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90-70

N-SSB

Students leave for historic
Leningrad mission project

By Frank Wm. White

NASHVILLE (BP)--Ten college students and two student ministry leaders from Tennessee have become the first Southern Baptists to embark on a volunteer missions project in the Soviet Union.

The Tennessee team is the first of four state student ministry teams that will spend two and one-half weeks each throughout the summer renovating a church in Leningrad.

The project is a joint venture of the student ministry department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School and Foreign Mission boards. This is the first mission project that Southern Baptists have been allowed to conduct in the Soviet Union, according to Brad Gray, student ministry department world missions consultant.

The Tennessee team left Nashville International Airport May 20 and will return June 8. They will be followed in Leningrad by teams from Texas and Mississippi with a joint team from Alabama and Kentucky.

Visas from the Soviet Embassy in Washington, were cleared only on Friday before the Tennessee team departed on Sunday, making departure plans tenuous. Visas have not yet been cleared for the remaining teams.

The team members' business visas rather than the usual tourist visas will allow them to stay in the homes of church members rather than in government-approved hotels.

Gray said visiting Baptists have never been allowed to stay in homes before. The business visas also allow greater freedom of movement instead of following a rigid government-approved itinerary.

The teams plan to use the freedom to do some Christian witnessing and speaking to area congregations, said Rodney Wilson, associate director of student ministries at the Tennessee Baptist Convention and project team leader.

The team is taking Russian-language New Testaments for use in witnessing opportunities, Wilson said.

The students have been scrambling to learn a few Russian words since they were selected for the project six weeks ago. But Jeremy Wilcox, a Vanderbilt University student from Madisonville, Ky., will have an opportunity to test the Russian language he has learned during his past two years in college.

"I never had a clue I would be going to Russia like this," Wilcox said.

Wilcox first took Russian to meet a foreign language requirement but liked it and majored in Russian.

In addition to his language skills, Wilcox gained construction skills through working with his father, who is a building contractor. "But I never worked on a cathedral before," he said.

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All of the team members have construction experience, and several have built houses. Each was selected because of a particular construction skill, said Ircel Harrison, director of student ministries for the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

The students were selected from 50 applicants from campuses across the state. "The team is well-prepared and has the technical skills to do the work. We had a bunch more who could have gone. They all were well qualified, but we had to pick 10," Harrison said.

The students will renovate a building that originally was a Russian Orthodox cathedral around the turn of the century. With the communist takeover, the building became a factory warehouse, was bombed during World War II and has fallen into disuse. The Soviet government recently gave the building to the Temple of the Gospel church in Leningrad.

The refurbished building is expected to house a school and mission-related ministries as well as worship and education space for the congregation, said Pastor Sergei Nikolaev.

The Foreign Mission Board has allocated \$150,000 for materials to be used in the renovation.

The Tennessee team will be responsible for replacing cracked and damaged stucco on the building, said Bob Hall, Baptist Student Union director from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, who will supervise the construction work.

"We don't know for sure what we will get into, but we will do as much as we can," he said.

The other teams will have other specific assignments with an objective of having the building as nearly completed as possible by the end of the project.

In addition to raising their own funds for the trip, the Tennessee team packed an array of hand tools that they will use, leave for the other teams and then leave for the church to use later.

In addition to Wilson, Wilcox and Hall, Tennessee team members include Matthew Evans from Brownsville, a junior at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville; Steve Johnson from Knoxville, a graduate student at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville; Allan Lovelace from Morristown, a senior at Tennessee Tech University at Cookeville; Howard Murphy from Anderson, S.C., a May graduate of Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City; Rusty Nix from Johnson City, a senior at East Tennessee State University at Johnson City; Jeffrey Ramsey from Hampton, a senior at East Tennessee State University; Mike Turner from Knoxville, a sophomore at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville; Jay Victory from Columbia, a sophomore at Columbia State University; and Richie Williams from Germantown, a junior at Memphis State University.

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

Freed KAL bomber, now
Christian, repents crime

By Michael Chute

F-AMB
Baptist Press
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SEOUL, South Korea (BP)--Tears streamed down the face of convicted terrorist Kim Hyun Hee May 16 as she told the congregation at Yoido Baptist Church in Seoul, South Korea, that God had forgiven her crimes and maybe the Korean people could, too.

Kim, a confessed North Korean agent, was convicted of blowing up a Korean Air Lines flight with 115 people aboard in November 1987. She was pardoned by the South Korean government in mid-April. The special amnesty came days after the South Korean Supreme Court upheld her death sentence, ending trials that lasted more than two years.

During her detention, the 28-year-old Kim became a Christian through the witness of a Baptist layman who is an official with the Agency for National Security Planning, formerly the Korean Central Intelligence Agency. Han Kee Man, pastor of Yoido Church, went to the prison every week to conduct a Bible study for Kim and baptized her April 12, shortly after she was released.

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In the first public appearance since her release, Kim told listeners at the special church service: "If God loved me and gave his Son for me so that my terrible sins are forgiven, then he can do that for anyone. If he forgave me, then maybe the Korean people can, also.

"I want to commit what I have of the rest of my life to telling the unbelieving people of Korea of the great love of God through Jesus Christ."

A government spokesman said South Korean President Roh Tae Woo decided to pardon Kim so she could be a living witness to North Korean terrorism. North Korea continues to deny involvement in the KAL bombing, calling it a South Korean propaganda ploy. South Korean officials believe the air attack was designed to prevent Third World and socialist countries from participating in the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

During her trials, Kim confessed that she and 70-year-old Kim Seung Il -- posing as father and daughter -- planted a bomb on a Boeing 707 operated by Korean Air Lines. The plane disappeared off the coast of Burma Nov. 29, 1987, while enroute from Baghdad, Iraq, to Bangkok, Thailand. No one survived the crash.

The North Korean pair boarded the plane in Baghdad and got off during a scheduled stop in Abu Dhabi. Arrested for possessing false Japanese passports, they attempted to commit suicide by taking cyanide. Her male companion died instantly, but Kim survived and was extradited to Seoul.

When she entered the heavily guarded Seoul church, Kim was accompanied by more than 30 security agents. She took a front-row seat and sang hymns with other worshipers, then came to the podium to repent of what she did.

"I tried to take my life ... but God brought me to Korea to give me life," she told the congregation. "God saved my life to have me repent for my heinous crime."

During a subsequent press conference, Kim said she will devote her life to the victims' bereaved family members, who have vowed to avenge the bombing. She said she spends her time reading the Bible, praying and writing her memoirs. She also expressed concern for her relatives in North Korea, from whom she has not heard since leaving North Korea in 1987.

"I think they probably are suffering much pain as a result of my confession to the bombing," she said. "As far as I know, there might be a purge and disciplinary measures against my father and other family members."

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Lilly wants to ensure homes
on the islands and in heaven

By Ken Camp

F-Texas

Baptist Press
5/21/90

DALLAS (BP)--John Lilly of Clear Lake University Baptist Church Houston went to hurricane-ravaged St. Croix to make sure residents had rebuilt homes on the islands and have eternal homes in heaven.

Lilly first journeyed to St. Croix last October with a Southern Baptist disaster relief team that spent two weeks preparing hot meals for victims of Hurricane Hugo. A few months later, when the call was issued for volunteers to help reroof and repair storm-damaged homes, Lilly and his wife, Helen, responded.

This has been a busy year for Lilly, who retired in 1987 after more than 26 years with IBM. Before going to St. Croix with the building team, he completed two weeks with the Texas Baptist disaster relief unit at South Padre Island. There he helped cook about 10,000 pancakes for workers with the Baptist Student Union "Beach Reach" spring break ministry.

From April 17 to May 7, the Lillys worked on three houses in St. Croix, cooked meals, offered counsel to younger volunteer builders and to island residents, and ran errands for other workers at Grace Central Baptist Church in Frederiksted.

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On May 15, Lilly was again called into service as unit director for the regional southeast Texas Baptist disaster relief mobile mini-unit from First Baptist Church, of Beaumont.

The unit was set up at Kenefick, in Liberty County, to serve flood victims along the lower Trinity River.

Lilly said that when he learned of housing needs in St. Croix, memories of the hurting people he had met there in October attracted him back to the islands.

"That earlier association drew me back to St. Croix to see the people again. I was delighted that my wife got to go. I'll probably never get to go on a mission trip by myself again," he joked.

Southern Baptist volunteers currently are working with several other denominations to repair hurricane-damaged homes in the Caribbean. Baptists originally were scheduled to work in St. Croix from April 16 to May 28, but the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission recently announced it was extending that commitment through July 31.

On one occasion during his time in St. Croix, Lilly presented the plan of Christian salvation to a mother and her 10-year-old son and led them in prayer as they asked Christ into their hearts. The following Wednesday, the two new Christians arrived at Grace Central Baptist Church for a prayer service carrying the Bibles Lilly had given them.

While working on the home of another family, Lilly learned that the woman who lived there was a faithful church member at Grace Central. Her husband had made a profession of faith in Christ within the past year, but he continued to work as owner and proprietor of a local tavern.

One day when the homeowner came to visit with the volunteer roofers, he wore a cap that said, "Avoid hangovers. Stay drunk."

Pointing to the cap, Lilly asked, "You don't really believe that do you?"

The next day, when the man came back to the job site wearing the same cap, Lilly swapped his own disaster relief cap for it, telling the man that he needed a new hat and a new lifestyle.

"I told him he needed to get involved in the church alongside his wife and make a total commitment of his life to Christ. I said the Lord couldn't do what he wanted with his life until he turned it over to him totally," Lilly said.

The following Sunday night, the man came to Grace Central Church with his wife, requesting prayer for God's guidance in his life.

Later, when a burglar entered Grace Central Church and stole more than \$4,000 cash and personal items belonging to the volunteer workers, the bar owner offered a gift of \$200 to help repay the loss.

"I think we really must have touched that man's heart. You've got to change a man's heart before you can get to his pocketbook," Lilly said.

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'Skate for God' club offers
unique evangelistic outreach

By Rebecca Carr

F-10
(Mo.)

Baptist Press
5/21/90

RAYTOWN, Mo. (BP)--Two teenagers respond to the invitation at the close of a worship service. Clad in skateboarders' attire, their appearance contrasts with the majority of the large suburban congregation.

One boy wears multiple earrings; the other has a half-shaved head. The teens reach the altar and publicly profess their faith in Christ.

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Scenarios such as this have occurred regularly at First Baptist Church, of Raytown, Mo., since the formation of the Skate for God club.

"You have no idea of the impact, the freshness, of seeing these boys walk down the aisle," noted Steve Wilson, minister to single adults.

Thirty-seven skaters became Christians during the first three months after the club's formation in August 1989. Sisters and mothers of skaters also have accepted Christ.

"The Lord opens up unique ministries," acknowledged Johnny Brady, minister to youth. Brady and Wilson sponsor the club, which is composed of 44 boys in grades seven through 11.

The club began after Wilson's 13-year-old son, Josh, invited a 12-year-old friend, Eric Lee, to church. Both enjoy skating.

"Eric got saved," Josh remembered, "and then we started asking other friends to church." Twelve skaters made professions of faith in Christ the following week.

The church allowed the boys to begin skating on the church parking lot. One day Brady, while handing out Bibles to the skaters, approached them about forming a club. Drawing from his experience with a basketball team, Brady suggested that the club could witness through skating demonstrations.

"Skate for God is taking talent and using it for the Lord," he pointed out. "It isn't getting boys saved and then molding them. It's using them as they are. We are sharing what God has given them."

Of the club's members, only three were members of First Church, before the club was organized.

"It's sometimes hard for the church to appreciate that not all the kids were from Christian backgrounds," Wilson noted.

Brady and Wilson affirmed pastor Paul Brooks' support and influence in leading the church's acceptance of the club. "I'm supportive," Brooks said, "but not more so than the rest of our church. Our congregation is always open to people who come into the kingdom. It's been our tradition to reach out to the unchurched."

During the club's early stages, Brady and Wilson developed standards specifying where and when boys could skate on the church lot. In addition, they established that members must maintain consistent church attendance and attend the club's Bible study.

The Monday night study initially met in Wilson's home. "Many of the boys didn't come from stable environments," he noted. He and his wife, Donna, developed caring relationships with the boys. "Our home became, in a sense, an oasis of stability for them."

In addition to spiritual growth, the club emphasizes outreach. The boys remain enthusiastic about witnessing opportunities. "I want to keep on growing, to keeping on helping out," declared club President Jimmy Fuller. His testimony is printed in a brochure the club distributes.

The first outreach activity took place when the club had been in existence less than a month. "Some of the boys had been Christians for only two or three weeks," Wilson added.

The boys skated in the Raytown Roundup Parade, displaying a sign they had made bearing the club's name. "People read the sign and said, 'That's a good idea,'" Wilson recalled. "It had a positive impact on the community."

Following the parade, the boys held their first skating demonstration on the church's parking lot. The skating demonstrations have become a primary means for club members to share the message of Christ.

Demonstrations begin with skateboard tricks performed using a ramp called a fun box. Club members then share testimonies and distribute tracts, and Brady closes the session with a brief message.

"It's great to get to share my testimony and help people find God," club member Bobby Stevens noted. Stevens, 16, is part of the five-member skateboard team featured in demonstrations.

The club recently put on a demonstration at a correction center in nearby Lee's Summit, Mo. "At first they weren't paying attention," club member Ismael Lopez observed. But the residents' interest increased as they watched the skaters perform. After the demonstration, club members and correction center residents joined in a game of basketball. "We got the message across," Lopez noted.

This summer the club plans to travel to Evanston, Wyo. Members will put on demonstrations, conduct skating clinics and judge a citywide skateboard contest. "The Lord keeps adding opportunities," Wilson noted. "We keep being amazed by what we see."

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Rebecca Carr is a correspondent for Word & Way, newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention

From Missouri to Nigeria to Ohio,
congregation aids family in need

By Shari Schubert

F-10
(Mo.) Baptist Press
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COLUMBIA, Mo. (BP)--Akebola Akanbe was 4 years old when she first came to the United States and won the hearts of members of First Baptist Church of Columbia, Mo., where her parents -- then graduate students at the University of Missouri -- were members.

Now, 10 years later, 'Bola' is back in the States -- at a hospital in Cincinnati this time -- and once again her life is touching, and being touched by, the Columbia congregation.

Slightly over a year ago, Bola was lighting a kerosene lamp at her home in Ila-Orangun, Oyo, Nigeria, when the lamp exploded, burning 42 percent of her body. She was taken to a hospital in Ogbomosh. After receiving all the medical attention available there, she still was left with severe scars and her elbows and wrists were inflexible.

Bola's father, Joseph Akanbe, wrote to Moray Loring, telling her of Bola's situation and asking about the possibility of medical treatment in the United States. Loring, now retired, was director of First Church's child development center at the time Bola was enrolled there.

Written in early September 1989, Akanbe's letter was not received until mid-October, recalled Harriette Fristoe, a deacon at First Church who has been involved in the congregation's ministry to the Nigerian family. Mail service between Columbia and the Akanbe's home typically takes 15 days or longer, Fristoe noted.

When Loring shared Bola's need with other members of First Church, 'we didn't know where to turn,' Fristoe said. But they were determined to find out what options were available. They thought the Shrine organization, which sponsors hospitals where burned and crippled children can receive free treatment, might accept a child from a foreign country.

Through James Wise, a member of Columbia's Moolah Shrine Club, members of the church contacted Shriners' Hospital in Cincinnati and obtained application forms, which they mailed to Akanbe Nov. 10. They received the completed application form and photos showing Bola's injuries Dec. 12, and forwarded them to the hospital. Two months later, they learned Bola had been accepted as a patient -- and that she was to enter the hospital March 12.

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The deacons of First Church met immediately and recommended to the finance committee that they approve an effort to raise funds for Bola and her father's travel and living expenses. The cost of airline tickets alone was about \$2,800. Other anticipated needs included housing for Akanbe at \$65 per week and about \$50 per week for groceries. Church members understood that Bola's surgery, skin grafting and therapy might require her to be in the States for as much as six months.

Despite the fact Akanbe and his wife, Eunice, both hold master's degrees and are professionally employed -- he works for the Nigerian government in establishing fisheries and she teaches nutrition in a college -- their combined annual income is only about \$2,000, Fristoe explained.

The deacons' recommendation was approved Feb. 22, and the need was presented to the church Feb. 25. Members of the church have responded generously, noted Pastor Daniel Day. In addition to designated gifts from individuals, a memorial gift was earmarked for assisting the Akanbes.

"In the meantime, I was trying to get together all the documents that were required by the State Department to get (the Akanbes') visas," Fristoe recalled. In that process, help came from congressman Harold Volkmer. The secretary in Volkmer's Columbia office contacted the State Department, and Volkmer wrote to the American consul in Lagos, Nigeria, endorsing the project.

The documents were sent to Akanbe by private courier Feb. 23, 'which left very little time,' Mrs. Fristoe said. The family had only about 10 days to get ready for Bola to come to America.

Bola and her father arrived in Cincinnati March 11. Mrs. Akanbe remained in Nigeria with the family's other two children.

Since undergoing surgery and therapy, Bola already has begun to regain use of her arms. During a recent telephone interview, Akanbe reported that Bola was busy typing a letter on the computer in the hospital's activity room -- her first opportunity to work with a computer.

Two Baptist churches in Cincinnati have joined the Columbia congregation in their efforts to minister to the Akanbes -- Montgomery Community Baptist Church, an American Baptist congregation, and Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, the Southern Baptist congregation where Joe Crumpler is pastor; his wife is retired national Woman's Missionary Union Executive Director Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler.

Members of the Mt. Carmel congregation have visited the Akanbes at the hospital and taken them home for meals, as well as to their worship services. "We are now part of their family," Akanbe said of the congregation.

In addition to their financial help, members of the Columbia church stay in touch with Bola and her father, sending sometimes as many as 20 get-well cards in a single day, Akanbe said.

Members of First Church also hope they can arrange for Bola and her father to visit them in Columbia before they return to Nigeria, Day said. Reflecting on the church's efforts to help Bola, as well as ministry they provided while he and his wife were students, Akanbe said: "They've done so much. ... Everything we are doing here now is at their mercy."

The Columbia congregation has been blessed as they have sought to be a blessing, Fristoe affirmed noting, "It's been a wonderful experience for our people."