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BWA general council pledges  
to fight racism, poverty

Baptist Press  
8/16/93

HARARE, Zimbabwe (BP)--Baptist leaders from around the world pledged to fight racism and poverty -- two of the multiple and formidable challenges faced by Africans -- when the Baptist World Alliance's general council met Aug. 4-9 in Harare, Zimbabwe.

"Racism is rooted in the sinfulness of humankind," Baptist leaders declared, pledging in the "Harare Declaration" to be a "prophetic witness that exposes and challenges the sin of racism."

They also pledged "to work to bring people together as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, whatever their ethnic identity."

The "Harare Declaration" is the work of the Special Commission of Baptists Against Racism (BAR) formed by the BWA a year ago in response to the race-related riots in Los Angeles and alarming race-related conflicts in almost every country of the world.

Specific to South Africa, Baptist leaders in a resolution condemned the current violence there and called for an non-South African peacekeeping force to ensure nothing is done to subvert the planned 1994 multi-racial elections.

They also called for "education for democracy programs among the peoples of South Africa" and asked BWA member bodies and their mission agencies to consider ways to support those programs in partnership with the Baptist Convention and Union of South Africa.

Realizing Africa is one of the richest regions in the world "while Africans are some of the poorest people of the world," Baptist leaders focused on poverty issues in a two-hour session on the causes and effects of poverty.

While many facts and figures and much statistical evidence were quoted on poverty, the most poignant example of poverty came when a Baptist minister from war-torn Angola told how he and other pastors had to preach while hungry.

"Many times I am hungry and have no strength in the pulpit because I have nothing to eat," the minister said, pleading, "Do something for us."

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Baptist leaders promised to challenge their churches and political leaders to fight poverty and to embrace the United Nations challenge for every country to give 1 percent of its Gross National Product to fight poverty in the developing world.

In other action on poverty, Baptist leaders called on the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, in a resolution on "Poverty and the Nations," "to examine the Structural Adjustment Programmes for 19 African countries and other poor nations and to seek ways to eliminate the serious disadvantages such programs cause."

However, Baptist leaders were reminded of their own shortcomings in helping the poor and disadvantaged as they approved just over \$2 million in aid for 1993-1994.

"Pathetic," said Ollwyn C. Abbott, executive officer of the Baptist Union of Australia. "What Baptists are giving to world aid is sad. We need to go home and reach into our pocketbooks."

But Baptists were praised for their \$2 million-plus in aid to Zimbabwe during their recent drought.

In his welcome to the Baptists, Simon Muzenda, one of two vice presidents of Zimbabwe since its independence in 1980, thanked Baptists for their help.

"Baptists spent millions of dollars in drought relief programs and local Baptists became channels for the international Baptist community to help in keeping Zimbabweans alive," Muzenda said.

"I say thank you very much to Baptists" who "demonstrated their love of Christ in a practical way," he said.

In turn, African Baptists demonstrated their joy in Christ in very practical ways. The 300 Baptist leaders visited Baptist churches in Harare and returned praising the singing, dancing and exuberant worship of African Baptists.

Indeed, while facing many problems, Africans are leaders in the Christian faith today.

"We have a lot to learn from our brothers and sisters on this continent," said BWA President Knud Wumpelmann.

"When we look at Africa, if we only see a continent with big problems we are very limited in our view," said Wumpelmann. "One out of every 11 Baptist churches in the world are in Africa. It is the continent with the fastest Christian growth."

In a resolution on "The Evangelization of the Peoples of Africa," Baptist leaders acknowledged "the movement of the Holy Spirit in the dramatic expansion of churches in the continent of Africa, and in particular, the growth of BWA member churches of approximately 50 percent over the past five years."

The leaders called on Baptists around the world to support their African brothers and sisters as "partners in mission" and to acknowledge and help Africans as "Africans win Africa for Christ."

But, as is true of Baptists in many places, Baptists in Africa struggle with conflict and division. In Zimbabwe, for example, slightly less than 200,000 Baptists are divided into four Baptist groups.

In an appeal to Baptists in Zimbabwe and Baptists around the world, BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz appealed for them to come together in unity.

"Baptists will win the world by the cross and not the sword," Lotz said. "What a tragedy to come to Baptist conventions and unions and see fighting and disunity."

"It is only if we point to Christ and his cross that we as Baptists have a future," Lotz said.

Baptist leaders responded by voting to ask Baptist churches to pray for unity among Baptists the first Sunday of every month "so that the world may believe."

## Baptist leaders embrace declaration against racism

HARARE, Zimbabwe (BP)--"We will announce courageously God's new and true humanity where the dignity and value of every person is affirmed and celebrated," says the "Harare Declaration" adopted by the Baptist World Alliance general council during its Aug. 4-9 meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe.

"We will work strenuously to ensure that our own and our congregational attitudes enhance and affirm love and respect for all God's children," the declaration states.

Baptist leaders also pledged to seek to bring people together "as brothers and sisters in Christ, whatever may be their ethnic identity" and for their congregations to address racism through evangelism, worship, education, fellowship and prophetic action.

The Harare Declaration was produced by the Special Commission of Baptists Against Racism, which presented its report to the BWA council during a special two-hour presentation.

The special commission was formed by the BWA in May 1993 after the Rodney King riots in Los Angeles.

It also was formed because of race-related conflicts in the former Yugoslavia; continuing apartheid in South Africa; violence against foreigners in Western Europe; and other evidences of worldwide racism.

Charged to report to the general council on what Baptists believe and can do about racism, the BAR commission, made up of Baptist leaders of many ethnic groups worldwide, brought the "Harare Declaration."

In the declaration, Baptist leaders say "racism is rooted in the sinfulness of humankind."

They approved a definition of racism in which groups of people assert their racial superiority because of "nature and heredity;" oppress others politically and economically "to find security, self-acceptance and power"; and "project their own anger, hostility, hatred and failures" on others to rationalize feelings of superiority.

The declaration affirms God's healing presence, reconciling love and redemption through Jesus Christ whose presence "unmasks and defeats the power of sin."

Baptist leaders voiced hope the declaration will have the same impact as the 1990 Seoul Covenant in which Baptists pledged to do all they can to evangelize the world by AD 2000.

The Harare Declaration is part of the special commission's report, titled "Baptists Against Racism," and available from the Baptist World Alliance, 6733 Curran Street, McLean, VA 22101-6005.

The report includes the papers of the commission as well as a preface by honorary chairperson Jimmy Carter.

"We need it more than ever before," said BWA President Knud Wumpelmann when the declaration was discussed during a BAR commission meeting prior to its presentation in the general council.

"Nothing we have done in the last five years has drawn the attention of the secular press and the Baptist world like this," noted BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz of the work of the racism commission.

"Go back to your communities and do something," John O. Peterson, chair of the BAR commission told general council members.

Exactly how this will be done is unclear "because we have been working without a map," said Tony Cupit, director of study, research, evangelism and education for the BWA. "However, we hope to heighten the consciousness of people in our member bodies," he said.

Calling on Baptist churches around the world to mix, Aduke Akinola, Nigerian women's leader and commission member, said, "until all colors can mix together to worship the same God, we just have verbal excuses."

"Go back to your churches where you live and see there is no more segregation," she said.

"There is still a lot of denial among our people," said Daniel E. Weiss, general secretary of the American Baptist Churches, USA. "This is a special problem and we have to confess our sin," he said.

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**Racism described, denounced  
in Baptist leaders' forum**

**Baptist Press  
8/16/93**

HARARE, Zimbabwe (BP)--"You can't laugh or smile with all this pain," said South African Dorothy Selebano, a leader of Baptist women in her country, "but as a Christian I have to learn to love those in power."

Selebano's comments were part of a special presentation by the Special Commission of Baptists Against Racism (BAR) during the Baptist World Alliance general council's Aug. 4-9 meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The presentation included calls for Baptists to do more to fight against the sin of racism in their countries and churches and the world, and it highlighted practical steps already being taken by some to deal with racism in their churches and communities.

Baptist leaders not only listened to their colleagues from around the world but also participated in small-group discussions on racism, with the groups reflecting the mix of Baptist leaders present.

Baptist leaders were encouraged to kneel or stand at the side of someone of a different race or country, or whatever they felt to express their commitment to God to fight racism.

"Even among us Baptists, there is still a problem," Selebano said, referring to the largely white Baptist Union of Southern Africa and the black Convention of Southern Africa, "but we should strive towards reconciliation."

Selebano said the women of South Africa had made progress in meeting for the first time before the general council meeting for a session with Beth Hayworth MacClaren, executive director of the BWA women's department.

When asked how she could still sing during the special presentation, "I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free" in apartheid South Africa, Selebano said, "It is because of the peace that passeth all understanding that is within me."

Since, as Jimmy Carter, BAR commission honorary chairperson, pointed out in his preface to a specially commissioned book for the council meeting, "the claim of 'God's will' is often used to justify these acts of discrimination or injustice," the commission asked John Kinney, dean of the school of theology of Virginia Union University in Richmond, Va., to give a theological perspective on the issue.

"Snake theology" is what Kinney called it, in a paper read in his absence by BAR chairperson John O. Peterson.

Kinney argued the snake in the Garden of Eden pitted man and woman against God, each other and nature, planting within humankind a demonic presence to always want someone under us or us to be over someone or something.

"A fallen over/under mentality possesses humankind and our worth is no longer defined through a wondrous image and likeness where we are with God and neighbor," Kinney wrote, "but rather by hierarchical ranking where we desperately seek value (actually devalue) by being better than, higher than, more or greater than someone else (this includes God)."

Examples of worldwide racism were given by Baptists in a panel led by Wallace Charles Smith, senior pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., and BAR commission member.

"The sin of Los Angeles was displayed before the world," said Emory C. Campbell, BAR commission member and executive minister of the Los Angeles Baptist City Mission Society.

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Campbell said the annual meeting of the mission society was disrupted by the rioting, which he described as "a wake-up call" to America.

However, while the annual meeting was cancelled, Baptist leaders from all ethnic groups met and prayed together that Saturday in May.

"It was a time of repentance and confession. God came to us," Campbell said.

While there is still tension, Campbell said more than 1,000 Baptists of every ethnic background came together recently "in a festival of worship, praise and reconciliation." He reported Korean churches are now inviting African American churches to worship together with them.

Campbell said in Los Angeles, Baptist leaders are using worship, education, fellowship and shared projects as a way to healing and reconciliation.

Noah Pashapa, president of the Baptist Union of Zimbabwe, told the audience "blacks need to be empowered and whites enlightened."

"People who have lived under racist conditions get conditioned to accept those symbols imposed on you," Pashapa said. "It becomes normal for you to accept the behavior of one race that believes it is superior to you."

"You can't avoid hate" because of racism, Pashapa said, "but you can rechannel it and harness that hate creatively."

Pashapa urged blacks to "help whites respect you and help them encounter you in the presence of God, so we can become what he want us to be together."

Simon Sircar, principal of the College of Christian Theology in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and a BAR commission member, spoke about the caste system among Hindus in his country and how the gospel ministers to that unjust system.

The caste system brings with it inequality in education, housing and economic resources, Sircar said. Therefore, when sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with Hindus and Muslims, especially lower caste people, they stress Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord, the Bible is the Word of God and once you belong to Christ you are a member of God's family.

Because the Bangladesh Baptist Union of which he is a member has many language and people groups, Sircar said, "The BBU is uniquely fashioned and equipped to be a home for those who speak different languages and come from different backgrounds.

"Once a lower caste person accepts Jesus Christ, he gets self-dignity and self-assurance," Sircar said. "First, the heart must be changed," he emphasized.

Faced with more than 600 slums in his native city of Rio De Janiero, Nilson do Amaral Fanini, senior pastor of the First Baptist Church in Niteroi, Brazil, determined to help, but first he had to work to change the attitudes of his congregation.

"I started to preach and asked Jesus to put compassion in our hearts," said Fanini. "It was black versus white and rich versus poor."

Fanini said the celebrated first heart transplant by South African doctor Christian Barnard, who placed the heart of a black man in the body of a white, helped him in Brazil.

"It didn't matter and showed we are equal," Fanini said. "We taught our church what the Bible teaches, that we are one and the love of God makes us color-blind. We don't see the color, we see the hearts."

Niteroi Baptist has launched a social ministry with 27 clinics and shelters and a feeding program.

"As an evangelist, I believe in Jesus' ministry of teaching, preaching and healing," Fanini said. "We should win the world for Jesus Christ, but the church today has to preach the total gospel to the total man. You can take people out of the slums, but only Jesus can take the slums out of people."

According to Cora Sparrowk, BAR commission member and a past president of the American Baptist Churches USA, the solution for every situation is different. "No one model will work for everyone," Sparrowk said. "However, we must be intentional about it."

Using her own church, First Baptist in Stockton, Calif., as an example, Sparrowk described it as a "multi-cultural congregation" and praised her minister, Jim Dunn, for being intentional in using a variety of people in leadership roles.

Sparrowk urged Baptist leaders and pastors to encourage "sister-church relationships and pulpit exchanges across racial lines."

Sparrowk described young adult ministries to people with special human needs in Los Angeles, educational forums and prejudice reduction workshops, such as they have in Arkansas with Southern and National Baptists as some ways Baptists are working against racism in their communities and churches.

Sparrowk also called for "a new curriculum especially for children to have a new way of looking at life."

"The key to overcoming racism is love, for we are all one at the foot of the cross," Sparrowk said.

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Baptists challenged to do more  
via world aid to fight poverty

Baptist Press  
8/16/93

HARARE, Zimbabwe (BP)--A funding goal of more than \$2 million was approved by Baptist leaders for world aid when the Baptist World Alliance general council met in Harare, Zimbabwe, Aug. 4-9, but there was no celebration over the amount.

"What we are giving to world aid is sad," said Ollywn C. Abbott, executive officer of the Baptist Union of Australia. "We need to go home and reach deep in our pocketbooks."

"There needs to be a continual growth in available funds if we are to attain the goal of funding all approved projects," said Paul Montacute, director of Baptist World Aid, noting the funding goal of under \$2 million for 1992-93 had not been met.

Of the \$2 million for the coming year, approximately \$700,000 is for disaster relief, with slightly less than half designated for hunger relief.

Some \$891,000 is designated for development projects, with the reconstruction of war-ravaged Liberia heading the list of countries to receive help.

Bibles, churches and seminary buildings are part of the fellowship assistance program of BWAid of almost \$600,000, with the Baptist seminary in Moscow slated to receive \$100,000.

However the spotlight on aid issues was focused on poverty.

As he welcomed Baptists from around the world to his country, Baptist Bishop Joshua T.N Dhube of the United Baptist Church described Zimbabwe as "a land of contrasts between poverty and squalor, tourism, wealth, affluence and comfort.

"Get in touch with the people of Zimbabwe" Dhube urged.

In his opening address to Baptist leaders, BWA President Knud Wumpelmann spoke about the disparity between the rich north nations and the poor south nations.

Wumpelmann quoted Jimmy Carter, who in an address to the United Nations Human Rights Conference in Geneva last May, said the rich nations of the north are guilty of selfishness.

"I lay most of the blame for the division of the south and north nations on the nations of the north," Carter said. "We are the ones who must yield and be unselfish and cooperate with those who have suffered too long."

Carter urged the delegates at the UN meeting to pressure the G-7 nations to provide "massive debt relief for countries that are not only starving, but are spending more than half of their total income just to pay the interest on their debt to rich countries."

Wumpelmann told Baptist leaders, "We are meeting in Africa not only to talk about aid, but also for justice."

During a two-hour presentation on poverty, Baptist leaders tasted "tsatsa," a white sticky cornmeal cake, part of the relief food poverty-stricken Zimbabweans ate during the drought. They also saw pictures of drought-ravaged Africa.

During the presentation, African leaders spoke out against the many wars on their continent that contribute to poverty as well as the exploitation of their natural resources by rich Western and European nations.

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"The powerful nations have taken advantage of Africa by taking away her material resources," said Eleazar Ziherambere, general secretary of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship.

"All the weapons used in Africa come from developing nations," he said. "If some countries stop selling arms to Africans, some people in developed nations would become jobless.

"More Africans die because of war and poverty than drought" Ziherambere said. Special emphasis was given to the poverty of the women of Africa.

Sally Chademana, president of the Pan African Women's Evangelical Association in Zimbabwe, described how women are most affected by poverty.

In a litany of sobering statistics, Chademana said 80 percent of all the labor in Africa is done by women who also organize their families and provide food for them. Women head over 70 percent of African households, she said.

"When a child is hungry it goes to its mother for food, and sometimes it is only after that child has eaten the mother will eat," Chademana said.

She spoke of the vicious cycle of poverty in which African women and especially tribeswomen find themselves.

The African tribeswoman is illiterate, Chademana said, because she is the first to be pulled out of school, yet while she is not involved in decision-making she is expected to carry out most of those policies.

"Even in drought or ploughing, she cannot decide when to be pregnant," Chademana said, "and often she has to go to terrible measures to find something to eat.

"For women, drought relief was no relief at all since the women had to take the children long distances to get food and then prepare it."

While many women farm, few own land, and Chademana called for land policies to be "gender-sensitive if we are to reduce hunger."

By keeping silent, African Baptist churches have contributed to poverty and deprivation, said Aduke Akinola, leader of women's work in Nigeria and secretary-treasurer of the BWA women's department.

"Baptists in Africa are also silent when they should cry out against bad government policies," Akinola said. "By doing nothing, Baptist churches encourage the rich to be rich and the poor to be poor."

Akinola said while Baptist churches in Africa spend more money on comfortable churches, cleaning people and others who maintain the churches -- often women -- get no or very little payment.

"Women are the poorest of the poor in developing countries," Akinola said.

Ken Sehested, director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship, said while Baptists are the majority denomination in the United States, their Christian influence "makes no visible statistical difference in the needs of the poor."

Sehested said appeals for the strong to help the weak "buys into the way the world thinks, since this keeps the weak in debt, compliant and voiceless."

Sehested called for Christian missionaries from "poor parts of its body to come to the rich and bear witness of the power of God."

"People of our congregations have a heart for helping the poor, but not all Christian leaders believe this is their job," said Robert Ricker, president of the Baptist General Conference.

Ricker described the reaction of one minister to some starving people. "God uses starvation to bring people to Christ," the minister said.

"It is right that our consciences hurt when we see the poor among us," Ricker said. "If we don't step up to this, who will?" he asked.

During an open discussion, Baptist leaders talked about the world economic order and unfair trade systems, and one man appealed to mission agencies to fund income-generating projects. "Help us not only with fish. Help us to know how to fish," the man said.

"Unless we share more than a part of our excess, and also work to restructure the systems that lead to poverty, we will not deal with this problem," said David Groves a Baptist minister from Australia who serves on the worldwide BWAid committee.

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Baptists speak out on AIDS,  
Bosnia strife, abortion

Baptist Press  
8/16/93

HARARE, Zimbabwe (BP)--Beyond addressing racism and poverty, worldwide Baptist leaders, meeting in Africa, spoke out on AIDS, warfare in Bosnia, poverty and the sanctity of human life and evangelism when they met in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Nine resolutions addressing moral issues and Baptist life were approved by the Baptist World Alliance's general council Aug. 4-9, with almost no disagreement.

"Recognizing the gravity of the situation in Africa, we could not leave without speaking to the issue of AIDS," said Ruth Sampson, chair of the BWA Human Rights Study Commission that presented the resolutions.

The Baptist leaders' AIDS resolution gave strong affirmation to "a Christian lifestyle and sexual values including the Biblical concept of chastity outside marriage and fidelity within marriage as a significant means of limiting the spread of AIDS."

The resolution called on Baptists around the world to cooperate with efforts to limit the spread of AIDS; work with others to secure funds for research for a cure; obey the call of Jesus Christ to give compassionate ministry to AIDS victims; and be models of "accepting communities where full dignity" is given to AIDS victims.

The resolution on Bosnia condemned ethnic cleansing and applauded "the humanitarian efforts so far."

The resolution "regrets profoundly" the failure of the United Nations and European nations to "intervene effectively." Baptist leaders also expressed "alarm" at the interpretation of this conflict "in inter-faith terms with the assumption that Western nations are indifferent to the plight of the Moslems."

The Bosnia resolution expresses opposition "to any solution that rewards aggression, believing that such a solution establishes a dangerous precedent."

Speaking to an issue that seemed potentially divisive, Baptist leaders in a resolution on "The Sanctity of Human Life" asked Baptists "to honor the principle of the individual's freedom of conscience to interpret Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and respect one another's integrity where differences exist as together we seek to affirm the sanctity of human life."

The resolution said "human life is sacred because all life is the gift of God" and every person is created in the image of God.

"Widespread resort to abortion, capital punishment, national and international conflict" are among violations listed in the resolution as "violations of that sacredness."

On the 25th anniversary year of the death of Baptist civil rights leader and preacher Martin Luther King Jr., the council passed a resolution thanking God for King's life and witness.

Saying "his call to seek change through non-violent action still serves as an effective model to all who strive for more just societies," the council called on Baptists around the world to celebrate King's anniversary and renew their commitment "to struggle non-violently for justice and peace."

In a resolution on evangelism, the council expressed thanks for the life of missionary pioneer William Carey who went to India 200 years ago.

Sending greetings to Baptists in the subcontinent of India, the BWA praised them for "their faithfulness in mission across two centuries and assures them of its prayers in support of their future witness."

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A resolution on "Poverty and the Nations" included a call for developed nations and their financial institutions "to forgive debts and interest repayments from impoverished nations" and "implores all nations whose arm sales contribute to the problems to cease this lethal trade."

BWA member bodies are asked to "avoid practices which transfer wealth inappropriately" and the Baptist World Aid Committee to help churches with practical ways they can address the issues of poverty, war, exploitation, inequality for women and other concerns raised in the poverty forum.

In a resolution of appreciation, Baptist leaders thanked Zimbabwean Baptists for "the warmth of their welcome and the generosity of their hospitality."

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9 new members welcomed  
to world Baptist body

Baptist Press  
8/16/93

HARARE, Zimbabwe (BP)--The Baptist World Alliance, comprised of 165 Baptist denominations around the world, welcomed nine new member bodies when its general council met in Harare, Zimbabwe, Aug. 4-9.

The council welcomed two new member bodies from Africa; two from Asia; three from India; and one from the United States.

With the removal of two umbrella-type bodies, the Baptist Convention of Thailand and the Baptist Union of India, and the withdrawal of the Myanmar Seventh Day Adventist Baptist, the BWA increased by five members, to 170.

Cries of joy erupted from their representatives when the National Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe was accepted as a member. The NBCZ, formed in 1989, has 14 churches and 1,400 members.

The Baptist Convention of Namibia with 36 churches, 13 mission points and missionary work in Angola has 3,000 members. It was formed in 1983.

From Asia, the Thailand Lahu Baptist Convention with 120 churches and 2,000 members was accepted as was the Thailand Karen Baptist Convention.

Accepted from India were the Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention with 190 churches and 13,400 members; the Nagaland Baptist Church Council with 1,255 churches and 250,000 members; and the Garo Baptist Churches with 90 churches and 132,600 members.

The 40,000-member Fellowship of Baptist Churches of Irian Jaya was admitted, as was, from the United States, the Russian-Ukrainian Evangelical Baptist Union with 21 churches and 800 members.

The BWA, with its 170 Baptist unions and conventions, encompasses more than 38 million baptized believers in a community of more than 80 million worshippers.

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EDITORS' NOTE: The following three articles comprise a series on issues facing today's teen-agers.

Teens get tips on how to  
minister in crisis pregnancy

By Tim Nicholas

Baptist Press  
8/16/93

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--When Laurie Taylor was a missionary to Brazil, her volunteer work on the maternity floor of the Baptist hospital in Fortaleza gave her empathy for mothers who couldn't keep their babies. Over time, mothers tried to give eight babies to her to find a home for them.

One child whom Taylor helped place went to her sister and brother-in-law. They had adopted one child in an American adoption. And then they adopted Matthew in Brazil after Taylor was asked to find a home for the child.

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Taylor didn't know Matthew's birth mother personally, but she spoke with the mother's Christian employer shortly before the child was born. Taylor and her sister, in planning for the adoption, had been calling the child "Matthew," which means "gift from God." On the phone, the employer said the birth mother called the child "Mateus."

"She called him by the same name (in Portuguese)," Taylor said -- a gift from God, but a gift she couldn't keep.

"He was a double gift from God," Taylor said. "My sister had been praying for another child."

She said this coincidence convinced her God's hand was on the adoption.

But her Brazilian experiences were not the only ones Taylor has had with mothers having difficulties keeping their babies. In fact, she always has had an interest in that direction.

When she was a member of Girls' Auxiliary, the forerunner to Girls in Action, the Southern Baptist missions organization for girls in elementary school, Taylor remembers writing the Sellers Home asking how adoption procedures worked. The Sellers Home is a home in Tallulah, La., formerly in New Orleans, for unwed mothers. At that time, it was operated by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Today it is operated by the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

Just before appointment as a missionary to Brazil in 1985, Taylor was in the process of being accepted into a pediatric chaplaincy program in Kentucky. Later, in Fortaleza where she did her volunteer work, the hospital -- the only Baptist one in Equatorial Brazil -- was less than a mile from her home, making participation on the maternity floor possible.

Taylor and her husband, Johnny, had to return home so their child could undergo tests to determine developmental disability. During this time, she worked three months as a substitute teacher in a prenatal program.

While Johnny Taylor took an interim job as a minister of education, Laurie Taylor requested to be a substitute teacher in special education. She'd always been interested in special ed, but her college advisor had told her that gifted students don't go into that field. So she majored in regular education.

Today, she has a master's degree in religious education from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, certification in special education and lacks only one class to finish a master's degree in special education from Texas Women's University in Denton.

Taylor went to work with the Richardson school district as a substitute teacher in special education.

Offered the chance to work with pregnant teens, she jumped at it. She helped the regular teacher, guiding the homework, teaching parenting, visiting in the hospital and home schooling the young mothers for six weeks until they could get back to class.

"That's when I got the chance to know what these kids go through," Taylor said. "One girl who was placing her child got depressed and within a year attempted suicide. Now she's in counseling."

Three were eighth-grade cheerleaders. The mother of one of the girls also had a baby out of wedlock three months earlier.

When the babies came, "friends loved on them, but didn't have to get up with them late at night or get a baby-sitter. They'd be so exhausted. The reality of single motherhood hit them real hard," Taylor said.

She worked with the girls on their academics and would often stay longer, working on their self-esteem. "For a lot of them it was their first experience (with sex)," Taylor said. She would tell them their lives were just beginning, not over, and they could still go to college. She said it became a ministry to her even though she couldn't officially witness to them while on the payroll.

While working on the prenatal program for the school district, Taylor went to a Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union writers conference. She mentioned her experience and was invited by WMU and the Brotherhood Commission to write a booklet on the subject of crisis pregnancy.

"How Could This Happen?" has been released under the World Changers Resources imprint as one of a series of booklets which deal with problems faced by teen-agers.

The booklet offers ways a teen can help a friend who is pregnant. It explains how to be a good listener, how to help her find appropriate resources and respect her privacy. It encourages the reader to share her faith if the friend isn't a Christian, and to remind her of God's love and forgiveness if she is.

"How we treat the mother is going to be reflected in her nurturing of the child spiritually," Taylor said. "If she feels unloved by the church, she feels rejected, therefore, by God."

If the young mother "is made to feel like a failure and with no chance of her being a 'good person' again, the chances her baby will ever be nurtured spiritually or ever become involved in a church are drastically reduced," she said.

"Most of the girls I worked with were in a school setting and most didn't have Christian friends," Taylor said. "I think that maybe some of the non-Christian friends stuck closer with the pregnant girl than the Christian friends did. A lot of it had to do with the parents not wanting them hanging around any more."

She added, "I wish that every pregnant teen could have a Christian friend. That would make a tremendous difference."

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Nicholas prepared this story on assignment from WMU.

**Nurse's AIDS ministry  
began with dying nephew**

**By Tim Nicholas**

**Baptist Press  
8/16/93**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Baptist nurse Margaret Ann Cummings of Norfolk, Va., became involved in ministering to AIDS patients the way many others do -- a family member contracted the terminal disease.

Because of her nursing background, she went to help her nephew who had AIDS. He died at age 29. Though she had retired from active nursing in 1973, Cummings' involvement in the AIDS ministry continued.

"The main thing that drew me is that people shunned us when we were taking care of our nephew," she said.

She has since taken hospice training and works with an Episcopal hospice group. She belongs to an interfaith AIDS council in the Norfolk area which attempts to interest churches in ministering to their own.

Why work with other denominations?

"We can't get the Baptist churches to respond," she said, adding, "I'm afraid we're going to be last."

But Cummings and others like her haven't given up trying. She works with the Virginia Woman's Missionary Union through the Baptist Nursing Fellowship of Virginia which is getting ready to begin a series of ministries in October. These ministries will include working with pregnant teens and with AIDS patients.

She also is on the Virginia WMU resource team getting ready to train in parish nursing. "This is a program where you have a nurse and a physician on a church staff who direct people in the congregation to minister to people who are ill," she said.

Now, out of her personal experience, Cummings has written a booklet for teen-agers on ministering to family and friends who have AIDS. The booklet tells the simple stories of three young people who contracted AIDS.

"They're all dead," she said sadly.

The booklet is just one in a series published jointly by Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union and the Brotherhood Commission under the World Changers Resources imprint. The series focuses on issues faced by today's teen-agers and how they can effectively minister to victims of those issues. Subjects covered by the booklets include suicide, grief, substance abuse, the New Age movement, pregnancy and divorce.

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"The main thing about teen-agers is that's when they're getting infected," Cummings said. Most of the AIDS patients she has ministered to are in their early 20s. "With the promiscuous sexual activity, they're going to get infected in high school and sick in college."

She noted, "You can't count on protected sex. Besides, when they're on alcohol or drugs, they're not going to think about protecting themselves."

Beyond giving a clear picture of the devastation AIDS wreaks even on children and teen-agers, the booklet offers suggestions on how teens can minister to other teens with AIDS.

"There are only certain ways you put yourself at risk," she said. "It's really a wimpy virus. You have to work at it. Sitting, hugging, watching a TV show together -- you're not going to contaminate yourself that way."

Cummings offers several suggestions for working with AIDS victims:

- Offer to relieve family members.
- Bring in foods they like.
- Share a verbal Christian witness.

The booklet includes a short series of Bible verses which point to the necessity of trusting Christ.

"What I'm interested in is if they've had an experience with the Lord," Cummings said. She recalled a minister witnessing to a young man with AIDS. "Ask the Lord to love me," he told the minister who, in turn, led him to a profession of faith.

"One night I was sitting with my nephew. He asked me some questions about AIDS. He was on the experimental (drug) AZT. I didn't know the answers. He said, 'What do you know something about?' I said, 'Well, let's talk about heaven.' We made a pact -- we're going to meet each other at the southern gate."

Meantime, she plans to use her talents to help AIDS patients as best she can and to expose as many people as possible to a ministry whose time has come.

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Nicholas prepared this story on assignment from WMU.

New Age movements ask little  
of followers, attract many

By Tim Nicholas

Baptist Press  
8/16/93

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--The New Age movements circulating in America today offer "microwaveable spirituality," according to James Browning.

The Kansas City, Mo., pastor and former staff member with the Interfaith Witness Department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, said the movements -- plural because they do not form a unified theology -- are "culturally adapted to what middle Americans want."

What people want, Browning said, is low commitment. In New Age movements, "You don't have to join and pay a tithe or teach Sunday school."

Though many in the New Age movements are looking to share what they have, they are not evangelistic in the sense of evangelistic Christians, he said. "No one's going to knock on your door."

Instead, adherents say things such as "Come study at the institute"; "Come take this course"; "Learn about this technique," said Browning. "It's more like a therapeutic relationship. You would pay them a fee, usually, and get back some kind of spiritual service."

Browning said he can see New Age movements as being attractive to young people "because you can be a seeker and pick and choose what you like. It speaks the language of our culture -- high-tech, high-touch." He believes there are aspects of New Age movements that might be appealing to young people, but those movements are not necessarily aimed at young people.

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To help educate Christian young people, however, Browning has written a booklet published under the World Changers Resources imprint titled "Read the Label Carefully: Separating New Age and Christianity." Jointly produced by Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood Commission, the booklet is one of a series of booklets dealing with issues facing teen-agers today.

The booklet outlines basic ingredients of New Age movements and suggests that readers genuinely listen to others involved in them.

"Your dialogue will pay off by building trust and demonstrating that you are really interested. Later, when you share your testimony, your friend will be more likely to listen to you," said Browning in the booklet.

When it comes to relating to someone in the New Age movements, Browning doesn't describe the tone of his booklet as "nasty" or "sarcastic." "I want to model a compassionate approach to people who are different from us."

The overall approach to anyone different by faith or culture has to be biblical, loving and modeled after the approach Jesus took to others and sensitive to people's needs, he said.

"My primary approach is to listen and treat them as unique human beings loved by God," Browning said. "I should be honest with them and say I believe Jesus Christ is the Savior. I would never be ashamed of saying that to someone."

A lot of religious "streams" flow into New Age movements. One is Hinduism, Browning said, but filtered through American culture. For instance, Hinduism wouldn't have a concern for the physical world, such as interest in ecology, as do many New Age movements.

"I sometimes say it's 'Yuppie' Hinduism," he said.

New Age movements place themselves in opposition to two basic things -- Christianity and secularism. Although he said he believes much of the positive morality of New Age movements come from Christianity, opposition to Christianity comes because they see it as "an old, outmoded, outdated religion," Browning said.

"Secularism they would see as a bankrupt approach to life because it doesn't deal with the spiritual."

Browning said New Age movements have what he calls "dogmatic open-mindedness." The idea they convey is, "We're open and seekers, and as long as you're like us, you're OK. But if you're one of those nasty Christians, you're not OK."

Some adherents of New Age movements are in it for the money, Browning said. Some are charlatans. Some are absolutely sincere.

The movements are evil "if you mean by evil, something that distorts the good," he said. "Certainly, New Age is a distortion of what I believe would bring fulfillment to people. They are honestly seeking, but seeking down the wrong path."

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Nicholas prepared this story on assignment from WMU.

Inmates need change of heart  
more than education, training

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press  
8/16/93

ENNIS, Texas (BP)--While prison inmates need education and training for jobs to prepare to rejoin society, Don Dennis believes the greatest need is a change of heart.

"It is time for government and prison officials to realize unless you change a man's heart he'll go back to the lifestyle he had before," said Dennis, an ex-convict who has been instrumental in introducing MasterLife and other discipleship courses in 24 state and federal prisons in Texas. Through his efforts and those of others, courses are now being taught in prisons in 23 states.

He speaks from experience in leading MasterLife groups in prison and of enlisting others to begin ministries. But before that, he spent years as a habitual criminal caught in the cycle of crime, conviction, prison, release and more crime. Sentenced in 1977 to life in prison without parole, he was released in 1980 when his conviction was overturned.

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Dennis tells his story in a new book, "Breaking Crime's Vicious Cycle," published by Broadman and Holman Publishers.

In a note in the foreword of the book, Charles Colson, a former official in Richard Nixon's administration who served prison time and now heads the Prison Fellowship, wrote of Dennis:

"I first met Don Dennis in Walla Walla prison 14 years ago. He was a tough, hard con who gave his heart to the Lord and has been just as tough ever since -- but now as a warrior for Christ. A wonderful example of God's grace: the One who can save a Don Dennis or a Chuck Colson can save anyone."

Dennis talks in his book about the summer after first grade when he made a profession of faith at a Vacation Bible School in Longview, Texas. His grandparents were thrilled by his decision but his parents were more interested in partying than attending his baptism.

"Every day I prayed that I would be a good boy. I vowed to quit using the bad words I had picked up from friends at school and from my mom and dad when they had one of their fights," he wrote.

But his parents' divorce, the constant availability of alcohol and his ability to get attention through fighting, showing off and drinking led him into constant run-ins with the law. Dennis acknowledges the pain he caused his family, describing poignant scenes such as his arrival at a funeral home, handcuffed to a prison guard, to pay his respects to his father.

After trying Muslim and eastern religions while serving time in Walla Walla, Wash., Dennis became a Christian, this time for real, in 1979. After reading the book of Romans, he knelt by his bed.

"'Christ Jesus,' I sobbed, 'I ask you right now to come into my life and change me,'" Dennis recounts.

But after his release, Dennis again struggled with alcohol and drugs in addition to living a Christian lifestyle. He was introduced to MasterLife by Bob and Ida Davis, furloughing missionaries attending Northside Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas.

The invitation Dennis received described MasterLife as a "discipleship program that will change your life." Six months later as he completed the course, Dennis agreed the promise was no exaggeration.

In 1988, Dennis introduced the course published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board to 25 inmates at Beto II prison in Texas. Since 1990, he has worked on contract with the Baptist General Convention of Texas and formed Don Dennis Ministries with his wife Carol.

In addition to expanding prison discipleship ministries, Dennis challenges MasterLife graduates coming out of prison, especially those from the inner city, to return to their old neighborhoods and become a positive influence on youth and young adults.

"If they (those from the inner city) can go back as new people, they're more effective than someone out of a middle-class neighborhood," said Dennis, who is working with the BSSB black church development section to enlarge this concept.

With an expanding ministry, plans for the future, a happy marriage and a home in Ennis, Texas, Dennis seems the model of a reformed criminal. But he is under no illusions that the struggle is over.

"I have to remember God's doing this," he said. "This is for God's glory. Without him I'd probably be in prison or dead. I have to pray about my life daily. The Lord and the Scriptures are my crutches, not alcohol or booze."

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

54 US-2 missionaries  
commissioned at Glorieta

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Fifty-four Southern Baptist US-2 home missionaries were commissioned Aug. 15 with the assurance that "being where God called you, doing what God called you to do is the best place to be in all of the world."

Larry Martin, vice president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's ministry section, spoke at the Sunday morning service held during the annual student conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center. The 54 new missionaries, recent college graduates, hail from 20 states and Puerto Rico and will serve two years in 23 states and Puerto Rico.

At the close of the service, dozens of students made public commitments to future mission service.

Martin told those being commissioned, "We are celebrating God's call on your life, your response to the call and the potential for ministry in your life.

"Out of all the billions of people in the world, God has chosen you to be in a particular place at this time. You're the person God wants to use there. You're the person God has chosen," he continued.

Martin urged the new missionaries who will depart for their fields later this month to give their hearts completely to God, seek to develop servant spirits and "continue to trust God even when the resources seem very limited.

"There will be many times when you look at overwhelming need and have extremely limited resources. You will be amazed at what God does," Martin said.

Lane Peacock of Georgia, a new US-2 missionary who will be going to Detroit, Mich., to work with college students, said she felt God's call to missions during the 1992 US-2 commissioning service held during Student Week at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Acknowledging her southern accent would draw questions in Detroit, Peacock said, "The Lord has really shown me how much he can do in such a short amount of time."

Michael Baker of Illinois, who will be serving as a church planter in Nevada, said he became a Christian while in junior high school. However, when he entered college, "I found out it's either live it (Christian faith) or leave it. I decided to live it."

Baker paid tribute to his family, friends, campus minister and Baptist Student Union for affirming his call to missions.

Charles Johnson, director of the Baptist Sunday School Board's national student ministry, said the BSSB and HMB and been longtime partners in student ministry and in helping students live out their calls from God to mission service.

"The campus may be the most strategic mission field in the world," Johnson said. "Students are a credible missions resource."

The annual student conferences are sponsored by national student ministry.

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A list of missionaries commissioned and their home states and states where they will be serving will be posted in SBCNet newsroom.

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