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Repaired dam quenches  
thirst in Zimbabwe

By Linda Gaddis

Baptist Press  
12/23/92

SANYATI, Zimbabwe (BP)--What better way can a Christian prove concern than by helping conserve water in a drought-stricken land?

That's what Paul Boone did in the Neuso area near the Sanyati Baptist Hospital in Zimbabwe, a country suffering perhaps its worst drought in recorded history.

Two years ago, as area rainfall already was decreasing, the Southern Baptist missionary doctor from Friendswood, Texas, noticed an earthen dam near Gambiza Baptist Church deteriorating.

In past years the dam had provided a significant reserve water supply. But without upkeep it had slowly eroded and couldn't even hold water. In years of normal rain, area residents got along without it. But in a drought it would be sorely missed.

Boone spent more than a year talking to community leaders and church members until they recognized the need to repair the dam using local labor. Eventually the local chief asked Southern Baptist missionary Nancy Carley if the dam qualified as a project for "Food-for-Work" -- a Baptist hunger relief program that pays people in food to work on community improvement programs.

Carley, a nurse-midwife at the Sanyati hospital, got authorization and soon residents were laboring with shovels and other hand tools on the dam.

Gambiza Baptist Church has a simple brush-arbor preaching point beside the reservoir, so it took advantage of the opportunity. Pastor Darlington Dhliwayo led a daily noon devotion, and since repairing a dam by hand takes a long time, church members had many chances to tell the workers about Jesus.

Each Food-for-Work project has a specific time limit so people won't stop producing their own crops. But when the Neuso project's time ran out the dam wasn't completed. So Boone and Dhliwayo organized a big community work day to finish the job. They advertised it widely in churches and the community.

People came from all over the area to spend the day helping. Church members and missionaries prepared lunch for the crowd. Even the Boones' four children gave a hand by slicing bread for sandwiches. At day's end the dam was completed and Dhliwayo led a triumphant thanksgiving service.

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Two years later, the value of the dam is increasingly evident. While gardens and cattle in other areas around Neuso die, the reservoir holds the run-off from what little rain falls. Local residents have a place to bring their cattle to drink and a communal garden maintained with irrigation.

When it was time to harvest the produce, roles reversed.

Local people held a celebration to acknowledge the role Boone and the Baptists played in the dam's reconstruction.

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Gaddis is press representative for Southern Baptist missionaries in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe school Bible studies:  
one missionary, 8,000 kids

By Linda Gaddis

Baptist Press  
12/23/92

SANYATI, Zimbabwe (BP)--When you have 8,000 students and one missionary, there's only one way to succeed.

Make that "One Way."

Gayla Corley leads "One Way Clubs" in 15 public primary schools near Sanyati Baptist Hospital in Zimbabwe as part of the government's "general content" curriculum.

Every other week the student bodies of all the schools attend Corley's Bible class, where the Southern Baptist missionary from Abilene, Texas, teaches and shares her Christian faith any way she chooses. Often teachers listen, too. Some even take notes and test the pupils on the lessons.

A lesson may begin with reciting the club's theme, John 14:6, and singing "One Way," a song specially written for the clubs by Robby Chitofu, son of a local Baptist pastor.

Then Corley uses an object lesson to illustrate a Bible truth. One week she called up the school's "head boy" (the top appointed student officer) and wrapped twine once around his hand. She challenged him to break it. Of course he easily snapped the string. Next she wrapped it several times around his arms and again he broke free.

Finally she wrapped the cord around his body until he could hardly move -- or get loose. Comparing the twine to bad habits and sin, she used a pair of scissors as a symbol of the power of Jesus to defeat sin. Students easily understand the simple, dramatic lessons. Club time always ends with prayer and an enthusiastic cheer spelling out the name of Jesus.

Missionary Bob Parker launched the One Way Clubs in the early 1980s, soon after Zimbabwe's war for independence. Today many children in the Sanyati area associate any passing white face with the One Way Club in their school.

They run to the side of the road, smiling and holding up their right index fingers to signal "One Way in Jesus."

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Gaddis is press representative for Southern Baptist missionaries in Zimbabwe. (BP) photo (horizontal) mailed Dec. 23 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

'Storying' effort keys  
Tanzania evangelism

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press  
12/23/92

MBEYA, Tanzania (BP)--Edina Donard doesn't know much about missiological strategy and innovative evangelism techniques.

She just knows her father became a Christian because he heard the story of Jesus Christ.

Fourteen-year-old Edina was among the first Tanzanians to respond to an effort to communicate the Christian gospel to semiliterate and nonliterate societies by "storying."

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She ran home each week after Sunday school to retell the day's Bible story to her parents. Finally she asked Southern Baptist missionary Pauline Eardensohn to come with her.

Primed by the Bible stories, the parents welcomed Mrs. Eardensohn and promised to come to Utungule Usongwe Baptist Church, a 1-year-old mission where missionaries field tested the "storying" idea in Tanzania.

Two weeks later Edina's father asked to be baptized as a new Christian.

"This is one example of the great things God is doing through the nationwide emphasis on chronological Bible storying," said missionary Bill Eardensohn, director of Sunday school promotion for Tanzanian Baptists.

Eardensohn attended a "storying" conference sponsored by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in 1991. It focused on Biblical storytelling to present the Christian message to semiliterate people. Eardensohn also saw it as a way to help missionaries accomplish their Bible-teaching goals.

A two-year nationwide Sunday school emphasis -- "Knowing God Through Knowing His Word, The Bible" -- eventually developed.

Utungule Usongwe Baptist Church in Mbeya "was the ideal place to try out the emphasis," Eardensohn said. So Mrs. Eardensohn started "storying" through the Old Testament with a women's group on Wednesday afternoons and with a children's class on Sunday mornings.

The primary evangelism emphasis was buttressed by three other benefits:

1. Because the program also includes memorizing the books of the Bible, adults as well as children responded to the challenge. Mrs. Eardensohn plans to build on that interest to begin literacy classes.

2. People learn about the nature and character of God. After each session the class is asked which of the six listed attributes of God was obvious in the story. "There are so many false assumptions about God," Eardensohn explained. "We're hoping some of the misconceptions will be eroded as people discover for themselves who God is."

3. The program has made printed Bibles easily available to both church members and unchurched people. "Through the generosity of Southern Baptists we've bought 50,000 Swahili-language Bibles and made them available through the churches at a greatly reduced price," he added. "We also encourage Christians to buy a gift Bible for an unchurched neighbor or friend and invite him or her to join a Bible study group."

Three months into the emphasis, nearly 300 leaders from associations representing about half of the Baptist churches in Tanzania had been trained in storying. Planners hope by 1994 Sunday school enrollment in Tanzania Baptist churches will nearly double to 50,000.

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Embarrassed tears become  
cries of sorrow in Malawi

By Sam Upton

Baptist Press  
12/23/92

LILONGWE, Malawi (BP)--A frank discussion of human sexuality with African pastors and wives produced two floods of tears in Malawi.

First the women laughed in embarrassment until they cried. Later they wept over relatives and friends dead or dying of AIDS, which is spreading rapidly in Africa.

Fifteen Baptist couples recently gathered to hear Charolette Day from Campus Crusade for Christ explain the ABCs of sex. It's unusual in African culture to discuss such a topic in a mixed group. But the wives invited the husbands because of a heartfelt desire to teach their children the biblical truth about sexuality to combat promiscuity and misinformation.

One woman, for example, had been told that babies come from Great Britain. All agreed that most youngsters in Malawi, as in most Western countries, learn about sex primarily from their peers and get confused ideas.

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Once the meeting started, however, the women, overcome by cultural inhibitions, found it difficult to sit through what they had asked for. Some laughed so hard they could hardly sit in their chairs. Embarrassed, they buried their faces in their hands and cried with laughter.

But the discussion continued, focusing on sex as a great gift from God to be used in marriage. Everyone agreed they could no longer allow cultural attitudes to inhibit talking to children about biblical principles of marriage and sex.

During the closing prayer, the tears of laughter and embarrassment turned to tears of sorrow and concern. One woman started thanking God for the lesson and asking for wisdom and courage to teach her children properly. Her words of petition soon intermingled with sobs as she prayed for her little niece and nephew, who have AIDS. Her sister, brother-in-law and another nephew already have died from the disease.

"It's good," one observer noted, "that Malawian Baptist leaders are learning to overcome the embarrassment of tears of laughter in discussing sex more openly so there won't be so many tears of sorrow later."

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Sam Upton is press representative for Southern Baptist missionaries in Malawi.

Moore still believes  
in a God of hope

By Colleen Backus

Baptist Press  
12/23/92

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--If an intense gaze and strong hands would change the world, Debbie Moore could be the one to do it. Moore, a native of Hope, Ark., was appointed a Southern Baptist missionary to Liberia in 1982. Since 1989, the country has been beset by civil war.

Moore, who is in Arkansas to spend the holidays with her family, will not be returning directly to Liberia. She and nine other missionaries, recently evacuated from the country after the civil conflict hit the capital city of Monrovia.

"At 3 o'clock in the morning of Oct. 15, my house started to shake," Moore related. "The security guard came by and said there were 'burning airplanes' overhead." As Moore and other missionaries gathered in the yard, they realized rockets were landing in the Atlantic Ocean, about 250 yards behind the houses. The rebel leader, Charles Taylor, was attacking Monrovia. A week later, on Oct. 22, Moore boarded a U.S. Embassy evacuation flight and flew to Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

Moore previously had evacuated in the summer of 1990. At that time, she spent three months temporarily assigned to Ghana and then spent 1991 at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, working on a degree in missiology. In January 1992 she returned to Liberia to do relief work.

"What is relief work?" Moore asked. "I had no idea. But I do now -- I've done it from dawn 'til dusk this whole year." She and other missionaries were caught between how much of the former ministries to pursue and the overwhelming human need at the relief centers.

Some Baptist work continues, Moore said. ECOMOG, the west African peace-keeping force, currently occupies the campus of the Liberian Baptist Seminary. But the seminary has resumed operation in a rented building in downtown Monrovia.

An appointment, that of a Liberian woman, Alice Reeves, to direct the Girls in Action work in the country, was an answer to prayer. Moore previously had directed the work but felt a Liberian was needed for the post.

Just this year, seven new church have been started, and every Saturday afternoon Moore met with 10 adults in a MasterLife study. "You don't have to conduct much leadership training to get Liberians to share the gospel," Moore commented with a smile. "They are so excited, you just tell them to go and they're gone, out on streets witnessing."

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How ver, the majority of Moore's time in Lib ria this year has been spent in the relief centers, handing out goods. "Each organization tries to distribute something different," Moore noted. The Baptists distribut d hand and laundry soap, canned fish, tomato paste, chicken soup, toilet tissue, and a tin of milk for babies. "It seems like so little," Moore explained, "but these are people who have nothing."

Baptists also helped the United Nations distribute rice, cooking oil and beans, and aided the Lutherans in the distribution of tennis shoes. Moore was concerned about distributing the shoes in an orderly fashion to avoid fighting. So she took each right shoe, drew the outline on a piece of plywood, and painted it brown. At the relief center, each person matched his foot to the shoe size, and received the proper pair of shoes. "It took weeks," Moore said. "But everyone got a pair of shoes and there wasn't any fighting."

Another popular item Moore handed out was soccer balls. "There is so much boredom in the relief centers," she explained. "They go wild when you come with soccer balls, because it is something to do."

Normally, Monrovia can hold 200,000 people; by the time Moore left at the end of October, there were 800,000 people in the city. In order to understand the problem, Moore said, it is necessary to realize now Liberia is really two countries. Greater Liberia is controlled by the forces of Charles Taylor, and Monrovia is still ruled by the interim government headed by Amos Sawyer. There are even two separate currencies in use; to get caught with Monrovia dollars in greater Liberia is a dangerous proposition. With the rebel forces invading the countryside, village people have poured into Monrovia because it is the only place they have to go.

Political problems are compounded by the division of society into two distinct groups. One group, called Americo-Liberians, are descendant of the freed American slaves who founded Liberia in 1847. The other segment of the country's population is tribal.

Moore's prayers go out to the two remaining Southern Baptist missionaries, Bradley and Carolyn Brown, who have been in Liberia for 30 years. Ken Nicholson, a missionary to Liberia for 25 years, stayed with them in the country for a time, but joined his wife, Joyce, in the Ivory Coast, Dec. 15.

She also expressed concern for Bill Phillips, area director for West Africa, who is having to deal with problems relating not only to displaced missionaries from Liberia but also several other area countries that have erupted in conflict in recent weeks.

When Moore came out of Liberia, one of her concerns was for her family. Unable to get mail in or out of the country since July, her only contact with them was by phone. All communication lines were severed on Oct. 15. "I just kept thinking of my mom and what she must be going through," Moore said. Then, in her private devotional time, she came across 1 Timothy 5:8, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." She knew then it was time to evacuate. As soon as she reached the Ivory Coast she telephoned her mother, relieving them both of building anxiety.

Up close, Moore is a powerful personality with an unwavering gaze and strong gestures that come from hands that have distributed relief items to hundreds, maybe thousands of people. It is hard to imagine anything could shake her from her designated task; only when one realizes how strong her commitment to the Lord's work is can one imagine how bad things had to get in Liberia for her to leave. She is concerned for the work of Liberian Baptists, for the Liberian people left with nothing, and for her own future in mission work.

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As a Hope native, she concluded, "Like the president-elect (Bill Clinton), I also still believe in a place called Hope. I also believe in a God of hope." That hope and faith will continue to sustain her through all she does in God's name.

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Southern Baptists explore  
church growth in the '90s

By Millie Gill

Baptist Press  
12/23/92

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--Change, survival and growth for churches in the '90s were topics addressed Dec. 14-15 at a South Central Models for Ministry Conference.

Central Baptist Church of North Little Rock, a church that has experienced numerical growth for 12 years, hosted the event sponsored by the Home Mission Board. Co-sponsors were North Pulaski Baptist Association and the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

"Change and commitment" were the two needs sounded by speakers and seminar leaders for Southern Baptist churches to survive and grow in the '90s.

"How are you going to change when you have local church traditions?" asked Lyle Schaller, an author and church consultant, who was the conference's opening speaker, as well as a seminar leader.

"Change will come if you don't touch what is status quo," Schaller said. "You can begin a successful change that will lead to growth if you begin with something you are pretty sure will not create opposition, such as the addition of either a Saturday evening or early Sunday morning worship service. However, don't overwhelm your congregation. Make your changes one at a time, giving them time to adjust.

"Patience will be your key to success," Schaller declared. "There are a lot of people who cannot immediately accept change. They have to experience it.

"You are in the business of influencing them. Even though there is no neutral approach to change, you can help them to reach out to a changing world through new approaches rather than letting them continue to say 'We've never done it that way before.'"

He told participants from Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas he had discovered churches which are challenging people to be more than they thought they could be are seeing rapid growth and change.

"You know that the Bible tells us that Jesus got a dozen together and turned the work over to them," Schaller said. "You, as pastors, are in the people transformation business. Call your members to a deeper commitment, challenge them to doing the Father's business, and it will bring remarkable results."

He also pointed out churches, if they truly want to reach people, must recognize the need to reach out beyond the church campus with Bible studies or with classes designed to meet a variety of needs.

"In today's world more adults are engaged in the weekly study of the Scriptures than ever before," Schaller said. "But these classes are not meeting on Sunday.

He praised Southern Baptist leaders in the Pulaski County area for the establishment of 85 new congregations as the result of a 22 percent population growth. "Other denominations have shown membership decreases in this 20-year period," Schaller said. "But because of your vision to launch new works, Southern Baptist work in your county shows a 35 percent increase.

"Church membership is not the destination of most people today," Schaller emphasized. "There are six or seven audiences out there, including believers and disciples, who are seeking ways to participate, as well as to be listened to and to be heard.

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"One of these audiences will like the teaching or expository sermon, one will like the doctrinal sermon, another will want applications of Christianity, some will be seeking so they can believe. The latter audience is being ministered to by some congregations through a pre/seekers or pre/evangelism service as a non-threatening service based on issues and interests.

"Whatever you need to change, please do so," Schaller encouraged. "As you change, you will reach these audiences, leading them to participation and a mature faith."

Harold T. Bryson, professor of preaching and chairman of pastoral ministries at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, led seminars on leadership dynamics needed for today's "Global Village."

"Our village is one of increased population and technology filled with racial, moral, educational, family and addiction problems," Bryson declared.

"Churches continue with their same ministry methods to an ever changing world," he said.

Bryson said areas where churches can change include: moving away from structuralism; becoming more people centered; moving away from programs to ministries and becoming aware of the surrounding culture. He said available On Becoming A Leader by Warren Bennis and Transforming Leadership by Leighton Ford.

Bryson emphasized a genuine leader operates out of a sense of who one is rather than what one does. "Jesus knew what he was and that he was 'about the Father's business," Bryson said. "As a leader, you must continue in your mental, spiritual and emotional growth so you too can reach out in a dynamic way to a world in need.

"Do not be impulsive in your ministry. Jesus withdrew to pray and reflect. Therefore, you must reflect, contemplate and listen, seeking a vision and purpose for your ministry."

Billy White, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Little Rock, closed the two-day conference, challenging pastors, directors of missions and denominational workers to move beyond the walls of judgmental institutionalism, to be adaptable and flexible so the love of God could flow around the walls of geography, sexism, racism, personalisms, moralism, doctrinal and worship style.

"The gospel is not a wall," White declared. "The gospel is forever pressing religious folks like us to get beyond those walls and model our ministry after the one we call King.

"We will get beyond those walls by starting where we are, identifying those walls, moving beyond them and opening our eyes and looking upon the fields as Jesus instructed in John 4:35."

Bobby Waggoner, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church in Flowood, Miss., said, "I am glad that I could participate in this conference. I came seeking ways to improve my leadership skills and ways of reaching the younger professional couples who have moved into our rapidly growing area.

Cleophus Rawls, pastor of West Batesville Baptist Church, Batesville, Miss., said sessions had challenged participants to return to their local churches with a sense of conviction on moral issues, and a deeper commitment to bring the unsaved to Christ, to remove racial barriers and to demonstrate love.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Churches use various methods to declare sanctity of life," dated 12/22/92, please make the correct the next to last paragraph to read:

The Baptist Sunday School Board produces curriculum for older children through adults for Sanctity of Human Life Sunday.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press