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90-119

FMB to send \$500,000 gift
to combat hunger in Peru

By Mary E. Speidel

N-FMB

LIMA, Peru (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board is sending about \$500,000 to help hungry Peruvians hit hard by hyperinflation from government austerity measures.

On Aug. 9 officials of Peru's new administration announced an emergency plan to bolster the country's floundering economy. Overnight, Peru became the most expensive country in South America; the price of food jumped more than 300 percent, according to news reports.

From Aug. 9 to Aug. 10, gasoline prices jumped from about 20 cents per gallon to \$2.25 per gallon; kerosene, a primary cooking fuel, from 15 cents to \$2 a gallon. The cost of bread rose 500 percent, to \$2 a loaf.

"I think a lot of our people are still in shock," said Hayward Armstrong, of Atmore, Ala., chairman of the Southern Baptist mission organization in Peru.

Southern Baptist relief funds will support direct food distribution, soup kitchens, seed distribution and medical help for hunger-related illnesses. About 35 Baptist relief projects will aid people in 10 areas of Peru, including some remote places where no assistance has yet been provided.

The sudden price hikes triggered transportation slowdowns, power outages, rioting and looting, according to news reports.

The New York Times reported that some Peruvians called the austerity measures "Fuji shock," after Peru's new president, Alberto Fujimori, who was elected June 10. Fujimori reportedly had promised he would not try to revive Peru's economy with shock tactics.

Peru's second vice president, Carlos Garcia, former president of the Evangelical Baptist Convention of Peru, told Baptist Press he felt the measures were necessary for Peru's economic stabilization and development. "We're making the best effort possible ... to see that the poorest suffer the least during this period of economic adjustment," he said.

The government is channeling millions of dollars from outside sources into social relief programs such as food distribution, Armstrong said. A week after the austerity measures were announced, Peru's government declared that all Peruvian salaries be increased 300 percent and decreed one extra month's salary for all workers. But the need is "much greater than the government or existing social agencies can care for," Armstrong said.

"Peru is going through what many say is the worst economic crisis in its history," said Bryan Brasington, the board's area director for Spanish South America. "There are a lot of people going hungry."

Hyperinflation and the devaluation of the U.S. dollar have recently combined to make Peru one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere, Armstrong noted. On top of the unstable economy, a drought is compounding the country's hunger problems.

Hunger has also caused a "dramatic increase" in digestive disorders and respiratory problems, Armstrong said. At the same time, national hospitals are closing because of lack of funds. Armstrong expects the number of patients treated at the four neighborhood Baptist clinics in Peru to increase significantly in the months ahead.

In hunger relief, "We're estimating that we will be able to touch about 4,000 families," said Armstrong.

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Southern Baptist missionaries and Peruvian Baptist leaders will administer the projects through local Baptist churches. Baptists also will use the programs as a way to share their Christian faith, Armstrong said.

About \$200,000 will provide aid in the state of Cajamarca, northwest of Lima. The government has called Cajamarca one of the nation's poorest areas, where daily workers make about \$7 a month, Armstrong said. Southern Baptists already are supporting a long-range development project there featuring well-drilling, road-building and farming.

In the mountains surrounding the state's capital city of Cajamarca, the crisis is leaving poor Peruvians destitute, said Southern Baptist missionary Luke Smith from Sweetwater, Texas. To survive, farmers have been forced to eat seeds needed to produce crops later this year.

"It was either that or starve to death," said Smith, who lives in Cajamarca. "We now have a double problem of hunger and no seeds to plant for the coming season."

In Peru's capital city of Lima, workers at a Baptist soup kitchen are feeding breakfast to about 250 more children than they did before prices soared Aug. 10. Workers have had to cut breakfast to milk only, occasionally mixing in some oatmeal, Armstrong said.

"You've got to help us, because we no longer can even give children bread. We can't afford it," a cook at the facility told Armstrong's wife, Sherra, of Oneonta, Ala.

The situation has been a blow especially to poor Peruvians who have struggled to survive in a country which saw 3,000 percent inflation in 1989.

"The Peruvian people have been so beaten down for so long -- you might expect some people to rise up ... and complain. They do complain, but there's more a sense of despondency and hopelessness," said Armstrong.

But the poor aren't the only ones hit hard by the crisis.

In Cajamarca, Smith said university-educated teachers are receiving only half their salaries. Armstrong told of a middle class Baptist family in Lima who has asked their church for help because they couldn't pay their bills.

"It's not just the really poor people who are suffering. The whole country is suffering."

Among Baptists, most people have a "wait and see" attitude about the situation, Armstrong said. Baptist church services are continuing as scheduled although some special conferences have been postponed. Armstrong said he expects Southern Baptist mission work will be affected by price increases in transportation, electricity and telephone service.

Despite the economic crisis, Armstrong said he is optimistic about Peru's future. "I believe that if people can hold on a little bit longer, and if we can help them in the meantime, and as the country begins to recuperate financially, within six months to a year, we'll see a different Peru," he said. "A lot of us are praying to that end."

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Baptist workers in Jordan:
'one ear to radio, one to God'

By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press
9/11/90

AMMAN, Jordan (BP)--In some parts of Jordan, "it doesn't pay to look like an American right now," says Roger Wall.

So the Southern Baptist worker from Taylorsville, N.C., stays out of those areas, as do his wife, Trudie, of Hudson, N.C., and their four children.

Southern Baptist teacher Gerry Milligan of Tulsa, Okla., doesn't walk around the campus of the University of Jordan in Amman, where he teaches psychiatric nursing, and he carefully avoids daily anti-Western demonstrations there. His wife, Arylis, of Tulsa, Okla., no longer goes downtown alone.

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Single teacher Beverly Richardson of West Plains, Mo., calls colleagues Graydon and Betty Hardister of Pine Bluff and Benton, Ark., every night before bedtime to let them know she is OK. Keith and Tammy Summey of Charlotte, N.C., keep "one ear to the radio and one ear to God."

And all of them steer clear of Muslim mosques during Friday services, after which some of the most heated anti-Western demonstrations begin.

Why the precautions? The initial fury has died down a bit, but many Jordanians, particularly among the large Palestinian population, remain deeply angry about the U.S. and Western military response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Many strongly support Saddam Hussein, and some claim the United States has "invaded" Saudi Arabia and now threatens the entire Arab world.

That anger -- and an undercurrent of tension and fear about a regional war that still could erupt at any hour -- combine to make life uncomfortable for Americans in Jordan, including the nine Southern Baptist workers left in the country. Uncomfortable, but not impossible.

"You just use a little common sense," explained Mrs. Milligan. "You see a crowd, and you go in the opposite direction."

Richardson encountered a few protesters at the height of the anti-American reaction while driving between Ajloun and Anjara. Initial reports indicated several young protesters beat and kicked her car, but she later confirmed only one youth hit the car. Others quickly protected her and the vehicle. Later people in the village apologized to her for the incident, Richardson said.

Despite the relative calm of recent days, nine Southern Baptist workers and their families, who temporarily evacuated Jordan in the early weeks of the Gulf crisis, remain in Cyprus along with 12 evacuees from Yemen -- for good reason.

Several received threats or warnings about their continued safety in Jordan. The others also felt it best to leave the country, at least for a time.

"It was important that they leave," said Hardister. "They were not comfortable or at ease. I think they made a wise decision. It's different for each one of us."

Added Mrs. Hardister: "It's a fine line. When you can't get out and do your work and feel secure, you need to leave."

The Hardisters are veterans of 25 years in Jordan and two evacuations of their own -- including one during Jordan's Six Day War with Israel in 1967. During this crisis, they have provided stability and guidance for younger workers like the Walls.

The Milligans also weathered tense times during five years at the Baptist hospital in Gaza, where both worked as nurses. They know about curfews and the sounds of grenades and bullets. Yet in some ways, Mrs. Milligan prefers that kind of clear danger to the constant uncertainty of Jordan today.

In Gaza "everything was visible," she reflected. "To me it's a lot more tense here because you don't know what's going to happen. Every morning I wake up and think, 'What's going to be on the news today? Are we going to go to war or not?' And it gets worse, because I feel it can't go on like this forever. After a while something's got to give."

For the nine Southern Baptist workers who remain, the main challenge is doing the work of 18. Besides their own work, they are helping Jordanian Baptists run two schools, two bookstores and other ministries. They also are helping shelter up to 200 Philippine refugees from Kuwait at the Amman school.

"We really have to double up, plus the fact that we have the refugees in the gym at the school; we're trying to minister to them on a daily basis," said Mrs. Milligan. "And every day there's a new problem. There aren't enough bodies" to do the work.

New ministries are on hold or "out the window," according to her husband. Some relationships are on hold, too. Many Jordanians, including church members, want to talk only about the Gulf crisis and their anger over U.S. actions when they are with Americans. The response options for the Southern Baptist workers: listen, argue back or avoid contact. One said she doesn't enjoy visits in Arab homes now because the subject inevitably comes up.

"Sometimes we just have to be sounding boards and let them get it off their chests," said Mrs. Wall. "There's nothing we can say to change their minds. Roger's standard answer is, 'God knows the future. We don't, but we know the one who does.'"

Most disturbing to the Southern Baptists is the anti-Americanism they see creeping into the churches. And, they say, it is growing.

One church member recently approached Mrs. Milligan after a worship service and asked, "Why are the Americans trying to kill us?"

The hostility is not directed at the Southern Baptist workers personally, but if American forces stay in the region for long, that might change.

"We in the church try to differentiate between politics and religion, and up to now our church people have been mature enough to do that," explained Fawaz Ameish, a longtime Baptist leader and pastor of the Amman Baptist Church. "We have Americans in our churches. We love them and they love us, because we are one in Christ.

"But the general feeling about America is not good in these last weeks. People are full of bitterness. You hear it in the streets and markets and shops, wherever you go. But we are trying to prevent this hatred from coming into the church. I think the best thing for Americans these days is not to attract attention to themselves."

Still, many Christians and other Jordanians have encouraged the U.S. workers not to leave. And some -- afraid for their own families -- have thanked the Americans for expressing confidence in Jordan's future by staying.

"I think we can be encouragers now," said Mrs. Wall. "We tell them we believe the Lord sent us to Jordan, and this is our home. We don't want to be unwise; we have four children. But we had no peace about leaving."

That could change tomorrow or next week, she acknowledged. But until things change, they are staying. "We love Jordan, this is home."

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(BP) photos will be mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Jordan's Christians, Muslims
find some common ground

By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press
9/11/90

AMMAN, Jordan (BP)--For the first time in a long while, most Christians and Muslims in Jordan seem to be united.

The majority Muslims and minority Christians, who comprise about 5 percent of Jordan's 4 million people, apparently agree on two things: helping refugees pouring into the country from Kuwait and opposing the Western military buildup in the Mideast.

Both responses have helped Christians gain new recognition and respect from Muslims and the Jordanian public, at least for the moment. But Christianity's association with the West in the Arab mind could create new problems for Christians in Jordan and throughout the Middle East if U.S. and Western forces stay in the region very long.

Jordanian churches and mosques are helping lead a countrywide effort to assist tens of thousands of refugees flooding into Jordan from Iraqi-occupied Kuwait. For example, Jordanian Baptists, the largest evangelical denomination, are housing Philippine refugees at the Amman Baptist School and delivering thousands of sandwiches to other refugee centers.

The effort not only is aiding the refugees, but is giving Baptists new opportunities to spread their faith among Jordanians.

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"You are different," a refugee camp official told one Baptist volunteer. The Baptist had delivered clean, neatly wrapped meals to the camp, in contrast to unsanitary boxes of food brought by some other groups. Another Baptist took food to refugees staying in Muslim mosques. One religious leader received the aid with enthusiasm; several others reacted with open-mouthed amazement.

The refugee ministry is a humanitarian and religious impulse everyone can agree upon. To understand the Jordanians' unified stand against the West's reaction to Saddam Hussein, however, calls for a short course in the tangled politics of the region.

Half of Jordan's people are Palestinians, displaced from their homeland by the state of Israel. They have fought (and lost) several wars with Israel. They bitterly resent U.S. support of Israel -- which they often call "the 51st state" -- and they support the Intifada, the uprising of Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza.

Jordanians, many of whom live in poverty, also dislike the oil-rich Kuwaitis and Saudis and remember that Western powers carved the present-day borders of the region in the first place. Jordan has close economic and cultural ties to Iraq, and many Jordanians admire Saddam Hussein's audacious move into Kuwait, which was once part of Iraq. They consider the West's response as yet another move to dominate the region and its oil, and to protect Israel. What's more, Western sanctions against Iraq could cost the already-strapped Jordanian economy \$2 billion a year.

Thus Saddam's call for the "Arab Nation" to rise up in a holy war and drive Western interests out of the region evokes powerful feelings from Jordanians on emotional, religious, political and economic levels. Their response even outweighs their fear of the devastation war could bring, particularly if Iraq and Israel attack each other on Jordanian soil.

Jordanian Christians don't want a holy war, to be sure, but they join the chorus of voices angry at Western actions in the gulf.

"This is Arab land, it is Arab oil, and it is the Arabian gulf," said Speer Matalka, a prominent Baptist businessman. The gulf crisis should be solved by Arabs without outside interference, he insisted.

"We must show our loyalty to this area," said Fawaz Ameish, pastor of Amman Baptist Church. "The way we look at it, there were mistakes and unwise decisions taken in the West, like we sometimes have unwise decisions here. Some people may go to hating, but we Christians try to be loving in all situations."

Ameish said he is working hard to keep hatred out of the church.

As for Christian-Muslim relations, Fawaz reported "there is a little change -- to the better. Before this crisis we had a current of Muslim fanaticism. ... But this is a time of unity between all groups. We come nearer to each other, so fanaticism is less a little bit."

Another Christian minister reported that some Muslims even seem more open to listening to the gospel. They are disappointed and confused that Saudi Arabia, the center of Islam's holy shrines of Mecca and Medina, has allowed the "Christian nation" of America to send forces to its soil, he said.

In the long run, however, Christianity's association with the West in Muslims' eyes could work against the church, Christians acknowledge. Some radical Muslim leaders are joining Saddam in calling for "Jihad," or holy war, to drive out Western Christians and "crusaders" (the Arabic word for crusader means "follower of the cross").

"It may make it more difficult (for Christians), because Muslims consider everything coming from the West as Christian," Ameish explained. "They don't separate the state from religion." Ameish added that Christians could possibly face difficulties because Muslims may say "'Look, you're Christians; they came to take the oil and the land from outside.'"

For now, the biggest anti-Western demonstrations in Jordan begin at the mosques. Time will tell whether they will end at the churches.

Nurses are key to rapid growth
of Filipino churches in New York By Mark Wingfield

F-10MB

NEW YORK (BP)--By plunging into the medical community, home missionaries in Metropolitan New York Baptist Association have opened a major artery for church growth among Filipinos.

In eight years, the association has grown from one Filipino church to 13 churches with dozens of weekly outreach Bible studies.

Metropolitan New York Baptist Association encompasses the city's five boroughs and suburban New Jersey, with an estimated Filipino population of 60,000 to 100,000.

Romy Manansala is a Filipino church growth consultant serving in the association under appointment of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and the Baptist Convention of New York. He was formerly pastor of Bible Church International, the first Filipino Baptist church in the association.

When Manansala began his ministry in Jersey City, N.J., in 1982, he quickly discovered Filipinos gathered around medical communities. "When Americans met my wife, they would say, 'Are you a nurse? Most of the Filipino women I've met are nurses.'"

Curious about that recurring question, Manansala began to do some research. He discovered that the Philippines is the world's largest exporter of nurses to the United States.

The reason is economic. With a minimum wage equal to \$4 per day, it is difficult for Filipino families to survive in their homeland, he says.

One of the most popular means of generating income is to concentrate what meager resources are available to send a son or daughter to nursing school. Once trained, that child can move to the U.S., where there is a critical shortage of nurses, and earn from \$24,000 to \$50,000 annually.

The typical Filipino nurse arriving in the U.S. is female, between 22 and 24 years old, a recent graduate and single, Manansala says. She will send as much as 50 percent of her salary to family members in the Philippines.

"In the metropolitan New York area, if you want to locate Filipinos, it's very easy. Go to the hospitals," Manansala says. "Where there are hospitals there are nurses; where there are nurses there are Filipinos; where there are Filipinos there is a ministry."

The secret to reaching Filipino families is to first reach a key family member, Manansala believes. "If you can win a key person, you have a group that will come. Usually the key person is the one who brings home the bread."

Those breadwinners -- most often nurses -- usually are reached through small home Bible studies with other nurses. The evangelistic Bible studies are held at various times and in different locations to accommodate the schedules of medical personnel.

When nurses arrive from the Philippines, they are invited to welcoming parties to help them make the transition into American culture and introduce them to the Bible studies.

"When I start a new Bible study, I always get professions of faith at the third or fourth session," Manansala says. "Then after three to six months, a church is born."

From there, the multiplication process takes over as more Bible studies are started and the church continues to grow.

For example, pastor Delfin Orendain became the first pastor of Agape Bible Christian Fellowship in Keyport, N.J., in June of last year. At that time the church consisted of 18 people meeting in four weekly Bible studies.

One year later, Orendain is ministering to a congregation of 100 people with eight Bible studies. About 50 people currently attend Sunday worship.

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Yet there are more opportunities. "We've covered only seven of 15 hospitals in Middlesex and Monmouth counties. Our need is for workers. Sometimes I think I cannot do it all."

The Filipino pastors are concerned about reaching Filipino immigrants quickly because they believe the window of opportunity may be brief.

"The first few years are the most crucial," says Kenneth Tan, pastor of Bible Church International. "If we don't reach them in the first year or two, they get hooked into the American dream and get materialistic. The spiritual things get pushed out and they feel self-sufficient.

"We have to grab the opportunities while these people are open."

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press

Denominations aim
for 33 percent growth

By Sarah Zimmerman

N- HMB

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CHICAGO (BP)--If 32 denominations reach their goals, North America will have 33 percent more churches by the end of this century.

During an interdenominational dialogue on church planting Sept. 7-8, the 32 evangelical groups reported 167,624 churches this year. Their collective goal is to have 223,460 congregations by the year 2000, an increase of 55,836 churches or 33.3 percent.

"That tells me we're not alone in trying to church America," said David Bunch, assistant vice president for strategy development at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. "We all have a concern for lost people, and we're trying to find the right way to reach them."

Southern Baptists' goal is to have 50,000 churches and church-type missions by the end of the century. The convention now has about 43,000 congregations.

Getting acquainted with other church planters was a highlight of the meeting, said HMB President Larry Lewis, who called the group together. "We tend to be suspicious of people we don't know. This helps us see each other not as competitors but as companions," he said.

Wesley Johnson of the Evangelical Free Church commented: "Sometimes you become myopic and think you're the only one doing God's work."

In addition to sharing goals, the 63 participants exchanged church planting strategies and frustrations during the two-day meeting.

A common concern was the need to recruit gifted church planters. Bill Cline, director of new church planning for American Baptist churches, said several predictors have emerged from his denomination's search for successful church starters.

One is a sense of God's call to church planting. Other predictors of success Cline cited include a person who is energized by being with new people, is skilled in people management, has a vision and is able to communicate that vision and is a self-starter with a sense of humor.

In addition to recruiting, participants considered training essential. Educational programs for church planters vary from four-day workshops to seminary courses and practical experience.

Participants also expressed a need for bivocational leaders who can support themselves financially with secular employment while starting a church.

A frustration with planting churches in North America is challenging the attitude that there are already enough churches, participants said. Paul Taylor of the Presbyterian Church in America reminded the group that in 1900, there were 27 churches for every 10,000 people in the United States. He said that figure has decreased to 12 churches for every 10,000 people.

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North American church starters also have to compete with foreign mission programs, they said.

"It's difficult to compete with a young couple and their five kids all ready to go to a foreign field," said Terry Gyger, also with the Presbyterian Church in America.

Each denominational representative at the meeting expressed a concern for reaching ethnic and racial groups. Bob Hoyt of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America said, "We have to target the person whose color is other than white and whose language is other than English."

An issue among all the groups was funding church starts. Some advocated buying land for future church sites as investments. Others stressed building a strong congregation before building a facility. However, the consensus was that approaches must be diverse because one model will not work in every situation.

In addition to denominational representatives, the group included representatives of the American Bible Society, International Bible Society and Interest Ministries of Wheaton, Ill. The group agreed to have a similar meeting in about two years.

Denominations represented at the meeting were: American Baptist Church; Assemblies of God; Baptist General Conference; Baptist Missionary Association of America; Canadian Baptist Federation; Christian and Missionary Alliance; Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); Christian Churches, Churches of Christ; Church of God; Church of God of Prophecy; Church of the Nazarene; Conservative Baptists; Cumberland Presbyterians; Evangelical Covenant Church; Evangelical Free Church; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; General Baptists; Grace Brethren; International Church of the Foursquare Gospel; International Pentecostal Holiness Church; Mennonites; Missionary Church Inc.; North American Baptist Conference; Presbyterian Church in America; Presbyterian Church USA; Salvation Army; Wesleyan Church; United Baptist Convention; United Methodist Church.

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Leaders challenge single adults
to evangelize 1 million in year

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
9/11/90

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Sunday School Board family ministry department and the evangelism department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board jointly have set a goal to reach one million single adults for faith in Christ in a year's time.

Kicking off the emphasis at four Labor Day conferences, Rollin Delap, singles evangelism consultant for the Home Mission Board, said the two agencies hope to train 100,000 single adults to evangelize and disciple other single adults across the nation.

Single adults attending the Labor Day weekend conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center were challenged to catch a vision of evangelization and to use their Christian gifts to witness to the unchurched.

"I challenge single adults to begin to become faithful disciples of our Lord, to be witnesses in their work world, to lead people to Jesus Christ and to disciple those they win," said Delap.

Delap issued the challenge following a four-part SingleLife lecture series he delivered at the National Single Adult Labor Day Conference at Ridgecrest where more than 2,500 single adults attended. Ridgecrest and three other simultaneous conferences at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center, Los Angeles and St. Louis, drew more than 6,000 participants.

The conferences were sponsored by the single adult section of the SSB's family ministry department.

"I believe many single adults have let the circumstances of their lives destroy them," Delap said. "I think they are now looking for a vision and a greater purpose in their lives.

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Single adults have the potential of being tremendous soul-winners," he added. "Regardless of what has happened in a person's life in the past, God has a purpose for the rest of his life.

"God has not called Christian single adults to mediocrity. He has called them to be the very best they can be."

Delap challenged single adults to become a better Christian testimony to those around them.

"Because of your testimony, do people closest to you pray more, read the Scripture more, witness more, go to church more or give more?" he asked.

Characteristics of a faithful disciple are that they have a heart for God (put him first), they are teachable and they have a willingness to pay the price, Delap said.

He said many single adults have "a heart for (or prioritize) finding the right person for their lives.

"That is what possesses some Christian single adults, not God, as it should be," he said.

To be teachable, Delap said Christians must be able to listen and obey instructions from God. He said single adults who are interested in evangelization will pay the price of time and possible condemnation from non-believers.

"It will cost you to be a disciple, and it will cost you even more to be a disciple-maker," he said.

"But Christian singles must stand faithful regardless of the costs," Delap said, "until every single is won across the nation."

"Every Single Won," is the theme for the evangelism emphasis and the title of a 1990-91 theme book for single adults written by Delap. A video tape the SingleLife series challenging single adults to evangelism and training them for that challenge has been produced by the SSB family ministry department.

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Sense of loss, change is common
among newly divorced, widowed

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--People just divorced or widowed share as a common denominator the burden of loss and the sureness of change, said a seminar leader who outlined the steps of re-entering a lifestyle with no mate.

"Sometimes we just don't want to admit we are single after a divorce or widowhood, especially if we've been married a long time," said Ann Alexander Smith, an Asheville, N.C.-based author and free-lance lecturer for women and single adults.

Smith, who is a member of First Baptist Church of Asheville, said she has been both widowed and divorced.

"I can empathize with you," she told a group attending her seminar during the National Single Adult Labor Day Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center. "I have walked in the shoes of many of you."

Smith said new singles must acknowledge their situation, understand their attitude toward pain, identify their goals and purposes as they re-enter the single adult world, work through the processes of re-entry and look forward to a new future.

Most importantly for newly divorced or widowed persons is realizing that God is a source of power, Smith said.

"God can give us strength when all our strength is used up, There is no way to work through the pain and trauma you are going through without going to the word of God."

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Smith said the pain of being divorced or widowed emerges with a loss of identity, self-esteem, relationship and perhaps shared parenting.

"Our attitude toward pain is so important," she said. "We resist pain so much, yet God said we can expect pain, and we can expect suffering. He tells us to grow through our pain, not just go through it.

"If our pain is wasted, and we don't learn from it, then we are foolish, and that is a double trauma," Smith said.

She said the goal or purpose of the re-entry process is "to find wellness again," and that includes physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and financial health.

The processes of re-entry include acknowledging "that what is happening to us is a reality, and that we must accept our losses and inevitable changes in our lives."

"Accepting it doesn't mean you're going to like it," she added.

Smith said a divorced or widowed person must "permit yourself to grieve. It is unhealthy never to complete your grief cycle."

In circumstance where the illness and eventual death of a spouse is a long process, Smith acknowledges that the grieving process might be completed before the death. Likewise, some grieving can be done before the finality of divorce, she said.

The grieving process can take anywhere from six months to two years, according to Smith, who said she "pleads with people never to remarry under two years."

Smith said additional processes of re-entry into single adulthood include building a new identity that excludes a former partner, developing a positive attitude toward life and forgiveness.

"You have to forgive yourself; you have to forgive that other person; and you have to forgive God," she said. "It is for your sake that you forgive. If you don't, hatred will spill out on every other relationship you have.

"There is no reason known to God that will exclude us from forgiving others," she added. "It is one of the most difficult things that we as Christians have to practice."

Smith concluded that Christians going through the pain of death of a spouse or divorce should "remember the church."

"You need the fellowship of believers. You may have to back off of participating in some organizations of the church for awhile, but don't ever forsake the worship."

National Single Adult Labor Day Conferences are sponsored by the single adult section of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry department.

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Developing friendship is key
to long-lasting relationships

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Many single adults spend their free hours pining away for a lasting relationship that will lead to marriage when they should be searching for long-term friendships, a conference leader said.

"I get the idea that a lot of singles try to live their lives in order to find the right mate," said Cindy Dupree, associate director of Broadcast Music Inc. in New York City.

"But friendship -- and I'm talking about true friendship -- now that is the relationship of relationships. That is what we should be pursuing," said Dupree, who led a seminar at the National Single Adult Labor Day conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, Aug. 31-Sept. 3.

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Dupree is an Alabama native who moved to Nashville after marriage and became involved in the Christian music industry. After going through a divorce, she moved to New York where she is a member of The Lamb's of Manhattan Church and is active in ministering to the poor and homeless.

Dupree said "the great question of life" for single adults is, "What advice would you give someone seeking to find the right person?"

"The most reassuring answer I have found is 'Just don't look,'" she said.

Instead, Dupree said, cultivate friendships. "Friendship is a gift of God. We should take advantage of our ability to develop friendships with people.

"There are many ways to develop friendships. Be open to all kinds of people. Feel good about yourself. Be the best person you can possibly be. Be an initiator," she suggested.

Dupree said most people have a tendency to develop friendships with only certain types of personalities.

"We must try to get past this preconceived idea of what the perfect friend or mate is," she said.

Dupree said friends must be vulnerable, honest, trustworthy, available, accepting and forgiving.

She said if a man and a woman would develop a friendship before they ever started dating, they might discover the makings of a lasting relationship.

"Friendships with the opposite sex can possibly lead to dating relationships and possibly marriage relationships," she said. "We really need to build friendships before we build relationships."

"We need to learn to take it a little bit slower."

She said taking it slower includes holding off on sex until marriage. Emphasizing that understanding of biblical sexuality is being destroyed through modern media, Dupree said, "If you were hoping you would come here and I would tell you it's okay to have sex outside of marriage -- No.

"I don't have to tell you that -- nothing's changed."

Meanwhile, Dupree challenged single adults to "seize the day.

"We have a gift of life, and sometimes we sit way down deep in a pit, and we can't find the way out. I challenge you to grab life, seize the day, make something of yourself.

"God wants you to live a happy life, and that just might not include marriage."

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

'Learn, recharge, make a difference,' says Naylor

By Breena Kent Paine

Baptist Press

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"You are here to learn, to make a difference, and to recharge your battery," Robert E. Naylor told students at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary during a recent convocation service.

The president emeritus of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, said, "The fundamental goal of the servant of God is to have a reason for being, to know what you're about."

The learning process of God's Spirit in your heart and God's will in your life opens to you new vistas, new horizons," Naylor said, "in the way that he selects.

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"It's a great moment in life when you learn that God comes in his own select moment to speak to you. I've found a lot of people in the journey that want to lock God into a particular approach to them. He always speaks through (the Bible), but he comes to us in such personal fashion until it comes one-on-one and he talks with you."

"God moves on purpose in the lives that he touches, and in the people that he calls. If there's anything that should be fresh with you day and night, it is the touch of God upon your life.

Seminary students are also "here to make a difference," continued Naylor, a native of Hartshorne, Okla., and a member of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. "There isn't any moment better in life for any of us, however cherished it might be, than the moment in which God changes us into that which he wants us to be.

"You are here to yield yourself to the hands of God until God molds you into the likeness of the master, until it is clearly seen by those who pass your way.

"If you're faithful to his calling, if you're committed to his will, if you're honest in your proclamation, God will change you day by day.

"What you're about today could be the sum total of your entire ministry. You're not to regard this place as a stepping stone to what you intend to do after awhile," Naylor said, but seek to make a difference now. "You come to your assignments and your responsibilities with an awareness that this is God's day and this is your life.

"There is no wastage in the will of God. There's nothing lost by being faithful. Every day is important," he continued. "You walk with a quicker step when you walk under his will and under the knowledge of his direction, and under the anticipation of his fulfillment.

Last, students are in seminary for "the recharging of their batteries, Naylor said, and seeking God's resources.

"Christian fellowship and the company of Christian ministry are not made up of that which you see, not even that which you've sought, it's those footsteps you hear suddenly when you faithfully pursue the will of God in your life.

"God is not through with us, and he's not through with his gospel. God is coming, to be sure, but in the interval, there is a company surrounding you out across this world, a company of people who love Jesus, who love the Lord, who feel the presence of God, who seek to serve him, and in the midst of all the discord of voices, you're not to forget that the company of God walks with you.

"You are here to find a fresh commitment," he continued. "That dramatic commitment of yesterday is not enough for this morning.

"You are here because God brought you; here knowing God will provide for you; ... here discovering again, in a refreshing fashion, the assignment of God that is yours."