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92-21

Russian man meets Jesus
during stay in Kentucky

By Jim Robinson

LA CENTER, Ky. (BP)--Pavel Tolmachev came to America to learn about agriculture but returned home last month with a Christian faith unknown to him before. Tolmachev became a Christian through the ministry of Oscar Baptist Church in La Center, Ky. He returned to Sverdlovsk, Russia, with plans to start a new Christian church in an area where none exists.

Tolmachev operates a 130-acre farm outside Sverdlovsk and supervises 100 other farmers in the region.

The Russian arrived in America last January to study U.S. farming operations. While visiting in western Kentucky, the 40-year-old agronomist was asked if he knew Jesus Christ.

"I have not met him yet," Tolmachev replied. "Where does he live?" Staying with the Bill Cooper family of La Center, Tolmachev came into contact with Max Gordon, a fellow farmer and deacon at Oscar Baptist Church. Gordon introduced his new friend to his pastor, Marty Brown, who began telling the visitor about his faith in God. Brown said Tolmachev found the idea of God bewildering at first. His concept of a god had been the Soviet government.

Members of Oscar Baptist Church obtained a Russian translation of the Bible and invited Tolmachev to attend services there. In the past seven months, the Russian farmer has read the Bible through eight times, Brown said.

After the church's Jan. 8 prayer meeting, Tolmachev told the pastor he wanted to become a Christian. The bivocational pastor questioned him at length to be certain about the decision.

Since Oscar Baptist Church has no baptistery, Tolmachev was baptized Jan. 19 at nearby Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church which was filled to capacity for the occasion.

Earlier in January, Tolmachev had received a letter from Russian President Boris Yeltsin asking for his swift return home. His agricultural leadership skills are needed during the country's economic transition.

Kentucky Baptists sent Tolmachev back to his city of 1.5 million people with a copy of the "Jesus" film, several Russian Bibles and a vision of planting a church. Tolmachev said he is excited about telling his countrymen what he learned in America. "A new life opened while I lived here," he said.

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Jim Robinson is a state correspondent for the Western Recorder, newsjournal of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Dockery named seminary dean;
2 profs receive warning

By Pat Cole

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--David S. Dockery has been appointed dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, effective Aug. 1.

The appointment by seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt followed unanimous approval of faculty status for Dockery by the Louisville, Ky., school's trustee executive committee Feb. 4.

In executive session, the executive committee heard a report from the academic personnel committee regarding Southern professors E. Glenn Hinson and Molly T. Marshall. A joint statement issued after the meeting by trustee chairman W. Wayne Allen of Tennessee and Honeycutt said the academic personnel committee had "brought to a conclusion several years of continuing concern related to certain writings of" the two professors.

The academic personnel committee reported it had instructed Honeycutt to "warn the professors that if in the future one should teach the positions which someone interpreted them to have expressed, he/she might be in violation of the Abstract of Principles (the seminary's confessional statement) and thus in jeopardy of dismissal," the statement said. The warning, it noted, has been communicated to each professor.

"We are encouraged by the trustees' careful resolution of this important and sensitive matter," Allen and Honeycutt said. "We are grateful that the action taken satisfies the concerns raised without constituting a punitive action against the two faculty members."

Dockery, general editor for Broadman Press in Nashville, was elected to a tenurable position as associate professor of New Testament interpretation. He will be presented to the full board in April as a candidate for tenure.

Dockery, 39, has been at his current position as editor of the 40-volume New American Commentary since 1990. Before that, he was assistant professor of New Testament interpretation at Southern Seminary for two years. He previously taught for four years at Criswell College in Dallas.

Allen said the board's academic personnel committee, which interviewed Dockery the previous day, was impressed with Dockery's command of Scripture and his ability to answer a broad range of theological questions.

Dockery was selected from a field of 27 candidates whose names were submitted last summer and early fall as part of a nationwide search process. Honeycutt had promised to name a conservative evangelical scholar for the deanship whose views were consistent with the covenant agreement between faculty and trustees approved last April. In the covenant, faculty and trustees agreed to cooperate to move the school in a more conservative direction.

After hearing of the seminary trustee action, trustees of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board voted unanimously at their Feb. 5 meeting in Nashville to express commendation for Dockery to the seminary trustees.

Prior to the executive session, the executive committee, acting on a recommendation from the academic personnel committee, voted to ask the full board to reaffirm the covenant document. The recommendation also specifically urged trustees to stand by their commitment not to revisit the seminary's 1986 response to the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee. A trustee review that year cleared several professors, including Hinson and Marshall, in response to allegations they were teaching outside the Abstract of Principles.

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Executive Committee Chairman Larry Adams of Oklahoma said a reaffirmation of the covenant would be reassuring to the faculty. "Some of our members (on the academic personnel committee) thought it might be expedient to reaffirm that we still stand in the same place as we did in 1991," he said.

In another action, the executive committee recommended the full board adopt a standing rule of order for dealing with allegations made against professors during trustee meetings. The proposed procedure calls for the chairman to refer automatically any charge to the president for initial review and recommendation. Any reference by a trustee to the facts of a charge would be ruled out of order until a report is made from the academic personnel committee or the standing rule of order is repealed, rescinded, amended or suspended.

Academic Personnel Committee Chairman Richard White of Tennessee said the proposed policy "gives us a very clear process" for dealing with charges against faculty during trustee meetings.

In other business, the executive committee:

-- Accepted the resignation of trustee John L. Smith of Louisville who left the board for personal reasons.

-- Appointed a committee, chaired by trustee Morris Denman of Florida, to re-examine the seminary's mission statement.

-- Learned the Association of Theological Schools has commended the seminary's faculty, administration and trustees for the implementation of the covenant. The covenant effectively replaced some trustee actions that had drawn criticism from ATS.

-- Heard a report on the seminary's self study, a review completed every 10 years required for re-accreditation by the school's accrediting agencies.

-- Received information about the search to fill three faculty vacancies in the school of Christian education and three vacancies in the school of theology.

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Southern Baptists look beyond
revivals to 'draw the net'

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
2/5/92

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptists who traditionally have used revival meetings to "draw the net" around evangelistic prospects are finding additional ways to be fishers of men.

Evangelism leaders are not willing to toss revival meetings overboard but they acknowledge the need for new ways to reach non-Christians.

"In our complex society, revivals are just one evangelistic tool," says Richard Harris, mass evangelism director for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

"Any pastor who uses revivals as his only evangelistic method is very unwise," Harris says. "Not to use revivals is equally unwise because they are proven evangelistic tools."

Dan Agee, director of evangelism for the Baptist General Association of Virginia, says in some places revival meetings are not effective because unchurched people are not familiar with revivals.

Agee recalls a church in Virginia's Fairfax County which invited prospects to a revival meeting. Many people responded, "What are you asking us to attend?"

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Agee defines revival as a "time for folks to get together and have a renewal experience that leads to evangelism. It's a time for non-Christians to see Christians celebrating."

But that description is not likely to attract people who do not understand "the language of Zion," Agee says.

"I'm not anti-revival," Agee explains. "But you can draw the net every night and if there's no fish to catch, what good is it?"

A key to attendance is giving a lot of church members a little bit of responsibility in revival preparation, Harris says. Members will come because they have made an investment in the services. Members will invite non-Christians if they believe the revival will meet their friends' needs.

Getting people to attend revival meetings may be most difficult in places where time is a limited resource.

Gene Wilson, director of missions in Calvary Arrowhead Baptist Association near Los Angeles, says most workers in his area commute 90 minutes one way to the office and work at least 50 hours a week. They do not want to attend another meeting after work, he says.

Wilson says churches in his association have more success with "event evangelism" and with Christians developing witnessing relationships with non-Christians.

An example of "event evangelism" that has worked well in California, Wilson says, is neighborhood block parties. Music and food attract a crowd, and the gospel is shared.

Agee urges churches to offer need-based ministries that include an opportunity for evangelism. He cites seminars on families and money management, programs for youth after high school football games and Bible studies in the workplace as examples.

"The program has to be something that makes people think, 'It will be worth my while to come to this,'" Agee says.

Harris agrees revival meetings do not have to fit a stereotype. "We recommend that churches have two revivals a year but we don't mean they have to be two traditional revivals," he says.

Dan Crawford, associate professor of evangelism and missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, says, "If a church is reaching people through other ways, it may not need revival meetings. Revival meetings are not essential. Revival is."

Yet Crawford and Harris both say revival meetings are still effective when the proper preparation takes place.

Every year, Southern Baptist churches hold more than 50,000 revival meetings that last four days or more, Harris reports. But he adds, "A lot of those should never be conducted because people aren't prepared. They have a bad experience and say they will never do that again."

Crawford leads the seminary's spring evangelism practicum. The program sends students to lead revival meetings in small churches in new convention areas. Last year more than 140 students led revivals during their spring break, and recorded 272 professions of faith.

"In cases where we really have revival, the students and the churches are both fully prepared," Crawford says.

Students learn how to preach a revival sermon and how to give an evangelistic invitation. Churches are asked to clear their calendars of other activities and to promote the meeting.

Both the student preachers and the churches are expected to pray faithfully for revival. "We pray for God to send a revival in the midst of the revival meeting," Crawford says.

"In great revivals in history they used a term we don't hear much anymore: 'Pray until the break comes.' They prayed until God broke through," Crawford says.

"One reason we don't have revivals is we don't take time to wait on God. We put it on the calendar and expect him to show up."

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New ethics center offers
first national conference By Lonnie Wilkey & Art Toalston

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NASHVILLE (BP)--The fledgling Baptist Center for Ethics took a key step forward Feb. 3-4 in hosting its first national workshop.

The meeting, centering on "Ethics in the '90s: A New Agenda," drew about 300 participants from 17 states to Nashville's Immanuel Baptist Church.

The Nashville-based Baptist Center for Ethics was formed in September 1991 by moderate Southern Baptists disenchanted with what they viewed as a "negative and narrow" approach to ethics exhibited by the Christian Life Commission, Southern Baptists' ethics and moral concerns agency.

Former CLC staffer and interim executive director Robert Parham was tapped to head the new ethics organization.

Parham said the BCE conference was designed to address "issues which have been considered taboo for a number of years." Among workshop speakers' topics were teen-age sexuality, the new genetics, racism and civil religion.

The center's aims, Parham said, include efforts "to describe social problems, to equip people to think about ethical issues and to equip them to address ethics."

Parham said the conference will give BCE "the traction necessary to break out of the backfield of obscurity into the open field of credibility and visibility," as well as "traction to go out and raise money now."

At present, the center is funded primarily by individuals and some churches and also has received funds from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Southern Baptist Alliance, said Joel Snider, a Nashville pastor and chairman of BCE's board of directors. The Fellowship voted in January to allocate 45 percent of its ethics funds to the center.

Parham said BCE received about 90 percent of its \$25,000 budget from September through December last year, while costs of the workshop were met by registration fees.

In the area of teen-age sexuality, Bill Fletcher, professor of psychology at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., reported on his findings from seven years of research on sexual activities of Christian youth.

According to Fletcher, 63 percent of males and 48 percent of females had sexual intercourse by age 17. His study involved students who took his human sexuality course at Carson-Newman from 1984-91. Of the 313 males and 436 females in the survey, only 3 percent said they did not go to church. Others in the survey attended an average of 8.5 church services per month.

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Fletcher's most recent data, collected in the fall of 1991, showed 66 percent of males and 65 percent of females had had premarital sexual intercourse. Those trends are consistent with students in the population at large, the professor said.

"I suspect that some in the religious community will react ... with shock and perhaps disbelief," Fletcher said. "While I have no supporting evidence, I am convinced that many in our church believe that the Christian values we teach our children are controlling their sexual behaviors. The evidence suggests this is simply not the case."

Christian youth reconcile their sexual behavior with their biblical teachings by equating love with marriage, Fletcher said. "To them, a loving relationship and commitment to each other are the necessary and essential preconditions for a sexual relationship."

Fletcher said his advice is not to "preach" to teens because they won't listen. Instead, he said, church leaders must establish relationships and build trust so teens will talk candidly with them. Churches also must teach parents how to communicate about sex to their children at an early age, he added.

David Hughes, pastor of First Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C., suggested in his address a new ethics agenda for the 1990s is not needed, rather, the one that has stirred America's conscience for decades is sufficient.

"Could it be that in the social turmoil of the '60s, the narcissism of the '70s and the upwardly mobile sophistication of the '80s that many of us lost touch with salt-of-the-earth virtues like honesty, fidelity and integrity?" Hughes asked. "Sadly, Southern Baptist denominational life is no exception to this rule. If you don't believe it, just ask our friends at Ruschlikon," he said, referring to controversy surrounding sudden action by Foreign Mission Board trustees last October to cut the board's \$365,000 allocation to European Baptists' Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

Hughes targeted Christians for reactionary instead of proactive responses to ethical issues. "We need, all of us, to stop being against fundamentalists or liberals and start being for God's agenda in this world. ... My hope for the 1990s is that we Baptists can so get our corporate act together, whether it be in old or new denominational wineskins, that the marketplace of competing ideas will be compelled to consider what we say because of how we live together in Christ."

In a panel discussion on racism, James Kennedy, pastor of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church in Flint, Mich., told of a part-time staff member from a National Baptist background who came to work with his black Southern Baptist congregation. About six months later the man decided to return to National Baptists, Kennedy recounted, quoting one of the minister's reasons: "I've examined Southern Baptist literature and it is second to none. How come they don't practice what they preach?"

One audience member, in an open forum time, said racial division in America "is at least as serious now, if not more serious, than when Dr. (Martin Luther) King (Jr.) was in the streets" crusading for civil rights. Poverty in inner cities is worse than in the 1960s when riots erupted in various metro areas, he said.

Speaking on the new genetics, Ellen Wright Clayton, assistant professor in both pediatrics and law at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, said science's progress in DNA research likely will allow people to "find out exactly what our children are going to look like." And doctors will be able to treat "broken genes" linked to genetic problems.

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Such technology "raises the prospect that we would be able to alter deliberately and specifically the genetic makeup of future generations," Clayton said. "We would then have to ask who ... has the wisdom to decide which traits ought to be eliminated. ... I think that an honest assessment would lead us to conclude that there is no one individual or institution either in existence or that we can envision that we would trust." An even deeper question, she continued, would involve "what it means to be human. ... Which traits can be eliminated without undermining an important aspect of what it means to be human?"

"We cannot wish away the new genetics," Clayton said. "The challenge is to direct these technologies toward as much benefit and as little harm as possible." Wise use of genetics will occur "only if we engage in open and honest conversation ... (to) come to a full and sensitive appreciation of all the implications of genetic information."

Other speakers included:

-- David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World, an anti-hunger lobby based in Washington, who cited a recent survey of mothers in various U.S. counties that counted 5.5 million children as hungry. Worldwide, there are 1 billion people who get "too little food to lead fully productive lives," said Beckmann, a Lutheran minister and former World Bank economist. While direct food distribution is critical, he emphasized Christians can have even more impact by "using their citizenship" to support government policies and programs to combat hunger. Through food pantries in churches and other locations, he said, \$2 billion in aid is given each year to Americans in poverty. However, government programs encompass \$24 billion in such aid, he pointed out.

-- Tom Corts, president of Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., who spoke on the status of American education, saying, "school-bashing may be the most popular non-sport in America." Superintendents "are under fire from every conceivable sub-group of our society," Corts said, "and I believe it may be one of the most difficult and hazardous of all professions." Schools are caught in a "political quagmire" of proposals for vouchers for private schools and dependence on state and federal funding. "New models of local control and empowerment are essential," Corts said.

-- Jerry Hickson, general pediatrics chief at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, who addressed the rising cost of health care in America. He urged the religious community to become involved in the U.S. health care debate, noting Medicare costs, if unchecked, will require 40 percent of the federal government's budget by the year 2060 to meet the needs of an aging population and cover ongoing upward medical costs.

-- Bobby Bowden, Southern Baptist layman and head football coach at Florida State University in Tallahassee, who said coaches can both "encourage ethics and teach young people to be successful."

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Connie Davis, assistant editor of the Baptist and Reflector, newsjournal of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, also contributed to this story.

Missionaries avoid crossfire
in Venezuelan coup attempt

By Mary E. Speidel

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CARACAS, Venezuela (BP)--Missionaries Clarence "Buck" and Ila Mae Smith barely avoided a crossfire that killed at least 59 people in Venezuela Feb. 4.

They were driving just six blocks away when rebel troops and tanks attacked the presidential palace in Caracas. Rebels were trying to take control of the Venezuelan government, a 34-year-old democracy.

The two Southern Baptist missionaries and their son-in-law, Leonel Portillo, a Venezuelan, had stopped to get gas when they heard gunfire. They were en route to the Caracas home of Portillo and his wife, Melissa.

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"We heard the cannons and the guns shooting into the palace," Smith said in a telephone interview. "We were real close by. We just thank the Lord he was protecting us." Smith, from Portales, N.M., is a church planter in Maracaibo, about 400 miles west of Caracas, the capital city. Mrs. Smith is from Dora, N.M.

Smith said when they saw military tanks in the street, cars around them began backing up to leave the area. They were able to get out of the traffic safely and take another route.

Press reports said 17 soldiers died and 52 were injured in the uprising in Caracas, while some 42 civilians were killed in the crossfire. Rebel troops also staged battles in the cities of Valencia, Maracay and Maracaibo.

"We were fortunate not to be caught in it," Smith said.

So were 135 Southern Baptist medical volunteers who left the country less than 24 hours before the coup attempt, said John Murphy, Southern Baptist mission administrator in Venezuela.

"At 9:30 a.m. on Monday (Feb. 3) I was at the airport drinking coffee, watching the (volunteers') airplane leave. Then at midnight the coup took place," said Murphy, of Kansas City, Mo. "We felt like the Lord knew what he was doing," he said of the timing of the volunteers' departure.

Press reports said Feb. 5 loyal soldiers had halted the coup attempt and about 1,000 rebel soldiers had been arrested. The Venezuelan defense minister said he believed rebels had hoped to assassinate President Carlos Andres Perez, who had returned from Europe three hours before the attack.

During a phone interview the afternoon of Feb. 4, Murphy said Caracas was quiet and Southern Baptist missionaries throughout Venezuela were staying home. "We hope and pray that democracy can be preserved and it looks like that's happening," Murphy said.

In Caracas, the government did not impose a curfew but suspended some constitutional civil rights for several days, he said.

A conference at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Los Teques, Venezuela, went on as scheduled, Murphy said. However, he and several others decided not to make the hour-and-a-half trip from Caracas because of the unrest.

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Virginia Baptists send
\$100,000 to Ruschlikon

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2/5/92

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The \$100,000 allocated by Virginia Baptists last fall to the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, has been given to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to be transmitted to the international seminary.

Nathaniel W. Kellum, treasurer of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, presented the check Jan. 31 to FMB vice president for finance Carl W. Johnson.

Messengers to the annual BGAV meeting last November approved a motion to provide the \$100,000 unless FMB trustees reversed their October decision to eliminate \$365,000 from Ruschlikon's operating budget. In December board members reaffirmed their earlier action, taken because some trustees say the school teaches liberal theology.

Virginia Baptists redirected the funds from the \$1.6 million in their 1992 budget designated directly to the FMB.

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"Virginia Baptists deeply regret the decision ... to delete 1992 budget funding for Ruschlikon seminary in (the FMB's) October meeting and the decision in December to stand firm on the previous action of defunding in spite of the concerns and pleadings expressed by an overwhelming majority of Virginia Baptist messengers and by messengers in annual meetings in other state conventions," Kellum said in a statement given to Johnson along with the funds.

He added: "How we wish the Foreign Mission Board trustees had seen the wisdom of honoring documented financial promises to Ruschlikon seminary for one more year, and thus this action by Virginia Baptists, along with the divisiveness and almost unbearable agony and anxiety of Foreign Mission Board trustees, staff and missionaries, would have been avoided."

In related action, Kellum reported his office had received \$40,573 by the end of January from individuals and churches in Virginia designated for Ruschlikon.

The bulk of that amount -- \$38,741 -- arrived during January. An additional \$1,832 was given during December.