



(BP)

-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2350
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8910
CompuServe ID# 70420,1

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
NASHVILLE Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

August 6, 1992

92-125

EDITORS' NOTE: Today's Baptist Press releases:

NASHVILLE -- Bennett: Cooperative Program 1992 goal remains in sight.
BARCELONA -- Baptists compete for souls at Olympics in Barcelona, with photos.
RICHMOND -- Pray for rain, relief in Africa, foreign missions officials urge.
WASHINGTON -- CLC supports bill for expanded alcohol labels.
LOUISVILLE -- Author urges Christian media to be more than 'talking heads', with photo.
GLORIETA, N.M. -- Baptists face world's agonies if only for a few moments, with photo.
MACAO -- Doctor's tough shell masks self center, with photo.
ORLANDO -- Los bautistas hispanos celebran 500 anos de influencia en America.
(Spanish-language version of earlier BP story.)

**Bennett: Cooperative Program
1992 goal remains in sight**

**Baptist Press
8/6/92**

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program funds received by the SBC Executive Committee dipped 1.89 percent over the same month a year ago, according to Harold C. Bennett, the committee's president-treasurer.

"There is still time for us to meet the Cooperative Program goal for 1991-92, and I pray we will respond to the challenge," Bennett said. He voiced conviction that "Southern Baptists remain committed to spreading the gospel in all the world and to the Cooperative Program as the channel of financial support."

After 10 months of the SBC fiscal year (Oct. 1 to Sept. 30), Southern Baptists' Cooperative Program giving for missions and ministry -- \$116,631,991 -- remains just 0.51 percent below the rate of a year ago. The monthly basic CP operating budget is \$11,725,856; the overall 1992 goal is \$140,712,282.

Designated gifts for July, meanwhile, jumped 55.37 percent, totaling \$4,990,614 compared to \$3,212,018 in July 1991. For 10 months of the current fiscal year, designated receipts were 2.99 percent above the same period a year ago.

In Cooperative Program giving, the July 1992 total was \$11,372,445 compared to July 1991 gifts of \$11,591,867, or down 1.89 percent.

The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. Designated contributions include the Lottie Moon Offering for Foreign Missions, the Annie Armstrong Offering for Home Missions, world hunger and other special gifts.

State and regional conventions retain a percentage of Cooperative Program contributions they receive from the churches to support work in their areas and send the remaining funds to the Executive Committee for national and international ministries.

OLYMPICS MINISTRY ROUNDUP

Baptists compete for souls
at Olympics in Barcelona

By Mike Creswell

BARCELONA, Spain (BP)--The world watched the Summer Olympics as athletes grunted, grimaced and sweated their way to victory -- or defeat.

But behind the scenes, scores of Baptists competed in a spiritual battle for souls. These spiritual athletes smiled more than the sports stars but also did their share of grunting and sweating as they labored amid Spain's soaring summer temperatures.

For the "Reach Out '92" effort, an international team of nearly 100 Baptists ministered during the Olympics. The team included 10 Southern Baptist missionaries, about 30 Baptist Student Union workers from the United States, two dozen student volunteers from the United Kingdom, 25 Spanish workers and 10 from other European countries.

They were not alone. As many as 8,000 Christian workers from other denominations and church-related organizations came to Barcelona for the Olympics, estimated Southern Baptist missionary Fred Dallas of Fort Bragg, N.C., who coordinated Baptist efforts.

Despite some overlap and occasional tensions, the general effort went smoothly. Most ministries were carried out in coordination with the council that represents the relatively few evangelical churches in Catalonia province.

Track and field great Carl Lewis was the big draw in a special program Aug. 4 at the Palace of Music in Barcelona. More than 1,500 people packed the recital hall as Lewis and other star athletes told of their faith in Christ.

Because Baptists are little-known in Spain, local pastors appreciated the extra "muscle" to help introduce them and boost their image. At the Palace of Music program, flashbulbs fired and applause burst out as Lewis took the stage with Olympian Leroy Burrell and others.

Active in Christian outreach since 1981, Lewis told the crowd the Lord is with him when he wins but also when he loses. When he loses, "That's when the Lord comes to me and says everything is going to be all right," he said.

American track star Chandra Cheesborough admitted she began dabbling in cocaine during the same 1984 Olympics in which she won a gold medal. Soon she had a habit that cost \$10,000 a week. A rehabilitation center stay failed to cure her but she later was "scared straight" by something that happened to her, although she didn't elaborate.

"I had to be delivered from drugs. We need to know drugs are not an illness. It is sin. And we need to face it as sin," she said.

She didn't make the 1992 Olympic team "but God saw fit that I made his team."

Olympian Leroy Burrell also spoke of his faith in Christ. He has won six gold medals in running and held three world records going into the 1992 Olympics. When people ask him if he is OK, "I say yes, because I'm a Christian!"

Along with soloists such as American opera singer Marvin Matthews, the 176-member chapel choir and orchestra of First Baptist Church, Dallas, performed.

At a cost of about \$200,000, the First Baptist Church group brought more than 200 performers and supporters to Barcelona in a chartered jet to perform 12 concerts in 13 days. Their programs found an enthusiastic reception both in outside plazas and in meeting halls and churches.

--more--

Baptist students packed backpacks with lunch and evangelistic materials and pounded Barcelona's streets all day to spread their faith. Some performed music, drama, mime or sports to get an audience for their Christian testimonies.

They worked in a city decked out for the Olympics with flags and banners waving from every available window or post. Most flags represented Catalonia, the separatist-minded province where the city is located, not Spain.

Intense security precautions prevented Baptists from having gatherings near the Olympic Village. When they attempted to gather there, police quickly arrived to disperse them. But local missionaries said such security is normal; Basque separatists from northern Spain have mounted a violent campaign for independence for decades.

Baptist volunteers distributed thousands of colorful booklets explaining the gospel. One, called "Winning in Life," featured sports photographs to capitalize on the Olympics. It was jointly produced in 15 languages by the United Bible Societies and the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Offerings taken this summer by students at Centrifuge programs sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board helped underwrite production costs.

Southern Baptist missionaries in Spain also worked with Spanish Baptists to produce an attractive four-color brochure explaining who Baptists are.

For weeks before the Olympics began, Dallas and other missionaries visited schools and parks throughout the area to hold sports clinics in which the finer points of baseball and basketball were taught. An introduction to the gospel, "The way to win at life," was included. Some schools canceled the clinics after initially approving them when parents complained about the religious emphasis.

Barcelona reportedly spent a whopping \$7 billion to get ready for the Olympics. Many of the improvements in roads and trains will remain long after the athletes are gone.

Similarly, while Baptists reached out to Olympic athletes and visitors, they concentrated most efforts on boosting local churches. Only two Baptist congregations worship in Barcelona, a city of some 5 million people.

Only about two dozen evangelical churches of any kind exist in the sprawling metropolis; most are small. The situation mirrors Spain in general. Only about 70,000 of Spain's 40 million people are evangelical Christians. And while Spain is known as a Catholic country, studies by the Roman Catholic Church show only about 17 percent of Spaniards have any involvement with the church, said Robert Velert Chisbert. He is pastor of Bona Nova Baptist Church in Barcelona and president of the Evangelical Baptist Union of Spain.

"Spain is one of the biggest mission fields in the world," Velert said.

A lack of local evangelical church backing was hard for some Baptist workers at the Games.

"It is a lot different here from Seoul, Korea, where there are many evangelical churches to give support," said Dallas, who also worked in the Seoul Olympics. "Here, we don't have the 'home field' advantage."

Most Baptist volunteers stayed at a temporary camp at Nueva Salem Baptist Church in Badalona, near Barcelona. There they endured bunk beds in Sunday school areas with no air conditioning and limited toilet and shower facilities. The camp was necessary because prices for Barcelona hotel rooms during the Games soared into hundreds or thousands of dollars.

Pastor Juan Marcos Yasquez said Nueva Salem emphasized reaching out to local residents before the Olympics. By the time mid-July arrived, most city dwellers had headed for the beaches or mountains on vacation.

--more--

Forbidden to hold public meetings near the church, the members moved two miles out to another community for an outreach effort. In a plaza in the Llefia area, they held a sports-related program featuring Christian athletes as guest speakers. The athletes, attired in colorful sports togs, attracted plenty of attention.

In one service 19 people prayed to receive Christ as Savior; 12 actually walked forward to register their decisions. "Walking the aisle" is common in the United States and elsewhere, but is considered unusual in Spain. "This is a miracle," Yasquez said.

By signing up people contacted for Bible studies, the church hopes to preserve more decisions.

--30--

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

Pray for rain, relief in Africa,
foreign mission officials urge

By Donald D. Martin

Baptist Press
8/6/92

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Foreign Mission Board is asking Southern Baptists to pray for millions of Africans affected by war and drought.

"Several million people are suffering and many are dying for lack of food. The sight of people hungry and thirsty ... having no hope, that's what drives me to request prayer," explained Bill Bullington, the board's vice president for Africa.

This century's worst drought in southern Africa has wiped out between 50 and 90 percent of the region's cereal crops. By September some 30 million people in the region will need outside food assistance to survive, according to the U.S. Committee for Refugees, a private research organization in Washington, D.C.

Bullington also asked Southern Baptists to pray for people in Somalia, where civil war and drought have plunged the nation into a desperate state of anarchy. Relief workers in the region say the disintegration of the country surpasses the more publicized horrors seen in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"A bad day in Sarajevo would be a good day in Somalia," said a relief worker who recently returned from east Africa where Somalia is situated.

The Red Cross drew a similar conclusion. "The situation in Somalia is the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today," said the director-general of the British Red Cross in a recent press report.

Some 5,000 people a week die from starvation in Somalia and 1.5 million are at "extreme risk of starvation in the next few months," concluded the U.S. Committee for Refugees.

The crisis in Somalia offers an important opportunity for the world's Christian community to help one of the countries most isolated from Christianity, said a relief worker.

Scores of Christian organizations, including many Southern Baptist agencies, rushed into the former Soviet Union to stake a claim in rebuilding the Christian church. But recent cracks in Somalia's wall of Islamic isolation have gone largely unnoticed, he said.

Historically Christians have ignored Somalia because of its violent opposition to any religion except Islam, the worker said. Yet Christian researchers still were surprised at the extent of neglect of Somalia when they compared the distribution of evangelistic resources in Somalia to those in post-Soviet Russia. At current levels, a Russian will receive a million evangelistic messages before a Somali receives one, the research concluded.

--more--

"How can you say that's fair?" a researcher asked. "We've ignored Somalia because it's such a tough nut to crack."

Beyond Somalia, Bullington asked for prayer for all of southern Africa. The next few months are critical, he said. In August or September what is left of internal food stocks will run out, forcing many countries in the region to rely on imported food, according to an American Red Cross report. The region will need food assistance for almost a year, Bullington added.

"The next normal rainy season will not come until October or November," he said. "So even with good rains, the people will not have food that they've produced for an additional five or six months. That means there's nearly a year before us without adequate food resources.

"We are talking about massive human need. Southern Baptist missionaries and African Baptists have already begun to act through normal channels and hunger relief projects. New efforts have been planned, and additional requests for hunger relief funds will soon arrive."

Missionaries in Zimbabwe are feeding about 20,000 people and plan to expand the \$700,000 feeding program to assist 40,000 by this fall. Zimbabwe is one of the countries hit hardest by the drought.

Other missionaries are preparing relief projects that should deliver up to \$2 million worth of food assistance to countries in southeastern Africa, Bullington said.

--30--

GLC supports bill for
expanded alcohol labels

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
8/6/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--A bill requiring more information on alcoholic beverage labels recently was introduced in Congress. The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has endorsed the legislation.

House of Representatives bill 5613, introduced by Rep. Pat Schroeder, D.-Colo., would amend the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act to require the following information on alcoholic beverage labels:

- Alcohol content by volume in a nonpromotional way.
- Number of drinks per container.
- Ingredients by their common name and calories per container and drink.
- This statement: "If you or someone you know has a drinking problem, a call may be made to (a toll-free number established by the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services) for help."

The bill would require the information to be conspicuous in its type and its location on the label. It also mandates the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms issue a report to Congress on the effectiveness of alcoholic beverage warning labels.

H.R. 5613 defines a drink as .6 ounces of alcohol.

"We must keep in mind that children have died from overdosing on fortified wines that contain the equivalent of five shots of hard liquor in a container the size of a beer can," Schroeder said in introducing the bill. "Failing to make the alcoholic contents of these products perfectly clear is courting disaster for our kids as well as for adults."

--more--

"We are pleased this legislation has been introduced," said James A. Smith, GLC director of government relations. "The Christian Life Commission believes it is always beneficial to fully inform consumers about alcohol. We believe this information will help educate consumers, especially children, who may not be fully informed.

"We also hope the inclusion of a toll-free help line will offer hope to individuals who feel trapped in their alcohol dependence and who may not get help any other way."

Warning labels already are required on alcohol containers by The Alcoholic Beverage Labeling Act of 1988. The labels read: "GOVERNMENT WARNING: (1) According to the surgeon general, women should not drink alcoholic beverages during pregnancy because of the risk of birth defects. (2) Consumption of alcoholic beverages impairs your ability to drive a car or operate machinery, and may cause health problems."

The bill, introduced July 9, had 12 original co-sponsors.

--30--

Author urges Christian media
to be more than 'talking heads'

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
8/6/92

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Robert Don Hughes wants Christian media to tune in to a new audience.

"I think Christians spend most of their time talking to each other rather than the world," said Hughes, associate professor of communication and mass media at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

"Our media approach is mostly talking heads, the preached sermon," he said. "People who do not go to church are for the most part disinclined to tune in and watch (sermons) at home."

Hughes argues in his recent book, "Talking to the World in the Days to Come," that Christian media must change its focus to reach secular audiences. His book was honored in June as one of five finalists in the evangelism/missions category for a Gold Medallion Book Award, a recognition sponsored by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association.

"If we Christians would stop throwing our money into ineffective evangelistic approaches that just make certain wealthy preachers wealthier and start contemplating how to effectively use God's money, I think we would start to see there are some very effective uses of the media," Hughes said in an interview.

Film and drama are more likely to get the attention of non-Christians than sermons, he said. Yet some films sometimes run the risk of only attracting Christian audiences, he said, noting that people resist going to movies perceived as targeted for a specialized audience.

"I can't imagine anybody walking up to me and saying, 'Do you want to go see the latest communist film or the latest Ku Klux Klan film?' or any propaganda-type statement," Hughes said.

Less overt Christian messages, he said, are usually necessary to draw secular audiences. He cited "Chariots of Fire" and "Tender Mercies," films of the 1980s produced by secular studios, as two movies that "were not Christian in nature but had Christian impact." In addition, he praised "The Hiding Place," a motion picture produced several years ago by Billy Graham's World Wide Pictures, as an effective film.

"It's really hard for Christian producers to do anything but 'Christian films,'" Hughes said. "I have a hard time with the idea of putting 'Christian' in front of everything. One thing the book talks about is the tendency for Christians to draw apart and just be Christian over here in the corner and let everybody else go."

--more--

Such an attitude prompts criticism of Christian artists when they gain popularity among secular audiences, Hughes said. "When you start to cross over to the world like Amy Grant and some others, you get criticized by the Christian community which says, 'They've abandoned us.' What they are able to do is cross over to a non-Christian audience and try to build some credibility and some relationships."

The modern world demands that Christians use the media to convey their message, Hughes said. "We used to put up churches and steeples and people came. There is now a far more aggressive marketplace of ideas -- and that marketplace is the media."

Nevertheless, Hughes stressed in his book that Christians cannot rely solely on media to do evangelism. "I really tried to emphasize the most effective evangelism is personal evangelism that comes not from preacher types, because everybody expects preachers to say those kind of things," he said, "but from laypersons who share their faith not only through their words but by the way they live."

--30--

(BP) photo available from Southern Seminary.

Baptist face world's agonies
if only for a few moments

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
8/6/92

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Forget assignments -- these Southern Baptists wanted out.

"Air Jericho" took them on imaginary trips to other countries during Jericho missions festival at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center. The game transported them to nations where government officials were harsh, life expectancy was low and illiteracy rates were high.

For some, the trip was too intense. They offered watches, class rings and earrings as bribes to get out of their assigned countries. The game was coordinated by members of "The Company," a drama troupe from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, who accepted the "bribes" and returned them after the game.

One player attempted to defect to the United States. He was caught, however, and quickly returned to his country.

Roy Owens, member of Vallecito Baptist Church near Bayfield, Colo., was assigned to India. But as soon as he arrived he was told he was dead. The life expectancy in India is 57.5 years; he is 68.

Two-thirds of the Air Jericho players had cotton balls in their ears to represent people worldwide who go to bed hungry every night.

Stephen Branham, a 10-year-old who attends West Gate Memorial Baptist Church in Beaumont, Texas, was a player with cotton balls. He "died" of starvation in the Philippines before the game ended.

Clydel Chapman, associate pastor of Northside Baptist Church in Odessa, Texas, was one of the lucky ones. He was assigned to the United States with the privilege of sitting on a sofa in the shade while players assigned to other countries stood in the sun. He even had the choice of eating plain or peanut M&Ms.

"My initial response was wow, this is where I want to be. We were very comfortable," Chapman said.

But he developed mixed emotions watching other players try to memorize a garbled paragraph in order to legally exit their countries.

In the United States, "we had freedom of movement but some of these people never got out of their countries," Chapman said.

--more--

Chapman toured the world as defined by Air Jericho. He ended his trip in the Middle East where he was arrested for being a Christian.

Jericho missions festival is held each year at Glorieta and Ridgecrest Baptist conference centers. It is jointly sponsored by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board, Sunday School Board, Brotherhood Commission and Woman's Missionary Union.

--30--

(BP) photos available upon request from Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

Doctor's tough shell
masks soft center

By Lounette Templeton

Baptist Press
8/6/92

MACAO (BP)--If Esther Lackey seems a bit crusty, she comes by it honestly. The tiny doctor with a tough surface and soft center has battled the odds for 70 years.

A less-spirited person might not have traveled to unfamiliar Macao, near Hong Kong, to run a clinic for people who speak unfamiliar Chinese. But the Southern Baptist doctor from Colorado Springs, Colo., did just that -- three times.

Lackey quickly learned her way around the tiny Portuguese colony on the China coast, which returns to Chinese rule in 1999. With the help of an interpreter and a smattering of Chinese, she also learned to communicate with patients at Macao's Hope Medical Clinic. On three occasions in the past six years, Lackey has worked at the clinic, begun by missionaries, while missionary doctors furloughed or studied Chinese.

When the clinic finally reached a full staff, Lackey could think of retirement. She went home to Colorado but retirement isn't what she has in mind, despite her 70th birthday in April and a nagging knee injury.

"I don't like the word," Lackey said, treating "retirement" as an unmentionable. "I've never worked a place long enough to retire. If retirement means sitting and watching TV, forget it.

"I don't feel old except when my knee acts up," she said. "I enjoy walking, getting out with people." The frown embedded in her brow deepened. "I get mad at my knee," she said, when it prevents her from being as active as she wants.

Indeed, anger has frequented Lackey's life. She was born (in Evansville, Ind.) with a deformed right hand. Later she contracted a skin disease. It became so severe skin grafts were necessary when she was just 16.

"I didn't have a normal life as a teen-ager," she said, rationing her words. "I guess it just made me stubborn."

That stubbornness served her well when she chose a career. Women doctors were rare when she went through medical school. In 1942, Lackey was one of just eight women out of 400 applicants accepted into medical school at Indiana University. Studying in a male-dominated school could have been a problem for some women but not for Lackey.

"Oh sure, they made fun and tried to embarrass the women but I expected it," she said. "We didn't let it upset us."

After her internship, Lackey took a medical job in Texas' Crystal City -- sight unseen.

"I arrived by bus and if I'd had the money, I would have turned around and left," she said. Fortunately, the town had more to offer than "cactus and 120-degree temperatures in the shade," she said. Lackey married her landlady's son. She also became a Baptist.

--more--

Lackey joked that her family went to the Methodist church "after the offering was taken." But her Southern Baptist husband "went to church every time the doors opened."

"The Lord never let me go," she said, her voice cracking to expose the soft center under that tough surface. "He gave me a husband to head me in the right direction."

Marriage can be a major obstacle for any woman with a medical career. So Lackey changed careers. For 26 years she was wife and mother first, then a doctor. Because her husband's job as a petroleum engineer moved them often, Lackey didn't have much chance to set up a medical practice. She has no regrets.

Her husband died unexpectedly in 1976. With their children grown, her homemaker career ended. Feisty but fragile, she got into a battle with God.

"I thought I would get to feeling better if I served the Lord better," she recalled.

Lackey tried leading an international Bible fellowship group. When the first "coffee" in her home fell flat, she turned on God. Lackey sat up the rest of the night pouring out her anger. She had tried to be faithful with the social graces she had but felt God had not been faithful to her.

"I ended up on the floor, literally, with nowhere to go except back to him," she recalled. "I said, 'Though You slay me, yet will I trust in You.' That's been my motto ever since."

She soon discovered God had other plans for the rest of her life. Before her volunteer medical work in Macao, she worked in a soup kitchen that had a small medical clinic. Between trips to Macao, she spent 10 months in the jungles of Peru as a volunteer doctor for Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Despite Lackey's crustiness, people marvel when they see her in action. Besides her work at the Hope Medical Clinic, she treated elderly patients in a makeshift dispensary in a Macao church. She led a Bible study class for Philippine maids. Limping down Macao's cobblestone streets, she passed out tracts.

"I don't have any gifts," she said flatly. "But I do enjoy working, helping out wherever I can. My prayer is that when I'm no more use to God, he'll take me home."

People involved in missions hope that's a long time off.

--30--

(BP) photo available upon request from Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

EDITORS' NOTE: This is a Spanish-language version story of the (BP) story, dated 8-4-92, "Hispanics mark 5 centuries of influence in America" by Barbara Denman and Rosa Martinez.

Los bautistas hispanos celebran
500 anos de influencia en America

Baptist Press
8/6/92

ORLANDO (BP)--Mas de 1,700 personas del grupo etnico mas grande de los bautistas del sur viajaron desde California, Nueva York y diferentes paises latinoamericanos hasta Orlando para elebrar los 500 anos de la influencia hispana en America.

La "Celebracion de los 500 anos," patrocinada por la Conferencia de pastores hispanos bautistas del sur el 1 y 2 de agosto en Orlando, destaco el descubrimiento de America asi como la herencia y el futuro del trabajo hispano de los bautistas del sur.

--more--

Banderas, trajes y exhibiciones representaron la cultura de 20 naciones hispanas. Mariachis, musica tipica de America del Sur, coros unidos, la conocida cantante internacional de opera Blanca Varela y la cantante Cathy Guajardo, dieron el toque del mosaico musical hispano.

Bob Sena, coordinador del programa, comenta: "La unica cosa que nos une es nuestro idioma. Este evento borra el mito que los hispanos no pueden trabajar unidos."

Sena, director asociado de la division de extension de iglesias de idiomas de la Junta de Misiones Domesticas, dijo que el programa se diseno para destacar "la cultura, el idioma, la herencia, el poder del voto y la presencia hispana en los Estados Unidos."

Sin embargo, el anade que el proposito de la reunion puede verse en el futuro y no en el pasado. "Queremos usar esto como una plataforma para lanzar una estrategia de evangelizacion e iglesrecimiento, y el comienzo de iglesia en la proxima decada en la Convencion Bautista del Sur."

"Esto es una gran celebracion, una gran fiesta," dijo Sena. "Muchos dicen que hemos estado dormidos. Estamos despertando a un gran gigante. Estamos aqui, tenemos influencia y estamos contribuyendo a la Convencion Bautista del Sur. No estamos pidiendo nada, estamos dando una mano."

"Estamos enfatizando la evangelizacion, destacando el grupo etnico mas grande de America."

La historia de la influencia hispana en America la presento Antonio Ramos, pastor de la Iglesia Bautista Calvario en Miami. El destaco el descubrimiento de America por Cristobal Colon y el desarrollo de la obra bautista del sur entre los hispanos.

Ramos, citando a Josue Grijalva, dijo: "Los bautistas del sur iniciaron su testimonio con los mejicomamericanos en 1821 cuando la First Baptist Church de San Antonio, Texas, empezo una clase biblica en espanol. Este grupo se convirtio en 1861 en la Primera Iglesia Bautista Mexicana."

Un dato que resalto Ramos, y citado en unos de sus libros, fue el siguiente: "A mediados de las decada de 1880 (probablemente en 1884) se inicio la obra entre los cubanos residentes en la Florida ... Al reunirnos en la ciudad de Orlando, los bautistas hispanos de la Florida tienen ya una historia centenaria."

Para terminar, Ramos recuerda al pueblo: "un detalle fundamental es que jamas le hemos mentido al pueblo hispano. Le hemos hablado de una Biblia infalible y de un Salvador suficiente, unico mediador entre Dios y los hombres. Esa es en si una enorme causa de celebracion."

Segun Jimmy Draper, presidente de la Junta Bautista de Escuelas Dominicales, el ano 1992 ha sido el ano de los nuevos materiales en espanol. En octubre, saldra Quietud, una revista con devocionales diarios, y tres recursos didacticos que acompanaran las revistas de adultos, ninos y preescolares de la Escuela Dominical. Otros productos incluyen el "Consejero de las 24 horas"; serie de casetes para jovenes, preparado por consejeros hispanos; "El Discipulo Joven", un material del discipulado para jovenes, "Paso a Paso por el Antiguo Testamento", una guia de estudio para recorrer en su totalidad el Antiguo Testamento; "El Pacto Matrimonial"; "Padres por la Gracia de Dios"; y el libro para pastores "El Pastor en la Iglesia de Hoy."

Cada ano, Draper anadio, mediante actividades de capacitacion, la junta ha preparado aproximadamente 5,000 lideres hispanos en las area de alcance, ensenanza y discipulado. "Hemos dicho que el trabajo etnico y la obra hispana tendran prioridad en el presupuesto del proximo ano."

Durante el evento de dos dias, el grupo reconocio a tres lideres por sus contribuciones a las Convencion Bautista del Sur. Fueron nombrados "heroes de las fe" Antonio Ramos, Oscar Romo y Doris Diaz.

La hermana Diaz, que se has jubilado de la UFM antes del tiempo senalado, fue reconocida por su servicio desinteresado y consagrado. Segun Barbara Curnutt, directora de la Union Femenil Misionera de la Florida: "Seria dificil medir el impacto de su vida y ministerio en la causa misionera de nuestra convencion. Literalmente, ella ha pasado su vida ensenando y contando la historia misionera a miles que hablan ingles como el segundo idioma."

Hugo Ruiz, pastor de las Iglesia Bautista Tamiami en Miami, honro a Ramos como pastor, escritor, historiador, pensador y amigo de todos. Ramos, un escritor e historiador prolifico, fue nombrado miembro perpertuo de la Real Academia Espanola. Tambien contribuye para periodicos como el Heraldo de Miami y es autor del libro "El pastor en la iglesia de hoy."

Oscar Romo fue nombrado el "estadista hispano bautista del sur siglo" y reconocido por representates de las agencias bautistas del sur.

Segun, Fermin Whittaker, coordinador regional de la Junta de Misiones Domesticas, el mejicoamericano Romo sirvio como pastor en Texas, y trabajo en la Convencion Bautista General de Texas antes que fuera para la junta en 1965 como el primer hispano o etnico empleado por una agencia de la Convencion Bautista del Sur.

En 1970, cuando Romo fue nombrado director de misiones de idiomas, las junta tenia 674 congregaciones etnicas. En 1992, el trabajo etnico toca a cada estado, llegando a 6,000 congregaciones, de las cuales 2,600 son hispanas.

"Desde el poder politico de la Casa Blanca hasta el obrero mas humilde, Oscar Romo es conocido como un hombre de fe, un amigo de los que sufren, amigo de los pastores y fiel siervo de Dios," dice Whittaker.

El evangelista internacional Luis Palau cerro los dias de conferencia con el mensaje titulado "Hispanos, es su hora de decision." El compartio la influencia que tiene el Espiritu Santo en la persona. Tambien dijo que el Senor tiene un proposito especial para los hispanos en los Estados Unidos.

Animo a la concurrencia a que se mantuviera firme en su amor por Dios, el lugar que ha ditinguido a los hispanos en relacion con la familia. Ademas, insto evangelizar a toda persona.

La reunion se celebro en conjunto con la Conferencia Nacional de Desarrollo de Iglesias Etnicas, patrocinada por el departamento de ministerios especiales de la Junta de Escuelas Dominicales, la cual espera una asistencia de mas de 1,000 personas representando 11 idiomas diferentes.

Yamiles Fernandez de Santa Ana, Calif., es el presidente de las Conferencia de Pastores Hispanos Bautistas del Sur.

--30--

Also available upon request:

-- First-person commentary by evangelist and former football All-Pro Bill Glass about the importance of fathers and faith in the home.
