



February 12, 1991

91-20

BPFNA executive announces fast,
continued resistance to war

N-CO

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--In a news release dated Dec. 13, 1990, the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North American announced the "All Things are Possible: Call to Prayer and Fasting" campaign, designed to mobilize and amplify the voice of Baptist and other citizens who opposed the prospect of war in the Middle East, to affirm diplomatic initiatives to resolve the conflict and to suggest creative, practical and redemptive ways for Christians to express their convictions.

To underscore and extend this campaign, now that the war has begun, BPFNA Executive Director Ken Sehested has announced a personal bread-and-water fast, to begin on Feb. 13, Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the 40-day (excluding Sundays) Christian season of Lent, and last until Easter Sunday, March 31.

"I am taking this action to further dramatize the profound grief over our nation's decision to undertake this war," Sehested said, "and grief over the wounded, deadly fate of tens of thousands of soldiers and innocent civilians."

The organization has no official sponsorship of any convention. Its primary purpose is to encourage greater Baptist involvement -- at local, national and international levels -- in justice and peace concerns and to help clarify understanding of such involvement as essential to Christian discipleship.

Sehested said he hope his Lenten fast, referred to as the "Deepening the Call" campaign, will serve to encourage those BPFNA members and others who have endorsed the "Call to Prayer and Fasting" to continue their pledge to daily prayer and weekly fasting, to invite others to endorse the "call," and to urge other creative actions designed to bring hostilities to an end and to establish a negotiation process which can lead to just, lasting peace in the Middle East.

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Soviet cultural exchange seeks
700 Southern Baptist volunteers

By Marty Croll

N-7MB

Baptist Press
2/12/91

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Participants in what may become the largest overseas Southern Baptist volunteer trip ever can build a lasting relationship with a group of Soviet Muslims who have been closed to Westerners for centuries.

Up to 700 volunteers are being sought to participate in a far-reaching cultural exchange program in the Soviet republic of Kazakhstan. Called the U.S.-Kazakh People's Festival, the project will be coordinated by Cooperative Services International (CSI), a Southern Baptist service agency, and the Golden Apple, a Kazakhstan-based agency promoting culture and tourism.

The festival is part of a partnership project between Pennsylvania-South Jersey Baptists and Kazakhstan, but volunteers from across the United States are being encouraged to participate.

Volunteers who attend orientation and pay the \$1,950 package price (including round-trip airfare from New York) will become some of the first Westerners to encounter the culture of Kazakhstan. Members of the Golden Apple hope Southern Baptists can develop friendships among their fellow Kazakhs during the festival, scheduled for June 20-July 6.

The Golden Apple's idea is to involve 300 university students, 50 medical specialists, 100 business and professional workers, 25 construction workers, 50 people with displays and commercial booths on American crafts and "Americana," and 175 performers and artists. It could be the largest Southern Baptist volunteer group ever to participate in a single overseas project.

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In addition, festival organizers in the United States are doing all they can to ensure that volunteers who go are able to relate to individual Kazakhs. Because the region has long been isolated, most Kazakhs have never met a Westerner.

"This is a chance, literally an unparalleled one, for Southern Baptists to go to an area of the world that has been closed to Westerners for centuries," said CSI's David Garrison, one of the project planners. "When they go they will share who they are, and they will learn who the Kazakhs are, and when this happens, both will come back from the encounter changed."

Kazakhstan is about the size of Alaska. Much of the festival will center around the capital city of Alma-Ata, an economic, scientific and cultural center with a population of about 1 million. Kazakhs are historically nomadic farmers and herders descended from ancient Turks. They are said to be very open, friendly and peaceful. As the Soviet Union has opened up, Kazakhstan has made news because of several environmental calamities that have threatened lives there.

Southern Baptists sent a container of food 40 feet long and eight feet high and deep that just arrived in Kazakhstan. Ed and Vi Mason of Tallahassee, Fla., a volunteer couple who helped administer relief to Ethiopia during its mid-1980s famine, will oversee a distribution program in Kazakhstan. A second relief container brimming with medical supplies is scheduled to arrive at the same time as the summer volunteers.

The relief, along with medical aid offered by the volunteers, will help ease the suffering caused by the environmental calamities. Medical volunteers are being asked to bring more supplies with them.

In one part of Kazakhstan, 40 percent of the Aral Sea has turned to a bed of salty dust. People along the fringes of the sea, who have made it their livelihood, now struggle to survive. Over-draining of upstream water outside the republic has caused water to recede from the shoreline.

During much of the year, no water flows into the sea. Fish are dead and with them the fishing industry that once fueled local economies. Large boats sit stranded atop desert-like stretches of sand, once the Aral Sea's bottom. Adjoining countryside is a vast wasteland. Many animal species have vanished. Scrub brush peppers endless mounds of salty sand. Camel trains transport most supplies to the region.

In another area of the country, people have been able to make only limited progress at restoring buildings in the wake of a major earthquake.

Southern Baptists plan to use \$50,000 in emergency funds to buy materials that volunteer construction teams will use in rebuilding a school in the area. The biggest hurdle in this project will be securing the building materials, said John Cheyne, who oversees Southern Baptist relief efforts overseas.

Organizers hope to have 500 people committed to the volunteer project by March 15. By early February, they had identified about 20 medical people and 200 others as possible participants.

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Ione Gray, longtime
FMB editor, dies at 74

N-FMB

Baptist Press
2/12/91

PINE BLUFF, Ark. (BP)--Ione Gray, who organized and directed the first press office of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, died Feb. 9 in Pine Bluff, Ark. She was 74.

Gray, a board staff member for 30 years before her retirement in 1980, was managing editor of The Commission, the board's magazine, and press representative from 1950-59. In the following 10 years she was director of press relations, providing news and information to Baptist state newspapers and other publications.

In 1969 she became the board's international writer and editor, traveling extensively overseas to do on-the-scene coverage of mission work. At the start of this period she served 18 months as interim director of the European Baptist Press Service in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, where she taught creative writing at the Baptist Theological Seminary.

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During her career she won the highest writing awards of the Religious Public Relations Council and the Baptist Public Relations Association and was a charter member of the Baptist group. While in Richmond she was first vice president of Quota Club, an international service club for women executives.

Before beginning her assignment with the board, Gray taught school in Rison, Ark., her hometown, and Little Rock, Ark.; worked as assistant editor of the Arkansas Baptist newspaper in Little Rock from 1943-47; and was editorial assistant in the division of publications of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee in Nashville, from 1947-50.

She was a graduate of Ouachita Baptist College (now university), Arkadelphia, Ark., and Draughton's Business College, Little Rock. She also completed journalism and public relations courses at several institutions.

Since retirement, Gray had lived at Trinity Village, a retirement center in Pine Bluff, where she died shortly before 9 p.m. Feb. 9. She was a member of First Baptist Church there.

Funeral services were Feb. 12 at the chapel of Buie Funeral Home, Rison, with burial at Greenwood Cemetery. Survivors include two brothers, a sister and a number of nieces and nephews.

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

Retired FMB administrator
Homer Beaver dies at 66

N-FMB

Baptist Press
2/12/91

TYLER, Texas (BP)--Homer Beaver, retired Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board executive, died Feb. 9 in Tyler, Texas.

Beaver, 66, also was a retired colonel in the U.S. Air Force. He died of a respiratory disease at the University of Texas Health Center in Tyler.

Beaver and his wife, Sue, had lived in Hideaway Lake in Lindale, Texas, since his 1988 retirement from the FMB in Richmond, Va.

"He was a natural leader and organizer," said his son, Don Beaver of Vista, Calif., a Marine colonel.

Beaver used those skills during a decade of service at the Foreign Mission Board, primarily in roles related to the president. From 1986 to 1988 he was executive assistant to board president R. Keith Parks. Earlier, he was vice president for administration, administrative assistant to the president and manager of the media resources section for the communications department.

Beaver retired from the Air Force in 1976. During his 33-year military career, he received five medals and decorations including the Legion of Merit and the Bronze Star. Besides serving in World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, he held positions at the Alaskan Air Command in Anchorage, Air Force headquarters in Washington, Air Force Logistics Command in Dayton, Ohio, and Strategic Air Command in Omaha, Neb.

After his retirement from the military, he entered Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, to prepare for church-related service. He received the master of religious education degree.

Beaver also received the bachelor of education degree from the University of Nebraska in Omaha and the master of personnel administration degree from George Washington University in Washington.

Born in Cushing, Okla., Beaver grew up in Longview, Texas. Over the years he served churches in Alaska, Nebraska, Ohio, Texas and Virginia in various educational and administrative roles. He was an ordained Southern Baptist minister and deacon.

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Most recently, Beaver was a member of Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, where he and his wife were active in the church's missions programs.

Besides his wife, Beaver is survived by two sons and four grandchildren. Funeral services with full military honors were held Feb. 11 at the Caudle-Rutledge Funeral Home in Lindale, with burial at Cathedral in the Pines Memorial Gardens in Tyler.

The family requested that memorial gifts be made to the Foreign Mission Board's Missionary Learning Center in Rockville, Va.

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Climate of hope
prevails in Haiti

By Mary E. Speidel

N-FMB

Baptist Press
2/12/91

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (BP)--A climate of hope and "absolute euphoria" surrounded the Feb. 7 inauguration of Haiti's first democratically elected president, according to a Southern Baptist missionary.

The Rev. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a leftist Roman Catholic priest, was inaugurated as president of Haiti on the fifth anniversary of the fall of dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier.

Haitians were "completely ecstatic," said Virgil Suttles, a missionary from Haiti visiting the Dominican Republic. "There's probably as much hope in the minds of the people now as I've ever seen in Haiti. They really have hope that things are going to change" and that the country will "come out from under some of the oppression it's suffered in the last three decades," he said.

Suttles spoke to Baptist Press Feb. 7 after he and his family traveled to the Dominican Republic the day before the inauguration. They decided to take a vacation there because they anticipated possible tensions and violence surrounding the event.

They did not feel they were in a life-threatening situation, Suttles said, "but there was enough tension there that we felt like it would be a good time to be out for a few days." The Suttleses are from Elberton, Ga.

Southern Baptist volunteer Bobby Edwards, from Greenville, S.C., traveled with the Suttleses to the Dominican Republic. Southern Baptist missionaries Mark and Peggy Rutledge remain in Haiti. The Rutledges are from Murfreesboro, Tenn., and Glendale, Calif., respectively.

Haitians were out in "droves" sweeping the streets, preparing rock gardens, planting trees, building signs and painting pictures on walls before the inauguration, Suttles said.

Those activities contrasted sharply with the previous month of violence in Haiti, which erupted following a Jan. 6 coup attempt by Roger Lafontant, a member of the former Duvalier regime. Lafontant is the former head of the Tontons Macoutes, the security force under Duvalier. He and 15 others were seized during the attempted coup at the National Palace.

Former members of the Tontons Macoutes have been blamed for some recent violence in Haiti, including burning a shelter for orphans and street children run by President-elect Aristide. Also, poor Haitians opposed to the Macoutes have attacked people suspected of belonging to the former security force.

The word "Macoute" sometimes becomes a "catch-all phrase for a person who really isn't a Macoute but somebody that someone has a grudge against," Suttles said.

In that context, several Haitian Baptist pastors recently have been targets of violence and have received threats from a group of poor Haitians, Suttles said. One pastor's home was burned. Another pastor's car was burned. Another has received continuous threats, Suttles said.

Suttles said the violence and threats are not directed toward the Baptist Convention of Haiti or Southern Baptist missionaries there.

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Tensions ran high in early February in Limbe, near the city of Cap Haitien, Suttles said. Two institutions related to the Baptist Convention of Haiti are located in Limbe. They are The Good Samaritan Hospital and the Baptist Theological Seminary of Haiti, both begun by American Baptist Churches U.S.A. A number of American Baptist missionaries and volunteers work at those institutions.

Members of pro-Aristide and pro-Duvalier groups reportedly clashed in the area north of Limbe, said Reidar Lindland, area secretary for the Caribbean for American Baptists. There were also some civil disturbances in Limbe, he said. Because some of the wounded were treated at the Baptist hospital, missionaries there were concerned about being possible targets of violence.

Because of the tensions, the wives and children of some American Baptist missionaries and volunteers evacuated for two days to Cap Haitien, said Lindland. They have returned to their homes. Following the inauguration of Aristide tensions seem lower in the area, he said.

In light of such incidents, Suttles asked for prayer for missionaries in Haiti from all denominations. He also called for prayer "that the new government might be able to stem some of the corruption that has stifled or strangled the country in the past so that the country might have a season of calm and of economic stability. The people need that badly."

Haiti is undergoing "very drastic, convulsive change," he said. Haitians' greatest need amid change is "a new understanding of the relationship between God and man. ... They need a proper relationship with their creator."

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World Changers work projects
scheduled June-August

By Tim Yarbrough

N- (CO
Brotherhood) Baptist Press
2/12/91

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Co-educational missions education for youth is the emphasis of six World Changers National Work Projects set for this summer across the United States.

World Changers is the new coeducational missions education program for youth in grades 9-12 sponsored by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission. World Changers National Work Projects encompass a variety of involvement activities designed to allow Southern Baptist youth the chance to experience missions firsthand.

In the summer of 1990, more than 130 youth participated in a World Changers pilot project in the coal mining community of Briceville, Tenn. Because of the overwhelming success of the pilot, projects were expanded to include five sites besides Briceville in 1991, said Andy Morris, Brotherhood Commission World Changers director.

"You could say World Changers is a laboratory experience that allows youth to play out the role of servanthood in a dynamic way," said Morris. "This summer we're meeting a need for missions education and missions involvement that has been the cry of youth ministry in Southern Baptist life at the grass roots level for a long time."

World Changers project sites, dates, and locations are: eastern Los Angeles, June 22-29; St. Louis, June 22-29; Briceville, Tenn., July 13-20; Birmingham, Ala., July 20-27; Rio Grande Valley, Texas, July 27-Aug. 3; and the Eastern Shore, Va., July 27-Aug. 3.

The World Changers concept is not new, Brotherhood Commission President James H. Smith said.

"It has been practiced by para-church groups for years and Southern Baptist youth have been participating," Smith said. "The time has come for Southern Baptists to assume a role in this area."

According to statistics, of the more than 900,000 Southern Baptist youth enrolled in Sunday school, only about 150,000 are enrolled in missions education, Smith said. That leaves more than 750,000 youth who are not receiving Southern Baptist missions education at all.

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To qualify to participate in a World Changers National Work Project, youth must complete 11 sessions of study. Instruction includes many aspects of Southern Baptist missions education. Youth learn about the biblical basis of missions, the origin of Southern Baptists and its missions emphasis, and about the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and Foreign Mission Board.

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(BP) photo available upon request from the Brotherhood Commission

Pastor fights voodoo to build
Haitian church in New Orleans

By Breena Kent Paine

F-CP
(NOBTS)

Baptist Press
2/12/91

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The Caribbean voices rose unaccompanied to the high rafters, filling the Gothic, inner archways of the rented church building with harmonious sounds of praise.

Then a young, simply dressed woman stepped up to the front, dwarfed behind the massive, carved pulpit. A print of Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane loomed over her shoulder, shining in the surrounding candlelight, as she closed her eyes and lapsed into a sweet song of her love for God, forming the Creole-French words gently, meaningfully.

In the fourth pew, a young man who had spent a hard day at work rested his head against the edge of a grey, stone archway and closed his eyes. Parents and children alike sat still in their seats, some leaning forward in the pews, resting their chins on their knuckles, others silently praying.

From the front pew, Celillon Alteme nodded his head with a gentle smile of affirmation for the young woman's testimony in song, his Bible open in his lap, and his heart praying for those who would hear his sermon that night.

Alteme has had to fight barriers of voodoo deception, complacency, rebellion, and other sins to plant this church among the Haitian community in New Orleans. But the results have been a small-but-strong membership characterized by its love, faith, and prayer.

The Haiti native had come to the United States looking for an education. As a student at Warner Southern College, Lake Wales, Fla., one of his assignments, however, was to take part in feeding the hungry. Coming from a mainly poor country to what he thought was the "rich" United States, Alteme was shocked into wanting to make a difference.

"That is the way God started talking to me," he said. "I never wanted to be a pastor, but I felt God calling me to be involved in the Haitian community."

After receiving his bachelor's degree, he moved to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to pursue a master's degree. He found the city an open field for ministry. After contacting area universities and other resources looking for his countrymen, he and two other Haitian Baptists began surveying the community.

They found a few interested Haitians and began a home Bible study, which after eight months grew to the point of needing a building of its own. For a low rental fee, they moved into a beautiful, mini-cathedral-like building with a Gothic, castle-like interior and stained glass windows. The Protestant congregation meeting there had dwindled in membership, meeting only for a brief hour on Sunday afternoons, and was glad to have their more-than-adequate facilities used by a vibrant, growing mission church.

Many of the needs Alteme has found among Haitians in New Orleans involve their struggle with adapting to American culture and big-city life. Stepping from the poverty-stricken, rural setting of Haiti into the bustling cross-cultural city of New Orleans, many feel confused and helpless. Many lack job skills and the means to go to college. Others have no transportation and little money for food and health care.

The Haitian French Baptist Mission provides tutoring for about 30 elementary and high school students, helping them with English and their chances to enter college. Some members are taxi drivers who own their own cabs and help with transportation. Other Christians provide an "orientation" program for newcomers, offering advice on area schools and shopping. In addition, Alteme teaches classes for parents on dealing with adolescents, stressing love and listening more than criticizing.

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The Haitian congregation holds a food drive throughout the year, and since Alteme is a member of the community's Haitian Human Development Group, they participate in a health fair twice a year, where local Haitian doctors and nurses provide free medical care to the needy.

"These are opportunities to evangelize," Alteme explained. "Our church is a backbone for these people. ... We've become a therapeutic center, where they can share their feelings, and also they can learn the system (of American society) and how it functions."

Spiritual needs run deep among the Haitians, many of whom have been raised mixing Catholic traditions with voodoo practices. Centuries ago, slave ships brought Africans and their voodoo religion to Haiti, where they were ordered to be baptized into the Catholic faith. Most slave owners, however, did not teach them about Christianity, afraid they would learn they were "equal" in God's sight.

The result has been a distortion of Catholicism. Pictures of Catholic saints are pinned up in voodoo sanctuaries, but lose their Catholic identity and take on that of a loa, or "mystery" spirit. In northern Haiti, these loa are actually called "saints." St. John the Baptist, for example, is a storm god.

Although Alteme is from St-Louis-du-Nord, said to be near the "headquarters" of these loa, he was raised in a Christian home and knows little of the voodoo practices of his neighbors. He does know, however, that sharing the gospel with such Haitians is no easy matter. They must first put aside all they have ever believed about Christianity before they can understand God's true message of love and salvation through Jesus.

"It is very difficult for them to understand Christ, to know Christ personally," Alteme explained, because in their confusion they have thought themselves to be Christians, all the time worshipping other gods.

The lure of the French Quarter's voodoo shops and Bourbon Street temptations do not make things easier. Haitians in New Orleans are "the hardest group to minister to because of the ambience of the city," Alteme said.

Many times, the children are the ones to pay for their parents' meddlings. As a result, Alteme has developed a special ministry to teenagers, offering them a listening ear and a caring heart.

One 15-year-old girl took advantage of this opportunity and shared her problems with him. When Alteme asked her to pray with him, she refused, saying, "Why? I'm not going to talk to the God who let my father go to jail!"

Amidst her words of "I'm nothing, I'm ugly, I'm dumb, I hate myself," Alteme offered her help; if she needed anything, all she had to do was call.

She did call, but not to share her problems. God had been dealing with her and she called to say she had decided to accept Christ. "I didn't know exactly how God could change someone like me because I was so rebellious against him," she said. But now she teaches children, and Alteme attests, "she is changed."

When Alteme left Haiti, he never aspired to start a Haitian church and be a pastor; but now he knows, "my calling is to work wherever there is a need."

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(BP) photos available upon request from New Orleans Seminary

Christian's 'game' is
bringing people to Christ

By Breena Kent Paine

F-60
(NOBTS)

Baptist Press
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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"The game is not spending all your time plotting the demise and fall of someone," Frank Pollard told students and faculty at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary during a recent campus revival. "The game is bringing people to Christ."

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"To almost every cry of people to God, God's answer is his people," continued the pastor of First Baptist Church of Jackson, Miss., and former president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif. "People are crying out, and we are the answer, ... but we must be willing to be used."

"In God's economy, the real person who can be used by God is not the boss, not the tyrant, not the deluded egomaniac, but the servant," said Pollard, a native of Olney, Texas. Christians must have high moral convictions and courage, be survivors, and make a costly commitment to the will of God, he said. They must be "teachable, approachable, loving, and caring, (as Jesus was). He was perfect, he was sinless, he was holy, ... yet the very worst of sinners was comfortable in his presence."

To be ready to "play the game," Christians must "get in the huddle," where they remember Christ's death on the cross and get their assignment, Pollard said.

"We need our huddles, we need our revivals, we need our church meetings more than ever before," Pollard said. "It is the cross that reminds us of our pride, ... that none of us has the right to boast. We've all been saved by the grace of God."

Then, when God gives the Christian an assignment, he should not reply with, "Lord, I'll play if you let me call the shots when I play."

"Don't tell him what you want to do. Listen to him, do what he says," he continued. "The assignment is to share Christ. Run the play. Go out and do it."

"When the Great Physician came down here, he didn't just say take two doses of hope and I'll see you on judgment day," Pollard explained. "You and I are in the game not because (Jesus) went to the huddle, but because he (ran the play) -- he died on the cross for our sins."

"Our Lord knows about us, that we're not as bad as our worst hours, and we're not as good as our best hours," he said. "I've been in the valley where I've failed him, but I know he can walk into any valley of defeat and bring victory."

"What a shame it would be to stay in the huddle and lose the game by default," Pollard concluded. "Get out of the cushioned pews, ... and get out there where the people are. Tell them that God in heaven loves them."

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(BP) photos available upon request from New Orleans Seminary

'The idea is to
serve:' Professor

By Breena Kent Paine

F-60
(NOBTS)

Baptist Press
2/12/91

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Felix James' shelves are stacked with history books, and the posters on his walls tell of great men from ages past; but in his desk drawer he keeps the best story every told -- the story of Jesus.

A history professor at Southern University in New Orleans for 17 years, James is intense, serious, and thorough in the classroom. But in the hallways and in his office, he offers a smile, a listening ear, and a caring heart.

His students know he is a Christian, and occasionally they will come to him for advice on problems. Others will try to argue with him about their philosophy of religion. But some of James' students have found Christ through his example and the gospel tracts he keeps in his desk drawer.

Born into a Christian home in Hurtsboro, Ala., James was reared in Columbus, Ga., his father was a Baptist deacon. He accepted Christ as a child, but his parents felt he was too young to be baptized. Disillusioned, the boy put aside an early call to the ministry and began his journey to be a teacher.

James earned the master of arts and doctor of philosophy degrees in history from Howard University, and Ohio State University, respectively. He taught in the Columbus, Ala., public school system, at Tuskegee University, Ala., and at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale; then, as "the winter climate did not agree with me," he moved to the warmth of New Orleans where he met his wife, Florence.

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"SUNO has been most attractive to me because of the many backgrounds of the students," said James, whose call to ministry returned after seeing their needs.

"From time to time, I have students in my class that want to talk about God. I say, 'I can't. This is a state institution,'" James explained. But in the hallways they seek him out for answers to their questions, ranging "from Genesis to Revelation."

"One small class was unusual because every chance they got -- outside that class, on the campus, whenever they saw me -- they would want to talk about Jesus," James said. "I could hardly lecture for their interrupting, wanting to ask questions."

Such questions stirred within him a burden for lost people, and as he prayed, he began asking God to show him whether or not he wanted him to be in the ministry.

"That week, everywhere I went, people I didn't know would walk up to me and say, 'Are you a preacher?' Are you a minister?" James said. "My call came to a head. God had been calling me for years; I just hadn't understood."

In 1985, he enrolled in New Orleans Seminary to pursue a master's degree, working the classes around his SUNO schedule. "I want to be able to communicate with people on every level," said James, who because of his past experience has especially enjoyed his courses in preschool and childhood education. "I want to be able to preach where that little one will understand also."

Many of his colleagues and students have been supportive of his call, sometimes even attending services when he guest preaches in local churches; a few of the professors are ministers themselves.

"I have the feeling that my coming to SUNO was in a plan. God parked me right around the corner from the seminary," he said. Now, "every opportunity I have to tell someone about Jesus, I do."

Whether in the classroom, in the hallways, or in the pulpit, James insisted, "the idea is to serve."

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(BP) photos available upon request from New Orleans Seminary

Duke McCall
assists new church

By Pat Cole

N-CO
(SBTS)

Baptist Press
2/12/91

JUPITER, Fla. (BP)--Duke McCall's retirement from a 40-year denominational career has not sent him to the back pew of church service. Instead, the former president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., spends Sunday mornings helping to arrange chairs in a school cafeteria for Central Baptist Church, a new congregation in Jupiter, Fla.

"Anybody with a strong backbone can be a member of our church," said McCall with a chuckle. McCall, president of Southern Seminary from 1951-82, and his wife, Winona, spend six or seven months a year in Jupiter and have been part of the church since the fall of 1989.

Jupiter, a city with a summer population of 35,000, had no Southern Baptist church until Central was formed. When the McCalls arrived, Central was a congregation of 19 people that had just decided to constitute as a church. The congregation recently had called T. R. Myers as pastor.

"I was looking for a church and I figured the need was there," said McCall of his decision to affiliate with Central. In the past year, the congregation has grown to an average attendance of 50 to 80 people and the church is in the process of buying a 4.5 acre building lot.

Central has been active in outreach and ministries, said McCall, adding that the church has developed a ministry with Hispanics and a "tremendous" youth program. "Most members are recent converts or people who had dropped out of church," he said. The Hispanic ministry is headed by Jorge Suarez, a native of Ecuador whose conversion was influenced by Southern Baptist foreign missionaries.

The church conducts baptismal services in the backyard swimming pool of one of the members. Unchurched people in the neighborhood often gather to observe the service, he said.

He describes Myers as a "servant leader" who "knows what he's doing and knows where he wants to go." McCall would like to brag that Myers is a Southern graduate. Rather, he said, "God called him to Southwestern (Baptist Theological) Seminary."

McCall lends his experience as an administrator and Christian leader to the congregation. He has been a supply preacher and serves on the building committee, keeping a low-key but active role in the church. "I provide kind of a catalyst for the congregation," he said. "I am not there to give instruction. I am there to share ideas."

Myers said McCall has been a "tremendous asset" to the congregation. In addition to providing wise counsel, McCall lends "dignity and grace" to the congregation when he is called on to lead in worship, said Myers. "It is very noble for somebody of his stature to participate in a fledgling work, but Jupiter needs a Southern Baptist work and he feels a need to be here," he said.

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(BP) photo available upon request from Southern Seminary

Chaplain counseling
in crisis; daily routine

By Breena Kent Paine

F-CO
(NOBTS)

Baptist Press
2/12/91

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Dead on impact, the drunk teenager was tangled in a mess of metal, the car's "Saints Fan, Bud Man" bumper sticker plastered to his chest.

It was just after 1 a.m., and Jerry Pounds, director of continuing education at New Orleans Seminary, was on the scene of the accident, dressed in dark pants and tie, and a white shirt with metal crosses on the collar and police patches on the arms.

The officers approached him, apparently relieved he had answered their call. As a volunteer chaplain for the New Orleans Police Department, Pounds would accompany them to the boy's home to inform his single mother of her son's death.

"That's the most difficult part of the job," said Ken Pulliam, a graduate of New Orleans Seminary who also serves as a volunteer chaplain, "breaking the news to a mother that her child has been shot or killed."

NOPD chaplains also intervene in civilian cases such as domestic disputes or suicide attempts. "You see people at their worst," said Pulliam, a native of Brandon, Miss., who has lived in Las Cruces, N.M., and Fredericksburg, Va.

"Usually, a regular pastor doesn't get to the parishioner until the crisis has passed; he's there to pick up the pieces. But we're there on the scene when the crisis happens."

A police chaplain's main ministry, however, is to the police officers themselves. Fighting crime daily, urban officers sometimes find comfort in a chaplain riding with them, listening to them, encouraging them, and trying to help them find ways to deal with their own problems.

Some officers may work an additional job during their off hours. This combined with the high stress of combatting crime daily may breed marital problems, physical illness, or other difficulties.

As chaplains, "we hope to release the stress in those officers before they get to that point," Pulliam said.

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"I've met some fine Christian officers," added Pounds, a native of New Orleans. "Those are the ones who usually seek you out first, excited to know you're there supporting them."

In addition to working 40 hours a week as director of campus police at New Orleans Seminary, Pulliam usually works (without pay) several shifts a week as an NOPD reserve officer, sometimes wearing his "chaplain's hat" at the same time. In 1990, such reserve officers put in over 80,000 volunteer hours protecting New Orleans' citizens.

"Here, (officers) are very committed to their jobs," Pulliam explained, because they are "fighting for what they believe in."

"Nobody faces the pressures of police officers," he continued. "In the military, you face death, but those you are up against are usually faceless (an enemy you don't know personally). In the police force, they are people with faces, sometimes neighbors, sometimes even friends."

"It means a lot to the police officer to know (chaplains are) not some kind of high and mighty." As a reserve officer, Pulliam can relate to them on a deeper level, having gone through their academy, and being able to say, "I've been where you've been, I've held a gun, I've faced death, I've been scared, and I understand what you're feeling."

"That's the idea of any kind of chaplaincy -- to take the church into the work force and identify with the people in that environment, like a specialized pastor," said Pulliam.

He feels his positions complement each other: the 10 months he spent in the police academy training to be a reserve officer helped him to be a more effective campus police director; and his theological training at the seminary benefits him as an NOPD chaplain.

"I think the most frustrating thing for anyone in law enforcement is the lack of support," Pulliam said. Although many citizens who actually witness crimes are helpful, others out of fear or other reasons may respond to police officers' questions with "I wasn't there."

"Citizens need to take a stand," he continued, and Christians need to pray for their police officers and their city daily."

"Once you get through that hard mask of what an officer is, they're just like you and me; they have the same needs, the same hurts," Pounds said.

"Much of what we do as chaplains is just being there to give them support and show we care."

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(BP) photos available upon request from New Orleans Seminary