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NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee

901 Commerce #750

Nashville, Tennessee 37203

(615) 244-2355

Herb Hollinger, Vice President

Fax (615) 742-8919

CompuServe ID# 70420,17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522

DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232

NASHVILLE Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300

RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151

WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

March 19, 1992

92-50

As Iraq tensions escalate,
Baptist workers hang on

By Erich Bridges

LONDON (BP)--Rumors abound: American or British forces may attack Iraq to force compliance with the U.N. agreement that ended the Persian Gulf war. Saddam Hussein's forces might attack the Kurds. Internal unrest could topple Saddam.

In the eye of the storm, a small contingent of Southern Baptist relief workers continues to aid the Kurdish people of northern Iraq.

"Southern Baptists are still there," said Mike Stroope, a Southern Baptist who works with Global Partners, a London-based relief and development agency. "We've got everybody on alert. Everybody has a bag packed and they're ready to move out at a moment's notice. So it's a bit more tense but we're not out yet, and we're still doing our work."

- Stroope visited the seven workers in the northern Iraqi city of Zakho in late February. Under Global Partners' sponsorship, they continue to operate mobile medical clinics and drill water wells in Kurdish towns. In a new aid effort, they are distributing seeds to Kurdish families for planting gardens as spring approaches.

What's more, additional help is on the way. Another Southern Baptist physician and well-driller are scheduled to join the medical workers now in Zakho.

Southern Baptists have been aiding the Kurds in northern Iraq since the end of the Persian Gulf war last year, when a Kurdish uprising against Saddam brought savage reprisals that drove thousands of Kurds from their homes into the mountains. Southern Baptists worked in Kurdish refugee camps in Iraq and Iran and set up shop in Zakho to provide ongoing assistance.

But that presence is becoming harder to sustain, Stroope admitted.

Fuel and other resources are being blockaded from the south, "so they're not getting much up into that area," he reported. "It's difficult -- not impossible, but difficult -- to bring it across from the north and much more expensive. When I was there they were getting diesel fuel through the United Nations. But it's kind of a make-do situation."

The United Nations' agreement with the Iraqi government providing for work with refugees ends in June, according to Stroope. After that, Global Partners and other relief organizations will find it harder to stay in the country.

Iraqi forces clearly want to see such agencies get out -- both because of their aid to the restive Kurds and their presence as witnesses of what Saddam might try next in his efforts to stamp out Kurdish opposition.

Global Partners hopes to work out an agreement to stay, either with the ongoing United Nations Development Program (which operated in Iraq before the war) or directly with Kurdish leaders. "We're looking to stay on," Stroope said.

Meanwhile, life in the area is beginning to resemble normality.

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"There are still people sleeping out in the elements and there are still a good number of refugees in the mountains," Stroope explained. "They're hanging on until the spring. When spring comes I think we'll see a lot of people moving back into their traditional villages and trying to establish themselves. The general mood at this point is good. They feel like they're free in a sense as long as Iraqi forces (stay in the) south Attack is always in their minds but they're going on with life as it is."

Before the war Iraqi forces leveled thousands of Kurdish villages to crush rebellion and consolidate control of the oil-rich region. Their methods included torture, mass executions and the use of poison gas to kill entire populations of Kurdish towns.

"You drive up in that area and you see village after village where it is just rubble," Stroope said. "Hospitals have been destroyed there. Whole orchards have been poisoned; the trees are down to the stump or just branches stick up in the air. You can see where (Saddam Hussein's forces) came through and just destroyed to move those people out."

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J. Harold Smith sermon renews
pre-SBC evangelism rally plans

By Tammi Ledbetter

Baptist Press
3/19/92

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--As 81-year-old J. Harold Smith rose to speak, several hundred Southern Baptists at a Crossover Indianapolis rally waited with anticipation. Smith was introduced with a reference to "God's Three Deadlines" he was about to preach. The oft-delivered sermon was compared to R.G. Lee's "Payday Someday" and Jonathan Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

But rally-goers did not anticipate the way the Holy Spirit would move through Smith's sermon.

The evangelist underscored the seriousness of lost people committing the unpardonable sin of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit in refusing conviction of sin and the need for salvation -- and, he charged, Southern Baptists have lost the vision of reaching one lost soul, the value of that soul and the victory of winning that soul to Christ.

"It's time repentance and humbling of the heart started in the house of God," Smith said.

About half the crowd of 400 recommitted their lives to Christ. A dozen churchgoers acknowledged they themselves needed to be saved.

Pastors and lay people alike expressed regret for not bringing more unsaved people to hear Smith preach. Alvin Reid, evangelism director for the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, stated, "We don't know what God can do. We don't have any vision." Individuals began pondering the seriousness of the June 6 Crossover Indianapolis evangelistic campaign before the June 9-11 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in the city.

Pastor O.J. Peterson of Indianapolis rose to ask for a second chance at rounding up folks to hear Smith's sermon. "Why can't we have (Smith) back" in conjunction with the Crossover effort "now that we know what a great effect this can have?" Peterson asked.

Reid agreed to work with Crossover organizers and Indianapolis-area Metropolitan Baptist Association officials for an evangelistic rally the night of June 6 to culminate a week of simultaneous revivals in Indiana churches. Earlier efforts to plan a pre-convention rally had been laid aside out of concern that attendance would be low.

Charles Sullivan, the Indiana Baptist convention's executive director, said his dream now is to have "a thousand lost people saved" at the rally where Smith will again preach his "God's Three Deadlines" sermon.

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James Abernathy, interim director of the Indianapolis-area Baptist association, closed the rally with a prayerful appeal for God to protect against pride or selfish attitudes interfering with what God had called the rally-goers to undertake.

Morris Chapman, SBC president, was at the rally and described it as "the spark which could ignite the highest and holiest hour which Southern Baptists have experienced for many years," resulting in revival for which so many have been praying.

Chapman urged Southern Baptist pastors across the country to bring a contingent of people to participate in the Crossover day of witness June 6 and the rally that night. "Indiana Baptists are saying here tonight they will have hundreds of lost people in that service. We are on the brink of a revival that can change this generation of Southern Baptists -- and it is incumbent upon us to seize the hour."

Though many pastors hesitate to leave their Sunday pulpits for pre-SBC meetings, Chapman stated, "I believe if the pastors of our Southern Baptist churches will give up their pulpit that Sunday so they may come to Indianapolis the Saturday before, their people will praise God the Sunday they return" over the impact of the Crossover campaign.

"We'll have a convention -- but more desperately we need a revival," Chapman said.

Freddie Gage, Texas evangelist and Crossover co-chairman, acknowledged he was part of an April 1979 meeting to launch the conservative movement in the SBC in the office of W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas. He said he remains committed to the conservative effort. But Gage asked all Southern Baptists "to stop all the fighting -- at least for the next 120 days -- and go fishing for souls" with an eye toward Crossover Indianapolis.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: In a time of Japan-bashing in the United States, the following three stories focus on Southern Baptist missionaries in Japan who, alongside Japanese Baptists, continue a steady effort to share the gospel in the Buddhist, industrial giant of the East.

Missionaries work to
'light a fire' in Japan

By Michael Chute

Baptist Press
3/19/92

TOKYO (BP)--Lois Whaley thinks Baptist work in Japan has gotten a bad rap.

Whaley, a retired Southern Baptist missionary to Japan, has done a little math to prove her point. If Southern Baptists had grown at the rate of their Japanese counterparts since the end of World War II, she states, the entire Western Hemisphere would be Southern Baptist.

After the war just 16 Baptist churches with 300 members struggled out of the state-established United Church of Japan. The Japan Baptist Convention now claims more than 30,000 members in 300 churches and mission congregations -- a hundred-fold growth rate. If the six million Southern Baptists in 1945 had grown at the same rate, 600 million people would call themselves Southern Baptists today.

Yet nobody -- including Whaley, who now lives in Atlanta -- thinks Christianity has found fertile ground in Japan. Everyone seems to agree Japan is among the world's least-responsive countries to the gospel.

Explanations abound. Some say Japan's homogenous society won't accept anything not distinctively Japanese. Others counter that materialism so pervades the national psyche that wealth is Japan's religion. A few even suggest the Japanese clan is a lost tribe of Israel. Still others insist Christianity is too new to Japan; Buddhism took 800 years to influence Japanese society.

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Well-meaning explanations offer little comfort in the face of reality: Less than 1 percent of Japan's 123 million people embrace Christianity. Baptists total 3 percent of 1 million Japanese Christians.

Christian ranks grew quickly after the war when Japanese reeled from humiliating defeat. But as the country earned economic superpower status, Christian growth stagnated while the general population boomed.

Missionaries are working. Japanese Christians are working. God is working. But the Japanese people aren't yet responding in large numbers. The status quo satisfies nobody, particularly missionaries. After a two-year church growth study, the Southern Baptist mission organization in Japan adopted a strategy in 1988 that emphasizes church planting. The missionaries seized the pioneer-evangelism initiative in Japan, explaining to Japanese Baptists: That's why missionaries are sent -- not to do denominational work but to preach the gospel and start churches.

"The difference is intent," explained Max Love, a missionary in Tokyo. "Before, our intent was to win people to the Lord and get them in church. It never went beyond that. Now we're saying it doesn't stop there; we're going to multiply witnessing, church-planting churches." Love, from Stockbridge, Ga., resigned as mission administrator last year to become a full-time church planter.

"It's not just arithmetic increase but geometric increase -- to multiply not only the number of Christians but the number of witnessing Christians," he continued. "That's really the hope of Christianity in Japan. It's got to become a grass-roots movement."

The missionaries wrestled with the distinction between the capital letter C in "Church Planter" and the small letter c in "church-planting missionary." The strategy says it can't rely solely on evangelists to plant churches. For instance, if a religious educator comes to Japan as a missionary, he knows up-front he also will assume a church-planting role.

Today half the missionary force is directly responsible to start a church. Nearly eight in 10 missionaries are directly involved in evangelistic ministries, including teachers, who often work with more non-Christians than church planters.

The strategy calls on missionaries to present the gospel in a clear and concise manner -- including an invitation to believe -- to 100,000 Japanese by the year 2000. They also plan to start 100 churches over the next 10 years. The Japan Baptist Convention adopted a goal of 500 churches and 50,000 Baptists by the end of the century.

Only time will tell if the strategy will make a significant difference in Japan. Early results show it might. Last year, eight new churches joined the Japan Baptist Convention, compared to a recent average of two churches a year. Among those eight churches, two had organized and called a pastor within five years -- unheard of in Japan.

Missionaries and Japanese Baptists hope they can report many more "firsts" in the decade to come.

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

Japanese businessman is
loyal employee, Christian

By Michael Chute

Baptist Press
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TOKYO (BP)--It's crunch time for Toshio Morita.

A blue-suited, designated "shover" in white gloves herds Morita and other commuters into every square inch of a Tokyo-bound train. Jostling people jockey for a spot; Morita gets pushed to the back of the car. No one, including Morita, seems to mind.

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Before sunrise every morning, this Japanese Baptist businessman sets out by bus for Yokohama train station. The "express" train gets him downtown in 80 minutes. A brisk six-block jaunt puts him through the front doors of Toto Ltd.'s international headquarters. The entire trip takes two hours. At 6 p.m. he does it all over again.

Morita, customer service manager for a Toto subsidiary, just built a home in a new Yokohama housing development. Market value for the 1,000-square-foot house: \$800,000. Morita pays for it with his \$100,000-a-year salary. Plans call for extending the subway line to this area in a couple of years. But Morita's commute is not considered far by Japanese standards. A typical trip is three hours one way. Still, Morita leaves before dawn and gets home after dark.

This is the down side of "Japan Inc." that produces a curious mix of Japanese self-satisfaction and frustration. Citizens give their country mixed reviews: Its world success in finance and technology brings pride, but exorbitant housing costs, forced social conformity and a living standard that allows few frills cause sometimes deadly stress.

A top-level executive, Morita is where most Japanese would like to be. He's made it -- he is among the top 30 percent who graduated from college and entered Toto's corporate ranks when he did.

He's also an excellent Christian example to employees: conscientious, honest, dependable. His disposition is calm, stoic, disciplined. All are values Japanese admire.

Morita often invites Toto co-workers to the home he and his wife, Yuriko, designed themselves -- a "great room" layout with living, dining and kitchen areas all in one large room. They specifically built it this way as a house church. They feel God gave them the property and opportunity to start their housing development's first Baptist church. More than 300,000 people already live in the growing area.

"(Co-workers) understand why my house is built the way it is, a little different from the average Japanese home," says Morita, a member of Kawasaki Baptist Church. "We don't have a sofa in our living room. With Western furniture (taking up space), many people could not attend the meeting. So we just use cushions on the floor."

The 52-year-old Baptist layman plans to go into full-time Christian work when he retires at the customary age of 60. "If I can work here for God, that's what I want to do," he says. "I'll preach, if I can. I've preached several times in the pastor's absence."

Morita knows the house church approach works. A colleague with Toto who attended such a church led him to faith in Christ when Morita was 35.

Although his family was Buddhist, Morita had some early exposure to Christianity. In World War II-devastated Japan, education was scarce. U.S. Gen. Douglas MacArthur requested 10,000 missionaries for Japan and young Morita attended a school the Disciples of Christ operated near his home. A bright student, Morita later graduated from prestigious Waseda University. In 1962 he joined Toto, a worldwide plumbing supply house.

By the early 1970s the Moritas lived in company-owned housing, still a common sight in Japan. Unlike her husband, Yuriko earlier had professed faith in Christ while a student at Baptists' Seinan Jo Gakuin school in Kitakyushu. After she married, however, Yuriko didn't go to church. But a Christian who lived in their housing unit invited the Moritas to a home Bible meeting. She attended; he didn't.

However, contact with this Christian began to affect Morita. When the man invited them to a revival meeting at Kawasaki church, he agreed to go. It was the first time he had ever entered a church building. Five months later he accepted Christ as Savior and was baptized. Nearly 20 years later, he serves Kawasaki church as Sunday school teacher and director, deacon, church treasurer, choir member and anything else the church asks.

It's not easy serving Christ in Japanese corporate life, where loyalty to the company takes priority. For Christians, the "loyalty" issue can produce a myriad of stresses and rejection. Young Japanese often regard church attendance "too restrictive" for their already-controlled lives. Older Japanese often charge that Christianity's emphasis on the individual undercuts Japan's homogeneous social fabric. Some Japanese even call Christians' devotion to church "unpatriotic."

Morita tries to play it down, but he's successfully balanced company and church. A product and beneficiary of Japanese society, he's proof it is possible to be Japanese and Christian at the same time. Morita is the only Christian most of his colleagues know personally. And he's not just a Christian on Sundays. He has carved out a place for Christian faith in Toto's high-tech, freewheeling marketplace. Some fellow workers have accepted Christ through his influence.

"Everyone in the office knows I'm a Christian and they know I go to church," he says. "When new people come into the company I always tell them I'm a Christian, but usually they've already been told. If I do the work, my being a Christian is no problem."

In recent years, younger Japanese have been growing weary of the society's notoriously long workdays. Jobs often keep workers out four nights a week entertaining clients and co-workers. Even leisure time traditionally belongs to the company: Offices regularly choose Sundays for employee activities after a six-day workweek.

But changes overtaking Japanese business could help Christianity in the marketplace. Major businesses are beginning to close on weekends, realizing too much work makes duller, less productive workers. Company activities on Sundays are becoming fewer. For instance, companies now usually hold golf outings, a favorite among Japanese businessmen, on Saturdays. And although work units still demand workers to take customary outings together, these trips now tend to be overnight excursions on Fridays.

"Japanese think highly of Christianity, but becoming a Christian is a different thing," Morita says. "I have different kinds of opportunities to share my faith. I invite co-workers to church, but there's not much chance of them coming. Usually there's no reaction.

"But one of the women who worked for me became a Christian. There were many influences in her life and I was the first Christian she ever met. If I had been a bad influence, she probably wouldn't have become a Christian."

The woman married another Christian and Morita enjoys their friendship. Corporate life can be lonely for Christians in Japan. But if more Japanese become Christians and values change, it could become easier for Morita and other believers to serve Christ.

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

Church-starting mission team
'writes the book' in Yokohama

By Michael Chute

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YOKOHAMA, Japan (BP)--Charlie and Darlene Williams take a well-earned break at a neighborhood grocery store. The weary missionaries have just spent the afternoon canvassing a five-building, 600-apartment housing complex nearby.

They found no Christians and only one prospective believer: a woman who had been to church before. In younger years she was interested in studying the Bible. Nowadays she just doesn't know -- about a Bible study, a church or Christ. Williams will visit her again and place evangelistic tracts in her mailbox over the next few months to try to rekindle interest.

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This is north Yokohama, Japan, and three Southern Baptist missionary couples are trying to start Baptist churches where there are none. It's an experiment -- the first missionary church-planting "team" deployed in Japan. If it works, this type of team approach to church planting could become the pattern in Japan.

"It's like mining gold; you've got to hit the vein to work it," Williams says. "We haven't hit the vein here yet. But for every hour we spend canvassing, if we can get one person to work with, we've got something. If we can get 10 people into a church, they can go out and help. You don't need a seminary education" to knock on doors.

The Williamses eventually will knock on every one of the 3,500 doors in Kohoku neighborhood where they just moved. The other two missionary couples -- Bob and Gail Gierhart and Mark and Linda Whitworth -- do the same in the nearby Midori neighborhood. Their goal is simple: to find people interested in a Bible study and to be seen. The Bible studies will become churches. The missionaries want people to know they're here.

Research on church growth in 1988 showed north Yokohama was the most receptive area to the gospel in all Japan. So it topped the list of strategic sites for new churches. The missionaries' strategy targets young families who make up the vast majority of the area's rapidly growing population. Two passenger train lines crisscross this "bedroom" community for Tokyo. The subway and Shinkansen -- the famous "bullet" train -- connect the area to urban centers north and south.

With the site chosen, the Southern Baptist mission organization handpicked each couple for the team. But the missionaries could accept or refuse. None of them had worked together before. They hardly knew each other.

-- The Williamses, of Mobile, Ala., had finished a five-year church start in south Yokohama, leading Konan Megumi Baptist Church to call a Japanese pastor. They moved into an area on the growing side of New Yokohama train station.

-- In Japan 12 years, the Gierharts, of Denver and Honolulu respectively, ended a student work assignment north of Tokyo. Their Yokohama housing area is 20 years old but a lot of young families have moved in recently. Their house sits on the major thoroughfare from Tokyo to Nagoya, traveled 24 hours a day.

-- The Whitworths, of Independence, Mo., have expertise in counseling and had just completed language study. They moved into a new area developed by 30- to 40-year-old "yuppies."

Each missionary house forms a point of a large triangle that spreads across north Yokohama. The missionaries' "field" is everything within that area. More than 1.5 million people live there. Finding suitable housing is the only difficulty the team has faced; most Japanese don't want to rent to foreigners.

In the Midori neighborhood, 15 young women sit around the Gierharts' living room while the Whitworths lead a class on parenting. This is the team's target group: young housewives with children at home. Reaching the mothers also reaches the children. Sometime later, when the inevitable midlife crisis hits the wife's highly competitive Japanese husband, he'll probably look to her faith -- having none of his own -- to find strength. The Williamses know this scenario well; they recently baptized four men who followed this pattern.

"In a family, the man has 15 or so years between crisis points," Williams explains. "But for the woman, it hits when she gets a house full of kids, especially in an urban setting. He's gone most of the time and she's tied to a bunch of kids. At this stage in her life she's more likely to become involved with a group that's very supportive."

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The team selected Williams as leader since Baptists in Yokohama already know him. Both Williams and Bob Gierhart assumed the pastoral roles for the churches starting in their homes. Whitworth's counseling specialty serves the team well as he and Linda use their contacts working as outreach leaders for both new churches.

"The bottom line is to get people to hear us talk about parenting and family relationships," Whitworth says of a deep need in modern Japan. "In one parenting class we had 14 Japanese mothers and not one had ever been to church before. Many kids go to (Christian) kindergartens but the mothers would never go to church there. Linda always gives a testimony at the end of each talk, sharing something God's taught her about parenting. Everything we say is based on Christian principles."

Williams may be team leader, but he's not dogmatic about church-planting methodology. His team concept allows room for individuality.

"Everyone had their own ideas coming into this and we still do," Mrs. Gierhart says.

The Gierharts hope to establish a "central" church with satellite congregations. A Sunday afternoon Bible study the Whitworths hold in their home may develop into a satellite of the Gierharts' church. But the Williamses want to develop a "cluster" of house churches meeting throughout the week, not necessarily on Sundays.

"We're looking initially at one church that's made up of multiple single-cell congregations," says Williams of his approach. "Then we'll bring people together once a month for celebration and worship and a sense of the larger group. Most churches in Japan don't become anything more than a large single-cell congregation. Some churches can (do that) -- the ones that own property and can develop a full program on-site. But these days we can't begin to think about buying property, which can cost \$7 million to \$8 million in this location."

The Gierharts, meanwhile, spent a year planting seeds and trying to get exposure in the neighborhood before starting regular Sunday worship services. Now 24 people meet in their "living room" church each Sunday. In addition, they teach several Bible classes in English and Japanese during the week. She also conducts a cooking class once a month that draws a large group of women.

"Everybody in my classes had some connection with Christianity in the past -- a Christian preschool, mission high school, Sunday school, English Bible classes," Mrs. Gierhart explains. "It's like the Lord is finally going to allow us to participate in the harvesting ministry. We were just 'sowing' all the time in student work. Now ... we see results from all those seeds planted."

The missionary team gets together weekly to go plan, pray and have fellowship. "The team is a good balance," Gierhart says. "I don't know if the mission thought much about our different personalities when they asked us to join the team but it's worked out well. It sounds like we're all doing our own thing but that's really not the case. We do help and support each other."

Other missionaries and Japanese Baptists regularly ask how the "experiment" is working. The team is still trying to get to know each other and learn what everyone is supposed to be doing. Nobody's ever done this before, at least not in Japan.

They're writing the book as they go.

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

Former diplomat becomes
ambassador for Christ

By David Winfrey

WASHINGTON (BP)--A former Guyanese foreign service officer to America is now using his diplomatic skills as an ambassador for Christ.

Cecil Mahendranath was appointed in December by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board to minister to diplomats and foreign embassy personnel in Washington, D.C.

Most of his work is directed at helping families of embassy staff but can range from Christian counseling for a diplomat to fashion advice for an ambassador's wife.

"My whole idea is to penetrate into the embassies and offer whatever services we can in the name of Christ," he said.

Although diplomats and staff spend an average three to four years in America, they often receive little help from their government in getting established, Mahendranath said.

"By the time you move into a house, the responsibility of the embassy is over," he said. "They expect you to come to work with no assistance for your family."

Mahendranath said he felt a sense of "total loss" when he and his wife, Shirley, arrived in New York in 1977 for his new job with the Guyana office at the United Nations.

During one of their first nights in America, the two of them were praying for a church home, fellowship and an opportunity for Christian service when the doorbell rang.

At their door was Avery Sayer, a Southern Baptist home missionary who invited them to a chapel service in their apartment complex.

"That is a way of how God answers prayer right away in some instances," Mahendranath said.

He credits God with several other minor miracles to prepare him his new job.

Mahendranath said he was considering quitting his civil service job in Guyana to be a full-time Southern Baptist pastor before he learned about four openings in foreign service work. Although he had the least seniority of 34 applicants, he received one of the jobs.

The average Guyanese foreign assignment lasts about three years but Mahendranath was dispatched to New York and Washington offices for more than 13 years before resigning to do mission work last year.

During that time he was interim pastor at Wisconsin Avenue Baptist Church in Washington and assisted Mario Acacia, his predecessor in embassy mission work. Acacia retired in 1989 and is now living in Canada.

Mahendranath was "the only person we considered to replace Mario," said Joel Land, associate director of special ministries for the Home Mission Board. "He has a long experience both in diplomatic service and with the ministry."

One priority of Mahendranath's ministry is to involve more District of Columbia churches in his work.

He plans to hold seminars and workshops to train local churches to reach out to diplomats with services and invitations to church.

In addition to learning more about cultural and ethnic diversity, churches can become more missions minded through embassy ministries, he said.

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"While they are reaching out, they are being blessed in many ways as well."

Such work isn't limited to just Washington or New York, he said. Many large cities have consulates or colleges with a large number of foreign families who have physical and spiritual needs, he said.

A greater goal is to spread the gospel with as many people as possible, he said, "be it an ambassador or perhaps a lower category of officer or the children."

Making just one contact in an embassy can make a big difference, he said.

"Any one of these can become the head of a country," he said. "If we share the gospel with them and lead them to Christ, eventually it can influence a whole country."

Diplomats often return to their home country as the head of departments and they can assist foreign missionaries there, he said.

"We cannot really limit God's power," he said. "If we win one person, we can win a whole nation."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

Bakke challenges Southern Baptists
to explore urban ministry options By Trennis Henderson

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ST. LOUIS (BP)--Emphasizing "there are many ways to be the church of Jesus Christ," Ray Bakke challenged Southern Baptists to explore creative ways to reach the nation's cities for Christ.

Bakke, an American Baptist minister, is professor of ministry at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago. He also is executive director of International Urban Associates, a Christian research and consulting firm for urban ministries, and senior associate of large cities for the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization.

Bakke was the keynote speaker during a "Models for Metropolitan Ministry" conference March 9-11 in St. Louis. The three-day conference attracted more than 200 participants from five Midwestern states.

Describing how the apostle Paul ministered in the cities of his day, Bakke noted, "Many of us have built our theology on Paul. My question is: Have you built your strategy on Paul?"

"The way most of our churches do evangelism is to put a barrel in a sanctuary, fill it full of water and invite the fish to come in it so we can catch them. Anybody who fishes knows that you have to change the bait. Some fish are morning, noon or night; winter or summer; fly, worm or net.

"You're not going to catch people with a church building-centered evangelism strategy," Bakke said. "A 'come' structure isn't going to do it in the modern world. You're going to have to turn the church inside out and have a 'go' structure.

"Paul is our example of how to do that," he pointed out. "Paul was bicultural, multilingual; he adapted his message, his meeting places and his methods to the audiences he was trying to reach."

Bakke, author of "The Urban Christian: Effective Ministry in Today's Urban World," said overcoming cultural barriers is one of the great challenges in evangelizing cities.

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"The frontier of missiology today where most of the unreached people are is no longer across an ocean, over a desert or through a jungle," he said. "Missions as we have known it has changed. Most of the unreached are no longer geographically distant; they are culturally distant from the existing church."

As examples, Bakke noted, the United States is the world's largest Irish nation, Swedish nation and Jewish nation, the second largest African nation and the third largest Spanish nation.

"The whole world is coming to the United States," he said. "We have become a human zoo. Thank God. Just when it was too expensive to send missionaries, they come here at their own expense."

The challenge, he emphasized, is to employ ministry methods for effectively crossing cultural barriers.

"The world is 87 percent non-white," Bakke said. "If you're quoting me about church growth and you're just using white church examples, you've got too narrow of a lens We are turning out designer ministers who can design ministry in their own image and little else. Frankly, we'll never reach the world that way."

He said the key to evangelism in the city is to uncover relationships. "You can't go door-to-door in my neighborhood; you'll get killed," he declared. "If the dog doesn't get you, the gang will. If the gang doesn't, the doors are locked. People live in fear; they do not open their doors to strangers."

"People become committed Christians through relationships," he said, noting that individuals' network of relationships includes the biological world of family, geographical world of neighbor, vocational world of work and recreational world of play.

"When you're doing pastoral visitation in an ethnic neighborhood, it's important that you don't pray with the person and then burn the bridge to the rest of their network. You don't disciple them up and out of their families," Bakke said. "If you turn your members loose in their relationships, they can do evangelism."

Churches also must cross socioeconomic barriers, Bakke insisted.

"Social psychologists remind us that around our churches we put barriers. The pastor is up there preaching, 'Y'all come to Jesus,' but the people are all very well dressed. What you're really communicating is, 'You can come to Jesus if you can afford to dress like us.' . . . A parking lot of very nice cars is screaming at the community, 'You can't come to Jesus unless you can afford to drive a car like ours.'"

"If you are using one service, one kind of worship, one kind of English hymnal, one kind of music, what you're doing is building walls around your church," Bakke warned.

"If you want to reach the community, have ushers who look like the people you're trying to reach -- a wheelchair usher, kids, singles, different age groups and people of different color We're not going to reach the world if we require them to become culturally like us."

Evaluating successful church growth, Bakke noted, "The churches that are growing today seem to be growing in three basic areas: worship, caring and mission."

He added, "Worship is not what pastors do; worship is what the people do. Worship is the recreation of the drama of our salvation. Since when did it become sit and listen? . . . People today are very, very much in need of celebration."

Growth also is evident in "incredible caring in small groups," often focusing on such emphases as Bible study, prayer, personal growth, support and missions, he said.

Bakke, who has lived and ministered in inner-city Chicago since 1965, said he sees "an incredible link between the gospel and social care for people."

He described successful inner-city congregations which have embarked on such projects as establishing separate nonprofit organizations to provide community counseling centers, youth programs and housing units; encouraging church members to take active roles in government; and developing effective interdenominational relationships.

"Most of us have reduced the Bible to a canon within the canon to a few salvation passages," Bakke said. "It's not enough to talk about church growth. We've got to talk about to what end we are planting churches -- to seek transformation to the glory of God in this place. A healthy neighborhood that can produce healthy children is the product of a healthy church.

"The theological issue is: Are you the pastor of a church which happens to be in the community or are you the pastor of a church which is for the community?" He said the second option "changes the church from being a clubhouse to an agency of transformation in the neighborhood."

Affirming the importance of ecumenical interaction, Bakke added, "The kingdom of God is bigger than any one denomination We take a risk in working with others but we've got to do it. Baptists can't do it by themselves. The fact that I know who I am and what I believe leaves room for others.

"I am convinced that 90 percent of all the barriers to effective ministry are inside the church, not in the community. The city is not our problem; it's the 'we never did it that way before' syndrome," Bakke said. On the other hand, "If your church has found a way to embrace people who have fallen through the cracks in society -- the homeless, the helpless, the powerless, the AIDS people -- you're going to grow."

In addition to major presentations by Bakke and by Ebbie Smith, professor of Christian ethics and missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, four Missouri Baptist pastors shared their churches' models for ministry.

The conference was the second in a series of annual urban ministry conferences scheduled throughout the Midwest. Similar conferences also are held in other parts of the nation. The Midwest conferences are jointly sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, the six Southern Baptist seminaries, the Missouri Baptist Convention, Iowa Southern Baptist Fellowship and Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists.

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(BP) photo available upon request from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Lombard, Ill.

Professor shares biblical
models for urban ministry

By Trennis Henderson

Baptist Press
3/19/92

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Seminary professor Ebbie Smith detailed a "biblical basis for ministry" during a "Models for Metropolitan Ministry" conference in St. Louis.

Smith, professor of Christian ethics and missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, based his remarks on six cities described in the Bible. Those cities and their applicable lessons are:

- Sodom: God's judgment on the city -- our warning.
- Babylon: God's rejection of the city -- our terror.
- Nineveh: God's desire for the city -- our mandate.
- Jerusalem: God's love for the city -- our example.

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- Antioch: God's reach toward the city -- our methodology.
- The New Jerusalem: God's ideal for the city -- our goal.

Describing God's love for the city, Smith noted, "God loves every city ... God's love can look beyond the evil and the despicable deeds done in the city and God can reach out. He loves those people. Christ died for them. So must we.

"If we're going to reach the city, we're going to reach it with the same kind of ministry, the same kind of ideal Jesus demonstrated when he left the glory of heaven and came to this earth to be our Savior," Smith said. "The incarnation is the greatest example of love any person could conceive."

Smith challenged pastors to "lead through the spirit of sacrifice, service and servanthood." He added, "Until you come to the place where you're willing to die for that church as Christ died for the church universal, you're not ready to be the biblical pastor and leader of that church. Here is our example. We lead and serve for the sake of those we serve."

Smith said God also demonstrates his love to the city through "the provision of a fellowship of sharing" and "the provision of peace and justice."

"I wonder what the world says about us now? 'Look at how those church members fight each other.' In the New Testament church there was radical sharing.

"I worry about the convention to which I have given the majority of my life," Smith said. "I am certain God wants there to be peace among us ... I'm not sure we're listening to the Holy Spirit of God who would direct us to peace."

He said God also demonstrates his love for the city "through social justice, through fair play."

"Sometimes those of us who are concerned about the salvation needs of the world forget other needs of the world," he said. "Those of us who believe most deeply in the Scriptures ought to be on the forefront of bringing justice to all people ... We need to be about rebuilding our cities by having a new dedication to reaching out to where people are hurting and meet those needs face to face.

Concerning the method of reaching the cities, Smith noted, "Professionalism was not the characteristic of missions in the first century church. We need to recapture the movement of the laity in missions methodology."

In addition to affirming and empowering the laity, he said, "Until we affirm the properness and rightness of bivocational pastors we cannot reach the cities."

Smith pointed out that the apostle Paul "accommodated his message to the exact needs of the people without changing the gospel."

"We need to accommodate the gospel to the lifestyles and interests of every group of people out there in the communities where we are serving," he said. "Let us start churches among every group of people so we can remove sociological barriers so they can hear and respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"Let's allow our Southern Baptist Convention to be as diverse as it needs to be," Smith urged. "As long as we're straight on theology, let's be diverse in methodology."

Noting that the New Jerusalem is "a place of no poverty, no pain, no disillusionment and no distress," Smith said, "God will bring people from the east and west if we are his witnesses ... If we'll follow the biblical theology shown in these cities, we can find ways to reach our cities with the gospel."

Plans underway for
'Mission 95'

NASHVILLE (BP)--Citing the success of "Mission 90", Southern Baptist student ministry leaders are making plans for another national after-Christmas student missions conference in 1994.

An advisory committee of representatives from Southern Baptist agencies, seminaries, state conventions, campus ministries, local churches and Woman's Missionary Union met in Nashville March 16-17 to make preliminary plans for "Mission 95." Such student missions conferences have been held about every five years since 1970.

The advisory committee selected Louisville, Ky., as its first choice for Mission 95 and Dec. 27-30, 1994, as tentative dates for the conference. Thinking ahead, committee members also chose St. Louis as their first choice for Mission 2000. Fort Worth, Texas, was selected as the alternate location for both events.

"We believe this conference offers an excellent opportunity to challenge college students to align their lives with the biblical mandate to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to this nation and world," said Jeff Lewis, student ministry consultant at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and program chairman for Mission 95.

Almost 4,000 students attended Mission 90, but Charles Johnson, director of student ministry at the Sunday School Board, encouraged committee members to "think big" toward attracting 8,000 to 10,000 students to Mission 95.

A steering committee is to be appointed in the next four to six weeks to meet next fall to begin planning details of Mission 95, Lewis said. The conference will be jointly sponsored by the Sunday School Board's student ministry department, Home Mission Board, Foreign Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and WMU.

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General session leaders set
for national growth conference

Baptist Press
3/19/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Getting lay people involved in starting churches and finding alternative ways to interest people in attending church are just two of the topics to be covered by the general session leaders at the Nationwide Church Growth Conference Aug. 31-Sept. 3 in Fort Worth, Texas.

Tillie Burgin, minister of missions at First Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas, will speak on "Mobilizing Laypersons in Church Starting" and George McCalep Jr., pastor of Greenforest Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga., will address "Alternate Entries into the Church."

California pastor Rick Warren will share "The Saddleback Story," a testimony about how the Saddleback Valley Community Church in Mission Viejo, Calif., has grown using a non-traditional approach to ministry.

Beverly Chilton, Bible teacher and conference speaker from Douglasville, Ga., will speak on "Impacting Lives for Christ in the Marketplace." Chilton led hundreds of children and their parents to Christ while teaching sixth- and seventh-grade students in the public school system in Mobile, Ala.

Ken Hemphill, pastor of First Baptist Church of Norfolk, Va., who will become director of church growth for the Home Mission Board and the Sunday School Board, also will speak at the conference.

Dick Baker, minister of music at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas, will lead music during the four-day conference.

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Other general session speakers will include John R. Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church in Houston; Joe De Leon, pastor of First Bilingual Church in Pico Rivera, Calif.; Richard Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix Baptist Church in Phoenix, Ariz.; and Charles Kelley Jr., associate professor evangelism at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

The conference, which will be held at the Tarrant County Convention Center, is designed to provide a comprehensive view of church growth for pastors and church leaders representing all sizes and styles of Southern Baptist congregations.

A \$35 per person registration fee (\$75 per person for non-Southern Baptists) is required for the conference. Registration is free for college and seminary students.

A promotional brochure about the event contained an incorrect telephone number to contact for more information. The correct number is (615) 251-2294.

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Houston pastor
dislikes labels

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
3/19/92

HOUSTON (BP)--Robert Mennefee dislikes labels.

And although the 41-year-old minister acknowledges some blacks still view the Southern Baptist Convention as "racist," he had no reservations about accepting a call earlier this year to serve as pastor of the SBC-affiliated Greenspoint Baptist Church in Houston.

"I know the history of the Southern Baptist Convention," Mennefee said, referring to the 1845 split between Northern and Southern Baptists caused primarily by division over the slavery issue. "But I don't think Southern Baptists are any more racist than any other denomination. And when people use labels like that, they are in danger of becoming just as racist as the people they are labeling."

Mennefee, a native of Fort Worth, Texas, has been involved with three Baptist denominations during his 24 years in the ministry. He served 10 years as associate pastor at Shiloh Baptist Church, affiliated with the National Baptist Convention of America in Fort Worth, and later was pastor of two American Baptist churches in Massachusetts while attending Andover Newton Theological School, an American Baptist seminary in Boston.

Soon after his graduation from seminary, he accepted a post as an educational ministries consultant with American Baptist churches in Philadelphia. And after being pursued twice by Greenspoint, he accepted the pastorate of that Southern Baptist church last December.

In making his decision to take the position at Greenspoint, Mennefee said he focused more on the congregation itself than its denominational affiliation.

"The church's denomination really wasn't an issue to me. I always look at the church first," he explained. "I knew from my meetings with them they are a warm, friendly people with hope and vision for the future. That is exciting to me. That is what's important."

Still, Mennefee acknowledged some notable differences exist between American and Southern Baptists.

"As a whole, I think American Baptists are stronger on theology and are definitely more open to women serving as ministers, pastors and deacons," he said. "American Baptists also have stronger minority representation in their leadership."

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Mennefee said, in his opinion, "Southern Baptists know the Bible better and they do a better job with education and evangelism," adding the SBC appears to be more aggressive in starting black churches. (The director of black church extension for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board has predicted African American churches in the SBC will grow at a pace of one a day by the year 2000.)

Despite differences, Mennefee said Baptists of all persuasions can and should find ways to work together. One of his main duties while working with American Baptists was organizing an annual black church education conference -- a meeting attended by blacks from several Baptist denominations, including the SBC.

These days Mennefee is much more interested in talking about his new church. Started as an Anglo mission in 1979, Greenspoint has changed in recent years along with its surrounding community and is now almost 100 percent black.

"We are trying to aim for 2,000 members by the year 2000," Mennefee said, a feat that would require doubling the church's membership. Still, he remains confident.

"The people here are excited about the future. I don't think we'll be in this building more than a year. We already need more space."

While he believes in responsible citizenship, Mennefee said his number one job is to serve as spiritual leader at Greenspoint, not as a political spokesman.

"I'm here to work with the people to lead others to salvation and to help them grow as Christians, not to lead them to vote for a certain political candidate," he said. "I am here to point them toward the Bible and encourage them to read Scripture for themselves."

Mennefee said he also plans to make religious education a priority at Greenspoint, a church known for its strong Sunday school program.

"A good Bible study program is vital," he said. "People have to know the Bible before they can live out what it teaches."

He also wants to involve as many lay people as possible in the ministry of the church.

"I believe in a congregational style of ministry," he explained. "All of us have gifts and we're all called to be ministers. I think we can find a place for everyone."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press.

CORRECTION: In the (BP) story titled "Presidential ballot, possibly Quayle, highlight Indy SBC," dated 3/13/92, please change the first line of the sixth paragraph to read:

"Presiding at the Indianapolis convention will be Morris Chapman of Wichita Falls, Texas, who will become president-elect of the SBC Executive Committee following the annual meeting."

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Campbell faces challenge
of Duke in NCAA tourney

By Paul B. Johnson

BUIES CREEK, N.C. (BP)--Campbell University, Southern Baptists' third-largest college, will play the role of David tonight when its Fighting Camels meet the top-ranked Duke Blue Devils in the NCAA men's basketball tournament in Greensboro, N.C.

Rated by USA Today as a trillion-to-one chance to win the national championship, the Camels won 12 of their last 14 games and the Big South Conference championship to gain their first-ever berth in the NCAA. Their season record was 19-11.

Founded in 1887 in Buies Creek, N.C., the school's motto is "Ad Astra Per Aspera," "To the Stars Through Difficulties."

One of the largest providers of education for the U.S. military, Campbell has a total enrollment of 5,777, including extension centers at Fort Bragg and Camp LeJeune, N.C., and several other military bases. About 1,000 alumni and students of the university served in Operation Desert Storm last year.

Campbell has graduate schools of law, business, education and pharmacy and international programs in Wales and Malaysia. The university program also includes a church-state department, a large Baptist Student Union and regular chapel services.

Camel coach Billy Lee said, "I know we're in a sword fight with a pocket knife. But one thing you can't measure is heart and this team has it. If we beat Duke, it will be the biggest upset in basketball history."

The Camels joined the NCAA's Division I in 1977. Campbell advanced to the finals of the 1977 NAIA National Tournament in Kansas City, Mo.

This year Campbell went from worst to first in the Big South Conference. Last year the Camels posted a 9-19 mark and finished eighth in the conference but played without forward Mark Mocnik and center Billy Ellison, both of whom were redshirted due to injury. Mocnik scored 15.5 points per game this year while Ellison tallied 13.3 per game.

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Paul Johnson is director of public relations and public information at Campbell.

Also available upon request:

-- Feature by Louis Moore about a home/school being founded for troubled youth near Gatlinburg, Tenn.