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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 Martin King, 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 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

July 22, 1993

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Russia inundated by cults
and religions of all kinds

Baptist Press
7/22/93

By Mike Creswell & Marty Croll

MOSCOW (BP)--The crash of the Iron Curtain opened the way for a parade into Russia of such U.S.-based cult groups as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses and such Eastern religious groups as disciples of Hare Krishna and transcendental meditation.

In fact, evangelicals in Russia say other religious groups cause as many problems for them as communism once did.

Against that backdrop, the Russian Orthodox Church is maneuvering to regain its earlier state church status and opposes foreign religious sects -- including evangelicals such as Baptists -- in the process.

One of the most visible indications of the swiftly changing scene in Russia was a July 14 vote by the Russian Parliament which would give the government new authority to say what religions can legally operate on Russian soil. It would also ban foreigners from mission work in Russia without special accreditation, unless they're attached to a registered religion.

The measure, awaiting President Boris Yeltsin's signature, is a backlash against the proliferation of groups from the West sharing a wide range of beliefs in Russia. It amends the 1990 law on religious freedom that swept away seven decades of repression under communists.

It has drawn worldwide protest as an abridgment of religious freedom, reminiscent of the repressive control of communism and, before that, of the Russian Orthodox Church.

But the proliferation of cults does present a problem, which Russians -- including Christians -- must learn naturally accompanies freedom, according to religious liberty experts. Freedom gives choices and choices are confusing -- especially in a society which has had little opportunity to make them.

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Hare Krishnas dance and chant in popular Moscow places such as Pushkin Square to win adherents. They share the space with evangelicals from the West who preach, perform street drama and pass out Bibles and tracts. Many wear T-shirts emblazoned with Bible verses or religious slogans.

Posters on subway walls urge Russians to hear "enlightened" gurus from India who promise the wisdom essential for correct living.

Once the Orthodox Church was "the" religion in Russia, as inevitable as black bread at mealtime. Since the Soviet Union's breakup, religion is more like a cafeteria with a bewildering array of spiritual choices.

The religious free-for-all rages amidst economic hardships and political instability. A bubble-may-burst mentality about freedom of expression in Russia has led religious groups of all stripes to get personnel and programs of all persuasions in place quickly, lest repression return.

Russia has historically been devoid of religious liberty. Christianity came in 988 A.D. in the form of Eastern Orthodoxy, which developed alongside Roman Catholicism out of a schism in the early Christian church. Orthodoxy became the state religion in Russia by decree of Prince Vladimir. Czarist years that followed until communism took over in 1917 were dominated by the Orthodox state church. Evangelicals were imprisoned and exiled in both Czarist Russia and communist Russia.

"Baptists here have always thought this might be a narrow window of opportunity," said Southern Baptist missionary George Lozuk of the current religious liberty. Lozuk and his wife, Veda Rae, were the first Southern Baptist career missionaries to serve in Russia. The two retired this summer after preparing the way for an influx of Southern Baptist career missionaries and short-term volunteers who work with Russian Baptists.

Baptists and other evangelicals are not happy about the influx of alien faiths in their midst because they complicate the sharing of the simple Christian gospel. In fact, many Russian Baptists are frustrated that fellow evangelicals -- including Baptists -- come with their own agendas ignorant of ongoing evangelism efforts. The result? Their programs are ineffective or even counterproductive to local churches.

But evangelicals are most worried about a resurgent Russian Orthodox Church that seems out to recapture its old state church status while excluding any competition.

"In some ways there's a greater threat from the Orthodox Church than from a communist resurgence," said Lozuk.

In recent months Russian Orthodox followers have reprinted and circulated a strongly anti-Baptist brochure from the early 1900s. It portrays Baptists as an "imported" religion and the Russian Orthodox Church as the only correct religion for Russians. "If you're Russian you should be Orthodox" is the brochure's essential message, Lozuk said.

Orthodox leaders sometimes openly oppose evangelistic efforts, including a Billy Graham crusade in Moscow. Earlier this year Russian evangelicals who have settled in Germany returned to hold crusades from a riverboat in towns along the Volga River between St. Petersburg and Moscow. In one town Orthodox leaders tried to keep them from getting off the boat, Lozuk said.

The Orthodox may be targeting Baptists because of their rapid growth. Baptists baptize more than 30,000 new believers a year and are starting new congregations quickly across the region. They have launched scores of new Sunday schools, prison ministries, schools and other types of work.

But cult groups struggle to get a foothold in Russia also. Along with the traditional door-to-door efforts of Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, some cults are "devious," Lozuk charged. Followers of the Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon, known as "Moonies," offer Russian families free camping trips, but they turn out to be indoctrination sessions on Moonie beliefs, Lozuk said.

As the Orthodox Church rails against such groups and their tactics, it lumps Baptists together with them, Lozuk said.

In the Siberian city of Novosibirsk, Southern Baptists maintain one missionary couple. About 3,000 Mormon missionaries will arrive there in August.

"When Baptists deal with people they finally realize we're not one of these extremist sects, but the propaganda is being put out all the time that says we are," he said.

Administrators of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board are monitoring the situation in Russia closely as they prepare to send still more personnel into the region.

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Bible school goes on,
despite flood, mud

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
7/22/93

ANKENY, Iowa (BP)--Eight feet of mud, meetings with city officials and not enough water for long showers -- what a week for Vacation Bible School.

What sounds like chaos is actually an opportunity to minister, says the pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Ankeny, Iowa, where two water purification units donated by Southern Baptists are providing drinking water for area residents, a community college and a Des Moines mission center.

The church scheduled its VBS nine months before floods disabled the water treatment plant in nearby Des Moines. Last October youth from First Baptist Church of Gainesville, Texas, volunteered to lead VBS for the Iowa church.

When Des Moines' lack of drinking water made national news, Brent Gentzel, youth minister at the Texas church, said he had to work hard to convince parents it was safe for their teen-agers to go to Iowa.

Ankeny's water supply was not affected by the flood, but residents were asked to conserve water to share with Des Moines residents and to keep for fighting fires in Des Moines. "We're taking awfully short showers," Gentzel said.

The water purification units are at a lake on a community college campus, said Ronny Carroll, home missionary and pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church. Although the units are not on the church property, Carroll said the community knows they were donated by Southern Baptists.

The publicity helped this year's Vacation Bible School, Carroll said. Last year the church averaged 30 children in VBS. On the first day of VBS this year, the church had 44 children. The church typically has 40 people in Sunday school and more than 50 in worship.

Among Iowa residents, 19 percent are Catholic, 10 percent are United Methodist and 10 percent belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, according to a 1990 survey of church membership. Southern Baptists are 0.5 percent.

Response to the flood gave Southern Baptists in Iowa credibility, Carroll said. "City officials were shocked. They had no idea we had these kind of resources. I told them, 'It's not how big we are, but cooperation that makes the difference.' It's blowing them away."

The water purification units were donated by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission and Home Mission Board. Beulah Baptist Association in Tennessee provided two 1,500-gallon containers to store the filtered water. Southern Baptists in other states are donating bottled water. Carroll is asking the local school system to provide housing for volunteers who will help with clean-up projects.

Each water purification unit is about the size of a small U-Haul trailer, Carroll said. Water drawn from the lake goes through two filters to strain out foreign objects, then it passes through a charcoal filter. Chlorine is added, and the water is exposed to ultraviolet light to kill remaining bacteria.

Twice a day volunteers take purified water to the Baptist Friendship Center in Des Moines, Carroll said. The mission center was not affected by the flood, but like the rest of Des Moines it has no water supply.

Some people drive to the water purification units in Ankeny to get water for home use, Carroll said. The units also provide water for the local community college with 6,000 students enrolled in summer school.

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Though Des Moines' water service is expected to be restored soon, officials say it may be a month before the water is safe to drink. When flood water recedes and drinking water is available, volunteers will be needed for clean-up.

Cornerstone Baptist Church's building was not damaged by the flood, but some people have eight to 12 feet of mud in their basements and cellars, Carroll said. The water will be drained, but volunteers with shovels and buckets are needed to remove the mud.

Volunteers also will be used to remove Sheetrock and flooring destroyed by flood waters and to repair buildings.

To volunteer, people can contact their state Brotherhood directors or the Home Mission Board volunteer division at 1-800-HMB-VOLS.

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FMB seeks to attract revenue
going now to non-Baptist groups By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
7/22/93

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Foreign Mission Board is seeking to attract more of the money Southern Baptists give to other mission groups more effectively personalizing their work to donors.

FMB leaders say untold millions of Southern Baptist dollars find their way into foreign mission efforts operating outside denominational channels. An action at the 1993 Southern Baptist Convention in Houston has added momentum to existing efforts by the board to attract that revenue into denominational missions and involve a wider number of Southern Baptists in foreign missions.

Recommendation 19, passed by messengers in June, asked both the Home and Foreign Mission boards to design a way churches can support annual mission offerings by funding specific projects. The request, which FMB leaders will respond to after study, is part of a plan to re-accelerate the SBC's Bold Mission Thrust to reach the world for Jesus Christ by the year 2000.

Many cite woes in the economy and the 14-year internal SBC conflict as part of the reason the FMB's finances have lagged behind expectations.

But many see other reasons, some of which relate to the changing face of society and affect the whole denomination.

For one thing, non-Southern Baptist mission groups may go into a church and ask for any amount of money they want, but SBC rules that stress cooperative giving prevent the FMB from being as direct.

Not long ago, Southern Baptists gave money simply because they believed in missions and trusted the denomination to do it. Many still do; many others, reflecting trends shown by modern-day American donors, want to give for projects they can see and touch. They want to know their money is accounted for and makes a difference.

This shift in donor loyalty presents a puzzle for the board, which has always successfully pitched itself as the best way for Southern Baptists to impact a non-Christian world and, until recently, enjoyed healthy increases in revenues from churches. Most of those donations have come through Southern Baptists' unified giving plan -- the Cooperative Program -- and the annual foreign missions intake -- the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

But Lottie Moon revenues have shown annual decreases two of the last three years. Cooperative Program receipts have fallen the past two years. Thus, spending power has suffered a hit.

New FMB President Jerry Rankin predicts Southern Baptists "can have 5,000 missionaries and \$100 million" a year in Lottie Moon receipts by the year 2000 "if we get in tune with what God wants us to do. ... Although there's been a downturn in finances, the final report on the 1992 Lottie Moon offering was the second highest in history -- \$80,980,881," he said.

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But at present, spending power of the money that missionaries use to spread the gospel is shrinking dramatically. As revenues have leveled, the board thus far has avoided curtailing the flow of new missionaries to the field. But, as a result, each missionary has had, on average, less money to use for such things as starting churches.

For example, missionaries in Europe and the Middle East face an 11 percent budget cut for 1994. In their efforts, which include the board's aggressive thrust into the republics of the former Soviet Union, missionaries have been told they must spend about \$450,000 less in 1994 than they did this year.

In June Executive Vice President Don Kammerdiener predicted a crisis if new money isn't found. The board can still propose a "workable" 1994 budget, he said, but "what isn't workable is that missionaries will deal with the situation by reducing the number of missionaries they request."

The shame of it all, board leaders say, is that it doesn't have to happen. "Potential resources are unlimited," said David Coleman, the board's director of development. It's just a matter of helping churches give to the Foreign Mission Board the way they give to other agencies.

Many won't automatically give to SBC missions anymore, Coleman said. "They'll give because we're a worthy work sharing the gospel. They want personal involvement and information about what's going on with their money."

Last year, Coleman worked with Second Baptist Church in Houston to increase its Lottie Moon giving about 65 percent -- to \$164,860 -- by identifying specific projects for which various groups in the church raised money. The church also gave another \$358,600 for high-priority needs the board had not had the funds to budget.

"We have to raise the consciousness of all of us -- missionaries, staff and to some extent communicators -- to the fact that everything we do is related in some way to having the resources to do it," Kammerdiener said.

Kammerdiener and others know the danger of Southern Baptists at home determining what missionaries can do by giving money only for specific uses. Most Southern Baptist tend to give generously when they see a need firsthand. But they're often unaware of the scope of missions needs and tend to zero in on high-profile causes at the expense of other important work.

In maintaining 3,958 mission personnel in some 130 countries and sending about 12,000 volunteers, the FMB incurs a lot of expenses. "It's the old question -- who's going to pay the light bill?" said Kammerdiener.

Still, he hopes the board can find more "creative access" to churches that would like to support missionaries but find no satisfaction in raising dollars without seeing specific results. Once those churches start learning about missions by giving to specific projects, he said, they will understand the need to give cooperatively and send more money for general use.

Trustees and staff agree increased support will come as they adhere to a mutual decision they made in June to reconcile conflict -- which has distracted them from their main purpose -- and focus as a cooperative team with other Southern Baptists on a world missions agenda.

They proclaimed a "new day" of reconciliation at Rankin's first trustee meeting as president. Election of the 23-year missions veteran -- despite predictions trustees would make a political choice -- has been widely hailed as a reconciling act.

Also, the board recognizes support will increase as it finds better ways to personalize missions and report the heartbeat of what's happening around the world. To heighten that effort, it will spend this year about a half million dollars (\$12 per church average), instead of the usual \$300,000, partly to offer selected churches materials such as prayer guides and up-to-date information more specifically designed for their needs.

Working with the Woman's Missionary Union, which founded the offering, and the Brotherhood Commission, the board will form a pastor's advisory council to be led by three nationally known pastors: John Bisagno of First Baptist Church, Houston; Frank Pollard of First Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss.; and Dan Yeary of North Phoenix Baptist Church, Phoenix, Ariz.

And the FMB will use about \$10,000 of the extra allotment to design efforts for selected churches similar to last year's at Second Baptist Church, Houston.

Another new FMB project seeks to link large churches with efforts involving missionaries and unreached people groups. While giving through this project would be considered separate from the Lottie Moon offering, Kammerdiener views the approach as a model for cooperation with some Southern Baptist churches.

"Churches are saying to us that we really do want to participate in individual projects with the Foreign Mission Board," Kammerdiener said.

"The best way to support foreign missions is to get churches to cooperate through the cooperative giving system. But we want to open up ways in which we can appeal to churches that don't do anything with us now."

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HMB reaction cautious
to SBC motion on giving

By Martin King

Baptist Press
7/22/93

ATLANTA (BP)--Officials of the Home Mission Board have expressed mixed reactions to an action taken during the Southern Baptist Convention in June.

The action -- recommendation 19 from the SBC Executive Committee -- called in part for the Home and Foreign Mission boards to develop plans by which church gifts to the two special missions offerings could fund "specific missions projects identified by the two mission boards."

"We're excited about the renewed interest in Bold Mission Thrust and that the convention has asked the two mission boards to take a major role in accomplishing its goals," said Larry Lewis, HMB president, concerning the purpose of recommendation 19.

"We are already discussing ways to match churches with specific projects which are part of our plan for reaching our nation for Christ. We have responded on an individual basis in the past but have not had a system to do large numbers of churches. We do plan to work with churches that wish to make their gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions more personal."

Lewis said, however, he hopes most churches will still see the wisdom of making unrestricted gifts to the special offering rather than limiting gifts to one special interest.

"When a church specifies a particular project, they are a part of that one project but are not a part of all the other work the Home Mission Board does. We have nearly 5,000 missionaries who need support, and I would think churches would want to rejoice in assisting all the work and not just a portion."

Implementing a system which would match thousands or even several hundred churches with thousands of Home Mission Board projects could be a logistics nightmare, according to Ernest Kelley, HMB executive vice president of planning and finance.

"The Home Mission Board is charged by the SBC with developing a uniform national mission strategy for reaching our nation for Christ. That process includes massive involvement from state conventions and fellowships, associations and local churches. The mission dollars from these entities are then used to implement a national missions strategy on the basis of established priorities."

Kelley continued, "That's why it is necessary for designated gifts to fund projects which are already part of the negotiated national strategy. Otherwise, a church or individual could designate their offering to be used for something like dropping tracts from airplanes flying over large sporting events. If we had unlimited funds it might be productive, but with limited resources we must fund those missionaries and projects that support the national strategy."

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Asked about the possibility of the Home and Foreign Mission boards developing one system or at least similar plans, Lewis said, "We've already held some preliminary discussions with the FMB about this issue, but our budget and planning structures are very different. We're very early in the process at this point."

"I'm confident we will be able to develop a method to adequately handle requests for personalizing some Annie Armstrong gifts. And I appreciate that we have until 1995 to implement it. But I hope such designations will be exceptions rather than the rule," Lewis said.

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Patricia Lockwood dies
after lengthy illness

Baptist Press
7/22/93

NORTH SYRACUSE, N.Y. (BP)--Patricia Ann "Pat" Towler Lockwood, 45, of North Syracuse, N.Y., died July 21 St. Joseph's Hospital after a lengthy battle with cancer. She is the wife of Quentin "Chip" Lockwood Jr., editor of the New York Baptist newsjournal.

Mrs. Lockwood, a native of Hopkinsville, Ky., taught ninth-grade social studies for more than eight years with the North Syracuse School District.

She was a member and deacon of North Syracuse's Bellewood Baptist Church, where she served on several committees, taught Sunday school and was a former president of the Women's Missionary Union. She also was a member of the Cicero-North Syracuse Optimists Club.

"This has been a three-year struggle," her husband, Chip, told Baptist Press July 22, "and we've almost been overwhelmed with the support of people across the Southern Baptist Convention. The last six months have been particularly difficult, and the number of contacts we've had with people who prayed for us has just been astounding. We've not had a need that's not been met."

In addition to her husband, survivors include three sons, Quentin III of Washington, D.C., Daniel M. of Georgetown, Ky., and Benjamin P. at home; her parents, Grover C. and Beuton Towler of Elizabethtown, Ky.; and a brother, Grover C. Towler III of Newburgh, Ind.

Services will be at 10 a.m. Saturday, July 24, in Bellewood Baptist Church and at 2 p.m. Monday, July 26, in Severns Valley Baptist Church, Elizabethtown. Burial will be in Elizabethtown Memorial Gardens.

Severns Valley Baptist, Mrs. Lockwood's home church, is where he first met her during their college days during a Kentucky Baptist Student Union convention, Lockwood said, when he was the state president and a student at Georgetown College in Kentucky and she was president of the BSU at Elizabethtown Community College. The church also is where he was licensed, ordained and married, Lockwood said.

Memorials may be made to the Patricia T. Lockwood Memorial Scholarship Fund at Bellewood Baptist Church in North Syracuse.

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Christians have duty
to media, speaker says

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
7/22/93

ATLANTA (BP)--Christians who think they are portrayed poorly in the media should blame themselves, a TV sports producer and author told Home Mission Board ministry section leaders.

"Anytime there's an error about what Christians think, believe or act, it's our fault," said Bob Briner, president of ProServ Television in Dallas. "We've left it to (the media) to interpret who we are. We don't interpret ourselves for them, so they don't have any chance to know."

Briner's book, "Roaring Lambs," encourages Christians to seek ways to present their beliefs in a positive way.

Briner, whose company is involved in the U.S. Open tennis tournament, said churches often pursue ministries to athletes at the exclusion of a greater audience.

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"Athletes are almost over-ministered to," he said. "Nobody wants to go into the trucks where people are producing the events and minister to those groups. That's a tougher ministry, and basically we've said it's too tough for us."

Churches and Christians should look for opportunities to present their beliefs though the media, Briner said. He suggested letters to the editorial pages of newspapers can be a "positive way to tell the great story we have to tell."

Briner said Christian writers have appeared on the editorial pages of The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal, answering stories with mistaken comments or portrayals about Christianity.

"They will come back and in a very cogent, good-humored, positive way and correct the error and a lot of times really get a full-gospel message into the media," he said.

An effective witness requires a quality presentation, he added. "You don't need a Pulitzer Prize winner necessarily to do a guest editorial for a weekly, county paper, but you might to do an op-ed piece for The New York Times."

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GAs flood missionaries
with Kool-aid packets

By Susan Doyle

Baptist Press
7/22/93

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Clyde and Ann Berkley, Southern Baptist missionaries to Kenya, are 'drowning' in Kool-aid thanks to thousands of young girls across America.

Last fall, members of Girls in Action studied work that Southern Baptist missionaries are doing in Kenya. GA is the missions organization sponsored by Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union for girls in elementary school.

The October GA leader magazine, Aware, included a letter written by the Berkleys to be shared with GA members. In the letter, they told the girls about the students they work with during school holidays and vacations.

"You can help us by praying for our students and by sending a package of unsweetened fruit drink mix when you write to us this Christmas," the Berkleys wrote.

The Berkleys use the drink mix to serve refreshments in the Bible clubs they lead during school vacations and holidays.

The Berkleys also encouraged the girls to send them Christmas cards. Each week throughout the year, the missionary family chooses five of the cards they received at Christmas time. They use them to pray for the families who sent the cards.

Recently, Barbara Massey, editor of both Aware magazine and Discovery, the GA member magazine, received a letter from the Berkleys telling her how they had been overwhelmed with cards and Kool-aid.

GA members in 2,553 churches representing 44 states and Canada sent 15,156 Christmas cards and 15,560 packages of Kool-aid.

"At first we tried to reply to each card," the Berkleys said. "After sending out 424 aerograms, we were overwhelmed."

The Berkleys weren't the only ones who were overwhelmed. Massey said she also was amazed at the phenomenal response.

"We are teaching girls in GA to respond to needs," Massey said. "GAs are naturally doers. Through Discovery magazine, they learned about a need and immediately wanted to do something about it."

"When you consider the fact that we have over 202,000 girls learning about missions through GA, I don't know that the number is that surprising. But it is a huge response. GAs overwhelmingly respond to needs."

"It just goes to prove you should never underestimate the power and impact of missions education in the mind and heart of a GA."

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New Mexico church
saves WMU week

By Susan Doyle

FORT SUMNER, N.M. (BP)--If it weren't for some members of First Baptist Church of Fort Sumner, N.M., the Woman's Missionary Union leadership training week at Glorieta (N.M) Baptist Conference Center might never have happened.

Ele Clay, language materials editor for Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, and her husband, Charles, were driving a rented 24-foot cargo truck from Birmingham, Ala., to Glorieta. The truck was filled with conference materials, stage sets and props scheduled for use during the meeting.

The Clays, with Ele at the wheel, passed through Fort Sumner and turned onto Highway 84 heading toward Santa Rosa shortly before noon on Thursday, July 15.

"A car had just passed us when suddenly the truck swerved left crossing the oncoming lane, bumping and juggling like somebody was shaking it," Clay said.

Out of control, the truck skated back across to the right side of the road and then back across to the left side, slowly tipping over. When the truck came to a halt, it was lying across the road on its right side. The cargo compartment was in the road and the cab on the shoulder.

"We were left hanging by our seat belts," Clay said.

Clay's first thought was concern for the safety of her husband who was riding in the passenger seat.

Both Clay and her husband walked away from the accident without injuries.

"We felt like the Lord's angels were taking care of us the whole time because it didn't look like anybody could have gotten out of the wreck without more happening," she said.

"My next thought was, 'Oh, no. The posters and platforms are crushed and we won't be able to have the WMU conference.'"

Help arrived immediately in the form of a man who voluntarily directed traffic around the truck, a nurse who stopped and offered her services and someone who contacted the local sheriff's office.

"People just drove up and stopped to help," she said. Everyone was interested in the truck's contents.

"We had a chance to tell them who we were, what WMU is and why we were traveling through here," she said.

By the time Clay returned to Fort Sumner from the wreck site with the sheriff, the sheriff's office had contacted the truck rental company and a replacement truck was on the way.

Contacts also were made to the WMU staff in Birmingham, Ala. WMU staff members contacted Fort Sumner's First Baptist Church to let them know what had happened.

Jim Peabody, the church's pastor, and Joy Garner, the church secretary, gathered church members to help reload the replacement truck when it arrived later in the day.

In addition to Peabody and Garner, church members Russell Riley, Dean White, Bobbie Russ, Frank Patterson, Rick Garner, Glenn Russ and Wanda Russ worked almost three hours to unload and then reload the WMU cargo.

Damages to the contents were minimal.

Joy and Rick Garner hosted the Clays for the evening and sent them on their way the next morning.

"They really babied us and took super care of us," Clay said.

In addition to the church members, the Clays gave high praise to the Debaca County Sheriff, Champ Landrum, and the department's dispatcher, Linda Boyd, for their assistance and concern.

Cause of the wreck is still undetermined. Driver and mechanical error have been ruled out.

Seminary prof takes students
'where the fish are biting'

By Jon Walker

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--More than 400 people made professions of faith in Christ in San Salvador, El Salvador, during a week of evangelistic crusades involving students from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Southeastern professor Gerald Cowen said he took the students "where the fish were biting so they would want to go back for more."

"I operate under the dictum that you find out where God is doing something and then you get there as soon as you can. Once you get there, you try to work without fouling up what God is already doing," said Cowen, who has annually taken students from the Wake Forest, N.C., seminary on mission trips to remote areas of the world.

The people of San Salvador are very open to the gospel and particularly hospitable to Americans, Cowen said.

"Some of our students have never seen anything like this, where 50, 75 or 100 people accept Christ during one week at a local church," Cowen said. "When I was a boy, you could still see things like that in America, but rarely anymore. However, there are still places in the world where people are open to the gospel and I think it's an encouragement for our students to see that."

Southeastern student Jeff Pennington said he was moved by the many people "saved and dedicated to the Lord" during the San Salvador crusades.

"Having pastored in the South, where many people have heard the gospel and are almost hardened to it, I was surprised at how receptive the people of San Salvador were to it," Pennington said.

Cowen said members of the communist party tried to compete with the outdoor evangelistic crusades by setting up loudspeakers to draw attention away from the gospel message. However, by the week's end one of the communist leaders accepted Christ, "coming forward publicly during an invitation."

"He came over to talk to us every day," Cowen said, "and the last time I saw him he had bright orange 'I Love Jesus' stickers all over his black beret. He couldn't read, so he would take Christian tracts home to have his mother read them to him. We also gave him a Gospel of John for her to read to him."

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Bible publishers seek
new relevance, customers

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
7/22/93

ATLANTA (BP)--Faced with an increasingly secular society, Bible publishers are offering multiple versions and formats of Scripture in a search for relevance and new buyers outside the church.

In addition to the bonded leather, onion-leaf pages most people recognize, today's Bibles often come in soft covers, combining Scriptures with such user-friendly features as devotional material or topical subheadings on current issues.

Ranging from a devotional Bible for busy executives to a street slang translation of the books of Moses, publishers seek to offer the centuries-old book in a contemporary format that will be desirable in today's market.

"Niche Bibles" are not new but there are more of them, said Wendell Overstreet, Bible marketing manager of Broadman & Holman Publishers. Broadman & Holman, the publishing company of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, publishes the Family Worship Bible.

While the message of the Bible should be relevant to all people, Overstreet said publishers must guard against diluting Scripture by trying to make it "all things to all people."

"While we have it as our mission to reach others, you can't change God's Word," he said, adding he's seen groups try to influence publishers to soften some of the Bible's confrontational messages. "You can't make it say whatever you want it to to embrace any special interest group."

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Many versions simply try to add insights to help readers understand the Scripture's original meaning and context.

"The Bible is probably the most purchased and least read product," said Ron Beers, vice president for editorial at Tyndale House, publisher of the "Life Application Bible."

Findings by researcher and author George Barna appear to support Beers. While two-thirds of Americans say religion is an important part of their lives, those who read the Bible weekly decreased in the past decade from 40 percent to 34 percent, Barna said.

"Even those who do read it have a very difficult time understanding it," Beers added.

Frank Couch, vice president of Bibles for Thomas Nelson Publishers, called the \$200 million-a-year Bible publishing trade a ministry of reaching beyond the church pew to make Scripture attractive to those who do not attend church.

"What we've been doing is preaching to the choir for a very long time," said Couch, whose company publishes "The Word in Life Study Bible."

"There are people out in the general public who don't have any idea what faith is about. We have to touch those people," he said.

Many publishers at July's annual Christian Booksellers Association meeting in Atlanta said multiple translations and formats alone do not weaken the impact or importance of Scripture.

"This is something that has been going on for many hundreds of years," says Lynn Hieatt, manager of Cambridge Bible Publishing. "There have been many times when people have reinterpreted the Bible for their times making it relevant."

San Antonio pastor and author Max Lucado agreed. "People who attend our congregation are not aware of the reverence of the Bible. They are seeking more the relevance in the Bible."

"People complain to me if I use a form of Scripture that doesn't connect immediately with them," he added. "I find people more and more appreciative that the Bible reads more like Time magazine or a newspaper."

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Slang Bible translation
seeks black audience

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
7/22/93

"And that bad ol' serpent told the sister, Nah, sister, he's feeding you a line of bull. You won't die. The Almighty just knows that if you eat from the tree you'll be hipped to what's going down." --- From the Black Bible Chronicles by P.K. McCary

ATLANTA (BP)--Don't bother charging P.K. McCary with irreverence. She's heard the criticisms and says they pale in light of her evangelistic mission.

"All I want to do is introduce kids to God," says McCary, a journalist and member of Brentwood Baptist Church in Houston. "It doesn't matter how you get it, just so you get it."

Her Black Bible Chronicles is a street slang translation of the Old Testament's first five books. With sections titled "World Up!" and "Cain Wastes Abel," it won't be mistaken for the King James Version.

McCary says this kind of book is needed to share the Bible's timeless message with young people who don't think their problems are addressed in the leather-bound pages most people carry to church.

"Sometimes your point is made when you say 'cuz' rather than 'because.' It makes you perk your ears up and listen," she says. "We've got kids who are not listening."

Some research supports her claim. Christian researcher and author George Barna said while the black community reveres and reads the Bible more than the rest of society, "there is a greater struggle to make sense of it."

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McCary says she hopes the book helps parents teach their children values and morals in today's society. "They have looked at our hypocrisy and our fallibility, and we have nothing to say to them, so they think."

Drawing from her experience as the daughter of a Baptist preacher, McCary says the answer lies in giving children a Christian foundation that will last a lifetime. "Even when I went through periods of rebellion, the foundation was there."

Still, McCary expects criticism for her book. She can catalogue her answers faster than you can offer complaints.

Irreverent? "I don't consider slang irreverent. I consider it a gramatic, cultural way of expressing myself."

Doesn't it perpetuate black stereotypes? "As a person who has always spoken pretty much correctly, there are times when I revert to a very colorful form of language," she says. "I find it, actually, rhythmic and cool, which makes it cool to kids."

Can a layperson adequately translate Scripture? "Jesus didn't come to the preachers and the politicians to get them to spread the word. He went to the common man."

Scheduled for a September release, the first printing of Black Bible Chronicles already has sold out to bookstores, said McCary, whose second effort will be on the four Gospels.

"The message in here -- and it's here no matter what version -- is that you do get more than one shot in this life if you believe in God," she says. "Obviously, because the children of Israel were always messing up."

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**Churches can attract unchurched
with divorce recovery programs**

By Terri Lackey

**Baptist Press
7/22/93**

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--With proper programming, churches can become an environment to heal the hurts of divorced people, according to a specialist in single adult work.

Since 50 percent of the couples in the United States who marry get divorces, churches have a wide-open market to minister to those who have gone through the trauma of permanent separation, said Tim Cleary of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family adult department.

Cleary led seminars on conducting divorce recovery programs in the local church during the Sunday School Board's Discipleship and Family Development Conference, July 17-23, at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Resources and the willingness of church leaders to hold seminars and workshops for divorced people will bring outsiders flocking to the church, Cleary said.

"The majority of divorced people you could reach are unchurched," he said. "To reach out to those people is just pure evangelism."

"When divorced persons begin to realize that divorce is not the unpardonable sin, and that divorce can happen to anyone, they can start healing," Cleary said.

"The church can become an environment or community where people who are hurting can come and share their need. The problem is the church is many times the last place people will go."

A church can combat that problem by making the program attractive to outsiders, he said.

A good process for churches wanting to begin a divorce recovery program, Cleary said, is to offer a day-long seminar on the subject led by a Christian counselor or health-care professional who is not a member of the church. He suggested advertising it widely throughout the community.

At a later date, churches should offer divorce recovery workshops and follow those up with support groups, he suggested.

Divorces affect more than the couple, Cleary said. They affect the children; they affect the couple's family; and they affect friends.

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Ultimately, a church would be able to offer a holistic approach to divorce recovery, he said. That would involve ministry to singles again, separated people and married couples who are considering divorces. Group help also might be offered for children, families and friends.

Divorce recovery ministry can start as simply as handing a friend a book, Cleary said.

"Do we treat them as lepers or as people who have had a significant loss? If we could do simple human-touch kinds of things for them, and then hand them a book, that's a start in helping them through their divorce," he said.

Recovering from a divorce is a long process, Cleary said. "There is no microwave for divorce recovery."

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A list of resources related to this story have been placed in the Newsroom Library on SBCNet.

School funding proposals
find no Baptist consensus

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
7/22/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Republican-sponsored alternative to President Bill Clinton's school reform bill would require one-fourth of federal funds to local communities to be used for educational choice programs.

When the president's Goals 2000: Educate America Act is considered, probably the last week of July or the first week of August, Rep. Dick Armey, R.-Texas, and other Republicans plan to offer as a substitute the Parent and Student Empowerment Act.

Armey's proposal, like Goals 2000, will provide \$400 million in federal matching funds for school reform. His substitute would allow for educational choice programs to include religious and other private schools but would permit each community to decide whether the programs would include nonpublic schools. The programs could consist of, but would not be limited to, vouchers and tuition-tax credits for parents.

Goals 2000 is the "same old gang of failed ideas" which will do "absolutely nothing for school reform," Armey said at a July 22 press conference on the U.S. Capitol grounds.

Armey predicted his substitute will be opposed by the National Education Association and others because its school choice proposal "disenfranchises the education establishment from the monopoly control of American education, and it takes away from the liberals control of the nation's children and puts that control and those prerogatives in the hands of American parents."

Other proposals in Armey's substitute which differ from Goals 2000 include:

- prohibition of federal funding of school-based health clinics.
- requiring parents have the right to opt out of programs which they consider harmful to their children.
- mandating parents receive written, informed consent before children participate in psychological testing and sex surveys.

Representatives of Washington public-policy organizations on both sides said Armey's proposal has almost no chance of passage.

Among supporters of Armey's proposal are the Christian Coalition, Concerned Women for America, Family Research Council, Eagle Forum and the American Association of Christian Schools.

Southern Baptists, however, are deeply divided over government-funded educational choice proposals, said Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission

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"While there are many aspects of Rep. Arme y's proposal -- such as providing parental opt-outs on programs, requiring parental notification and permission as safeguards against outcome-based education psycho-babble and banning federal funds for school-based clinics -- mandating an option for federally funded educational choice, which would include religious schools, is extremely problematic for many Southern Baptists," Land said.

"While an overwhelming majority of Southern Baptists remain unalterably opposed to any kind of direct government assistance to religiously sponsored primary and secondary schools, there is no consensus when it comes to assistance given to parents who then choose where to use that assistance in funding their children's education," Land said. "Large groups of Southern Baptists still believe this to be unconstitutional, and large groups of Southern Baptists see a crucial distinction between assistance to parents as opposed to assistance to institutions.

"As I have said before, there are growing numbers of Southern Baptists who find it difficult to understand why it is considered constitutional for an 18-year-old college freshman to receive government tuition assistance to attend Baylor, Notre Dame or Brigham Young, but it is considered unconstitutional for that same 18-year-old's parents to have received government vouchers or tax credits to help defray the tuition for his senior year at a Baptist, Catholic or Mormon high school," Land said. "Given this lack of consensus, the CLC will continue to foster discussion and debate among Southern Baptists in hopes of focusing attention on the issues involved in order to help Southern Baptists reach their own conclusions."

Arme y, when asked by a reporter, said he saw no violation in allowing parents to use funds at religious schools.

Students attend Southern Methodist University, Notre Dame and Brigham Young on Pell Grants and other public funds, Arme y said, and he sees "no problem with that at the elementary and secondary schools."

The Baptist Joint Committee, while taking no position on either proposal otherwise, opposes the Arme y substitute for the "same reason we have opposed choice and voucher plans in the past," said associate general counsel Brent Walker.

Because a "school would be the ultimate recipient of government funds," including parochial schools in choice programs, it would run counter to the traditional Baptist understanding of the separation of church and state, Walker said.

The courts historically have made a distinction between parochial secondary schools and "religiously affiliated colleges where religion is not so (pervasive) in the curriculum and operation of the school," he said.

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European Baptist assembly
reflects international flavor By Trennis Henderson

Baptist Press
7/22/93

INTERLAKEN, Switzerland (BP)--From the opening hymn to the closing celebration service, the international flavor of the 33rd annual European Baptist Convention summer assembly was unmistakable.

Focusing on the theme, "Make Disciples of All Nations," 785 participants from throughout Europe and other parts of the world began the July 3-8 meeting by singing, "We've a story to tell to the nations." Both the theme and the hymn are descriptive of the ministry and vision of the European Baptist Convention, a fellowship of 60 English-language congregations in both Western and Eastern Europe.

One clear example of the EBC's international emphasis came during a report from EBC church planting consultants Ray and Helen Reynolds. They said a recent study of 15 EBC international churches revealed that 94 nations are represented in the churches' worship services.

Reynolds added one of the EBC's goals is to plant 20 churches in four years, with new congregations already established in Bulgaria, the Czech republic, Hungary, Romania and other nations.

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"That's the vision; God is developing the strategy," Reynolds said. "These churches have been planted because volunteers have heard the call and have come over to get in on what God is doing here in Europe."

Among those who have heard the call are Arkansas Baptist leaders who are working with EBC officials to finalize plans for a three-year partnership scheduled to begin in 1994. A team of 16 Arkansas Baptists attended the assembly in conjunction with a partnership planning meeting.

Arkansas partnership coordinator Glendon Grober, director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Brotherhood department, told EBC leaders, "We in Arkansas are grateful for the invitation to come and work with you in the European Baptist Convention. We see our role as a helping role. We are extremely excited about where you are today in terms of reaching the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Grober served as the Bible study leader during the weeklong summer assembly. "Find out what the Holy Spirit is doing in our world today and join him," Grober urged. "I believe God can use you to bring some cities in Eastern Europe and Western Europe to Christ."

Phil Lineberger, pastor of First Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas, was the keynote preacher during the assembly's evening worship services. Lineberger, immediate past president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, discussed such topics as: What must I do to become a disciple? What must I do to make a disciple? Where must I go to make a disciple?

"When Jesus addressed evangelism, he did so as discipleship," Lineberger emphasized. "Jesus considered evangelism and discipleship as a lifestyle When we talk about making disciples of all nations, we are talking about sharing a life-transforming message which touches and covers every aspect of one's life."

Noting the world is comprised of risk-takers, caretakers and undertakers, Lineberger pointed out, "You can't steal second base if you keep one foot on first base."

"It's risky to take the old story to new places but that's what it takes to be a disciple," he declared. "If God is going to have an impact on your part of the world, it will be because you have chosen to be a risk-taker."

In addition to the Bible studies and worship services, the assembly featured more than 20 small-group conferences ranging from confronting the New Age movement to stress management to English as a second language. Arkansas Woman's Missionary Union President Marjorie Grober and state WMU Executive Director Julie Ketner led sessions addressing WMU leadership. Among other conference leaders from the United States were Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, and Bill Marshall, executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

EBC president Bill Clark Thomas, chairman of the 1993 Interlaken planning committee, noted "one of the miracles of Interlaken are those who volunteer or accept an invitation to come at their own expense and make a contribution."

According to Ketner, "The whole experience has been a spiritual experience for me."

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Musician says praise, worship lead to God," dated 7/15/93, please delete the last sentence of the third paragraph which reads, "If we confuse praise with worship, we commit heresy," he declared.

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