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-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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April 20, 1993

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93-64

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Baptist expert suggests
hearings on cults in U.S.

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
4/20/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Branch Davidian nightmare in Texas has prompted a Southern Baptist expert on cults to suggest public attention -- perhaps even congressional hearings -- be focused on such groups in the United States.

Tal Davis, interim director of the Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department, also voiced a positive comment about denominationalism in the wake of the fiery, suicidal deaths of cult leader David Koresh and about 85 of his followers and their children April 19 outside Waco, Texas.

Maybe the tragedy "will wake some people up," Davis said the next day in an interview in Nashville after leading a workshop on cults during the Sunday School Board-sponsored Youth Ministry National Conference 4.

"I'm real hesitant about the government getting too deeply into things," Davis said, citing the U.S. hallmark of religious freedom. But he said some sort of public inquiry, perhaps congressional hearings alone, "would increase the awareness of people about some of these groups."

Such awareness "would go a long way," Davis said. "People are highly aware of other issues," such as AIDS and drug abuse. Cults likewise are "an issue ... but most people don't have knowledge about it."

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The Koresh tragedy "is the tip of the iceberg," Davis said. "There are hundreds of these isolated cult groups around the country. In most communities of any size, you're going to have churches or movements that definitely are cult-like in their orientation." Many of these are small independent churches where a leader or small group exercises absolute control over the people in the congregation, Davis said.

Davis said J. Gordon Melton, author of the "Encyclopedia of American Religions," has estimated there are 700 groups in the United States as socially restrictive as Koresh's Branch Davidians.

Davis said he receives calls each week from parents, friends and ministers concerned over someone who has become involved in a cult, which he defines as a religious movement or organization claiming to be Christian yet either denying or redefining one or more essential doctrines of the Christian faith. "We have calls every day about something new," he said. Keeping up with the proliferating number of cults and sects is "a never-ending responsibility."

The possibility for cults turning violent or suicidal, Davis acknowledged, is "the dark side of our freedom, (which) always opens itself up to the possibility of abuse." Yet "most of those are not going to end up being as violent" as Koresh, he qualified.

In an era of anti-denominationalism, Davis said, "There is a positive side to denominationalism," noting denominations can help prevent spiritual abuses such as those perpetrated by Koresh.

"I think denominations have a very important part to play" in American religious life, Davis said. "If you're looking for a good church, find one that fits in a solidly biblically based denomination."

Denominations foster accountability to the Bible and to church members through such practices as ordination and minister peer evaluations and through denominational and church councils, Davis said.

Be wary of any congregation "where one person or one small group becomes the focus of power and authority (because that) sets up the potential for some kind of spiritual abuse," he advised.

Apart from theology deviating from historic Christianity, Davis cited four other characteristics of a cult:

-- a single charismatic leader or authority figure or small group of people seen as "capable of receiving direct revelation from God."

"David Koresh was a perfect example of this ... a young man who, just by the force of his personality, gathered a group around him who literally worshipped him," Davis said. "When a person is so idolized, it affects them in some way, (making them) out of touch with reality. People start listening to them with an intensity that they would listen to God himself."

-- belief in supplemental revelation to Scripture or in the cult leader's claim of "a unique or divinely inspired interpretation of the Bible to the exclusion of all others," Davis said. Cult members "are not allowed to compare it or weigh it against anything else." And, Davis said, cult leaders hold power over their followers with revelations that seemingly hold the only hope for salvation and eternity.

-- acceptance of new written authority, often the cult leader's own writings, as superior or equal to the Bible or as correct interpretation of the Bible.

-- a belief that the group is "the one true church, that salvation resides alone in their movement," Davis said.

People who are concerned about a loved one or friend in a potential cult should learn specifically what he or she has become involved in and then search for flaws in that group's beliefs or the leader's personal character, Davis said.

Families and friends should not cut off relationship or communication with someone involved in a cult, he said. If the person feels he or she is still accepted and cared about, "chances are they're going to come back."

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Churches need to do much better in Christian education among young people, Davis said. All too often, youth "are not getting a sound theological base for their lives."

Christians, to be honest to the Bible, have a responsibility to evaluate these groups, Davis said. If Christians understand the beliefs of various cults, they then will understand these groups "do not have a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ," Davis said. "We need to be trying to win them to true faith in Jesus Christ."

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Waco Baptists feel conflicting emotions
as cult standoff reaches fiery conclusion

Baptist Press
4/20/93

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (BP)--Sorrow, shock and anger were among the emotions felt by Baptists in Waco, Texas, as the 51-day standoff between members of the Branch Davidian sect and federal agents reached a fiery conclusion April 19.

Kenneth Massey, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Waco, was enjoying lunch with some church members and watching unfolding events at the Mt. Carmel compound on a big-screen television when the holocaust started.

"Our first reaction was shock, then a certain disbelief," Massey said, adding those feelings were soon washed away by a wave of sadness as the great loss of life -- particularly the lives of children -- became apparent.

At about 6 a.m. on April 19, the FBI started punching holes in the Mt. Carmel compound walls with Bradley armored vehicles and pumping in non-lethal doses of tear gas. Six hours later, flames engulfed the compound, burning the Branch Davidian stronghold to the ground.

One person from the compound -- Ruth Riddle, 29, who sustained a broken ankle and first and second degree burns over less than 4 percent of her body -- was taken to Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center. The woman was placed under guard at Hillcrest, a health care institution affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, where she was listed in stable condition.

Only nine of the 95 people inside the compound -- and none of the 17 children -- were known to have survived the inferno. Sect members who escaped the blaze and were taken into custody claimed fellow Branch Davidians started the fire.

The Branch Davidians were led by self-proclaimed Messiah Vernon Howell, who legally changed his name in 1990 to David Koresh. He claimed to be the "Lamb of God" sent to open the seven seals of Revelation, unleashing catastrophe leading to the end of the world.

The standoff began Feb. 28 after agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms unsuccessfully attempted to execute a warrant at the Mt. Carmel compound and were met with a hail of gunfire. Four ATF officers were killed in the shootout and 15 were injured.

Almost exactly 24 hours after the Mt. Carmel compound exploded into a lake of fire, a community-wide prayer service was held by the Waco Ministerial Alliance at Central Presbyterian Church.

Dan Bagby, pastor of Seventh and James Baptist Church and a member of the ministerial alliance, told the Dallas Morning News, "There's a lot of sentiment in Waco that it's not our religious trouble, yet it happened at our back door. There's a sense of sadness I feel as I walk around town."

Aside from "coffee shop talk" about how federal agents handled the situation and a superficial renewed interest in the New Testament Book of Revelation, the most long-lasting effect of the seven-week standoff on Waco's citizens could be the way the city's religious image has been twisted into a bizarre, fun-house distortion of itself, according to Massey of Calvary Baptist Church.

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Religion and church-going is woven into the fabric of the central Texas community, he said. Many local believers have taken the attention given to David Koresh and his followers as a personal affront.

"It seems like Christians feel they have been back-handed in a way," Massey said. "David Koresh has been seen by some as the media prototype of what it means to be devotedly religious. He is perceived by some as a typical Bible believer, but that's not really who we are."

The events at Mt. Carmel point both to the reality of sin and its tragic consequences, he noted, adding, "It underscores how seriously we need to take our mission.

"Particularly, it should make us sensitive to the truth of how leadable some people are -- how easy it is for some people to divest themselves of all responsibility," Massey said.

"It points to the danger of authoritarian leadership. A person doesn't have to be a cult leader to exploit that kind of power."

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FMB plans jobs cut at home
because of shortfall, costs

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
4/20/93

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board will cut home office positions to compensate for falling revenue and rising costs expected in 1994, interim president Don Kammerdiener announced April 16.

Kammerdiener said it's too early to forecast how many of the board's 464 full- and part-time employees will actually lose their jobs -- or when.

"You may hear rumors as the possibilities are considered, but I urge you to wait for the facts as they develop," Kammerdiener said in a memo to board staff. "We will strive to minimize trauma to staff members without compromising our service to the Lord and his work through the Foreign Mission Board."

Kammerdiener hopes to make final decisions in May, he said.

Before then, each of the board's eight vice presidents will review with the president what functions should be reduced or eliminated in 1994. "Identifying the reductions now will allow us to fill vacancies that arise with staff members who may be displaced," Kammerdiener said. The board also will consider offering out-placement and other services to employees who lose their jobs.

In his memo, Kammerdiener referred to the downward trend of Cooperative Program giving and the projected shortfall in gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions for 1992. The shortfall and rising costs "leave the Foreign Mission Board with less buying power," he said.

"Sixty-eight percent of the \$22.4 million home office budget for 1993 provides salary and benefits for the staff. Therefore, it will be necessary to scale down these budget items which will require the elimination of some home office jobs."

Overseas field budgets will need to be trimmed also, he said.

Kammerdiener projects in October he will present trustees a smaller budget for 1994 than the current budget, he said.

Board officials base their budget each year on projected revenue. Gifts from Southern Baptists' unified giving plan -- the Cooperative Program -- originate in local churches and come through the denomination's Executive Committee about every 10 days. Receipts from the Lottie Moon offering, Southern Baptists' annual foreign missions offering, come to the board mostly in a period from January through May. Revenue also comes from several other sources such as investments and designated giving.

"Every single year we have to make a projection," Kammerdiener said. "As we've made a projection this year, we are anticipating a reduced budget for 1994."

The Executive Committee voted in February to send the Foreign Mission Board next year a projected \$69 million, or about \$1 million less than this year.

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It's too early to know how Southern Baptists will respond to the 1993 Lottie Moon Offering late this year and how much of the foreign missions budget the offering will support. Projections show the 1992 offering -- to be counted at the end of May -- will total about \$1.5 million less than it did the year before. .

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Church's revival services
continue despite prison riot

By Theo Sommerkamp

Baptist Press
4/20/93

LUCASVILLE, Ohio (BP)--What a way to start a revival -- on Easter Sunday, the day hundreds of prisoners in one cell block of the state prison, within a mile of Cook Road Baptist Church, started a riot that has lasted for days and resulted in a yet-to-be-determined number of deaths.

That is the setting at the Lucasville, Ohio, church about 85 miles south of Columbus.

The church's six-day revival went on despite the sudden riot, and three people professed faith in Christ and were baptized while the standoff continued nearby. However, several regular attenders stayed away out of uncertainty, but attendance matched that of average Sundays of about 40 to 60 people.

Mona Parks, wife of Cook Road pastor Larry Parks, is head of the nursing service at the prison's infirmary.

She has been working 12 hours a day since the riot started. It is believed 450 prisoners at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility are engaged in the riot; they initially held eight guards as hostages.

Parks has delivered medicine daily in person, accompanied by a guard, to prisoners in other areas of the facility but not to the unit where the riot went on.

One guard has been killed, apparently by the rioters; two others were released during negotiations to end the uprising. The remaining five were still hostages. Seven prisoners have been killed, and it is believed others also have been killed and their bodies are still inside the sealed-off area where the rioters are held without water and electricity. The bodies of some dead inmates have been tossed outside.

Cook Road Baptist Church is the only Southern Baptist church in the tiny, unincorporated village of Lucasville. The prison is the only "industry" in the vicinity. The church grounds are just one piece of property away from being a bordering neighbor south of the correctional facility, whose power plant, warehouse, barbed wire and several guard towers are easily visible from the backyard of the church.

Another church member, Jeff Hamilton, is superintendent of construction for the local school board, which had just constructed a new high school and a new elementary school near the prison and was planning to occupy them on the Monday after Easter Sunday.

The new high school was occupied that Monday, but not by the intended student occupants. Rather, the new high school became a waiting place for families and friends of guards being held hostage. The old high school was used to lodge state highway patrolmen, called in from across Ohio. They and some national guard units, also activated, used showers in the old high school, with the demand for hot water often exceeding the supply during a cold snap. Students had an unexpected spring "break."

Some church families joined in community efforts to provide food to families of the hostages staying in the school building.

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Christian ed, music deans
resign at Southern Seminary By Mark E. McCormick

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The deans of two of the four schools at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, citing ideological differences with President-elect R. Albert Mohler and seminary trustees, are resigning.

William B. Rogers, dean of the school of Christian education, announced he would remain at Southern as a professor but would step down July 31 as dean because of Mohler's stance against women as ordained pastors.

Milburn Price, dean of the school of church music, has been named dean of the school of music at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala. Price said he is leaving, also on July 31, mostly because Samford offers new career challenges. But he said another factor was a "narrowing of the boundaries as to what is an acceptable expression of faith, or what is an acceptable perspective of faith," at the seminary.

Outgoing President Roy L. Honeycutt said he was stunned by the resignations.

"I greatly regretted their resignations," Honeycutt said. "They were eminently well qualified and the seminary will suffer greatly from their departure."

Honeycutt said he will name interim deans but will let Mohler name permanent replacements.

Price's planned departure brings to at least 10 the number of faculty who have left Southern Seminary since 1991, or announced plans to leave, in the face of criticism from religious conservatives who now control the Southern Baptist Convention. Many of the departing faculty decried diminishing freedom at the school.

Mohler, 33-year-old editor of Georgia Baptists' Christian Index, was elected the ninth president of the seminary March 26 in Atlanta. He takes office Aug. 1.

At a campus news conference the day he was elected, Mohler discussed various issues, including the ordination of women.

He drew the ire of some faculty and students at that session and at a subsequent meeting this month when he said he could find no biblical support for the ordination of women, although he added women should be admitted into any degree program.

In a letter of resignation Rogers submitted to Honeycutt April 15, he wrote: "I believe that being Baptist and being Christian means that I must advocate freedom for each believer in Christ to identify gifts and define calls to mission and ministry without regard to gender. I find no evidence that Jesus taught exclusiveness related to gender and ministry, rather he taught a profound inclusiveness."

Mohler, reached in Atlanta, said some staff changes can be expected with any administrative transition.

"We obviously have an honest difference of conviction and opinion on the issue of women serving as pastors," Mohler said. "But I would wish to honor both deans for their service and dedication to their respective schools and to focus on the future which holds great promise for both schools."

Mohler said he had not requested blanket resignations of the executive staff or of the president's cabinet.

In an interview, Rogers said Mohler "devalued" the gifts and the call of women with his stance against their ordination, and Rogers said he couldn't be a part of such an administration. "This issue is crucial, central and pivotal," he said.

Although the seminary has no official position against the ordination of women, Rogers said Mohler's private views would have an impact on the institution.

Rogers contrasted Mohler's stance with Honeycutt's position in favor of ordaining women.

He noted Honeycutt has appointed the seminary's first female dean, vice president, professor of theology and professor of Old Testament.

"I must be able to defend the president and advocate the president's leadership," said Rogers, who knew Mohler when Mohler was a student at the seminary. "I find that I am unable to do that with Dr. Mohler. I think we can go on in an honest and mature relationship."

Price, who said his personal views would be "very inclusive," said his resignation was less a reaction to Mohler's election and more a reaction to the general academic climate on campus.

"My decision was also influenced by what I perceived to be a diminishing tolerance on the part of trustees for diversity of thought and diversity of approach," Price said. "For me, those qualities are very important."

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Bold Mission Thrust
needs boost, some say

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
4/20/93

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Does anybody remember Bold Mission Thrust? The reviews are mixed.

On one hand, surveys show many Southern Baptists understand that Bold Mission Thrust is the denomination's plan to make the gospel known to every person on earth by the year 2000. On the other hand, surveys also show low levels of commitment to some of the things denominational executives see as vital to the success of Bold Mission Thrust.

At the same time, even the most ardent supporters of Bold Mission Thrust now admit many of the plan's goals may not be met in the remaining seven years. However, a few of the goals already have been met or exceeded.

Almost universally agreed is the assessment that Bold Mission Thrust needs a new boost to be recaptured in the minds of people in the pews.

The strategic planning group that directs Bold Mission Thrust is convening a special meeting April 22 to decide how to address this challenge.

"If the people are telling us that the way we're doing it now isn't igniting any enthusiasm, isn't it appropriate for us to stop and reconsider whether we need to redirect the approach?" asked Ernest Mosley, chairman of the Bold Mission Thrust steering committee.

Mosley, executive vice president with the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, explained the analysis is partially "to see what course corrections may be needed to help us achieve more of the basic objective of getting the gospel to every person in the world by the year 2000."

Bold Mission Thrust was adopted by messengers to the annual SBC meetings in 1976 and 1977. It was conceived out of a missions challenge committee chaired by Warren Hultgren, then pastor of First Baptist Church in Tulsa, Okla.

The plan was "to refocus the energy and interest of Southern Baptists on their primary goal of preaching the gospel to the world," Hultgren explained recently. "What Bold Mission Thrust did was merely to verbalize and articulate the fundamental commitment of Baptists from the beginning. You would have a hard time convincing the average Southern Baptist that this is not what our primary responsibility is."

Although the initial Bold Mission Thrust documents set few specific, measurable goals, the number of statistical goals has been expanded through the years. Also, various agencies and institutions have piggybacked their own strategic plans on the Bold Mission Thrust agenda, creating various subsets of goals under the one banner.

After a few years in the bureaucratic process, the simple plan to tell everyone in the world about Jesus had picked up dozens of annual themes, projects and emphases.

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"We've had so many Bold Mission Thrust projects that it's hard for people to see the Bold Mission Thrust label on them," Mosley said. "People are looking for something sharply focused, more specific."

Mosley said he believes the amount of information people were asked to process became confusing and caused them to lose sight of their own involvement in Bold Mission Thrust through the local church.

A recent survey by the SBC Executive Committee found Southern Baptists ranking "personnel and financing for foreign and home missions" last out of six primary issues facing the SBC in the future. This low-priority item clearly fits the general description of Bold Mission Thrust.

"The recognition factor regarding ... Bold Mission Thrust promotion was very low," Mosley admitted. "That the enthusiasm toward it was very low was equally spread among church leaders and church members."

But Ellis Bush, a Sunday School Board staff member who coordinates the planning and promotional aspects of Bold Mission Thrust, says earlier research shows people in the pew readily identify Bold Mission Thrust as a plan to present the gospel to every person on earth.

"Where we get confusion is where we pick up these specialized program promotions ... under the rubric of Bold Mission Thrust," he said.

In one sense, Baptist leaders note, Bold Mission Thrust has become all things to all people, churches and agencies. "It's easy for a church or a Christian, a state convention or an agency to say, 'Anything I do is Bold Mission Thrust,'" said Wally Buckner, assistant vice president with the Home Mission Board. "How's that any different than business as usual?"

For Bold Mission Thrust to succeed, Buckner suggested, it must be seen as a truly bold step that moves the church beyond its basic commitments.

And that's the work of the Holy Spirit more than a denominational bureaucracy, he said. "Local churches and local believers are going to have to have a say in how Bold Mission Thrust is reinvigorated if it's reinvigorated. It's not going to come because some board or agency announced it. This is the work of the Spirit."

Yet in an organization the size of the 15-million-member SBC, some form of long-range planning is needed, said Don Kammerdiener, interim president of the Foreign Mission Board who has been deeply involved in Bold Mission Thrust planning for several years.

"It is far easier for us in the agencies to do our work effectively if it can be coordinated with other agencies," he explained. "At the same time I'm a church member and I know that people out in the churches are bored with long-range planning."

The SBC also faces a dilemma in planning styles, Kammerdiener said. "We are on a railroad track in which there are trains coming toward each other related to the whole issue of planning."

The traditional approach has been to develop ideas and programs through a series of channels inside agencies and institutions, with approval from SBC messengers when necessary, he explained. "Right now, we are confronting a different style of leadership in which each new president of the SBC comes with a fresh, charismatic view ..., a new vision that this is what I want to accomplish in my year or two."

On top of that cultural change, the 14-year controversy in the SBC has derailed some of the focus on Bold Mission Thrust, several leaders suggested.

"I think the dream and the desire and the vision of Bold Mission Thrust is still there," Bush noted, but "we're beset by so many distractions in the denomination that are carryovers from the controversy."

"I believe anyone, whatever position you might take in the so-called controversy, would have to concede that you have bled off a lot of energy and interest," Hultgren said. "As a convention, we have lost the cohesive thrust across the board."

"The ideal is still there, the need is still there, the command is still there, but I don't believe we have the resolve to do what we set out to do as a total convention," he said.

But Buckner believes entrusting the ultimate goal of Bold Mission Thrust to a denominational plan never was the answer.

"This is God's work," he said. "We have to be a part of that, but we have to be in what he's up to. I don't know that we can manufacture this. We can't just crank this out as a denomination.

"It's got to be a movement of God or it's not going to happen at all."

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How will Baptists know
when all have heard gospel?

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
4/20/93

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--If Bold Mission Thrust is a plan to share the Christian gospel with every person on earth by the year 2000, how will Southern Baptists know when they've done the job?

"There is no way we could ever know if we have succeeded in that goal or not," said Ernest Mosley, chairman of the Bold Mission Thrust steering committee. "We do know that the task of evangelism will be before us until the Lord returns."

Measuring success on such a goal over the 24-year period of Bold Mission Thrust is like watching a moving target, Mosley and others involved with Bold Mission Thrust planning admit. People constantly are dying and being born into the world, and there's no certain way to assess who has heard the gospel and who hasn't, they explain.

This was a point of debate among the framers of Bold Mission Thrust in the late 1970s, noted Warren Hultgren, retired pastor of First Baptist Church in Tulsa, Okla., and chairman of the missions challenge committee that recommended Bold Mission Thrust's adoption.

"Realistically and literally, one could not accomplish this," Hultgren said of the goal. "But the final resolution was that any lesser ideal or object would be less than the Great Commission, hence we ought to go for the ideal and not try to limit ourselves merely to the realities."

While the goal of Bold Mission Thrust is ambitious, it is not as unachievable as it may sound, said David Barrett, global missions researcher with the Foreign Mission Board.

One way to measure progress toward the goal is to look at the world in people groups, Barrett said.

One snapshot of the world shows that 75 percent of the people in the world today know something about Jesus Christ, although they may not follow him, Barrett said. "The 25 percent who know nothing about Christianity -- about 1.2 billion people -- they're in what we call World A, a very clearly defined, mapped and tabulated area of the world."

The people of World A are clustered in a belt that extends through North Africa and Central Asia, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and includes predominantly Muslim strongholds.

Another snapshot of the world shows that there are 12,000 ethno-linguistic people groups in the world, Barrett said. About 9,000 of those groups have been exposed to Christianity, while about 3,000 have little or no knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Don Kammerdiener, interim FMB president, explained that his agency has set a goal of sending missionaries to at least 300 of those unreached people groups. Since Southern Baptists have 5 percent of the world's missionary force, taking responsibility for 10 percent of the unreached groups is carrying more than a fair share, he said, noting the FMB is attempting to work with other "Great Commission Christians" to reach all 3,000 groups.

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Even though this effort has just begun in recent years, FMB workers are beginning to penetrate at least 50 of these unreached groups, Kammerdiener said. "This is one of the most substantial results of Bold Mission Thrust. All of these are people groups where we previously were not working and now are. That's one of the good things that has happened."

One misconception Southern Baptists might have about reaching the Bold Mission Thrust goal is that every person will have multiple opportunities to respond to the gospel, Barrett said.

People in highly evangelized areas like the United States and England are "spoiled" in comparison to residents of regions where the gospel has yet to be proclaimed one time, he said.

When seen in its simplest terms, the Bold Mission Thrust goal is achievable, Barrett said, because it is simply a restatement of the Great Commission.

"It obviously must be possible," he explained, "otherwise Christians wouldn't have been told to do it."

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Volunteerism is success story
but other goals lag behind

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
4/20/93

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Increasing volunteerism may be one of the greatest contributions Bold Mission Thrust has made to Southern Baptists' global witness, several key observers believe.

At the same Southern Baptist Convention where messengers approved Bold Mission Thrust, they heard a challenge from then-President Jimmy Carter to drastically increase the missions involvement of lay volunteers.

That challenge resulted in formation of programs of long-term volunteer service on home and foreign mission fields. Subsequently, other short-term volunteer programs have been developed by both the Home Mission Board and Foreign Mission Board.

Bold Mission Thrust calls for enlisting a combined total of 350,000 volunteers during the five-year period from 1990 to 1995 and 400,000 volunteers during the period from 1995 to 2000.

For the last year of record, the HMB and FMB reported use of 83,083 volunteers -- well above the annual rate needed to reach the ultimate goal.

"I think the most significant thing that has happened in Bold Mission Thrust ... is the phenomenal acceleration in the utilization of volunteers," said Ellis Bush, planning and promotion coordinator for Bold Mission Thrust.

Wally Buckner, assistant vice president with the HMB, agrees with that assessment.

"I think Bold Mission Thrust has caused churches and church members to be more intentional about their missions," he said. "A lot more mission work is happening, and a lot of that has to do with our emphasis on calling out the called and equipping the laity."

The other Bold Mission Thrust goal on target relates to home missionaries. Bold Mission Thrust calls for a total of 4,500 home missionaries by 1995 and 5,000 by the year 2000. The current total is 4,868, although the way missionaries are counted by the HMB has changed since Bold Mission Thrust goals were set.

Goals lagging behind target achievements include:

-- Baptisms. Bold Mission Thrust calls for a total of 2.1 million baptisms reported by churches during the 1990-1995 church years and 2.5 million during the 1995-2000 church years. Achieving the 2.1 million goal would require 420,000 baptisms annually. In the 1991-92 church year, Southern Baptists baptized 367,847 people.

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-- New church starts. Bold Mission Thrust calls for a total of 50,000 churches and church-type missions in existence by the year 2000. Currently, the SBC counts 43,387 churches and missions. Achieving the goal requires starting 1,500 new congregations each year. Last year, 1,281 new churches were started, the highest number in recent years.

-- Worship. Bold Mission Thrust calls for average morning worship attendance in SBC churches to equal 60 percent of resident church membership and for average evening worship attendance to equal 35 percent of resident membership by the year 2000. Currently those ratios are at 42.4 percent for morning worship and 17.8 percent for evening worship.

-- Bible study. Bold Mission Thrust calls for 13 million people enrolled in SBC Sunday schools by the year 2000. Current enrollment is about 8.3 million. Reaching the goal requires a 5 percent annual increase. Last year's increase was 1 percent.

-- Discipleship. Bold Mission Thrust calls for 3 million people enrolled in discipleship training programs by the year 2000. Current enrollment is about 2.2 million.

-- Missions education. Bold Mission Thrust calls for combined WMU and Brotherhood enrollments of 2.3 million by the year 2000. Current totals are 1.8 million. Growth has been short of the 3 percent annual increase needed to meet the goal.

-- Stewardship. Bold Mission Thrust calls for a total of \$20 billion in undesignated church offerings annually by the year 2000. Last year's total was nearly \$4 billion.

-- Foreign missionaries. Bold Mission Thrust calls for a total of 4,800 foreign missionaries by 1995 and 5,600 by the year 2000. The current missionary force is 3,893.

-- Missions support. Bold Mission Thrust calls for annual gifts to the Cooperative Program unified budget to equal \$2.5 billion by the year 2000. Last year's total was \$369.5 million.

-- Associational missions. Bold Mission Thrust calls for each church affiliated with the SBC to give a percentage of their undesignated receipts to associational missions. As of last year, only 79 percent of churches were doing that.

-- Intercessory prayer. Bold Mission Thrust calls for each association to have a functioning network of intercessory prayer by 1995 and for each church to have such by the year 2000. As of last year, 34 percent of associations reported intercessory prayer ministries. No report was available on churches.

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Brotherhood officials, state leaders
renew commitment to disaster relief

Baptist Press
4/20/93

By Jim Burton

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist state Brotherhood directors and national agency representatives reconfirmed their 25-year commitment to disaster relief during the 1993 Southern Baptist Brotherhood Disaster Relief Roundtable.

With 32 state Brotherhood disaster relief directors in attendance, April 12-14 in Nashville, participants worked through detailed strategy plans to create a working outline for an updated Brotherhood disaster relief manual.

"The depth of experience and commitment of state Brotherhood offices to disaster relief represents the finest of cooperative missions in Southern Baptist life," said James D. Williams, Brotherhood Commission president.

"After 25 years, there are few volunteer organizations working under the American Red Cross (ARC) umbrella that have the track record in mass feeding, cleanup and long-term recovery that Southern Baptists have," he added.

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The roundtable doubled as a debriefing following Hurricane Andrew, the worst U.S. natural disaster this century. The Brotherhood feeding units prepared an estimated 2.5 million meals in south Florida and more than 180,000 in south Louisiana. In the midst of the Andrew response, Hurricane Iniki struck the Hawaiian island of Kauai. Volunteers prepared an estimated 350,000 meals there.

Don Jones, American Red Cross general manager of disaster operations, and other top ARC officials attended the three-day meeting.

"We could not do the mass care operation if we did not have the Southern Baptist kitchens," Jones said, referring to the state Brotherhood mobile mass feeding units. "We count on them as much a part of our organization as anyone else."

Since 1989, Brotherhood disaster relief feeding units have played a major role in both Hurricanes Hugo and Andrew.

"Our network is growing," said Jim Furgerson, Brotherhood Commission national disaster relief director. "More of the new work states have mobile feeding units and those without equipment are training volunteers to work other areas of disaster."

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Red Cross official values
SBC disaster volunteers

By Jim Burton

Baptist Press
4/20/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--When Lt. Gen. Don Jones retired from his 34-year military career, he was suddenly faced with a new enemy -- natural disasters.

With his house in Virginia sold and his sights set on Texas, American Red Cross President Elizabeth Dole asked him to become the general manager of disaster operations. He said yes and put on new battle gear.

"In the 112-year history of the American Red Cross (ARC), this is the most demanding time we have ever spent," Jones said of the last 12 months that included Hurricanes Andrew and Iniki and Typhoon Omar. "We had about 6,000 people involved in those four operations and expended about \$110 million."

Between hurricanes, forest fires, tornadoes, the Los Angeles civil disturbance and the 1993 winter storm, there were about 151 ARC operations in a six-month period. Normally, that equals a year's worth of responses, he said.

Since 1905, ARC has had a mandate from Congress to lead the nation in disaster recovery. Other disaster relief organizations, including the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn., work under the ARC umbrella.

"It is probably one of the greatest relationships we have with any organization," Jones said. "We work closely with the Southern Baptists. They are a tremendous part of our whole operation."

ARC and the Brotherhood Commission currently work under a statement of understanding signed in 1986. That is currently under review and is expected to be re-signed soon.

"Considering the chaotic nature of disaster scenarios, the relationship with ARC has been amazingly smooth through the years," said James D. Williams, Brotherhood Commission president. "We are looking forward to strengthening that relationship with this revised agreement."

Jones is proud of ARC's Brotherhood Commission relationship. A lifelong Southern Baptist, he was raised in Friendship Baptist Church near Campbellville, Ky. He remained active in Southern Baptist churches throughout his military career.

During a recent Baptist Men's Day address at his church, First Baptist in Springfield, Va., Jones shared personal experiences from combat and noncombat situations. "My faith and prayer pulled me through," Jones said.

During the last seven years of his military career, Jones attended a weekly flag officers' fellowship, prayer and Bible study at the Pentagon. He called the experience a "stabilizing factor in all our lives."

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The decision to join ARC was made with prayer and affirmation of his calling as a layperson.

"I felt like my calling while in the military was to witness and be a member in uniform who would be a Christian and have a positive impact on youngsters," Jones said. "I felt like this (ARC) is what God wanted me to do, and I felt an obligation to try to return something to my fellow man. This country has been very good to me."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers from the Brotherhood Commission.

Volunteers still needed
for south Florida recovery

By Jim Burton

Baptist Press
4/20/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Eight months after Hurricane Andrew ravaged south Florida, recovery continues as volunteers steadily flow into the Miami area to lend a helping hand.

"Our commitment is to stay in south Florida until all the need is met or the money is gone, whichever comes first," said James Goodson, Florida Baptist Convention missions division director.

Goodson and Florida Baptist Brotherhood disaster relief director Cecil Seagle attended the recent 1993 Southern Baptist Brotherhood Disaster Relief Roundtable, where they shared with other state Brotherhood directors about the ongoing efforts.

While an average of 125 people now volunteer each week for construction projects, Seagle said that number could double this summer.

"I think we can handle in the neighborhood of 250 to 300 volunteers a week," Seagle said. Aside from construction, there may be opportunities for survey work, Backyard Bible Clubs and concerts, he said.

Volunteers have built 445 homes thus far, Goodson said. Another 200 are in process. The Florida Baptist Convention would like to assist yet another 200 uninsured or underinsured homeowners.

Disaster response has been "the sum of Brotherhood work for the last year," Goodson said. However, according to current Church Uniform Letter reports from Florida, Brotherhood enrollment is up 7 percent.

"Andrew has focused in a clear, concise way what we are about," Seagle said. "This is men and boys doing hands-on missions."

Volunteers interested in south Florida volunteer work should call (305) 248-7059 for more information.

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Cooperative efforts needed in county
with record number of non-Christians

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
4/20/93

SAN DIEGO (BP)--All it takes is availability to start a church in one of the nation's most non-Christian communities, according to bivocational pastor Bill Losasso.

"God's timing and orchestration are so evident every day," Losasso said. "All we do is show up."

Pathways Community Church in Santee, Calif., began in February, with Losasso, who is also plant manager for a manufacturing company, as its first pastor. By its fourth week, the church had 275 in attendance, two softball teams and plans for an array of home fellowship groups.

Santee is in San Diego County, which has the nation's third-highest number of non-Christians, according to Home Mission Board research of 3,105 counties. San Diego County's non-Christian population is estimated to be 2.1 million.

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Southern Baptists in San Diego are attempting to reach their non-Christian neighbors with the combined resources of people, established churches and the local association.

"We're looking for more people like Bill Losasso," said Wade McKinley, home missionary and director of missions for San Diego Baptist Association. "He won to Christ most of the people in the new church's core group. He was a soul winner before he became a pastor."

Pathways Community Church is sponsored by Del Cerro Baptist Church in nearby La Mesa. Volunteers from Del Cerro do everything from teaching Sunday school and leading music to serving coffee and moving in furniture every week to transform an elementary school into a church.

Linda Berquist, director of extension ministries for Del Cerro Baptist Church, helps new churches develop promotional material, find places to meet, secure special guests to attract the unchurched and plan for child care.

Pathways also received a \$10,000 grant from San Diego Baptist Association. McKinley said a survey of the association revealed the need for 150 more churches. But he also wants to see "old churches live again."

The state's economic recession creates a positive climate for planting churches and expecting revival, McKinley said.

"For the first time in many years, people in Southern California are concerned about their existence -- their career, their family, their medical insurance, their taxes. Now everybody talks about insecurity. Even the person at the top of the rung is no longer secure."

That sets the stage for talking about eternal security, McKinley said. "For the first time in a long time, they will listen to the gospel. We've got to give them the Word. We may pass up our greatest opportunity if we don't move now."

Mormons evidently see the same spiritual void as McKinley. They established high visibility in San Diego when they opened the world's 45th Mormon temple there in February.

Mike Reynolds, director of Utah Missions Inc., a Mormon watchdog organization affiliated with the Home Mission Board, predicted the temple's presence will result in a surge of Mormon converts in Southern California, even though the temple is only used for sacred ordinances.

Mormons already outnumber Southern Baptists in San Diego County. A 1990 report shows that 1.9 percent of San Diego County residents are Mormons, compared with 1.2 percent who are Southern Baptists. Catholics are 16.5 percent of the county's population, Jews are 2.8 percent.

The report also showed 66 percent of San Diego County residents are not affiliated with any of 133 mainline religious groups. Dan Grider, pastor of 3-year-old Daybreak Community Church in Carlsbad, Calif., is most interested in reaching the unchurched population.

Last year his church baptized 68 people, making it an associational leader in number of baptisms.

Daybreak's challenge now is securing a meeting place. It began in a theater, then moved to a school. But the school system limits how long the church can meet there. In February Daybreak began a "Vision 2002" campaign to raise money for a building.

While the church is waiting for a permanent location, Grider said he is willing to meet in a tent if necessary. Like Losasso, his plan is to watch for God's movement and be available.

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

California counties lead list of non-Christian population

ATLANTA (BP)--Three of the top four counties in non-Christian population are in Southern California, according to a study by the Home Mission Board research department.

The study is based on 1990 population figures and estimates of numbers of people who are not Christians. It includes data from 3,105 counties.

New York City is divided into boroughs, which were each studied as a separate county. Two of the top 10 areas of non-Christian population are New York City boroughs.

The estimated number of lost people in the top 10 counties follow:

1. Los Angeles -- 6.9 million
2. Cook (Chicago) -- 3.7 million
3. San Diego -- 2.1 million
4. Orange (Near Los Angeles) -- 2.0 million
5. Harris (Houston) -- 1.8 million
6. Kings (metro New York City) -- 1.8 million
7. Maricopa (Phoenix) -- 1.7 million
8. Dade (Miami) -- 1.6 million
9. Queens (New York City) -- 1.6 million
10. Wayne (Detroit) -- 1.4 million

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Crowded congregation plans
to use world as meeting space By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
4/20/93

FRESNO, Calif. (BP)--Two aisles in the sanctuary are a luxury which members of Grace Community Baptist Church cannot afford.

The 4-year-old congregation moved pews and added folding chairs to take advantage of all available floor space. With only a center aisle, the auditorium seats 420 comfortably -- 500 uncomfortably.

It's a stark contrast from the church's beginnings when pastor Marvin Davis used the end table in his living room for a pulpit.

"It's really exciting to preach to a full congregation," Davis says. "I have preached to just my wife and child."

Davis, a native of Madera, Calif., moved to Fresno after high school to attend college. While working part-time as a youth minister, he noticed teen-agers dropped out of church in their junior high years and few churches ministered to college students.

With college students in mind, Davis started a Bible study that eventually became Grace Baptist Community Church. The church moved five times in four years to accommodate its growth.

Now meeting in a building vacated by another church, the congregation still experiences growing pains while it reaches beyond the college community. In January, the church began two Sunday morning worship services.

Most of Grace Community's growth is through evangelism. Last year, the church recorded 337 baptisms, second in the state in number of baptisms. In 1990 it ranked 17th and in 1991 it ranked eighth in California baptisms.

Davis says he doesn't have a blueprint for church growth, but he suggests some things triggering growth at Grace Community are:

- No gimmicks. "We're basically very fundamental."
- Intensity of worship. "We don't do anything boring."
- Enthusiasm over the Word of God. Davis describes himself as an expository preacher who "preaches absolutely nothing but Jesus."

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-- Daily ministries. From prison and hospital visits to clothing closets and children's programs, Grace Community has more than 20 outreach ministries.

-- Commitment to reach all people. About 75 percent of Grace Community's members are black, Davis says, but the church's agenda is to "reach all people in all walks of life. We're not trying to reach just people who are like us. You can't grow a church like that unless you want to grow it on racism and hate."

-- Lay involvement. "My job is to equip," Davis says. "It's not my preaching that wins people. The only way for Grace Community to stop growing is for people to stop telling people about Jesus."

As the church grows, it will continue to need more space. Davis says he hopes to solve that dilemma by training church members to lead services in their neighborhoods or homeless shelters.

"We'll use the church as headquarters for equipping and use the world as our meeting place," he says.

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

Southern professor dies
after battle with cancer

Baptist Press
4/20/93

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Ernest White, a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary since 1980, died at his home April 17 following a lengthy battle with cancer.

White, 63, was the Louisville, Ky., seminary's Gaines S. Dobbins professor of church administration and leadership. He also directed the school's Dehoney Center for the Study of the Local Church. Prior to joining the seminary faculty, White was pastor of Wyatt Park Baptist Church in St. Joseph, Mo., for 18 years. He was also pastor of four other Missouri churches and one Kentucky church during his 30-year pastoral ministry.

A native of Huron, S.D., White earned the A.A. degree from Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo., the A.B. degree from William Jewell College in Liberty, Mo., the B.D. degree from Central Baptist Seminary in Kansas City, Kansas, and the Ph.D. degree from Southern Seminary.

White was the author of five books and numerous articles. Active in denominational life, he served on the Southern Baptist Convention's Committee on Boards in 1975 and the Committee on Committees in 1979.

He is survived by his wife, Bonnie, four children and nine grandchildren.

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CORRECTION: Some changes have been made in the program for the 1993 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting that ran in Baptist Press March 23, 1993. If you have not already run the program in your publication, please note these changes and make the corrections accordingly:

At 8:45 on Tuesday morning, June 15, please note Mary Lou Retton Kelly and her husband will not be giving a welcome. Instead, John Bisagno, pastor of Houston's First Baptist Church, will deliver a welcome. Bob Lanier, mayor of Houston, will deliver a welcome as listed.

At 9:00 on Tuesday evening, June 15, please note Rick Ray, who will deliver the benediction, is from Orlando, Fla., not Moore, Okla.

The Baptist World Alliance report will come at 9:00 Thursday morning, June 17, not at 8:50. Also on Thursday morning, the speaker at 11:25 is Charles R. Swindoll, not Chuck Swindoll as listed.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

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