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Young, CLC agree to form  
multiethnic advisory group

By Louis Moore

HOUSTON (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention President H. Edwin Young of Houston has agreed to work with the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission to establish a denomination-wide multiethnic advisory committee to address ethnic diversity in the denomination.

One of the goals of the task force would be to develop a plan to increase multiethnic representation on the boards and professional staffs of Southern Baptist agencies and institutions.

The idea of the task force grew out of a race relations consultation sponsored by the Christian Life Commission in the spring of 1991.

"Through evangelism and commitment to scriptural principles, Southern Baptists have become the most racially diverse denomination in America today," Young said. "We are grateful to God he has allowed us to minister to such a wide variety of people.

"Now, we need to identify ways to include our people of all colors in positions of leadership throughout the denomination. I look forward to working with the Christian Life Commission staff in assembling this advisory committee and then working in this important area."

In a June 15 letter to Young, Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission Executive Director Richard Land had encouraged Young to establish the multiethnic advisory committee.

The letter applauds E. W. McCall's resolution, adopted at the 1992 SBC in Indianapolis, on evangelizing America's urban centers. McCall is pastor of St. Stephen Baptist Church in La Puente, Calif., and serves as a leader in the newly formed Southern Baptist African-American fellowship.

Land pointed out in the letter that the Christian Life Commission also proposed a resolution on racism, approved by McCall and others, but the SBC resolutions committee chose not to use it. Al Mohler, chairman of the resolutions committee, said after more than two hours of deliberation, the committee determined the strong resolution adopted by the convention in 1989 could not be improved upon.

"Our letter calls for an initiative that has not been part of any of the previous resolutions," Land said. "We held a consultation on racism in Nashville in 1991. The idea for a multiethnic advisory committee emerged from that meeting."

The recommendation from the consultation calls for an advisory committee to help achieve the goal of having "significant (more than token) multiethnic representation on the boards and professional staffs of our Southern Baptist agencies and institutions" by the year 2000.

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"We have at least a two-fold task as Southern Baptists," Land said. "We must continue to chip away at the wall of racism and bigotry. At the same time we must also learn to celebrate our ethnic diversity. Racial and ethnic diversity is one of the hallmarks of American culture, and more importantly, it is one of the signatures of our creator. We are his workmanship and he has made each of us unique and special.

"We recognize Dr. Young to be a man of vision and concern for these two goals and we have prayed that under his fine leadership a multiethnic advisory committee could become a reality," Land said.

Land serves on the committee on racism for the Baptist World Alliance and met with BWA members in Jamaica recently. Race relations is one of the areas of concern assigned by the convention to the Christian Life Commission.

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Lost masses given names,  
faces during mission week

By Marty Croll

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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Missionaries gave names and faces to the 3.5 billion people... of the world cut off from God during Southern Baptists' fourth annual "Jericho" missions festival at Ridgecrest, N.C., July 11-17.

Chided for ranking self-concern above outreach to the masses -- including next-door neighbors -- festival participants were given several opportunities to make amends by promising to do something to make a difference.

As one service ended, for instance, scores of people wrote down something they would sacrifice so others might experience the abundance of life in Jesus Christ. After walking the aisle during evening services, 110 participants pledged support to missions. Another 123 adults and 22 youths indicated interest in becoming part of home and foreign mission work.

Mike and Kathy Weaver of Gainesville, Fla., made public their decision to pursue foreign mission service after questioning for some time whether it was God's plan for their lives. She had sensed God calling her to missions at a GA camp when she was 12 years old but later passed it off as infatuation with the missionary doctor who spoke.

Shelby and Debby Smith also came to Jericho wondering if they should become foreign missionaries. They left knowing they're already doing just what God wants them to do.

Smith grew up in Ecuador and Antigua, the son of missionaries. He met his wife-to-be at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala. She works as a full-time nurse in Nashville and mother to their three daughters. He is a home missions volunteer outside the city, helping pastors establish evangelism training programs in their churches.

Sponsored by Southern Baptists' five mission-related agencies, "Jericho: A Southern Baptist Missions Festival" drew about 1,300 participants July 11-17. They plunged into the complex world of near-21st century missions as it was described by about 70 home and foreign missionaries.

"God still calls some of us to keep going 'out yonder' where the gospel has not yet been heard," Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks told the group. "God never places people because of convenience or comfort. God always calls us to where the need is."

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Don't think people are lost because God has forgotten them, Parks said. Rather, God has done all he knows to communicate his love to them but many people he has chosen as mouthpieces have failed to heed his call.

Mission leaders characterized 'out yonder' as not only beyond geographic limitations but also beyond the limitations of traditional -- or even "reasonable" -- methods of spreading the Good News.

The increasing lostness of America and the collapse of many governments overseas mean tried-and-true ways of starting churches are no longer enough. Speed, effectiveness and impact are necessary as never before, speakers pointed out.

Missionary Rick Dill told how he met with a group of Christian believers in a small city on the border between Poland and former East Germany. The Berlin Wall had fallen and Christians were asking for help. The town of 50,000 "is just one of thousands of cities in Germany where the gospel is not preached," he said.

But this particular city was founded as a model of communism. A communist leader once said people there were "freed from the burden of idle talk about God. Church bells will never ring out in this city."

Christian believers there have been waiting for help, holding onto an obscure Bible verse, Zechariah 6:15: "And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord, and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you."

Said Dill: "No one can come unless some of you are willing to go."

Dill will move with his wife and two children from the relative prosperity of former West Germany, where he has lived the past 10 years, into Weimar, another East German town, when they return there later this summer.

"When the wall fell, we were confronted with the possibility we could go to East Germany if we chose to do so," he said. The Dills' decision: go.

A Baptist woman in Weimar told Dill believers had suffered much persecution over the years and grown old. "We've buried every member of the church that was here," she said. "But you can't bury the church."

A group of theater students known as "The Company" used drama, music and dance at Jericho to underscore the value of prayer, the enormity of human need and the necessity of reaching beyond barriers of any kind.

"The Company" is led by Dennis Parrish, a Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary professor who selects its members from his most promising single students. The group tours with Parrish during summers.

Many people at Jericho helped build church furniture for Spanish-speaking Canaan Baptist Church in Queens, a borough of New York City. Its Colombian-born pastor, home missionary Ernesto Chapparo, started the church with one family in 1976. Since then it has grown to include about 150 members from 20 nations throughout Latin America.

Canaan has started Philippine, Haitian and Brazilian missions and has sent many of its key families to start churches in other parts of Queens and Brooklyn. Chapparo even hopes to start a mission service for English-speaking Americans in the neighborhood.

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Drug dealers pay a high price to organized crime figures for the privilege of operating just outside Canaan's doors and on nearby street corners, he said. Three of his members are former dealers who learned about Jesus through church members. Another member grew up in Colombia and has lost 20 of her family members -- including her mother -- to murder because of the family's connection to the drug trade.

About 350 people participated in the Jericho youth program, up from about 200 last year. Home missionary Laura Lea Barksdale, a youth leader, saw many youths decide to pursue Christian service in creative, non-traditional ways, she said. For instance, two young men told her they felt God wanted to use them in performance, one as a trumpeter and the other in comedy.

One youth told others in his late-night devotional group: "If I don't do it 100 percent for God, I shouldn't do it at all."

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Boyhood friend's witness  
yields baptism in handcuffs

By Stephanie Heading

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FLOYDS KNOB, Ind. (BP)--The life-changing power of Jesus, the undying love of a friend and the aid of the justice system all led to an unusual baptism service at First Southern Baptist Church of Floyds Knob, Ind.

Pastor David Wood baptized a handcuffed prisoner as church members and the prisoner's family and friends looked on.

However, the story of the prisoner, Jeff Campbell, began long before the baptism service. It began in the heart of Kevin Manring. Manring and many of his family became Christians and were baptized at at the Floyds Knob church. Following his conversion, Manring sensed a burden for Campbell, his boyhood friend. But Campbell was hostile toward anything to do with God.

"He threatened to pull a knife on me if I ever came over to visit," Wood said.

Things began to change last winter when Campbell was arrested during a drug bust. "Once he was in jail, he was willing to see me," Wood recounted. "I spent about an hour and a half with him and he accepted the Lord."

Campbell wanted to be baptized, so within the two weeks following his conversion experience, Wood made special arrangements with the court for Campbell to be baptized at his church.

Church member Ron Schultz was a retired Louisville, Ky., policeman, so a local judge made Schultz a special deputy. Schultz picked Campbell up at the jail, supervised him during the service and returned him to jail. One of the stipulations for Campbell's release was that he remain in handcuffs throughout the service.

Following his baptism, Campbell began writing to church members and working through the Survival Kit for New Christians. "I don't think Jeff had ever experienced as much love and acceptance as he felt at our church," Wood said.

Arrangements were made for Manring to visit Campbell in jail and encourage him as he studied the Survival Kit. Wood also visited Campbell weekly to check on his progress.

About two weeks after Campbell completed the Survival Kit, he was released from jail following a bond reduction.

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However, soon after his release, it was learned that the primary informant against Campbell was wanted on drug charges in another state. As a result, all charges against Campbell were dropped.

In addition to Campbell finding Christ during his run-in with the law, his wife also prayed to receive Christ. Wood says the Campbells are both now active at the church and working to build a new life in Christ.

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Heading writes for the Indiana Baptist, newsjournal of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana.

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