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91-26

BSSB to release book  
in Russian language

*N-SSB*

NASHVILLE (BP)--A 1977 Broadman book, "What It Means to Be Born Again," is being published in Russian for distribution in the Soviet Union, according to the author, Johnnie Godwin, vice president for general publishing at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

The 140-page book has been translated into Russian and will be distributed at the International Book Fair in Moscow, Sept. 3-9. One-thousand copies of the book were printed free of charge as a goodwill gesture by Rose Printing Co. in Tallahassee, Fla., Godwin said.

Godwin said the book was written to coincide with the inauguration of former President Jimmy Carter. A Southern Baptist, Carter identified himself as a "born-again" Christian during his campaign for the presidency. Officials at the Sunday School Board decided to publish a book to explain the term which was unfamiliar to many Americans, and Godwin agreed to author the manuscript.

The decision to translate the book into Russian was made after Godwin made several trips to book fairs in Moscow.

"I've talked with many, many Russians -- some believers, some agnostics, and some atheists," he said. "Many of the non-Christians told me, 'Yes, I have read the Bible. So, what?' This book answers that question for them by explaining what it really means to accept Christ."

The release of the book will coincide with a project to distribute 4 million New Testaments in the Soviet Union by next September. The distribution, dubbed "The Moscow Project," is an inter-denominational effort to saturate the Soviet Union with the gospel.

"This means millions of Soviet citizens will have access to Scripture, and many of them will be asking questions," Godwin said. "Hopefully, this book will answer the most important question of all."

The book was translated by Eugene Pavlov, a Russian student who temporarily worked at Christian Booksellers Association in Colorado Springs, Colo. A new cover also was designed by artist Jim Bateman.

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

Sponsors sought for  
2,000 new churches

By Mark Wingfield

*F-HMB*

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ATLANTA (BP)--WANTED: Sponsors for 2,000 new Southern Baptist churches across America.

That's the message the Home Mission Board hopes 37,000 existing Southern Baptist churches will respond to March 24, to be observed as Start-a-Church Commitment Sunday nationwide.

The call to sponsor 2,000 new churches this year is part of the Bold Mission Thrust goal of having 50,000 SBC churches and church-type missions by the year 2000. Bold Mission Thrust is the denomination's plan to present the gospel to every person on earth before the turn of the century.

To facilitate sponsorship, the HMB is compiling a directory of specific information about places where new churches are needed. Many of the sites already identified are in areas where there are no existing SBC churches to provide sponsorship, said Floyd Tidsworth, HMB director of new church extension.

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Tidsworth encourages churches to use Start-a-Church Commitment Sunday as an opportunity to evaluate church starting needs in their communities. Churches located in areas already well represented by SBC congregations could look toward needs in unchurched areas within their state or beyond, he suggested.

Sponsorship can take one of three common forms, Tidsworth explained.

Primary sponsors are nearby churches that start and nurture a mission, holding membership rolls and assisting in major decisions and financial needs. Cosponsors are churches that contribute substantial finances for a mission located either nearby or far away, in conjunction with sponsorship by another church. Support sponsors are churches that contribute to a package of financial, prayer and volunteer support that is undergirded by a larger number of similar support sponsors.

Tidsworth cited several examples of requests already received in the HMB database of missions needing sponsors.

-- In Santa Teresa, N.M., Bible studies will begin soon in preparation for a church to provide a witness near a new border crossing into Mexico. The town's current population of 2,000 is projected to grow to 50,000 in 10 years.

-- In Chicagof Island, just west of Juneau, Alaska, additional sponsorship is needed for a pastor to develop a field of mission churches in several isolated fishing villages.

-- Near Tehachapi, Calif., plans are being made for a Southern Baptist church to serve a new community being built in an area eight miles from the nearest church.

-- In the fastest-growing county in Indiana, a church is needed in the Morse Lake resort community. Because of the affluence of the community, sponsors are needed to support expenses for a meeting place. Also, volunteers are needed to assist with door-to-door visitation.

-- In Round Lake, Ill., a church is needed for a rapidly growing suburban population. Now only 17 churches serve a population of 500,000 in Lake County Baptist Association.

Free materials for observing Start-a-Church Commitment Sunday are available from the HMB's customer service center: 1 800 634-2462.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Following is an update of a story dated 2/19/91. In a meeting held subsequent to the release of the story, new information was available. Please substitute this story for the previous one. This is being done with the consent of Robert H. Dilday who wrote the earlier story.

Spiritual awakening committee  
promises historic session

N-10

Baptist Press  
2/21/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--A committee hoping to spark spiritual awakening among Southern Baptists unveiled tentative plans Feb. 18 for "the most important meeting" in the denomination's history.

The 10-member spiritual awakening committee, named by Southern Baptist Convention President Morris H. Chapman, will coordinate a two-and-a-half-hour period on Wednesday evening of the SBC's annual meeting, June 4-6 in Atlanta, during which the convention will be called to prayer for spiritual awakening in America. The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, originally slated to present its report at that time, relinquished the time slot late last year. National revival is based on conditions found in II Chronicles 7:14.

"We believe this could be a very special changing time, not only in the life of Southern Baptists but ... to other people as well," said James B. Henry, the committee's chairman. Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla., spoke to a gathering of committee members, convention prayer leaders, state convention presidents and executive directors, and state paper editors just prior to the February meeting of the SBC Executive Committee.

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The prayer session, to be called "A Fresh Encounter with God," could be "the most important meeting Southern Baptists have ever had," said Henry.

He said the prayer session will feature "lots of scripture reading" preceded by trumpet blasts, which will signal participants to stand. He noted such practices frequently are recorded in the Old Testament.

In addition, he said, the session will allow time for individual and corporate prayer, confession of sins, testimonies and "praise" music.

Southern Baptists will be encouraged to contribute lists of sins "we, as a people and as a nation, have committed," said Henry. Several will be chosen and mentioned as representative examples,

Lists may be sent to committee member Jonya Davis, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 36, Russellville, Ark. 72801.

Sacrifice will be another theme, Willis said, as participants are asked to give to God anything -- their bodies, financial resources, time -- they have been withholding. Prayer and confession will be followed by celebratory congregational singing and a responsive reading expressing Southern Baptists' "renewal of our covenant" with God, he added.

In preparation for the prayer session, the committee will distribute numerous articles through Baptist Press, the denomination's news service, and directly to state Baptist newspapers. Also, churches will be asked to pray for the event both on May 19, Pentecost Sunday, and on the Wednesday night itself, when most Southern Baptist churches hold regularly scheduled prayer meetings. Presidents of the six Southern Baptist seminaries also will be requested to schedule prayer for the endeavor during chapel services and faculty meetings; all pre-convention events, such as the meetings of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference and the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, will be asked for prayer; and other denominations are being urged to pray for the SBC.

"We're asking God to break through in a dynamic way ...," said Henry. "The result will be revival, renewal and spiritual awakening that will spill over and touch not only Southern Baptists but other Christians."

Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, appointed the spiritual awakening committee in the fall of 1990 to provide heightened awareness to renewal within the convention. In addition to Henry and Davis, committee members include Lewis A. Drummond, C.B. Hogue, J.C. Mitchell, Jeannie Seaborn, Glenn Sheppard, Danny Watters, Wallace A.C. Williams and Fred H. Wolfe.

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CLC's Whitehead defends  
10 Commandments monument

By Tom Strode

N-00  
CLC

Baptist Press  
2/21/91

WASHINGTON (BP)--Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission General Counsel Michael Whitehead has written a letter to a Kansas county repudiating the contention of the American Civil Liberties Union that a courthouse monument engraved with the Ten Commandments is unconstitutional.

Whitehead wrote the Wyandotte County Commission Feb. 14 after a report of the ACLU's complaint about the monument was published in the Kansas City Star. The 6-foot-tall granite tablet, has been on public property in front of the county courthouse in Kansas City, Kan., for nearly 30 years. It was presented to the county by a local chapter of the Fraternal Order of Eagles, said Kay Nies, chairman of the Wyandotte County Commission.

"The Ten Commandments constitute the foundation moral code for Western Civilization. It is no impermissible 'establishment of religion' to recognize the Judeo-Christian moral ethic which states that it is wrong to lie, steal or kill," Whitehead's letter said.

Dick Kurtenbach, executive director of the ACLU of Kansas and Western Missouri, wrote to the county commission on Feb. 5. His letter said that the tablet "raises a significant First Amendment issue involving the prohibition of an establishment of religion by governments," the Star reported. David Waxse, general counsel of the ACLU chapter, told the Star that the solution is "to put that tablet on private property someplace."

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Nies said the interim county counselor had written the ACLU inviting officials from the chapter to express their concerns at a public meeting of the commission.

"We will do everything within the law of the land to keep the gift," she said. "We certainly are not rushing off to move (the monument) on the basis of one letter."

Whitehead told the county commission that the United States Supreme Court has disagreed frequently with what he called the ACLU's "strict separationist" view of the establishment clause of the First Amendment. He quoted portions of Chief Justice William Rehnquist's majority opinion in the 1984 Lynch v. Donnelly decision. Among excerpts included in the letter were:

"In every Establishment Clause case, we must reconcile the inescapable tension between the objective of preventing unnecessary intrusion of either the church or the state upon the other, and the reality that, as the Court has so often noted, total separation of the two is not possible.

"In the very week that Congress approved the Establishment Clause as part of the Bill of Rights for submission to the states, it enacted legislation providing for paid chaplains for the House and Senate....

"It would be difficult to find a more striking example of the accommodation of religious belief intended by the Framers.

"The very chamber in which oral arguments on this case were heard is decorated with a notable and permanent -- not seasonal -- symbol of religion: Moses with Ten Commandments.

"There are countless other illustrations of the Government's acknowledgment of our religious heritage and governmental sponsorship or graphic manifestations of that heritage....

"This history may help explain why the Court consistently has declined to take a rigid, absolutist view of the Establishment Clause."

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Real spiritual results  
follow fake beatings

By Charlotte Gearley

F-FMB

Baptist Press  
2/21/91

MUTOKO, Zimbabwe (BP)--"It was pretty hard getting beaten up several times a day!"

That startling report came from John Denhollem, a short-term mission volunteer from North Carolina, about his recent time in Zimbabwe.

But don't fit him for a martyr's crown yet. The "beatings" were just for play -- even though the work was real.

Denhollem was part of a 15-member team from Providence Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C., which spoke to more than 20,000 people in 28 schools during a two-week visit to the southern Africa country. By conservative estimates, at least 2,000 made professions of faith in Christ, missionaries said.

The volunteers gave their Christian testimonies through interpreters and told Bible stories through drama. That's how Denhollem, cast as the victim of thieves in the story of the Good Samaritan, got "beaten up" so often.

The group stayed in three villages and became proficient at eating sadza, a thick cornmeal mush that is the staple of the local diet, with their hands.

"We were overwhelmed by the love of the people toward us," one team member said. "They're so warm and friendly."

Those feelings flowed both directions.

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The Sunday after the Americans returned to the United States, the worship service at Mutoko Baptist Church was dominated by testimonies of gratitude for them. "I never thought white people could come and live with us black people," one new Christian said. "But they did and I thank God for them."

No doubt Denhollem felt it was worth getting beaten up after all.

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Cearley is press representative for Southern Baptist missionaries in Zimbabwe.

Ministry multiplies  
for stateside chaplains

By Sarah Zimmerman

F-10/11/91

Baptist Press  
2/21/91

SAVANNAH, Ga. (BP)--Chaplain Brett Travis easily remembers the first time he cried about a situation related to Operation Desert Storm.

A soldier about to board a plane for Saudi Arabia had written a stack of letters, but he could not find envelopes or stamps for them while he was in training.

"He gave me an address and asked me to mail the letters, one every day, until they ran out. He asked me to write 'I love you' on the back of every envelope because that is what he always did."

Capt. Travis knows that will not be the only experience that moves him to tears.

Travis is assigned to a military intelligence unit based at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Ga. Typically, 33 chaplains are assigned to Hunter and nearby Fort Stewart. Now he says there are only five active duty chaplains working at the two posts.

Though the number of troops assigned to his post dropped from 4,000 to 1,000 since August, Travis' ministry mushroomed as he counsels with families of deployed soldiers. All the while, Travis is aware that he may be assigned to Saudi Arabia at any time.

Issues Travis faces run the gamut. Marital separation triggers a grief process similar to the grief caused by the death of a family member, he says. He also encourages spouses to be faithful to their marriage commitment because "when the void is there, the temptation is there." He has dealt with cases of child abuse stemming from the parent's anger over the separation.

Major John O. Ford, the officer who is second in command at Hunter, describes Travis as "a friend to all." Ford says Travis stays so busy, "I have to tell him to take a day off."

Time off is difficult for Travis to find. Every other Saturday he leads a support group for families of people stationed in the Middle East. On Sunday, he preaches at the post chapel where attendance has dropped from 225 to 140 because of the number of people serving in the Persian Gulf.

Travis says one of his most useful tools in ministering to families is a study of Philipians, which he says demonstrates how to have joy in times of crisis.

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'Get on with  
the job:' Leavell

By Breena Kent Paine

F-10  
NOBTS

Baptist Press  
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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"As long as Baptists stay right with the book in our belief in it and our practice of it as best we can, I will be a Baptist until the day I die," Landrum P. Leavell II said during a recent chapel service at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Offering reasons "Why I Am a Southern Baptist," the seminary president told students and faculty, "My personal sense of integrity permits me to accept no authority other than the Lordship of Jesus Christ -- not a board, not a council, not a group, not a self-appointed individual. ... I look to nothing other than the inspired word of God. It is our sole rule for faith and practice."

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Although he was raised in a Southern Baptist family, Leavell has studied the doctrines of many other denominations. "If I could find another denomination that I believed honestly, candidly was closer to the New Testament than Baptists are, I would consider becoming a member of that group. But I've not been able to find such.

"I remain a Baptist," he said, "because I am convinced that we're aligned with the Word of God. Now, we don't always live like it. I'm not here today to tell you that Southern Baptists are perfect, ... but we're closer to the New Testament than any other group I know anything about."

In addition, having studied in Southern Baptist institutions and now serving as president of one, Leavell said he is convinced, in the words of evangelist Billy Graham, "the Cooperative Program is the greatest means ever devised by a church for distributing one's tithe."

"Why are we able to offer fully accredited masters' and doctor's degrees with no tuition costs? Because Southern Baptists through the years, being a missions-minded people, have said continually, those who are called out of our churches we are obligated to educate.

"Our schools, our hospitals, our seminaries, our homes for the aged, our children's homes, our universities, all stand in mute testimony of the blessings of God upon Southern Baptists.

"Those blessings will continue in direct proportion to your faithfulness as you go out from these halls into ministry," Leavell continued. "Whether our denomination fragments, or flakes off, or splits, or whatever, is largely going to be a result of the stance that you take and a reflection of the appreciation you have for what has been provided for you.

"I'm a Baptist also because of the constant emphasis on reaching human beings with the gospel for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ," he added. "Why should a preacher ever be down-hearted? The whole world is out there waiting.

"I've been a pastor of feuding, fussing Southern Baptist churches. I know what it's like. But you bring enough new people in there through their faith in Jesus Christ, and with the excitement of conversion, I guarantee you it will transform a congregation," said Leavell, who has been pastor and interim pastor in churches throughout Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. "If you have troubled baptismal waters, the chances are you're not going to have a troubled membership.

"We've grown strong as Southern Baptists with a steady diet of evangelism and missions. No other denomination anywhere can match our record in these categories across many, many years. Southern Baptists have characteristically been the fastest growing denomination with the greatest missionary outreach."

However, he continued, "Just as surely as we continue to feud and fuss, point fingers and call names, God's going to take his hand off of us, and God's going to find a group that will be obedient to him, even though they may not be as close to the New Testament as we say we are. God's not going to wait around on us all day.

"We're not going to stand still as Baptists," Leavell concluded. "We're either going to move up, or we're going to begin to fall back. With 70 percent of our churches plateaued or declining, you're the ones who are going to have to do something about it, and it will happen when you become obedient to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and get on with the job.

"We've got the ball, but we're going to have to advance it rapidly," he said. "Whatever we intend to do for Jesus, we must do quickly."