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93-137

ETHIOPIA -- Ethiopia: years of patience harvest long-term results; photo.
ETHIOPIA -- Labels don't describe suffering of Ethiopia's displaced people; photo.
ETHIOPIA -- Tradition dies hard as Orthodox confront evangelicals in Ethiopia;
photo.
ETHIOPIA -- Ethiopia: a home where the Pearsons' hearts live; photos.
MISSOURI -- Midwestern Seminary v.p. resigns over financial irregularities.
NEW MEXICO -- They say abuse victims can be abuse survivors.
TEXAS -- From 57 in a bait shop, mission becomes full-service church; photo.
NASHVILLE -- (BP) Brites

EDITORS' NOTE: Africa correspondent Craig Bird wrote the following stories after visiting Ethiopia to assess how mission work is progressing in the post-communist era.

**Ethiopia: years of patience
harvest long-term results**

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
8/17/93

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries of Ethiopia have quite a resume.

In the past two decades they have worked under a feudal monarchy that empowered a state religion, a brutal communist dictatorship that persecuted all religions and a fledgling democracy that at times is hard-pressed to back up its guarantee of religious freedom.

During those same years they have ministered in one of history's most devastating droughts and famines and through a debilitating civil war.

What's the result?

"We've done a lot of good things on the human level," said Jerry Bedsole of Foley, Ala., dean of Southern Baptist missionaries in Ethiopia with 23 years of service. "And the Lord has let us take part in some great things on the eternal level.

"Under the (communist government) we couldn't report a lot of what was happening publicly and if we associated too closely with new converts they would be arrested, but the Word of God was planted. Today we finally have the freedom to preach and witness openly -- and we see what God has been doing."

Two examples:

-- Nearly 40 people completed a spring workshop on MasterLife, a Christian discipleship and Bible study program. More than half are active priests in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church -- a common opponent and sometimes persecutor of "Pentays" (a derisive term applied to evangelical Christians).

-- In the central highlands a tiny band of believers cut off from contact with missionaries for more than a decade after the communist takeover has grown into a 300-member congregation that often attracts 1,000 worshippers. It also has started two other Baptist churches.

The foundation for the recent growth, and continued work to reach new areas of Ethiopia, is development work.

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"Development work allowed Baptists to remain in Ethiopia when communists took over and kicked out all the preachers, including ours," said Bedsole, a veterinarian and discipleship trainer. "And when the new government came to power they told us up front, 'You can preach what you want and where you want as long as you help us develop this country.'"

The most massive human needs programs came during the famine of the mid-1980s, when Baptists joined the rest of the world in keeping a nation from starving. Baptists manned feeding stations and medical clinics in half a dozen remote areas. In each of those towns strong churches exist today.

But with the end of the famine, the missionaries moved into water development and reforestation and pushed for permission to resume the veterinary and medical clinics suspended by the communists.

"Drought relief was good because we helped many people but it was frustrating because we were restricted to the feeding centers and couldn't go into villages and develop relationships with people," Bedsole explained.

"But to do water development or establish a tree nursery you have to live where you can really get to know people and share the gospel with them. If you have regular clinics people learn to trust you."

One unexpected benefit of travel restrictions was that missionaries and Ethiopian Baptist workers spent lots of time together. The workers' commitment grew as they and missionaries studied the Bible and prayed together night after night.

"Several people have told me, 'You Baptists did it right when you trained development teams,'" said Paul Gay of Quitman, Miss., former missionary projects coordinator. "We didn't do it on purpose, but now when they go to work on water or nurseries they have a mature faith to share and a bold spirit to go along with it."

Today in Ethiopia, missionaries and Baptists develop the country and believers. Springs long contaminated by animals and people are capped, and clean water flows in pipes. Bare hillsides slowly sprout with seedlings from a Baptist-operated tree nursery -- making local people who benefit more willing to attend a home Bible study.

At a medical clinic men with AK-47 rifles cradled in their arms read Scripture portions and listen to devotionals before the day's work begins. Student veterinarians learn animal husbandry from a man who also talks about a living faith in Jesus Christ. In a refugee camp food deliveries are known as "Baptist bread" and hopeless people hear about a God who loves them.

"I loved to teach and witness -- and did both whenever I could," Gay said before he returned to the United States. "But it didn't take me long to realize that if I did well negotiating contracts with the government I was making it possible for 15 strong Ethiopian Christians to work where the gospel desperately needs to be heard. And they do a better job presenting Christ in their own culture than I could.

"It's not very glorious to sit behind a desk -- but the ultimate results have been pretty glorious."

And on the missionaries' resume, it's the ultimate results that count.

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Labels don't describe suffering
of Ethiopia's displaced people

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
8/17/93

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (BP)--To most people they're refugees.

To relief workers they're displaced people.

To Southern Baptist missionaries in Ethiopia, they're hungry, hurting people who need physical food and spiritual help.

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Technically, residents of Kaliti camp on the outskirts of Addis Ababa are classified as displaced people -- instead of refugees -- because of an imaginary line they didn't cross. If war or natural disaster forces you to flee across an international border, you're a refugee. If your tragic journey is within your country, you're simply displaced.

Whatever the label, the economic and social disruption are identical. And the physical and emotional needs are the same.

Baptists began working in the camp distributing food, and that's what keeps them there. Bible study also attracts a steady clientele. In three years more than 1,200 people have listened to Ethiopian Christians teach the gospel. Currently 25 attend regularly.

Almost 30 people have made public decisions to become Christians and have been baptized. Missionaries are considering renting a nearby house so the Bible study can have its own meeting place.

"It's very difficult for people to study individually because others are always interrupting them," said Berhanu Kabede, leader of Baptist work in the camp. "We hope to rent a small house nearby for about \$12 a month to have church services."

With 3,000 in Kaliti camp -- in a city where population has tripled to 3 million because of "displaced persons" -- it is not a pleasant place to live. At last count the camp held 145 children under age 18 who have been separated from their parents.

Housing differs widely -- rooms of an old hotel, massive tents used to store grain during the famine, army pup tents, lean-tos built from scrap metal and ragged plastic sheets, cabs of derelict trucks. But it all has one thing in common: It's very, very crowded.

Two 70-by-30-foot tents house 300 people each. Each family carefully marks its area with small rock borders and uses empty feed sacks for beds. A few maintain tiny garden plots inside the tent. One 10-by-10-foot lean-to used to be the office of the government official heading the camp. But he turned it over for housing; now eight people live there.

Baptists distribute bread and hold Bible studies five days a week. Other groups distribute oil, grain and milk, but supply is erratic.

In the weeks before the rains began, the camp committee came to the Baptists with a request for more help. The latrine (18 stalls for 3,000 people) was overflowing. Since it's on higher ground, any rainfall would wash human waste into the living area.

"If you could get us a truck we'll empty the holding tanks," said Assan Setow Assabe, committee chairman. "And if you could get us some pipe we'd repair the water system, too."

"It's not that these people don't have initiative, they just don't have resources," said Paul Gay of Quitman, Miss., former Southern Baptist missionary projects coordinator. "They've been chased from their homes and often have nothing but the clothes on their back. They're willing to work if someone like us can help them a little bit."

Industriousness is apparent inside the camp. Women sit beside small piles of potatoes and tomatoes in a miniature market. Others card wool and weave. Men spend the days walking the streets of Addis Ababa looking for work.

Yet few, if any, of the camp dwellers noted the irony of an advertisement just outside the gate. A neighborhood video room was showing a double feature: "Bullet Proof" and "One-Armed Boxer."

For people driven from their homes by bullets and left as handicapped as if they had lost an arm, the difference between movie make-believe and the world they live in is as simple as Baptist bread -- and Bible studies.

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

**Tradition dies hard as Orthodox
confront evangelicals in Ethiopia** By Craig Bird

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (BP)--The ancient and proud Ethiopian Orthodox Church is confronted by a young, bold and energetic evangelical movement.

Its reactions are definitely mixed.

Reports come from across Ethiopia of Orthodox (or Coptic) persecution of "Pentays" -- derogatory slang for "Pentecostals" applied to all evangelicals.

But so do stories of reconciliation between two groups who each see themselves as Christian. And so do indications of a renewal within the Old Testament-dominated Orthodox church as priests and lay leaders rediscover the power and truth of New Testament teachings.

During the last days of Emperor Haile Selassie (deposed in 1974) and the dark years of communist dictatorship that followed, missionaries had constant, although limited and quiet, contact with Coptic priests.

"We were so restricted by the Derge (communist government) -- and any converts who publicly associated with us were often drafted into the army," explained Jerry Bedsole of Foley, Ala., dean of Southern Baptist missionaries in Ethiopia. "So when we were accepted as friends and fellow Christians by Orthodox leaders, we welcomed the opportunity to share our faith."

Bedsole preached almost every Sunday outside a rural Coptic church when he lived in the highlands more than a decade ago. "Priests would stand on either side and translate for me," he recalled. "We had a great time in the Lord."

By the time the Derge ordered the Bedsoles to move to Addis Ababa, 70 people regularly attended Bible study in their home.

In the capital, some Coptic priests and church leaders met Bedsole and other missionaries and heard the ring of truth in their explanation of the gospel. In several Coptic churches, primarily in youth services, teachings began to center on Jesus as Savior and Lord instead of on Mary and angels. Several people now key members of New Covenant Evangelical Baptist Convention became "believers" (the term preferred by evangelicals) at those services.

Even today, when religious freedom guaranteed by the new democratic government allows people to leave Orthodoxy and openly identify with evangelicals, the Orthodox church retains numerous "believers." They're committed to bringing renewal and revival to a rich religious tradition that reaches back to Philip baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch and remembers when King Solomon entertained the Queen of Sheba.

One young man -- the New Covenant convention's "encourager," who travels around leading revivals and discipleship training -- tried to stay in the church of his family and ancestors, but finally was driven out.

Yendil, son of a priest, was educated in Orthodox schools to be a "mergata" or monk -- "one who develops others spiritually." But the priest in the church where he worked was a "believer" and witnessed to his new monk. Yendil responded and started openly attending evangelical churches.

Youth services at the churches where he worked began to grow as he shared the teachings with others -- and persecution started. For three months his salary was cut off. He responded by starting a Theological Education by Extension program to deepen the faith and understanding of young converts. His father said he would be cursed if he became a "Pentay." An opportunity to study overseas was denied while less qualified men received scholarships.

Once Orthodox leaders had government soldiers guard a compound where Yendil was staying. But when he walked out, they couldn't convince the soldiers to arrest him. When a delegation visited to see how he had changed since becoming a "Pentay," they learned about big changes indeed. For one thing, he had stopped drinking alcohol when he previously had consumed four to five quarts of wine a day.

Overt persecution of Yendil has slacked off since he began to work outside the Coptic church. But other examples abound, such as in the town of Arreti, where an Ethiopian Baptist development team built and opened a medical clinic and worked in water development. They also evangelized and began a Bible study and church with a handful of converts.

The local Coptic priest went from house to house warning parents to keep children away from "Pentays" and to "deal" with the "Mary haters."

Abeba Nebi, a 32-year-old nurse, was accosted as she walked home from town. She met an apparently drunk townsman, turned her head to greet him and found herself staring down the barrel of a rifle.

Nebi started walking toward her compound "as fast as I could in those slippery shoes" while "calling on Jesus to protect me," she said. The explosion of the gun paralyzed her with fear. "I thought I had been shot but he was so drunk his aim was off."

Baptists brought the case before local officials. At first the man denied the incident but later admitted it. Then the head official publicly warned the priest for inciting the people against the Baptists, declaring, "you can't deny you have -- I've been in the bars and heard how you talk."

Today, when the priest and Nebi meet, his first words are: "It's peace now -- it's peace now, isn't it?" Other Coptic priests apologized and a neighboring priest invited the Baptists to come live and work in his town. "The people can listen to you and to me and make up their own mind what they want to believe -- we can live together," he said.

At Maranga the local Baptist church was growing so fast and attracting so many of the town's young people that the Orthodox priest sent for outside help. Coptic youth workers arrived from Addis Ababa, and Baptist church members suffered what they simply call "heavy persecution."

But the youth still came to the Baptist church, the persecution waned and now the local priest has asked the Baptists to lead youth programs at his church. "All we're waiting on is approval from his bishop," one Maranga Baptist reported joyfully.

When the Bedsoles and other missionaries were banned from the highlands 10 years ago, they left a small, struggling group of believers in a rural area under the leadership of a converted priest.

When Bedsole, a veterinarian, and Sam Cannata, a missionary physician, returned for a clinic after communists were overthrown, old friends from that congregation hung around until dusk, waiting for everyone else to leave.

"Come with us," they whispered to the two missionaries. In the dark they stumbled several miles into a canyon. The Coptic church there was jammed with 400 people who had come for an all-night service.

"They sent word to that many others not to come because there wasn't room," Bedsole said. "Sam and I each preached twice. When we finally left at 2 a.m. they were still going strong. They've started two churches, and now have more Baptists there than Coptics. The priest is about to get kicked out of the Orthodox church, but they'll build and continue to witness and grow."

A key method of evangelism for the missionaries was mimeograph machines. Forbidden by the communists to own printing presses, the missionaries learned mimeographs were legal. So for hours every day they churned out workbooks on MasterLife -- a discipleship training program used worldwide.

Other evangelical groups also used them and so did the evangelicals within the Orthodox church. And that hasn't changed.

Twenty-four Coptic priests were among 40 people who completed a spring workshop on MasterLife at the Southern Baptist mission compound. They will lead 4,000 members of their churches through the Bible-based program that encourages personal devotional times and a constant sharing of evangelical faith.

"This is a great day for Ethiopia, with the new religious freedom," admitted Bedsole, a 23-year veteran of the vagaries of Ethiopian missions.

"But God gave us some great days in those early years too."

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

**Ethiopia: a home where
the Pearsons' hearts live**

By Craig Bird

SHOLA GABEYA, Ethiopia (BP)--Missionary Margie Pearson's new home is an old tavern.

But at least it has a new bathroom. And a spectacular view.

Of course, the bathroom is a 20-yard walk from the house, and its basic concrete-and-corrugated-metal-sheet construction won't attract "House Beautiful" photographers.

But it's still part of a dream house for Margie and her husband, Jeff, although it's a far cry from homes they once knew in their respective hometowns of Charleston, S.C., and Mora, Minn. It allows them to work in the Bulga District of central Ethiopia, the heartland of the Amhara people and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church -- and an area untouched by evangelical Christian witness until now.

Actually the new, detached bathroom isn't the only improvement the Pearsons and the Southern Baptist mission of Ethiopia made on the 24-year-old structure. They built a fourth room (with an inside shower!) on one end to up the space to 700 square feet. Then Pearson, an engineer specializing in water and forestry development, found some translucent plastic sheets in a warehouse and turned them into skylights. Then he poured a new cement floor.

The Pearsons scratched plans to use the original tin roof when rain revealed scores of nail holes, so they got a new metal roof too. Solar power provides a few hours of electricity each day.

"My twin sister kids us and says, 'Other folks install new carpet, but you just put in new concrete and whitewash the dung-and-grass walls,'" said Mrs. Pearson, who grew up as the daughter of missionaries in Morocco, Ethiopia and Yemen. "But we came to Ethiopia to be with the people. The closer we live to the way they live, the more comfortable they'll be to visit our home."

Now about the spectacular view -- actually, views.

One side displays stunning canyons; Shola Gabeya rises more than 8,000 feet above sea level. The other gives way to gentle, rolling hills. Men and boys ride by on prancing horses, sheepskins and AK-47 rifles on their shoulders. Women and girls glide by with earthen water jugs.

Children stare and yell greetings to the "feringhi" (foreigners). They will be playmates for the Pearson children, Christopher, 8, and Matthew, 4. Their families will benefit from springs capped and tree seedlings grown and distributed by Jeff Pearson and the Ethiopian Baptist development team.

And they'll all hear -- slowly but surely -- of Jesus Christ as the only way to God, of a faith that says you don't worship Mary or angels. That's the view the Pearsons and the development team concentrate on.

The Ethiopian Orthodox (or Coptic) Church traces its lineage to New Testament times and its theology mainly to the Old Testament. It claims to possess the Ark of the Covenant. It survived the Islamic onslaught that swept Christians from most of North Africa and the Middle East, partly because it sheltered the Prophet Muhammad when he fled early persecution.

Cut off from the rest of the church by Islam and geography for centuries, it developed its own apocryphal books. Mary became the focus of veneration and angels assumed a prominent role. Prayers and blessings and Scripture readings are in Ge'ez, a language no one speaks any longer.

And the Bulga District is the center of that faith. To be Amhara is to be Coptic. To be Coptic is to be Amhara. To live in Bulga is to be both -- at least until now.

"We came here to do water development and reforestation," Pearson explained. "That's what the government said we could do and we'll do it. That's what the development team is paid for. We don't pay them to witness -- they do that from their own conviction and in their own way."

But the Pearsons have worked with most of the team before in other parts of Ethiopia. They're co-workers in development, co-laborers in Christ.

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"They were persecuted by their families when they accepted Christ, called 'Mary-haters' and worse," Pearson said. "The former communist government persecuted them and so does the Coptic Church. But when Ethiopians take a stand for Christ it's real. They don't try to impress missionaries. They do it because they mean it. When they make a stand, they stand."

The people of Bulga thought the Baptist team members were crazy when they came to survey the area a few years ago. A civil war raged near the district and here came a group of strangers asking how they could help.

Now the strangers live among them, cleaning and securing the water supply and planting trees in the daytime, leading Bible studies and building relationships at night, singing and worshipping God and his Son on Sundays.

The "hotel" they rent is home for the team, work base and church. Several school teachers walk 20 miles one way to worship with others of similar belief. Locals wander in on Sunday, attracted by the singing and Bible teaching, and visit weeknight Bible studies. The local priest publicly condemns the "Pentays" (derogatory slang for "Pentecostals" applied to all evangelicals) but he also asks Pearson for rides to Addis Ababa.

And when the Pearsons invite villagers to their home, no matter how humble, they really mean "home." It's where their hearts live, not just their furniture.

Mrs. Pearson, a nurse, worries most about medical emergencies -- the nearest medical care is a three-hour drive away, half of that over awful roads. But she takes refuge in how God cared for the family during their first term.

"We had many examples of God's protection," she said. "It was neat the way he worked it out so we were where we needed to be to get help. Jeff had one of the worst cases of hepatitis doctors had seen. When we went to Kenya for treatment, Christopher came down with a bacterial infection and almost dehydrated. He probably would have died if we'd still been in Ethiopia.

"The next year I got sick and went to the hospital in Addis Ababa. I thought I had appendicitis but the doctors didn't, and didn't want to release me. I literally 'snuck' out of the hospital on Feb. 2, got on a plane for Kenya and had a successful operation. In March I got a letter saying that 1,000 Alabama GAs and their leaders had prayed for me on Feb. 3 -- my birthday -- and they didn't even know I was sick!"

Later the civil war forced them to evacuate their home, leaving all their possessions to be looted. Then Pearson developed cancer, "but praise the Lord he recovered!" she said.

"On furlough people asked why we wanted to go back after all we had gone through. We told them it was because God had proven himself so faithful."

And because, while Ethiopia may not offer them much of a house, it's making them a wonderful home.

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Midwestern Seminary v.p. resigns
over financial irregularities

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Sam T. Switzer, vice president for business affairs at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, resigned effective Aug. 15 following disclosure of financial mismanagement involving the use of seminary credit cards.

The inappropriate financial transactions were discovered through the seminary's own internal accounting procedures. A special audit by the auditing firm of Baird, Kurtz and Dobson was requested by Seminary President Milton Ferguson.

The audit revealed the amount in question was less than \$15,000 over a two-year period. The full amount has been repaid and no further action is anticipated by the seminary.

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Following Switzer's acknowledgement of his financial irregularities and after his initiation of rehabilitative therapy, his resignation was accepted by Ferguson, with the approval of the executive committee of the board of trustees.

Switzer joined Midwestern's staff as director of financial services in July 1981. He became business manager in the fall of 1982. He was elected vice president for business affairs in April 1986 by the seminary board of trustees.

According to Ferguson, "This is a very painful situation for Midwestern Seminary as well as for Sam Switzer. We shall continue to pray for Sam and his family. We also will encourage and support him as he works toward full recovery."

Ferguson also said, "Sam Switzer has strong administrative and leadership skills. I anticipate that he will complete his rehabilitation and engage in productive, responsible service in the future."

Switzer, in his letter of resignation, said, "I am grateful and thankful to the seminary administration for all they have done for my family and me during this most difficult time. The manner in which the seminary has responded has afforded me the opportunity to begin rehabilitative therapy, to which I am committed to continue."

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They say abuse victims
can be abuse survivors

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
8/17/93

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Susan Boner experienced the horror of date rape more than five years ago.

For two years, she denied the young man who had invited her to his car to talk had later turned physically and sexually violent.

Healing began only with acknowledgment of what had happened and she became able to face the reality that she was not at fault, Boner, now a student at the University of Iowa at Ames, told participants attending Student Conference Aug. 14 at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center. She also is president of the Baptist student group at University Baptist Church in Ames.

Boner said the healing process for her accelerated when she participated in a study of the book, "Search for Significance," by Robert McGee. An edition of the book for Christian support groups has been published by the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division.

"It was there (study of the book) that I learned I didn't have to meet anyone's standards but mine and God's," Boner said. "I have learned God loves me, God accepts me and, no matter what happened to me, God can use me."

In a conference on helping friends who have experienced abuse, Houston counselor Toni Richerson made a distinction between abuse victims and others, like Boner, who have sought help to become abuse survivors.

To be able to help a friend who has experienced abuse, a person has to first understand what abuse is, she said. She listed seven types:

1) physical -- visible injuries from being hit, pushed, whipped, bitten, punched, slapped or burned, as well as internal injuries such as hemorrhaging.

2) sexual -- any kind of forced or tricked sexual contact, showing sexually explicit pictures or films or telling sexually explicit stories to children; inappropriate touching.

3) neglect -- failing to provide a child the basic necessities; leaving a child alone who is not ready to care for him or herself.

4) emotional neglect -- parents who fail to take an interest in their child, to even talk with, hug or be emotionally available to the child.

5) cruel and unusual punishment -- punishments that are extreme and inappropriate to the child's age or ability to understand.

6) corporal punishment -- excessive physical discipline by an adult who is out of control.

7) mental suffering -- psychological abuse or threat of abandonment.

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Many abuse victims deny their abuse, Richerson said. Other common responses include minimizing the experience as not really hurtful, rationalizing it and being unable to remember everything that has happened.

"What we're finding in research is that the more they can't remember, the worse the abuse was," she said.

"There are no excuses for abuse," Richerson emphasized. "There may be reasons why it happened, but there are no excuses."

To become abuse survivors, Richerson said victims must "accept the truth that this happened."

In the process of acknowledging the truth of what they have experienced, she said responses may include anger, fear, shame and then relief at finally talking about what has happened.

Abuse of any kind leaves a residue of aftereffects -- difficulty trusting people, poor self-esteem, unhealthy drive for perfection, difficulty fitting into groups and trouble with intimate relationships, she said.

She urged students to share with abuse victims the message that identity and healing is possible through a relationship with Jesus Christ. However, she urged sensitivity in the timing of the message.

"If you have been abused or know someone who has been abused, telling them God can heal them won't mean something right away," she said.

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From 57 in bait shop, mission
becomes full-service church

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
8/17/93

ROWLETT, Texas (BP)--Summer slump hit Lake Pointe Baptist Church the first weekend in August when 1,723 people attended Bible study.

What would be record attendance for most Southern Baptist churches is 3,000 less than this spring's average attendance at the 14-year-old church.

In staff meetings, however, no one talks about statistics. Instead they focus on recruiting care leaders for small groups and finding places for people to serve.

Pastor Steve Stroope insists his objective is not winning the numbers game. His goal is to lead people to become "fully developing followers of Christ."

Lake Pointe Baptist Church is on a peninsula jutting into Lake Ray Hubbard on the outskirts of Dallas. In 1979, nearby First Baptist Church of Rockwall saw developers buy land on the vacant property to build tract homes.

Led by J.V. Thomas, now the Home Mission's Board national consultant for key church strategy, seven families from Rockwall began a mission in a bait shop that had gone out of business. Another bait shop was the only retail outlet in the neighborhood of grain fields.

The mission grew to 57 people who called Stroope as pastor in January 1980.

Now the peninsula is home to \$80,000 houses still under construction and \$300,000 houses with lake front property. And Lake Pointe is a multi-staff, multi-building church which has baptized more than 100 people this year.

The church's growth is largely due to the community's expansion, but Stroope dismisses the idea the church would have grown without being aggressive. "People moved here to escape Dallas, not to go to church."

Lake Pointe's success is a combination of constant revisions, intentional planning and emphasis on spiritual gifts.

For example, when other churches began using home groups, Lake Pointe studied their success. Leaders realized small group intimacy and in-depth Bible studies were supposed to happen in Sunday school.

"We decided to either make Sunday school work or do away with it and do home groups," Stroope said. Their choice was to make Sunday school effective.

But they don't call it Sunday school. Too many adults think Sunday school is for children, Stroope explained. Instead, they offer small group Bible studies based on people's age or life stage, such as blended families and career singles.

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Each small group has a care leader as well as a teacher. Without care leaders, teachers would serve as social planners, crisis ministers and service coordinators. At Lake Pointe, people with the gift of teaching are only asked to teach. People with mercy or hospitality are care leaders.

Small groups at Lake Pointe are where members find friendship and their first place of service. Small groups are not the outreach arm of the church, however.

Non-Christians will not visit a small group where they don't know anyone, aren't familiar with the organization and can't relate to in-depth Bible study, Stroope said. Newcomers typically come to worship services first, he said.

Small group Bible study is one of several "speed bumps" at Lake Pointe. Stroope said doing things differently makes people slow down to consider the purpose of the task.

People called deacons in a typical Southern Baptist church are called servants at Lake Pointe. They help with pastoral care by starting prayer groups, caring for widows, making hospital visits and following up with new Christians and new church members.

A group of six men, elected annually by secret ballot, serve as elders. They are not an elite group telling the church what to do, Stroope stressed. The church is governed by the congregation but led by the elders. A large group of decision-makers becomes either a rubber stamp or a bottleneck, he added.

The church has Sunday evening services once a month. That night they visit community newcomers, host a fellowship for new members and celebrate baptism and communion. Nothing is scheduled for adults on other Sunday nights.

"On Monday we send rested Christians back in the marketplace where they do most of their ministry," Stroope said.

A year ago, the church began Saturday night worship services to alleviate crowds at two Sunday morning services. More than 350 people regularly attend, and Stroope has asked 200 more to attend on Saturday night this fall to accommodate newcomers on Sunday.

Discipleship training, called Lake Pointe University, takes place on Wednesday nights.

As the peninsula becomes saturated with buildings, the church will change its strategy from reaching new people to reaching people who have been there for 10 years.

The church plans to "look at our resources and the community and ask, 'Who are we and who are we trying to reach?'" Stroope said.

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(BP) Brites
Compiled by Art Toalston

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Nurse, preemie reunited in Brazil

RECIFE, Brazil (BP)--Southern Baptist missionary Tracy Beedy in Brazil was visiting in the home of fellow missionaries Clifford and Peggy Dane last year. Beedy mentioned she was born in Plainview, Texas, and the Danes noted they had lived in the city as newlyweds. The more they talked, the more they discovered a key link in their past: Beedy was born as a tiny premature baby in December 1959 -- and Mrs. Dane was among the nurses in the same hospital's newborn nursery who gave round-the-clock care for several weeks to the infant they called "Ity Bity Beedy Baby." Nurse and infant are now Southern Baptist colleagues in north Brazil.

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Opportunities keep him at the drugstore

NEWELLTON, La. (BP)--Several years ago Ed Britt was wondering and praying whether he should follow in his father's footsteps and become a Baptist minister. The Newellton, La., pharmacist believes he got an answer: "It hit me that I had a better opportunity to witness and to minister to people for Christ than just about any preacher in Tensas Parish. Nobody in Tensas sees as many people as I do in a month's time, so nobody has as many opportunities to work for God as I do. I realized at that moment that I didn't have to go anywhere else to do God's will in my life."

Miss Arkansas prays to keep the fizz

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--The Christian life should be better than a soft drink, says Shannon Boy, Miss Arkansas for 1992-93 and a Baptist church member. She explains: "We go to church on Sundays and we get all fired up about God in our lives but as the days go by the fizz dies down. If we are constantly clinging to the Word of God, we can constantly keep that spiritual fervor The fizz will always remain constant. Every morning as I wake up and every night as I go to bed, I ask the Lord to give me the strength to keep my spiritual fervor alive so I can lead people to him . . . and make a difference."

Quilts are her ministry to troubled girls

BURRVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--When a troubled, abused or neglected girl enters the Tennessee Baptist Children's Home unit in Morgan County, Tenn., she receives a handcrafted quilt as a housewarming gift, the work of Nella Kring, 73. "The Lord inspired me to do this," Kring says. "All I can do is quilt. I can't even drive a car. I'm just working for the Lord and I don't want any praise. Those children are precious. They're down on their luck and I want them to know someone cares." For the girls, houseparent Abbie Rogers says, the quilts "are sometimes the only thing that is uniquely theirs. They keep these quilts forever."

Boomers, busters can believe, Lewis says

ATLANTA (BP)--Despite what is often said about how resistant to the gospel "baby boomers" and "baby busters" are today, Larry Lewis says he believes the time has never been better for spiritual awakening. "I hear it all the time: You can't reach people like you see today," says Lewis, president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. "Well, just mark it down, it's a lie from the devil! People are the same the world around, and they are longing for something more than the broken cisterns of this world can ever offer."

He advises the dying to plan their funeral

DALLAS (BP)--People facing terminal illness should make their own funeral plans, advises Joe Gross, director of pastoral care and counseling at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas. "Let your loved ones and friends know who and what you want included in your memorial service," Gross says. "Recently a Christian woman who was known for her great sense of humor died following a long illness. Her instructions to her pastor were: 'If you don't make them laugh at least seven times during the service, you have not done your job!'" Her memorial service, Gross recounts, became "an authentic testimony to her joy in life and to her belief that heaven was now her home."

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