



BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas, 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5100
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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90-129

Surplus Bible study materials
on the way to Persian Gulf

By Frank Wm. White

N-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--Sailors aboard the USS Flint in the Persian Gulf will be receiving surplus devotional and Bible study materials from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, and efforts are being made to provide materials to United States military forces on the ground in Saudi Arabia.

Debra Saul, wife of U.S. Navy Chaplain Richard Saul, recently called the Sunday School Board requesting surplus materials for her husband aboard the U.S. Navy vessel in the Persian Gulf, according to Woody Parker, manager of the special education section in the board's special ministries department.

The section has coordinated a project since 1987 to provide surplus materials to military chaplains. Saul apparently was aware of the program but had not participated in it previously, Parker said.

Based on the request for Bible study and devotional materials, 200 copies each of Home Life, a leisure-reading magazine; Open Windows, a daily devotional guide; and Bible Book Study for Adults, a Bible study quarterly, are being sent to Saul aboard the ship, Parker said.

Parker said he has not had contact with Saul but provided the materials based on his wife's request.

Her call has been the only such request for service members involved in Operation Desert Shield, the military operation in the Persian Gulf which began following the Aug. 2 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Parker said.

"We have thought about taking a proactive approach on this and providing materials but want to see for sure just what the restrictions are," Parker said.

Leaders of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission have protested to U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Postal Service officials concerning restrictions on mailing religious materials to forces in Saudi Arabia.

However, the restrictions have not been established by the military or the postal service, according to Lt. Col. Joseph Allred, a spokesman for the U.S. Army chief of chaplain's office.

Allred said the restrictions are from Saudi Arabian customs officials. "There are about 25 items they will not accept through the mail," he said.

"Any religious material that appears to be for mass distribution will be confiscated or returned to the sender by Saudi officials," Allred said. "We are not saying 'Don't mail it.' We are just suggesting that people be aware of the problem."

Allred said mail to service personnel can include personal religious items for individual use.

Earlier, military officials had interpreted the restrictions to include items for personal use. However, a clarification of the restrictions indicates that Saudi customs officials will allow U.S. soldiers to receive religious items intended for personal use rather than distribution to Saudis, according to Capt. Barbara Goodno, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Army chief of chaplain's office.

Allred said there has not been any problem with servicemen and servicewomen taking personal religious items into Saudi Arabia. "They can take their Bibles, devotional materials, crosses or other religious symbols as long as they are obviously for personal use," he said.

Allred said chaplains with U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia have religious materials with them and are conducting religious services. "There is no dearth of religious materials for them," he said.

Allred said there is no problem with U.S military chaplains taking religious materials in or receiving materials along with other supplies arriving with U.S. military supply shipments.

He suggested that materials for chaplains to provide to troops should be sent through the chief of chaplains at the U.S. Central Command which is overseeing Operation Desert Shield or through chiefs of chaplains at home installations for units involved in Operation Desert Shield.

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Johnson named office manager
of new funding organization

Baptist Press
9/26/90

ATLANTA (BP)--Hettie Johnson has been named office manager for Baptist Cooperative Missions Program, Inc., the alternate funding mechanism for Southern Baptist mission support, created in Atlanta in August.

Johnson retired in 1981 after 13 years as director of the business services division of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Earlier, she was administrative assistant for Georgia Baptist Woman's Missionary Union for six years.

Johnson will be nominated to become a board member and treasurer of the BCMP when that board meets in early October.

BCMP is related to "The Fellowship," the group coalition of moderate Southern Baptists who met in Atlanta in August to talk about how to continue support of Southern Baptist mission causes without abiding by new features of the SBC Cooperative Program unified budget, as drafted by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

Grady Cothen, chairman of the BCMP trustees and president of the corporation, said: "BCMP will be ready to receive funds as of Oct. 1. Individuals or churches wishing to designate funds will have their wished followed to the penny. Our corporation is in the process of getting full tax-exempt status with Internal Revenue Service. Until that time, individual contributions may be sent through local churches to secure tax credit. Churches may then forward funds to BCMP."

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CLC opposes coercion
to employ homosexuals

By Louis Moore

Baptist Press
9/26/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has expressed strong support for an amendment which would allow organizations in the District of Columbia to exclude adult homosexuals from certain programs and activities that involve minors.

The action came in letters sent this week to several members of the U.S. Congress. In those letters, CLC Executive Director Richard D. Land put the Commission on record as supporting an amendment by Senator William L. Armstrong, R-Colo., to a bill which funds the District of Columbia. That amendment, approved by the Senate on Sept. 12, would allow organizations in Washington to set their own policies with regard to the participation of homosexuals in programs and activities that involve minors. The amendment would amend the Human Rights Act of the D.C. Code.

For it to become law, the House must act on the Armstrong amendment. James A. Smith, director of government relations in the CLC's Washington office, said the CLC is urging several members in the House of Representatives to take advantage of any opportunity to introduce the Armstrong amendment in the House.

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The need for the amendment was demonstrated by how Big Brothers of the National Capital Area was forced to accept homosexuals into its programs, Smith said. That organization pairs male and female adults with male and female children who, either because of death, divorce or desertion, are not living in a home with a parent of the same sex. The idea of the program is to offer role models and close associations with a parent-model of the same sex.

In 1989, the District of Columbia's Office of Human Rights decided to investigate a claim by an adult homosexual who said the Big Brothers organization in the District excluded him from its program because he was homosexual. The Office of Human Rights then decided that Big Brothers discriminated against the man on the basis of his sexual orientation. In October 1989 the Big Brothers organization in Washington agreed to allow homosexuals to participate in its programs.

"The pertinent question in this debate is, should the government of the District of Columbia have the legal authority to compel organizations to admit homosexuals as role models, companions, coaches or trainers of children?" Land said. "We strongly believe voluntary organizations should be allowed to establish their own policies without coercion from the D.C. government."

"My amendment does not exclude homosexuals or anybody else from Big Brothers, Campfire Girls, Girl Scouts, or Boy Scouts. It says that we are not going to permit the District of Columbia to force these organizations to accept homosexual persons in these sensitive roles," Armstrong told members of Congress.

Sen. Armstrong provided copies of a CLC letter on this matter to every senator on the floor of the U.S. Senate during the debate on his amendment. Armstrong has said the CLC was a decisive factor in the Senate's adoption of his amendment.

"Although the Senate has adopted the Armstrong amendment, much work is still necessary in order for it to become law. Southern Baptists who are concerned about the coercion of organizations to include homosexuals by the D.C. government should contact their representative and two senators immediately," Smith said.

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CLeaR-TV calls boycott
on Burger King over ads

By Louis Moore

Baptist Press
9/26/90

A-CO
(CLC)

NASHVILLE (BP)--The executive committee of Christian Leaders for Responsible Television has voted to promote a one-year boycott of Burger King, citing the fast-food chain's sponsorship of television shows featuring sex, violence, profanity and anti-Christian bigotry.

The organization made the decision to boycott Burger King after its regular Spring 1990 monitoring period showed the fast-food restaurant chain helped sponsor two-thirds more sex, violence and profanity than the average advertiser. According to CLeaR-TV statistics, Burger King helps sponsor 18.85 incidents of sex, violence and profanity with every 30-second commercial.

Through its ads, Burger King sponsors such shows as Ruthless People, Octopussy, Platoon, Child in the Night, Beverly Hills Cop II, Throw Momma From the Train, Hardball and The Nasty Boys.

Richard D. Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, is a member of CLeaR-TV's executive committee, which is composed of religious leaders from a variety of Christian denominations.

Donald E. Wildmon, executive director of CLeaR-TV, said the organization wrote Burger King's top executive, Ian Martin, four times and tried to arbitrate the group's concerns before calling the boycott. "Burger King obviously isn't concerned and apparently does not want the business of those families concerned about TV's steady diet of sex, violence, profanity and anti-Christian bigotry," Wildmon said.

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"It is our right, as concerned Christians and citizens, not to give our business to Burger King if Burger King intends to use our money to destroy the values which are important to our society and our families," he said. Other boycotts of television advertisers have proven successful, said Wildmon, and he called upon U.S. Christians to join this boycott.

"Companies are in business to make money," Wildmon said. "If sponsoring a TV show helps them do that, they'll sponsor it. But if sponsoring a TV show causes people to boycott their products, they won't do it. That's why boycotts work."

Land urged Southern Baptists to participate in the boycott.

"Given our denomination's size, I believe that within a matter of months this national restaurant chain would alter its advertising in support of such reprehensible programming, if our people stopped eating at Burger King," Land said.

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State executive directors honor
Cecil B. Day family

By Mark Wingfield

F - HMB

Baptist Press
9/26/90

ATLANTA (BP)--Members of the Cecil B. Day family were honored with testimonies of what the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's Day Fund has accomplished across the United States.

Day, founder of Days Inns of America, upon his death bequeathed funds that eventually will total \$15 million to the HMB. With that money, the HMB established the Day Fund, an endowment to assist in church starting and direct evangelism projects.

Day's widow, Deen Day Smith, and other family members attended a banquet with executive directors of the state Baptist conventions during their fall meeting in Atlanta. The event highlighted a "Decade of Triumph," referring to the 10 years the Day Fund has been in existence.

Several executive directors told the Day family what the Day Fund has accomplished in their states.

-- Ken Lyle of Maryland-Delaware told how Day funds are providing the salary for the pastor of a new Messianic Jewish congregation in his convention. In addition, Day Funds currently are assisting three churches with site purchases.

-- Ernie Myers of Nevada reported that Day funds assisted in starting three of the 25 churches promoted in conjunction with the SBC annual meeting held in Las Vegas last year. "Through the Day Fund we were able to start strong churches in Reno, Las Vegas and Lake Tahoe," he said. "One of those churches has already baptized 100 people."

-- Jim Currin of New England said Day funds helped restore the Luther Rice homeplace when no other funds could be found to restore the historic site. Rice is one of the forefathers of the modern Baptist missions movement. Currently, 30 students are enrolled in accredited missions courses being taught in the restored building.

-- Quinn Pugh of New York related how Day funds helped purchase the site of Metro Baptist Church in New York City. "This was the dream of our people for years, but you don't buy property in Manhattan cheaply," he said.

-- O.W. (Dub) Efurd of Hawaii said the Day Fund assisted in starting a church through a day care center in Big Island Baptist Association. That church start is significant because of the high price of real estate and unique way in which it relates to the day care center, he said.

-- Bill Duncan of Alaska told how assistance from the Day Fund restarted a church that had died. The congregation now has 29 members and is growing, he reported.

HMB President Larry Lewis presented members of the Day family with a book detailing the history of the Day Fund. Mrs. Smith, who has married since Cecil Day's death, responded with a testimony of her own.

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"I know the Lord gave Days Inns to the Day family for a purpose, and that purpose is that we could open a door," she said. "I am on a mission for the Lord. That mission is to be out sharing my faith."

"God has a great storehouse of blessings for us," she continued, urging all Baptists to come together in support of Bold Mission Thrust, the denomination's plan to present the gospel to every person on earth by the year 2000.

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Golden Gate Seminary
professor honored

Baptist Press
9/26/90

F-00
(666TS)

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--The federal University of South Africa has awarded a doctor of theology degree to Craig P. Skinner, professor of preaching at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., for the past eight years.

Australian-born Skinner, who also has a doctor of philosophy degree in education and social psychology, gained the distinction, which is rarely awarded internationally, partially through a dissertation entitled "Creative Biblical Preaching." Examiners included Fred B. Craddock of Emory University in Atlanta, as well as UNISA authorities. The original research sustained "the viability of didactic biblical exposition applied within contemporary dynamics of creativity and communication."

UNISA is the largest fully integrated university in the Republic of South Africa, enrolling 100,000 students and is known as a leader in protest and litigation against apartheid.

American authorities, including the State Government Post-Secondary Commission of California, rate the degree as equivalent to those conferred by major universities in Europe and the Western Hemisphere. Among others, the degree is recognized by Oxford, Cambridge, London, Edinburgh, Tubingen, Utrecht, Harvard and Princeton.

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Wife of singles minister dies;
forces him to live his ministry

By Terri Lackey

F-55B

Baptist Press
9/26/90

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--In the summer of 1988, Carlton Berry took his wife to the hospital and brought home an infant daughter.

Berry, minister with single adults at Calvary Baptist Church in Beaumont, Texas, had been married less than four years when his wife, Sally, died as a result of complications from childbirth. His daughter, Allison, survived, forcing Berry into the dual roles of widower and single parent.

Berry now must live the life he teaches.

"I, like many others, did not have a choice in becoming a single adult again. I did not have a choice in losing my wife," said Berry, who described Sally as an extremely healthy, tomboyish woman "who could beat me all over the golf course."

Berry led a seminar series for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's National Single Adult Labor Day Conference, Aug. 31-Sept. 2, at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center on losing a spouse through death. When his wife died, he was singles' minister at Grand Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Smith, Ark.

Berry was in his early 30s when he married. "I was comfortable being single, but the Lord brought her to me and we loved each other."

He said they had been married about three years when Sally began "getting those maternal instincts and wanted children."

Berry said when Sally died he was angry at God for leaving him alone to care for a little baby. Losing a spouse is a very emotional time, Berry said. "You cry, you grieve, you ask God 'why?'"

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Some people who lose their spouses feel guilty because they do not go through the experience with strength and courage, Berry said. "But, I don't think that God wants us to go through it with our heads held high.

"It's just like we tell divorced people," Berry said. "It's a process you have to take one day at a time. You just can't be consumed with how well or how badly you're doing."

Berry said it is important to "get the grieving process done and over with. Some people have a tendency to immerse themselves in their work or other people and not think about what has happened to them.

"As soon as you can grieve and divorce yourself from what has happened, the sooner you will be able to get on with your life," Berry said. "That person (the deceased) deserves from you that you get to the point of being able to talk about it. Until you get to that point, you are still in the grieving process, and you might still be mad at God."

Berry said as a single parent, he has had to make some choices about how he was going to spend his time.

"You have to have a balance," he explained. "You have to care for your child, but you also have to take time out for yourself."

He said single parents have a tendency to struggle over which parental role they should play.

"Basically, you have to decide to be one parent or the other, so I'm the father," said Berry, who acknowledges he is no good at "sponge-rolling" Allison's hair. Therefore, he goes to female church members or other mother figures for aid when he needs a maternal helpful hint.

Berry said he believes single parents must carefully consider the roles they ask their own parents to assume in child care. "A lot of single parents use their parents as parents. But the child needs to know who his or her parent is."

Berry said one of the most difficult emotions to fight following the death of a spouse is loneliness.

"We need adult relationships," said Berry, who noted the results of loneliness can be self pity, shutting others out and becoming selfish, or even promiscuity which might occur because of a craving for attention. Another result of loneliness can be suicide, he added.

On the other end of the spectrum, Berry said, are those people who do not allow time for healing and who marry too quickly after the death of a spouse.

"A widow or widower who marries in the first two years after the death of a spouse has a 50-55 percent chance of failing in that marriage," Berry said.

"Those who wait two years or more to get their life back together are likely to have a more successful second marriage than the first," he said.

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Common views alone cannot
produce harmony, professor says

F-10
(Calif)

Baptist Press
9/26/90

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Commonly held beliefs within a fellowship do not necessarily produce harmony, according to a Southern Baptist seminary professor.

D. Michael Martin, associate professor of biblical studies at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., said that a view such as inerrancy, even when commonly held within a congregation, still does not remove the potential for disagreement, conflict or even charges of heresy.

Martin spoke to faculty, staff and students during the seminary's fall academic convocation. His address was entitled "Interpretation, Validation and the Church."

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"It is my conviction that an understanding of the process of interpretation demonstrates the necessity of an openness to an active honest dialogue with those who disagree with us," he said, adding that the absence of such dialogue severely hampers one's understanding and appreciation of the word of God.

"We will do better Bible study when we take seriously the fact that we approach the text as persons who have already absorbed a world of experiences, and those experiences have shaped each of us to varying degrees," he said.

Each church faces the task of defining its beliefs, but also must take seriously the task of remaining open to newly perceived biblical truths, according to Martin.

"The challenge is to find the balance between maintaining the traditions and maintaining that openness which allows a church to be vital and responsive to an ever-changing world," he said.

Martin said he feels the churches' response to the rich potential for meaning found in the Bible should be dialogue, not censure. "What we learn from these dialogues depends partly on our openness to ask questions and partly on our willingness to listen to the answers even when they are not the answers we expect or like," he said.

During the convocation, three newer faculty members signed a document stating they will "teach in accordance with and not contrary to the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message statement." William B. Hair III, librarian; Dwight A. Honeycutt, professor of church history; and Michael D. Thompson, dean of students, all signed the document, a practice which the seminary has required of all faculty members since 1977.

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Youth commit lives, prayers,
during summer conferences

F-SSB

Baptist Press
9/26/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--A total of 979 public decisions were made by youth during four Sunday School Board discipleship training department conferences where almost 1,250 young people placed their names on the Youth Prayer Corps roster.

The conferences were held at Glorieta (N.M.) and Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist conference centers.

Total attendance at the four weeks, two Summer Youth Celebrations and two Discipleship Training Weeks, was 4,466, according to statistics compiled by the board's discipleship training department.

The total number of decisions at all four conferences included 136 professions of faith, 682 rededications, 54 pledging to enter church vocations and 107 other types of commitments.

Meanwhile, by placing their names on the Youth Prayer Corps roster, about 1,250 young people signed pledge cards to pray at least 10 minutes each day.

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Prayer meeting for Baylor player
yields 23 professions of faith

By Ken Camp

F-Go
(Baylor)

Baptist Press
9/26/90

DALLAS (BP)--When a Baylor Bears team meeting turned into a prayer vigil for a critically ill teammate, 23 players made professions of faith in Christ, according to head coach Grant Teaff.

Baylor offensive lineman John Karkoska, 19, collapsed during a Sept. 13 team workout and was hospitalized at Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center in Waco, Texas.

An underlying condition, possibly viral and infectious, brought about Karkoska's collapse and subsequent kidney and liver failure, according to a statement released Sept. 19 by team physician R.W. Covington. Karkoska died on Sept. 22.

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Baylor Bears players and staff gathered in the team meeting room at the football stadium on Sunday afternoon, Sept. 16, for a routine conference. But deep concern for Karkoska transformed the gathering into a prayer meeting.

"It was a real private thing," said Teaff. "There was a spirit and unity there one only finds when there is that concentrated effort and spirit of concern for someone else.

"The inner working of God takes place at special times. It was one of those very special times."

Teaff said he is in the process of securing copies of the Survival Kit for New Christians, a workbook published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, for each of the young men who made a commitment to Christ, and he plans to continue to follow up on their decisions.

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Church is 'foot-shodding,'
not 'foot-washing' Baptist

By Ken Camp

F-10
(Texas)

Baptist Press
9/26/90

DALLAS (BP)--Though they could not rightly be called "foot-washing Baptists," the members of Fellowship Baptist Mission in Daingerfield, Texas, might be known as "foot-shodding Baptists."

During a recent Sunday morning worship service at the three-month-old mission of First Baptist Church of Daingerfield, and East New Hope Baptist Church of Mt. Pleasant, Texas, about 30 needy children were fitted for new shoes.

At another "back to school" service, notebooks, pencils and other supplies were distributed to the children. Both services grew out of an observable need among members of the predominantly low income congregation.

"We had noticed nearly every Sunday since we started that we had children there who were barefooted," said Ted White, mission pastor.

White was concerned about meeting the obvious physical need while at the same time preserving the dignity of the children and their parents. He decided to send a note home to all of the parents of school-age children.

"We are thrilled to have the privilege of teaching your children at Fellowship Baptist Mission. It is our desire to be a blessing to you and your family and to minister any way we can," the letter from White said.

The note went on to explain that designated offerings had been received to help purchase shoes and school supplies for children at the mission. White asked each of the parents to return a brief form granting permission for their children to receive the gifts.

During the worship service on Aug. 12, White called all of the youngsters in the congregation to the front for the weekly children's sermon. Appropriately, the topic was "walking in the footsteps of Jesus."

Later in the service, those children whose parents had granted them permission returned to the area in front of the pulpit to have their feet measured for shoes.

Concern for people and their needs is central to the ministerial philosophy of Fellowship Baptist Mission, White notes, and it has borne fruit in persons coming to faith in Christ.

"We just feel like it is what we ought to be doing," White said. "The people are grateful for the expression of caring."

In three months, the mission has grown from a Sunday school attendance of 14 people to more than 50 and worship attendance has increased from 22 to a high of 65 people. Eighty percent of the members of Fellowship Baptist Mission previously were unchurched.

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Fellowship meets at a converted convenience store building in Northwest Daingerfield. One temporary building already has been acquired to provide additional educational space, and another will be added in the near future.

In addition to the support of its sponsoring churches, Fellowship Baptist Mission also receives monthly financial assistance from Harmony-Pittsburg Baptist Association and the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

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Tri-ethnic church offers
hope to community's poor

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
9/26/90

DALLAS (BP)--A tri-ethnic mission congregation sponsored by a Hispanic church is crossing racial lines to bring the poor of Palestine, Texas, a message of hope.

Here's Hope Baptist Mission is seeking to evangelize a segment of the low-income Anglo, black and English-speaking Hispanic community that no church is reaching effectively, according to Dexton Shores, pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista in Palestine, the sponsoring congregation.

Last February, Primera made its first concerted attempt at reaching the non-Spanish-speaking poor with a series of English revival services, scheduled in addition to Spanish services as part of the "Here's Hope" simultaneous revival emphasis.

"The Here's Hope emphasis showed us the great possibilities, but it also showed us one congregation couldn't handle it. We needed two congregations," Shores said.

In response to the need, Here's Hope Baptist Mission was established. The name of the mission comes both from its origin in the Here's Hope revivals and from its central message, according to De Brown, mission pastor.

"We want to expand on the meaning of what Christianity really is -- to say, 'Here is hope. The hope is Jesus Christ,'" he said.

Brown came to the mission pastorate in a round-about manner, he recalls. Several months ago, Shores called the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission seeking someone to lead the OnTrac drug education curriculum at Primera. He was referred to Brown, who then served on staff at Good Samaritan Baptist Mission in Tyler, Texas.

"I had been wanting to work with lower economic groups who didn't fit into the quote-unquote church -- to reach them, educate them and bridge the gap between the church and them," Brown said. "Talking to Brother Shores, I found out he was doing just what I wanted to do."

Coming to Palestine as pastor of Here's Hope Mission on June 1, Brown discovered a tremendous mission field. Because the city is near several Texas Department of Corrections facilities, many low-income families move there to be close to incarcerated husbands and fathers.

"The need is fantastic. There are about 300 people in a six-block radius who are unchurched," he said. "Most are impoverished, with several families living under one roof.

"Often they come with no job, no education and no place to stay. The kids aren't in school. There's a single parent at home. Daddy is off in jail. There's no guidance for the children, so it's not surprising when they end up in gangs."

Many of the young people turn to drugs as a means of escape. Brown understands their plight, having been a drug addict for 15 years and a member of a motorcycle gang prior to turning his life over to Jesus Christ.

"Drug and alcohol dependency is a real problem in many of these homes, and De is able to identify with them," said Shores.

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In addition to helping young people fight chemical dependency, Brown also has helped Here's Hope Mission start a Backyard Bible Club and a clothes closet and food pantry for the needy. In the near future, he hopes to see an Alcoholics Anonymous chapter sponsored by the church.

Here's Hope Mission meets in the same facility with Primera Church and works closely with the sponsoring church in planning programs and ministries. Although Brown wants to see that cooperative arrangement continue, he hopes eventually the mission independently can start new work of its own.

"I'd like to see us start a Spanish mission ourselves," he said, "so that we can pay back what has been given to us."

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Baptists keep ministry
doors open in Motor City

By Sarah Zimmerman

F-NMB

Baptist Press
9/26/90

DETROIT (BP)--In an economically stressed city where 35 Catholic parishes were closed this year, Southern Baptists are committed to keeping their ministry doors open.

Southern Baptists could buy the vacant Catholic churches, but "we don't want them for the same reason the Catholics don't want them," said Doc Lindsey, director of missions for Greater Detroit Baptist Association. He said the cost of maintenance on the stately structures would be formidable.

Unemployment has contributed to the need to close Catholic churches in the nation's sixth largest metropolitan area. Lindsey said eight years ago the state's official unemployment rate was 17.5 percent. It is now 7.9 percent, the second worst unemployment rate in the country.

Despite the motor city's unemployment, crime and racial unrest, innercity pastor Mickey Nardin said, "I don't know why anyone would want to be in the suburbs where everybody has the same education. They all dress alike, they act alike, they think alike."

Nardin is pastor of Fairview Baptist Church on Detroit's east side. His church's ministries include a recreation program in the gym which is used almost all the time. The church operates a thrift shop where clothes are practically given away, a grade school with 66 pupils and a preschool with 75 students and a waiting list.

Fairview, which averages 200 people in Sunday school, also sponsors a Laotian and Filipino ministry. Nardin hopes the church will begin a ministry with senior citizens and a food distribution system soon.

Meeting physical needs is essential in making Christianity appealing to the church's neighbors, Nardin said. "The people I talk to believe in God, but they don't believe in church or religion."

Lindsey shares Nardin's burden for the inner city. "I cry for my city," he said. "She's an old lady who needs help, but she's going to bounce back. God's up to something in Detroit."

The associational ministries are headquartered in the Cass corridor, home of the poorest of Detroit's poor. The two-story Baptist Center serves as a meeting place for three congregations on Sunday mornings and daily lunch room for about 90 people. Children from low-income housing areas come to the center for after school programs each week day.

The Greater Detroit Baptist Association has 52 churches. It encompasses 2.1 million people, less than half the total metropolitan population. The association includes more than 110 ethnic groups, and about 70 percent of its residents are unchurched.

Detroit is one of 44 cities Southern Baptists have targeted as a mega focus city. Over a four-year process, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, state convention and association will study the metropolitan area to develop and implement a strategy to reach Detroit residents.

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