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91-79

EDITORS' NOTE: The planned visit by President George Bush to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 6 in Atlanta will be the second time he has addressed a Southern Baptist gathering.

As vice president in 1982, just prior to the SBC meeting in New Orleans, Bush spoke to the annual Pastors' Conference.

Speaking during the opening session of the pastors' meeting, Bush defended the religious right movement. In a news conference he defended President Reagan's support for a constitutional amendment permitting group prayers in public schools.

Bush also restated his support for tuition tax credits to parents of children enrolled in private and parochial schools.

ACTS to provide live and delayed coverage of the SBC annual meeting

N-CO

Baptist Press
5/24/91

ATLANTA (BP)--A combination of live and delayed coverage of selected portions of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting from Atlanta June 4-6 will be broadcast on the American Christian Television System network.

The Call to Spiritual Awakening will be broadcast live Wednesday, June 5, beginning at 6:45 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. The event will last two hours and 40 minutes.

Jack Johnson, president of the Radio and Television Commission, which operates ACTS, expressed "hope that Baptists and people of other denominations who believe in the power of prayer will gather together to watch the telecast on the network or direct from the Galaxy III satellite."

Also scheduled to be broadcast live are the Baptist Hour 50th anniversary program Thursday, June 6, at 10:45 a.m. (EDT) followed by a message by President George Bush, which will close the convention. The Baptist Hour program and the address by President Bush will be broadcast live both on ACTS and FamilyNet, also operated by the RTVC.

ACTS is primarily a cable-delivered network and is carried by more than 750 cable systems across the nation. FamilyNet is carried by more than 70 independent television stations.

Speaking of the Call to Spiritual Awakening, Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla., and chairman of the group planning the event, noted the ACTS live broadcast "will provide churches the opportunity to participate in the service with their own prayer groups and to hear the messages and the music."

Churches with satellite dishes that can be tuned to get the program would receive it on Galaxy III, transponder 7 (seven). The Galaxy III arc position is 93.5 degrees west.

Churches that don't have satellite dishes might want to meet in small groups at the homes of members who do have satellite dishes or cable TV to participate in the event through the live broadcast June 5, said Avery Willis, manager of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's adult section of the discipleship training department and who is involved in planning the Call to Spiritual Awakening.

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Convention highlight to be taped and broadcast later -- all ACTS -- and dates and times of the broadcasts (all EDT) are:

-- The SBC president's address by Morris H. Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas; Wednesday, June 5, 1-1:30 p.m.

-- The convention sermon by Tom D. Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., Thursday, June 6, 1-1:30 p.m.

-- Rebroadcasts of the Baptist Hour anniversary program; Thursday, June 13, 1-1:30 p.m. and 8:30-9 p.m.

-- Rebroadcasts of the special address by President Bush; Thursday, June 6 at 8:30-9 p.m. and Friday, June 7 at 1:00-1:30 p.m. and at 8:3-9 p.m.

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Accrediting team
visits Southern Seminary

By David R. Wilkinson

Baptist Press
5/24/91

N- CO
SBTS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Following a fact-finding visit from an accrediting evaluation team, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt expressed optimism about the outcome of an investigation related to the seminary's accreditation.

A four-member team representing the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools made a "focused visit" to the Louisville, Ky., campus May 21-22. The team met with seminary administrators and faculty and trustee representatives.

Honeycutt described the sessions as "constructive, positive and cordial." "I do not wish to presume on the report of the evaluation team," he said, "but I am optimistic."

ATS officials indicated a report from the visiting team may be completed in time for consideration by the agency's commission on accrediting at its meeting June 10-12.

The "focused visit" was authorized by the commission on accrediting following a review of an ATS staff member's report on a preliminary fact-finding visit to the seminary campus last November.

Accrediting issues raised in that report dealt primarily with two 1990 actions of the seminary's board of trustees: adoption of the Southern Baptist Convention's 1987 Peace Committee Report as a guideline for employment, promotion and tenure of all faculty and approval of a policy allowing use of tape recorders in all seminary classrooms. In both cases, the ATS staff report questioned whether the board had moved beyond its normal policy-making function and potentially damaged the school's academic environment.

At its annual meeting in April, however, the board effectively rescinded both actions. Trustees voted overwhelmingly to replace the Peace Committee Report with a "Covenant" document drafted by a special committee of trustees and faculty. The document had received faculty approval two weeks earlier.

In an effort to ease tensions between faculty and administration and a conservative majority of trustees, the covenant plots a more conservative course for the 132-year-old seminary. It pledges the seminary will seek "balanced representation" on the faculty through "intentional employment of conservative evangelical scholars for future openings."

At their meeting, trustees also voted to drop the requirement that tape recorders be allowed in all classes, opting instead to leave decisions about a tape recording policy in the hands of the administration. The seminary previously had no policy prohibiting use of tape recorders, leaving the question to the discretion of the professor.

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5/24/91
"In addition to the specific actions of the board in April, I think the commitment by both trustees and faculty to work together to resolve our differences has been evident," Honeycutt said. "I am aware that the covenant is only a beginning, and it will require a lot of nourishment to make it work. Yet I remain hopeful about the opportunity we have to deal honestly and creatively with the issues before us in ways that will strengthen rather than harm this seminary."

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Middle East correspondent Mike Creswell and photographer Paul Obregon accompanied a Southern Baptist relief team into Iran, where the team aided Kurdish refugees from Iraq.

Baptist team in Iran
feeds 10,000 Kurds

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press
5/24/91

MARIVAN, Iran (BP)--Eager smiles lit the faces of Kurdish refugees May 21 at the Dolenov camp in Iran, near the Iraqi border, as they carried off pots heaping with rice freshly cooked by a Southern Baptist relief team.

"Soo pas," Kurdish for "thank you," the workers heard repeatedly as they handed out the food.

It was the first day the team, working with Iranian Christians, was able to distribute food after a series of delays.

It also was the first time a group of Americans has entered Iran to work with Christians, Iranian church leaders said, since Islamic revolution in 1979 brought the Ayatollah Khomeini to power. They speculate it may be the first time a group of Americans has entered Iran for any reason, although individuals have visited.

Team members toiled through the preceding night and most of the day to prepare the rice, enriched with lentils and raisins. A group of Iranian Christians in training for response to future disasters joined the effort. So did scores of Kurdish refugees of all ages, who helped clean the rice and raisins, operate cooking stoves and clean utensils.

Iranian government authorities who visited the camp during the first day of cooking said they were pleased with the project. They ordered a concrete slab be quickly prepared to provide a better platform for rice cleaning operations. Meat provided by the government for the following day's meals arrived the evening of May 21.

En route to the camp, team members drew curious stares from Iranians unaccustomed to seeing Americans. But Kurdish refugees, camp authorities and Iranian soldiers providing security welcomed them. Ironically, the valley where the camp is located was the site of a battle between Iranians and Kurds several years ago that left more than 1,000 Iranian soldiers dead.

Before the feeding began, tensions developed as some local officials were stunned to find Americans had been invited by national authorities to enter the area. Signs along the roads and on buildings in the camp -- symbols of an earlier era -- proclaimed "Death to America."

More than two weeks elapsed between the time the Southern Baptist volunteers left the United States and the day they served their first meal because of a multitude of technical problems and delays en route to Iran.

But all agreed the unbridled joy of the Kurds upon receiving food made the wait worthwhile.

"It was a wonderful, warming experience! You knew our prayers were being answered," said Larry Blanchard, an electrician from Lindale, Texas, as he reflected on seeing the long lines of people receiving food.

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But he added, "When I saw those ladies carrying off pots of rice, my heart was still hurting for them, because they're still homeless, hurting people."

A Kurdish immigrant to the United States who accompanied the feeding team told fellow Kurds: "These people are here because of Jesus. He loves us. We know Jesus too. But not like they do. We should really think about this. We need to know him like they do."

Working in cooperation with the Iranian government, the Southern Baptist team was assigned to the Dolenov camp. An estimated 15,000 Kurds have lived there for more than a month after fleeing from Iraqi forces following the failed Kurdish revolt in Iraq. Iranian officials estimated more than 1 million Kurds fled into Iran's western mountains near the Iraqi border.

The Dolenov camp is located in a narrow, rocky valley at an altitude of about 5,000 to 6,000 feet in isolated mountains. It's a four-hour drive on winding mountainous roads from Sanandaj, the nearest city with an airport.

Snow and ice that plagued the Kurds on their arrival have given way to searingly hot days and cold, windy nights. Snow still lies on surrounding slopes in a dry, rocky setting reminiscent of southern Colorado or northern New Mexico. High winds created dust storms and damaged a canvas cover sheltering the cooking area.

The Southern Baptist workers live in tents near the cooking area, getting a taste of refugee life. But the situation is changing.

Even as team members served their first meals, busloads of Kurds began heading back to Iraq. They're pinning hopes for future peace on accords with Iraq ultimately expected to establish regional autonomy for the Kurds.

The changing conditions leave undecided how long the Dolenov food project will continue, or if Southern Baptists will need to send more volunteers.

Team members besides Blanchard who left Iran May 22 included Cal Jones of Alexandria, La., a Brotherhood and disaster relief coordinator with the Louisiana Baptist Convention; John Lilly, a retired IBM executive from Houston; Reggie Quimby of Montgomery, Ala., Brotherhood worker with the Alabama Baptist State Convention; Warren Hart of Belton, Texas, associate director of missions, Bell Baptist Association; and Jim Burton of Memphis, Tenn., an editor with the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

Those remaining in Iran until May 26 include: John LaNoue of Dallas, Brotherhood worker with the Baptist General Convention of Texas; Jim Furgerson of Memphis, an executive with the Brotherhood Commission; Richard Hurst, a physician from Tyler, Texas; Bill Atkins of Ft. Worth, Texas; and Dennis Quinn, a construction worker from St. Peters, Mo.

LaNoue, on-site team coordinator at the camp, said conditions for the Kurds at Dolenov were harsh, but that the Iranian government has made a strong effort to support the refugees and done a good job of stabilizing the camp.

Iranian troops assigned to the camp have provided firm but evenhanded security, LaNoue said, while camp directors have done an admirable job of trucking in adequate water and food supplies. The isolated location hampered government efforts to provide more than bread, potatoes and limited vegetable and meat supplies. Rice, a staple food for the Kurds, has been most sorely missed, several refugees said.

"In their culture, they sort of don't feel they've eaten unless they get a good portion of rice," said LaNoue, familiar with rice through his Louisiana Cajun background.

Kurds also received medical care in a field medical clinic staffed by Iranian, Iraqi and French physicians. Volunteer Hurst, who also served in the clinic, said he saw no cholera in the camp, but reported cases of scabies, a parasitic affliction. Serious medical cases are transported to regional hospitals, LaNoue said.

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The feeding team brought about \$300,000 worth of medical supplies into Iran for treating refugees, Hurst said. Four portable kitchens, valued at \$15,500 each, will be left with Iranian Christians to use in future disasters.

The ministry in Iran is part of a multicountry effort in the Middle East to minister to the Kurds. The cost of the work will total about \$2.4 million.

"We have every reason to continue in this work. We've gotten encouragement from the government," said Sam Yeghnazar of the Iranian Christian Fellowship of London, who has helped coordinate the effort.

Iranian Christians have benefited from the opportunity to care for people in crisis, he added, and they want to continue and are open to more involvement by Christians.

Southern Baptist feeding efforts in Iran are not confined to refugee camps where the outdoor kitchens have been placed. More than \$200,000 in Southern Baptist hunger relief funds has been allocated to enable relief workers from Iranian churches to provide food and cooking utensils to Kurdish refugees in other camps and to Shiite refugees from Iraq who have entered southern Iran.

Southern Baptist disaster relief volunteers delayed from leaving for Iran May 19 have been asked to stand by at their homes, said Tim Brendle, who heads the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's Persian Gulf Response unit.

Brendle will review reports from the first 12 volunteers about their work in Iran before sending out more volunteers. If a decision is made to proceed, the next volunteer team for Iran may leave the week of June 9. Plans also are being made if a continuous supply of workers is needed throughout the summer.

Meanwhile, a number of Southern Baptist personnel, including seven from Latin America, are adding their efforts to medical work among Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq.

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(BP) photos sent to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Baptists returning to Gaza, Jordan
surprised by warm homecoming

By Donald D. Martin

N-FMB

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AMMAN, Jordan (BP)--Southern Baptist representatives returning to Gaza and Jordan, after tensions surrounding the impending Persian Gulf war forced most to evacuate in January, report warm receptions from local communities.

"It's been much better than we ever thought. We were really surprised," said Southern Baptist representative Keith Summey, who returned to Amman, Jordan, in April with his wife, Tammy, and 1-year-old son, Luke. The Summeys are from Charlotte, N.C.

"We expected to see a lot of anger," Summey said. "I had feared having to face that anger. But we haven't seen it. That's not to say it's not there. But in spite of all that has happened, we've seen Jordanians able to draw a line between governments and individuals."

Many observers feared the rage of Palestinians and other Arabs over American involvement in the war would cause a backlash against American Christian workers in the region -- particularly in Jordan and Gaza, heavily populated with Palestinians.

The Summeys were one of the first Southern Baptist families to return to Jordan. Nine of the 18 Southern Baptist workers assigned to Jordan before the war have returned. In mid-May, the group grew to 10 with the arrival of a new Southern Baptist worker, Vicki Smith of Fredericksburg, Va.

Six workers temporarily have transferred from Jordan to other areas in the Middle East and Europe. That's added an extra strain on the group in Jordan, Summey said.

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"Most of the leadership in our group has left. Our whole structure is going through dramatic change," he said. "We are working to rebuild and most of us are taking on new responsibilities. Things are upside-down in terms of our group, but it's still good to be back together."

In Israeli-occupied Gaza, local residents also warmly welcomed back the Southern Baptist workers. Ten Southern Baptist representatives returned in late May. Three other representatives assigned to Gaza have not yet returned.

Gaza, a 125-square-mile strip of land, is situated next to the Egyptian border. About 630,000 Palestinians, almost all Muslim, live in the territory. Israel took control of Gaza from Egypt during the 1967 Six-Day War.

"Everyone has been very happy to see us back," said Southern Baptist representative Dean Fitzgerald of Tulsa, Okla., who returned to Gaza April 21. His wife, Dona, of Bartlesville, Okla., joined him a few days later.

"Frankly, I was worried about what I might find in the way of a reception," said Fitzgerald, a physician who works at the Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza.

"I even had a dream the night before (coming back) that I was mobbed as I came into town. There's this school on the road that always has lots of people in front of it; I dreamed that I was mobbed there. So I was very relieved when I came to that point in the actual trip and nobody was there."

It's still too early to tell how the war has affected area ministries. But early signs indicate the war has not caused as much local resentment as the workers feared, he said.

In fact, one of the largest hurdles confronting the work in Gaza as well as Jordan and other parts of the Middle East is the reluctance of many Southern Baptists to go to work in the region, Fitzgerald said.

"I'm sure the war will make it much more difficult to get people to come here. When people back in the United States think of the Middle East, they think of war. But what I see around me is friendship and people glad to see us back."

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CDC gives \$25,000
to gay conference

By Tom Strode

N-CLC

Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)--The Centers for Disease Control has contributed \$25,000 to a national conference on homosexual health that includes workshops on lesbian erotic dance and sexual fantasies of homosexual therapists as well as a "safer sex party" for lesbians.

The grant from the CDC, which is an agency in the Department of Health and Human Services, is for the 13th National Lesbian and Gay Health Conference and Ninth National AIDS Forum scheduled July 24-28 in New Orleans.

Letters protesting the grant were sent from Richard D. Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, to John Sununu, White House chief of staff, and William Roper, director of the CDC. Land requested Sununu direct Roper to cancel the grant. He also asked Sununu to advise President Bush to contemplate issuing guidelines to administration staff members preventing such decisions.

"It is an outrage that any taxpayer's money is being used to underwrite any part of this conference," Land said in his letter to Sununu. "Governor, what do I tell perplexed and confused Southern Baptists when they ask me about the CDC incident and the National Endowment for the Arts as they relate to the Bush Administration's commitment to traditional family values? Such episodes can and do seriously undermine a great deal of goodwill in a very short time."

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Many of the 192 workshops listed in the preliminary program deal with AIDS/HIV topics and volunteer services to patients with the virus or disease. Numerous others, however, deal with sexual relations involving male and female homosexuals. Included is one on sadomasochism that seeks to "explore s/m as a normal healthy sexual identity..."

A few of the workshop titles with a portion of their descriptions from the preliminary program are:

-- "The Lesbian Erotic Dance: Butch, Femme, Androgyny and Other Rhythms" (Parts I and II) - "This workshop will explore through didactic presentation and group participation, the lost language of Lesbian erotic sensibilities..."

-- "Erotic Countertransference in Gay and Lesbian Therapists" - "This workshop gives Gay and Lesbian therapists the opportunity to talk about, listen to, and understand the meaning of sexual fantasies held by therapists toward their patients. Everyone attending will be expected to participate fully."

-- "The Carnal Carnival: A New Educational Event" - "This presentation will describe and discuss the Carnal Carnival in San Francisco, the world's first hands-on safe sex educational play event."

-- "Sex, Safe and Hot: Eroticizing Safer Sex for Women" (Parts I and II) - "The objective of this workshop is to provide the space and support for Lesbians to develop our own safer sex models that will realistically embrace the sexual energy we have with the reality of safety as we define it."

-- "Safer Sex for Lesbians" - "A team of Lesbian health educators will present a safer sex party for Lesbians."

-- "Creating Mythologies and Rituals for Queer People" - "This workshop is open to all people who are interested in developing and exploring Queer Spirituality."

-- "Cross-cultural Elements of Healing Using Native American Spirituality" - "Native American spirituality has always stressed the interconnectedness of all things - symbolized by the Medicine Wheel, or Sacred Hoop. Healing is therefore the process of becoming whole again by learning to embrace the shadow side of oneself that initially frightens one."

-- "SEXCESSful Teen Outreach" - "This workshop is for AIDS outreach/education workers and will address specific outreach styles and a brief demonstration of (Colorado AIDS Project's) SEXCESS workshop with a teen emphasis."

At least a dozen workshops deal with youth, including one to help teenagers "come to an understanding of their Straight, Bisexual, Gay, or Lesbian sexuality in a society that assumes and expects everyone to be heterosexual." There also is a plenary session entitled: "Cross-cultural Coming Out: The Positive Mental Health of Gay and Lesbian Youth."

A copy of the grant application obtained from the CDC does not include titles or descriptions of the controversial workshops. The application, submitted by the National Lesbian and Gay Health Foundation, one of the cosponsors, lists 12 sample topics from previous conferences. All deal with AIDS or HIV except one, "Strategies for Preventing Relapse Into Unsafe Sex."

Included in supplemental documents submitted to the CDC by the foundation were a preconference program for 1990, a 1990 conference program book and a "call for presentations" for 1991. The other documents were not made available to Baptist Press with the application. A CDC staff member was asked to describe what was in the supplementary material. He said he would have to look at the documents. He did not call back with the information.

Neither the administrative director nor the president of the National Lesbian and Gay Health Foundation were available for comment.

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The application requested \$25,000 to cover travel costs for staff and speakers, postage, printing of the advance program and program book, and expenses for 28 persons with AIDS attending the conference.

In his letter to Sununu, Land reminded the chief of staff of a proposed executive order protecting traditional families in federal policy making presented by a group of evangelical leaders, including himself, in a meeting with the president in October 1990.

"If that proposed Executive Order had been promulgated as we requested," Land wrote, "this grant would not have been given since it violates both the spirit and the letter of that proposed Executive Order."

The conference, which is cosponsored by The George Washington University Medical Center in Washington, will be held at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans.

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Court should reinstate 24-hour
broadcasting ban: Whitehead

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
5/24/91

N-CLC

WASHINGTON (BP)--A federal court opinion overturning a 24-hour ban on indecent broadcasting should be challenged, the general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission says.

A three-judge panel of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, in a unanimous vote May 17, struck down a Federal Communications Commission rule enforcing a Congressional ban on all broadcast indecency. The ruling leaves in force a previous FCC regulation prohibiting indecency on radio and television from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

"I am disappointed in the outcome," FCC Chairman Al Sikes said. The commission will examine the decision in consultation with the solicitor general's office of the Justice Department before determining whether to appeal, Sikes said.

"We urge the FCC to appeal this decision to the U.S. Supreme Court," said Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the CLC. "The FCC 24-hour indecency ban seeks to protect the public interest in public airwaves, especially the interest of parents with small children. Such interest overrides private monetary interests of broadcasters who want to hide behind the First Amendment and say some dirty words to make more money.

"Such crass, commercial interests in truly 'filthy lucre' must be subordinated to society's interest in protecting our children," Whitehead said. "Surely there is no shortage of sewage in our society and no need to make a new cesspool of the public airwaves."

The FCC's definition of indecency is "language that describes, in terms patently offensive as measured by contemporary community standards for the broadcast medium, sexual or excretory activities or organs."

Both Congress and the FCC concluded children under 18 were in the broadcast audience at all hours of the day.

The court's opinion was not a shock, said a Washington lawyer experienced in obscenity cases.

"No one was surprised on any of the sides," Rob Showers said. "We're in the place where everyone thought we would be. There are some cases that are destined to go to the Supreme Court. This is one of those cases."

Showers, a member of the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee, prepared a brief supporting the ban on behalf of the Christian Life Commission and nine other groups in Action for Children's Television v. FCC. He attempted to file it, but the appeals court ruled it would not accept friend-of-the-court briefs in the case. (A previous Baptist Press article erroneously reported the brief had been filed.) The brief was used in oral arguments by the FCC, Showers said.

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Congress passed legislation in 1988 requiring the 24-hour ban for the primary purpose of protecting children.

The FCC's regulation enforcing the law was challenged in court. In the meantime, the Supreme Court ruled in a case involving telephone transmission indecent speech may be controlled if the regulations promote a "compelling" government interest and are "narrowly-tailored" to serve that interest. The appeals court granted the commission a period to receive public comment. In July 1990, the FCC adopted a report, based on the data it received, stating the 24-hour ban met the Supreme Court's test.

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Hand-me-down hymnals
are treasured gifts

By Charles Willis

F-SSB

Baptist Press
5/24/91

SAN FRANCISCO (BP)--While memories of childhood in hand-me-down clothes may linger for many adult Southern Baptists, the experience of hand-me-down hymnals is a far less frequent event.

In fact, the last time a massive Southern Baptist "hymnal swap" occurred was 16 years ago when "Baptist Hymnal," 1975 edition, was published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. It was then many congregations passed along their 1956 "Baptist Hymnals" to churches that had been using the 1940 "Broadman Hymnal."

Prior to B.B. McKinney's beloved "Broadman," Southern Baptists had no hymnal of their own, save the "Modern Hymnal," published in 1926 and later purchased from Robert H. Coleman of Dallas, by the Sunday School Board.

So when the Sunday School Board published "The Baptist Hymnal" in March of this year, a time-honored tradition once again surfaced. The 1991 version of hand-me-downs, however, is more fashionably called "recycling," and the stigma of a previous owner has been exchanged for badges of pride, both for the recipient and the giver.

One of the first beneficiaries of the revived hymnal exchange is Primera Iglesia Bautista del Sur of San Francisco.

The bilingual congregation of 400 members is 96 percent Hispanic, with some who claim Spanish as a first language and others who view it as a second language.

According to James Page, pastor of the 40-year-old congregation, younger members choose membership there because they are Hispanic, not because of a language need. Many of them have grown up on hymns sung in English and enjoy singing in English.

David Medina, volunteer pianist and music leader, explained the English language service on Sunday mornings is attended "mostly by young people." And while a Spanish language service also is offered Sunday mornings, the Sunday evening service is bilingual.

Morning services were not so much a problem, he reflected. While one group used the "Baptist Hymnal," 1956 edition, the other used "Himnario Bautista" published in 1978 by the Baptist Spanish Publishing House in El Paso, Texas. The difficulty came when the two hymnbooks were used in bilingual services. Many of the hymns the people wanted to sing are not included in both hymnbooks.

The solution would have been to purchase the '75 English hymnal, which closely parallels the Spanish hymnbook.

"We just couldn't afford to put that kind of money out," Page declared.

Providentially, First Southern Baptist Church of Reedley, Calif., was looking for a recipient for a gift of their '75 hymnals, boxed and stored when the new hymnals were delivered this spring. While John McGuckin, state music director for the California Southern Baptist Convention, was preparing to advertise the free hymnals through the California Southern Baptist, the convention's newsjournal, Page arrived in Fresno for a Hispanic fellowship meeting.

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Some 125 copies of "Baptist Hymnal," 1975 edition, were in the hands of members at Primera Iglesia Bautista del Sur, and both Page and Medina say the gift has made a meaningful difference in worship.

"We have noticed an increase in the enthusiasm of congregational singing in the English service and in our bilingual service," Page said.

And Medina added the younger members are "excited that many of their favorite songs in Spanish are available in English. I've observed an increased understanding of the texts. They can use the '75 hymnal to translate what they don't understand in the '78. Most of our youth don't realize that a lot of the Spanish songs were originally in English and were translated."

The congregation doesn't think of their gift of hymnals as hand-me-downs. "We view them as 'new'," he declared.

He said he feels churches "should not put discarded hymnals in a closet, but should put them to use. Hymnals represent several hundred dollars of investment. Don't put that money in a closet," he urged.

As for the church's no-longer-needed 1956 hymnals, Page said the members plan to pass them on to another congregation.

Churches desiring to give hymnals to another congregation should contact their association office or their state director of church music at the state Baptist convention office.

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

Relevant ministries needed
to reach America's unchurched

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
5/24/91

F-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--Almost two-thirds of the unchurched people in America believe the church is not relevant for today, a California research executive told participants at a May 20 Church Growth Consultation at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

"By and large Americans have no problem with Christianity, but they have a big problem with the local church," said George Barna, founder and president of Barna Research Group in Glendale, Calif. Many who stay away view the church as a hypocritical, judgmental organization that is out-of-touch with the society it is trying to minister to, he said.

Barna is author of the book "The Frog in the Kettle," which is subtitled, "What Christians Need to Know About Life in the Year 2000." Based on research conducted by his company, Barna shared with church growth leaders from the Sunday School Board, Home Mission Board and other SBC agencies, trends that will affect ministry in the 1990s.

Gary Cook, vice president for church programs and services at the Sunday School Board and chairman of the board's Church Growth Council, said the consultation was one of numerous events sponsored by the council designed to "challenge the thinking" of Southern Baptist leaders and "encourage a re-examination of our ways of doing church."

Barna said 62 percent of America's unchurched population believe the church is not relevant today and "feel no sense of urgency to get involved in a church." But despite their apparent lack of interest, 8 out of 10 of the unchurched population believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and half say they have made a profession of faith in Christ and that Jesus is an important part of their lives. In addition, one out of five describe themselves as "born-again" Christians, one out of four read the Bible on their own and two out of three pray to God in the course of a typical month.

"They have this knowledge floating around in their heads, but it has no anchor in why they do what they do," Barna explained.

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Barna's research also revealed confidence and respect for churches are declining among those who choose not to attend religious services. Only 43 percent say the church "communicates a clear sense of beliefs and values," while only 45 percent believe the church is "concerned about all people," he said.

Another sobering indicator of the unchurched population's lack of interest in local churches, Barna said, is the dramatic drop in the percentage of the unchurched who plan to visit a church, down from 40 percent in 1986 to 18 percent in 1990. "That is an alarming statistic," he said.

What can churches do to reach these people? First and foremost, Barna said they must "be sensitive to people and their needs. We must ask ourselves the question, 'Is the church really loving people?'"

Among the researcher's other suggestions were:

- emphasize the benefits of church involvement;
- offer quality programs and ministries that compete with the professionalism of secular organizations;
- develop a climate for facilitating growing relationships;
- develop a membership that demonstrates authentic Christian lifestyles; and
- allow for unity in diversity.

He also suggested offering opportunities for a practical introduction to Jesus Christ and holistic ministries that guide people toward spiritual maturity.

In a challenge to the Southern Baptist Convention in particular, Barna said denominational leaders need to continually ask themselves, "Is the denomination culturally relevant to where we are today," and "Has the Southern Baptist Convention changed the lifeblood of the churches that comprise the denomination?"

The denomination also will have to develop new strategies for witnessing that stress "friendship" or "relational" evangelism, Barna said. He also described the following items as critical for ministerial success: training about the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life, increasing interdenominational cooperation, enhancing the image of churches, identifying and training pastoral candidates that can provide strong leadership, planting new churches, and redefining the individual's role in missions.

Effective ministry by the SBC in the nineties also will require some leaders to act as "futurists" for the denomination, planning ministry in anticipation of societal trends rather than in reaction to them, Barna said.

"The nineties are really a make-it-or-break-it time for the church," he said. "We need a new heart, a new spirit, a new passion about ministry."

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Anticipate societal changes
Barna urges growth leaders

By Chip Alford

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Christian churches must learn to anticipate societal changes rather than simply react to them, a California research executive told Southern Baptist church growth leaders May 20.

"We need a new awakening in the church. We cannot go on playing the same games we have for years. We have to ask ourselves, 'Is the church culturally relevant to where we are today?'" said George Barna, president of Barna Research Group, a marketing research company in Glendale, Calif.

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Barna made the remarks during a presentation on trends of the 1990s at a Church Growth Consultation at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. More than 100 people from the Sunday School Board, Home Mission Board and other SBC agencies attended the event, which was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Church Growth Council. Barna shared information from his book, "The Frog in the Kettle," which is subtitled, "What Christians Need to Know About Life in the Year 2000."

Churches will have to understand the changing mind-set of the American people to minister effectively in the last decade of the century, Barna said.

"Most people in this country do not live according to any articulated philosophy of life," Barna said. A growing number of Americans are forming a new "syncretic" faith by choosing values and ideas they like from several religions and institutions.

Barna cited random-digit telephone surveys conducted by his company which revealed the following: 66 percent of Americans believe there is no such thing as absolute truth; 64 percent believe all people pray to the same god, even though they use different names for that god; and 63 percent believe the purpose of life is enjoyment and personal fulfillment.

In addition, 21 percent of Americans believe living differently from other people is what it means to be a Christian, 14 percent believe it is simply loving and helping others, 14 percent think it is believing in God, 11 percent say it involves going to church or being "religious" and 10 percent think being a Christian means being a good person. Twenty-two percent say they simply don't know what being a Christian is all about. Only 19 percent believe that being a Christian is accepting Christ as Savior and having a personal relationship with Jesus.

Perhaps even more alarming, Barna said, is the large number of people who have been attending Protestant churches for years but never have made a personal decision to accept Christ as Savior.

"This Sunday, 55 percent of the persons sitting in Protestant churches are not Christians. And many of those people have been sitting in those churches for 10 years or more," he said.

Evangelism is failing in America, Barna believes, because "we are basing it on an assumption that people do not buy. We cannot assume that there are basic beliefs that we can build on."

Besides coming to grips with changing attitudes and beliefs, Barna said growing churches in the 90s will be those bodies of believers that offer relevant ministry to families.

"The family (in America) is not at all dead. But it has taken on a new definition," Barna said.

According to research conducted by Barna's company, the more dramatic changes in the American family unit between 1970 and 1990 include increases in: co-habitation (443 percent), the divorce rate (from 33 to 49 percent), interracial marriages (178 percent), the number of single parents (351 percent), and the number of women between 18-44 in the labor force (from 30 percent to 52 percent.)

Families also are spending less time together, Barna said, adding nine out of 10 Americans now believe the "quality" of time spent with their children is more important than the quantity of time spent together.

These changes have created new problems and issues the church should be addressing, Barna said, pointing out only 30 percent of Americans believe churches are sensitive to the needs of families.

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Churches also must keep in mind America's aging population, Barna said. By the year 2000, 52 percent of the population will be 35 or older. As a result, the nation's focus will soon shift from child care to elder care.

Barna shared other statistics and information which he said churches should consider in developing their ministry plans for the nineties, including:

-- Ethnic population growth: By the year 2000, white, native-born Americans will be at zero-population growth while the number of immigrants admitted to the country will still be on the rise. A 13 percent growth rate is predicted for African Americans in the 1990s, 27 percent for Hispanics and 35 percent for Asian-Americans.

-- The Ascendancy of Women: The 1990s will find more women in roles of authority both in secular and religious circles. Three out of every 10 businesses in America are now owned by women, and five out of every six new businesses opening this year will be started by women.

-- Use of the Bible: While 93 percent of all households own one or more Bibles, only 12 percent of adults read Scripture every day, and 57 percent do not read the Bible at all during a typical week.

-- Knowledge of the Bible: Americans know less and less about the Bible. Only 31 percent of adults surveyed knew the saying "God helps those who help themselves" is not in the Bible, and 58 percent did not know who preached the Sermon on the Mount.