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Joel Gregory resignation
stuns First Baptist, Dallas

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
10/1/92

DALLAS (BP)--Frustrated with lack of progress in the transition of leadership at First Baptist Church in Dallas, Joel C. Gregory unexpectedly resigned as pastor during a Wednesday night service.

Gregory, 44, has been pastor of the 28,000-member congregation following his election in November 1990, ostensibly to fill the shoes of W.A. Criswell who will celebrate his 48th anniversary with the church Oct. 4. Criswell, 82, had been designated "senior pastor" and reportedly was planning to retire from the pulpit and spend more time leading Criswell College.

But lack of progress in that transition, in Gregory's understanding, was cited in the surprising announcement Sept. 30 during the regular Wednesday night service. About 300 members were present when Gregory asked for a "personal privilege" to speak.

His announcement stunned the congregation which, in complete silence, watched Gregory leave the pulpit and the building. He left instructions that he would not be available for several days, with no further clarification provided.

At press time, Gregory had not informed Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board staff officials whether he intends to remain chairman of a search committee seeking a successor for FMB President R. Keith Parks, who retires Oct. 30. Gregory, in the third year of his first four-year term as an FMB trustee, can remain as a trustee as long as he continues to reside in Texas.

Gregory, in his statement to the church, said even though Criswell had handed over day-to-day responsibilities nearly two years ago, the senior pastor continued to lead the church.

"The ultimate agenda," Gregory said, "is the prolonging of the incumbent's ministry rather than the enabling of the new pastor's. None of these things can be a surprise to the informed members of this congregation. In light of these circumstances I immediately and irrevocably submit my resignation."

Criswell did not comment on the resignation. He did tell the Dallas Morning News that Gregory "is one of the best preachers ever heard in this generation. He is a sweet friend and prayer partner."

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Gregory told the Dallas paper he did not inform Criswell or church of his intentions to quit because he would have been pressured not to resign. He plans, for now, to "rest a while to see what opens up."

"That congregation is a huge burden: a day and night responsibility," Gregory told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

When it became apparent that Criswell might stay as senior pastor until his 50th anniversary with the church, Gregory made plans to resign and only a few congregational leaders knew about it. They wanted him to work it out with Criswell but Gregory objected to the idea of dealing directly with Criswell to solve the matter.

Conservative leaders in Texas and the Southern Baptist Convention reacted with shock and surprise at the announcement although most privately agreed there has been some frustration evidenced by Gregory over the transfer of leadership in the SBC's largest congregation.

Saying he was shocked to hear the news, Baptist Sunday School Board President James T. Draper, Jr., former pastor in Euless, Texas, affirmed Gregory.

"I think he was acting out of love for the church, doing what he thought was best," Draper told Baptist Press.

H. Edwin Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston and president of the Southern Baptist Convention, said Gregory is a superb teacher of homiletics and a great pulpiteer.

"Joel is my dear friend and I am sure he sought the wisdom of God and did what he believed was necessary for the church," Young told Baptist Press. "He can count on my friendship and prayers. God still has much for Joel to do in his kingdom."

Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., and president of Criswell College from 1975-92, told Baptist Press he was astonished by Gregory's announcement but only at the timing and the method he chose.

"I knew that this was probably inevitable. I wish Dr. Gregory, Dr. Criswell and the whole church God's richest blessing for the future," Patterson said.

Patterson did say, "as much as I love Dr. Criswell," his profound counsel to any retiring pastor, with somebody else coming in, would be to go pastor a mission church.

"Especially when you (Dr. Criswell) are a legend it is difficult to follow you under any circumstance. I would caution any young pastor to be certain he understands the difficulties which nobody can control but do exist," Patterson said.

Morris Chapman, new president of the SBC Executive Committee and former Wichita Falls, Texas pastor, also expressed his concern for all involved.

"I know all Southern Baptists will be praying for Dr. and Mrs. Gregory and the First Baptist family in this hour of uncertainty," Chapman told Baptist Press.

Chapman said he was aware of struggles in the Dallas church but had no idea they would result in a resignation.

"Things were not going real easily in the church. It was just a time of transition, which was not going smoothly," Chapman said. One pastor taking over a church while another pastor is still on the scene often can result in difficulties, Chapman said.

"I don't know, but perhaps that created some conflict," Chapman said. "Dr. Criswell has given great leadership to the church over the years. Dr. Gregory is one of the premier preachers in the SBC."

Chapman said there will be no major effect on the SBC with Gregory's resignation.

"The only impact it will have on the SBC is to serve as a reminder that although the church is God's divine institution, God has chosen to use human beings to reach the world for Christ," Chapman said. "Because of our own humanity, sometimes there are breakdowns in communication which are very unfortunate."

Gregory was pastor in several Texas churches and taught at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. He came to Dallas from Fort Worth where he had been pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church since 1985.

Gregory also served as president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas 1986-87 and was viewed by many as an eloquent, powerful preacher and a theological conservative. He preached the annual convention sermon at the 1988 Southern Baptist Convention in San Antonio, Texas, and was named permanent speaker on the long-running "Baptist Hour" radio program.

A Fort Worth native, Gregory holds undergraduate and doctorate degrees from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Seminary. He was assistant professor of preaching at Southwestern from 1982-85. In addition to Travis Avenue and Gambrell Street churches in Fort Worth, he also was pastor of churches in Waco, Cottonwood and Granbury, all in Texas.

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EDITORS' NOTE: The following is the text of the statement that First Baptist Church of Dallas Pastor Joel Gregory issued Wednesday:

"In November 1990 this congregation called me to become pastor. I assumed that responsibility January 1, 1991. This was presented to the congregation as a transition between Dr. Criswell's pastorate and my leadership. Both the Committee and the Senior Pastor presented an understanding concerning the nature and brevity of time in transition. This was entered with apparent good will on the part of all parties. I have and do express love and veneration for Dr. Criswell. He has publicly expressed his affection for me.

"Recently the Senior Pastor has announced in several contexts his desire to continue in that role until his fiftieth anniversary. He is the respected patriarch of this congregation. He has the sole right to determine God's will for his life, as I do. In recent conversations with me the congregational leadership has expressed both their concern that the transition continue and that Dr. Criswell achieve this landmark of leadership. They preferred, but did not require the solution that I work this out with the Senior Pastor in private conversation.

"This places unilaterally on my shoulders the burden of solving what the congregation and its leadership might have solved. For me to force the issue and make demands for myself neither honors God nor conforms to my personality. The entire process has left our family in an intolerable situation. Any conceivable future circumstance presents the specter of a divided congregation, a distracted pastor and a diminishing return. It is apparent that there is double agenda. The ultimate agenda, however, is the prolonging of the incumbent's ministry rather than the enabling of the new pastor's.

"None of these things can be a surprise to the informed members of this congregation. In light of these circumstances I immediately and irrevocably submit my resignation."

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Elvis Presley was a Christian,
says evangelist in new book

By Keith Hinson

FORT WALTON BEACH, Fla. (BP)--Elvis Presley was a Christian.

So says a new book by Rick Stanley, a Southern Baptist evangelist who is the late singer's stepbrother.

Titled "Caught in a Trap," the book is scheduled for release by Word Publishing in October -- two months after the 15th anniversary of Presley's death and several months before the planned release of a U.S. Postal Service stamp depicting a young Elvis.

Regarding his belief that Presley was a Christian, Stanley wrote, "My religious tradition teaches once saved always saved. I believe Elvis became a Christian as a young boy. While he may have strayed from the teachings of the church as an adult, his original faith remained safely in the hands of God. I believe my (and Elvis's) faith depends on God's power and faithfulness, not on mine."

According to Stanley, Presley became interested in Eastern philosophy and spiritualism in 1964 when he met Larry Geller, a young man who cut Presley's hair.

Presley's fascination with spiritualism and New Age-like writings grew, Stanley wrote, so that "as in so many things, Elvis wanted to find a way to have his cake and eat it, too The central teaching in these writings is that God is the voice within us and that we are all, in a manner of speaking, God. External authorities need not concern us... . Guided by his 'inner light,' he was his own authority, which suited his personality and temperament.

"(Elvis's) Pentecostal background should have provided firmer footing, a way back to something more nearly like the straight and narrow path," Stanley wrote. "Elvis had several problems with traditional Christianity, though. But mainly he found it almost impossible to obey its precepts. He may have thought that something had to be wrong with a religion that demanded marital fidelity from a man who had women toss their hotel keys at him every night. Or maybe this was the 'one great flaw' in his character. I don't know."

Yet despite Presley's theological flirtations with other beliefs, "he always came back to the basic biblical teaching that Jesus is God's son who died for our sins and that salvation is through believing this," Stanley wrote.

After Presley's death, Stanley recalled a meeting that Presley had with TV evangelist Rex Humbard in a hotel suite in Las Vegas: "I talked with Rex Humbard about their conversation. He said that the questions Elvis asked and all his comments indicated that he understood quite well the Christian view of salvation. The foundation of his faith remained."

Stanley became part of Presley's family in 1960 when Elvis's recently widowed father, Vernon, married Stanley's mother, Dee, who was recently divorced.

Stanley and his two brothers had been living in a residential boarding school where teachers "poured Tabasco sauce into our mouths for ... routine infractions. We ended up calling Breezy Point 'the orphanage' among ourselves, which expressed how abandoned we felt."

One morning, the boys were surprised when their mother and new stepfather withdrew them from the school. "On the drive to Memphis, Mom explained that Vernon and she were married and that he was our new daddy," Stanley wrote. "She also spent much of the long trip talking about Elvis and his wonderful career. All of this was too much for the three of us to absorb. We weren't allowed to listen to the radio at Breezy Point Farms, so we had never even heard Elvis sing."

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Stanley was 6 years old when he became part of the Presley clan -- a time when Elvis "was twenty-five, a movie star, and the conquering hero of millions of young women who had eagerly awaited his return from the army."

The transition of moving from the boarding school to Graceland, Elvis's mansion in Memphis, was startling. Stanley recalled how plushly and lavishly the home and grounds were furnished.

He also wrote about the first time he and his brothers met Elvis: "He welcomed us, gathering us up into his arms. 'I always wanted a little brother,' he said. 'And now I have three!'"

"When we awakened our first morning at Graceland," Stanley wrote, "we were greeted with a veritable wonderland of toys. There were bicycles, tricycles, scooters, sleds, television sets, everything imaginable for the three of us. Elvis had gone shopping and personally selected everything for us."

At age 17 Stanley joined Presley's touring crew, "TCB," which stood for "taking care of business."

"My mother hit the roof when she first heard of the idea," Stanley wrote. "I hadn't even finished high school yet! Elvis sat down with her and promised he would supply all my needs. He would even hire a tutor The first time I boarded Elvis's plane with the guys, he let me know that he would be my tutor. He told me that whatever went on was between the guys."

Stanley wrote that he soon became Presley's "personal aide and what you might call his communications director. Before long I was handling all the calls coming in to him and going out. I was like a president's appointment secretary -- the one who knows who gets access and who doesn't, and who might, and on what terms they might."

It was during this time that Stanley said he learned of Presley's openness to ministers. "Contrary to his reported disdain toward ministers, in the years I toured with him, Elvis always sought out ministers," Stanley wrote. "He was more ready to admit them backstage than anybody else -- something I know first hand since I handled such arrangements."

But Stanley added that "Elvis always disliked fundamentalist ministers, whom he stereotyped as basically judgmental. This probably goes back to his early career when those ministers led the way in their denunciation of his music and style."

Another part of Stanley's job was helping collect prescriptions for Presley. "Many times these prescriptions were written in the names of the crew," he wrote, "but a lot went straight to Elvis."

Stanley wrote that after Elvis's wife, Priscilla, had an affair and left him, "Elvis reacted with predictable anger to this turn of events. He went through wild cycles of depression and rage. And everyone agrees that Elvis's drug intake accelerated unbelievably during this period. He simply could not find enough anesthetic to ease his pain."

Stanley himself abused prescription and illegal drugs as part of Presley's entourage: "When I joined the TCB crew on tour with Elvis, I rationalized that I needed speed to keep my energy level up and downers to unwind... . I soon found friends who did drugs -- you score and party with the same people, generally. We checked into hotel rooms and experimented for days on end with various combinations. I was into speedballing, mixing cocaine and heroin together, staying up for days at a time in a racy, numb state."

After Priscilla Presley's departure, Elvis developed a romance with Lynda Thompson who joined the touring crew. Once in a "drug-induced euphoria" Stanley joined in a "session of Lynda-bashing by the guys," he wrote.

"Sadly for me, Lynda overheard my little tirade and was very upset. Elvis called and told me I had blown it. He was going to have to ask me to leave the crew until Lynda settled down and things blew over," Stanley wrote.

Stunned, Stanley's drug habit grew until he forged a prescription and was arrested, he wrote. Presley used his influence to have Stanley released into his custody. Stanley spent several days in a drug rehabilitation hospital in Memphis but soon returned to drugs and to the touring crew.

After Elvis's death in August 1977, Stanley moved to California where he "joined the Hollywood party scene" and continued abusing drugs. He was confronted by a friend who asked him, "You want to crawl in beside your brother in his coffin?"

The impact of that confrontation moved Stanley to call a high school friend, Robyn Moye, who had kept in touch with him over the years. She, her church and her family had prayed for him for years.

Moye invited Stanley to visit her family in Destin, Fla., where she "attended one of the Jesus Movement churches that sprang up in the 1970s." It was during a worship service led by the preacher, Jay Zinn, Stanley wrote, that he began to feel God working in his heart.

After the service, Zinn counseled Stanley who accepted Christ during the same meeting. Later he began receiving invitations to speak to Christian groups about his "former life with Elvis and his new life with the Lord."

In 1978, Stanley married Robyn Moye. He later graduated from Criswell Bible College in Dallas and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Stanley and his family are now members of Wright Baptist Church in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., where his ministry headquarters is located.

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New book portrays Elvis
as interested in religion

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
10/1/92

FORT WALTON BEACH, Fla. (BP)--"I should have been a preacher." That's what Elvis Presley said the night his daughter, Lisa Marie, was born, according to a new book by the late singer's stepbrother, Rick Stanley, a Southern Baptist evangelist.

Titled "Caught in a Trap," the book is scheduled for release by Word Publishing in October -- two months after the 15th anniversary of Presley's death and several months before the planned release of a U.S. Postal Service stamp depicting a young Elvis.

Concerning Elvis's feelings about a call to preach, Stanley wrote, "Elvis did not follow up. He knew his calling differed, although he probably felt guilty about this, since anyone who grows up in Pentecostal circles sees the pastorate as a pinnacle."

Stanley wrote that though Elvis had been fascinated with Eastern spiritualism and philosophy, yet "the birth of his daughter made Elvis want to acknowledge the true source of his gifts and the wealth they had brought him... (I)n this clarifying moment he did not confuse the Lord with any 'divine self' within. He knew God as an agent quite apart from him, and in most respects, very much unlike him."

Other highlights of Stanley's book include his views on the following:

-- Whether Presley is still alive: "I loved my stepbrother and cherish his memory. But I cannot love him as a god-figure, lately risen from near-death, who chooses to haunt convenience stores in Minnesota or fast-food restaurants in Michigan. That image is grotesque, and I will not have him stolen from me twice as a brother by those whose need to worship is so great that they cannot control their imaginations. ... Besides, twenty thousand people viewed his body. Several witnesses were at the autopsy. How much proof do you need?"

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-- The effects of gospel music and Pentecostalism on Presley's childhood: "As a child in the Tupelo (Miss.) Assembly of God church, Elvis ran up and down the aisles, moved to express the joy of the music in the only way that he could. His immersion in gospel music from that time was so great that later he claimed he knew 'just about every religious song that had ever been written.' ... Some people have been reluctant to acknowledge gospel music's influence on Elvis, both musically and spiritually. They like to think of him as the 'hood,' the teenage rebel, Elvis the Pelvis... . They have trouble thinking anything good can be connected with Pentecostalism."

-- Elvis's long-time manager Colonel Tom Parker: "As a young evangelist I was visiting with him immediately following Vernon Presley's funeral in 1979... . When I told him of the crowds coming to my meetings ... his eyes sharpened and a grin tightened up his sagging mouth. 'Listen,' he said, 'I've heard about your work with kids. I could do with you what I did with Elvis. Make you as big in your line of work as Elvis was in his.' ... I really believed he could do it. I felt like I'd been taken up on an exceedingly high mountain and shown all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and been made the devil's offer of fame and power... . Colonel Parker might not be the devil himself, but he is certainly as enticing, by his own design, as a real one."

-- Presley's response to the worship of his fans: "So many people worshiped the image Elvis presented, the illusion he produced on stage, that he was left wondering whether his fans did not know better than he did. Maybe he was something more than an individual with his own strengths and weaknesses that inside he always knew himself to be. Maybe he was a kind of spiritual leader. Perhaps he had been sent on a mission to lead the world in a great religious revival? Not of the Pentecostal description, but a revival of the ancient wisdom.

"These thoughts led him to attempt spiritual healings. It had him preaching sermons to the girls who attended his Bible studies in his Los Angeles homes. He dabbled with this for years, and his show, in the end, acquiesced to his fans' need for hero worship. He gave them his scarves as relics, and he swooped into and out of view by spreading his angelic cape. By the time this image emerged into public view, though, he knew it to be a soul-destroying counterfeit."

-- Presley's reaction to the 1977 book "Elvis: What Happened?" (a negative portrayal of the singer by two former bodyguards): "Elvis waved the pages of the bodyguard book at me. 'What am I going to do about this, Rick?' he asked me. I tried to make some reassuring comments about the fans not really caring. Why should anyone believe something written out of spite? But Elvis saw things more clearly. 'Let's pray,' he said. He motioned me over to the side of the bed alongside of him. I was moved by this exhibition of his sincerity.

"'Dear Lord,' he prayed, 'please show me a way. I'm tired and confused, and I need your help.' (Unless you are going to demand a perfect act of contrition, that seems like a pretty decent sinner's prayer to me.) He looked up and said something to me that I shall remember until my dying day. 'Rick,' he said softly, 'we should all begin to live for Christ.'"

-- Presley's reading of Scripture: "It is true that most of his books would be classified today as New Age, but Elvis also read the Bible regularly. True, he did get far away in his searching from the Christian faith of his boyhood, but he never stopped believing the basics of Christianity, that is, Jesus as God's savior for mankind's sins."

-- Presley's favorite Bible passage: "1 Corinthians 13. When Lynda Thompson and Elvis first met, she had verse 13 inscribed on a plaque. It read 'And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.' Elvis's life can best be understood as a 'search for love.' This plaque is very revealing."

-- Whether Elvis committed suicide: "We will never know for certain... . As for me, I don't believe and never have believed that Elvis deliberately, consciously committed suicide. He would never have done that to Lisa Marie, especially while she was at Graceland. He loved her too much."

Stanley's epilogue contains his acknowledgements to many people, including: "Dr. Ike Reighardt for teaching me how to express love as a man to other people; Dr. Jay Strack for listening and relating; Dr. Freddie Gage for recognizing my call; Dr. and Mrs. W.A. Criswell for the scholarship to college and encouragement; Dr. Paige Patterson for adding sound learning scholarship to my calling; Dr. Becky Land for her teaching on counseling and the home; Dr. Charles Carter and his lessons on ethics; ... Dr. James Merritt for his mink-and-granite-like jaw; Dr. Don LaBelle and Pat LaBelle, my pastor and his wife, for their counsel and prayers; ... the professors at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, especially Drs. Curtis Vaughan, Bruce Corley (a widower who never quit at home), and Jack MacGorman ...; ... Dr. Jerry Falwell and the students at Liberty (University); Dr. Billy Graham and his wife, Ruth, for keeping the standard high."

Stanley is a graduate of Criswell College in Dallas and Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth. He and his family are members of Wright Baptist Church in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., where his ministry headquarters is located.

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Miami pastor urges congregation
to rethink material possessions

By Jack Brymer

Baptist Press
10/1/92

MIAMI (BP)--"Thank you, God, for the hurricane," pastor Murrill Boitnott of Wayside Baptist Church in Miami said in an opening prayer during a recent Sunday service.

"Thank you for the mess, the stench; for readjusting our priorities. Don't let us rebuild it the same -- in temporal things that can be destroyed by the next hurricane. Help us to build men and womens' lives so that when the storms come we will be safe"

Later in his sermon, Boitnott urged the congregation to be as concerned about the "life adjuster" as the insurance adjuster. Basing his text on 2 Cor. 5:10, he warned that everyone must appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

"Christ will not assess what you have accumulated in your house but what you've done with your life," Boitnott said.

The pastor suggested three things which should motivate Christians in building the kingdom of God:

-- A cautious fear that God, the life adjuster, one day is going to hold us accountable should motivate us to make pleasing God our goal.

-- The compassion of Christ should compel us to give our lives away to other people. Boitnott noted God's wrath is seen in the hurricane but God's love is seen at Calvary.

-- The commission of Christ -- reconciliation -- should motivate Christians to be more concerned about people than things.

"After the new carpet is on the floor and everything is fixed, all that matters is relationships -- that people are speaking and that sharing is taking place. That's what will last," Boitnott said, suggesting that "we leave our fences down to share and love one another."

In Hurricane Andrew's wake, Boitnott recounted, the church got guidance from Dave Courson, minister of administration at First Baptist Church in Winter Park, and Pat Morrison of Wayside in setting up 81 grids with 20 families in each. Fifty volunteers went house to house with a survey to ascertain the needs of each family.

At the church, a board was set up for people to list the things they could and/or would do in response to the disaster. The cards were color-coded to indicate critical or immediate needs.

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Without electrical power and education space, Boitnott said the duties of the staff were changed. For example, Leslie Williams, minister of education, became minister of tree and yard work. Stan Coleman, minister to students, became minister of roof repair and major house damage.

As a result of the effort, more than 500 families received assistance.

Boitnott praised Courson as an "unsung hero" who came in here and got us off roofs and "shook us out of our confusion, wondering what we're going to do." He said Courson, with Morrison's help, organized the effort, put together flow charts and brought a sense of order to the disaster.

Also, Boitnott said the influx of Baptist volunteers has said to the city, "We care for free." Southern Baptists are being heard because of their efforts, he said.

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Volunteers arrived
at his darkest hour

By Jack Brymer

Baptist Press
10/1/92

REDLANDS, Fla. (BP)--Bill Baggett, pastor of First Baptist Church in Redlands, Fla., and his family rode out Hurricane Andrew in their home. As sections of the house were destroyed, they would move and finally wound up in the laundry room, which was about all that was left. The house has been condemned as unsuitable for human habitation.

"We lost everything," he said. "Even our dog died from trauma."

Things were not any better at the church site either. All but one family in the church were wiped out, Baggett said, and many of the younger families had packed up and left.

"When I was at my lowest, darkest hour, six precious men -- Georgia Baptist builder volunteers -- drove up," Baggett recounted. "I couldn't talk. Those guys stood there and held me and prayed with me. I had to get a Bible because mine was gone, but I asked these guys to sign it and I will pray for them every day of my life."

Later, other volunteers came from West Palm Beach, led by pastors George Thomasson of Northwood Baptist Church and Ron Lentine of Lake Park Church. "They came on the site, built, ministered to me, offered love and financial support," he said.

Even the men of a Navy unit out of Norfolk, Va., sent to repair schools and public buildings, assisted with cleanup and repairs on their own time, Baggett said.

Despite destruction and loss of church members, Baggett said he hasn't given thought to leaving. "God called me here in the good and bad," he said. "We've seen the boom time -- two morning services -- so I have no option."

Baggett acknowledged the church had a space problem, needing a larger sanctuary and more educational space. "Hurricane Andrew took care of that," he said. "Now we can grow."

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Miami migrant ministry
dealt severe setback

By Jack Brymer

Baptist Press
10/1/92

MIAMI (BP)--One of the lesser-known victims of Hurricane Andrew is La Mision Hispana Bautiste Esperanzo en Cristo (Hope in Christ Baptist Mission), a fledgling ministry of the Miami Baptist Association. The chapel, located in the Everglades Migrant Camp, was totally destroyed and now is an official dumping site for millions of tons of debris being cleared in south Dade County.

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Late last year, after a four-year struggle, the Miami association received permission to rent a trailer on the camp grounds to start the mission. It is the only church organization that has been able to do that, according to Mike Daily, associational director of church and community ministries.

The association started conducting mobile dental projects at the camp in 1989, with Daily recruiting students from the University of Miami's medical school. And at the camp, "I went door to door and got to see what it's like living in a camp and what churches could do to help them."

Then Daily asked to start a mission in the camp. Ciprino Garza, director of Dade County migrant school programs, turned him down.

The next year, in 1990, Daily contacted him again about allowing some of the children to attend the camp for migrant children sponsored by Florida Baptists at Lake Yale Baptist Assembly. With the assistance of pastor Eduardo Jordan of Silver Palm Baptist Mission and the aid of the Florida Baptist Convention, 14 children went to camp.

"The kids came back from Lake Yale overjoyed," Daily said. Garza noticed the difference, according to Daily, especially the fact they continued to write pen pals they had made at camp. After that, Garza allowed Daily to use the facilities for after-school activities.

Late last year, the association received permission to rent a "very used" trailer on the grounds to organize a mission church. A team from First Baptist Church of Windermere brought supplies and personnel to renovate the trailer. Even without a pastor, Daily said, people were being won to Christ through special projects and ministries.

After the hurricane hit, Daily toured the camp. "It was completely wiped out. A community with 420 trailers had turned into a mass of debris."

Daily said he went to the spot where the trailer had been and all that was left was a piece of aluminum hanging in a tree. "About a dozen children came running up to me and hugging me said, 'I remember you. You take us to the dental clinic. Are you coming to help us? Nobody's been here,'" he recounted.

Daily was able to get medical personnel and supplies into the camp quickly, but replacing the chapel is not as certain. "The spiritual as well as individual needs are so severe," Daily said. "A continued presence in the camp is necessary to develop trust which leads to acceptance by the leadership of the camp and the people who live there."

There are approximately 50,000 migrants in south Dade County in three camps of about 15,000 to 18,000 each. Others live in low-rent facilities in Homestead and Florida City. Contrary to what many believe, Daily noted, not all migrants live in camps.

"True migrants follow the harvest and work for landowners," Daily explained. "Most of these are from Mexico, speak only Spanish, are of very low education -- barely even literate in their own language -- are primarily Catholic but the only relationship with the church is at birth, weddings and death. These people make about \$6,000 to \$8,000 per year and pay taxes."

Most of the migrants in Florida, however, do not migrate, according to Daily. They live in fixed low-income housing, do the same kind of work and have the same lifestyle. Many come from Central America and Puerto Rico.

The children have received education and a majority speak English. Yet, only 10 percent of the migrant population graduate from high school.

"Migrants serve a vital function in our society by harvesting the crops," Daily noted, "but they are not always appreciated."

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After Hurricane Andrew hit, large quantities of clothing was brought and literally dumped on the grounds, Daily said. "No effort was made to personalize the ministry and treat them as human beings," he said, adding that the Army came in and cleaned it up like a trash dump.

The manager of one of the camps noted that the shoes were worn out and broken. "They got the discards, like they didn't count," she said. "They did receive water but no food until the Baptists, Catholics and Mormons came in," she said.

"We're not sure at this time about the future," Daily said. "Hopefully, there is the possibility of building a medical facility in the camp. That way, we could have a combined medical facility and church. We desperately need a ministry in there."

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Breakthrough project targets
14,000 churches in third phase

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
10/1/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--More than 3,000 churches have begun customized growth projects through Great Commission Breakthrough, but that number is expected to swell to 14,000 by September 1995, according to planners at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Great Commission Breakthrough provides individualized growth planning, training and consultation focused on developing the Sunday school, said Art Burcham, manager of the church growth projects section in the church growth-Sunday school division.

During the pilot and training phases, 2,250 consultants have been trained, Burcham said. While the project has been developed by the Sunday School Board, primary focus for implementation is with state conventions which are matching churches and consultants, Burcham said.

In Mississippi, for example, more than 100 consultants have been trained and have assignments for churches, Burcham said.

Although the implementation phase is beginning in October, training sessions will continue with a goal of training 7,000 consultants by September 1995, Burcham said.

Each consultant is encouraged to work with at least two churches to reach the goal of 14,000 churches by 1995.

Once a church enters the Great Commission Breakthrough project, a consultant is assigned. The consultant assesses the church's Sunday school program prior to a three-day session where church leaders evaluate the church's commitment and plan for growth, he said.

Great Commission Breakthrough involves the pastor as leader in growth planning, Burcham said. "The project can make a pastor's future at a church. The pastor needs to be at the heart of what the church is doing in Sunday school."

As the church implements changes to develop Sunday school growth, the consultant continues to assist the church, Burcham said.

Churches interested in participating in the Great Commission Breakthrough Project should contact their state convention Sunday school department, Burcham said.

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A list of consultants available in a state is available from the state convention Sunday school department.

**Southwestern selects Sanchez
to lead church growth institute**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Daniel Sanchez has been named director of the new church growth institute at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Sanchez, professor of missions at Southwestern since 1983, was appointed to the director's position by Russell H. Dilday, seminary president.

Dilday said the church growth institute and Sanchez's appointment as director will "enhance biblically based and theologically sound church growth education at Southwestern."

"The focus is to develop leaders in full-time, part-time and bivocational church ministry and supporting the church growth program through research and publication," Dilday said.

Since 1980, Southwestern has promoted church growth programs through the World Mission/Evangelism Center. However, Dilday said the new church growth institute will allow a more concentrated approach. The World Mission/Evangelism Center will continue promoting home and foreign mission work.

Sanchez earned the master of divinity degree from Southwestern, the doctor of ministry degree in church growth from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., and the doctor of philosophy degree in theological contextualization from the Oxford, England, Centre for Mission Studies.

After serving as a missionary to the Republic of Panama, Sanchez was assistant director in the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's language missions department. He also served as evangelism director and state missions director for the Baptist Convention of New York.

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**Three cited for articles
on healthy family life**

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
10/1/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Three articles on healthy families by Southern Baptist writers from North Carolina, Florida and Virginia have been selected as winners in the family enrichment article contest sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Winning entries will be published in the January 1993 issues of Home Life, Living with Preschoolers, Living with Children and Living with Teenagers published by the board's discipleship and family development division.

A total of 390 articles were submitted by writers from 32 states and seven countries.

"A Healthy Family From an Unhealthy Past" was the title of the first-place article by Angela LaCour, a wife and mother of two daughters from Raleigh, N.C. She is a member of New Hope Baptist Church.

LaCour traces her childhood in a family where her father was an alcoholic and regularly abused her mother, her sister, brother and herself.

"I am now 29 years old," LaCour wrote. "I gave my life to Christ six and a half years ago. With God's help I found a wonderful Christian man to whom I am now married. We have two children. I have the joy I never knew was possible. I have a healthy family."

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The second-place article, "My Pea-Pickin' Family," was written by Connie Croxton, a member of New Hope Baptist Church of Marianna, Fla. She is married and the mother of three.

Growing up in the home of a Free Will Baptist pastor who also was a part-time farmer, Croxton recalled the lessons she learned from harvesting produce with her parents, brothers and sisters.

"Lessons learned then were sometimes hard, but how very thankful and, yes, proud, I am to have learned them through the love and examples of my pea-pickin' parents," Croxton wrote.

Elizabeth Dart, retired teacher who now works with homebound students, wrote the third-place article, "Unwavering Love." Dart is a member of Sterling Park Baptist Church in Sterling, Va.

Dart wrote about a Christian family who gave love and support to a 15-year-old daughter who became pregnant out of wedlock. After giving birth, the young woman has sought to influence other teens not to repeat her mistakes.

"Even more important, God has brought Melissa back to his service and she now faithfully teaches the toddlers Sunday school class. She has learned significant lessons about caring and parenting," Dart wrote.

Entries were judged by the family enrichment editorial staff on the basis of originality, freshness, creativity, appropriateness, substance and depth.