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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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July 31, 1991

91-113

Baptist Center for Ethics  
not counter, but new voice

By Herb Hollinger

N-CC

NASHVILLE (BP)--A new voice, not a counter voice ... not an anti-everything ... filling a vacuum in Southern Baptist life ... openness, integrity and compassion.

Those were some of the descriptions given the new Baptist Center for Ethics by organizers at a news conference in Nashville July 30. The new ethics agency was formed, organizers said, to fill a "vacuum covering New Testament ethics in Baptist ranks."

The "vacuum" was one way of referring to what organizers said was their disagreement with the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and its "limited agenda."

Dissatisfaction with the CLC was visibly apparent as Robert M. Parham, who has resigned as an associate director of the CLC, was introduced as the BCE's executive director. Parham announced his resignation from the CLC July 26, effective Sept. 1. Parham, 38, has been with the SBC ethics agency for six and a half years and was interim executive director for four months in 1988.

Although BCE organizers hope to have a relationship with the new Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, official ties have not been established, according to Joel Snider, chairman of the agency's board of directors. Snider is pastor of the Crieveview Baptist Church in Nashville. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was formed last year by moderate Southern Baptists dissatisfied with the current SBC leadership.

Bill Sherman, pastor of the Woodmont Baptist Church in Nashville, is a member of the Fellowship's coordinating council and a director of the new Center for Ethics. The Woodmont church was the site for the news conference.

BCE plans to be an ethics resource for Southern Baptists, Parham said.

"Now is the time for a new ethics venture. Baptists stand in a 'fullness of time' moment for the creation of an ethics network which will help Christians face all the commonplace, complex and cutting edge issues," said Parham. "(The BCE) will articulate a new vision, provide new ways to do ethics, supply new resources and offer new leadership."

The new agency has a threefold agenda, according to Parham: (1) to call Baptists and others back to basics -- personal ethics and character development; (2) concentrate on consensus issues -- caring for the hungry, strengthening families, fighting substance abuse, promoting integrity in the marketplace and fostering racial and ethnic reconciliation; and (3) challenge Baptists to face the complex and cutting edge issues, like health care, endangerment of the earth and medical ethics, with intelligence and compassion.

The BCE plans a national seminar in February of 1992 in Nashville to deal with "national priorities" of alcohol and other drug abuse, health care crisis, public education, environmental concerns and the face of Baptist ethics in the 1990s.

The BCE will seek contributions from churches and individuals, hoping to raise \$25,000 by September and \$100,000 for 1992, Snider said. Currently the group has about \$10,000 in cash and commitments, said Snider. Parham's salary and benefits package will be \$45,000.

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A 21-member board of directors will guide the BCE's positions on policies and issues. A group of associates, including a number of Southern Baptist seminary professors, will offer their services as seminar teachers, writers of materials and articles and will provide professional expertise. An advisory council will attempt to raise funds.

Listed as members of the board of directors are: Nancy Ammerman, Emory University, Atlanta; Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, Mt. Carmel church, Cincinnati; James Denison, First church, Midland, Texas; Carolyn Dipboye, First church, Oak Ridge, Tenn.; Gene Garrison, First church, Oklahoma City; John Hewett, First church, Asheville, N.C.; Vickie Hollon, Wornall Road church, Kansas City, Mo.; David Hull, First church, Laurens, S.C.; Raymond Lloyd, First church, Starkville, Miss.; Gene Lovelace, Immanuel church, Nashville; Emmanuel McCall, Christian Fellowship church, Atlanta; William Nelson, Riverchase church, Birmingham, Ala.; Sherman and Snider.

Three directors are to be appointed by the ethics and public policy ministry group of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Several additional directors are to be named later.

Associates listed are: Carolyn Blevins, assistant professor of religion, Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn.; Furman Hewitt, professor of Christian ethics, Southeastern Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.; Ray Higgins, assistant professor of Christian ethics, Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; Mark Johnson, pastoral counselor, East Tennessee Baptist Hospital, Knoxville, Tenn.; Jim Johnson, pastor, First church, Sarasota, Fla.;

Andrew Manis, assistant professor of religion, Averett College, Danville, Va.; Penny Marler, faculty, Hartford Seminary, Hartford, Conn.; Dan McGee, professor of Christian ethics, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Ira Peak, assistant professor of ethics and policy studies at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Craig Sherouse, pastor, Lakeside church, Lakeland, Fla.; Ron Sisk, pastor, Tiburon church, Tiburon, Calif.; Paul Simmons, professor of Christian ethics, Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky.; Ebbie Smith, professor of Christian ethics and missions, Southwestern Seminary; Glen Stassen, professor of Christian ethics, Southern Seminary; and Bill Tillman, associate professor of Christian ethics, Southwestern Seminary.

Advisory council members announced are: W.C. Fields, chairman, Woodmont church, Nashville; Jack Causey, First church, Statesville, N.C.; Elizabeth Cooper, First church, Yazoo City, Miss.; Bruce Heilman, University of Richmond (Va.); Randall Lolley, First church, Greensboro, N.C.; June McEwen, First church, Chattanooga, Tenn.; Bill White, Second church, Little Rock, Ark.; and Kay Shurden, Macon, Ga.

The BCE's mailing address is P.O. Box 22188, Nashville, TN 37202.

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Southeastern adds biblical  
inerrantists to faculty

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N-CO  
SEBTS

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Two theological conservatives and biblical inerrantists have been added to the faculty at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Earlier the seminary announced five professors had submitted resignations and would leave at the end of the fall semester. At least eight others were expected to announce their resignations or retirements in a dramatic change at the seminary.

Maurice Robinson, professor at Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville, Fla., and Stephen J. Andrews, who is completing his Ph.D. at Hebrew Union College's Jewish Institution of Religion, will both join the faculty this fall, seminary officials announced. Both are graduates of Southeastern and both are theological conservatives and biblical inerrantists, officials said.

Robinson will teach New Testament and Greek while Andrews will teach Old Testament and Hebrew.

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The seminary has been the center of an ongoing controversy with trustees seeking more a conservative faculty. Since the arrival of President Lewis Drummond in 1988 a majority of the faculty has resigned, retired or indicated they would. Student numbers also have dropped to about half of those in the mid-1980s.

Drummond welcomed the recent changes in faculty.

"We feel that God is blessing Southeastern and that the changes taking place will have a positive effect on our future," said Drummond. "We now have a greater opportunity than ever before to hire more of the kind of people the Southern Baptist Convention wants on our seminary faculty."

Drummond said the faculty members who are leaving came to him on their own volition.

"I have worked in good faith, trying to confer with each of them in a Christian manner. I believe that in every case, we have arrived at the best possible solution for both departing professor and Southeastern seminary," said Drummond.

Vice President for Internal Affairs G. Paul Fletcher said the changes in faculty will help the seminary as it faces the possibility of cutting its budget.

In 1988, the SBC Executive Committee froze the seminary funding formula used to calculate the money each of the six SBC seminaries receive. Southeastern's funding was frozen to reflect an enrollment of 1,073 students. When the formula is unfrozen in 1993, the seminary expects to receive funding based on an enrollment between 600 and 700 students.

"These voluntary faculty departures have given us the opportunity to solve many of our financial exigency problems without having to force any resignations and without causing any additional trauma to our seminary community," said Fletcher.

Even with the nine administrative positions cut at Southeastern, Fletcher said it would have been almost impossible for the seminary to survive without the formula freeze.

"We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the other five Baptist seminaries and to the Southern Baptist Convention for their understanding and support in agreeing to this freeze," said Drummond.

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House approves lifting ban  
on fetal tissue research

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
7/31/91

*N-CLC*

WASHINGTON (BP)--The House of Representatives has approved legislation directing the federal government to fund the use of tissue from aborted babies in experimental transplantation.

On July 25, the House voted 294-144 for a bill lifting a ban on fetal tissue research. The legislation, H.R. 2507, provides for the reauthorization of the National Institutes of Health policy.

Supporters of the moratorium fear lifting the ban will result in an increase in induced abortions because it could provide women considering such action with apparent justification. Opponents of the policy say fetal tissue research should be funded because some scientists report it could provide a remedy for such afflictions as Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease.

"This vote represents another example of how our consciences are being violated by use of our tax dollars," said James A. Smith, director of government relations for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "In this case, the barbarians are at the gate asking the federal government to give the 'Good Housekeeping' seal of approval while taxpayers are being coerced to support this grisly, inhumane and unethical research.

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"The old saying goes, 'It's never right to do wrong to do right.' The use of tissue for speculative research which may hold some promise of ameliorating a few diseases does not in any way validate the taking of human life," Smith said.

"The bottom line is this -- since most Americans believe that most abortions are wrong, most of the fetal tissue in question should not be available anyway. We believe lifting this ban will make it harder to legislate against abortion."

Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in June approved a sanctity of human life resolution that included support for the moratorium on fetal tissue transplantation.

The ban was instituted during the administration of President Ronald Reagan in 1988 and continued by President George Bush's new secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, Louis Sullivan, in 1989. The moratorium does not extend to private research or to tissue from miscarriages or ectopic pregnancies.

Debate on the floor of the House was strident at times.

Rep. John Doolittle, R.-Calif., said overturning the ban would open a "Pandora's box."

"We will surely create an enhanced market for such tissue. I think that is undisputable," Doolittle said. "... I believe that we will literally be endorsing the unwilling use of human beings as guinea pigs for spare parts."

Rep. Henry Hyde, R.-Ill., asked, "Is Frankenstein suddenly becoming an acceptable model, where we kill people so we can get their organs?"

Such research could endanger pregnant women by requiring a longer period of time for the abortion to be completed and by delaying the procedure until tissue is more developed, said Rep. Tom DeLay, R.-Texas.

"I know some of my colleagues will say it is illegal to buy and sell an aborted fetus, but I say it is common for researchers to pay these abortion clinics' processing fees for this tissue and for tissue that is in good condition..." DeLay said.

A moratorium opponent, Rep. Bill Richardson, D.-N.M., said, "... I find it degrading and patronizing to insinuate that women would deliberately become pregnant and seek abortions in exchange for money or in the name of scientific research."

Rep. Henry Waxman, D.-Calif., said, "I cannot see how members (of Congress) can look people in the eyes ... who are suffering from these diseases or who have dear ones, family members, who are suffering and tell them it is better to take the tissue from a dead fetus and bury it, rather than let any of that tissue be used for a research that could save someone's life."

Safeguards preventing the sale of fetal tissue and the donation of tissue to a specific recipient were included in the bill, but proponents of the moratorium did not accept them as adequate solutions. An amendment passed without debate extending both safeguards to privately funded research.

The Bush administration notified House members before the vote the president's advisors would recommend a veto if the bill reached him in its present form. The Senate has yet to consider overturning the moratorium this year.

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Sullivan cancels  
sexuality survey

By Tom Strode

N-CLC

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Louis Sullivan, secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has canceled an \$18 million sexuality survey of American teenagers.

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Under legislation passed by the U.S. House of Representatives two days later, however, a similar study could be approved outside the power of the secretary to veto it.

Funding for The American Teenage Study was overturned by Sullivan July 23, one week after he said he first learned about the national survey during an interview on a satellite television program operated by a pro-family coalition.

The survey was described as a "study of behaviors contributing to the risk of pregnancy and AIDS among U.S. teenagers," but critics attacked it as an inappropriate and wasteful use of federal funds to ask teenagers about their sexual practices.

A portion of a draft version of the survey showed it included questions about oral and anal sex as well as inquiries about contraception, pregnancy and abortion.

A section for males only was on homosexual relationships. The introductory paragraph to the section includes the statement: "Many teenage boys have had (homosexual) experiences ... ." The section includes questions about forms of sex with males and about the use of condoms.

The survey was to be administered to about 24,000 students in grades 7 through 12. Parents of the teenagers also were to be surveyed.

In cancelling the grant, Sullivan was "concerned with the inadvertent message the survey would send" and felt it "would distract from and be counterproductive to his message against casual sex," an HHS spokeswoman said.

The House, however, voted July 25 in favor of an amendment by Henry Waxman, D.-Calif., enabling sexual behavior surveys to be conducted through the National Institutes of Health. They have to be approved by review panels and to be determined to assist in reducing AIDS/HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases as well as other infectious diseases or "improving reproductive health" or other health. The secretary of HHS could not overturn such studies.

The amendment, which passed 283-137, was a substitute for an amendment by William Dannemeyer, R.-Calif., that would have prohibited any future human sexuality survey. Dannemeyer's measure, therefore, was not voted on.

"Secretary Sullivan deserves much praise for moving decisively to stop this survey after learning about it," said James A. Smith, director of government relations of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"This survey represents one more assault in an increasingly militant campaign led by bureaucrats and others within various agencies of the federal government who are seeking to alter traditional moral values as they relate to sexuality. This survey is particularly objectionable because it is directed at promoting sexual deviancy among our children," Smith said.

"This money would be better spent by applying it to resources to teach teens why they should abstain from sexual activity until marriage."

An aide to Dannemeyer called the survey a "ludicrous waste of taxpayers' money.

"We know how kids get pregnant," the aide said. "We know how kids get sexually transmitted diseases. Only the Ph.D.'s have to spend \$18 million to find out."

Because it was a grant through NIH, the teen survey did not have to be approved by Sullivan. It had been OK'd by Bernadine Healy, director of NIH, and James Mason, HHS assistant secretary for health.

Prayer ministry takes  
planning, organization

By Terri Lackey

F-SSB

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--A church prayer ministry takes planning, prayer and dedicated members willing to take care of the day-to-day business, an SBC prayer leader said.

The result will be church growth, T.W. Hunt told a group attending a seminar at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center during Discipleship Training Week July 20-26.

"If a church develops a successful intercessory prayer ministry, it will see programs of the church grow," said Hunt, Lay Institute for Equipping consultant on prayer for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship training department and author of the 13-week course, PrayerLife (soon to be renamed Disciple's Prayer Life: Walking in Fellowship with God).

"Baptisms will increase, Sunday school attendance will go up and discipleship training will take on a new importance," Hunt told the group studying the "Church Prayer Ministry Manual" expected to be released by the discipleship training department in the spring of 1992.

The manual, compiled by Hunt, is a detailed resource for churches considering starting a prayer ministry. Two vital ingredients of a successful prayer ministry, according to Hunt, are a dedicated prayer coordinator and a committed pastor.

"The pastor is the most important part of the prayer ministry," Hunt said. "The pastor needs to preach on prayer, speak on prayer, mention it in the church bulletin. And he really ought to participate in it," Hunt said.

Prayer coordinators or directors are the lifeline of the prayer ministry, Hunt said.

"Prayer coordinators are normally lay people, and some of the best ones in the SBC are women. "They need to be called by God; they need to be deeply spiritual; and they need to already have prayer in their life."

Immanuel Baptist Church of Shawnee, Okla., and First Baptist Church of Lafayette, La., are two Southern Baptist churches with around-the-clock prayer ministries.

Prayer coordinators Juanita Allison of Immanuel Church and Wilma Goetzmann of First Church, agreed in telephone interviews prayer does not come easy for Christians and is a discipline that must be taught.

"Prayer is the key to everything we do," said Goetzmann. "It is the umbrella over our programs and the foundations to them." Churches that establish programs before a prayer ministry "are just putting the cart before the horse."

Allison, whose church has conducted a prayer ministry for more than 11 years, said a church should not start a prayer ministry just because other churches are doing it. "It must be a ministry from God."

Maintaining a prayer ministry demands discipline and sacrifice, said Goetzmann and Allison. Participants must be obedient, committed and willing to be used by God.

Church members who pledge an hour or more a week to pray -- or prayer warriors -- are needed to sustain the prayer ministry, Hunt said.

"Some people have had problems with the term 'prayer warrior,' but the more I pray about it, the more I think that is a good phrase because prayer is a battle," said Hunt. "Prayer is hard."

"Prayer warriors need to be people of prayer who allow God to do his work." They also need to be dedicated, trustworthy and responsible, he said.

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Confidentiality is the name of the game for prayer warriors, Hunt said.

"Once you start a prayer ministry, you will be flooded with prayer requests. You won't believe the very, very private things people are willing to write down on paper," he said.

"So it is absolutely necessary that prayer warriors are trustworthy. Once they leave the prayer room, they should never, ever mention what was prayed about to anyone."

Prayer warriors are not even allowed to speak with the person who made the prayer request, Hunt said.

"In some cases it is OK for the prayer warrior to write a note (or a prayergram) to the person they are praying for," he said. "But prayer warriors have to build up a reputation of being trustworthy."

If a prayer warrior is discovered to have broken the confidentiality of a prayer request, Hunt said, "then you have to ask them to drop out of the prayer ministry because of a breach of contract."

Prayer warriors must be responsible. If they have to miss their hour of scheduled prayer, then they must call the prayer leader, Hunt said.

"You need a substitute who could fill in your spot if you're going to be absent," he said. "A teacher of a Sunday school class would notify someone if he was going to be absent."

"The purpose of an intercessory prayer ministry in a church is to keep prayer as continuous as possible before God for the causes that touch the church," he said.

One goal of Bold Mission Thrust is to have one prayer coordinator in every association by 1995 and to have a prayer ministry in every church by the year 2000, Hunt said.

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Car windshield can help  
open doors to ministry

By Susan Todd Doyle

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*N-CO  
WMU*

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--There is more to see than just road and scenery when looking out of one's automobile windshield, said a missions educator. Looking through a windshield can be an easy way to identify the needs within a community.

"You have to look at your community through the eyes of Jesus to see your community as he sees it," said Karen McGuire, Age-Level Magazine Group manager of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union. "It gives you a whole new perspective of your city."

McGuire spoke to WMU leaders gathered at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center July 13-19 for leadership training.

Most people drive very similar patterns to and from work and around their communities, she said. But if a person looks beyond the landmarks and traffic, areas of great need become obvious.

McGuire described a "windshield survey" which she had conducted within her own neighborhood.

"I knew what was there intellectually, but I had never seen it that way simply because I was looking at it closely through Jesus' eyes instead of hurriedly as I was on my way," she said.

After driving around her neighborhood, McGuire and other WMU members visited areas they each passed every day.

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"We went to an adult book store, to the area where prostitutes hang out, to the jail, and to a prominent liquor store in our area," she said. "We went to see what needs might be in those places."

Looking closely is all it takes to find people with needs, she said. "We live in an age when we don't want to know about these things. But they are there."

Once needs are discovered, church members should be made aware of the needs within their areas and the other groups with whom they could work to meet those needs, McGuire said.

Community and government agencies have countless resources from which churches can obtain information to help them in ministering to people with all types of needs. Reference books about service agencies also are found easily at public libraries.

"Go to see someone at each of the agencies in your area," she said. "Establish a relationship with them. Ask them two questions -- 'What are the needs you see in this community?' and 'What can my church do to help meet those needs?'"

"Be shocked at nothing they tell you, and be interested in everything. There may be things about your community that you don't want to hear," she said.

Churches would do well to strengthen their work with local service agencies, McGuire said. "I think one of the things the church has done in the past is to work in isolation. We do so much better when we work together. It's just good stewardship. Nobody can do it all."

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Expert offers tips and advice  
on teaching preschoolers to pray

By Susan Todd Doyle

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F-CC  
WML

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Preschool leaders can give an eternal gift to the children with whom they work by teaching them how to pray, said a national preschool magazine editor.

"By teaching a child to pray, we are setting the pattern for life," said Kathryn Kizer, editor of two preschool publications for leaders, Start and Share.

Both publications are resources for Mission Friends, the mission organization for preschoolers sponsored by Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union. Start is a quarterly magazine that includes learning activities, mission stories and articles about missions and child development. Share is a take-home activity leaflet for 4- to 5-year-olds, which includes songs, games, notes to parents, etc.

"Prayer gives a child security and dependence on someone who can help them for a lifetime. That is someone with a capital 'S.' Even greater than money in a will is the ability to talk with God," Kizer said.

Teaching preschoolers to pray can be a very natural process instead of a scary one, she said. Perhaps more than anything, the way adults view prayer will affect their ability to teach children how to pray, she added.

Children need to be taught God always hears prayers, Kizer said.

"We don't want to give the misconception that he will always give us what we ask for," she said. "He knows what we need better than we do." Children can learn at an early age God sometimes says "no" or "wait," Kizer stressed.

Preparation for prayer is important when teaching preschoolers how to pray. Children often need directions to help them think through their prayers before beginning.

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"Discuss things for which you want to thank God," Kizer said. "Many times children will pray about the little things in life. We find ourselves praying about the big things of life, but God is concerned about all of life."

Adults shouldn't teach a misconception that a person has to be in a certain form to pray, she said, citing folding hands and kneeling as examples.

"Teach them to know that they can talk to God walking down the street."

Memorized prayers can be cute when said by children, but they may lay the foundation for a greater problem later in life, she said.

"It's important for children to start early telling God just exactly what they think," Kizer said. "I think that's why many adults feel inhibited about praying. They didn't start early."

Children are imitators and will follow whatever their adult models show them. If adults close their eyes to pray, children will probably do so, too, she said. They will understand the reason better if told that it will help them to just think about God and not the other children around them.

Simplicity of words can also help preschoolers as they learn to pray. "Don't expect a preschooler to pray like a second-grader," Kizer said. "There are words they just will not understand. 'In Jesus' name' has no meaning for preschoolers."

Other guidelines which will help preschoolers learn to pray are:

- Begin with a simple salutation, such as "Dear God."
- Keep the vocabulary simple.
- Use short sentences.
- Keep prayers short.

Teachers of preschoolers should never use prayer as a crutch to quieten a roomful of children, she said.

"If you think prayer is a significant time, they will, too."

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NOTICE: Aug. 30, 1991 will be the last day for use of the Jacquard computer in the Baptist Press office. After that date, Baptist Press will be available electronically only on the CompuServe system. We will, of course, continue to mail Baptist Press to all our subscribers. Contact David Haywood at the Baptist Sunday School Board for more information.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

'Check in the mail' isn't  
best way to help Romanians

By Art Toalston

F-FMB

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Some churches in the United States send money to pastors in Romania, but the best way to help the country's Baptists is to check first with the Baptist Union, according to its top leaders.

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The union can advise churches in the United States and elsewhere in the West of Romanian congregations or mission efforts urgently needing support, said Vasile Talos, union president, and Nicolae Gheorghita, general secretary.

"We want to avoid a situation where one or two or three churches are supported -- and hundreds of others, nobody knows about," Talos said when he and Gheorghita visited the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board July 26.

Talos and Gheorghita, in meetings with the mission agency's administrators, reviewed two of Romanian Baptists' top concerns:

-- Expanding the union's Bible institute in Bucharest, which soared from a handful of students to more than 100 after the country's revolt against communism in December 1989. A second Bible institute, created last year in the city of Oradea, has jumped to an enrollment of 170.

-- The need for portable chapels for church-planting efforts among about 14,000 villages in Romania with no Baptist church.

Southern Baptists have joined the Romanians in several evangelism- and relief-related projects since communism's demise. Recently Charles "T" and Kathie Thomas were named as the first Foreign Mission Board representatives in Romania in more than 50 years. They will transfer from France, where they have worked for 15 years.

"We want to give a whole picture" of evangelism and church-planting needs in Romania, said Talos, who is pastor of a Baptist church in Bucharest. Great portions of Romania remain a mission field, he said, noting 90 percent of the country's 75,000 Baptists live in the northwest section of the nation.

When aid for specific Romanian churches or home missionaries in unevangelized regions is channeled through the Baptist union, Gheorghita said, foreign donors can be sure of a full accounting of how the money is used.

But indiscriminate use of American dollars in Romania can cause severe problems for Baptists, both men warned.

"We do not want it to appear that people from outside are trying to buy the souls of people," Talos said. "This could become a rumor" linked to Baptists.

In the Romanian context, he said, it is acceptable for the Baptist union or a local church to receive outside funding but suspicious if individuals receive such aid.

These individuals may become vulnerable to benefactors who are out of sync with Baptist beliefs, Gheorghita added. "(The donor) can say, 'I am free to come in your church anytime I come to Romania (and) spread my theology,'" he explained. Churches sometimes suffer internal strife when members find out their pastor has received aid from the West.

And some home missionaries supported by outside funds tend to drift away from fellowship with Baptists and other well-rooted evangelical groups in Romania, Talos said.

Since Romania's revolt against communism, the nation has been swamped with well-meaning foreign Christians offering help -- and with "all kinds of colors of so-called Christians ... with all kinds of teachings," Gheorghita said. "All the time people are coming. It is like an invasion."

The influx includes Mormons -- thousands of whom are said to be studying the Romanian language -- as well as Jehovah's Witnesses and New Age movements.

"They came and came and came" to Second Baptist Church in Oradea where he has been senior pastor, Gheorghita recounted. "Tens and tens of teams, every Sunday almost," some with their own TV crews. "They said they would help us with Bibles (or) send money for the building fund, but nothing happened. I don't know where they have gone." Some insisted they had "a word from the Lord which they had to preach in our church."

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The congregation had to begin screening foreigners seeking to speak during worship services, he said. "We ask them about their doctrine, about what they want to do." Generally the church now extends most visitors the courtesy of greeting the congregation for just a minute or two.

Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and others "are building their kingdom in Romania where there is a spiritual vacuum right now," Talos stated. "This is why our task is so important right now, to be in the first line to spread the gospel in the country, to let people know the truth."