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'Spring Harvest' draws 65,000
evangelicals in Great Britain

By Mike Creswell

N- FMB

SKEGNESS, England (BP)--Next to Easter, the biggest springtime event for Baptists and other evangelicals in Great Britain is "Spring Harvest."

Billed as the biggest Christian teaching event in Europe, this year's sessions drew 65,000 participants to week-long meetings in resort complexes at Skegness and Minehead in England and at Ayr, Scotland. All were filled to capacity in separate sessions held between March 31 and April 26.

Spring Harvest is a week of conservative Bible teaching and innovative worship services. About one-third of the "harvesters," as participants are called, are Baptist, and one-third are from the Church of England. The rest come from a range of other groups.

In a land where church membership has declined rapidly in recent decades, Spring Harvest has become an annual rallying point for evangelical Christians, a forum to flex growing spiritual muscles.

"You can't understand what's happening with Baptists in the United Kingdom today without understanding Spring Harvest," said David Coffey, current director of evangelism for British Baptists. "Spring Harvest is one of the biggest things happening among the churches here today," said Coffey, who taught a session for church leaders at the Skegness site.

Spring Harvest is influential because new music, concepts and programs introduced each year find their way into churches throughout the United Kingdom, observed Colin Saunders, a Free Church layman and chairman of the 13-member executive committee overseeing the annual program. The conference also wields increasing financial clout: last year's participants contributed \$416,000 for relief work, missions and evangelism.

"I'm very impressed by the age range here, with a very good proportion of young people," said Gordon Kuhrt, an Anglican archdeacon. "It's an enormous teaching opportunity and has a tremendous effect on people going back to their local churches with fresh vision and fresh resources."

Such factors have helped turn British Baptists around from a declining membership to a growing one in recent years, church leaders said.

Some observers believe a major Christian revival of some sort may be coming in Great Britain.

"I really believe we're going to see a spiritual revival in Britain in the years ahead. I'm very excited about what I see happening in the churches there," said Belgium-based missionary Bill Wagner, Southern Baptists' consultant on evangelism and church growth in Europe.

Meanwhile, signs of change also are appearing within the Church of England. When he was ordained 23 years ago, only about 20 percent of people ordained by the church were evangelicals, Kuhrt said: "Now it's around 50 percent or just over. Over the next 20 years, a lot of those will be moving into positions of leadership."

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This year's Spring Harvest sessions included "encounter" gatherings for Bible discussions as the program focused on teaching lay people to use the Bible themselves. The conference theme, "Uncage the Lion," was based on a statement by C.H. Spurgeon, the famous 19th century London preacher: "Defend the Bible? You may as well try to defend an uncaged lion."

Spring Harvest also shows the improved interdenominational cooperation beginning to characterize church life in Great Britain, Saunders said.

Session planners delight in throwing speakers together from diverse backgrounds to present as many perspectives as possible on topics ranging from Bible prophecy to environmental concerns. At Skegness, the program put speakers from the Church of England on the same teaching team with representatives from informal house churches.

However different next year's conference may be, it almost certainly will be bigger. Planners will add a fourth site in central Wales in 1991, enabling Spring Harvest to accommodate more than 90,000 people. "We're not sure we'll get that many, but we can accommodate them," Saunders said. Begun as a Bible study conference for young people 12 years ago in Wales, Spring Harvest now draws mostly families with participants of all ages.

Along with Bible studies and worship services, evening sessions included discussion groups and a jazz music program. "The intention is to relax, but also to let the day's content soak in another way," Hill explained.

One of the two Sunday evening services held at Skegness took place under a circus tent. The service ran almost three hours, culminating in a public evangelistic invitation to which scores responded. Songs, mostly new praise choruses, were accompanied by a rock band. At one point a barefooted woman moved about the stage, swirling a flowing ribbon in time to the music.

Charismatic overtones also were part the service, such as raised hands during prayers and singing -- features of Spring Harvest that have drawn some criticism. But Saunders dismissed the concern: "It's often said that if you want to worship with your hands in the air, you can. If you want to keep your hands in your pockets, nobody thinks the worse of you."

Fewer British evangelicals are put off by such practices these days, because charismatic renewal has left few evangelicals untouched, said Paul Beasley-Murray, principal of Spurgeon's College, a Baptist school in London.

But the freer, more innovative worship services generally do not include speaking in tongues and overt emphasis on certain spiritual gifts.

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Guidelines merge hygiene,
relationships in preschool work

By Frank White

N-SSB

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Concern about the spread of AIDS and other infectious diseases should challenge preschool workers to practice good hygiene while laying spiritual foundations with preschoolers at church, according to a manager of preschool work at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Unnecessary concern about contact with body fluids can hamper a preschool ministry that must involve close relationships between adults and preschoolers, said Cos Davis, manager of the preschool program section in the Sunday school division.

Attention to basic hygiene, such as washing hands, work surfaces and toys, can decrease the risk of disease and illness for workers and preschoolers.

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Good hygiene practices always have been recommended for work with preschoolers that involves changing diapers and dealing with runny noses, Davis said.

"Under all circumstances, good hygiene needs to be practiced," he said. "Contracting diseases is the rare exception rather than the rule in dealing with preschoolers."

While hygiene practices have been encouraged in the past, the preschool program section has developed a list of recommendations for preschool hygiene practices.

The guidelines are printed in the April-May-June 1990 issue of "Preschool Leadership" and will be included in a basic Sunday school preschool book to be published in 1991.

"AIDS wasn't our main concern. However, that may be the issue that gets people's attention to be more careful about good hygiene practices," Davis said.

Following the guidelines will protect workers and children against any kind of bacteria problem, Davis said. He pointed out that hepatitis is a more likely concern than AIDS, noting, "It's my understanding that AIDS is hard to contract."

The Tennessee state health department assisted in developing the guidelines that were based on experiences with preschoolers at Glorieta (N.M.) and Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist conference centers.

The guidelines recommend that any contact with body fluids should be followed by careful hand-washing and sanitization of potentially contaminated surfaces.

In addition to soap and water, the guidelines recommend using a bleach solution of one tablespoon bleach to one quart water for cleaning. For blood spills, the solution should be one part bleach and 10 parts water.

If a teacher has an open wound, the guidelines suggest use of disposable gloves, or reusable rubber gloves should be considered. Because wearing gloves for wiping noses and drooled saliva is not practical, the guidelines recommend using tissues and washing hands in the bleach solution immediately afterwards.

Davis pointed out that gloves are suggested only for workers who have open wounds. Because touching children and helping them with things they cannot do for themselves is an important part of preschool ministry, he said gloves are not desirable for normal care.

The guidelines state that "our purpose in teaching preschoolers is to help them gain valuable foundational attitudes and information about God, Jesus, the Bible and other important areas. Perhaps our most effective way of teaching is through our personal relationship with the child."

The guidelines are designed to help workers continue personal relationships with preschoolers and have a balanced ministry while using good hygiene to stop the spread of germs, Davis said.

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Preschool hygiene practices
focus on precautions

N-SSB

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Guidelines developed by the preschool program section of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board focus on precautions to prevent the spread of disease while maintaining personal relationships.

The guidelines are designed for use in any church preschool activity. They state:

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"Our purpose in teaching preschoolers is to help them gain valuable foundational attitudes and information about God, Jesus, the Bible and other important areas. Perhaps our most effective way of teaching is through our personal relationship with the child. This means touching the child and helping him with things he cannot do for himself such as changing diapers, wiping noses, caring for scratches, bites, etc. The following guidelines should be helpful to you personally and to children in your department as you attempt to be as sanitary as possible.

-- "If a teacher has an open wound and contact with tears, urine, stool or blood is possible; the teacher should consider using one of two types of gloves: single-use disposable gloves or a reusable rubber glove which must be sanitized after each use.

-- "Whether or not disposable gloves are worn, any potential contact with body fluids-- nasal secretions, saliva, urine, etc.-- should be followed by careful handwashing and sanitization of potentially contaminated surfaces. If you do not choose to wear gloves, be sure that every open wound is covered with a bandage.

"In addition to soap, water and friction; diluted bleach water is a good inexpensive sanitizer. Recommended practices include: promptly cleaning soiled surfaces with disinfectant --one tablespoon of bleach added to one quart water, prepared daily; for blood spills a dilution of one part bleach to 10 parts water is needed.

-- "Wearing disposable gloves for wiping noses and drooled saliva is not practical, so the teacher should use tissues for this purpose and wash his hands as mentioned above immediately thereafter.

-- "A mouthed toy should be gathered when a child seems finished with it and before another child decides to mouth the toy. A basin labeled "soiled" can be kept on the shelf to hold contaminated toys until they can be washed and sanitized. Toys with smooth surfaces can be washed with dishwashing liquid and warm water followed by a rinse in water, a dip in diluted bleach water --one tablespoon to one quart--, and air drying. Toys which cannot hold up to these routines should not be used in the department.

-- "Any surface --crib rail, eating tray, infant seat, etc.-- which has been potentially contaminated by a body fluid must be cleaned and wiped with a bleach solution before another child can come in contact with it.

-- "Continue to teach good hygiene practices to children.

-- "There must be adequate disposal of soiled diapers by placing them in paper bags before placing them in the container.

"Prevention is critical. Good hygiene stops the spread of germs. Two strategies cannot be overemphasized:

-- "Washing hands properly and frequently, using water and liquid soap and disposing towels or tissues after one use.

-- Promptly cleaning soiled surfaces with a bleach solution prepared before each session --one tablespoon bleach to one quart water if no blood present or one part bleach to 10 parts water for cleaning blood spills."

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Father, son serve
on same faculty

By Breena Kent Paine

F- CO
(NOBTS)

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Serving on the same faculty with one's father has its advantages, said Jim Minton, whose father is celebrating 30 years of service at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

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"There are times when I can ask his advice as a colleague, and other times when I can ask his advice as a father, the younger Minton said." Jim Minton is associate professor of youth education and recreation, and has been on faculty since 1978. His father, Donald W. Minton, is academic counselor and director of testing for the seminary, advising students about their vocational calling, ministry, personal adjustment, problem-solving, interpersonal relationships and academic concerns.

"Rarely does a day go by that someone doesn't say, 'He has helped me more than you'll ever know,'" said Jim Minton. "And that makes me proud."

From Baton Rouge, La., Don Minton received his bachelor's degree from Louisiana State University; and his Master of Divinity, Master of Religious Education and Doctor of Religious Education degrees from New Orleans Seminary. In 1955, he became a contract teacher for the seminary, teaching religious radio and religious journalism, and in 1960, he became a full-time member of the seminary faculty.

The elder Minton held his first pastoral-type role when he went into the Navy during World War II. As a navigator and gunnery officer in the South Pacific, he knew his ship could be sunk and all those aboard could die at any moment, so he volunteered to be "acting chaplain" on the ship, holding worship services and giving "what help I could to fellow shipmates."

Back from the war in 1949, his call to ministry became more persistent as he met a young student from New Orleans Seminary who talked with him "on into the night" about the ministry and seminary training. That young student was Landrum P. Leavell II, now the seminary's president.

Don Minton made a "prayer closet" out of a large, walk-in locker, where he would "kneel in the corner, in pitch black with the door closed, and ask the Lord, if he wanted me in ministry, to please let me know for sure that he was calling me."

"One day, I walked out of that closet, and I knew in the depth of my being that the Lord did want me to be a minister," he continued. "But I didn't know then that I would have the joy of spending the rest of my life in theological education."

"After 40 years of ministry, if I were to pray that prayer again, knowing what I know now and how I've been blessed through the years, I'd pray: 'Lord, please call me. Please let me have the privilege of being your minister.'"

Don Minton and his wife, Ellen moved to New Orleans, where he enrolled in seminary classes in January of 1950 and became pastor of First Baptist Church of, Grand Isle, La. Their son, Jim, was only three years old at the time.

Growing up around his father, the younger Minton found "with his background in counseling, he often knew what I was going to do before I did it," something he now recalls fondly.

"I have tried to parent like he parented me," he added. "He was my example because I had such a great childhood and adolescence. As a parent, he gave me total, unconditional love and support since my earliest memories, and that's rare. If a parent can do that for a kid, that kid has a real head start on anyone who doesn't have it."

A native of New Orleans, Jim Minton received a bachelor's degree from Louisiana College, a master's degree in education from the University of New Orleans, and the Master of Religious Education and Doctor of Education degrees from New Orleans Seminary, where "the class that influenced me most ... was (his father's) adult psychology class."

Now he feels "privileged" to work on the same faculty with his colleague, father and friend.

Former Missionary:
"time is now"

By Breena Kent Paine

F- (NOBTS)

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Bold Mission Thrust is "a plan in tune with the heart of God; but are we in tune with the heart of God?" William F. Warren Jr. asked students and faculty of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary during a Missionary Day service at the seminary.

"We live in a lost and dying world. We developed a plan called Bold Mission Thrust (the Southern Baptist Convention's global missions/evangelism campaign) to reach our world by the year 2000, but has our commitment remained strong enough to carry out the task?" asked the former missionary to Colombia.

"The time is now for us to respond to God's calling. The time is now for us to proclaim God's message. The time is now to call men to repentance."

Warren, assistant professor of New Testament and Greek at New Orleans Seminary, said people who argue that now is not a good time to share the gospel should remember that "it wasn't an ideal time by any means (when) Jesus came on the scene."

"It was a dangerous time politically," explained Warren, of Shelbyville, Tenn., and "a difficult time economically. ... Class distinctions were pronounced. Taxation was heavy. Prejudice was rampant. ... It was a divisive time religiously.

"All outward indications were that it was not a good time to launch a new movement," but that was the condition of the world when Jesus came.

Today, Warren said, "our world is coming apart. As we were in Colombia, we could say, 'It's not a good time,' but it's God's time. We could say, 'It's not a good time because threats were rampant among political leaders, social leaders, religious leaders.'

"It's a scary thing to see your name on a list when people say, 'We're going to kill these people,'" Warren said from experience. "People say, 'Well, why are you there in Colombia still?' Our missionaries continue working, bombs are going off in cities, people are being murdered."

But one concern remains constant -- "the heart cry of a world that's lost."

In Latin America, Warren said, the average head of a household is a woman between 25 and 40 years of age with a third-grade education and three children she supports with temporary employment -- the norm for two out of five households. Forty percent of the labor force in Latin America is unemployed.

"We're in a needy world today. Twelve million children are born each year in Latin America; and out of those 12 million, 700,000 will die that same year they are born because of lack of adequate care.

"But God says the time is now. Now is the day of salvation." Despite the unrest in Colombia, "we saw a small group of 20-25 believers grow into a church and two other missions and two other preaching points. People are responding to God's word."

Within seven years in one Colombian tribe that has only the Gospel of John in its language, five new churches have sprung up, Warren said. "In Tanzania, one missionary couple saw over 100,000 people come to know Christ through their ministry. God says the time is now.

"I see a danger as we've come back to the United States ... that we're starting to minister too much to just the beautiful people among Baptists.

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"Be careful how you preach that kingdom. It's a kingdom that goes to all people. We have to be careful not to let it lead to a success theology that only includes those who have victory in their lives, ... (forgetting) about the unsuccessful people.

"God can change the way things are. He can change me, he can change you. He can take away what binds us, ... and give hope for the lives of hopeless people."

For God to do this, Warren said Christians must "change the way we view reality."

"I've seen another danger as we've come back from the mission field -- the danger of a mindset that's come upon us within our churches, as much as outside our churches, that's so accommodating that we no longer see a distinction between God's kingdom and our kingdom.

"We no longer see a distinction between how we live and how God would have us to live; and we go ahead and buy, and we buy and we buy, and we're addicted to money. We don't even think about what we're doing for God's kingdom.

"In the year 1987, as much money was spent in the United States on Nintendo games and accessories as was spent by all Christian churches in the entire United States on world missions.

"If we're going to win our world to Jesus Christ, we've got to change the way we view our world. We can't see it the same as society sees it.

"As we ministered to the poor (in Colombia), I came to see a side of ministering for Jesus Christ that I hadn't seen here in the States. It was that of how I was going to live.

"Every day, people came knocking at our door, people who literally lived on the streets. They had no family; they had no earnings and no way to support themselves, asking for food for months.

"It was difficult for me to decide how do I live faced with a world like that? How do I live, spending my money, what I have, when a world is dying right before me at my very doorstep? I'm not saying it's wrong for people to have clothing, a house, decent education; I believe everybody ought to have it. But it's wrong people don't have it.

"I'm not saying it's (wrong) for us to have so many theology books in our library that we'll never be able to read all of them. But (some) people will never be able to have one single book in their life that speaks about Jesus Christ. They'll never even be able to have a copy of a Bible, much less five or six different versions on their bookshelf.

"Change the way you view reality. Change the way you live. Start seeing it like God sees it.

"He says that God's time is now, God's message has become reality in Jesus Christ. We are to proclaim it. Our response is imperative. There's no time to waste.

"God's placed us at this moment in history. What are we going to do with it?"

Bold Mission Thrust is still possible if Christians are willing to carry it out, Warren said: "We walk, and he walks in us. We speak the word of God, and he speaks through us. We touch people's needs; he's reaching out still in this world. We show his love; he's still loving people through us."

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Photo available upon request from New Orleans Seminary.

May seminary graduate leaves
Vietnam with precious cargo By Pam Alewine & Scott Collins

F- (O
(SWBTS)

DALLAS (BP)--When Ha Nguyen fled the communists who came to power in Vietnam after the war in 1975, he left a lot behind. But he left with even more.

With the Viet Cong bearing down on South Vietnam near the end of the American occupation there, Nguyen --pronounced "win" -- gathered more than 80 orphans and did what many Vietnamese did -- he looked for a safe place to run.

For Nguyen and the orphans, that turned out to be a boat floating in the South China Sea, bound for wherever the current would take them.

Nguyen and the children finally found a resting place in Houston. "I was planning to come to the United States to study, but not as a refugee," Nguyen said. "We lived on faith Nguyen said of the evacuation from Vietnam.

"And our needs were always met."

Nguyen will graduate from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, with a master of divinity degree. But getting to the seminary wasn't easy.

The flight from war-torn Vietnam was the culmination of years of strife and hardship for Nguyen and his family, who operated the Cam Ranh City Christian Orphanage. But for someone born into a Christian home and who later became a Baptist pastor, it was "something I needed to do," Nguyen said.

"The war in Vietnam destroyed many families. As a preacher, I knew I needed to do something," he said. "I didn't know exactly what to do, but I found my place."

Those convictions were born in Nguyen's life almost as soon as he was. His father was converted by missionaries with the Christian Missionary Alliance in 1925, and Nguyen himself accepted Christ as a child. Later, as a college student, he "became excited about Christianity and the possibility of ministry."

"When Baptist missionaries came to Vietnam, I saw that I liked the Baptist ideas," he said. So in 1958, Nguyen joined a Baptist church.

A high school teacher, he became a bivocational minister in Vietnam and was pastor of a Baptist church there.

But as the war grew worse, Nguyen began to see a need greater than his church and school. That's when he started the orphanage, set up for children who had lost their parents in the war, and for children whose parents did not feel safe enough to keep them in the villages.

The orphanage survived the war, thanks to gifts from Baptists around the world who donated money and building materials.

But when Saigon fell and the country was overruled, Nguyen knew it was time to flee.

Once safe in the United States, the orphans went to children's homes or were adopted. Now, 15 years later, Nguyen still maintains contact with many of the children. "I have had the opportunity to perform the marriage ceremonies for many of them," he said.

With the children safely cared for, Nguyen began pursuing his own new life. But a new life did not mean a new direction of ministry.

Instead, Nguyen took up where he had left off in Vietnam. "There were no Vietnamese preachers (in the United States), but there were many, many distraught Vietnamese people," he said.

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To fill that need, Nguyen began the first Vietnamese Bible Class at East Grand Baptist Church in Dallas. The Bible class has since become Faith Baptist Church -- the first Vietnamese congregation in America. And many of the people in the church are originally from Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam.

From 1978 to 1985, Nguyen served under appointment of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, working with Vietnamese in Wichita Falls, Texas.

In addition to his work with the Vietnamese, Nguyen also attended Southern Methodist University on scholarship, earning a master's degree in business administration, which helped him and his wife begin an insurance business.

Nguyen had returned to Dallas to lead Faith Baptist, again, as he had in Vietnam, serving bivocationally. But as the congregation grew, so did the need for a full-time pastor.

Nguyen enrolled at Southwestern Seminary "to receive more knowledge about the Bible and about the work of the Lord."

Today, 15 years after fleeing Vietnam, Nguyen sees himself as something of a foreign missionary to America, working with his own people. More than 30,000 Vietnamese live in Dallas alone.

And as many of the Vietnamese have become accustomed to American life, Nguyen said his ministry has become more evangelistic than social.

But while the Vietnamese work is in Texas, Nguyen and his fellow countrymen have not forgotten their home. He is active in International Bible Ministry, helping to send 5,000 copies of the Gospel of John to Vietnam.

For Nguyen, helping other Vietnamese has become a way of life. "I feel like I'm needed," he explained.