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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 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 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

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Vietnamese church sees growth
via focus on spiritual awakening By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
3/30/93

HOUSTON (BP)--Four years ago, members of Houston's Vietnamese Baptist Church took a long, hard look at themselves.

"We knew where we ought to be, but we were very far from that," recalls pastor Huynh Quoc Khanh. "I was frustrated because I preached and not many responded."

Out of that frustration, the church began holding Tuesday night meetings with prayer for spiritual awakening as the only agenda. Khanh credits God's answers to those prayers with the church's growth from 45 to 183 members.

Also in the last two years, the church purchased a building it shares with a black congregation and set a goal of starting an Hispanic mission.

Evangelism among Vietnamese is most effective through relationships, Khanh says. Eighty percent of Vietnamese adhere to Buddhism, which stresses the value of ancestors and families.

"Our people will not listen to a stranger tell them their ancestors were all wrong," Khanh says. "You have to build friendship and trust."

Khanh made his profession of faith while escaping Vietnam.

"When I reached 18 my family sent me away to save my life," Khanh says. At that time, 18-year-old Vietnamese men were assigned to the war in Cambodia. Many of them did not live through the experience, Khanh says.

When Khanh escaped Vietnam, six people on his boat died from lack of fresh drinking water. Facing death made Khanh recall the Christian teachings of his parents. He remembered John 3:16, which he memorized in Vacation Bible School, and made his profession of faith.

Vietnamese with similar backgrounds find a place where they are understood and accepted at the church, which Khanh started in 1983. People drive from all over Houston to attend the Vietnamese church, Khanh says.

Sunday afternoons include a fellowship meal, English classes and Brotherhood and Woman's Missionary Union meetings. It's not unusual for Khanh to be at church from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. each Sunday.

Church members meet on Fridays for choir practice and Bible study and Saturdays for prayer meetings. Their prayer requests on Saturday range from health concerns to family issues. But their Tuesday night prayer focus remains spiritual awakening.

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

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Friday nights for these coeds
are devoted to city's homeless By Elaine Herrin Onley

ATLANTA (BP)--Each Friday night, two college freshman drive 80 miles to Atlanta.

After driving from the north Georgia mountain town of Cleveland, where they attend Truett-McConnell College, to a downtown Atlanta parking lot, Sharon Griffin and Marsha Lewis join 30-40 other volunteers, including students from other colleges.

Once assembled, the group prepares for the night's ministry from 8 to 11 p.m.

An outdoor soup kitchen is set up where they serve food donated by local restaurants and stores, churches and individuals. Typically they serve hot dogs, donuts and hot chocolate in the winter. Cold drinks are served in the summer.

"There is also clothing distribution with goods provided by local stores -- discontinued lines and items that do not sell," Griffin explains.

While Griffin stays with the feeding and clothing program, Lewis, who has been with the ministry longer, joins with those who go in groups of four to six and "hit the streets." They distribute tracts, share their Christian faith and tell hungry, homeless people along the way that "hot food and warm clothes" await them at the corner of Spring and Luckie streets.

Why would two Baptist college students, who could be doing something else with their time, commit their Friday nights to the street ministry among a sprawling city's homeless? "Why?" Griffin ponders only a moment. "Because I feel a real need to get in this world and do something. I went the first time because I had a curious need to check this out. One visit and I realized that I took so much for granted -- my home, a warm bed to sleep in I'll never take my warm bed for granted again."

Lewis's experience has been similar, but for other reasons. Born to a single parent and given to her grandmother to be raised, growing up in a dysfunctional situation with great personal need herself, she lived from one "pity party" to the next. "I always felt sorry for myself. I thought I didn't have much. Then one night in ministry among the homeless really opened my eyes! I realized the desperation of those people." Lewis adds boldly, "Now I'm not allowed to feel sorry for myself. I know how much I do have."

Griffin's involvement in the outreach was kindled in her Baptist Student Union, when she heard some students talk about programs for helping the homeless.

"Something inside me made me follow up on this afterward. I began to ask questions and learned that there was a program Friday nights in the Techwood area in Atlanta where I could help."

The Stockbridge, Ga., student said she immediately felt drawn to the ministry, but "I knew that I needed a strong person to go with me." She learned that another freshman, Lewis of Breman, Ga., was already actively involved, "so she was my 'strong person' who could help me get started."

Exchanging the 300-acre mountainside campus in the Blue Ridge mountains for several night hours on the streets of Atlanta already has had a profound influence on the two coeds.

Lewis, a theatre major who wants to work in the field of special education, has learned "I have a heart for the homeless. I learned homeless children cannot go to school because they don't have a permanent address." Becoming a Christian at age 9 charted the course for her life and she says she would have been "on the streets, barefoot, pregnant and on drugs -- in that order -- had not the spirit of Christ been in my life to turn me in the right direction. That's the only way I can explain why I made the choices I did."

The girls have seen firsthand the plight of the homeless: hunger, lostness, confusion, pain, AIDS, addiction and extreme loneliness.

Griffin explains, "... you never get over it once you actually are in the midst of it. For me, I feel good about myself, knowing I have at least done something." A pre-law student who plans to go into some area of criminal justice, she offers encouragement to anyone who may want to join them on Friday nights. "You may not be able to help everybody, but for certain you can help somebody."

**Black Southern Baptist leader
calls for missions partnership** By Sarah Zimmerman

FRESNO, Calif. (BP)--When Annie Armstrong wrote letters to motivate Southern Baptists to be involved in home missions, she identified three people groups for ministry: migrants, American Indians and blacks.

Seventy years later, Tom Kelly says it's time to think of blacks as mission partners rather than mission targets.

"I refuse to let our black churches be second class," says the director of black church extension for the California Southern Baptist Convention.

California is the only state convention with staff member whose full-time responsibility is black church extension; most states add leadership of black church extension to other assignments.

Kelly's leadership and the state's commitment to black churches make California a pacesetter in black church growth, says Willie McPherson, Home Mission Board director of black church extension.

Of the Southern Baptist Convention's 38,458 churches, 1,352 -- 3.5 percent -- are predominantly black congregations. In California, 260 -- 17 percent -- of the Southern Baptist churches are black congregations. Of California's top 25 churches in baptisms last year, 15 were black congregations.

When Kelly began working with the state convention in 1984, California had 100 black Southern Baptist churches, and he was the only staff person assigned to black church extension.

The home missionary has since developed a network of regional consultants and contract workers who serve as specialists in subjects ranging from Sunday school to Woman's Missionary Union. "They're the key to our success," he says.

Many of California's new black Southern Baptist churches are established congregations affiliated with the predominantly black National Baptist Convention, Kelly says. Most of them remain dually aligned, he adds.

"They stay with the National Baptist Convention for fellowship and come with the Southern Baptist Convention for training," he says. Dual alignment strengthens both conventions as well as the church, he says.

Southern Baptists have been accused of proselyting churches from the National Baptist Convention but Kelly says that is not the case.

When a church wants to affiliate with Southern Baptists, Kelly says, "We check out their motives. We ask, 'Can you help us win California for Christ?'"

Although Kelly helps existing churches that want to affiliate with the SBC, he says his priority is starting churches. California reported 18 new black churches last year, but Kelly wants the number to reach 50 a year soon.

Many black churches have five to 10 associate ministers, Kelly notes. He challenges those churches to send associates as church starters.

Helping churches "read the menu" in Southern Baptist life is another priority for Kelly. Newcomers have to be taught the difference in Sunday school curriculum and how local associations, state conventions and national agencies relate.

Kelly also is leading black churches to give more to the Cooperative Program. Black churches in California give nearly \$300,000 a year to the Cooperative Program now, but he says he wants to see that amount reach \$500,000.

Personal mission involvement is another of Kelly's goals. He hopes to see more blacks commit themselves to foreign mission careers and serve as volunteers in home missions.

Kelly said he looks forward to the day when black Southern Baptists are in places of responsibility across the convention. Black churches are a majority in three of California's 33 associations, Kelly says, and he would like to see a black person serve as director of missions in those associations someday.

Asked whether he prefers the term "African-American" or "black," Kelly says he uses both expressions, depending on his audience. Actually, he said, he prefers "colleague" and "fellow laborer."

**CLeaR-TV calls for boycott
of Johnson wax company**

By Louis Moore

NASHVILLE (BP)--Christian Leaders for Responsible Television, nicknamed CLeaR-TV, has called for a one-year boycott of S.C. Johnson and Son, Inc., a Racine, Wis., corporation that markets a variety of waxes/polishes and household/personal products because of the company's sponsorship of prime-time television programs that feature sex, violence and profanity.

CLeaR-TV is composed of more than 1,000 Christian leaders from about 100 denominations. The organization in the past has initiated boycotts of other TV advertising sponsors it has deemed to be sponsors of sex, violence and profanity on prime-time TV.

Richard D. Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and a member of the CLeaR-TV's executive committee, is urging Southern Baptists to join in the boycott of Johnson.

"All attempts to get Johnson to respond to our real and legitimate concerns have been rebuffed," Land said. "A boycott of the offending sponsor's products is a perfectly legitimate way to use consumer power to demand redress of serious grievances. Boycotts have a long and glorious history in righting societal wrongs.

"I ask Southern Baptists to pray about whether they should express their displeasure with S.C. Johnson and Son's sponsorship practices by refraining from purchasing the boycotted products," Land said.

Billy A. Melvin, chairman of CLeaR-TV, said representatives of his organization have asked to meet with representatives of the Johnson Company but have received no response.

"We are disappointed that a company so clearly identified with household products would, in a cavalier and flagrant manner, sponsor TV programs that are helping to destroy important family values and the quality of life we enjoy in this country," he said.

Melvin said the Johnson company claims it has high ethical standards when it comes to TV advertising sponsorships.

"We have monitored their television advertising for more than two years, and their record hardly suggests they have been guided by 'high ethical standards.' To the contrary, we have a situation here where a company says one thing to the public, while practicing something else."

Among television shows pinpointed by CLeaR-TV as examples of Johnson-sponsored programming that is unsuitable was the Oct. 19, 1992, showing of "Love and War" on CBS, the Oct. 29, 1992, showing of "Top Cops" on CBS, the Nov. 4, 1992, showing of "Law and Order" on NBC and the Nov. 14, 1992, "Columbo Cries Wolf" movie.

These are the products Christians are being asked to boycott:

Personal -- Agree shampoo, Aveeno bath products, Curel skin lotion, Edge shaving cream, Fisher Price bath products, Halsa shampoo and conditioner, Off insect repellent, Soft Sense lotion.

Household -- Drano drain opener, Favor polish, Glade room deodorizer, Glory rug cleaner, Mr. Muscle oven cleaner, Pledge Dusters, Rain insecticide, Shout stain remover, Step Saver cleaner, Toilet Duck cleaner, Vanish toilet cleaner, Windex glass cleaner.

Waxes and polishes -- Bravo wax, Brite floor wax, Clean & Clear wax, Future floor coating, Glo Coat floor coating, Johnson Wax, J-Wax, Klear floor coating, Pledge wax, Pride wax.

**Southwestern Seminary students
see decisions during spring break** By Susan Simko

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--More than 450 decisions for Christ are being reported by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary students who took part in a spring break evangelism blitz that included revivals and street witnessing in 29 states, three foreign countries and Puerto Rico.

More than 200 of those decisions were professions of faith in Christ. The evangelistic efforts were part of Southwestern's Spring Evangelism Practicum, New Orleans street witnessing outreach and a student-led World Mission Fellowship trip to Monterrey, Mexico.

The Spring Evangelism Practicum, which combines the classroom with hands-on experience, involved 116 students. Those students spent the first half of the spring semester in a class emphasizing sermon preparation and prayer.

The students traveled to churches in sparse Southern Baptist areas in the United States, Canada, England and Puerto Rico for spring break. They preached revivals, visited prospects and counseled Christians. It brought classroom theory to life, said Derek Boyd, who went to Girard, Ill.

"I was actually able to do what God called me to do, and do it with all my heart, all my mind, all my soul and all my spirit," Boyd said. "It was encouraging to take some time away from study to do that. I got to preach what I only practice here."

While their schoolmates were preaching from pulpits, 12 Southwestern students took the message of Jesus one-on-one to the homeless and homosexuals who roamed the bars of Bourbon Street in New Orleans as part of a program sponsored by Southwestern's World Mission and Evangelism Center.

The students said drunks screamed in their faces. Others ignored their efforts to witness. But many passers-by stopped for conversation, attracted by the concern of other individuals for their lives, and several heard the message, the students said.

"Our job here is to be responsible, not to convert," said Roy Humphry, pastor of Viex Carre Baptist Church, located a block away from Bourbon Street. "Seldom are things like CWT (Continuing Witness Training) and rote memorization of Scripture very effective here. While the knowledge of them is helpful, the real key is learning to talk with someone and to share the gospel with them on a private plane."

Jim Sharp, a Southwestern student who has participated in the New Orleans program for three years, agrees. "If you come to the streets, you've got to do it its way. Every witnessing encounter is individual," he said. "Christians need to be taught they're working with people and not things."

A third group of students involved with Southwestern's World Mission Fellowship learned the same lesson in Monterrey, Mexico. They visited door-to-door, preached revivals, helped build a church and led Vacation Bible School in conjunction with Primera Iglesia Bautista Maranatha, the home church of Southwestern student Martha Palomares.

Student Claire Kennedy said the group's greatest contribution was to help motivate their Mexican co-workers to spread the gospel themselves. Because of the language barrier, the national Christians accompanied the American students on visitation. Some had never experienced door-to-door witnessing before and the Mexicans learned how powerfully God could use them in their own neighborhoods, Kennedy said.

"It wasn't just us, our mission, it was theirs too," she said. "That's what I think missions is all about. We encourage the nationals to do it themselves."

**Texans receive interfaith
witness leadership awards**

KANSAS CITY (BP)--Two Texans were honored by the Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department in March.

Bob Parrish received the award for state interfaith coordinator of the year and Mark Stepherson was recognized as associate of the year.

Parrish has been deaf ministries consultant for the Baptist General Convention of Texas since 1980. The North Carolina native also coordinates the state's interfaith witness program, including training events, volunteer efforts and requests for information.

Stepherson, a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, continues to live in Fort Worth where he works for Tandy Corporation. As an interfaith witness associate, he teaches Southern Baptists about religions, sects and cults.

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