



**-- BAPTIST PRESS**  
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**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

April 29, 1992

92-75

'Christmas Baby' article  
ends in emotional reunion

By John Dart

CALIMESA, Calif. (BP)--After 40 years of separation, four Arab-Americans held an emotional reunion here with Kate Ellen Gruver, a Southern Baptist missionary who gave them a chance at life at an orphanage in post-World-War-II Nazareth.

Of the four, however, only Lorice Swanson was not told the reason for the gathering April 26 at the home of Diana and Ron Crouch about 20 miles west of Palm Springs.

Introduced inside the house to the unidentified, 79-year-old "guest of honor," Swanson politely said, "You look familiar."

"This is Aunt Katie," said Diana Crouch, a fellow orphan who located the retired missionary last fall through Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

Swanson uttered a long "Aaahh!"

Putting her hands to her face to cover tears that started flowing, she laid her head on the shoulders of the petite woman in the white, flower-print sweater and dress.

After exchanging rapid updates on each other's lives, Swanson said, "I'm so overwhelmed. I can't believe this!"

Gruver, who now lives in Decatur, Ga., began the orphanage in 1945 with funding from members of WMU. After a dozen years working in Palestine and Israel as a foreign missionary, she left in 1952 and returned to the United States to work with Broadman Press and eventually the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. She had lost contact with nearly all of the 20 children at the home -- even though many of them eventually made their way to North America.

Diana Crouch, whose Arab name was "Hadiya," last year sought information about her early years in Nazareth to share with her own two daughters.

Crouch wrote Eljee Bentley, WMU archivist in Birmingham, Ala., asking for information about the George W. Truett Home in which she was raised. Bentley sent Crouch an article about the home from a 1952 issue of the WMU magazine Royal Service. It told the story of a baby left on the doorstep of the home at Christmas.

Responding last November, Crouch wrote Bentley that she was the "Christmas baby" mentioned in the article.

"My heart was filled with beautiful memories while I read through the pages," Crouch wrote. She said she would like to contact Kate Ellen Gruver and ask "if she remembers Hadiya (me)."

Gruver, at the reunion, recalled she got a phone call from a Diana Crouch but didn't have any idea who she was. When told she was "the Christmas baby," Gruver exclaimed, "I can't believe it!"

"I never could figure how I got my Southern accent," Crouch said, "but as soon as I heard Aunt Katie on the phone, I knew."

--more--

Crouch had maintained contact with other children who left the home and settled in the United States. She was able to join close friend Lorice in the late 1960s at California Baptist College in nearby Riverside where they were roommates.

Also present for the reunion and a bountiful lunch of Middle Eastern dishes was:

-- "Ali," now Sam Elaine, who was the second boy admitted to the home. Brought to America after high school graduation by his father who lived in Brooklyn, Elaine owns a furniture store in Upland, Calif.

-- Aida Paine, a public school teacher in Phoenix, Ariz. Aida came to this country in 1969, working as a nurse's aide in Texas while studying education, then graduating in 1973 and marrying in 1975.

Sitting on a couch with Paine and patting her leg, Gruver said, "You'll never know how I missed you all." Pointing to Paine's jet-black hair, Gruver said, "Your hair was blond when I left."

Gruver said she and fellow missionaries never referred to the boys and girls as orphans or to the home as an orphanage.

"They were my children, and I feel like these are my grandchildren," she said, referring to the daughters of Crouch and Paine who hovered around.

She gave each of her former charges copies of photos she had kept over the years. "I never knew I had a tricycle," said Elaine, looking at photo of a tyke on a tricycle.

Crouch was given a picture of herself taken when she was a month old. "My Nicole as a baby looked just like me," she said.

Of the four, the women are involved in Baptist churches today: Crouch as a member of a Southern Baptist church in nearby Yucaipa; Swanson as the youth minister in an American Baptist Church in Upland, Calif.; and Paine as a mission-minded member of North Phoenix Baptist Church who saves used clothing to give to low-income children who attend a church-run preschool.

"When I speak in churches," Paine emphasized, "I feel privileged I can show people the result of money spent on missions."

The George W. Truett Home, named after the late Southern Baptist preacher, was begun by Gruver and a missionary couple to care for Palestinian children who were either abandoned or had hopeless situations in fragmented families.

They wrote to the Foreign Mission Board for funding but mission money was scarce during the war. Gruver then wrote to Kathleen Mallory, the top national executive of WMU in 1945, asking if WMU could help. Little time elapsed before Gruver received a call from her bank in Nazareth, saying she'd have to come down and endorse a check for \$5,000.

"For what? Where did that come from?" she asked incredulously.

"Anyway, I made tracks down to the bank."

The request apparently came to the attention of the Virginia WMU, which sent the money and then funded the home for the next couple of years before the FMB funded it through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions.

The home eventually closed when the last of the 20 children left as young adults.

At the reunion, the invaluable and soft-spoken source for lost childhood regaled the families formed in America with a detailed story of the Christmas baby of 1948.

"On Dec. 23, Diana was left of the doorstep of the pharmacy for the Scottish Mission Hospital in Nazareth," Gruver said, recalling doctors saying she was only about a day old.

Earlier, at the home, 3-year-old Lorice had dictated a letter for Santa Claus to Aunt Katie, saying she wanted flowers, music and a baby.

"You want a baby doll?" asked Gruver.

"No, a baby sister," answered little Lorice.

On Christmas Day, Dr. Bathgate, a white-haired physician, "put on his Father Christmas outfit and came in carrying a baby girl. He asked, 'Who wants a baby sister?'" Gruver said.

"I do," said Lorice.

Everyone started calling her "Lorice's baby." After a while, Gruver asked Lorice, "What are you going to call your baby?"

Lorice answered, "Hadiya," which Gruver said means "very special gift" in Arabic.

"At prayertime later," Gruver recalled, "Lorice said, 'I thank God for my Hadiya.' She didn't believe Santa gave her the baby sister. She knew it was from God."

--30--

Dart is religion editor for the Los Angeles Times.

Brotherhood trustees approve  
crisis ministry reserve fund

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press  
4/29/92

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission trustees voted unanimously April 24 to approve a capital campaign, with the employment of Resource Development, Inc. of Springfield, Mo., to assist in planning and conducting it.

"The reserves we hope to establish through this campaign, which we will call a Program Reserve Fund, will support and enhance the mission of the Brotherhood Commission and our state Brotherhood departments," said James D. Williams, Brotherhood Commission president.

Investment earnings from the reserve fund are expected to help the agency increase its ability to support the meeting of "crisis/emergency ministry needs" at home and overseas. Earnings also will be used to meet immediate, critical missions education needs at the Brotherhood Commission and in state convention Brotherhood departments related to program personnel, promotion, technology and development.

A reserve fund investment committee of trustees will be created to develop and maintain policies for managing the fund.

"I know this effort would appear to be a daring and bold move for the Brotherhood Commission but we believe strongly it is of God," Williams said of the first-ever campaign. "And I want our partners in the Southern Baptist missions enterprise to know we will design it so as not to interfere or compete for support with any of our missions offerings or with the work of our state conventions."

The trustees affirmed Williams' commitment to the agency's SBC partnership by approving a policy statement addressing these concerns and directing the design and implementation of the campaign.

--more--

Williams added ministry in foreign or domestic emergencies made possible by the reserve fund would not be done apart from the Brotherhood's "ongoing relationship" with the Home Mission Board, Foreign Mission Board and Woman's Missionary Union.

Trustees also heard reports from participants in the agency's current emergency relief effort, Project Brotherhood, including remarks from Mark Lassiter of Germantown, Tenn. Lassiter arrived home from Russia April 24 after two weeks in Moscow working with four other Southern Baptist volunteers in food distribution.

"You can't meet a person's spiritual needs without helping to meet their physical needs and that's what Project Brotherhood is all about," said Lassiter, who recalled his witnessing efforts often were hampered by the effects of widespread economic hardship.

Lassiter said Southern Baptists should support food assistance to give Russian Christians a better basis for evangelism among fellow citizens.

Project Brotherhood got another boost during the meeting when food boxes provided by churches in the Shelby Baptist Association were loaded by trustees onto a 50-foot trailer while local television news cameras rolled. The 36-pound boxes provide a month's worth of staple items for an average Russian family and are symbolic of Project Brotherhood's next phase, which will emphasize food boxes provided by local churches and individuals.

Trustees also authorized Williams to appoint a military task force, including Home Mission Board and Woman's Missionary Union representatives, to study the current status of ministry to and mission with military personnel in the Southern Baptist Convention. The action delayed the launch of Full Armor magazine until a recommendation is brought back to trustees in April 1993.

"We hope the development of enlarged mission action opportunities for the military through the churches will require the publication of Full Armor and other programs and services to meet this need," Williams said.

In other action, trustees:

-- adopted a 1992-93 budget of \$4.2 million, representing a 4 percent increase over 1991-92.

-- received a draft report of the agency's 1992-95 corporate priority plan, a set of broadly-stated priorities to guide the development of all other plans when it is completed in October.

-- received an initial report from a committee of staff and state Brotherhood leaders examining what modifications, if any, are needed for Pioneers and High School Baptist Young Men, the agency's missions program for young men in grades 7-12.

-- approved a resolution in recognition of Keith and Helen Jean Parks' leadership with the Foreign Mission Board.

-- honored retiring trustees Walter Barnes of Alabama, John Baxley of Florida, C.L. Bowe of New Mexico, Ellis Norris of the District of Columbia, Wendell Reed of Virginia, Don Varnado of Louisiana and Spurgeon Willett of Michigan.

The next meeting of Brotherhood Commission trustees is scheduled Oct. 23-24, 1992, in Memphis.

Ruschlikon president resigns  
as Southern Baptist missionary

By Robert O'Brien

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--John David Hopper has resigned as a Southern Baptist foreign missionary but will remain as president of the controversial Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

Hopper and his wife, Jo Ann, will end their active service April 30, according to an announcement by Winston Crawley, the board's interim vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Crawley said the Hoppers, 27-year veterans of missions, will be paid through May 31, when their terminal leave ends.

The seminary, founded by Southern Baptists in 1949 and now owned by European Baptists, has been the center of controversy in Europe and the United States since Foreign Mission Board trustees voted to defund it last year.

FMB trustees initiated the defunding action after they learned Glenn Hinson, a professor at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., was teaching there on a four-month sabbatical. Many trustees had long regarded both Hinson and the seminary as "liberal," a charge Hinson and the school dispute.

Crawley's April 28 announcement preceded a press conference the Ruschlikon seminary had scheduled April 30 at the Tarrant County Convention Center in Fort Worth to report on decisions by the seminary's trustees and Hopper's future intentions.

Hopper said in a telephone interview from Fort Worth seminary trustees, meeting the previous week in Switzerland, "voted officially for me to continue as president and affirmed I should continue to meet my obligation to raise funds for the seminary."

Hopper had been told earlier by FMB officials that, to remain a missionary, he must cease fund-raising activities in the United States for the seminary. Board policy prohibits direct fund-raising by missionaries outside normal channels of the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

"The board defunded us and we had no access to the Cooperative Program or Lottie Moon, so we have no other alternative but to raise funds," Hopper told Baptist Press. "To be honest in my relationships, I had to do the right thing -- continue to raise funds and simultaneously resign as a missionary so as not to violate policy."

"I could walk away from the seminary but that's where my call from God is," Hopper said. "The seminary board affirmed my decision to resign rather than break Foreign Mission Board policy. I understand the policy and why it's there."

In their April 25 joint letter of resignation, the Hoppers also noted they decided to resign as missionaries because they cannot support the FMB trustees' "new direction" toward a "creedal agenda and a reversal of the honored and effective missions principles of partnership and cooperation under which we have worked in Europe."

Trustees deny any agenda but missions and evangelism. Trustee chairman John Jackson of California told Baptist Press the Hoppers have "misconstrued some actions of the board and imply that they reveal a creedal approach to missions, which I disagree with."

"The trustees, to my knowledge, privately or publicly, have never set forth an agenda to make other Baptist bodies conform to a standard of theology in order for us to cooperate in missions," Jackson said.

Jackson said he, Crawley and FMB Executive Vice President Don Kammerdiener will travel to Europe in mid-May to meet with missionaries and European Baptist leaders "to let them know that things are going OK, and that just because people are resigning doesn't mean everything is falling apart."

He said he wants "to give them reassurance and reaffirmation and let them know we are moving forward in finding a new vice president and area director for Europe" to fill vacancies left by Isam Ballenger and Keith Parker, respectively. Ballenger and Parker announced early retirement in January, also charging the trustees have "a global agenda" to enforce theological orthodoxy around the world.

Hopper indicated that he may get an offer to affiliate with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization of moderate Southern Baptist churches opposed to current Southern Baptist Convention leadership. The fellowship was to hold its annual meeting in Fort Worth April 30-May 2.

"The CBF said it would cover the salaries of missionaries who could no longer in good conscience stay affiliated with the Foreign Mission Board," Hopper said. "The CBF's understanding of partnership and mission strategy coincides with what I believe is the historic Baptist position. I think the CBF will make me an offer."

The fellowship has announced plans to support at least 11 missionary couples in Europe next year, according to news reports.

Hopper, a native of New Orleans, La., is a graduate of Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, La. He earned the bachelor of divinity degree from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., and the master of theology and doctor of philosophy degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

Before appointment as a missionary, he was pastor of Westridge Baptist Church in Euless, Texas, and Signal Hill Baptist Church in Long Beach, Calif.

Hopper began and ended his career as a missionary of the Foreign Mission Board in Switzerland. After appointment in 1965, he taught at the Ruschlikon seminary and did communications work until 1970. He was installed as the eighth president of the seminary in January 1988.

In between those assignments he was stationed in Salzburg, Austria, 1971-76, where he worked in theological education and church development and served as a fraternal representative to Yugoslavia. Then he was stationed in Vienna, Austria, as fraternal representative to Baptists in Eastern Europe, 1976-87, providing communication links between Southern Baptists and Baptists in those countries.

Mrs. Hopper, the former Jo Ann Wells of Tulsa, Okla., and Downey, Calif., is a graduate of California Baptist College in Riverside and earned the master of religious education degree from Golden Gate Seminary. During her missionary career, she has done church and home work and taught at and worked in the administration of the Ruschlikon Seminary.

Crawley said the Hoppers have served as effective missionaries and will be missed. "They are admired and loved by European Baptists and have rendered valuable service," he said. He said he preferred not to comment on their reasons for resigning and would discuss that with them personally. "They have resigned and given their reasons," Crawley said. "Their decision was not unexpected. They have been wrestling with the question of fund-raising and their relationship to the Foreign Mission Board."

--30--

FMB subcommittee recommends  
maintaining news practices

By Robert H. Dilday

Baptist Press  
4/29/92

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A subcommittee examining the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's news philosophy has opted to recommend no changes in current practices.

However, the panel acknowledged that a successor to President R. Keith Parks, who will retire in October, "will want to interact with trustees and staff in shaping his news philosophy," leaving the door open for possible future changes in policy or reinterpretations of current guidelines.

--more--

The FMB's longstanding news philosophy, as outlined by Parks, is a commitment to "openness, integrity, responsibility and professionalism."

The seven-member subcommittee, which met April 27-28 in Richmond, is composed of FMB trustees and staff. It was appointed by communications committee chairman John P. Greene during the board's April meeting in Clemson, S.C., to study concerns by some trustees at how board staff have handled recent controversial events.

Although trustee scrutiny of FMB press operations is not new, it has increased following the board's elimination last October of budgeted funds for the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, which angered many Southern Baptists.

Some trustees have maintained negative reaction could have been avoided if press reports had included additional information about the Swiss school and its past relationship to the FMB.

In particular, trustees have expressed dissatisfaction with a Jan. 7 news conference held in the board's chapel to announce the resignations of two senior staff members.

In the conference, Isam Ballenger, vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and Keith Parker, area director for Europe, charged the Ruschlikon affair indicated a change in mission strategy for the board and accused trustees of pursuing a "fundamentalist" agenda overseas.

Board members later said they were displeased the conference was held in the FMB headquarters building and no trustee was invited to respond to charges.

Following its meeting, the subcommittee studying the issues released a two-paragraph statement:

"The subcommittee on communication of news releases and press conferences has reviewed the overall news philosophy and administrative guidelines presently employed by the FMB. We will be reporting to the communications committee that we find no problems with present news philosophy and guidelines. However, we did acknowledge to Dr. Parks and staff that were present concerns with how the January press conference was handled.

"The FMB is in a period of transition. We recognize that the new president will want to interact with trustees and staff in shaping his news philosophy. Therefore, we recommend that no further action be taken at this time."

Although the subcommittee's first day's proceedings were closed to the public, representatives of Baptist Press and a local newspaper were permitted to attend the second day.

In addition, Herb Hollinger, Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee vice president for Baptist Press, met with the panel on the second day. The FMB's news and information office also functions as the Richmond bureau of BP.

"We had a good time of dialogue with staff and with Dr. Parks," subcommittee chairman Terry L. Williams said of the closed session. "We discussed the (news) philosophy we have here on the board and had a healthy time of dialogue."

Williams, pastor of First Baptist Church in Batesville, Miss., said the statement will be shared with trustees at their June 22-24 meeting in El Paso, Texas.

In addition to Williams and Greene, a businessman from West Palm Beach, Fla., other subcommittee members are trustees Michael D. Smith, an Asheville, N.C., contractor, and William H. Pace Jr., a minister from Largo, Fla.; Alan Compton, vice president for communications; Irma Duke, associate vice president for communications support; and Robert L. Stanley, director of the news and information office and chief of BP's Richmond bureau.

Mission group's tactics  
questioned by SBC leaders

By Chip Alford

NASHVILLE (BP)--Questions are being raised about the enlistment and fund-raising tactics of a North Carolina-based ministry currently recruiting Southern Baptist college students for a summer missions program in Spain.

Encounter with Christ, a self-described nonprofit religious and educational organization based in Cary, N.C., has been on Baptist college campuses in Kentucky, Tennessee, Florida, North and South Carolina and Indiana recruiting students for a "Summer Mission Outreach" during the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona.

A promotional flyer published by the organization said the five-week outreach July 6-Aug. 11 will involve the students in sharing their faith, assisting in a sports ministry with Spanish children and teaching Spanish church members how to witness and disciple new Christians. The flyer also said students will attend training seminars on witnessing, Scripture memorization and other topics.

The promotional piece, however, contains some false information, according to Barry Sneed, a youth specialist in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship training department.

Sneed's picture and title is printed on the flyer and he is listed as a professor and speaker for the summer event. Sneed, however, said he has no plans to attend or participate and never gave his permission for Encounter with Christ to use his picture for promotional purposes.

"They called me three or four months ago and asked if I would be interested in participating in the program," Sneed said. "I told them it might be something I would be interested in but that I would like to know more about what it was and who they were."

Sneed said he soon received a packet of information from Encounter with Christ, adding the materials he read on the group indicated their doctrinal beliefs were sound. He never heard from the group again, though, until he learned last week his picture had been used on their promotional flyer.

Sneed said a representative from Encounter with Christ called the office while he was out of town on a field service assignment and asked his secretary to send a photograph of Sneed because he had agreed to be involved in their summer outreach program.

"My secretary just figured it was a regular field service assignment so she sent them the photo, but I never gave them permission to use it and I never agreed to be involved in the program," Sneed explained.

Carolyn Ortega, co-founder and trustee of Encounter with Christ, said the use of Sneed's name was "a misunderstanding." She said her secretary thought Sneed had agreed to speak at the summer outreach but that Sneed apparently did not receive a letter that would have confirmed the agreement.

In addition to Sneed, Encounter with Christ also was using the name of Brad Gray, a consultant in the Sunday School Board's student ministry department, in their recruiting efforts. But Gray said he also never gave his endorsement to the project.

To clear up any confusion about alleged Sunday School Board-sponsorship of the project, student ministry department director Charles Johnson sent a letter to all state directors of student ministries April 22. In the letter, Johnson urged state directors to notify all BSU directors that Encounter with Christ's summer program "is not a program of the student ministry department summer missions program."

The letter also stated that any reference Encounter with Christ representatives make to Gray or Sneed "does not in any way signify an endorsement."

--more--

Encounter with Christ has run into problems before by claiming Southern Baptist ties without permission. Two years ago the organization was working in Ocean City, Md., and a local pastor said representatives from the ministry were using his church's name in their fund-raising without his permission.

"I liked the people OK but I was not very pleased with their fund-raising," said Terry Davis, pastor of Ocean City Baptist Church. "They were sending kids out on the boardwalk and asking for money. When people would ask what church they were with, they would tell them they were with us. I had that stopped right away."

Questions also have surfaced over Encounter with Christ's fund-raising techniques for their 1992 Summer Outreach.

According to Ortega, Encounter is asking students who agree to go on the mission trip to Spain to secure 30 sponsors, each of whom would give an initial donation of \$135. All of those funds would be used to pay the students' trip expenses, she said.

The sponsors also are asked to give an additional \$300 during the next year (\$25 a month). Of the \$750, 20 percent is to go to Encounter with Christ for "administrative costs and business expenses," Ortega said, with the remaining funds being distributed to students on a monthly basis.

Ortega said \$600 given to students each month would allow them to forego a part-time job and devote more time to Bible study, discipleship and witnessing. That would be accomplished, she said, through the ministry's "100-2-5-2" program for memorizing 100 Bible verses, studying definitions of two words from each of the 100 verses, completing five word studies on "five critical words for the understanding of salvation" and reaching two others for Christ and discipling them during the year. The students also are encouraged to introduce the two students to the Encounter with Christ program.

Monica Inman, a freshman at Cumberland College in Kentucky, said she decided to participate in Encounter's summer outreach after talking with a representative on her campus earlier this month. However, she changed her mind after becoming disillusioned with the group's fund-raising techniques.

"The organizational meeting I went to lasted four hours and the whole thing was about fund-raising," Inman said. "They wanted us to come up with 30 sponsors and after the meeting was over Mrs. Ortega pushed for us to go to the Holiday Inn to start calling" potential sponsors.

Inman said she made the decision to back out of involvement with the ministry after receiving a call after midnight from Mrs. Ortega who wanted to know how she was progressing on her fund-raising.

Ortega said she placed the late call "because most students don't get in until then. That is when their curfew is and you can't reach them until then."

Wyndee Holbrook, campus minister at Cumberland College, said she regrets Encounter with Christ representatives were ever let on campus.

"I'm advising my students to be wary of them," she said. "I've had some students say they have been very pushy in their tactics."

Still, Ortega insists the problems have all been the result of misunderstanding and sometimes poor administration. "We've made about 20 mistakes we wouldn't make again," she said, adding she has assured Sneed and Gray their names will no longer be used in recruiting efforts.

Encounter with Christ described  
as religious, educational group

NASHVILLE (BP)--What is Encounter with Christ?

Promotional materials for Encounter with Christ describe the group as "a nonprofit, religious and educational organization" formed for the sole purpose of carrying out the Great Commission. It is not affiliated with any denomination.

A video detailing the group's ministry said the organization was founded in 1970 by Reuben and Carolyn Ortega who were then college students on the campus of the University of California-Berkley. The organization claims to have conducted mission projects in China, India, Korea, Hong Kong and other foreign countries.

Based in Cary, N.C., near Raleigh, the ministry has no national office building; instead the nine-member staff operates out of their homes, according to Carolyn Ortega, co-founder and trustee.

The ministry is in the process of registering as a nonprofit corporation with the North Carolina Secretary of State's office, a spokeswoman from the office said. The group also was granted tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service in 1972.

Despite some concerns recently raised about Encounter with Christ's fund-raising and enlistment procedures, some Christian leaders say they have had good experiences with the group.

Wally Buckner, assistant to the executive vice president of the Home Mission Board, said Encounter with Christ officials helped him get into China during a mission trip to Southeast Asia in 1985. "Their knowledge was invaluable," he said.

In addition, Paul Feinberg, a professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill., and one of the speaker's at this summer's Barcelona outreach, described the group as "a legitimate organization." However, he also said he had understood the group has had "some problem with finances because they try large projects and they are a small organization."

--30--

Barren church in cornfield  
becomes thriving congregation

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press  
4/29/92

COLUMBUS, Ohio (BP)--When John Hays graduated from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., his classmates were called to be pastors of churches with furnaces and padded pews.

He was called to a church with no running water and a two-seat outhouse.

In 1981 Hays and his wife drove from the seminary to visit Jersey Baptist Church, 10 miles outside the interstate that circles Columbus.

"As we drove, the road kept getting smaller and smaller. When we thought the road was going to disappear, we were in Jersey," Hays recalled. "It was a four-way stop sign with a little grocery store. The church was a 100-year-old building that used to be a Grange Hall. It looked like an inner-city mission."

"I told my wife this is a church of convenience -- started by families who didn't want to drive (to Columbus for church). There's no way a church could grow here."

When Hays was convinced God was not calling him to Jersey, he found a shoe box with names of 100 prospects for the church. He began to believe maybe God could grow a church in the middle of the cornfield.

--more--

Eleven years later, the church is still in the midst of a rural community. But it now has a furnace and running water in facilities built with volunteer labor and loans from the Home Mission Board church loan division. Average worship service attendance is 500 and it is sponsoring another church.

One key to the church's growth is committed lay leaders, Hays said. Another key is a loving fellowship.

"Once you get people here, it is the bonding that keeps them. Church needs to be a place where people make friends and do something for the kingdom's sake."

The church has streamlined its organization through Sunday school, Hays said. When a person joins the church, he is automatically enrolled in Sunday school where benevolence and outreach ministries as well as Bible study take place.

The prospect file and outreach program are the church's lifeblood, Hays said.

Jersey Baptist Church uses "same-day visitation." Names of people who visit on Sunday morning are given to church members immediately after the worship service. Church members visit the visitors after lunch.

Monday a letter is mailed to all the visitors, Hays said. Each guest is visited by Hays or another staff member the week following his initial visit. Hays also expects Sunday school teachers to visit people who come to their class.

In addition, Jersey Baptist Church has implemented strategies to reach people who do not come to their church. The church works through the school system to provide shoes for needy children. Once a year church volunteers offer a free oil and filter change to people who cannot afford basic car repairs. In the summer, the church coordinates a baseball clinic for area youth.

Hays said being pastor of the congregation has helped him recognize his strengths and weaknesses. For example, he said, "I am not a quitter." Perhaps that attribute made him stay at the church despite the first winter when he wore gloves when he preached because it was so cold in the building.

Yet Hays takes no credit for the church's growth.

"The bottom line is God has just chosen to bless Jersey. If God removes his anointing, we'll fall flat on our face."

--30--

Baptist Press is available on

**CompuServe**

For more information contact David Haywood  
at CompuServe ID 70007,5000 or phone 615-251-2895