

# (BP)

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October 5, 1990

90-136

Baptist teacher confirmed  
dead in China air crash

By Donald D. Martin

N-7MB

GUANGZHOU, China (BP)--Chinese government officials confirmed Oct. 5 that Southern Baptist teacher Mary Anna Gilbert was among 127 people killed in the Oct. 2 crash of a hijacked Chinese jetliner in Guangzhou, China.

Chinese officials told the U.S. Consulate in Guangzhou that investigators had identified Gilbert's remains and would immediately prepare them for return to the United States.

Gilbert, 23, and co-worker Erin Thomas, 30, of Harrah, Okla., were returning to teaching assignments at Jia Ying University after a weekend trip, when hijackers tried to divert their Chinese Boeing 737 to Taiwan or Hong Kong. The failed attempt ended in a fiery crash-landing.

Thomas, who was seated next to Gilbert, survived the crash and is in stable condition in a Guangzhou hospital. She has a dislocated shoulder, several broken bones and second- and third-degree burns on one leg. Her parents, Paul Thomas of Newalla, Okla., and Diane Aimes of Norman, Okla., have left for Hong Kong and were scheduled to arrive Oct. 7 in Guangzhou.

Gilbert, of Alexander City, Ala., had taught only about one month at Jia Ying University in Meixian, in Guangdong Province. She had planned to teach English in China for two years through Cooperative Services International, a Southern Baptist service organization.

In that short time, Gilbert's spirited personality and contagious laughter had made its mark and launched several friendships, said Joy Hilbun, a former CSI teacher Gilbert replaced at the university. Hilbun helped Gilbert and Thomas get settled at the school before returning home to Baton Rouge, La.

"People in Meixian were always commenting to me that Mary Anna loved to laugh," Hilbun said. "Even the women working in the post office said they looked forward to seeing her check for mail. They hoped she'd receive a letter almost as much as she did, just to see her break into that smile."

"I felt very good about leaving my work at Jia Ying with both of them there," she said.

As lively as Gilbert was, she also was gentle in spirit. "She was sensitive to learning new customs and adapting to new surroundings," Hilbun recalled. "She was already developing a good feel for appropriate ways to be a strong witness. You could see how excited she was to be where she was."

It was not easy for Gilbert to reach China, said Clayton Gilbert, her father. Mr. Gilbert, 69, who worked with the Royal Ambassador boys missions education program at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission in the early 1970s, is retired associate pastor of First Baptist Church in Alexander City. He is now pastor of Pine Grove Baptist Church in Camp Hill, Ala.

Cooperative Services International had delayed her approval for teaching in China until she reduced her weight and lowered her blood pressure, he said.

"She had a weight problem all her life," he said. "And the medical report (from CSI) seemed to close this door. But she put her mind to it and quickly brought her weight and blood pressure down. That wasn't an easy thing to do."

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Gilbert had a way of turning shortcomings into attributes, according to several friends and church members at Calvary Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa, Ala., where she attended the University of Alabama. She graduated in 1990 with a bachelor of science in marketing.

"If you didn't know her, you would say she was simply loud, but no one at church could feel like a stranger with Mary Anna around," said Christy Hamilton, a friend who is a senior at the University of Alabama and a member of Calvary Baptist.

Part of Calvary's Wednesday night prayer meeting Oct. 3 was devoted to prayer for Gilbert, Thomas and their families, Hamilton said.

"At one point, people got up and shared what Mary Anna had meant to them. Almost all of the college students there said Mary Anna was the first person they met when they came here (Calvary Baptist)," Hamilton said.

"As we shared, we couldn't help smiling and talking about some of her faults. When someone is suddenly taken away like this, it's easy to make them into a saint, but Mary Anna was too real for that. She wasn't perfect. But you couldn't help being joyful around her."

Gilbert was not a typical college student at the 700-member church located a few blocks from the campus. Most college students, pressed by the demands of school, usually take more from their college church than they invest, but Gilbert was a giver, said Joe Gordon, Calvary Baptist student minister.

During her five years at the university, Gilbert worked with the children's choir, helped prepare breakfast for the college department's weekly prayer breakfast, went on several mission trips, helped lead a small Bible study and taught a sixth-grade Sunday school class, he said.

"She was part of this church from the start. From the senior adults to the children's department, everyone knew her," Gordon said.

Calvary Baptist held a special service for Gilbert before she left for China, in which students from her sixth-grade Sunday school class participated. The children she taught asked her questions about China, he said. "They were seeing (overseas Christian) work firsthand."

Students in the church's college department are considering establishing a seminary scholarship fund in Gilbert's name, Gordon said. "I know seminary was part of her plans. ... We planned to follow her career."

Charlie Wilson, Hong Kong-based CSI representative, who works with teachers in China, remembered how strongly Gilbert felt she was where God wanted her.

"I was relating to her what a former teacher to China had said about her reasons for working in China," Wilson said. "The teacher had said, 'It was the love of God that brought me here, and the love of God that will sustain me because God knew he could love me here in ways that he could not love me at home.' When I looked over, there was Mary Anna with tears in her eyes. She said, 'Charlie, you ought to warn me about things like that.' You could see how the teacher's words had pulled at what brought Mary Anna to China."

Recent letters home spoke of her happiness in China.

"Mary Anna was having such a good time," her father said. "She said the Chinese people had been so good to her -- the people there in Meixian at the university. She was happy and doing what she thought she should be doing."

Gilbert's most recent letter to Hamilton reflected some simple joys of life in China. She wrote, "There is a little shack down the street. It's sort of like a store. They sell cookies and candy. People before us called it the veranda -- I'm carrying on the tradition. The people that own it live and work there. There's a small porch on the side, with tables and chairs. I like to go there, get a cold drink and sit and watch the rice fields.

"When the wind is blowing on top of the rice, it turns many different shades of green. It's beautiful."

Philippines missionaries  
watch air offensive

N-FMB

BUTUAN, Philippines (BP)--From the relative safety of their yards four miles away, Southern Baptist missionaries watched Philippine fighter planes make about 10 bombing and strafing runs over a rebel-held military post Oct. 5.

The planes were launching a counteroffensive against a rebel mutiny led by a military colonel. The colonel is said to have joined with a former governor to establish an autonomous political region on the island of Mindanao.

After the bombings, missionaries in Butuan City reported by radio that most of them temporarily had moved in together in three homes. All 14 missionaries in the city were safe.

Rebels who were driven from the base fled into Butuan City, the missionaries reported. From Manila, mission administrator Sam Waldron advised missionaries "to stay inside (and) keep as low as possible."

"They've bought groceries so they don't have to go out," he added. "They are not out looking to see what's happening, though they walk in their yards."

Philippine President Corazon Aquino's troops have surrounded the city, but Waldron said he believes they are trying not to trigger an offensive that could cause civilian casualties. Because of the nature of the conflict, Waldron added, he sees little chance that the rebels would use terrorist methods such as holding hostages.

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Refugee shelter closed  
at Jordan Baptist school

Baptist Press  
10/5/90

N-FMB

AMMAN, Jordan (BP)--The sheltering of refugees from Iraqi-occupied Kuwait at the Amman Baptist School in Jordan has ended.

Refugee aid at the Baptist school, and at a Catholic school in Amman, was discontinued at the request of the Jordanian government. The government has moved most of the thousands of refugees in Jordan to a large camp at Azrak, 40 miles northeast of Amman, the capital.

Most of the hundreds of Philippine workers fleeing Kuwait who received food, shelter and spiritual aid at the Baptist school gymnasium have returned to the Philippines, although a few had to go to a camp, a Baptist worker said.

Jordanian Baptists still are preparing and delivering food to other refugees from Kuwait, the worker said.

Earlier, one parent of a student at the Baptist school had complained to the school and to the government that the presence of the refugees posed a health hazard to her child and other students.

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Mission board warns of  
phony foreign fund raising

By Donald D. Martin

N-FMB

Baptist Press  
10/5/90

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board officials are warning U.S. churches about fraudulent letters from a Zambian pastor soliciting church construction funds.

A pastor of a church in Kabwe, Zambia, sent an unknown number of letters to U.S. churches asking for money to complete a stalled church construction project. In fact, the money was intended for the pastor's personal use, said Zeb Moss, FMB associate area director for eastern and southern Africa.

Officials decided not to release the name of the pastor, a young man in his 20s, because he has repented and asked forgiveness, according to Richard Kuter, a Southern Baptist missionary in Zambia, who counseled with him.

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Kuter said he believes the young pastor, who got overzealous after attending a fund-raising seminar, is sincerely repentant. He has agreed to write letters to the U.S. churches he contacted and tell them the truth.

"A word of caution is needed on responding to appeals from overseas for funding," Moss said. "Churches need to be sure they can verify the actual need on the mission field and the actual use of the funds."

The pastor's ploy was discovered by Kuter after an inquiry from Terry Braswell, pastor of Doss Memorial Baptist Church in Powder Springs, Ga., who received one of the letters. Braswell maintains close ties to Kuter, whose father, Harley, is a member of Doss Memorial Church.

Braswell said he questioned the Zambian letter because it came from the same city where Kuter and his wife, Eleanor, from St. Louis, work as church starters. The Kuters had never mentioned the church or its construction project before.

Braswell asked Harley Kuter to contact his missionary son and find out more about the request.

According to the letter, construction for a church building had halted because the congregation had run out of money. The Zambian pastor asked, "Would it be possible for a sister church in the United States to assist our struggling congregation?"

Kuter and another Zambian Baptist pastor tracked down the letter-writing pastor. They learned that he was acting on his own; his congregation knew nothing of his actions, Braswell said.

They also learned that the church was not involved in a building program. In fact, it had not even secured land on which to build. The pastor confessed he planned to use the money to build his own house, Braswell said. Kuter could not determine how many churches the pastor has written to or how much money, if any, he has received.

Similar letter-writing schemes are beginning to occur more frequently, according to Kuter. "Often men who are not even legitimate pastors are soliciting money from churches abroad," he said.

Tom Small, a missionary administrator in Africa, said it can be disheartening for a struggling pastor to see someone who may not even be a recognized pastor successfully solicit funds from Southern Baptist churches in the United States.

"All too frequently it is the least deserving who are the most aggressive in soliciting funds," Small said.

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Southwestern Seminary professor  
called into active military duty

By Kathy Wade

F-60  
(SW375)

Baptist Press  
10/5/90

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary professor is answering a call of a different kind as he heads to the Middle East, joining the American military buildup there.

Jim Spivey, assistant professor of church history, has received orders to join a Texas Army Reserve unit mobilized to go to the Middle East as part of the U.S. military's Operation Desert Shield. He will serve as a chaplain. The unit he will join has orders for at least three months, Spivey said.

Along with Spivey, two Southwestern students, Kevin Forrester and Craig Hutson, already have withdrawn from seminary for military purposes, according to the seminary's registrar's office.

Because of the opportunities he will have, Spivey said he sees his chaplain's role as a ministry. "There are people there who have all sorts of anxieties, fears, homesickness, and crises in their lives.

"They will be listening now because of the fear of what's ahead," he said. "People begin to ask questions about the ultimate reality. They start asking about life and death matters."

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Spivey said contrary to some thinking, "there is something to this idea about foxhole religion. There's a tremendous opportunity to communicate at a level where they never would before."

There is an opportunity to share the gospel "with more people who are genuinely seeking answers," said Spivey. "You might even call it a cross-cultural ministry. "Many of these people are those who would never darken the door of the church," he added.

Spivey said he has been taken out of his own unit and placed in another unit which needs a chaplain. He has been in the reserves for 18 years, serving as an artilleryman for 14 years. "I was stationed in Saudi Arabia in 1976 and 77, so I know something about the Persian Gulf area."

"Some people have the idea that the reserves are just a contingency and they'll never get called unless there's total war. That's not true," he said. "If we're in a crisis, the reserves are called up."

Spivey said people at Southwestern have been praying for God's intervention for peace. "There is an unflinching commitment to pray for me and the students (who have been called to duty).

"It really does make you realize that we are brothers and sisters in Christ," he said.

Spivey's classes at Southwestern will be filled by adjunct teachers.

He and his wife, Beverly, have one daughter, Jennifer.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary

Baptist publishing ministry  
torched by arsonists in Italy

By Stanley Crabb

N.F.M.B

Baptist Press  
10/5/90

ALTAMURA, Italy (BP)--A fire started by arsonists Oct. 2 seriously damaged a Baptist printing and publications operation in southern Italy.

Damages from the early-morning fire and the water used to fight it have halted the ministry's printing operations. Initial damage estimates totaled more than \$168,000 to equipment and \$32,000 to books and other printed materials stored in the offices.

According to an initial police investigation, the criminal act appears to be the work of the local Mafia. The fire was similar to fires set at four other businesses on the same day in the city of Bari, the provincial capital of the region.

The publishing operation, called Filadelfia, occupies the entire ground floor of the Baptist church in Altamura, a town of 60,000 people. Filadelfia is owned and operated as a cooperative by several members of the 80-member congregation.

"Apparently, someone entered the premises of our print shop during the night, spread petrol (gasoline) all around and set the place ablaze," explained Martin Ibarra y Perez, pastor of Altamura Baptist Church.

"The police wanted to obtain from us a declaration that this act had no religious or political motivation," the pastor commented. "However, Filadelfia is such an integral part of the total witness of our church that it was difficult for us to declare this. The print shop is an expression of our Christian witness and everyone here knows that. For 15 years it has been one way the church has sought to integrate itself into the life of the town."

In a public statement, Italian Baptist Union president Paolo Spanu said the union "protests against this terrorist act which has all the elements of sabotage." Spanu surmised that those responsible for the fire "were obviously trying to frighten and destroy this small activity, whose purposes were to give the people of the South (of Italy) faith and hope for a work and a society renewed through love."

Spanu's statement concluded: "We appeal to the democratic institutions of our country, to all forces which are sensitive to social rebirth and to all Christian churches ... to renew their vigilance and to employ their energies in the fight against organized crime, against those who seek ... to corrupt and destroy the social fabric of our nation."

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The publishing cooperative was initiated by the former pastor of the church, Bruno Colombu. He was concerned that members of the church, like so many other people in Altamura, were emigrating to northern Italy and even abroad to find jobs. Together with several younger members of the church, Colombu tried to counter the emigration by beginning the commercial venture.

Filadelfia received start-up grants from Baptist and other Christian sources. Through the years Baptist members of the cooperative struggled to build the volume of activity at Filadelfia. Before the fire, the operation was producing virtually all of the printed materials for the Italian Baptist Union and all Sunday School literature for the Italian Protestant Federation, which serves Baptists, Methodists and other denominations.

The cooperative also printed materials for non-religious bodies. It obtained contracts with local government offices and was publishing other materials for local and regional concerns. Because of its low overhead, Filadelfia's prices often were lower than other print shops in the area. According to at least one of the workers, this could explain the arson attack.

Seven Baptist families currently work in the cooperative. "For 15 years we have struggled hard to survive," explained worker Pasquina Chironna. "Less than a year ago, Cooperative Filadelfia had finally become financially able for the first time and was able to pay each of us a regular salary. It was going so well ... and now this disaster."

Chironna said it won't be easy for the cooperative to resume its work any time soon. "The only thing that is keeping us going is our faith in God and in the help which our fellow Christians may be able to provide," she said. "The problem is, none of us is as young as we were when we started. I now have a family and I don't know if we have the energy to get started again."

Nicola Nuzzolese, a church member who helped start the cooperative and now leads it as president, said this kind of criminal act occurs nearly every day in the Altamura region. "The people responsible for this act are trying to establish themselves in our area. They will come to us eventually and ask for 'protection money,' so that this will not happen again. This is the reality in which we live in southern Italy."

But Nuzzolese expressed determination that the cooperative would continue its work. "We have set up an office temporarily upstairs in the Sunday school rooms of the church," he said. "We are encouraged by the expressions of solidarity which we have already received. We won't give up."

Most printed books and materials stored in the cooperative were ruined. "However, here was a real miracle," exclaimed Ibarra y Perez. "In one section of the print shop (which was not burned), we were storing all of the printed materials related to the forthcoming Baptist Assembly and for the historic joint meeting of Baptists, Methodists and Waldensians which will follow. Had these materials also been destroyed, it would have been terrible. Some of them were irreplaceable." The cooperative's two typesetting computers were stored in the same area.

"We are praying that out of this negative experience some good may result," he added. "Our church is over 100 years old. If we could survive the terrible years of fascist rule, we can surely survive this disaster."

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Crabb, a Southern Baptist missionary, is director of European Baptist Press Service.

The graying of America is  
getting grayer, expert says

By Susan Todd

N-CO (WMCU)

Baptist Press  
10/5/90

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--If Willard Scott of NBC's "Today Show" wished "Happy Birthday" to one person every day in America who is 100 years old or older, it would take him 180 years, said a Southern Baptist gerontologist.

B.J. Dier, a Southern Baptist home missionary, spoke recently about aging to more than 70 women gathered for an issues conference sponsored by Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

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"In 1890, there were only 2.4 million people over the age of 65, or 4 percent of the total (U.S.) population," Dier said. "In 30 years, the figure doubled to 5 million. Today, 35 million Americans are over the age of 65 -- about 13 percent of the total population."

High mortality and high fertility are the causes Dier attributed for the rapid increase. As mortality increases, the population of older Americans also will increase, he said.

"The older population is getting older," he said. "The 75- plus age is the fastest-growing segment of our population." Americans can expect the older population to continue to get older, he said. "The babies born in the decade of the '90s can expect to live to (age) 90."

The people born two and three generations ago would have called themselves "blessed" to see 60, Dier said, while the current generations are planning for their ninth and 10th decades.

But as the population grows among the older generations, younger generations can expect current problems to escalate, he said.

"Fewer than one woman in five currently receives any pension other than Social Security," Dier said. "It's a problem that ought not to be. It's due to nothing more than the fact that their husbands up and died."

Dier referred to the gross differences between the pension amounts men receive and the pensions women receive.

Housing is another major problem Americans will face in the next 10 years, he said. "The widow who has only Social Security has to go and look down in some flea-ridden flop house and live hand-to-mouth."

The housing situation is the responsibility of the church, Dier said. "If they were hungry, we'd feed them."

Retirement centers and communities are one of the biggest growth industries in the country today, he said. "What they do for profit, I say churches can do for love."

Of the 8 million Americans who live alone, Dier said 77 percent are women, 64 percent have no private pension income, 52 percent have been alone 10 years, and 28 percent live below the poverty level.

Many people face poverty for the first time after retirement, Dier said.

"We don't address these problems, and we think they'll go away, but they won't. They'll get worse," he said. "This should be a major cause of concern for us as Christian people to do something."

But Dier didn't paint a totally bleak picture for future generations. The current generation of elders is more powerful and more "savvy in the workplace," than any elder generation before them, he said.

"Americans can discover a nation within a nation in elders above the age of 65," he said. "They are a valuable resource."

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Church starting reaches  
new generation of blacks

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

Baptist Press  
10/5/90

LARGO, Md. (BP)--A new generation of black church starters is emerging to reach a generation of adults not being reached by traditional churches.

When George Ferguson started Christ Creative Baptist Church in suburban Washington, he chose the church's name deliberately. "I'm trying to break through the molds of tradition and say to people, 'You don't have to regurgitate the same old stuff you have for 20 years. You can be creative.'"

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When Willie Scott began Providence Community Baptist Church in suburban Atlanta, he also intentionally took a new direction. "The program God has given us would not work in an existing church," he says.

Though separated by hundreds of miles and working in vastly different communities, Ferguson and Scott share a common vision: presenting the gospel to young urban blacks who have not been reached by traditional churches.

"We need churches that can respond to the new cultural person," says Emmanuel McCall, director of black church extension with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

As an example of changes in culture, McCall cites the increase in the number of black professionals. "Black churches have traditionally addressed blue collar workers. Celebration in worship met their needs. Now you have black people who are corporate executives. They need more than celebration. They need someone who can help them apply the truths of Scripture to their daily lives."

Society also demands churches that will be responsive to the needs around them, McCall says. "We want to produce mission-minded and mission action churches."

In the next 10 years, McCall hopes to increase the number of predominantly black Southern Baptist churches from 1,500 to 5,000.

By that time, Southern Baptists should be starting 400 predominantly black churches annually, he says. Nearly 100 such congregations were begun last year, the HMB's first year of concentrated effort in starting new black churches.

Previously, the HMB focused on building relationships with existing black Baptist churches. In recent years the focus has shifted to intentionally starting new black congregations.

There are now 34 home missionaries under appointment with the sole responsibility of starting churches in predominantly black communities. Dozens of other church starters are involved in the same task either bivocationally or in conjunction with other ministries.

"This is a faith journey," says Ferguson, who is a bivocational church starter. He makes his living as a contracts management consultant. In addition to a graduate theological degree, he holds a graduate business degree from the University of Missouri and is a chaplain in the Army Reserves.

That background helps him relate to Largo, Md., where he ministers. Largo is an upper-class suburb of Washington, where an average home sells for \$180,000 to \$200,000. The population is 50 percent black.

While retaining the dramatic nature of the black preaching tradition, Ferguson develops thoughtful sermons with a biblical base. "People here are making good incomes but at the same time not being nourished spiritually," he says.

"I think I've got the message of the times. I needed to have the vehicle, and Southern Baptists have empowered me."

Ferguson says a hallmark of his new church will be concrete social action. "I'm about the business of liberating and freeing up people. Church is not just jumping up and down to feel good.

"People want to know: 'Are you making a difference in society? Are you going to help that mother with her baby? Are you going to make a difference with the city council?'"

That relates to another of McCall's goals. While starting new churches, he wants to build black Southern Baptist churches "that are so equipped in missions and social awareness that they change the character of their communities."

At Providence Baptist Church, Scott has proved a church can make that happen. In nine years, he has transformed an abandoned church building in Marietta, Ga., into a thriving ministry center.

With a \$2,500 loan from a bank across the street, Scott leased the building though he had no church members. The first service was attended by 21 people, who gave an offering of \$28.05.

The pastor and his wife lived in the church basement the first four months because they could not afford the lease on both the church building and an apartment.

Today Providence has 800 members and 18 paid staff members in its various ministries. The growth has come through meeting the needs of the community, Scott says.

Two major elements of this ministry are Providence Early Learning Academy, a pre-school serving 85 children, and the PET project, in which single mothers on welfare are taught a variety of skills to help put them back in the workforce.

The church is made up primarily of young adults and their children. "It's not that we've gone out to reach only young couples," Scott says. "But because of the programs we have here, we attract young couples."

Providence became the first black church in its area to have a full-time secretary, a transportation ministry or a weekday ministry.

McCall presents pastors like Scott and Ferguson as models of what he hopes will happen across the nation. "On the one hand, we're trying to communicate to churches a different style of being church. On the other hand, we're looking at communities where there is a need for new churches."

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

Mission pastor manages Bennigans  
in denomination of Burger Kings

By Sarah Zimmerman

N-HMB

Baptist Press  
10/5/90

PLYMOUTH, Mich. (BP)--In a denomination of Burger Kings, Phil Rogers is managing a Bennigans.

Most Southern Baptist churches, like the fast food chain, offer the same menu in the same environment, Rogers says to explain his analogy. Sunday school is followed by a worship service that includes hymns, special music, the offering and a three-point, 30-minute sermon.

"I'm not saying that's bad," Rogers says. After all, his earliest spiritual nutrition came from Burger King-type churches. But Rogers sees the need to offer an alternative to people who resist the routine of hamburger, fries and soft drink.

Rogers, 30, compares his church to Bennigans restaurants. It offers the same basic food as Burger King; it's just served differently.

Four years ago, Rogers graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and moved to Plymouth, Mich., to start a church with the support of the association and state convention.

He and his wife, Diana, spent about nine months in the affluent suburb of Detroit trying to whet the community's appetite for a church. They asked literally hundreds of people, "If you were going to start a church here, what would you do?"

Though Rogers was born in Arkansas, he was raised in Michigan where his father was a mission pastor and is now an associational director of missions. So Rogers wasn't surprised to find Catholics and Episcopalians who had rejected the traditional church package. Also, he learned that residents equate Baptists with narrow-minded, hell-fire and brimstone preachers.

Based on the survey findings, Rogers chose to name the church West Plymouth Community Church and to meet in a middle school cafeteria. Before the first service, 15,000 brochures were mailed to Plymouth residents, highlighting a sermon series on stress management.

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The first worship service attracted 52 people. Average attendance grew to 65 the second year and 85 the third year. If that growth rate continues, Rogers calculates the church will average 800 people in 10 years.

The growth is due primarily to church members sharing their faith, Rogers says: "All the friends and family members of these new Christians are non-Christians."

The church has grown without the basic ingredients of most Southern Baptist churches. It does not offer Sunday school or Sunday evening worship services. The congregation sings choruses instead of hymns. Rogers' message is called "life application" rather than a sermon. There is no altar call, but people are encouraged to register decisions on cards during a spiritual inventory phase of the worship service.

Public professions of faith are made when people are baptized. In three years, Rogers has baptized 50 people, only eight of whom were less than 18 years old. Baptismal services are held in the swimming pool at the home of a Polish-Catholic couple who opened their house for the group's first Bible study.

The church does not have "Baptist" in its name because of the community's attitude toward Baptists, but it is Baptist in its doctrine.

"We're conservative in theology, cooperative in missions and consistent in evangelism," Rogers says. "The name is a marketing tool. We expose them to our denomination gradually."

He notes that the church gives 10 percent of its budget to the Cooperative Program, 3 percent to associational missions and 2 percent to the Baptist Student Union at Michigan State University.

This month the church began operating without financial assistance from the state convention or association. Among Rogers' goals are to hire a staff member for music, youth and drama and to stay on target in reaching the community. Building a church facility is not on his agenda.

"We can seat 600 people in the middle school cafeteria. I want us to invest our money in people and ministry," Rogers says.

"When people ask me, 'When are you going to build a church?' I say, 'That's what I'm doing.' "

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

Resort ministers reach people  
outside Baptist mainstream

By Sarah Zimmerman

F-10MB

Baptist Press  
10/5/90

HILTON HEAD, S.C. (BP)--By working where crowds gather, resort ministers are reaching people most Southern Baptists seldom encounter.

Home missionaries assigned to resort areas told of serving people outside the Southern Baptist mainstream during the National Resort Ministries Conference Sept. 24-28. More than 200 people attended the meeting at First Baptist Church of Hilton Head, S.C.

-- Randy Cowling's office is two blocks from the boardwalk in Atlantic City, N.J. He leads a ministry to thousands of tourists hoping to strike it rich as well as down-and-out residents who tried their hand at luck and lost.

"Don't tell me about fun and games," Cowling said. "Tell me how to comfort the dying and the crying, the disappointed and the sorrowful."

-- Sam Worley, missionary in South Lake Tahoe, Calif., told of a casino card dealer who became a Christian. When the man died, Worley was asked to lead the funeral service.

"At the funeral I shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with every gambling executive in the United States," Worley said. "They didn't all rush forward to accept Jesus Christ, but they heard the gospel."

-- People attending a sport camp in Grandby, Colo., also heard a clear presentation of the gospel. Jim Doremus said the campers included the entire local Mormon youth group.

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-- In North Carolina, one man told Carlene Evans that the day camp the Wilmington Baptist Association provides at the beach is the only opportunity for his granddaughter to hear the gospel. The girl's mother does not take her to church, but she visits her grandparents at the beach two weeks each summer.

-- Another man told of preparing to lead a worship service at a lake. A curious child asked what he was doing. The man said, "We're going to have church." The child asked, "What's church?"

-- In the Estes Park, Colo., ski area, Steve Hoekstra led the manager of a mountain top restaurant to become a Christian. The manager in turn led eight of his employees to faith in Jesus.

In addition to testimonies, the conference featured creative worship services and training seminars.

One worship service, held at the beach, highlighted a sand sculpture by Randy Hofman of Ocean City, Md. Hofman, a wood carver by trade, used shovels, a water hose and a plastic knife to carve a life-size sand sculpture of Jesus calming the storm.

Hofman said the spectacle of sand sculpture draws a crowd, and he is able to share the significance of the sculpture and his testimony as people gather to watch him work.

The emphasis of the conference was training people to minister in resort areas where they live. Participants were encouraged to consider everything from festivals to theme parks as mission fields.

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

Associations increase CP giving  
despite hurricane devastation

By Sarah Zimmerman

*N-NMB*

Baptist Press  
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CHARLESTON, S.C. (BP)--Six Baptist associations most directly affected by Hurricane Hugo increased their missions giving through the Cooperative Program by 23 percent in 1989 despite tremendous losses to personal and church property.

George Bullard, South Carolina Baptist Convention missions director, said the state convention staff expected decreased giving from the areas ravaged by Hurricane Hugo. Instead, they found the tragedy increased churches' awareness of mission needs.

For example, Charleston's Citadel Square Baptist Church voted to give 30 percent of its December income to the Cooperative Program. Jim Long, education minister, said the church's 1991 budget proposes giving 12 percent rather than 10 percent to the Cooperative Program.

Also, the church gave \$19,000 to send 19 people to Brazil on a short-term mission trip in July. Long said the benevolent spirit is due to memories of Hurricane Hugo and the disaster relief work.

The church suffered \$1.25 million in damage, and all of the repairs have not been completed.

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