

(BP)**BAPTIST PRESS**
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355

February 26, 1991

91-28

'Love in every language,'
SBC mission leaders urge

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

CHICAGO (BP)--While parochialism could prevent Southern Baptists from reaching their greatest domestic mission field, speaking "love in every language" could make a difference, two missions leaders suggested.

Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis and Woman's Missionary Union Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien spoke about the importance of language missions during an HMB conference in Chicago.

"I believe reaching ethnic America is the greatest opportunity afforded Southern Baptists in our history," Lewis declared. "I see a field white unto harvest.

Lewis said Southern Baptists were hindered during their first 100 years by a regionalism that prevented working north of the Mason-Dixon line.

Although the convention has expanded into every state, many Baptists remain chained by a parochial attitude that the gospel is only for English-speaking Anglos in America, he said.

"It is frivolous rhetoric to talk about winning America to Christ and not give adequate attention to language missions," Lewis said. "We fly in the face of the Great Commission when we practice any kind of selective evangelism."

While words are important in spreading the gospel, sometimes spirit is more important, said O'Brien, a former missionary to Indonesia.

Slightly changing the title of a popular contemporary Christian song, O'Brien urged Southern Baptists to adopt the motto, "Love in every language, fluently spoken here."

SBC President Morris Chapman also addressed the annual meeting of language missions leaders.

"God wants every man and woman, boy and girl of every call and culture to know that Jesus Christ is the savior of the world," said Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church in Wichita Falls, Texas.

Alluding to the biblical admonition to take the gospel into Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, he said: "Sometimes we think of missions in terms of work that is done on foreign fields and fail to see our Jerusalem. It is imperative that we not overlook our nation because our Jerusalem is becoming Judea and Samaria."

--30--

Russian pastor urges
SBC to sponsor refugees

By Jim Newton

N-HMB

Baptist Press
2/26/91

CHICAGO (BP)--A Russian Baptist pastor urged Southern Baptists to support missions among Russian people at home and abroad during a time of openness created by glasnost and perestroika.

Sergei Nikolaev, pastor of the Temple of the Gospel in downtown Leningrad, issued a plea for Southern Baptists to sponsor and resettle thousands of refugees from the Soviet Union who are immigrating to America.

Nikolaev, pastor of one of the world's fastest growing churches, also told the 34th annual SBC language missions leadership conference that his church had grown from only 35 members to more than 1,000 members in one year.

--more--

4/20/71
The church meets in a 100-year-old former Russian Orthodox church building that had been closed from 1937 to 1989, when Nikolaev got permission to start a new downtown Baptist church.

Last year, four teams of students enlisted by Baptist Student Unions in the United States worked as volunteers to refurbish and repair the building. The SBC Foreign Mission Board provided \$150,000 toward the renovation.

In November, the church received permission to broadcast its worship service on Leningrad's cable television system reaching 100,000 homes.

While Nikolaev is excited about the new freedom for evangelism and worship in the Soviet Union, he warned that restrictions which existed in the past might be reinstated.

"Don't make the mistake of believing that communism has failed," he warned. "This is a dangerous illusion."

He said there could be a military takeover at any time. The Soviet people are in turmoil because there is no bread, no food, nothing to buy, he observed.

"Thousands of people are trying to escape," he said. "Most of them want to come to the United States because they have heard your propaganda for years on the Voice of America which portrays the United States as a paradise on earth."

Recently, President George Bush approved new quotas for the Immigration and Naturalization Service which will allow 60,000 refugees from the Soviet Union to enter the United States each year.

More than 600,000 Soviets have applied for refugee resettlement, including almost half a million Soviet Jews, said David Terry, associate director of the Home Mission Board's language church extension division.

There currently is an urgent need to resettle a group of 21 Russians, including a Baptist pastor and his family, Terry said.

Lisa Taylor of Fort Worth, sponsorship development consultant for the Southern Baptist Refugee Resettlement office, said there is tremendous potential for starting Russian Baptist churches among the new refugees and immigrants who come to the U.S.

Taylor, who speaks Russian fluently, predicted dozens, even hundreds, of Russian Baptist churches could result from the new wave of immigration from the USSR.

Currently, there are 13 Russian and Ukrainian Baptist churches affiliated with the SBC in America, Taylor said.

She cautioned Americans to be patient and understanding with Russian refugees they sponsor, because they come from an entirely different mentality, culture and value system.

George Boltnew, president of the Russian-Ukrainian Evangelical Baptist Union based in Union, N.C., observed that America has a very poor record of reaching Russian and Slavic people who come to America as immigrants.

"Americans are willing to send missionaries around the world, but do not seem to be willing to reach with the gospel the ethnic people who live right next door because they are so different," Boltnew said.

Nikolaev urged Southern Baptists to overcome stereotypical images that all Russians are poor, ignorant, uneducated and Red (Communists).

"Don't look at the new Russian immigrants as second class citizens," he said. "They have been second class citizens for more than 72 years" under Communist rule.

"We have a Communist administration, but we do not have a communist nation," Nikolaev declared. He pointed out only 7 to 8 percent of the population belongs to the Communist Party, compared to 33 percent who are members of Orthodox and Protestant churches.

He also urged Southern Baptists to work with Russian Baptists in evangelizing the Soviet Union, and to help develop follow-up programs that tie results of evangelism in Russia to local churches.

He pointed out there are 356 para-church, non-denominational organizations working in the Soviet Union, but few of them are trying to help existing Russian Baptist churches.

"If Southern Baptists don't help, in five years we will have 10,000 sects in the Soviet Union," he predicted.

He urged Baptists in America to help equip and train Russian immigrants who come to America in theology and evangelism with the hope that they might someday return to the Soviet Union to reach their own people.

"Now is the time to prepare for the greatest ministry opportunity we might ever face in the Soviet Union," he said.

--30--

Sponsors desperately
needed for refugees

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

Baptist Press
2/26/91

CHICAGO (BP)--Sponsors are desperately needed for refugees coming to America, a representative of the Southern Baptist immigration and refugee service said.

Somchit Vang of the immigration and refugee service asked state language missions leaders to encourage churches to sponsor families fleeing their homelands due to religious and political oppression. Vang spoke to the group during their annual leadership conference in Chicago.

The refugee resettlement office is a subsidiary of the Home Mission Board's language church extension division. Last year the office resettled 746 refugees.

Sponsors are needed to assist a similar number this year, she said, but there are currently no potential sponsors waiting to receive the next influx of refugees.

The majority of refugees to be resettled are Soviets, Vietnamese, Laotians and Eastern Europeans, Vang said. There is also a special need for sponsors for Ethiopians.

Sunday school classes, missions organizations, entire churches or associations may sponsor a single family, or several churches may jointly sponsor a family, Vang explained.

Sponsors are asked to secure initial living quarters and provide furniture, food, clothing and household goods for their refugee families. Additionally, sponsors may need to assist the newcomers in finding jobs, enrolling children in schools and filing paperwork required by the government.

The commitment sponsors make to refugees should last up to one year, although the first months are the most critical. The refugee resettlement office asks sponsors to pay rent for refugee families for at least the first three months and then phase down support as the family's income increases.

As Christians show compassion to refugees, the newcomers often become receptive to the gospel, said David Terry, associate director of the HMB language church extension division. "This is not just a social service, but a means to address the spiritual needs of refugees as well," he said.

There are currently 300 ethnic congregations in the Southern Baptist Convention started as a result of refugee resettlement, Terry said.

Individuals or churches willing to sponsor refugees should contact their state missions office or the HMB's immigration and refugee service.

--30--

Marty says spirituality is
bigger problem than humanism

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

CHICAGO (BP)--Shallow interest in religion that does not lead to commitment is a greater problem for the church than secular humanism, Martin Marty said.

Marty, professor of American Christianity at the University of Chicago, spoke to Southern Baptist state missions leaders during the SBC Home Mission Board's annual extension section leadership conference in Chicago.

"Our biggest problem is not secular humanism, but interest in religion that doesn't turn into commitment," Marty said.

Secular humanism is a powerful symbol Christians can easily identify as an enemy, he explained. However, the number of Americans who would identify themselves as secularists is "statistically insignificant."

In reality, interest in spiritual things is increasing, Marty claimed. "American people are more ready to talk about their religiosity, but this is mainly in their private lives."

Spirituality has become a consumer item in America, the Lutheran minister said.

He cited statistics from polls to say that about 90 percent of Americans say they believe in God or are open to spiritual things.

Many Americans claim to be spiritual but not religious, he added. The faith of many modern Americans is a "vague, oblong blur" that gives them "no more than a warm tingle in the bathtub," he charged.

"When someone claims they are spiritual, it doesn't mean your work is finished; it means your work is just beginning."

It is a paradox that Americans "like our presidents to be religious but not to use their religion in making decisions," Marty said. "We like them to be religious in their private lives."

He cited the example of President Bush attending church the day after the ground war began in Kuwait. Americans liked to see him expressing a private faith, but would be uncomfortable if he declared that his private faith would form the basis for public decisions.

"As religious as America might be in its private life, its religion is an invisible religion," Marty said.

The question churches must help people face is how to express a private faith in a public way, he suggested.

While some Christians may express their faith through ethical actions in business, "witness is a lot harder thing," he said.

--30--

Church planting could improve
American morality, Chaney says

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

Baptist Press
2/26/91

CHICAGO (BP)--Starting more churches could reverse America's moral decline, the leader of Southern Baptist church extension efforts declared.

Charles Chaney also called on Southern Baptists to increase their church starts from an average of three per day to four per day.

"The best thing we can do to halt North America's slide into moral chaos is to plant Bible-preaching, soul-winning churches in all segments of society," said Chaney, vice president of the Home Mission Board's extension section.

--more--

"Only by multiplying colonies of righteousness all across this continent can this moral decline be stopped.

"If the multiplication of disciples and churches does not affect society, something is drastically wrong with the gospel we preach and practice or the way it is applied, Chaney added.

Chaney made the statements to Southern Baptist church extension leaders during their annual meeting in Chicago.

"The force of our moral influence, even in the decade of the evangelicals, has waned," he declared. "We no longer have the moral clout to impact behavior in society."

That decline in moral influence is related to a decline in the proportionate number of churches serving the American population, Chaney explained.

Citing statistics from the Gallup organization, Chaney said Americans who worship together are more likely to reject drugs, be more productive at work and show a higher commitment to children and family life. He added that churchgoers annually contribute twice as much to human services as do corporations and foundations.

The Christian church impacts morality because it gives people a sense of purpose and worth, he added.

"The abuse of children is rising alarmingly. What should we expect? If a child can be destroyed violently while in the womb, how is it different six weeks or six months later when the baby is in the crib?

"The prevailing secular world view says that man and this universe are only an accident. No purposeful creator exists. Human life has no ultimate value."

While church membership does not make a person a Christian, statistics show that the more churches there are, the more people become Christians, Chaney said.

Population growth in America has so outpaced church growth that America has become one of the world's greatest mission fields, he added.

With an estimated 172 million unchurched people, "there are more lost people in this nation than in the total populations of all but four nations of the world.

"This nation is not a Christian nation that needs to be fixed, but is a mission field that needs to be evangelized thoroughly," he said. "That can only be done if our churches are multiplied.

"If all 360,000 churches of all Protestant denominations in America today were suddenly vibrantly alive, if genuine spiritual awakening came to every one, not enough churches exist to adequately reach the number of lost people in the land. Such evangelism would require the that the average church size in America increase by more than 300 percent."

Further, Chaney said, most of those existing churches do not identify with the segments of society where the greatest need for the gospel exists.

"Most of those 360,000 churches, whether black or white, speak English as their heart language and aspire, if they have not arrived, to be middle class. Proportionately, most unsaved people in America may not speak English as their first language and may not live a middle-class lifestyle."

Chaney admitted the Bible contains no mandate from Jesus Christ that explicitly says, "Go, plant churches."

"However, when I look at what the risen and ascended Christ continued to do and teach ... I find that the empowered believers made disciples, met needs and gathered new congregations wherever they made new disciples. Nothing is more the essence of the mission of the church than planting congregations of believers wherever they are needed."

Southern Baptist network
formed for child advocacy

By Pat Cole

N-CO (SBTS)

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A group of Southern Baptists has formed a network aimed at encouraging churches to be advocates for children.

The Southern Baptist Child Advocacy Network will try to motivate Southern Baptist churches to be advocates for children both within the context of church ministries and in the larger society, according to Diana Richmond Garland, a church social work professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and an organizer of the group.

"The purpose of advocacy is to protect children, help all children achieve their God-given potential and integrate children into the life and worship of the church community," she said.

Churches can be advocates for children through prayer and Bible study about children's issues, befriending children, "pleading the case" for children within social structures that impact them, mobilizing resources, educating the church and community about children's needs, and programming for and in behalf of children, Garland said.

The idea of forming the child advocacy network surfaced at an October meeting hosted by Southern Seminary's Gheens Center for Christian Family Ministry for denominational workers who deal with children's issues. The group reconvened at Southern Seminary in February and decided to move forward with plans for the network.

Staff members from the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board, Sunday School Board, Brotherhood Commission and the Christian Life Commission are involved in the network. Representatives from state Baptist convention children's homes and the women's department of the Baptist World Alliance as well as Southern Baptist churches have also agreed to participate.

Some ways the network may promote child advocacy include developing resources for churches, seeking ways to include child advocacy in the curricula of church programs and encouraging churches to focus on child advocacy during Children's Day worship services, said Garland, director of the Gheens Center. Network participants have also discussed holding a major conference in 1993 on children and the church, she said.

Statistics that address the overall welfare of children in the United States "have never looked so negative" in 30 years of monitoring, Garland said.

She said statistics reveal:

- The U.S. ranks 20th among nations in its infant mortality rate.
- 30 percent of American children receive inadequate medical care.
- Reported cases of child abuse tripled between 1976 and 1985. The increase is probably due to both higher rates of reporting and an increase in incidence, Garland said.
- 30 percent of children fail to finish high school despite an increase in per capita expenditure in public education. For non-whites the rate is 40 percent.
- 500,000 children are homeless and typically receive neither health care nor education.

The call to the church to get involved, in my estimation, couldn't be clearer," Garland said. "We need to help churches find ways to be advocates for children."

Christians should work
for clean environment

By Terri Lackey

F-SSB

ESTES PARK, Colo. (BP)--Just as Christians are responsible for keeping their bodies healthy and fit, so are they responsible for protecting the environment, a university professor of recreation said.

"The world is God's creation. He created it and said it was good, and then he gave us custodianship of that," said Sharon Baack, assistant professor of recreation at Southwest Missouri State University at Springfield.

While keeping the environment clean should become a responsibility of Christians, it is not their first responsibility, Baack said.

"The environment should not become the focus of what we do, because that focus should be a lost world," she said. "But we as Christians should make custodianship of the world our Lord has made a top concern."

By showing concern for the environment, Christians can communicate "a little of who we are."

Baack led conferences during Church Recreation Lab at Estes Park YMCA Center in Estes Park, Colo., Feb. 22-27. Rec Labs are sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church recreation department.

Baack, a member and former recreation minister at First Baptist Church of Springfield, said keeping the environment clean can come in the form of a personal commitment or a group commitment, possibly a program of the church.

Personal involvement includes making oneself aware of the opportunities available and then taking action.

For example, Baack said, people could use coffee mugs rather than Styrofoam cups, or they could drive less and walk more. They could buy more gas-efficient vehicles or begin recycling in small steps.

"Start recycling on a small level. Sort out at least newspapers," she urged.

Churches who want to start an environmental awareness program should not do it by "beating members over the head with it," Baack said. "Use a positive rather than a negative approach. Emphasize that we are Christians and ask them what we can do to care for the beauty of this world."

Churches could either start small by recycling in bits and pieces, she suggested, or "go all out" with a recycling or environmental emphasis weekend.

That might include planting trees in a certain area or selecting a park or a street and picking up trash, she said.

Churches choosing to start slow should begin with an awareness program, educating church members about what they can do.

"Walk through your church and see what you could begin recycling," she suggested. "Begin turning out lights. Put a recycling bin beside coke machines. Save computer paper. Just sit down and brainstorm materials that could be recycled."

Churches could begin to think of ways to use the materials they are recycling to benefit some church programs, Baack said.

"RAS and GAS could raise money for missions or attending conferences," she said.

Neighborhood clean-up efforts could even be used as an outreach tool, she said.

--more--

"If your church decides to have a neighborhood clean-up day, invite a non-Christian friend along who you know is concerned about the environment. This would really share a positive witness."

What a church can do with environmental clean-up efforts is only limited to the creativity of its members, Baack said. "Practical and useful ideas and applications for recycling will make it easier for people to become involved."

The key to beginning an environmental awareness program is changing mindsets and building attitudes, she said.

"Church members must be convinced there is no small effort when it comes to saving the environment."

She listed hints for saving the environment:

- Reduce purchases of single, non-recyclable items and those with excessive packaging.
- Purchase soft drinks and milk in returnable containers.
- Avoid products that are disposable, especially diapers, razors, lighters and flashlights.
- Avoid using Styrofoam products, plastic tableware, plastic straws, paper napkins, cups or plates.
- Use biodegradable garbage bags.
- Recycle paper, glass, aluminum and plastic.
- Reuse items, including aluminum foil, plastic wrap, storage bags and shopping bags.
- Pick up litter.
- Return junk mail to sender. Request to be taken off list.
- Buy materials packaged in recyclable materials.
- Keep a compost pile.
- Make crafts out of recycled materials.

--30--

Recreators must change
programs to fit society

By Terri Lackey

F-SSB

Baptist Press
2/26/91

ESTES PARK, Colo. (BP)--Church recreators who ignore societal changes that can impact their program's effectiveness will likely find themselves with a program but no people, a professor of recreation said.

"Is your program the same as it has always been or are you changing with the social changes?" asked Bob Raus, professor of church recreation at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Raus lead a session for church staff recreation ministers attending Church Recreation Lab, Feb. 22-27 at the Estes Park, Colo., YMCA facilities. Rec labs are sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church recreation department.

Raus attempted to identify trends in recreation through the year 2000.

"As I begin to try and predict, I want you to understand it is an art, rather than a science," Raus said. "I am always reminded what we were saying in the 60s would occur in the 80s." For example, he said social scientists predicted the 1980s would include 20-hour work weeks and an emphasis on leisure.

--more--

"What actually happened is that we seem to have about an hour less of leisure per day than we have ever had," Raus said.

New areas of interests in recreation are continually cropping up, said Raus, but determining whether these are fads or trends is difficult.

"You probably have seen these in-line skates. Will these go the way of the hoola-hoop, or are they here to stay?"

One rule to remember, Raus said, is "anything that doesn't seem to meet a human need (such as success, security, recognition or response) might not last very long.

Specific trends recreators might watch for, he said, are the popularity of the arts, the cocooning phenomenon in America (trend toward enjoying leisure time at home) and population changes.

The largest population group of people going into the year 2000 will be the middle adults or baby boomers, said Raus.

"The very group we neglect the most in our churches is the middle-aged adult group," he said.

Another cultural trend to watch for, Raus said, is the change in ethnicity of the world's population.

"The fastest growing groups are the southeast Asians and the Hispanics," he noted.

Recreators should be aware of the culturization of Americans, specifically the baby boomers, and offer programs that will appeal to them, said Raus. For example, he said more money in America is now being spent on the arts than on sports.

"Baby boomers are more affluent with more discretionary money, and they are more interested in cultural activities. Through your program, you should promote trips to museums and plays or do something to recognize their interests in creative activities such as hobbies or collections."

He suggested Americans are cocooning as a way to ward off additional stress. Therefore, home exercise training or wellness programs for total mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health could be implemented, he said.

Some lifestyle changes church recreators might look for in the adult population within the next five to 10 years include: the need for speed (the faster events happen the better), the need for change, even if it comes in small increments, and flexibility as in the amount of hours a recreation facility stays open to accommodate its visitors, said Randy Lanford, promotion/editorial processes coordinator in the church recreation department.

People are looking for convenience, practical, experimentation in recreation, choices or more than one option and performance or delivery of what has been promised, he said.

Church recreators must search for new ways to reach the people if the old ways are no longer working, Raus said.

"Your programs are going to die if you don't meet the needs of the people," he said.

--30--

Renew commitment
to CP, Fagan says

By Breena Kent Paine

F-CO
NOBTS

Baptist Press
2/26/91

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Southern Baptists need to renew their commitment to the Cooperative Program, the president of the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission told students and faculty at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary during a recent chapel service.

"There's a task God has given to each of us that is bigger than the local church fellowship," A.R. Fagan said. It is "joining hands with another church to do the job neither of them could do separately.

--more--

"On an average, Christians, and Southern Baptists in particular give about two percent of their per-capita income to support their churches," Fagan said. "This is reflected by 20 percent of all church members giving 80 percent of funds received; 30 percent giving 20 percent; and 50 percent giving nothing.

In his opinion, Fagan said, the person who gives nothing "is either dead or he has never been born again."

"We need to have a new realization personally of who God is," he explained. "God created the heavens and the earth. ... The reason I emphasize that is because that means the earth is his and the fullness thereof. It belongs to God.

"Until we get a new concept of God," Fagan said, "we're going to stay right there in the dead center of where we have been all along -- 50 percent giving nothing, 30 percent giving whatever change is in their pockets."

Second, Baptists need to understand the doctrine of man, "that we are created in the image of God."

"An image is not the real thing, but it is a reminder of the real thing," Fagan explained. The reason man was created was because "God wanted a representative in this world."

"I would suggest to you that anytime you fail to remind this world of God, ... you have not accomplished the purpose for which you were born."

In addition, God created man to "have dominion" over the things of the earth, he said. That means, "we are to be in charge of things, rather than letting things control us."

Trouble with credit cards "will thwart your relationship with God and what God wants you to be unless you can control that little piece of plastic."

Third, Fagan said Christians should remember the doctrine of sin: "taking what you know belongs to God and using it as if it belongs to you."

"I believe when God called, 'Adam, where art thou?' it wasn't because he didn't know where he was. It was because he wanted Adam to know where he was.

"Pain and suffering, thorns and thistles, ... have grown out of our poor stewardship," Fagan continued, "but one of these days, it's going to be different because of the remedy God has provided" -- salvation through Jesus.

"Being saved is to redeem that which is lost," he said. "What was lost? That relationship God created man to have with him in this world.

"There is a growing need for some basic understanding of what the Cooperative Program means," he continued. Before the Cooperative Program was established, often 50 percent of funds raised went to pay for the fund raiser rather than to take care of the need.

Now, however, "a Cooperative Program dollar is a part of the offering plate dollar. Each church decides for itself what part that will be," explained Fagan, a former pastor. "When it leaves the church, it is handled by the state convention administratively," then a part of that percentage is passed on to other SBC agencies and institutions.

"If the dollar stays in the state, regardless of what you call it, it is not the Cooperative Program," emphasized Fagan, former president of the Florida Baptist Convention. "The state convention cannot design and adopt the budget for the Southern Baptist Convention."

However, he concluded, "you don't have any Cooperative Program dollars to give unless you have stewards in the local church."