baptized were adults, which the pastor said is significant because the church had baptized only two adults over a three-year period before the revival.

--more--

The church had been through a period of "tremendous difficulty" in recent years but had experienced healing through the revival, Zamkus said.

"People who've been in this church 30-plus years say they've never seen a revival like this," he said. "We've learned that God is still in the business of changing lives and that God is not finished with First Baptist Church of Boonville."

Across the country, in Florida, Sunset Point Baptist Church in Clearwater literally was set on fire during its "Here's Hope" revival. An arsonist set two fires at the church sometime between Friday night cottage prayer meetings and a Saturday morning prayer vigil, Pastor David Throckmorton reported.

The blaze was detected early and damaged only a storage shed and the church's kitchen, he said. "We told people that Satan made his move at the wrong time. We were prayed up and prepared for the enemy," he noted.

The revival meetings averaged 183 in attendance, which Throckmorton said was excellent. "We had a good number of people visit just to see what was going on because of the fire," he said.

The church, which averages 200 in Sunday school attendance and has baptized an average of 25 people per year, recorded 65 professions of faith during the revival.

"This revival has made all the difference in the world for our church," the pastor said. "It has made our people aware of the fact that maybe we've spent too much time inside the four walls of the church and that if we'll make some effort to reach out to our community, there are people who will respond to the gospel."

In Texas, Calvary Baptist Church in Gladewater recorded 106 professions of faith during its "Here's Hope" revival. The church averages 120 in Sunday school attendance.

Prayer was the essential ingredient in the revival's success, said Pastor J. Prentiss McGee, who started the church eight years ago. The pastor also led members in Scripture training for sharing their faith.

"We urged them to pray like it all depends on God and to work like it all depends on us," he said.

Months before the revival, laymen began meeting at 6:30 every Wednesday morning to pray for revival, the pastor said, noting, "We weren't praying just for revival, but for the spirit of revival to permeate our lives."

As a result, the church has "truly experienced revival," McGee said. "I could hardly believe we could have such a revival in four days in a church of this size."

The board has established a "Here's Hope Victory Line" for churches across the nation to report similar results of their revival experiences. The number is (404) 898-7589. Calls are received between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Eastern time, Mondays through Fridays.

--30--

Orville Scott of the Dallas bureau of Baptist Press contributed to this story.

BJC warns of church-state
problems in child-care bills

By Kathy Palen

N-BJC

Baptist Press
3/23/90

As a child-care vote in the House of Representatives approaches, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs has continued to warn members of Congress and the Bush administration of potential church-state problems contained in proposed legislation.

"The BJC has consciously abstained from endorsing any particular child-care proposal on the merits," said J. Brent Walker, BJC associate general counsel. "Instead, we try to critique the church-state aspects of all of the proposals.

--more--

"Pro-ature endorsement of any bill -- on the merits or otherwise -- can be counterproductive because of the rapidity with which bills are amended and because such an endorsement can detract from our credibility when we speak to church-state issues, which are the core of our program assignment."

In the past month, Walker has met with President George Bush, the House Democratic leadership and congressional staff members to discuss the various child-care proposals pending in the House.

"We continue to oppose any proposal that would use federal tax dollars to fund sectarian child care, whether in the form of vouchers or direct grants," Walker said. "We do not oppose the use of non-discriminatory earned income tax credits as an aspect of child-care policy, because such credits do not have obvious church-state implications. This kind of tax credit is not a voucher."

Each of the major child-care proposals before the House contains church-state problems, said Walker. He pointed to the recently introduced Stenholm-Shaw bill as an example.

"The Stenholm-Shaw bill is seriously flawed from a church-state angle," Walker said. "It provides for federal funds to go directly to religious child-care providers through Title XX block grants to the states and mandates a voucher program. It specifically allows vouchers to be used to purchase services from 'providers which have religious activities.'"

Such provisions run contrary to the historic Baptist advocacy of church-state separation, he said. They also flout the will of Southern Baptists as expressed in a 1988 Southern Baptist Convention resolution and a half-dozen Baptist state convention resolutions passed during the last six months, he added.

Echoing those sentiments, Oliver S. Thomas, BJC general counsel, said: "Government funding and regulation of church child care is a bad idea whether it's suggested by Charles Stenholm or Edward Kennedy. The SBC in a nearly unanimous resolution called upon its churches to conduct their child-care programs 'without financing from the federal government.' Moreover, the resolution urged that any child-care bill 'include adequate safeguards to maintain the separation of church and state,' which the Stenholm bill clearly does not do.

"The recent 'qualified' endorsement by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission of a bill that so clearly contradicts one of the primary points of the SBC resolution is surprising, to say the least."

--30--

NOTE TO EDITORS: The two stories below, and accompanying photos, are the product of a recent trip to Romania and Hungary by Europe correspondent Mike Creswell and photographer Warren Johnson. To personalize the headlines of recent months, they spent time with two Baptist families -- the Fedors of Romania and the Jobbagys of Hungary -- and explored their lives at a historic moment.

A Baptist family in Romania:
struggles of body and soul

By Mike Creswell

F - FMB

Baptist Press
3/23/90

COMANESTI, Romania (BP)--When Mihai Fedor comes home from work, he pauses to greet his wife, Elena, and nine of their 10 children, then heads to one of the three wood stoves that heat his family's five-room house in Romania.

A burly, quiet man, he leans against the side of the tile-covered stove to soak up warmth. The Baptist layman has worked all day in a crane's unheated compartment, moving lumber around for Combined Furniture Factory. It turns out chairs, many of which are sold in the United States, and other furniture.

--more--

In February, a wind from the surrounding Carpathian Mountains slices through the warmest of clothing like an icy scalpel, leaving snow flurries across the hilly land. Fedor walks home from the factory half a mile away; owning a car is not even a dream yet for most people in Comanesti, a town where the major industries are petroleum refining, coal mining and furniture.

Near the Fedors' home, a steam plant's twin smokestacks belch thick columns of unfiltered smoke, dusting the town with soot. Many residents have breathing problems, Mrs. Fedor says, noting, "We eventually get used to it, but it's hard on children." She keeps her simply furnished home clean despite soot.

The Fedors have five daughters and five sons. After eldest daughter Daniela, 26, are Estera, 16; Luminita, 14; Alina, 10; and Mariana, 11. The sons are Liviu, 25; Cornel, 22; Sorin, 20; Adrian, 18; and Lucian, 5. Why so many children? Because that's the way God intended it, Fedor says.

As the red tinge of cold leaves Fedor's face, he and the family talk of their life in central Romania, one of the poorest regions in a land left devastated by the long reign of communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, deposed and executed in December's revolution.

They tell a story of struggle -- economic, political and spiritual.

Fedor labors six days a week on a swing shift that has him working days, nights or evenings from week to week. To attend Comanesti Baptist Church, where he and his family are active, he must swap Sundays with another worker.

He earns about \$119 a month. Three older children also work. Cornel, a rig operator with an oil refinery, earns \$120 a month. Sorin earns \$115 a month as a coal miner. Daniela earns \$140 a month as a mechanical engineer with an oil company. Adrian is looking for work. Liviu, a student at the University of Oil and Gas, hopes to land a job after completing his studies.

Despite their combined income, the family has struggled financially, especially during the last four years. Fedor has borrowed heavily to help buy clothes, potatoes, firewood. "My salary just ran short," he says.

Firewood alone costs \$20 a month. Like many products, wood is delivered in a horse-drawn wagon, still a common sight in the region, where only 20 percent of the people own cars. Pedestrians stop in their tracks to watch the rare passing auto that is not a Romanian-made Dacia. A flying saucer would have gotten no harder stares than a foreign visitor's economy Toyota.

Even a Dacia with a primitive two-cylinder engine costs \$3,500. "It would be like buying another house," says Fedor.

Under communism, prices and income were what the government said they were, with none of the market-driven ties to economic reality known in the West. Virtually everything that could be sold abroad was shipped out of the country to help pay off the national debt, at a high cost to Romanians.

The real meaning of government control becomes clearer when Cornel displays two battered rationing cards, unused since the revolution. They were the family's permit to buy limited amounts of food. One card is for bread, oil, sugar and corn meal; the other for pork, beef, butter, cheese and salami.

Printed on the back of one card are these words: "In case you lose this card you will not get another."

Before December, the 12-member family was allowed little more than one pound of meat per person each month. "It was not enough," says Mrs. Fedor. Dried beans and potatoes make up the bulk of the family's diet. At one meal the meat served is virtually pure pork fat. But these days more fruit is available, if one is lucky enough to be at the store when it is delivered.

--more--

In the two years preceding the revolution, food of any kind become increasingly difficult to find at any price. "Stores in Romania are like museums -- you visit and leave with nothing in hand," quips Cornel. The joke is an old one, he explains, like the one that defines a Romanian sandwich -- a meat coupon placed between two bread coupons.

"There were no clothes. Pants, shoes, even underclothing were hard to find," Mrs. Fedor says. She looked for a shirt for Adrian last September -- any kind of shirt. She searched in vain through every store.

As with many families in a land of perpetual shortages, the Fedors have had to be self-sufficient. Their cow provides milk; the garden produces fruits and vegetables. Pigs and chickens supplement their diet and income.

Asked if she ever had seen her children hungry because they could not find food, Mrs. Fedor quickly answers: "No, never. But it's because God takes care of us, even in hard moments. We always have had what was strictly necessary. We have not been at the height of fashion, but we have survived."

"But it's been hard," adds daughter Daniela. "I'm the oldest, and I know."

According to the Fedors, the increasing economic hardships of living in Romania, combined with an increasingly repressive political system, finally brought an end to Ceausescu's regime. The Fedors had several brushes of their own with his strong-arm tactics.

When their church was accused of constructing a new building without getting necessary government clearances, police descended on the building last May and bulldozed it into the ground. Fedor and Cornel were jailed briefly.

Fedor was harassed at work for being Baptist. The police threatened his children. "Your children will have trouble, even in school. We'll see to it," they said.

Fedor did not believe the family would be harmed -- God would protect them -- but he didn't doubt the government was wicked enough to try. Cornel recalls being laughed at in high school because he was a Christian. Luminita had similar experiences.

Because Daniela, who speaks some English, directed visiting Western journalists to the town, she was followed by the security police and harassed for weeks. "She was considered dangerous, an enemy of the people," Liviu says with a grin at his sister. "They tried to frighten her and kept her in the police department from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., questioning her."

Was she afraid? "Sure I was," she says.

Cornel completed his stint in the army last year. His unit was the one sent to Timisoara to quell protests there. The shooting of civilians in Timisoara helped spark the national uprising against Ceausescu. "It was the officers, not the enlisted men, who shot," he insists.

Cornel can now talk freely about politics or his economic situation without fearing that some "friend" will turn him in as a traitor. The police asked Romanians to spy on their neighbors, confirms Fedor, noting, "Those who offered information were very well-paid."

"If you made a comment against the government or Ceausescu, that would be bad," Cornel adds. "They even listened to your telephone, so you could say nothing."

The system was corrupt, the family insists. They pointed out a small police checkpoint building beside the road. It stands empty now, windows broken by residents ridding themselves of the hated police presence. "Before the revolution, drivers had to pay fines whether they did something wrong or not. The money was pocketed by the police," says Fedor.

--more--

The years 1988 and 1989 were the "saddest" of all, Mrs. Fedor recalls: "Before the revolution, the government said Ceausescu was building a 'golden epoch.' But the economic situation got so bad that people began to talk everywhere. They stopped being afraid they would be taken to prison. They became less and less afraid of revolutionary talk."

The Fedors are not political in the sense of taking an active role in politics or government. They judge their country on the basis of what they can buy in the store and whether they can voice their opinions freely and live out their Christian faith day to day.

Their table still is not overflowing, but they believe things gradually will improve in post-revolution Romania.

--30--

Photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond (foreign) bureau of Baptist Press

A Baptist family in Hungary:
life is good, but prices rise

By Mike Creswell

F- FMB

Baptist Press
3/23/90

BUDAPEST, Hungary (BP)--Klara Jobbagy's concern is obvious as she shops in the local grocery store -- prices are up again this week.

It is a typical morning for the Jobbagys, a Baptist family in Budapest, Hungary's capital. First, Mrs. Jobbagy takes a five-minute walk to the local kindergarten with sons Levente, 6, and Andor, 4. The building could be an American one, with warm classrooms decorated in much the same art one would see in Maine or California. She helps the boys change from winter coats and hats to T-shirts, shorts and sandals for the day.

Husband Ferenc Jobbagy leaves just after 7 a.m. for his work as a materials handler at Eotvos Lorand Science University. He catches a bus or tram within a block of home and is at work by 7:30. The price of the morning ride is high this month, up from 5 cents to 17 cents -- small amounts by American standards. But the threefold fare increase hurts in Hungary's economy, as it is weaned away from heavy government subsidies.

The family's 14-year-old Wartburg automobile is too expensive to use in getting to and from work. Its wheezing, two-cylinder engine pumps noxious fumes into the air as do most other Eastern European-made cars in Budapest. It usually is reserved for Sunday visits to family members across town.

Boglarka, her 3-year-old daughter, is still asleep at home while Mrs. Jobbagy makes a quick visit to the store around the corner. She doesn't drive, but the school, shops, bus station and tram lines all are within a few blocks in Kobanya Centrum, where the Jobbagys live.

Entertainment for the family usually is a walk through the neighborhood, a visit to Mrs. Jobbagy's mother or perhaps an outing to the city zoo, using public transport. They do not own a television.

As with other Christians in Eastern Europe, the Jobbagys see the new liberties sweeping their country as a mixed blessing. They take a dim view of the fact that a Hungarian edition of Playboy magazine and other types of "adult" literature have hit city newsstands in the past year.

If the Jobbagys have one love on which to splurge, it is music. A shelf of classical music albums sits alongside the stereo unit in the living room. Jobbagy, an accomplished violinist and organist, is assistant choir director and organist at Kispest Baptist Church, where the high-quality music on Sunday would be considered "take-it-on-the-road" quality in America.

Most Hungarian Baptist churches take music very seriously; many churches have orchestras. Music and the church brought the Jobbagys together. They met at Rakoscsaba Baptist Church, her home church in east Budapest, when he came there from Neszmely in northern Hungary to play violin in an orchestra.

--more--

Jobbagy's father had a Roman Catholic background, but he was taken to Siberia for five years during World War I and forced to work on a Russian farm. While there he heard the gospel and accepted Christ as savior. He returned to Hungary a staunch evangelical Christian. By the time he died at age 88, all seven of his children had become Christians.

Mrs. Jobbagy came from a Baptist home. Her father, who died in the mid-1970s, was a leader in Rakoscsaba Baptist Church. Today she teaches Sunday school at her church.

Jobbagy also serves on the church's building committee, a term that means more than meetings, since members do the work themselves. For a major renovation of their turn-of-the-century building, the church has received financial help from the Baptist Union of Hungary, which in turn received aid from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

With a membership of about 130 and a much higher average attendance, the congregation and its pastor, Andras Lovas, are excited about prospects for growth. Tens of thousands of people live within a square mile of the church building, most in clusters of high-rise apartments. Lovas considers the Jobbagys one of his most faithful families.

As do many Hungarians, Mrs. Jobbagy shops more carefully these days. Food prices recently rose almost 30 percent, a dent in their \$326 monthly income, which puts them into the "slightly above average" income bracket in Hungary. Prices of most products are headed up as the country makes the painful transition from a managed communist system to a Western-style free economy.

Yet she has access to more food, at lower prices, than people in most other Eastern European countries. In Hungary, shelves are well-stocked with breads, meats, cheeses -- even Coca-Cola.

But for the Jobbagy family, a bottle of Coke is a luxury, something to offer guests, not a beverage to have with regular meals. Mrs. Jobbagy looks longingly at some items on the shelves, but passes them up. The family eats meat, usually chicken, only about once a week. Except for bread, she does most of her own baking. Store-bought cakes and pies cost too much.

"Before, everything cost the same everywhere," says her husband. "Now we can save money on some items by comparing the prices at different stores."

The Hungarian economy is nothing like that of Romania or Poland, where inflation and perpetual shortages have driven people to desperation, or emigration. Hungary, after all, is known as one of the countries where communism almost worked.

"Foreign aid has helped the economy in recent years, but the pay-back will be hard," says Jobbagy. "We have a good farm system. Half of it is privately owned, not by the government."

These days, local newspapers announce almost daily new foreign investment and companies setting up operations in the country. Many are Austrian.

Opel, a German subsidiary of General Motors, and Suzuki, a Japanese company, will begin building cars in Hungary in 1991. Now, buying a car can mean a four-year wait unless the buyer has Western currency. Even getting one of the low-powered, air-polluting, Eastern-made Trabant cars can take months.

In the major department store near the Jobbagy home, a range of products are available. But many products are imported from Eastern countries, and the quality often is below Western standards.

Sprawling Budapest, a city on the Danube River, has Celtic ruins dating back to the third century B.C., but was officially organized in 1872 when the cities of Buda, Obuda and Pest merged into the Hungarian capital. Today it is home to more than 2 million people, almost 20 percent of Hungary's population.

--more--

Once part of the proud Austro-Hungarian empire, Budapest still is filled with stately buildings and monuments recalling its past. The city seems to endure the pollution of cars and flimsy high-rises associated with decades of communist rule like a once-wealthy matron wearing last season's dress.

Yet Hungarians look West these days. Public pressure bears down on schools to teach English and German, not Russian. Lines are long outside stores selling Western-made sports clothes, and a McDonald's restaurant is packed with customers all day.

"For the last 40 years, we have seen wrong politics," says a local store owner. "Now, we're seeing the results. I trust the government, and I think most people do for now. If prices had gone up earlier, before the new administration, people would have rioted. Now, they're mostly silent. For the past 40 years we've endured dirty things, and we can't change it all in a day or two."

Compared to most Eastern Europeans, the Jobbagys have fared well.

They are especially proud of their two-bedroom apartment, a second-floor walk-up with a kitchen, dining room, living room and single bathroom. It is scrupulously maintained by Mrs. Jobbagy against the onslaught of three healthy children. The rooms are considered spacious by Hungarian standards.

It is perhaps in housing arrangements that the differences between East and West are most apparent. Although the system is changing somewhat these days, housing has been doled out to Budapest citizens through city government.

After the Jobbagys married, they lived with her mother for a year and a half, a common occurrence. Then they received a temporary apartment with one bedroom, a kitchen and a toilet. Four years later they got their current apartment -- much faster than average.

"It was God's plan that we got this house," Mrs. Jobbagy explained simply. They rent their apartment from the government now but hope to buy it later. In a city where only about one in five citizens owns a telephone after a five-year wait, they consider themselves fortunate to have one.

Soon, now that Boglarka is 3, Mrs. Jobbagy plans to return to work -- both because the family will need the money and because neighbors and friends would frown on her staying home and not working.

Their monthly rent hit \$60 in February, a 35 percent rise over January. Heat and electricity cost about \$66 per month. They spend up to \$166 monthly for food, \$16 for telephone and about \$25 for monthly car maintenance. Their income just covers basic expenses, with little money left over for extras.

Asked about the future for her family and country, Mrs. Jobbagy wrinkles her forehead: "We can travel freely now to Austria and, with visas, to other places. And this is very good," she acknowledges. "We can leave if we like, but like many people, we're waiting for better times. We will stay here."

Her eyes light on her children playing happily on the floor. "The family is what's important. These days, we're living and dying for the family."

--30--

Photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond (foreign) bureau of Baptist Press

Alabama van
returns 'home'

By Bob Duck

N-60
(A1a)

Baptist Press
3/23/90

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP)--The Alabama Baptist Convention's disaster relief van returned to its "birthplace," Elba, Ala., March 18 to assist with feeding victims of a flood that virtually engulfed the town after a dirt levee broke due to heavy rains.

Some of the victims in serving lines were employees of Dorsey Trailer Company of Elba, which built the \$85,000 disaster unit for the Alabama convention 9 years ago.

--more--

Volunteering to help serve meals were townspeople from Elba, some victims of the flood. Baptists, members of the First Assembly of God Church where the van was parked and people from other denominations helped.

Five churches in the city received extensive flood damage, including First Baptist Church and Westside Baptist Church, said Tommy Puckett, director of the Alabama Baptist Brotherhood department.

Brotherhood-trained disaster teams from Elmore, Coffee, Tuscaloosa and Marshall counties directed the feeding effort. Brotherhood Associate Director Reginald Quimby helped in crisis counseling.

The 45-foot van is to be moved to the parking lot of First Baptist Church of Elba after waters subside. From there volunteers will help in the cleanup of homes and businesses, Puckett said.

The Elba flood was the fourth kind of disaster to which the Alabama Baptist disaster van has responded in less than six months. Last October, the van responded to a call from Charleston, S.C., following Hurricane Hugo. Next, the van journeyed to Watsonville, Calif., to assist with feeding hundreds of people following the northern California earthquake. Then, last November, the van was called upon to feed victims of a tornado that struck Huntsville, Ala., shortly after the adjournment of the annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist Convention.

The Alabama Baptist van is stocked with food to feed 5,000 people before being replenished. It contains a communications system, range, refrigerator, 1,000 gallon-water tank, ice machine, and bunks and bath facilities for a crew of six. It also contains equipment to help clear debris from streets and homes following a disaster.

--30--

Hester lecturer names
marks of Baptist preaching

By Brenda J. Sanders

N-10
(MWBTS)

Baptist Press
3/23/90

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Kentucky pastor H. Stephen Shoemaker examined the marks of distinctively "Baptist" preaching during the recent H. I. Hester Lectureship on Preaching at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.

Shoemaker, pastor of Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville, cited characteristics of true Baptist preaching.

"First, in a believer's church, Baptist preaching preaches for conversion -- for that first turning to Christ and for the ongoing conversion of the believer into the new creation God wants us to be," Shoemaker said.

Preachers are called to give voice to the gospel of God, he expounded. "It is a gospel that means life and death to us and to the world," he explained. "It is about the losing and the saving of souls."

The purpose of preaching then is to "help the hearer meet the God of the Bible and Jesus the Christ who has shown us God's face, and having met them, to join in glad obedience," Shoemaker said.

"As evangelical preachers, we preach for personal decision. We do not so much preach doctrine about Christ as we preach Christ. We're gospel preachers, with Christ's life, death, resurrection and present living Spirit as the heart of our proclamation."

Baptist preaching cares about the life of the community as well as the life of the individual, Shoemaker noted. "We help the congregation open Scripture and interpret it for its life and faith ... all the while reverencing of Scripture," he described.

In the free-church tradition, Baptist preaching also is an act of freedom, he pointed out: "We are utterly free under God to seek the truth in Scripture wherever it may lead, and utterly free to seek the truth anywhere in life that it may lead. Baptist preaching is an act of freedom from any higher human authority -- ecclesial or civic.

--more--

Helping serve meals were townspeople from Elba, some victims of the flood. Baptists, members of the First Assembly of God Church where the van was parked and people from other denominations helped.

Five churches in the city received extensive flood damage, including First Baptist Church and Westside Baptist Church, said Tommy Puckett, director of the Alabama Baptist Brotherhood department.

Brotherhood-trained disaster teams from Elmore, Coffee, Tuscaloosa and Marshall counties directed the feeding effort. Brotherhood Associate Director Reginald Quimby helped in crisis counseling.

The 45-foot van is to be moved to the parking lot of First Baptist Church of Elba after waters subside. From there volunteers will help in the cleanup of homes and businesses, Puckett said.

The Elba flood was the fourth kind of disaster to which the Alabama Baptist disaster van has responded in less than six months. Last October, the van responded to a call from Charleston, S.C., following Hurricane Hugo. Next, the van journeyed to Watsonville, Calif., to assist with feeding hundreds of people following the northern California earthquake. Then, last November, the van was called upon to feed victims of a tornado that struck Huntsville, Ala., shortly after the adjournment of the annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist Convention.

The Alabama Baptist van is stocked with food to feed 5,000 people before being replenished. It contains a communications system, range, refrigerator, 1,000 gallon-water tank, ice machine, and bunks and bath facilities for a crew of six. It also contains equipment to help clear debris from streets and homes following a disaster.

--30--

Hester lecturer names
marks of Baptist preaching

By Brenda J. Sanders

Baptist Press
3/23/90

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Kentucky pastor H. Stephen Shoemaker examined the marks of distinctively "Baptist" preaching during the recent H. I. Hester Lectureship on Preaching at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.

Shoemaker, pastor of Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville, cited characteristics of true Baptist preaching.

"First, in a believer's church, Baptist preaching preaches for conversion -- for that first turning to Christ and for the ongoing conversion of the believer into the new creation God wants us to be," Shoemaker said.

Preachers are called to give voice to the gospel of God, he expounded. "It is a gospel that means life and death to us and to the world," he explained. "It is about the losing and the saving of souls."

The purpose of preaching then is to "help the hearer meet the God of the Bible and Jesus the Christ who has shown us God's face, and having met them, to join in glad obedience," Shoemaker said.

"As evangelical preachers, we preach for personal decision. We do not so much preach doctrine about Christ as we preach Christ. We're gospel preachers, with Christ's life, death, resurrection and present living Spirit as the heart of our proclamation."

Baptist preaching cares about the life of the community as well as the life of the individual, Shoemaker noted. "We help the congregation open Scripture and interpret it for its life and faith ... all the while reverencing of Scripture," he described.

In the free-church tradition, Baptist preaching also is an act of freedom, he pointed out: "We are utterly free under God to seek the truth in Scripture wherever it may lead, and utterly free to seek the truth anywhere in life that it may lead. Baptist preaching is an act of freedom from any higher human authority -- ecclesial or civic.

--more--

"Baptist preaching is also a modest act. We do not preach as ruler of the church ... or as infallible interpreters of Scripture. If we believe in soul competency and freedom of conscience, then we will not presume to lord over God's people, but we will interpret Scripture as a priest among a congregation of priests."

Baptist preaching is biblical preaching as well, Shoemaker said, noting, "We are a biblical people in a biblicist tradition, and we expound Scripture with intellectual rigor and evangelical warmth."

"Biblicism" is not to be equated with "bibliolatry," he added. Biblicism is the "humble acceptance of biblical authority. ... (It) reads and follows an open Bible." Bibliolatry "worships a closed Bible and waves it as a banner or wields it as a weapon."

"Biblical people live with an open Bible, pledging to follow it with their lives," he said.

In addition, "as part of a dissenting minority perspective, Baptist preaching is a counter-cultural act," he said. "Our speech is a kind of poetic speech which offers a new world to the world trapped in the royal prose of the 'powers that be.'"

"Baptist preaching builds up the church, which is itself a counter-cultural community and seeks to be a parable of the kingdom of God."

Finally, Shoemaker said: "Baptist preaching is preaching in weakness. It's preaching in the weakness of the cross, preaching in the weakness of our frail earthen vessels, knowing that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness and trusting that the transcendent light shines through our cracked clay pot."

--30--

Failure to find excitement
hurts preaching: professor

N-CO
(SEBTS)

Baptist Press
3/23/90

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Ministers do not preach better because they fail to find the excitement in Scriptures, a professor of preaching told participants in Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's Adams Lectures.

"Many of us who have the responsibility of preaching week-in and week-out do not recognize the ... encounter with Sunday's text as a moment of high adventure," said Thomas Grier Long, professor of homiletics at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, N.J.

"The reason much of preaching is lacking today is precisely because we do not provide a way for the text to be an exciting encounter and (study) to be a sort of discovery adventure."

If preaching is to be all it ought to be, "we are going to need to make four rather strategic changes in the way we do business back in the study with the biblical text," Long told his audience at the Wake Forest, N.C., seminary.

"We are going to have to get over the notion in American Protestant ministry that studying is not doing ministry," he began.

Noting modern ministers have evolved into "pastoral directors," he explained: "We are organizers of programs, implementers of schemes and strategies, budgets and bottom lines in the church. We are not doing ministry, we tell ourselves, unless we have our sleeves rolled up and are doing something. (But) when we are engaging the biblical text in preparing for preaching, we are doing a kind of ministry that will pay off for the entire congregation."

Second, Long said, preachers "are simply going to have to provide during the week ample time in our schedule for creative engagement with the text. We get to know biblical texts in a way similar to the way we get to know people. We get to know them by engaging in dialogue over time, by seeing them in various settings, by imagining them responding to different contexts."

--more--

ed, he warned preachers: "Do not consult the commentaries too soon. We need to provide for ourselves a different kind of biblical study than perhaps we have been engaging in.

"And when you look at the text for yourself, do not assume that you already know what it means, even if it is a very familiar text. If you assume you know, then all the creativity in the sermon is the creativity that you juice up after you take the same old insight from the text."

He added: "The fourth change that needs to take place ... is that we need to bring what we have learned in some measure from the study into the pulpit. ... Many of us are afraid as preachers to bring any of the critical view of Scripture into the pulpit. We are afraid we will disturb the peace, we will disturb the spell that is out there about the inspired nature of Scripture.

"I want to tell you that lay people out there are hungry to trust the Scripture, and they are hungry to use their intellect to understand the Scripture."

Preachers must understand that the biblical text is "performative language," Long said. "That means that we understand that every biblical text used to be preaching, and it wants to be preaching again. It does not simply want to say something, it also wants to do something."

--30--

Athans appointed to lead
Georgia Baptist Medical Center

N- (O)
(Ga.)

Baptist Press
3/23/90

ATLANTA (BP)--M. Scott Athans has been named chief executive officer of Georgia Baptist Medical Center announced James W. Waters, chairman of the hospital commission, the governing board of the medical center.

Formerly a senior vice president and regional director for American International, Athans was responsible for 14 hospitals in six states with 8,000 employees and 3,400 beds. The southern region accounted for 40 percent of AMI's operating income.

From 1976 to 1983, Athans was administrator of Brookwood Medical Center in Birmingham, Ala., a 586-bed acute care hospital with five ambulatory care centers.

Athans is a graduate of Duke University in Durham, N.C., and Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

He is a member of the adjunct faculty of the University of Alabama in Birmingham, the Medical College of Virginia and Duke University. He also is a board member of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and a member of the AMERICAN COLLEGE of Healthcare Executives.

He and his wife, Sara Sue, and their two children, Melisa, 16, and Nickolas, 13, live in Sandy Springs, Ga. They are members of Second Ponce de Leon Baptist Church in Atlanta.

--30--