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SBC mission agencies leaders
meet for prayer in Virginia

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
12/15/93

RICHMOND, VA (BP)--Eight Southern Baptist Convention officials of missions-oriented agencies met Dec. 13 in a prayer retreat with an emphasis on "hopes, dreams and visions for world missions."

The informal retreat at the Foreign Mission Board's Missionary Learning Center in nearby Rockville, Va., was primarily for prayer, participants told Baptist Press.

"Our purpose was to pray and seek God's face for renewal and spiritual awakening in light of enormous changes in the world, the nation and the convention," Avery Willis, FMB senior vice president for overseas operations, said. Willis, chairman of the SBC Bold Mission Prayer Thrust Team, initiated and convened the meeting.

Also attending were Jerry Rankin, FMB president; Larry L. Lewis, Home Mission Board president; James D. Williams, Brotherhood Commission president; Dellanna W. O'Brien, Woman's Missionary Union president; Morris H. Chapman, SBC Executive Committee president; James T. Draper, Jr., Baptist Sunday School Board president; and Henry T. Blackaby, consultant in prayer and spiritual awakening in a joint project for the HMB, FMB and BSSB.

"We are very much aware of the high priority of prayer in staying on track as Southern Baptists with the work of God and his mission in the world," Rankin said. "We feel that we, as agency heads, must take seriously our leadership role in spiritual renewal and awakening. Our time together in a day of prayer was a significant opportunity for sharing, encouragement and bonding together."

Several told Baptist Press the prayers were for the nation, Southern Baptist churches and each other.

"We talked about our hopes, dreams and visions for world missions," Chapman said. "I was struck, particularly, by two common threads ... a burden to see God move among Southern Baptists in a mighty and fresh way and the desire of each person there to rely wholly on the Lord in fulfilling our leadership responsibilities."

Lewis said it was the first time the group has ever met just to pray with one another and "pray for one another."

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"Prayer was the sole agenda item. We've met with other agenda items before, but that doesn't bind you together spiritually like being on your knees in prayer," Lewis said.

True to its informal nature, no specific plans were made to meet again although Baptist Press was told the group may meet periodically for prayer.

"As a result of this time together and with God, I believe we have a better understanding of one another personally and of our respective roles," Draper said.

Williams' and O'Brien's offices were contacted by Baptist Press but they were not available for comment by press deadline.

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VISN/ACTS cable channel
to undergo name change

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
12/15/93

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The cable channel ACTS shares with VISN will be renamed "Faith & Values Channel" effective Jan. 2, 1994.

ACTS (American Christian Television System) is a faith and family cable television service of the Southern Baptist Convention Radio and Television Commission that reaches into more than 20 million homes. Since 1992, when ACTS began sharing the cable channel with VISN (Vision Interfaith Satellite Network), it has been called the "VISN/ACTS Channel."

"This doesn't represent a change in direction," said Jack Johnson, president of the RTVC. "We'll continue to use the acronym ACTS. And we'll continue to provide Christian family values programming. The name change simply enables the cable operator to better advertise and promote programming with local media. It is expected that many cable companies will use the initials F&V to identify the channel. It was also very important to position the channel for the new 500-cable-channel marketplace that is on the horizon."

Johnson said the "Faith and Values Channel" would continue the practice of no on-air fund-raising. The RTVC receives approximately 55 percent of its current annual \$8.7 million budget from Cooperative Program receipts. The agency must raise the remainder through advertising and solicitation of individuals. Churches are not solicited.

When ACTS and VISN entered the channel-sharing agreement with cable giant TCI in 1992, ACTS was available in approximately 8 million cable homes and was having difficulty expanding beyond the southern half of the United States. The agreement put ACTS in 11 more states and more than doubled its outreach.

"Because VISN represents a religious melting pot of ideas, some people thought our agreement to share a channel was the birth of an unholy alliance," Johnson said. "But as an evangelical, I believe the truth of Christ is stronger than any ideology. If our people learn the truth from God's Word, we don't lose them to false teachers. God's Word turns people to Jesus and away from false teaching. God's Word is always more powerful than the words of any man or ideology."

"Can you imagine Jesus, Paul or any of the apostles shunning the opportunity to teach the truth to people with differing religious philosophies?" Johnson asked. "If that had been the case, we would not have the powerful messages of the Sermon on the Mount, Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost or Paul's sermon on Mars Hill. The gospel can stand in any setting where any other message is being taught."

Johnson said because of the shared channel agreement the RTVC is in markets where Southern Baptists have had difficulty getting a foothold, and that being in those areas is making a difference.

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"The most important result is that people are coming to Christ," he said. "We're fulfilling our mission purpose, which is the Great Commission. Many church people always think of the Great Commission in terms of a foreign land. But the command is to go into all the world and preach the gospel, and when it comes to people not knowing the saving power of Christ a lot of the world is right here in the United States. We have a strong ministry worldwide, but the major support for it comes from Christians in this country. The more people we bring to Christ here, the greater our outreach to the entire world."

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Baptists lead effort to erase
scars left by church arsonists

Baptist Press
12/15/93

By William H. Perkins Jr.

MAGNOLIA, Miss. (BP)--Three young men crept down the rutted, single-lane gravel road in the dead of night until they reached their target: Springhill Freewill Baptist Church in Amite County. Using sanctuary hymnbooks for kindling, they burned to the ground the small, African-American church that earlier in the day had commemorated April 4, 1993, as the day Martin Luther King Jr., died.

Watching the flames eat away more and more of the building, one of the arsonists allegedly said, "Maybe this will teach them a lesson."

It did -- sparking a lesson in human relations on the brisk Saturday morning of Dec. 11, 1993, when Southern Baptists led more than 125 interracial volunteers from an multitude of denominations in raising a new building from the ashes of tragedy.

"When we heard the church had been burned, we knew it (the rebuilding) was the right thing to do. About 70 percent of the people here are Southern Baptist," said Jack Honea, a member of First Baptist Church in nearby Magnolia and vice president of the Mississippi Brotherhood's Volunteer Construction Fellowship.

The three men responsible for two church fires that night were eventually apprehended and now are serving no-parole prison sentences, but the emotional scars from the burning have taken longer to heal.

Susana Gatlen, 90, was baptized into the Springhill fellowship more than 80 years ago in a creek just down the road from the church. She pointed to the graves of her parents and grandparents in the cemetery beside the 120-year-old church.

Gatlen had found it difficult to view the charred remains of her church, but she asked her daughter, Hattie Jackson, to take her to the site that Saturday to watch the reconstruction. She marveled at the sense of purpose that pushed people beyond racial and denominational barriers.

"It hurt me so bad when the church burned, because I knew we weren't able to build it back. The Lord sent y'all," she told the volunteers.

The staccato rap of hammers and electric whine of power saws could be heard hundreds of yards in all directions. Carpentry skills varied widely, from a professional who walked the tops of tall rafters shooting nails with a compressed-air gun to folks who went home late that afternoon with black and blue thumbs.

Gooseneck trailers filled with building materials lined the lot, and human bootprints shared ground with fresh deer tracks. All that remains of the burned church has been pushed into a towering pile at the back of the property.

Honea, who has supervised volunteer church building crews for 11 years, said he is heartened by the response and plans to continue work on the church as long as finances hold out.

"Money provided, we will see this through to completion. This surpasses anything I could have imagined," he said.

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A building fund has been set up for the church at First Bank in Summitt, Honea pointed out, and the fund is about \$8,000 short of the estimated amount needed to finish the project. Tax-deductible contributions can be made to Springhill Freewill Baptist Church, c/o of First Bank, P.O. Box 619, Summitt, MS 39666.

Volunteers interested in working on the church can contact Rex Cowart of Summitt at (601) 276-9704.

"Mother Gaten," as she is known around those parts, marvelled at the large corps of black and white men and women who stopped construction at mid-morning and took time for thanksgiving, devotion and prayer.

"I couldn't imagined this as a young girl," she said.

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14-year-old turns loose change
into solid foreign mission gift By Donald D. Martin

Baptist Press
12/15/93

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--When Jeremy Nottingham returned to Africa with his missionary parents, the 14-year-old left behind some money that's sure to catch up with his family.

Since last January, Jeremy had collected loose change in a 2-foot-high plastic bank fashioned after a Coca-Cola bottle. By July, when the family left their home in Azle, Texas, for the southwest African nation of Namibia, he had packed the bottle with \$69 in coins.

He left the bank with his step-grandmother, Evelyn Bullington, and asked her to give it to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions.

"This was his intention all year long," explained Bullington, who with her husband, Bill, was a missionary in west Africa for 20 years.

Jeremy even brought the bottle to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's Missionary Learning Center in Rockville, Va., where his parents went through orientation training for overseas service.

"He kept saving all the time he was there," Bullington added. "Jeremy's like that. He's a young man who's serious about knowing what God wants for him."

Jeremy's stepfather and mother, Bryan and Dana Bullington, are the first Southern Baptist missionaries to live in Rundu, Namibia, a remote city just across the border from Angola. They're developing youth ministries for Baptist churches in the area.

Jeremy's natural father, missionary Barry Nottingham, died of hepatitis and related complications in 1989 while working in Burkina Faso. After resigning as a missionary, Jeremy's mother married Bullington in 1990. He was appointed as a missionary -- and she was reappointed -- in April 1993.

The gift of coins one day could purchase discipleship material for youths in Rundu or help with the mission family's housing and transportation, said Bill Bullington, Jeremy's step-grandfather and the Foreign Mission Board's vice president for overseas services.

"Whatever the use, he's just getting there a little before the coins."

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

East Africa missionaries
give \$100,000 to missions

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
12/15/93

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries don't just receive from the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. They give, too.

Mission offerings given at nine 1993 annual meetings of missionaries in eastern and southern Africa added up to \$100,464 -- and \$62,264 of that was designated for Lottie Moon.

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"These are totally free-will offerings," said John Faulkner, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board area director for mission work in the region. "The missionaries don't ask if they should take up an offering or how they should spend it -- and FMB administrators don't make suggestions."

Earlier reports from Kenya about missionary giving to Lottie Moon moved FMB trustees to respond to a challenge to increase their Lottie Moon gifts. Fifty-seven of 89 trustees reporting as of Dec. 15 have pledged to contribute \$90,000 through their churches to the Lottie Moon offering.

Missionaries in some countries give their entire offering to Lottie Moon. Some split it between Lottie Moon and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions. Others set aside part for the mission work of Baptist conventions in their countries or other special projects.

The numbers change often, but approximately 620 Foreign Mission Board missionaries are under appointment in the 26 countries of eastern and southern Africa. Roughly one-fourth are absent from the field at any one time for furlough, medical leave or other reasons.

Assuming that about 465 missionaries were on the field to give to the 1993 mission offerings, their per capita gifts totaled \$134 to Lottie Moon and \$216 to the total offerings.

"Imagine if Southern Baptists in the pew gave at that level," Faulkner said. "If even half of the 15 million members of Southern Baptist churches gave \$134 each to Lottie Moon, the Foreign Mission Board would have over \$1 billion to fund people and projects and programs to tell people about Jesus Christ!"

The goal for the 1993 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions is \$85 million.

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Land lists key issues
facing Americans in 1994

By Ferrell Foster

Baptist Press
12/15/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--The primary social issue facing Americans next year is health-care reform and how the various proposals for reform impact "sanctity of life issues," according to Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Land identified four key issues facing Americans in 1994 during a recent interview in Nashville. The other issues Land mentioned were race relations, violence and sexuality in media, and religious liberty.

Regarding health-care reform, Land said his personal belief is that "our medical delivery system is in significant need of reform." The difficulty is in identifying the most practical, legitimate approach to reform.

Reform is needed, Land said, because, first, "significant numbers of people" are not now covered by medical insurance and, second, "some form of catastrophic provision" is needed to keep long-term treatment from bankrupting people.

Most Americans would say they want the system to "assure some minimal package of health care for everyone," Land stated. The question is, "What is the best way to achieve that?"

Land said the Christian Life Commission concentrate on three factors in analyzing various health-reform proposals: how the proposals treat 1) abortion, 2) choice of doctors and 3) living wills and rationing of health care.

The Clinton administration's proposal would provide coverage for abortions. Land said he is opposed to that proposal as long as it includes abortion. If that obstacle were removed, he said he would consider other issues in the plan.

Regarding choice of doctors, Land is concerned that Americans have real choices, with a specific question involving mental health care. For instance, will a person who needs psychiatric treatment have the freedom to see a "Christian psychiatrist"?

All three factors listed by Land focus on a broader "philosophy of life."

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"There is no way you can have a value-neutral" health-care system if there is "one comprehensive standard" for providing that care, Land said. The system will either have a "sanctity of life ethic or a quality of life ethic."

A sanctity of life ethic would stress the importance of all human life, no matter the quality. In other words, it sees people with impaired capabilities as of equal value to those with normal capabilities.

A quality of life ethic assigns less value to lives that are not normally healthy or productive. This ethic might limit health care for the elderly, those with declining health, the mentally retarded and the permanently handicapped.

The Christian Life Commission supports a sanctity of life ethic, both in federal health-care policy and in the nation's general approach to medical care, Land said.

The Clinton proposal also would "eliminate private practice" of medicine as Americans have known it, because doctors would have to meet government guidelines in order to qualify for federal funding, Land noted.

The Clinton plan has received the most attention, but there are other plans being proposed, to be examined in a CLC-sponsored health-care consultation in January. Afterward, the CLC will communicate its findings to Southern Baptists and suggest questions Baptists need to ask in "formulating their own position," Land said.

Another "critical" issue in 1994 will be race relations, Land said.

"We are seeing literally a worldwide assault on the human race based on old ethnic hatred and racial prejudice," he stated. "We are in very grave danger of the virtual tribalization of the globe."

In this country, "we have to come to a point where we cherish our diversity and at the same time value those things we share in common as Americans," Land said.

Bringing together people from varied cultures is difficult, but Land believes "those who have been the oppressors, ... the perpetrators of prejudice, have the majority of the responsibility for reconciliation."

White Americans need to communicate a "desire for a fundamental change in the relationship," he said. Anglos "need to take the first, second and third steps."

The CLC is producing a new video on race relations, to be ready for Southern Baptists' Race Relations Sunday, Feb. 13.

Concerning violence and sexuality in media, Land said, "The public is fed up. Television and media violence is a direct contributing cause" to violence in America.

Land described pornography as "sexual violence, nothing more, nothing less." And he cited links between pornography and "anti-social behavior." The CLC has produced a new video on pornography.

"We're doing everything we can to mobilize Southern Baptists" regarding "abuse of the public airwaves," he added.

On religious liberty, Land asked, "Can we navigate between the devil of establishment and the deep blue sea of restricting legitimate right to religious expression?"

Government has increasingly intruded on the free exercise of religion, Land stated.

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act, recently enacted into law, "does not get us out of the woods," he said. "RFRA will be challenged in court," and the Supreme Court can overturn it.

Dangers to religious liberty include restrictions regarding practice of religion in public places and zoning restrictions that ban Bible studies in homes or keep church buildings out of an area, Land said.

There is an increasing assumption by government "that it has the right to restrict the rights of its citizens to expression of their religious convictions and beliefs," he stated.

In the spring, the CLC will release a video on Christian citizenship.

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**Missionaries suggest ways
to offer beggars real help**

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
12/15/93

ATLANTA (BP)--Ignoring them lacks compassion. Giving them cash seems unwise. Getting more involved demands time and effort.

People begging for money present a dilemma to Christians who want to help the needy but also want to be good stewards of their resources.

In New York City, home missionary Taylor Field said he can easily encounter 40 people asking for money by walking just 12 blocks. His stance is to never give cash.

"When you give money, too often you participate in the person's problem," said Field, pastor of Graffitti Baptist Center. Rather than buying food or clothes, people often use the money for drugs or alcohol, he explained.

Toby Pitman, home missionary in New Orleans, agreed. One couple with an infant stayed at New Orleans' Brantley Center at night. During the day, they went to a corner a few blocks away and put the baby on a blanket. The couple received about \$100 a day from people passing by, Pitman said.

Donors probably assumed their gifts would be used to take care of the baby, but the baby's physical needs were met through the Brantley Center, Pitman said.

For some people, asking for assistance is a well-planned business scheme, said Harold Hime, associate director of the Home Mission Board's church and community ministries department.

Hime was a pastor in Alaska for eight years. When people came to the church asking for money, the church staff asked why they needed money. If they said they were hungry, Hime offered to take them to a grocery store to buy food. If they were unemployed, Hime volunteered to take them on a job interview. No one ever accepted his offers.

People asking for money have legitimate needs or they would not subject themselves to the humiliation of begging, Pitman said. They may need to recover from an addiction or learn money management, but those needs cannot be met with a dollar bill.

"Even if you're very generous and give them \$5, how much good is that?" Pitman asked.

People often give money to beggars out of guilt, Hime noted. "Knowing you might have been manipulated feels better than feeling guilty. It feels better than worrying about it."

Yet "more people are abused by over-indulgence than neglect," Hime said. "You really help somebody when you help them help themselves."

"Nearly every city has a structure to aid deserving people," Hime said. "There are real needs and a lot of people don't know the system, but they don't have to sit on the street corner."

In New York City, Field said his first priority is to treat people with respect. He tries to talk to them long enough to learn their names and why they need money.

Field often carries a bag of oranges as he walks through the city. Along with an orange, he gives people who say they are hungry a list of times his church serves community meals. He carries a "street sheet" with directions to social services written in pictures so people who cannot read will know where to find help.

Individuals can follow Field's example by becoming aware of community agencies which meet social needs, Pitman said. When people ask for help, refer them to a place that will meet their needs.

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Many communities have a clearinghouse that screens people seeking help to prevent churches and other service organizations from being manipulated, Hime said. If a community does not have a clearinghouse, he suggested starting one.

Before referring someone to a service organization, Pitman suggested studying the agencies' financial accountability, services it provides and whether the gospel is presented.

"Identify the one you like the best and support it financially," Pitman said. "Become personally acquainted with the leaders and become involved in lives of individuals."

Investing in people is risky and time-consuming, Field noted. Some are grateful; others are not. It can be dangerous and it is often overwhelming. Field's advice is "be wise as serpents and gentle as doves."

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Caution urged in contributing
to seemingly worthwhile causes By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
12/15/93

ATLANTA (BP)--In the restaurant, Tal Davis overheard a man raising funds for missions for his church. When people reached for their wallets, Davis asked how long the solicitor had been a follower of the Rev. Moon.

As interim director of the Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department, Davis recognized the signs of cult members seeking donations. Since most Southern Baptists may not be in tune with their tactics, Davis warns that all seemingly worthwhile causes may not be as they appear.

The Unification Church, the Children of God or Family of Love and Hare Krishnas are among groups which raise money with public solicitations, Davis said. Members of the Nation of Islam raise money by selling papers to the public.

Cult members may wear a badge or have a statement on their collection plate that looks official, Davis said, but they rarely say who they represent.

While groups such as the Salvation Army have legitimate public fund-raising efforts, Davis suggests using caution when approached for money.

It's a stewardship issue as well as an interfaith concern, Davis said. "God holds us accountable not just for giving but for making sure the purpose is good and that it will be used as stated."

Davis suggested getting more information before supporting people asking for donations. If they have a brochure about their cause, write for information about the group's purpose and financial accountability.

The best way to channel money for mission efforts, Davis said, is through local churches where the use of money is publicly disclosed and members have a voice in how money is spent.

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Church reaches mothers, kids
via weekly prenatal clinic By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
12/15/93

FORT SMITH, Ark. (BP)--Sunday school rooms usually are the busiest locations in the church on Sunday mornings, but visit them during the week and often they are found vacant, collecting dust from lack of use.

Not so at East Side Baptist Church in Fort Smith, Ark. Each Tuesday night, Sunday school rooms become doctors' examining rooms, medical labs, offices for nurses, social workers and nutritionists -- and Bible study classes for children from babies to sixth-graders. The transformation is all part of a unique ministry the church started last February to meet a specific need in the community.

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The Agape Prenatal Clinic offers free medical care for expectant mothers who are unmarried, indigent or for some other reason are without health insurance. The church has done limited advertising and received some local press coverage, but many referrals are made through two local crisis pregnancy centers and by word of mouth. Church member Veta Rush, who coordinates the clinic volunteers, schedules appointments through a phone line in her home.

"It's been a very rewarding experience," Rush said. "It's great to be involved in something that is really meeting needs."

On its first night, 13 women visited the clinic, but that number quickly grew to 25-35 a week. As many as 20 volunteers a week work at the clinic, which officially runs from 6:30-8:30 p.m., but stays open until all the patients are seen.

In addition to thorough medical care from the doctor, the women also have lab work done, talk with an intake nurse and visit with a nutritionist who makes sure they know about proper eating habits and weight gain during pregnancy. They also have an opportunity to talk with volunteers who help them determine if they qualify for any government assistance programs and offer spiritual counseling and a follow-up visit from a church member.

The Agape clinic was the dream of Randy Feezell, a member at East Side and a practicing obstetrician/gynecologist in the Fort Smith area. He serves as the clinic's primary physician.

"This has been impressed on my heart for a long time," Feezell said. "There was an obvious need for prenatal care for indigent women in our community. We've had obstetricians delivering babies from women who had never seen a doctor until they came into the hospital to deliver.

"We've had every affirmation that this is what we're supposed to be doing," he said. "We've gotten all the equipment we needed and the church has provided a good group of willing volunteers."

Prenatal care is only one part of the Agape ministry.

Many of the patients who visit the clinic bring their children with them. Church members realized this presented an excellent opportunity for ministry, so another group of volunteers was organized to provide Bible study for the visiting youngsters.

"We didn't know if we'd have any children or not, but that first Tuesday we couldn't believe it. The church was full of mommies-to-be and we had children coming out of our ears," said Evelyn Weldon, director of the preschool Sunday school division at East Side and coordinator of the clinic Bible study for children and preschoolers.

She stressed the ministry is much more than just "baby-sitting," adding she has three goals for the program: 1) that the children feel loved; 2) that Bible study take place and 3) that Scripture goes home with the students through the distribution of Bible study leaflets.

Bible study volunteers use Children's Bible Study and Bible Story Time, Convention Uniform Series curriculum for preschoolers and children published by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

"These resources work great because they are designed for use in smaller churches where materials might not be as easy to come by. So, the materials we need are either in the resource kit or they are easily accessible," Weldon explained.

The teachers also send the Bible study leaflets home with the preschoolers and children, and the BSSB-produced magazines Living With Preschoolers and Home Life also are given free of charge to mothers visiting the clinic.

"We are thankful these dedicated workers are using our curriculum materials in such an innovative way to help boys and girls experience God's love," said Beth Cole, manager of the preschool Life & Work/Biblical Studies section in the BSSB's Bible teaching-reaching division. "The Bible Story Time leaflets the preschoolers take home also provide the opportunity to present the gospel to parents," she said.

The response to the clinic Bible study has been "overwhelming," Weldon said.

"We've even had children throw temper tantrums because they didn't want to go home," Weldon said, laughing. "They just feel like they are the most important people on earth when they come here."

Teaching during the clinic's operating hours on Tuesday night has helped volunteers become better Sunday school teachers on Sunday morning, too, Weldon said.

"On Sunday morning, we have the children for one hour and we have the routine down," she explained. "But on Tuesday nights, we may have them for 20 minutes or three hours, depending on how long their mothers are in the clinic. It forces us to be more flexible."

Weldon said she and the other volunteers work hard to build rapport with the mothers of the children and preschoolers. "I try to encourage them to bring their children back to Sunday school. We have had mothers bring their children back and some end up staying themselves. We've also been able to refer some mothers to other area churches, too."

East Side pastor John Marshall said the Agape clinic ministry has made church members more sensitive to other needs in the community, and a new ministry task force is under way to determine how the church can help.

"We have a strong feeling at East Side that the church too often abdicates its responsibility (for meeting needs) to the government," Marshall said. "As a result, we've turned over the greatest opportunity to launch evangelism and penetrating the world in which we live."

"It's a mind-set really. We are learning to find people who are truly hurting and we are ministering to them in Jesus' name," Marshall said. "It softens the ground for evangelism and brings honor and glory to Jesus Christ."

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB Bureau of Baptist Press.

Pastor celebrates 103rd birthday
by preaching Sunday message

By Millie Gill

Baptist Press
12/15/93

MELBOURNE, Ark. (BP)--W.O. Taylor, who was ordained to the ministry in 1913, recently observed his 103rd birthday by preaching during the morning worship service of First Baptist Church in Melbourne, Ark., where he is a member.

Focusing on "The Meaning of the Name," Taylor preached from Psalm 103 and Isaiah 7:14. "Jesus is called by some 200 different names, such as Lord and Master, Lord of Lord and King of Kings," he said. "However, his most important name is Jesus, because that name had been given to him from eternity."

"When that eternal name was bestowed upon him, a command was also given," Taylor said. "As that name was given, he was commanded to save his people throughout eternity. Today he challenges you to hear that command and give him your life so that you may spend eternity with him."

Taylor, who was born Oct. 23, 1890, near El Dorado, Ark., became a Christian in 1907 and was licensed to the ministry in 1912. His ordination in 1913 was at Sweet Hill Missionary Baptist Church in Arkadelphia, Ark.

Taylor has served numerous churches in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas, as well as serving as an associational missionary. He also has led in establishing associational camps in Arkansas at Black Ford, Bella Vista and Ravenden Springs.

He has published three books: "Clardy Heirs," "The Old Timers Did It This Way" and "Seventy Years in the Ministry."

The Melbourne church honored Taylor with a churchwide dinner to conclude the birthday recognition.

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Retired missionary nurse

Ruth Womack dies in accident By Donald D. Martin

McMINNVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Ruth Womack, a retired Southern Baptist missionary nurse known for her battle against infant malnutrition in Nigeria, died in a car accident Dec. 13.

Womack, 73, was driving home alone on a two-lane state highway after visiting a sick cousin. She ran a stop sign and was struck on the driver's side by a car crossing the intersection. She died less than 20 minutes after being taken to River Park Hospital in McMinnville, Tenn., her hometown. The two occupants of the other car also were taken to River Park and were in critical condition Dec. 14, state police said.

Appointed a missionary in 1947, Womack helped establish medical work in Joinkrama, Nigeria. She directed the Kersey Children's Home in Ogbomosho, Nigeria, from 1955 until her retirement in 1987.

At the Kersey home, Womack developed infant nutrition programs for the area. When she began her work with malnourished children, about half the children in the Ogbomosho area died before they were old enough to start school. By the early 1980s, losses had dropped to 30 percent. Womack also worked to place motherless babies with their relatives or in foster homes.

"She really was an amazing lady," said retired missionary Alice Gaventa, who worked with Womack.

"People from all over called her 'Eya-Omo' -- mother of our babies."

Her efforts gained recognition outside Baptist circles. In 1982, Nigerian television featured the missionary and her work. During the program, the announcer mentioned that water had to be carried to the Kersey home. This news prompted the Ogbomosho water director to promise to connect the home to city water and provide water tanks in the meantime.

Being featured on TV wasn't important, Womack commented afterwards. Getting water for "her babies" was.

When she retired in 1987, she moved back to McMinnville and became an active member of First Baptist Church. She taught fourth-grade Sunday school and led the church's Woman's Missionary Union and missions committee. She also traveled to Brazil, the Philippines and Venezuela on partnership mission trips.

A native of Decatur, Ala., Womack received the bachelor of arts degree from Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., and graduated from Baptist Memorial Hospital's School of Nursing in Memphis, Tenn. She also attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

She is survived by her sister, Mildred Womack, a Southern Baptist home missionary in Florida.

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(BP) photos (horizontal 8x10 and mugshot) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines available on SBCNet Newsroom.

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