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91-180

FMB chairman says Ruschlikon
violated mission principle

By Herb Hollinger

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The chairman of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's trustees says Ruschlikon seminary has violated the principle of "indigenous missions" by soliciting funds from U.S. churches.

A visit this week in the U.S. by the Swiss seminary's president, speaking to several high profile moderate Baptist churches, has caused "anxiety among the trustees," Bill Hancock, FMB trustee chairman and Louisville pastor, told Baptist Press.

Hancock said it has become public knowledge the seminary is soliciting funds in the U.S. but, he contends, trustees were led to believe the seminary would raise funds in Europe.

"The 1988 agreement (between Ruschlikon and the FMB), where the FMB agreed to a gradual defunding of the seminary, included provisions for the seminary to assume its own financial responsibilities," said Hancock. "I thought that would mean funding from European sources. The recent announcements of funding efforts in the U.S. by Ruschlikon violate that understanding."

The president of Ruschlikon, John David Hopper, says the seminary's action was prompted by more than a year of threats by conservative trustees to defund the seminary. At the FMB trustee meeting Oct. 9, 1991, trustees voted, 35-28, to withdraw \$365,000 of funds in the 1992 budget earmarked for Ruschlikon.

Hopper said he returned last week to the U.S. for his father's funeral and also responded to those churches which asked him to speak. Scheduled to speak several times in North Carolina, including Dec. 1 morning services for Pastor John Hewett of First Baptist Church, Asheville, and this week in Texas, Hopper said he planned to share Ruschlikon's situation and the response of Europeans to the defunding...in order to keep "our people informed."

Hancock says Hopper speaking at the Asheville church where the pastor is president of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a moderate Baptist group dissatisfied with the conservative leadership of the SBC, is seen as not helping resolve the situation. FMB trustees are scheduled for a special meeting, Dec. 5-6, to deal with the Ruschlikon controversy.

In addition, Hancock said he questions the wisdom of spending \$350,000 for Ruschlikon, plus three salaried missionary staffers, while the seminary has only 40-plus students.

"I felt we needed to re-direct the funds. The October decision (by the trustees) was to re-direct that money into other areas of Europe," said Hancock.

Hancock said he was unaware, until recently, of a three-year \$7.5-\$10 million fund raising campaign by Ruschlikon directed by Cargill Associates of Texas, nor the group, Friends of Ruschlikon in San Antonio, Texas, nor the employment of a development officer in Nashville hired by Ruschlikon.

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"My concern is not with the attitude of European Baptists nor any professor who has taught at the seminary," Hancock said. "My concern is the lack of communication between Ruschlikon, the FMB staff and the trustees related to finances (of the school)."

FMB President R. Keith Parks, in an interview with Baptist Press (see accompanying story), denied FMB staff had kept information about Ruschlikon funding efforts from FMB trustees, did not know of Hopper's speaking schedule this week in the U.S., and urged trustees to work out a continuing relationship with the European Baptist Federation.

Steve Hardy, North Carolina pastor and chairman of the FMB trustee regional committee which includes Ruschlikon, said a lot of questions have been raised about the "integrity" of the FMB in taking away the funds. Trustees' Oct. 9 decision to defund the seminary was based on criticism of E. Glen Hinson's employment by the seminary.

However, Hardy said, trustees had been asked by Ruschlikon not to bring the "SBC controversy" to Europe but when the seminary invited Hinson to teach, "he (Hopper) invited the controversy to Ruschlikon." Hardy said Hinson's statements on the controversy are well-known as critical of SBC conservatives. By inviting Hinson to teach at Ruschlikon, Hardy said, that became an integrity issue.

Hardy said he is also concerned Hopper has violated a FMB policy of missionaries coming to the U.S. and soliciting funds for "their special projects." Hardy said missionaries are expected to speak in U.S. churches and encourage giving through regular church gifts via the Cooperative Program and mission offerings.

Hardy said he also was not aware the Ruschlikon fund raising would include the U.S. and although told by FMB staffers this year that a fund raising effort would be started, assumed it would be in Europe.

Hopper, on the other hand, said trustees did know about the U.S. fund raising efforts, including Hardy.

Commenting on Hinson's employment, Hopper said the FMB policy has been any SBC seminary professor was qualified to teach in overseas seminaries.

"Hinson is a scholar of integrity. He will teach medieval Christianity, history of Christian spirituality (Christian classics) and Latin," said Hopper. The seminary did not have the funds to employ a European professor, Hopper said, and Hinson, on a four-month sabbatical from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, was available.

Hopper said since the FMB has given the seminary to European Baptists, the policies regarding SBC seminaries overseas do not necessarily apply. He said he was hoping to raise funds for desperate needs at the Swiss school which will lose about 40 percent of its annual budget if the FMB defunding holds.

Hopper said he considered himself a conservative, "right down the middle of Southern Baptist theology, but not politics."

Baptist Press interview
with R. Keith Parks

Baptist Press
12/2/91

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--In light of the controversy regarding Ruschlikon seminary and recent questions about fund raising by the seminary in the United States, Baptist Press asked R. Keith Parks, President of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, to discuss the issues using a question-answer format.

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Baptist Press: FMB Chairman Bill Hancock feels he, and the trustees, have not been kept fully informed by the FMB staff as to the American fund raising efforts of Ruschlikon seminary. He cited a letter he has in possession from Hopper to U.S. pastors that says Ruschlikon seminary trustees approved a fund raising effort in the U.S. and the letter is dated in July, 1991. Your response?

Parks: First of all I would hope this issue is not perceived as a staff versus board of trustees issue. It is not that. The close vote, 35-28, on the issue and the fact it has been reviewed and re-voted more than any other single issue in the last four years reveals that sincere trustees are interpreting the situation differently.

The unprecedented response of Southern Baptists reveals the concern and interest of many people. Part of the problem -- a very complex problem -- is that some feel the only issue is theology. Others, equally concerned about theology, do not believe the issue can be reduced to one element. Even if it could, there is strongly divided opinion as to E. Glen Hinson's theological position.

The (SBC) Peace Committee and Southern Seminary Board of Trustees have permitted him to continue teaching at Southern. He is at Ruschlikon only four months -- still supported by Southern Seminary on sabbatical -- teaching Latin, Church History and classical devotional material. He affirms the Baptist Faith and Message statement, in fact helped write it.

We feel (Ruschlikon) seminary is moving in the right direction and his being there four months is not an indication of a trend. The complexity of this issue is found in the missiology of the situation also. We have 80 other seminaries and Bible schools, 10 are international. Each of these has a board of trustees or some governing body. Throughout our history we have related as partners -- seeking to influence.

We have honored the Baptist principle of autonomy of each Baptist body. This seminary (Ruschlikon) is under the authority of the European Baptist Federation which has chosen a board of trustees. They are autonomous. In other situations as we have sought to shift the financial support we have worked out a transitional plan of funding. As far as I know we have followed these agreed upon plans. In this case, abruptly, unilaterally, without adequate time for discussion, the agreed upon plan was cancelled.

More specifically to your question: We all have known that European Baptists must take more of the financial load. Swiss law discourages the sale during the first five or six years of ownership by imposing a large (40 percent) tax. The seminary hopes to stay in Switzerland. If it cannot, it hopes to stay until the large tax period passes.

I knew and I assume other staff and trustees knew that the seminary was gearing up to raise money. I think we all expected this. There was never the intention on my part to hide this information. I think it was an assumption that with impending cuts in support from the FMB, there had to be efforts in fund raising.

As is consistent with the way I must function, I did not know details. I cannot and do not try to know details, even mission by mission, much less institution by institution. Nor is this a reasonable expectation of the trustees that they should know details of each institution. My understanding has been the seminary and European Baptists have been in consultation with some professionals among Southern Baptists to assist in creating a development program. That has happened in other places and seems wise.

We urge Baptists from abroad not to approach churches with appeals -- we urge our missionaries to refrain from this also. Bill Hancock read me the letter from John David Hopper over the phone. I have not seen it. I hope it was not sent to pastors or churches, but to individuals. However, there has been no effort on my part to keep information from the chairman of the board. Bill Hancock and I have talked several times a week to keep each other updated.

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Baptist Press: Publicity indicates John David Hopper is to speak on the Ruschlikon issue at First Baptist Church, Asheville, NC, Dec. 1 and at Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, Dec. 3. Are you aware of his visits to these churches, whose pastors are prominently affiliated with SBC moderates? Did you have any input into what he will say? Have you had contact with him since he arrived in the U.S.? How do you feel this will affect the Dec. 5-6 meeting of the trustees?

Parks: There are some elements here that trouble me. There has been suspicion raised by trustees that I and other staff are orchestrating responses to board actions. This absolutely is a false assumption. John David Hopper came (to the U.S.) for his father's funeral.

I am embarrassed that I have not talked to him to express my prayers during this time of grief. Missionaries plan their own schedules and respond to invitations from churches. I knew nothing about his speaking engagements, nor should I! We have not talked at all.

I would say that these are Southern Baptist churches and I am committed to sharing the mission message personally and through missionaries to all Southern Baptist churches. This may be our last hope to avoid a total defunding of foreign missions by many Southern Baptists. It is my hope that the meeting on Dec. 5-6 is focused on principle, basic issues and not emotional reaction or peripheral issues.

Baptist Press: What is the enrollment of Ruschlikon? How many graduates have there been in recent years? Hancock has indicated he feels the investment by the FMB there is not proportional to the results, both in numbers of students and graduates over the years. Your response?

Parks: In 43 years there have been 1060 full time students from 37 countries and 5 continents. There are 48 now, it has been as high as 76. In the Summer Institute of Theology and the International Baptist Lay Academy (at Budapest but sponsored by Ruschlikon) there have been about 600 others trained. These are from 37 countries all over the world.

One of the reasons for the high cost is the cost of living in Switzerland and difficulty for students to work because of laws. Many students can not bring any currency from their country. Eleven this year are from East Europe. The indications are large increases will come from all over Eastern Europe in the immediate future. Many of the short term people have been from Eastern Europe.

Politics and finances -- not theology -- are the primary reasons they have not come in larger numbers. That has now changed. European Baptists overwhelmingly credit Ruschlikon with being the primary factor in creating a unity and cooperation among all the Baptist unions. Most of the leaders from most of the Baptist unions and institutions have been trained there. They see Ruschlikon as the cohesive force that has enabled European Baptists to do much more than they could have done otherwise.

With the attaching of the Evangelism and Church Growth Center under Earl Martin, there has been an increasing emphasis on evangelism and starting churches -- all across Europe. Incidentally, the Baptist unions in Western Europe average baptizing one for each 31 members as compared to 42 or more in the SBC. Yet, one of the accusations is that Ruschlikon has generated leaders that are not evangelistic.

Ruschlikon was started as an effort at reconciliation among Baptists of Europe and the U.S. It has been that. If it is summarily rejected it could be the cause for the greatest disruption of Baptist relationships not only in Europe, but around the world. I hope we can work out a continuing relationship with the European Baptist Federation. For that is the real issue -- not just Ruschlikon.

Pastor, CLC differ on lifting
fetal tissue transplant ban

By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP)--A recent Senate hearing on funding of fetal tissue transplantation research placed a Southern Baptist pastor and the Christian Life Commission on opposite sides.

When Guy Walden, pastor of Broadway Baptist Temple in Houston, Texas testified Nov. 21 in behalf of lifting the ban on the use of fetal tissue from induced abortions for experimental transplantation, the CLC released a statement at the hearing opposing such a change.

The difference between Walden and the Commission surfaced at a hearing of the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources. The committee considered The Research Freedom Act (S. 1902), which would overturn the ban.

Similar legislation passed the House of Representatives in the summer as part of a National Institutes of Health reauthorization bill. President George Bush has threatened to veto legislation lifting the ban.

The moratorium on transplantation research applies to federal funding and to fetal tissue from induced abortions. The ban does not cover private research. It also does not prohibit federally sponsored research using tissue from ectopic pregnancies or spontaneous abortions, Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan has said.

Research reportedly has shown fetal tissue to provide promising, though unproven, results in curing such diseases as diabetes, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

Both Walden and the CLC are pro-life, but the pastor and the Southern Baptist Convention's ethics agency differ on the results of lifting a moratorium in place since 1988.

Passage of legislation removing the ban would bring private research within government guidelines, might reduce some abortions and possibly would produce remedies for incurable disease, Walden said at the hearing and in a telephone interview.

Among the reasons the CLC expressed for its opposition to overturning the ban are: (1) a resultant, close-knit, unethical collaboration between federally sponsored research and the abortion industry; (2) a potential increase in abortions because of added justification for a woman to make such a decision, and (3) the current availability of tissue that is ethically permissible under the moratorium, such as that from ectopic pregnancies.

"I don't want to be put into a position of criticizing the Christian Life Commission," Walden said. "I think it's apparent that we disagree on this issue."

"We regret that our responsibility to represent Southern Baptists on ethical and public policy issues places us in disagreement with Rev. Walden," said James A. Smith, the CLC's director of government relations.

"Rev. Walden's pro-life views are admirable, and his concern about the unethical use of fetal tissue is also admirable. However, Rep. Waxman and Sen. Kennedy and other members of Congress who claim to be concerned about the way fetal tissue is used are also cosponsors of the Freedom of Choice Act and other legislation providing unlimited abortion rights. The eager pursuit of abortion rights by these members demonstrates their lack of concern for the value and worth of unborn human life," said Smith, who had telephone discussions with Walden several times during the previous six months.

"The moratorium is the best safeguard available. Congress shouldn't discard it in favor of unlimited use of fetal tissue in transplantation experiments."

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The CLC has advocated a position in support of the moratorium for more than a year, Smith said.

Messengers to the 1991 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention approved a resolution on the sanctity of human life supporting the fetal tissue transplantation moratorium.

Sen. Edward Kennedy, D.-Mass., and Sen. Brock Adams, D.-Wash., are the prime sponsors of the Senate bill. Rep. Henry Waxman, D., Cal., was the chief sponsor of the House legislation.

In May 1990, Walden's youngest son, Nathan, received a fetal tissue transplant from an ectopic pregnancy while he was still in the womb. Three tests on Nathan this fall showed a low but therapeutic level of enzyme needed to combat Hurler syndrome, which attacks the brain and other major organs.

Nathan is the third of the Walden's children to have the disease. The oldest two died. Two other children are healthy. Walden's wife, Terri, is expecting their sixth child in May. Tests have shown the child to be free of the disease.

"We didn't have the luxury of living in the ivory tower," Walden said in a telephone interview. "I am very much pro-life, but I'm pro all life, not just some. And I'm not interested more in protecting the dead than I am in helping the living.

"If we could help save a life and by our hands we withhold the helps that would save that life," Walden said, "then I believe we become culpable in that death. ... I don't want to be culpable in my child's death."

Walden told the committee, "I do not want to do anything to encourage abortion in any way. We want to see the absolute strongest wall of separation between the decision to abort and the decision to donate."

The retention of such a wall is unrealistic if the ban is lifted, said James Bopp Jr., general counsel of the National Right to Life Committee.

Successful transplantation requires "live, fresh, sterile fetal tissue," Bopp told the committee. Only 6 to 10 percent of tissue from normal abortion procedures is usable in transplantation, said Bopp and a researcher testifying against the ban. As a result, a technique has been developed "which involves harvesting tissue from a live fetus causing the fetus' death," Bopp said.

He described such a method detailed in a 1989 Archives of Neurology article about transplantation into Parkinson's disease patients. The disease requires an intact fetal brain from an unborn child of about 8 to 10 weeks gestation for transplantation, Bopp said. American and other researchers working in Sweden suctioned the heads from live fetuses with plastic tubes and transplanted the brains from the heads, Bopp said.

If transplantation research proves effective, NIH would have no power to prevent such fetal tissue collection techniques in the resulting treatment, Bopp said.

Such methods "would be legitimized and could even be the wave of the future" if the ban is lifted, Bopp said. "Research that leads to an unethical therapy should not be funded."

One of Walden's reasons for supporting the bill is the hope it will help eliminate abortions done each year because of medical problems with the unborn child. Such abortions total 12 percent (180,000) of the 1.5 million done each year in the United States, Walden said. He attributed the figure to the Centers for Disease Control. Rep. Waxman told the committee such abortions total more than 195,000 annually.

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The CDC, however, does not compile statistics reflecting the reasons women have abortions, two agency officials said. A 1988 survey by the Alan Guttmacher Institute, research arm of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, showed only three percent of abortions are done because of possible health problems in the unborn child. Therefore, about 45,000 abortions yearly are because of a disease or defect in the child, reflecting a large reduction in the number of children potentially to be aided by fetal tissue transplantation.

Safeguards in the bill are adequate, Walden told the committee, except for the need of inclusion of a periodic review by NIH.

Of the eight Senate committee members present, all four Democrats and one Republican appeared supportive of overturning the ban. Three Republicans seemed cool to such legislation.

In April, Walden also supported lifting the ban in testimony before a House subcommittee.

The moratorium was established in 1988. It was continued indefinitely in 1989 by HHS Secretary Sullivan because of concern it would increase the number of abortions. His extension of the ban came despite a special panel's recommendation to lift it.

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Baptist Spanish Publishing House,
Sunday School Board enter agreement

Baptist Press
12/2/91

By Frank Wm. White

NASHVILLE (BP)--A "free market agreement" between the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and the Baptist Spanish Publishing House in El Paso, Texas, will allow both Baptist agencies to do a better job providing products to the Spanish-speaking community, according to a Sunday School Board executive.

The agreement between Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr. and Baptist Spanish Publishing House General Director Roberto Garcia Bordoli allows both agencies to publish and distribute products worldwide, explained Jimmy Edwards, vice president for marketing and distribution at the Sunday School Board.

Edwards was chairman of the Sunday School Board committee which developed the agreement with Baptist Spanish Publishing House officials.

For the past 11 years, the Baptist Spanish Publishing House was restricted from distributing materials within the United States and the Sunday School Board could not market its products outside the United States, Edwards said.

Under that arrangement, the Sunday School Board marketed both its own products and Baptist Spanish Publishing House products to Spanish-speaking churches within the United States, Edwards explained.

Now, the publishing house will be marketing and selling its own materials in the United States.

"We will still distribute their products through Baptist Book Stores and our customer service center," Edwards said, adding that the two agencies will continue to look for other ways to work cooperatively.

"We are looking for better ways to serve the Baptist Hispanic community. The potential is better for both agencies to do a better job with that," he said.

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Edwards said all Baptist book stores that have stocked materials from the Baptist Spanish Publishing House will continue to do so. The El Paso (Texas) Baptist Book Store stocks all Baptist Spanish Publishing House materials.

The board's customer service center will be able to fill orders for any materials from the Baptist Spanish Publishing House with some material on hand at the Nashville warehouse and other items to be shipped from the El Paso book store.

The board's customer service center offers a toll-free telephone number. Also, bilingual service representatives are available at the Nashville customer service center to assist Spanish-speaking customers.

With the agreement, the Sunday School Board "will be able to focus more on marketing our own Spanish-language materials," Edwards said. "We will be able to place much more emphasis on the very fine Spanish Bibles from Holman and other products."

Edwards said the board is looking at additional materials that can be published in Spanish. Some possibilities include commentaries and Bible dictionaries, as well as additional curriculum materials.

Acting on a request from the Home Mission Board, the Sunday School Board will publish a Spanish edition of "Total Church Life," by Darrell Robinson, HMB vice president for evangelism. A revised edition of the book recently was released in English for use in a missions study.

Before the free market agreement was developed, the board had granted permission for the Baptist Spanish Publishing House to produce a Spanish edition of another Broadman book by Larry Lewis, Home Mission Board President.

"The Sunday School Board wants to work cooperatively with the Foreign Mission Board and the publishing house to serve the Hispanic community in every way we can," Edwards said.

In an October 1 letter affirming the agreement, Bordoli said the free market agreement "will open many doors of opportunities for both our ministries."

Bordoli said the two agencies would continue to work together in developing products and continue to meet and look for "ways to make our financial operations easier and more efficient."

Draper expressed a desire to "work cooperatively and fraternally with the Baptist Spanish Publishing House in serving the literature needs of the Spanish-speaking people of the world."

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Burundi turmoil
disrupts Baptist work

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
12/2/91

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--One of two Southern Baptist missionary couples in Burundi evacuated the tiny central African country Nov. 30 amid political and ethnic violence.

Dennis and Margaret McCall, of Vicksburg, Miss., and Atlanta, respectively, and their three preschool children flew to Kenya. They left Burundi a week after ongoing fighting between government troops and forces claiming to represent the Hutu ethnic group spilled into Bujumbura, Burundi's capital city.

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The remaining couple, Jeff and Mary Polglase of Tucson, Ariz., and Dallas, respectively, had tentatively decided to fly to Kenya Dec. 6 with their three preschoolers. However, they reported Dec. 2 that Bujumbura appeared calm and if it remained so they would not leave. Three other missionary families scheduled to arrive in Burundi over the next four months are in limbo.

"We heard Nov. 24 that targets in the city had been attacked but there hadn't been any shooting on our side of town," McCall said. "However, when we got to church, which is right beside where the Polglases live, gunfire was plentiful enough to convince us to head home."

U.S. Embassy officials told American citizens to stay off the streets and warned "if we went out they weren't responsible," McCall added.

They saw no evidence of looting, either by the attackers or by government troops who conducted house-to-house searches in the areas where the fighting was most intense.

"We never considered leaving as long as fighting was in the rural areas -- even though much of it was around where the Baptist mission is building two houses in the north," McCall said. "We're praying we'll be able to go back in a few weeks or in a month at the most to continue our work."

McCall is an agricultural evangelist while Polglase is a church planter. Mrs. McCall and Mrs. Polglase are involved in evangelism through their church and home assignments.

Tiny, landlocked Burundi has a history of conflict between the Tutsi and Hutu peoples. The Tutsis, although they make up only about 15 percent of the estimated population of 5.5 million people, dominate the government and the military. The Hutu comprise about 80 percent of the population.

The worst ethnic clashes occurred in 1972 when Hutu attacks on Tutsis led to reprisal attacks against Hutus all over the country. More than 100,000 people died in the fighting, according to estimates.

President Pierre Buyoya, who came to power in a 1987 coup, earned high marks for his handling of another outbreak of ethnic violence in 1988. A Hutu uprising and military reprisals resulted in between 5,000 and 20,000 reported deaths, while another 60,000 Hutus fled to Rwanda as refugees.

Buyoya denied the high death estimates, but publicly vowed to work to end the centuries of animosity. In recent years he has taken a visible role in leading the country toward multiparty democracy and named a Hutu as his prime minister. But about a month ago Hutu military units began attacking from bases believed to be in Tanzania, according to news reports.

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Baptist Men discover hammers, saws
can build more than houses By Todd Deaton and Steve Barber

Baptist Press
12/2/91

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--More than 180 North Carolina Baptist Men and other volunteers discovered this fall that hammers and saws can build more than houses.

Baptist Men and volunteers from some 20 Raleigh Baptist Association churches not only used their talents to build a Habitat for Humanity house for a Wake Forest family as a missions project, but they also built a strong fellowship between members of the participating churches.

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"A project like this allows lay persons to use their gifts and talents in ministry," said Richard Brunson, Baptist Men's director for Raleigh association. "Some of these people know a great deal about construction, and the project provided them with the opportunity to help somebody by using their skills for ministry."

"The Baptist Men of Raleigh association are to be commended for their involvement in this project. It is a thrilling example of the way persons are applying the gospel," said Dr. James D. Williams, president of the Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn.

"Last year, more than 60,000 Southern Baptist lay persons were involved in more than 4,000 mission action projects around the world," he added. "Thank the Lord for this kind of commitment."

The new home construction marks an expansion of the primary focus of Baptist Men's volunteer construction efforts, according to Jim Furgerson, director of the Adult Division at the Brotherhood Commission.

"Our main concern has been construction of new churches and rebuilding homes following disasters," Furgerson said. "We are ministry-oriented and glad to see Baptist Men expanding their efforts to include low-income housing. I hope many more volunteers will come forward for projects like this in the future. They can start by contacting the Brotherhood office at their state convention. "

The 1,200 square-foot house constructed on Jubilee Court in Wake Forest, N.C., for Deborah Wiggins, a native of the town, and her two children, Anthony, 12, and Lucrezia, 6, was dedicated Nov. 23. Representatives from the Raleigh association, Grace Lutheran church and Habitat for Humanity, partners in the project, participated in the dedication service in which the Wigginses received a Bible signed by the 180-plus workers.

"It is good for an association to be partners in accomplishing a goal like this with churches. The project helps individual churches understand what the association is all about. That is, by working together, we can do things for Christ which we could not do by ourselves," said Brunson, who is also associate director of North Carolina Baptist Men.

The missions effort began more than eighteen months ago as an associational Brotherhood project. "The original intent was to involve a lot of the smaller Raleigh-area churches that were not able to participate in a Habitat for Humanity project because of limited resources. It would be difficult for a single church to raise \$40,000 for materials and provide all of the laborers on its own," Brunson added.

"When you talk about that much money, for a lot of churches a project like this is not something which you can just pass around the hat in a Baptist Men's group and expect to come up with the necessary start-up amount," Brunson explained. Participating churches often have to make the missions project an item in their budgets.

Raleigh association Baptist men initially set a goal of having 30 churches participating in the construction project, with each church contributing between \$1,000 and \$1,500.

The fund-raising effort was coordinated by Leroy Witt, a member of Aversboro Road church in Garner, while the volunteer laborers were coordinated by Hank MacKnee, a member of Hayes Barton church, Raleigh. Charlie Carter of Creedmoor Road church, Raleigh, served as chaplain during the building project.

Additional funds and laborers for the 12-Saturday construction project were provided by Grace Lutheran church, Raleigh, according to Morris Ashcraft, construction coordinator for the Habitat for Humanity project and former dean at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest.

Work began in September and was finished in time for the dedication service November 23. Between 20 and 40 persons worked each Saturday on the three-bedroom house which includes a porch, outside storage room, carpeting, air conditioning and gas heat.

"A lot of the skilled work was donated by individual Baptist Men," said Ashcraft. "A plumber from Calvary church, an electrician from Temple church, and a landscaper from Stony Hill church all volunteered their labor."

"Through prayers, answers to prayers and the Lord's guidance, we have accomplished a blessing here," said Jo Ann Stancil, church development director for the Raleigh association. "I am grateful for the vision of Raleigh association and all of the Baptist Men involved. This is what being Baptist is all about, what being Christian is all about -- and I am thankful for the opportunity to see us doing what God has called us to do in ministering to one another."

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(BP) photo available to state Baptist newspapers from the Brotherhood

Retired home missionaries
reject call to comfort

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
12/2/91

NEWHALL, Calif. (BP)--Reviewing 40 years of ministry in the western United States, Bob and Sara Wells admit they could have chosen a more comfortable place of service.

Their calling, however, is not to comfort.

Wells was pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas, in 1950 when he went to California on vacation. Before the visit was over, Wells was called as pastor of Narbonne Avenue Baptist Church in Lomita, Calif.

As the couple left the Bible belt, they were uncomfortable about raising their three children in the Southern California culture. But the children have followed in their parents' footsteps -- the daughter is a pastor's wife, one son is worship leader and another son is helping start a congregation.

Wells routinely found himself in the uncomfortable position of leading a church with a history of pastor turnover. His first California church had four pastors in six years. But he stayed 13 years and helped the church start three missions and grow from 100 to 1,100 members.

Another church where Wells was pastor had a history of running off pastors, but Wells said, "I didn't run very fast."

Wells left that church on peaceful terms after four years to become a home missionary and director of missions for Northern Nevada Baptist Association. Winters in Reno were "long, cold and harsh," but the experience generated some of their warmest memories, Wells said.

For example, a Sunday school class Wells helped start in Jackpot, Nev., could not afford to pay rent on the building it used each week. A local resident offered to let the class meet in his casino for free. The class in the casino ministered to two children, whose father later became a Christian and helped start another church in Nevada.

While in Nevada, Wells help organize three associations, the Nevada Baptist Convention and at least 43 churches. But he takes the most pride in the six couples from his association who now serve as Southern Baptist foreign missionaries.

In 1982, Wells retired and returned to Southern California. Their community north of Los Angeles did not have a Southern Baptist church, so naturally they helped start one.

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Mrs. Wells, a retired school teacher, leads the children's ministry at the new church. Wells, age 74, serves as interim pastor of a mission 20 miles north of their home.

Teaching English to internationals is the pair's newest passion. Wells uses the gospel of Mark to teach English and the plan of salvation to the advanced class; Mrs. Wells teaches beginner classes from Psalm 23.

Now the retired missionaries are learning Spanish so they can empathize with their students who are trying to master a new language.

In his free time, Wells plays golf, jogs at least three times a week, competes in the senior olympics and serves as an estate planning consultant for the Southern Baptist Foundation of California. Mrs. Wells creates ceramic figurines and paints china dolls. They both work as American Bible Society volunteers.

Retiring to a rocking chair, "might be a comfortable thing to do," Mrs. Wells said, "but it would be hard for us."

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