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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Commit-
901 Commerce #7
Nashville, Tennessee 372
(615) 244-22
Alvin C. Shackelford, Direc
Dan Martin, News Ed
Marv Knox, Feature Ed

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

April 17, 1990

90-54

'Sons & Daughters' organize;
call for end to SBC strife

By Lynn P. Clayton

N-CO
(La.)

ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)--Students from the six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries have formed an organization named Sons and Daughters of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Their objective is to "unite, and call for an end to denominational strife, and for freedom to minister unhindered, as called by God, in order to fulfill the stated purpose of the SBC's Constitution, Article II," leaders said.

David Burroughs, national coordinator of the group, based in Louisville, Ky., said the SDSBC steering committee hopes to have hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students enlisted in the effort before the SBC annual meeting in New Orleans June 12-14.

"We include people from both sides of the current SBC controversy who feel the time has come for us to be reunited under the purpose of the Bold Mission Thrust" global evangelism/missions campaign, said Burroughs, a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Letters containing petitions and guidelines for the group's prayer effort have been sent to 1,100 Baptist Student Union directors on campuses across the country, he reported. The directors are asked to distribute the material to students.

The organization is not sponsored by any other group and is not part of the Baptist Student Union organization, Burroughs stressed.

"We did not talk to anyone at the (SBC) Sunday School Board about our plans," he said. However, the idea for the group grew out of a meeting sponsored by the board and other SBC agencies, Mission '90, last December, he added.

Financial support "comes from individual donations from people who support what we are doing," he reported.

The group is non-partisan in relation to the 11-year-old SBC theological/political controversy, Burroughs said, adding, "I won't say we're not political, because we do see some changes we want made."

One desired change is "to depoliticize the presidency" of the convention, he noted: "I don't see the SBC as a democracy where the winner takes all. There needs to be representation of all groups. That includes sex, minorities, whatever."

Steering committee members from the SBC theological seminaries are Ross O'Brien of Southwestern, Tyanna Day of Southeastern, Lisa Welch of New Orleans, Robert Ernsting of Midwestern and Greg Higurley of Golden Gate. At least two SDSBC leaders are children of SBC leaders. Burroughs' mother, Esther, is an evangelism consultant for the Home Mission Board. O'Brien's mother, Dellanna, is executive director of the Woman's Missionary Union, and his father, Bill, is a staff member with the Foreign Mission Board.

The group is enlisting state coordinators to work with the steering committee, Burroughs said.

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"We have adopted several goals," he noted. "We are asking students to sign petitions in support of this movement, and we will present these petitions to our convention president, Jerry Vines, in New Orleans.

"We are calling each student to choose a denominational leader from the national convention to pray for every day and to write that person at least once a month.

"We also are urging students to make their way to New Orleans for the convention, where we will hold a 'homecoming rally,' asking Southern Baptists to secure the future home for all Southern Baptists. We are not asking necessarily that they go as messengers, but if they do go as messengers, we are asking that they vote their convictions.

Burroughs and O'Brien began talking about involving students in trying to end the convention controversy shortly after an address by Home Mission Board consultant Nathan Porter at Mission '90, Burroughs said. The pair enlisted a student from each of the other seminaries and held an organizational meeting Feb. 24.

"We realize that in 10 years we will begin leading the world's largest mission-minded Protestant denomination," Burroughs said. "The fight of the past 11 years is not our fight. We want to be known for cooperation in the task of world evangelization, which has been our great heritage."

The group conducted its first state presentation during the Louisiana BSU Spring Assembly, where Burroughs spoke to about 65 of 316 student participants. He noted several examples of how he believes freedom has been restricted within the SBC during the past 11 years. Included were restrictions against appointing divorced people as missionaries, a proposal to cut most of the SBC's funding of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, biblical inspiration and women in ministry.

During his presentation, several students asked him if the views he expressed, which they said favor SBC moderates, represented the SDSBC.

After the meeting, Louisiana Baptist Student Work Director Gene Hendrix said he regretted that Burroughs' presentation involved partisan statements.

"I have shared with groups across the state that BSU is a student-led organization in which we allow students to assume leadership roles as part of their growth process," Hendrix said. "We allow them the opportunity to both succeed and fail. If they fail, we help them evaluate, pick themselves up and head back on course.

"There have been many times when I have listened to students struggle to say what their hearts felt only to have their mouths fumble the words and talk about the matters that have little to do with the subject. When that happens, student workers know to follow up with corrective guidance and encouraging support."

Contacted in Louisville, Burroughs said: "I apologize for causing trouble. It wasn't my intention. The objectives of our organization are the kinds of things that can be presented in a BSU or church setting. They are not incredibly political. I overstepped my boundaries in this my first-ever public conference representing SDSBC."

Other members of the national steering committee hold opposite views from those he expressed in the Louisiana meeting, Burroughs said, and another steering committee member confirmed that assertion.

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Clayton is editor of the Baptist Message, Louisiana Baptists' weekly newsjournal.

Teacher shortage jeopardizes
Southern Baptist work in China

By Michael Chute

N-FMB

Baptist Press
4/17/90

HONG KONG (BP)--Slow response to requests for teachers in China threatens to curtail Southern Baptist work in that country, according to officials with Cooperative Services International, a Southern Baptist aid organization.

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Only 17 Southern Baptists applied to teach in China beginning in the fall under CSI sponsorship. The organization earlier requested 86 teachers, hoping to expand its work from the 57 Southern Baptists now teaching in China.

"The only thing that's saving the program is the 30 teachers who have agreed to stay over for another year," said Jack Shelby, CSI's Hong Kong-based administrator. "We will have to concentrate only on the schools where we have established relationships and will not be able to expand our program at all this year.

"Even in schools where we have teachers and established relationships, the number of teachers for each school will be drastically reduced."

Other Christian organizations working in China apparently are facing similar problems in finding personnel. Officials cite two main factors in the downturn of foreign volunteers: reaction to last June's crackdown on student protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, and an upsurge of interest in Eastern Europe as that region opens up.

"English teachers applying in large numbers for teaching posts in Eastern Europe are apparently taking the edge off interest in China," Shelby said. "Also, many people are still afraid to come to China. Still others believe it's wrong to help China at this time."

The opposite problem exists with CSI's short-term summer linguistics program in China: more volunteers have applied than have been requested for teaching positions in Chinese colleges and universities. Several Chinese schools that had planned summer linguistic projects and invited teachers have recently canceled those programs because of economic austerity measures.

"Those measures were already in effect before Tiananmen ever happened," explained Shelby. "But colleges are just now feeling the crunch. They're looking for every nonessential item to cut."

Still, CSI plans to place 60 Southern Baptist volunteers in several Chinese universities this summer. Eight teams are scheduled to go in early July for six weeks. The personnel will train Chinese middle school English teachers, focusing on updating and improving teaching methods. They also will assist in designing curriculum and teaching materials.

However, "if we don't get a big upsurge in teachers next year, the program could come to a screeching halt," Shelby warned. "We can't do it without people."

To help remedy the problem, CSI is requesting more career employees to lessen dependence on volunteers. Only six career employees currently work in CSI's China program; the remaining 51 teachers are volunteers. CSI expects to assign one career employee to China in July; another couple is under consideration. Also, CSI plans to place four students in China this fall for language study, the most assigned at one time.

"The reason we didn't request more career people last year was because of the uncertainty after Tiananmen," explained Shelby. "If these requests for new personnel are filled, we would be able to run both summer and year-round programs, even if our volunteer force falls off. The one catch is that these career people must be educationally qualified to fill slots in Chinese universities. We really must pray to the Lord of the harvest."

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5 Baptists to teach
in Vietnam project

Baptist Press
4/17/90

N-FMB

HONG KONG (BP)--Five Southern Baptists have been selected to teach in Vietnam this summer under the sponsorship of Cooperative Services International, Southern Baptists' aid organization.

The five will teach English to university students, focusing on oral and conversation skills. During the six-week program they also will teach English to university staff members, help upgrade English teaching methods and assist in curriculum design.

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Vi Marie Taylor of Austin, Texas, a retired CSI worker who taught in China, will teach in the English Language Center at Thu Duc University of Agriculture and Forestry in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). She also will work with the government's ministry of education to start a new English Language Center in Hanoi patterned after the one at Thu Duc. She will help design the curriculum and teaching materials.

"The ministry of education has also asked us to help provide teachers for this new language center," said Jack Shelby, CSI's Hong Kong-based administrator. "These teachers will be involved in ongoing instruction, so this will be a long-range project."

Glen and Rose Davis of Frankfort, Ky., will teach English at the Agriculture University No. 1 in Hanoi and work with the ministry of education in curriculum development. The Davises have taught in China for the past two years. Previously he was program manager for the Kentucky state education department and she was a professor at the University of Kentucky in Lexington.

Frances Petersen and Hazel Garner, both faculty members at Mobile (Ala.) College, will teach English at the University of Agriculture No. 3 in Bac Thai province, northern Vietnam. Both taught at that school last summer in CSI's first English-language teaching project in Vietnam.

"Two snags in sending teachers on an ongoing basis are the availability of Southern Baptist teachers and the availability of visas," added Shelby. "It's still difficult to get visas for Americans since the United States doesn't have diplomatic relations with Vietnam. Tourist visas are no problem, but visas for American teachers or other professionals, even for short-term projects, are difficult to obtain."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Following is the first of a two-part series on Southern Baptists' Bold Mission Thrust evangelism/missions campaign.

Costs of Bold Mission Thrust
called hard to calculate

By Marv Knox

F- CO

Baptist Press
4/17/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists did not literally "count the cost" when they launched Bold Mission Thrust in 1976.

But how could they? The equation for their global evangelism/missions campaign would have been complex, even without such variables as global inflation and compound interest.

For example:

-- Southern Baptists gave at least \$27.5 billion to their churches during the first 10 years alone.

-- That generated almost \$2.4 billion that was channeled to state and national agencies through the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget.

-- More than \$873 million in Cooperative Program funds reached national agencies and institutions, not to mention contributions from missions offerings, volunteer ministries, endowments, Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and Woman's Missionary Union budgets, and other non-CP resources.

So what is the cost of projects initiated by BMT? What have Southern Baptists spent that wouldn't have been spent anyway, trying to provide every person in the world with an opportunity to hear the gospel of Christ before the millennium is out?

The truth is, nobody knows. Just ask leaders of Southern Baptist Convention agencies.

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"It's hard to measure," says Keith Parks of the Foreign Mission Board. "I tried to get somebody to put some pricetags on Bold Mission Thrust. We worked up some for the Foreign Mission Board, but we couldn't get anybody to agree to them."

"It's difficult," agrees the Brotherhood Commission's James H. Smith. "It's impossible to put a pricetag on the numbers of volunteers -- such as 1,100 people who helped victims of Hurricane Hugo -- or partnerships between state conventions and Baptists in other states or countries."

Adds Larry Lewis of the Home Mission Board: "I don't know how you would come up with a figure. Our whole agency is geared toward these Bold Mission Thrust goals."

The Sunday School Board's Lloyd Elder also eschews a dollars-and-cents approach to cost-counting. "The accomplishment of Bold Mission Thrust demands that every Southern Baptist dare to think big and to step out in faith in the sure knowledge that God wants us to be about his business of carrying the Good News to the ends of the earth."

Fortunately, the value of BMT is easier to discuss than its cost.

"Bold Mission Thrust has had the effect of keeping us on our mission target," notes Roy L. Honeycutt of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and chair of the seminary presidents' council. "All of us are moving ahead and trying to be involved in bold missions in every appropriate way."

"With the focus of Bold Mission Thrust, Baptists have become highly sensitized to the urgency of sharing Christ with the world," said Dellanna O'Brien of Woman's Missionary Union.

"I'm convinced we have done and will do more than we would have done without Bold Mission Thrust," says Lewis. He credits BMT's emphasis on setting concrete goals.

"During any period in Southern Baptist life, we have set goals for ourselves," Lewis continued. "However, I don't recall any time when our goals were so specific and clearly visualized as having 50,000 congregations and baptizing 500,000 people per year by the year 2000."

Smith sounds a similar theme, praising the strategies that have been developed to help Southern Baptists meet their BMT goals.

"Once we kept the objective before us -- the evangelization of the entire world by the year 2000 -- the mission agencies began to look at new strategies to achieve those objectives," he explains. As examples, he cites the Foreign Mission Board's emphasis on presenting the gospel in countries that are closed to permanent missionaries and the Texas Baptist Men Organization's formation of MasterLife discipleship training classes in prisons.

"If we're going to take seriously the evangelization of the world, we've got to take seriously the new strategies the Lord may have let us in on," said Smith.

Adds Parks: "The primary value for the Foreign Mission Board is that Bold Mission Thrust has caused us to work hard at trying to correlate with the missionaries and national conventions to establish a planning process to accomplish our goals.

"As we were grappling with these goals, there was the awareness of the larger context of what we were doing. We began to look at the total world, not just where we were sending missionaries. We saw one-fourth of the world untouched by the gospel."

Consequently, Southern Baptists -- about 5 percent of evangelicals in the United States -- agreed to try to reach 10 percent of the 3,000 population segments in the world that have not been presented with the gospel, targeting non-resident missionaries to spread Christ's message in countries where they cannot live, Parks says.

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The enthusiasm for BMT has not been unique to mission officials, Smith says. Laypeople have gotten caught up in the need to volunteer for mission work, and missionaries have come to accept their contributions.

He cites an example: "Out in the boondocks of northern Togo, there are miniature goats running everywhere. They don't make much meat. Inbreeding for generations has caused this -- the fat ones get killed for meat, and the scrubs perpetuate the race. But we've had volunteers go in with bigger breeding stock and convince the people they don't kill their breeding stock.

"A few years ago, the missionaries didn't view that as missions. But Baptist Men from North Carolina left the Togo people with better goats, 103 wells and 13 ponds used for irrigation. Out of that, they planted 43 churches with more than 5,500 converts during the time they were there."

The experience of those North Carolina volunteers -- "reaching people and helping them grow and mature in their faith" -- expresses "what Bold Mission Thrust is all about," Elder notes.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Following is the second of a two-part series on Southern Baptists' Bold Mission Thrust evangelism/missions campaign.

Goals measure progress
in Bold Mission Thrust

By Marv Knox

F-10

Baptist Press
4/17/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists have designed the structure and charted the progress in Bold Mission Thrust -- the effort to share the gospel with every person in the world by the year 2000 -- by setting goals.

Some have been surpassed. Some call for the best efforts Southern Baptists ever have made.

BMT has involved a host of goals, and a comprehensive report on them has not been developed. However, convention agencies have issued periodic reports during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meetings. The primary reports were made in 1983 and 1986, at the end of multi-year phases of the campaign. Messengers to the 1989 annual meeting received the third report from the 1985-90 phase.

That latest report was divided into three parts -- Reach People, Develop Believers, Strengthen Missions.

Reach People involved three goals:

-- A 10 percent increase in baptisms per year. Southern Baptists baptized 351,107 people in 1988-89, a 2.3 percent gain.

-- Five thousand new churches by Sept. 30, 1990. At the end of 1988, Southern Baptists already had started 4,650 church-type missions.

-- Ten million people enrolled in Bible study by Sept. 30, 1990. Sunday school enrollment reached 7,936,015 in 1988-89, a 1.4 percent increase.

Develop Believers included four goals:

-- Every church with continuing intercessory prayer activities. Although the Uniform Church Letter did not ask about this program, 9,532 churches reported BMT prayer activities.

-- Discipleship training enrollment of 4 million by Sept. 30, 1990. Almost half that many were enrolled by the end of the 1988-89 fiscal year, a gain of more than 32,000.

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-- Twenty thousand churches conducting annual stewardship emphases by Sept. 30, 1990. Latest figures showed 13,068 churches with stewardship campaigns, an increase of more than 1,000 in one year.

-- A gain of 3,000 seminary students during the five-year period. At the end of 1987-88, the six SBC seminaries already had reported 3,633 new students.

Strengthen Missions was comprised of four goals:

-- Missions education enrollment of 3 million people by Sept. 30, 1990. This goal is measured by the combined enrollments of Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood, which at 1,733,186 increased slightly in 1988-89.

-- Missionaries totaling 7,660 on home and foreign fields by the end of the period. At the end of 1988, the Home Mission Board had 3,827, and the Foreign Mission Board had 3,867, for a combined total of 7,694 with two years remaining.

-- Two hundred thousand short-term mission volunteers by the end of the 1989-90 fiscal year. The total for the first three years was 162,408, putting volunteers on track to surpass the goal.

-- Every church increasing its Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program unified budget giving by at least 1 percent each year. The statistical survey revealed that 6,318 churches made that gain in 1987-88.

Other BMT goals -- developed by both church and agency leaders -- provide Southern Baptists with a roadmap for the final decade of the millennium.

Themes for the decade have been divided into two major groups. "Share Heritage and Hope ..." is the theme for 1990-95, with annual themes of "Extend Christ's Mission," 1990-91; "Embrace God's Word," 1991-92; "Equip Believers," 1992-93; "Serve in Christ's Spirit," 1993-94; and "Evangelize the Lost," 1994-95. "Go Make Disciples" is the theme for 1995-2000, with annual themes of "Live God's Word," 1995-96; "Share Christ's Love," 1996-97; "Grow in Spiritual Power," 1997-98; "Follow Christ's Servant Example," 1998-99; and "To the End of the Age," 1999-2000.

Overall goals for the decade are:

- Baptisms: 2.1 million during 1990-95 and 2.5 million during 1995 - 2000.
- Congregations: 45,000 total churches and church-type missions by 1995; 50,000 by 2000.
- Worship: An average morning worship attendance equal to 55 percent of resident membership and an average evening worship attendance equal to 30 percent of resident membership by 1995; 60 percent in morning worship and 35 percent in evening worship by 2000.
- Bible study: 11 million Sunday school members by 1995; 13 million by 2000.
- Discipleship: 2.5 million discipleship training members by 1995; 3 million by 2000.
- Missions education: 2 million Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood members by 1995; 2.3 million by 2000.
- Stewardship: \$12 billion in annual undesignated church receipts by 1995; \$20 billion by 2000.
- Home missionaries: 4,500 by 1995; 5,000 by 2000.
- Foreign missionaries: 4,800 by 1995; 5,600 by 2000.
- Missions volunteers: 350,000 total home and foreign missions volunteers for 1990-95; 400,000 during 1995-2000.

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-- Missions support: \$1 billion contributed to the Cooperative Program in 1995; \$2.5 billion in 2000.

-- Associational missions: Each church giving to associational missions on a percentage basis throughout the period.

-- Intercessory prayer: Each association having a functioning network of intercessory prayer by 1995; each church having an ongoing ministry of intercessory prayer by 2000.

"Reaching these goals can never be accomplished by a business-as-usual attitude," says Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee. "To reach these goals will require personal commitment and sacrifice. It will require the great majority of our church members feeling that they are personally involved."

Ellis Bush, Bold Mission Thrust promotion coordinator, said: "If there can be a restoration of the vision, a renewal of spirit and the will to work together, the goals will be reached. These things result from God's work in our hearts. Only prayer can bring us to the fellowship, unity and commitment that is essential."

However, the specter of denominational controversy hangs over the BMT goals, agency leaders warn.

"For the '80s, we did not give Bold Mission Thrust goals the front-burner status that was important for them to be successful," assesses Larry Lewis, president of the Home Mission Board. "We were so absorbed in the denominational controversy and other things that we didn't see a focus on church starting and soul winning."

"But I believe that will change in the next decade. We've settled down and will give significant attention to seeing 50,000 congregations and 500,000 baptisms each year."

Adds R. Keith Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board: "Our rate of growth in the various goal areas has been reasonably good. But unless we accelerate the percentage increase in this last decade, we're not going to reach those goals."

Echoes Roy L. Honeycutt, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: "We made a good beginning, but in the '80s Bold Mission Thrust has taken second place to other issues, namely the controversy. Bold Mission Thrust gave us quantifiable goals toward which our institutions are moving. We really have done quite well, despite the controversy."

"But the great challenge for us -- if we are to approximate those objectives -- is that we must stabilize the convention and move beyond the politics of the controversy."

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CORRECTION: Please change the last paragraph of the 4/6/90 Baptist Press story titled "Prayer conference set in New Orleans, June 7-9" to note that Providence House room rates are \$16 for a single and \$22 for a double, per night.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Work begins on wing
at Bangalore hospital

N- FMB

Baptist Press
4/17/90

BANGALORE, India (BP)--Groundbreaking in April signaled the start of construction on a \$400,000 addition to the Bangalore Baptist Hospital, a center of Southern Baptist mission work in India since 1971.

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The new wing will add 23 beds to the 100-bed hospital and increase space for treating outpatients. It will be used by private patients paying market rates for treatment, allowing the hospital to continue serving others who are too poor to pay.

The aim of the hospital always has been to provide high-quality medical care to people of all socioeconomic classes and religions, said Southern Baptist missionary Rebekah Naylor, associate medical superintendent of the hospital. The new wing is considered vital for the hospital to achieve financial self-support, she added.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board will pay half of the construction costs. Also contributing to the project are more than 100 churches and individuals, including First Baptist Church of Dallas, which gave \$150,000.

Two years ago the Foreign Mission Board signed over management of the hospital to the Christian Medical College in Vellore, India, as visas for Southern Baptist personnel became increasingly difficult to secure. Southern Baptists still own the property, however.

The hospital ministry allowed Southern Baptist missionaries to help start churches in and around the southern state of Karnataka. The churches were organized into the Baptist Convention of Karnataka in 1976.

Construction is expected to take 12 to 15 months and may be followed by a second addition to improve outpatient services.

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Shared ministry helps church
through pastor's bout with cancer

By Bill Webb

F - CO
(Ill.)

Baptist Press
4/17/90

DUPO, Ill. (BP)--The concept of shared ministry Darrell Atkins taught at First Baptist Church of Dupo, Ill., became more than a concept when doctors discovered a malignancy in his colon.

Atkins, who has been the church's pastor nearly five years, underwent surgery Oct. 2, 1989, for removal of the cancer. Doctors believe they got all the cancer, but Atkins still takes regular chemotherapy treatments.

Since he began feeling sick back in August, "the church has expressed so much concern in lots of different ways," the pastor said.

After doctors diagnosed his illness, the deacons took initiative to make sure the pastor paced himself in his ministry.

"When I came here, we started out with the concept of shared ministry," Atkins recalled. "It started with the deacons."

That's why he wasn't surprised when the deacons came to him with a handwritten document titled "How We Might Help -- Some Ideas and Recommendations."

One of those recommendations was that the pastor not greet members and visitors at the door following worship.

"During my treatment, they told me to be very careful about viruses going around because chemotherapy weakens you," Atkins said.

Deacons assumed responsibility for many of the pastor's hospital and evangelistic visits. One has been prepared each Wednesday evening in case Atkins has not felt up to leading Bible study.

Deacons insisted their pastor honor his full day off from pastoral duties and that he take at least two additional half days off each week during his treatment.

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So their pastor could recuperate from a bout with the flu and build his strength to teach January Bible Study, they placed him on vacation for a week in January. He negotiated to be in the pulpit both Sundays but off during the week.

The deacons told their pastor: "These are not commands, but an expression of our concern and the ways we feel we can help out in a very practical way."

"This has been one of the most pleasant experiences I've had," Atkins said.

"One of the lessons I've learned is that when you promote a shared ministry and let people function, they'll do it. It's not theory anymore. The church is blessed with good (lay) leadership.

"The deacons here are part of a pastoral care team. It's a ministry to the congregation, not a governing board. It's a ministry to church families and a spiritual counsel to the pastor. They have an ear to the spiritual condition of the church.

"Chemotherapy drags you down. I've handled it because I'm not feeling the pressure of the church to handle everything," Atkins said.

Chairman of deacons Dennis Pashia said the deacons tried to be sensitive: "When we started to put these recommendations together, we were hesitant to approach Brother Darrell about it. We took the approach that this is how it needs to be. We didn't want to ignore it, and we didn't want him to.

"It was a growing time for all of us. We don't know how frail we are until it comes to the bottom line.

"One of the things we did ask was if he had enough insurance. If not, is there anything we can do to help? We just wanted to be sure he had plenty."

Church secretary Charlene Hudson said the pastor has responded well to a modified schedule. "He is a pastor and shepherd in every sense of the word. His love is to care for his people. But he knows his limits," she said.

"I think anybody in this church would do anything for him because he always has for us. His ministry is centered around lay ministry. And he needs ministry, too."

The pastor's wife, Earlene, said she and her husband have tried to keep the church informed at every juncture of diagnosis and treatment.

"The doctor came out (of the operating room) after surgery to talk to me, and he looked around and saw about 15 people around," Mrs. Atkins recalled.

"He said, 'Do you want to go somewhere to talk?' I said, 'No, all of these people are concerned, too.'

"I knew that people really liked Darrell. He's caring, thoughtful and in tune with the people."

And how does her husband feel about other's helping shoulder the load? "Darrell's not threatened," his wife said. "As far as he's concerned, the church is the people's, and what they want is how it should be. From the first, he has presented the laymen's approach."

Easter Sunday unusual
for Romanian refugees

By Susan Todd

F- (O
(WMA)

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--Easter Sunday wasn't a usual day for the Gilpin and Rafa families. But then, their lives haven't been what most people would call usual, either.

Risking life for freedom isn't "normal." Leaving children with relatives, perhaps never to see them again isn't "normal." And sharing home with someone who doesn't even speak English isn't "normal."

Since April 1986, Alberta Gilpin of Jefferson City, Mo., has shared her home and her life with Tudor and Maria Rafa -- refugees from Resita, Romania. Gilpin, who is single, is executive director of Missouri Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

Easter Sunday, NBC aired "Easter 1990," a special featuring people across the country who have given of themselves to help others. One segment of the show told the Gilpin and Rafa stories.

Rafa, 32, was an electrician in a power plant in Resita. Mrs. Rafa, 27, held a highly sought-after job as a crane operator in a factory. Both made good money in their jobs. But everything wasn't rosy.

"They would tell us how good everything was, and everybody could see it was getting worse and worse," Rafa said. "Every day you had to put up with things you knew were not right."

Consideration for better jobs and coveted positions in colleges were held for members of the Communist Party -- something which Rafa refused.

Consequently, police routinely broke into their home. Police also pestered the Rafas' friends.

"I started thinking, 'Man, this is not the way to live,'" he said. Rafa had seen how political problems were passed within families from one generation to the next. For his family, leaving the country became their only hope.

Rafa joined two friends in an attempt to escape. If he made it, he knew his wife and two preschool-age children probably would be allowed to join him. He tried not to think about the alternative.

One late October night in 1984, Rafa and his friends swam the Danube River, which separates Romania from Yugoslavia.

The next day they were spotted and reported as illegal immigrants. The crime cost Rafa 26 days in a Yugoslavian prison. At the end of his sentence, he was returned to Romania to face a 16-month prison sentence.

Mrs. Rafa had known all along that her husband and his friends were attempting the escape. But not until he was returned to Romania did she know the outcome.

"The first time I saw Tudor in prison, he told me we would try to escape as soon as he got out," she said.

Although Rafa was released from prison early -- eight months short of the 16-month sentence -- the months were long and hard for both of them.

But prison wasn't all bad for him. There he heard details about other prisoners' escape plans and refined his own.

Rafa was released from prison in May 1985. He tried to find work, but was refused desirable jobs because he was considered a traitor. Between May and September, Maria and Tudor made arrangements for their 5-year-old daughter, Ramona, and their 6-year-old son, Galin, to be cared for by relatives.

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In September 1985, they left their home with a little food, an air mattress, a change of clothing, family pictures and important documents. After walking five days through woods and across mountains, he again faced the challenge of the Danube. But this time, he had help. She sat on the air mattress and paddled with her arms while he swam behind holding on.

Once in Yugoslavia they changed into dry clothes and began walking through woods. "We walked 30 miles that first day," Rafa said. "We were so tired." But the tiredness only fueled their desire to make it to freedom.

"If you really have the fire behind you and it burns your back, you have to walk," she said.

For three weeks, the Rafas avoided main highways and towns as much as possible. They found food wherever they could. Finally, they reached the Italian boarder.

Eventually, they found their way to a refugee camp in Bologna. They found odd jobs to make money for the next leg of their trip. However, most of their money was sent home to their children. After seven months, they learned that someone in the United States had agreed to be their sponsor.

All they knew was that they were going to Jefferson City, Mo. They arrived in April 1986 at the airport in Columbia, Mo., with only \$50. There they first met Alberta Gilpin.

Gilpin had built a large house and then decided she had more room than she needed and could share it with someone who needed a place to live.

The first days were difficult because of the language barrier. "I could tell they were very eager to communicate with me," Gilpin said. "They kept looking at me with great anxiety and yet with gratefulness."

Two months after the Rafas arrived, Gilpin began helping get their children out of Romania. At that time, the United States had a trade agreement with Romania. The agreement stipulated that trade would continue between the two countries as long as Romania allowed families to be reunited.

The two children arrived in July 1987. Since that time the Rafa and Gilpin families have grown into one big, happy family.

"I've moved from caretaker to more of a friend," Gilpin said. "I'm babysitter, grandmother to the children, mother to Maria and Tudor, teacher and confidante."

Today, life for the Rafas is different from their lives in Romania. They have they adopted a new country -- and hope to become official U.S. citizens in 1991. They have become fluent in English. They have gotten used to eating several courses at a meal instead of just one dish. They have a deep appreciation for the new freedoms they now have. One of those freedoms has made a difference in their entire outlook on life.

"We never went to church in Romania," Rafa said. "Sometimes I would go with my grandmother at Easter."

Today, going to Concord Baptist Church with Gilpin every week, not just at Easter, is a way of life for the Rafas.

Both of them have become Christians since coming to live with Gilpin. Talks with her about why she had helped them introduced them to a personal relationship with Jesus. Other experiences along the way made them see that the relationship was something they each wanted, too.

This Easter, the Rafas had many things to celebrate.

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