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August 15, 1991

91-123

Texas Baptist committee OKs  
proposed Baylor relationship

By Ken Camp

*N. Dixon*

DALLAS (BP)--A specially appointed Baptist General Convention of Texas committee approved a proposal today that potentially could end the controversy over the state convention's relationship to Baylor University and made suggestions to convention coordinating boards about current and future BGCT funding to Baylor.

The proposal by the Committee on BGCT/Baylor Relationship still must be approved by the BGCT executive board and the Baylor University board of regents and by the messengers to the annual state convention meeting, Nov. 11-12 in Waco.

The committee's proposal was an affirmation of a recommended agreement developed by the officers of the BGCT and Baylor University.

The committee, chaired by Robert E. Naylor, president emeritus of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, also suggested the BGCT Christian education coordinating board and human welfare coordinating board consider authorizing the release of escrowed 1990 funds to Baylor plus interest. Expenses related to the work of the committee and legal research would be deducted from the total.

The committee further suggested 1991 escrowed funds for Baylor be released by the coordinating boards at levels similar to those proposed for 1992 and the release of the funds would be contingent upon Baylor approval of the proposed agreement.

Also, the committee suggested the 1992 budget and all future budgets would reflect an appropriate level of funding for all educational institutions including Baylor for students studying for the ministry, Baptist students enrolled, campus religious experiences and ethnic/minority emphases.

Under the terms of the proposal recommended by the committee, Baylor would amend its charter to eliminate the office of trustee and to provide the BGCT directly elect 25 percent of the Baylor regents elected annually.

The Baylor bylaws also would be amended to include: "In the election of the 75 percent of the Directors (Regents) elected by the Board of Directors, the University will be receptive to suggestions from Texas Baptists and will give due and careful consideration to the suggestions of the BGCT of persons to be nominated for election to the Board of Directors."

The proposed agreement also calls for inclusion in the Baylor bylaws provisions that all Baylor regents must be Baptist; that Baylor will be operated within Christian-oriented aims and ideals of Baptists, including those contained in the Baptist Faith and Message of 1963; and that the assets of the university would be transferred to the BGCT upon discontinuance by dissolution and liquidation.

The proposal further provides these three bylaws provisions may be amended only by two-thirds vote of the entire board of regents provided at least ten days notice is given in advance. In "extreme emergency" when ten days notice is not given, an 80 percent vote would be required.

The special study committee was named by Texas Baptists in the wake of Baylor University's unprecedented charter change last September in which the school removed itself from the BGCT constitution and asserted its autonomy as an institution.

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Ethicist Ben Mitchell  
chosen for CLC post

By Louis Moore

Baptist Press  
8/15/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--Christian ethicist Carl Benjamin Mitchell, 36, will be nominated for the position of director of biomedical and life issues for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. CLC Executive Director Richard D. Land will present Mitchell to the CLC's board of trustees for approval at the board meeting Sept. 10-12 in Nashville.

In addition to biomedical ethics, Mitchell's job responsibilities will include all those currently assigned to Robert M. Parham, who resigned from the CLC effective Sept. 1 to head the new Baptist Center for Ethics. Parham was the CLC's director of hunger and drug concerns and race relations. The BCE, which begins operation in September, is aligned with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization of moderates who are unhappy with the current conservative leadership of the convention.

Medical ethical issues include genetic engineering, artificial insemination, fetal tissue experimentation and transplantation, abortion, the allocation of medical resources, organ donation/transplantation, AIDS, informed consent, medical confidentiality, euthanasia, advanced directives and living wills, death and dying and drug testing.

Mitchell will complete his Ph.D. course work in biomedical ethics at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville in December. If approved, he will join the CLC staff in February and plans to complete his dissertation and receive his Ph.D. degree by May 1993.

Mitchell is currently on the CLC's board. He was elected to that position in 1986. Prior to entering the University of Tennessee Ph.D. program, he was associate pastor, then pastor of Middle Valley Baptist Church in Hixson, Tenn., for five years. For the past year he was interim pastor of Immanuel Baptist church in Knoxville.

He is affiliated with The Society of Christian Philosophers, The Society for Christian Ethics, The Southern Baptist Historical Society, the American Philosophical Association and The Society for Health and Human Values.

He holds a bachelor of science degree from Mississippi State University and a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is enrolled this summer in the hospital practicum in clinical medical ethics at the University of Tennessee Medical Center at Knoxville.

In his letter to CLC trustees Aug. 13, Land said, "Many of you who have served with Ben on the commission know him already. I am confident that those of you who are new to the commission will grow to appreciate and admire his keen mind, Christian spirit and dedication to our Lord's kingdom as much as those of us who already know him. I am delighted to have the privilege to inform you of Ben's nomination. I am confident that he will, if confirmed by you, be a tremendous asset to our commission and to our convention."

Mitchell will be involved in planning the 1993 CLC annual seminar which will focus on medical ethics, Land said. That seminar is scheduled for March 1-3 in Nashville.

"It is my conviction that every informed Christian is competent to do ethics. We have the Bible and the Holy Spirit. What we need is accurate and relevant information. That's where I want to be of help. I want to help equip believers to make ethical decisions and influence public policy in an increasingly pluralistic society," Mitchell said about his nomination.

"Southern Baptists need to be an informed people," he said. "I see my role at the CLC as an information broker. That is, one who is able to maintain an awareness of the issues and literature and distill and communicate that information to fellow believers. I have every confidence that informed Christians will make God-honoring decisions and will best be able to be salt and light in a fallen world."

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On world hunger issues, Mitchell said, "As one of the privileged nations of the world, we have a responsibility to minister to the suffering and hungry in our own nation and in the world. It is Jesus himself who gives us that awesome picture of judgment in the 25th chapter of Matthew in which he says that in ministering to the hungry, thirsty and naked we are, in fact, showing love to Christ."

On alcohol and drug abuse, Mitchell said, "Our society needs to be confronted with the stark realities of alcohol use and abuse. Alcohol abuse is obviously destructive to individual persons, their families and others who are affected by their behavior (as in the case of DUI drivers). Alcohol use by pregnant women has been shown to pose potentially grave dangers to a developing fetus. For these reasons, at least, alcohol warning labels are even more important than labels on cigarettes."

On race relations, he said, "I believe the gospel is blind to color. Every person is made in the image of God and has, by nature, intrinsic value. Further, however, I believe that every person is also by nature, a sinner in need of Christ. The gospel and its benefits are for everyone who believes, according to the Scriptures.

"The wonderful thing about the gospel is that it breaks down racial barriers. (The biblical book) Galatians 3:28 says, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' That means I have a responsibility under God to love my brothers and sisters in Christ as I love myself."

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Parks urges new global thrust,  
offers leadership till 1995

By Robert O'Brien

N.F.M.B.

Baptist Press  
8/15/91

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Keith Parks returned from a mountain pilgrimage with a vision for powerful new foreign missions initiatives to help Southern Baptists reach their Bold Mission Thrust goals.

The Foreign Mission Board president, who will turn 65 in October 1992, also expressed personal commitment to lead preparations up to a 1995 launch date for his "Missions 21" vision, which extends into the 21st century.

Parks told FMB trustees at their August meeting the agency's current administrative leadership should remain in place until 1995 to maintain the momentum and direction it will take to accomplish the preparations.

"After that, a transition could be made (in administrative leadership) without hindering what we have prayed and worked so long to accomplish," said Parks, a 37-year veteran of missions.

He was referring to Bold Mission Thrust, the Southern Baptist Convention's 25-year plan for sharing the message of Jesus Christ with all people of the world by A.D. 2000.

Parks said his vision formed during a spiritual pilgrimage to the mountains, where he has prayed through three other pivotal decisions over the past 12 years. The first came in 1979, when he decided to accept an interview with a Foreign Mission Board presidential search committee.

"After each of these pilgrimages, God has moved through trustees, staff and missionaries to lead us to new levels of commitment, creativity and effectiveness in our task," Parks said.

His 10-point vision for a revitalized Bold Mission Thrust calls for an international mobilization of people of all ages and backgrounds -- from students to retirees.

It must include all "foreign missions-committed Southern Baptists," he stressed, and can only be accomplished with spiritual power.

"I pray that it will be so obviously Spirit-led that Southern Baptists will be drawn above our differences and reunite again around our common cause of reaching this world with the gospel of Jesus Christ," he said.

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Southern Baptists could be "on the verge of the greatest moment ever" in the history of foreign missions, Parks said, "if God can mold us together as missionaries, trustees and staff into a spiritual unity" -- and Southern Baptists can overcome such barriers as weak economy, negative cultural forces and lifestyles, and denominational strife.

Noting the 1999-2000 period has been targeted by Southern Baptists for a massive thrust in global evangelization, Parks pointed to 1995 as the year "most of the human elements and efforts must be in place." It's also the year Southern Baptists will celebrate the 150th anniversary of their convention and the founding of the Home and Foreign Mission Boards.

The 10-point plan would:

1. Challenge missionaries and overseas Baptists to convene regional meetings in 1992 to find better ways to evangelize all nations and unreached peoples.
2. Call a worldwide consultation for 1995 to coordinate plans for "extensive worldwide evangelistic efforts" in 1999-2000.
3. Challenge at least 10,000 college students to begin cultural and language studies no later than 1995 and spend 1999 "overseas in world evangelization or (in) becoming tentmakers" to work and witness in nations closed to missions.
4. Challenge 5,000 lay people and church staff members planning to retire between 1995 and 2000 to volunteer to spend 1999 in world evangelization or in starting a second career overseas.
5. Assist Baptist seminaries, universities and state conventions to help this new kind of volunteer gain cross-cultural communications skills.
6. Unite Southern Baptist and international Baptist bodies to provide massive evangelistic training in 1997-98 to prepare for 1999-2000 "as the greatest year of harvest in our history."
7. Challenge every association of Baptist churches "to pray forth at least two additional career missionaries, plus enough additional funding for support and operational expenses by the year 1995."
8. Determine how many countries beyond those where missionaries are now assigned should have a foreign mission witness and initiate action by the year 2000.
9. Work with other evangelistic Christians to target every major people group with evangelical witness by 2000.
10. Challenge every Southern Baptist church to develop regular prayer for missionaries and world evangelization -- and at least 12,000 churches to pray specifically for an unreached people group.

The time is short to respond to new opportunities like those in Eastern Europe and the Persian Gulf, where world events have made dramatic changes and "God is knocking down walls and opening doors," Parks said.

"Most missiologists say if new opportunities are not seized within five years, it 'becomes too late,'" he warned. "This countdown started ticking relentlessly away in January 1990 in Eastern Europe and January 1991 in the Persian Gulf. And it's ticking this very hour."

Parks also cited "time-sensitive elements" related to Bold Mission goals.

An analysis of the past 37 years of foreign missions history makes it "clear that some of the expectations the Lord has for us will not be reached unless we intensify our efforts in the next two or three years," he said.

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He pointed to achievable Bold Mission Thrust goals -- 10,000 volunteers a year overseas (already surpassed) and 5,000 missionaries in 125 countries by the year 2000. About 3,900 Southern Baptist missionaries now work in 121 countries with work extending into some 60 other nations.

Two goals that may fall short despite continuing growth, he said, are "tenfold multiplication of churches and tenfold multiplication of membership" overseas.

"We're gaining momentum in these areas, and that momentum must not be lost. In fact, with prayer and effort, these goals are doable if the right steps are taken now."

Other "time-sensitive elements," he said, include nationalization of mission institutions overseas, refocusing missionary energies "on cutting-edge expansion of the kingdom" and increasing ways to evangelize unreached people groups through nonresidential missionaries, tentmakers, partnerships with other Baptists and networking with other Christians.

Parks told trustees his "heavenly vision ... is no longer mine alone, for I've shared it with you."

"Many say the Foreign Mission Board is the flagship of our denomination," he said. "Some see it as the hope for our convention's future. However, this awesome responsibility can only be fulfilled with unquestioned spiritual commitment and transparent integrity. My conviction is that if we are unified around a vision like this, God will still be pleased to use Southern Baptists. But we must focus on the highest priorities.

"We must maintain our sound scripturally-based mission philosophy. We must rise above personal desires and denominational politics to kingdom concerns. We must be inclusive of all foreign missions committed-Southern Baptists. We must call for unity to overcome division."

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Missionary family escapes  
injury in grenade attack

By Marty Croll

*NFMB*

Baptist Press  
8/15/91

ZAMBOANGA CITY, Philippines (BP)--Two children of a Southern Baptist missionary couple in the Philippines escaped injury Aug. 10 when a grenade hurled onto a stage in front of them failed to explode.

The 10-year-old son watched as a second grenade landed behind the stage backdrop and a young woman went toward it, apparently to pick it up. It exploded, killing her and another woman and injuring about 40 others.

The incident occurred during a dramatic presentation by Christians working on the Doulos, a ship sponsored by Operation Mobilization of New Jersey. The ship docks in ports throughout the world conducting educational and book exhibitions, conferences, training seminars and other forms of evangelistic outreach. Several hundred people were in the audience.

"It was very obvious that if both grenades had exploded, there would have been major damage or death, because our children were right there close," said the missionary father, who asked that his family not be identified. "We really do praise the Lord for that. We see the hand of the Lord in it."

Local police reportedly arrested several extremist Muslims as suspects in the attack. The incident was thought to have been sparked by handbills promoting seminars on befriending and evangelizing Muslims and by word that a Doulos worker had branded the Prophet Muhammad a liar.

Zamboanga, on the Philippine island of Mindanao, is a trading city with a population that is 40 percent Muslim. It is marked by violence and reportedly is a haven for Muslim separatists who have been fighting since the 1970s for a separate republic.

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The missionary couple and the Philippine Baptists with whom they work in Zamboanga City had not established any formal relationship with Doulos, but had come to know some of the ship's workers during their two-week stay in the port. The couple works with the Cebuano people and is not involved with Muslim evangelism.

The Cebuanos, primarily Roman Catholics, are the largest Philippine language group in the nation. Although the area around Zamboanga City is historically Muslim, Cebuanos began migrating there and exerting increasing influence, especially after Mindanao was opened up to homesteading following World War II. Because the Cebuanos now control much of Zamboanga City, conflict with Muslims has arisen in recent years.

The missionary mother and her children had arrived at the late-evening presentation too late to get to the front of the crowd, but had found a spot at the side. "It was so crowded that I let my children wiggle up in front of some other people, and I wasn't even with them," the mother said. "When it (the grenade) went off, there was a stampede. But the Lord just helped me get to them as quick as I could."

The boy and girl were only a few feet from the side of the stage. Their mother was standing nearly behind it. Attackers lobbed grenades from both sides of the crowd, and the grenade with the larger charge landed on the stage.

"At first I didn't know what had happened," said the mother. "I didn't know if it was something that was maybe part of the act, because they were doing drama and different things."

But she realized "it was definitely serious" when she spotted an actor who had portrayed Jesus. His white shirt was splattered red with blood. Because of where she was standing, she saw the commotion where the other actors had been sitting behind the stage.

The actor who played Jesus was 19-year-old Nathaniel Fawcette of Oklahoma, the son of William Fawcette, a Southern Baptist who is pastor of International Baptist Church, an English-speaking congregation in Sao Paulo, Brazil. One of 21 wounded victims airlifted to Manila, Fawcette was quoted as telling reporters: "I have a love for the people who did this."

Using their small van throughout the night, the missionary couple took one injured person to a nearby hospital and transported two others to another hospital after the first one filled up. They also delivered medicines and carried messages between the hospitals and the Doulos ship.

The dramatic presentation had originally been scheduled for an outside area downtown, but rain forced the Doulos workers to perform inside the terminal at the port. The presentation was dubbed "International Night" and involved dancing and cultural interpretations from many of the 35 countries represented by the workers. The attack occurred during an evangelistic appeal at the end of the presentation.

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Never waver from Christ,  
Elder urges SSB employees

By Linda Lawson

N-SSB

Baptist Press  
8/15/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--"Listen to the drum roll of the Savior; follow his steps forever; seek his gracious favor; never, never waver," Lloyd Elder told employees of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board Aug. 9 in his last chapel service as president.

"Within our roles and positions, for the good of this great board's mission, undergirding the work of President Jimmy Draper, let us follow the high call of God in Christ," he urged.

Elder, who became the seventh president of the church programs and publishing board in 1984, retires as president Aug. 16 in accordance with an agreement reached Jan. 17 with trustees after a lengthy dispute about his leadership. His successor, James T. Draper Jr., was elected July 18 and is being inaugurated Aug. 20.

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Elder begins work Aug. 19 at Belmont College, a Baptist school in Nashville. He was elected in June to the H. Franklin Paschall Chair of Biblical Studies and Preaching.

He told Baptist Press he wishes only good things for the future of the board.

"My hope is that the board will continue to serve the largest possible number of people and churches in its historic programs," said Elder. "I hope the board will maintain the trust of our constituency and continue to have strong working relationships with other Baptist entities, all in behalf of the churches.

"This great board must continue to focus on the churches," he said.

Elder and his wife, Sue, were honored Aug. 7 by employees in a special program and reception. They were given a framed collage of highlights of the Elder administration.

In response, Elder announced two days later he was establishing the Centennial Employee/Retiree Fund with a personal gift of \$10,000. The purpose of the fund to which others may contribute is to meet emergency needs of employees and retirees.

He said the fund represented an expression of gratitude "in honor of all our fellow employees and retirees for service beyond the call of duty and love beyond measure."

In his chapel message, Elder told the story of a "walking drum" which, according to ancient European lore, was mounted on a horse-drawn cart and pulled in front of a caravan of travelers to direct their journey. He compared the drum to the presence of Jesus Christ in the lives of Christians.

"He establishes the course of the journey and goes before us. He guides the way each day. Indeed, 'he is the way.' He sets the pace of our going, for he 'knows our frame,' our readiness for the climb and our need for place and space of new beginnings.

"He makes the drum roll when danger approaches, alerting us to rally and be ready, for 'he is the captain of our salvation.' He starts us in the morning, for it is his day, and stops us at nightfall because he is our rest. He has always been 'the starter and finisher' of our faith," Elder continued.

He said he was leaving the board with optimism for the future.

While he will not teach until the spring semester, Elder said his responsibilities for the fall will include counseling with students, representing the college and serving as a guest lecturer.

"Among our families and friendships, under our burdens and pressures, in the midst of our joys and hopes, let us walk on to this drumbeat," said Elder.

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State student directors hear  
evangelism task force proposal

By Chip Alford

N-SSB

Baptist Press  
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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Preliminary plans for the creation of a national task force that would serve as a "delivery system" for student evangelism were presented to state directors of student ministry Aug. 12-13 at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

The National Evangelism Task Force would provide a channel through which materials, training, funds and other resources for student evangelism could be made available on an annual basis, according to Brad Gray, evangelism/world student missions consultant for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's student ministry department.

"We need in student ministry a delivery system or infrastructure where student evangelism can be lifted up and given a priority on an ongoing basis," Gray said. "This program can provide that system."

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As proposed, the plan calls for two layers of organization: the NET Force, a national group composed of two representatives from each state convention appointed by the state director for student ministry, and a State Evangelism Task Force (SET Force) in each state convention, with representatives appointed by the NET Force.

A formal proposal on the creation of the national and state task forces will be presented to state directors for their approval at their December planning meeting in Nashville.

In other business, Gray told student directors a representative from each student mission team which helped with the restoration of a Baptist church in Leningrad has been invited back to the Soviet Union for a dedication ceremony of the church in December.

In the last 15 months, Gray said 145 volunteers representing 60 college campuses and 12 state conventions helped restore an old church building in the Soviet city which is now being used by Temple of the Gospel, a Russian Baptist congregation.

The teams "brought an end to 72 years of closed doors to mission work in the Soviet Union" and opened doors to ministries at churches in other Soviet cities, Gray said.

State student directors and their spouses also have been invited to the church's dedication ceremony. Tentative dates for the trip are Dec. 30 through Jan. 11. Travelers also may visit Moscow and Kiev and other Russian cities to explore other possibilities for future student ministry involvement, Gray said.

In other action, student directors also:

-- heard that the Mission '95 committee, co-chaired by Gray and Jeff Lewis, also of the SSB's student ministry department, will meet in late September to discuss the location of the nationwide missions conference to be held in December 1995.

-- were asked for input on filling four vacancies on the SSB's student ministry staff. SSB student ministry director Charles Johnson said he hopes to have the positions filled by December.

-- were encouraged by Mike Riggins, associate director of the Mission Service Corps Tentmaker program, to use MSC volunteers to supplement their student ministry efforts.

State student directors also will meet at the 1991 Ridgecrest Student Conference Aug. 17-23 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

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Mississippi pastor turns high school reunion into evangelism opportunity

By Sarah Zimmerman

F-NMB

Baptist Press  
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ATLANTA (BP)--As a Mississippi pastor prepared for his 10-year high school reunion, he mailed New Testaments to more than 350 of his classmates.

"I wanted them to know that Christ is still the one who can make a difference in your life," said Greg Martin, pastor of Commission Road Baptist Church in Long Beach, Miss.

Martin became a Christian at the end of his sophomore year at Hixson High School near Chattanooga, Tenn. Though he attended church before he became a Christian, Martin said he lived as a hypocrite.

At age 10 he was arrested for shoplifting. At 13, he was caught breaking into cars. "I went from one bad crowd to another," he said.

Martin was working as a bookie at a race track in the spring semester of his sophomore year when he became convicted about his sin. He knew he needed to pray for forgiveness and salvation.

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That summer, a youth worker at his church taught Martin what it means to follow Christ. When Martin began his junior year in high school, he was a different person.

This year, he wanted people attending his high school reunion to know the changes Christ made in his life were lasting.

Martin found the addresses of more than 350 of the 400-plus members of his graduating class. He sent each of them a New Testament and a letter.

Martin was anxious about people's response as he attended the reunion. But he said about 50 people thanked him for the New Testament, and no one said anything negative about his gesture.

Most gratifying to Martin were the letters he received. One man told Martin he read the New Testament when he couldn't sleep at night. A woman who had been through a bitter divorce called the New Testament the "loveliest gift I have received in a long time." Another letter was from the high school's star football player who told Martin he wanted to discuss the claims of Christ.

Martin hopes that by his 20th high school reunion, he will see the benefits of his classmates reading the gift they received this year.

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Exodus offers ex-convicts hope  
on journey out of captivity

By Ken Camp

*F. J. [unclear]*

Baptist Press  
8/15/91

DALLAS (BP)--Exodus Ministries in Dallas offers a Christ-centered oasis of hope and recovery to ex-convicts making the sojourn from captivity to freedom.

The initial months after release are a crucial time of readjustment for ex-offenders and their families, according to Mike Rouse, executive director of Exodus Ministries. Through programs of spiritual and social development, Exodus teaches freedom within the confines of structure and accountability.

Exodus operates a 20-unit, multi-family housing complex in east Dallas where up to 17 ex-convicts and their families are provided a home for a maximum of six months. However, many leave sooner as they become readjusted to the "free world."

The ministry was begun in 1988 as a pilot project of Dallas Baptist Association, the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, under the sponsorship of Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas.

Monthly rent paid to Exodus goes into a bank account established for each family so when they leave the after-care ministry, they will have money for deposits on apartments and utilities, or even a down-payment on a car or house.

"To qualify for Exodus, an inmate prior to his release must be referred to us by his warden, chaplain or pastor, or by a prison ministry or social agency," Rouse explained.

The ministry is open to couples with children or to single parents with children living at home. Residents and their families are required to attend weekly classes in job placement, homemaking skills, household budgeting and substance abuse recovery. Persons who are not active members of a church elsewhere are strongly encouraged to attend worship services held at the housing complex.

Ex-offenders learn how to fill out job applications and interview for employment. Parents learn about nutrition, hygiene and simple first aid. And in the budgeting class, residents receive one-on-one help from volunteers as they review receipts weekly and learn how to live within their means.

Volunteers also offer tutoring for children, assistance to help adult drop-outs earn their GEDs, literacy training and Christian counseling.

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Sixty families have come through the Exodus Ministry in the last three and one-half years. Only two ex-offenders who have been through the program have returned to prison, and Rouse is able to point to several ex-convicts whose lives have been transformed by God through the influence of Exodus.

Rouse -- a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University who grew up in a Christian family as an active member of Pioneer Drive Baptist Church in Abilene, Texas -- said in the early 1980s he turned away from God and became involved in drugs and alcohol. In 1984, he was sentenced to an Oklahoma federal penitentiary for possession of cocaine with intent to distribute.

When he was released after serving 14 months, he returned to Abilene and began working again in the construction business.

"Here I was -- a graduate of a Baptist university who had a loving and supportive family, church and community -- but when I sat in the church pew, I still wondered what other people were thinking about me," Rouse said.

"What would a guy with an 8th grade education who came from a dysfunctional family do? How much of a chance do you think he would have without some love and support?"

When he relocated to Dallas, Rouse gained a better understanding of that experience as he went job hunting.

"I literally had one person tear up my application in front of me and hand it back to me when I told him I had been in prison," Rouse said.

"It gives me more credibility in working with the ministry.

I'm able to say, 'I've walked in your shoes. I know the same pain and loneliness. I've experienced the same rejection.'"

The empathy for ex-offenders that Rouse exudes provides an avenue by which he can share his faith with them and disciple new Christians, helping them to overcome their old lifestyle.

As a stress reliever and a means of channeling his own self-described "addictive personality," Rouse became a marathon runner while in prison. Looking at the 1,000 ex-offenders the Texas Department of Corrections releases to Dallas County every month and the relatively small number that Exodus can reach, Rouse turns to a sporting metaphor to describe his frustration.

"It's an ultra-marathon with no finish line," Rouse said. "It can be overwhelming, but I just try to remember that even Jesus couldn't touch everyone during his earthly ministry. He spent three years with 12 men.

"We're just doing what we can do here."

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Plight of the American child  
calls for adult advocates

By Susan Todd Doyle

Baptist Press  
8/15/91

F-C O  
WMU

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--The intricate, spider-web-like structure of the American family is being torn apart, and it is not being repaired, said a national children's educator. Sadly, the child is the one who suffers the most from the breakdown.

"The mounting crisis of our children and families is a rebuke to everything America professes to be," said Barbara Massey, a children's magazine editor for Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

"(The crisis) will bring America to its economic knees and increase violence and discord within this country unless we confront it," she said.

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"This year, as we are in the second year of this last decade of the 20th century, we must work hard rebuilding the moral and social foundations of our society, starting with the treatment of our children," Massey said.

"We must make it un-American for any child to grow up poor or without adequate child care, health care, food, shelter, education, and safety from neglect, abuse and violence."

Massey recently spoke to WMU leaders attending training conferences at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

She described some of the crises facing children in America today:

- every eight seconds of the school day, an American child drops out;
- every 26 seconds, an American child runs away from home;
- every 47 seconds, an American child is abused and neglected;
- every 67 seconds, an American teen-ager has a baby;
- every seven minutes, an American child is arrested for a drug offense;
- every 30 minutes, an American child is arrested for drunken driving;
- every 53 minutes, an American child dies of poverty;
- every school day, 135,000 American children bring guns to school.

"As the wealthiest nation on earth and the standard-bearer of democracy, we have an 'A' capacity to care for our children, but an 'F' performance on many key indicators of child well-being," said Massey. "By every measure, the U.S. performance is unsatisfactory."

In comparison to other countries, the United States falls short in many areas, according to statistics. American school children know less geography than school children in Iran, less math than school children in Japan and less science than school children in Spain.

"Children are the poorest Americans," Massey said. In comparison to eight other industrialized nations, America has the highest child poverty rate.

But money is not the main problem within the American family, Massey said. "Increasingly, couples are finding that their scarcest resource is time, not money."

A 1989 study in Pittsburgh verified Massey's analysis. It showed several things: the average parent has just 17 hours of contact with children a week; the average working couple spends four minutes a day in meaningful conversation with each other; and the average working parent spends 30 seconds a day in meaningful conversation with his or her children.

"The family structure is being torn from all directions with not enough time or energy or motivation to rebuild," Massey said. "The clearest evidence that the supportive web for children and for parents has pulled apart is the lack of family time."

The 40-hour work week is a thing of the past, surveys show. The average work week has risen to 46.8 hours. Leisure time has shrunk from 26.2 hours a week in 1973 to 16.6 hours in 1987.

"We are a society that is exhausted and overbooked," Massey said.

The crisis within the American family is affecting children more than most people want to admit, she said. And it is affecting more children than ever imagined. The children involved in Southern Baptist churches and programs are not removed from the problems facing children in society.

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"The children who come to our missions organizations are not removed," Massey said. "We don't get them as a pure, unaffected child. The children we deal with are affected.

"Children are at risk now, and it's becoming more so every day."

The situation isn't hopeless if adults will become advocates for the children, Massey said. "A child advocate means you stand up for children -- yours and others. Being an advocate means you become a voice for the voiceless."

Massey listed ways in which adults can be advocates for children: attending PTA meetings and looking out for the well-being of children; encouraging church leaders to give children an active role in church life; and letting government representatives know how you feel about issues which affect children.

"There are hundreds of ways to advocate for children," Massey said.

One of the ways WMU is getting involved as an advocate for children is by joining with other SBC entities and secular children's advocacy groups to sponsor the National Child Advocacy Conference in Louisville, Ky., April 21-23, 1993. The theme of the conference will be "Children and the Church."

"We as Southern Baptists have an amazing amount of resources, but we're hoarding them," Massey said. "There is more that we can do together."

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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.

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