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King's influence still felt
among Southern Baptists

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
1/6/93

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A more just attitude toward racial equality among Southern Baptists today is due in large measure to the life and work of Martin Luther King Jr., according to Southern Baptist authorities on race relations.

"We could hear him because he was a Baptist minister who spoke eloquently," said Glen H. Stassen, professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. "He brought together the love of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount and the struggle for justice in the midst of the powerful realities of the real world."

In fact, King grounded all his activities related to the civil rights movement "in the language of the Christian faith," noted David P. Gushee, assistant professor of Christian ethics at Southern. "It was difficult for Southern Baptists to dismiss the rightness of his cause."

King, whose birthday will be observed as a national holiday Jan. 17, was killed by an assassin's bullet in Memphis, Tenn., April 4, 1968. While King's moral appeal swayed many Southern Baptists, his message of racial justice was greeted with hostility by many others, said Henlee H. Barnette, senior research professor at Southern. Barnette, who was instrumental in inviting King to speak at Southern in 1961, said the seminary was sharply criticized by Baptists across the South because of the King visit.

While discriminatory laws have been changed and overt racial hatred has been greatly reduced, Southern Baptists still have a long way to go to "flesh out King's dream" of totally equality, Barnette said. "It's one thing to change laws but it's another thing to change attitudes and actions."

Gushee and Stassen agreed the battle for racial justice is an ongoing struggle.

"Sometimes subtle forms and not-so-subtle forms of racism remain a potent force throughout the nation, the South and the Southern Baptist Convention," Gushee said.

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Stassen emphasized the fight for racial equality is both a societal and personal struggle. "Race relations between blacks and whites is the issue of Christian discipleship which has most deeply engaged our emotions, though sometimes we have tried to repress them," he said. "When (King) spoke directly to that question he could move us deeply. He was speaking where we still have strong feelings." Everybody, Stassen added, must deal with issues such as guilt and redemption, love and hate, justice and injustice when they consider the race issue.

King helped Southern Baptists understand that the Christian faith moves beyond private devotion to every area of life, Gushee said. Hence, "Christ is not Lord where racism reigns," he declared.

King's influence, Gushee said, is evident in many Southern Baptist churches today where race relations emphases are observed and racism is considered sinful.

Stassen said King's book "Why We Can't Wait" is one of the most popular texts he uses in Christian ethics classes. "(Students) have not heard from others how much theological and ethical depth Martin Luther King had and how well he wrote," Stassen explained. "He has a major impact. It shows that churches have a job to do in helping white Christians to appreciate not only what Martin Luther King did, but what he had to say."

Prior to King's gaining widespread notoriety as a civil rights leader, a few Southern Baptists had dared to speak out against the dominant culture of racial segregation in the South, said Emmanuel L. McCall, an Atlanta pastor and a visiting professor of black church studies at Southern. Barnette, T.B. Maston, Clarence Jordan, Foy Valentine, Carlyle Marney and Victor Glass were among the early prophetic voices in Southern Baptist life who championed racial equality, McCall said.

"Although Southern Baptists did not embrace King, there was a sense in which King gave additional body to what they (Southern Baptist racial justice advocates) did," McCall said.

King and the civil rights movement probably helped the South avoid a violence-filled society that might have resembled the turmoil experienced in South Africa, Gushee said. "I tremble to think what the South would have been like if (the civil rights movement) hadn't happened."

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BSSB, WMU cancel
women's conference

Baptist Press
1/6/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Baptist Sunday School Board officials have cancelled a national women's convention in Atlanta after learning a similar conference is scheduled in the area at the same time.

Originally scheduled March 24-26, board officials elected to cancel "Panorama of Purpose: National Christian Women's Enrichment Conference," which was being co-developed with Woman's Missionary Union, said Jay Johnston of the BSSB's discipleship and family adult department.

The decision was based on "the fact that another women's conference with an outstanding program that will draw more than 2,000 participants was scheduled in the area for the identical dates," Johnston said. First Baptist Church of Snellville, Ga., is sponsoring the other conference.

"First Baptist Church in Snellville is an active Southern Baptist church that supports the programs and resources in the convention," Johnston said. "It is the role of the Baptist Sunday School Board to support the local churches and not compete with them."

This was the second annual national women's conference being co-developed with Women's Missionary Union, Johnston said. The first was held last spring in San Antonio, Texas.

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Response to gospel strong
in area of Mexican uprising By Mary E. Speidel

TUXTLA GUTIERREZ, Mexico (BP)--Mexico's first armed conflict since the 1970s occurred in one of the country's most responsive areas to the gospel, according to a Southern Baptist representative there.

Indian rebels retreated into the mountains of Mexico's Chiapas state Jan. 4 after a three-day uprising that killed nearly 100 people. Guerrillas of the self-proclaimed Zapatista National Liberation Army had seized abandoned San Cristobal de las Casas and at least three other towns in the area.

The insurgency started shortly after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) became official in Mexico on New Year's Day. The rebels protested the agreement, denounced the vast disparity between Chiapas' rich and poor and alleged human rights abuses against the region's poverty-stricken Indian peasants.

Southern Baptist representative Charles Collins, a native of Jackson, Tenn., last visited the area in early December to train Baptists who represent some of Mexico's indigenous people.

"I saw nothing at that time that would indicate any unrest. It was very calm and quiet," Collins said in a telephone interview.

But then, and in an earlier trip to the area, he observed "tremendous excitement about and interest in the gospel" among indigenous people there.

"It's probably one of the best-growing areas in the country as far as (spiritual) decisions are concerned. ... There's a tremendous response to the gospel among these people," Collins said.

That's one reason Collins and his wife, Jan, of Yuma, Tenn., moved to the Chiapas state capital of Tuxtla Gutierrez in September. The couple earlier worked among the Quiche people in Guatemala, which borders Chiapas. Their new assignment is assisting one of the state's two Baptist church associations.

Baptists have grown so rapidly in Chiapas during the past four years a second association had to be added, said Larry Gay, chairman of the organization of Southern Baptist representatives in Mexico. Both associations already have doubled in number of churches, he said.

While the Collinses now are the only Southern Baptist workers in the state, at least one couple is being sought to fill another assignment there, Gay said.

Since their arrival the Collinses have sought the best way to invest themselves in the region. So far they've found a big need for leadership training among indigenous people who have become Christians.

Collins already has led two training conferences near where the uprising began. At least 10 Baptist mission congregations meet in that area, he said. All have bivocational pastors.

One of his trips gave Collins some insight into the plight of the region's indigenous people. He and Mexican Baptist colleagues were walking across a steep mountain path about three feet wide.

"On my right-hand side was a slope that went almost straight up," he recalled. "You couldn't walk on it because it was so much of an incline. On my left was almost a straight drop-off. It was incredible how high we were."

He looked down and noticed crops growing along the incline. He learned the people cultivate the crops using ropes.

"That's an indication of how desperate they are just for the ordinary essentials of life," he said. "It's a very poor area."

Another problem: communication. Mexico has about 56 major indigenous people groups speaking about 250 dialects. In some parts of Chiapas, many indigenous people can't speak Spanish, Mexico's official language.

During the next few months Collins plans several trips to the area where the insurgency began. In the meantime, he and his wife will continue to see where their skills can be used.

During a recent leave of absence, Collins, a former pastor, completed paramedic training. Mrs. Collins finished a degree in nursing. Collins already has put his training to use as a volunteer for the Mexican Red Cross in Chiapas.

"I'm 51, which means I only have about 14 more years to go here," he said. "That isn't very long as far as investing one's life in an area. I want to use these 14 years to really accomplish something that's important. I'm asking the Lord to show me what's really important to him."

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Mediation effort to be tried
in church Freemasonry dispute

By Sabian Warren

Baptist Press
1/6/94

LINCOLNTON, N.C. (BP)--A group of Westport Baptist Church members Jan. 3 dropped a lawsuit against their church's deacons, agreeing a secular court should not rule on a congregational dispute.

Seven members who had filed the suit in November agreed in weekend meetings with church officials to end the legal proceedings and try to work out differences with the help of outside mediation, according to attorneys for both sides.

Insiders said the real issue was the conservative preaching of pastor Mark Cooke, who has taken a hard line against Freemasonry, abortion and homosexuality since becoming pastor in 1992.

According to Cooke, an unsuccessful petition drive to remove him from office preceded the lawsuit.

In a complaint filed Nov. 15 in Lincoln County District Court, the seven members claimed a September deacons election was conducted in violation of the church's bylaws.

The suit alleged another group of members changed a list of nominees and put the names up for the congregation's vote without prior notice. The plaintiffs wanted the court to declare the election invalid.

In exchange for the plaintiffs' agreeing to drop the suit, church leaders have agreed to allow the 860-member congregation to vote on whether to hold a new election, said Tom Bush, an attorney for the defendants.

Bush also said a mediation team would be called in to mediate the dispute. The mediation team, however, will exercise no authority over the congregation, Bush said.

Randy Isenhower, the attorney for the dissenting members, said all seven plan to stay in the church and abide by terms of the settlement.

Bush said both sides in the end agreed a state court should not decide the issue, which involves opposing views on church doctrine.

"It would set a precedent to allow the state to judge disputes over Christianity, which would be a horrendous precedent," Bush said. "You just can never allow the state to assist in resolving a church matter. Resolving a church dispute should be done by church folks."

Bush said Cooke's views on Freemasonry apparently stirred most of the dissent. Cooke has preached that the secrecy of Masonic rituals violates Christian teaching on marriage because husbands have to keep secrets from their wives, Bush said.

Because some of the members of the congregation were Masons, that sort of preaching "was throwing rocks at the alligator and then going swimming in the lake," Bush said.

Cooke said he was happy the suit had been dropped and hopeful that differences could be worked out.

"The things that are impossible with men are possible with God," he said.

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Used by permission of the Lincoln Times-News in Lincolnton, N.C. Warren is a writer for the newspaper.

WMU opened registration Jan. 1
for National Acteens Convention By Susan Doyle

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Registration opened Jan. 1 for the National Acteens Convention to be held in Birmingham, Ala., June 21-24.

Acteens, the missions organization for girls in grades seven through 12, is sponsored by Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

NAC is held once every five years for Acteens members who have completed the seventh grade, as well as adult leaders. This is the first time the convention has been held in Birmingham, site of the WMU national office. More than 16,000 teens and their leaders are expected to attend NAC.

Registration opened Jan. 1 and will continue until June 3 on a first-come, first-served basis. Only those who register in advance will be allowed to participate in NAC activities.

"Heart of the Journey" will be the theme of the meeting. Included in the six general sessions will be a commitment service, a commissioning service, Christian performing artists, interviews with missionaries and multi-media presentations.

After the Wednesday evening general session, Acteens will celebrate the 25th birthday of the organization with a party, parade and fireworks.

Daily Bible studies and issues conferences will be offered for the Acteens. Leadership conferences will be available for Acteens leaders and youth ministers.

Each Acteen attending NAC is asked to bring a teddy bear or a pair of inexpensive canvas shoes to give away. These will be collected at NAC and given to home missionaries to use in their ministries across the country.

A special tour of the national WMU office will be offered to NAC participants.

NAC registration forms are available in the January issue of Accent, the magazine for Acteens members. Forms also can be obtained from state WMU offices. Questions about special group tours should be directed to state WMU offices.

A registration fee of \$60 per person must accompany all registration forms. The fee includes entrance to all NAC sessions, a registration packet and an official NAC T-shirt. The fee does not include travel, housing, meals, insurance or incidentals.

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Business turns to ministry
after 'Experiencing God'

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
1/6/94

SONOMA, Calif. (BP)--First Baptist Church of Sonoma does not have business meetings anymore. They have ministry meetings.

Sure, they still call them business meetings. But pastor David Blacksmith knows they are ministry meetings because the tone of the meetings has changed since almost all the members completed the "Experiencing God" course.

In the spring of 1992, eight members participated in the church's first class to study "Experiencing God," produced by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division.

"There wasn't a single time we got together that the dynamics of God were not evident," Blacksmith recalled. "When that group finished, we all got certificates from the Sunday School Board. I presented them during morning worship and asked for testimonies. Had it touched their lives at all?"

Blacksmith said people begin to testify and to encourage others to take the course. Taking that as his cue, he asked if any other church members wanted to participate in a subsequent study. Thirty-two people raised their hands. And in the following days, the 32 grew to 50. Forty-two completed the 13-week course. Now, a year later, some participants have moved to other cities, but of the 56 average attendance in First Baptist's Sunday school, 42 people have participated in "Experiencing God." And if a participation level of 75 percent were not enough, another group plans to begin the study early this year.

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But back to those ministry meetings.

Blacksmith said those who have taken "Experiencing God" are very much aware of the concept to "watch and see where God is at work and join up." Perhaps the biggest example is a ministry opportunity that the church is ready to embark upon. At a nearby mobile home park with 220 units housing 179 children and their parents, help was needed with a fledgling Bible study and after-school ministry.

While a church in a nearby city had sponsored the effort, the need for a local sponsoring congregation became evident. Blacksmith was excited about the opportunity, and members supported the proposal to take on the task, but the need for a bus to transport children to the church for proper facilities and shelter was apparent. The mobile home park simply did not have space to offer in inclement weather.

Through the intervention of a visitor to a Sunday morning worship service, a bus has been made available by another church for First Baptist to use whenever it is needed. Soon a large number of latchkey children will ride to First Baptist on Wednesday afternoons for Bible study and activities. Blacksmith said he believes this fits in with what he already had perceived to be the church's ministry to reach adults through children.

Because of the congregation's commitment to joining God where he is at work, Blacksmith said he feels "excitement in being part of a body of believers who are willing to adjust."

Sheryl Blacksmith, a participant in the church's study of "Experiencing God" and the pastor's wife, said she observed "a lot of change on the inside of persons" following the study. She said she believes "Experiencing God" has "transformed my walk with the Lord. I learned that God pursues a love relationship with me personally.

"I always thought I'm doing OK with the Lord if I go to church and I serve God. I was always so concerned with what I could do," she reflected. "But God isn't interested in that. He's interested in ME. I was always doer-minded. My relationship with God is the most important thing. Then comes service."

David Blacksmith agreed, "I never knew God loved ME like he does. The service comes as a result of a personal relationship with the Lord." Not only have church business meetings become ministry meetings, Blacksmith said he also sees a difference in the ways church members relate to each other, and he sees them reminding each other of evidence that God is at work in their lives and the life of the church.

Blacksmith said he finds members less concerned with whether money is available to fund ministries and more interested in taking ministry opportunities and saying, "Let's trust the Lord. Let's watch to see what God is doing!"

"Experiencing God" resources include a LIFE course, a leader's guide, a video and audio cassettes. New "Experiencing God" resources in the planning stages include a youth edition, a Bible and a book.

Two seven-hour teleconferences, one about "Experiencing God" to be broadcast Feb. 12, and one on "Fresh Encounter" to be broadcast April 23, will feature Henry Blackaby and Claude King, authors of "Experiencing God." Broadcast times and places will be announced at a later date.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press.

Rosenbaum named director
of B&H editorial department

Baptist Press
1/6/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Richard "Bucky" Rosenbaum Jr., director of the Baptist Sunday School Board's trade operations department for Broadman & Holman Publishers, has been named B&H editorial director, according to Charles Wilson, vice president for trade and retail markets.

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In his new role, Rosenbaum will oversee development of product ideas, acquisitions and production of trade books, Bibles, academic books, reference books and commentaries.

Rosenbaum was vice president for business and finance for the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee before assuming leadership of trade operations in January 1993. Earlier, he was employed by the board as design and process specialist and a buyer for Holman Bible Publishers.

Replacing Rosenbaum as director of the trade operations department is Glenn Bailey, B&H management systems analyst. Before joining the board in March 1993, Bailey was president and chief operating officer of Spring Arbor Distributors in Belleville, Mich. Earlier, he was senior vice president and chief financial officer for Word, Inc., of Waco, Texas.

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Retired seminary provost dies
after apparent heart attack

Baptist Press
1/6/94

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--G. Willis Bennett, retired provost at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, died Jan. 5 of an apparent heart attack.

Bennett, 74, joined the faculty of the Louisville, Ky., school in 1959 as an associate professor of Christian ethics. He was named William Walker Brookes professor of church and community in 1969, a position he held until 1990.

Prior to becoming provost in 1987, Bennett served the seminary in a variety of administrative capacities including dean of the school of theology, director of graduate studies, director of advanced professional studies and director of field education. He retired as provost in 1991 but continued to teach at the seminary as a senior professor of church and community.

Bennett, a native of Candler, N.C., was a Southern Baptist pastor in his home state before his appointment to the seminary faculty. He held a bachelor's degree from Wake Forest University, the master of social work degree from the University of Louisville and bachelor of divinity, master of theology and Ph.D. degrees from Southern Seminary.

A recognized authority on urban ministry, Bennett frequently served as a consultant to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board as well as Baptist associations in metropolitan areas. He was the author of several books and numerous journal articles.

Bennett is survived by his wife, Caroline, three daughters and six grandchildren. The family requests memorial gifts be directed to the Dr. G. Willis Bennett Student Scholarship Endowment Fund at Southern Seminary.

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Criswell gives 2 hours
of counsel to pastors

By Tim Nicholas

Baptist Press
1/6/94

TUPELO, Miss. (BP)--Senior pastor among Southern Baptists W.A. Criswell offered his ideas on how to be a good pastor -- and noted a couple of things he has changed his mind over -- in a visit with about 30 pastors and guests at East Heights Baptist Church in Tupelo, Miss.

Beginning several of his statements with, "You may not agree with me but ...," Criswell spoke for more than two hours.

"The man of God who is the pastor of the church is the ruler," he said, noting that three times in the New Testament Book of Hebrews the Bible says to obey those who have rule over you. "They can quarrel with God over that, not me," he said.

He said when he went to be pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas nearly 50 years ago, he told church leaders, "The pulpit is mine and I preach what God puts on my mind, and the staff is mine and I run that church."

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H added, "Remember, this is my idea of the pastoral role."

Criswell noted, "If you have a dynamic pastor guiding the destiny of that church, you'll have a godly church." If a church has "a wimp" who lets others dictate what he can preach, it will be "a slovenly and sorry and poor church," he said.

The size of a church depends on the size of the staff, Criswell said. "You can only put your arms around so many people," he said, comparing the church to a tree. In the middle is the pastor and his family. "You don't grow at the center, you grow at the periphery." He said at the height of First Baptist growth the church had a paid staff of 344.

"The hardest thing in the world is finding consecrated, dedicated people (to put) on staff," he added.

A church needs choirs "plural," Criswell said. "Be sensitive to the comfort of the people and don't be afraid to change." When he was a country preacher, they would have month-long revival services in a tabernacle by the church. Now, he said, he doesn't attempt to have revivals. One can do the work through the Sunday school, visitation and bringing the lost to church, he said. Concerning broadcasting worship services, he said to do it if possible.

No matter how much money is given to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions, Criswell commented, "We will never send out enough missionaries."

He said to enlist every family member at budget time. Everyone fills out a pledge card, he said. "Pin it on the diaper" of the baby. And allow people to designate through the church to whatever worthy cause they like, he said, explaining it will keep them giving and, after a time, likely they'll stop designating and continue giving.

The church ought to encompass the entire life of the family, Criswell said. He reorganized First Baptist in Dallas, making workers responsible not just for youth Sunday school or discipleship training, but "responsible for them seven days a week."

He suggested starting an academy if a church can manage it so they can teach creation and have chapel services. He said it would be wonderful if a church could have drama schools and camps. "If I had been able to get the deacons to go along, we'd have had a football field and a baseball diamond and been the most inclusive of all organizations." He said the church started a Bible college and named it, against his will, Criswell College.

Besides dropping revival services, Criswell talked of other changes in the way he does things. For instance, he said at one time he would not perform weddings for divorced persons. Reading an article in a secular magazine initiated his change, he said. It dealt with other types of adultery. He said he knew a woman who came to church black and blue. "All kinds of things destroy the family ... Thousands are better off when they break it up." He said it is a personal conviction that, after counseling, he will marry divorced persons.

He said his understanding concerning suicide has changed. "I have talked to pastors who think (suicides) are automatically damned in hell fire. I came to a heavenly understanding and explanation," he said, noting a person can be sick in the mind just as in the body. "Does God damn because we're sick?" he asked. Instead, he said he asks God's blessing of remembrance and compassionate memory.

Other advice:

Finances: "You ought to live within that income."

Counseling: "Don't you talk to a woman about the intimacies of her life."

Baptism: "Dr. Truett (his predecessor at Dallas) slam-dunked people. But baptism is a burial service and I never saw anybody fling their dead into the ground." Instead, he said to do it gently and make a witness of the act. ... "If one is to be baptized, talk to (witness to) the whole family."

Lord's Supper: "The pastor ought to present the elements with glorious acclaim."

Funerals: Make them personal. Have th family write out a summary of their lives.

The denomination: "The Cooperative Program was born in my lifetime. That does not mean you cannot support missionaries of your love and choice. We have 31 chapels. We tried to get those ethnic groups to our church but they wouldn't come. We're organizing the 32nd one (soon)."

Other preachers' material: He said he thought it was wrong to use another's experience but realized his sermons would get thin if he did that. So he put references to preaching volumes in his Bible's margin "and my sermons got richer and richer and richer and richer. If you have said anything that magnifies the Lord, I wish you would send it to me."

Baptist hymnal: "Two-thirds of those songs will never be sung. These tunes don't bless my heart."

The SBC: "We have won our attempt to turn the SBC back to the Bible, to its conservative nature. ... The dichotomies lie in our state conventions. In Texas the conservatives tried to take over. But the convention is entirely in the hands of Baylor University. ... You've got the same thing in this state (Mississippi). Practically all the states are in the hands of the liberals. God help us."

Affirming the pastoral preaching role, Criswell reiterated, "You're going to stand up there and call them out of the judgment that faces every soul. You'll call them out of Sodom and Gomorrah."

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(BP) Brites
Compiled By Art Toalston

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Billy Graham: now a computer buff?

MONTREAT, N.C. (BP)--Watch out, computer hackers, Billy Graham is joining th ranks. Graham, sitting at a computer in his Montreat, N.C., office, spent an hour typing answers to questions zipped to him over America Online, an interactive computer network with 450,000 subscribers whose computers are linked by telephone-line modems. The 75-year-old Graham said he hopes his first computer stint "will not be my last. I've enjoyed it, and I wish we could go on for several more hours." With the computer network relaying exactly what Graham typed, a few of his typos added humor to the hour, such as a reference to the Prince of Peace as the "Prince of Peach."

QB doesn't fret slap as 'devout bore'

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (BP)--"I've never taken a drink, I've never taken drugs and I'm a virgin," University of Alabama quarterback Jay Barker said at Calvary Baptist Church's "Bama Day" in Tuscaloosa. Barker gave credit to his parents as "my best friends, and my father is my role model." Of Sports Illustrated once labeling him a "devout bore," Barker said it's a joy to be criticized for being a Christian. "My faith helps me a lot in a game," he said. "I rely on the Lord's support and I realize I am nothing without him."

Youth urges 'never give up hope'

PARK CITY, Mont. (BP)--"I used to be a person you would hate," high school senior Justin Baker told a Montana Baptist missions conference. Baker, a new Christian from Park City Baptist Church, had written this testimony: "I was a smoker and I hung around with other smokers and drinkers. I didn't want a job and didn't want to do my school work. My grades were slipping. Then on Easter Sunday of 1993, my aunt and uncle asked me if I would attend church with them. I said yes but I didn't really want to. To my surprise I really liked it. I kept attending. In June, 21 young people from Florida came to help with our youth group and to hold revival services. At our first revival service, I accepted Christ as my Savior and three days later was baptized."

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I promised myself I was going to tell everyone of the great change in my life. My only regret is I didn't do it sooner. I hope all the people reading this could show it to someone they know, to show them you should never give up hope because everybody can make a change."

Even a spoon can be a ministry

SALINA, Kan. (BP)--In a trip to Bangladesh, Woman's Missionary Union staffer Barbara Joiner was asked to lead a conference on spiritual gifts. On the last day a Bengali woman told about a Hindu man in her village who was bedridden by a stroke and could not feed himself. People in the village had given up trying to feed him because it was such a messy ordeal eating the Bengali way -- using one's fingers. "I have a spoon," the woman said. "Every day I take my spoon and go over and feed him his curry. I make sure every drop goes in his mouth and not on his face." Telling the story to Kansas-Nebraska WMU members, Joiner exhorted them, "Use that spoon. Serve in Christ's name."

Sunday school losses no problem here

HAVELOCK, N.C. (BP)--This church lost 100 Sunday school members in 1992 but gained 190. The reason: 5-year-old McCotter Boulevard Baptist Church in Havelock, N.C., is near the Marine Corps Air Station at Cherry Point, where personnel are stationed just two or three years before being transferred to another base. To make the best of the high turnover, the church has become "a spiritual incubator," pastor Kincy Barrow noted. "There are lots of young Christians here. Our responsibility is to try to teach them and disciple them so when they leave they can go to work somewhere else. We're just sending out missionaries."

Like those fishermen who followed Jesus

RICHMOND, Ind. (BP)--Truck driver Ray Crisman surrendered for the ministry during a Sunday night worship 20 years ago soon after becoming involved in a nursing home outreach. "The following Tuesday I was called by a church to preach Wednesday," he recounted. "Thursday another church called me to preach their Sunday morning service and Friday another church called me to fill the pulpit Sunday night. Three months later I pastored my first church. I haven't been back to my home church since the night I surrendered to preach. I even had to mail in my resignation as deacon and Sunday school director."

Joy abounds in town at dirt road's end

DIXSONVILLE, Ark (BP)--Not big enough to be noted on an atlas, Dixsonville, Ark., is at the dead end of a dirt road. Diana Lewis, Southern Baptist home missionary who works as Arkansas Baptists' Christian social ministries consultant, hadn't heard of Dixsonville until its needs were noted by the mayor of a neighboring town. Lewis and a host of volunteers then launched ministries in Dixsonville such as a dental clinic, ladies' Bible studies, summer feeding programs for children and distribution of clothing, food, school supplies and personal hygiene items. Despite the work, Lewis said she's the one who has benefitted. "Not all people in poverty live without joy. They are not always deprived emotionally," Lewis said. "Going to Dixsonville is not depressing to me because of the joy and love I receive."

Association's foresight pays dividends

ROWLETT, Texas (BP)--When church planter Joe Hewitt was told the Dallas Baptist Association owned a parcel of land in suburban Rowlett, he drove to Princeton Road to try to find it. "We had no idea where it was," Hewitt recounted. "We drove by the Annie Keeley Elementary School and saw the vacant five acres next door. 'If I could choose five acres on this road, I'd choose that five acres,' I told my wife. We learned later that was the property."

Thanks to the association's foresight to purchase the land in 1976 when Rowlett was a town of 2,000 instead of 26,000 and costs were considerably lower, Hewitt noted the new Princeton Park Baptist Church can devote more of its offerings for such causes as Southern Baptists' Cooperative Program for national and international ministries.

After 20-year detour, he's back in ministry

CLAY CITY, Ind. (BP)--Attending seminary in another denomination 20 years ago, Ray Deeter remembered being told "my beliefs were old-fashioned." He later became disillusioned in that denomination's ministry and separated from his wife for several months, then reconciled; became a businessman; and weathered the crisis of their son being arrested for possession of drugs. One Sunday his wife, Joanna, suggested, "Let's go down to that Southern Baptist church," where Deeter said the family "found a home. The messages just spoke to me and I would sit there in church and weep." Deeter began sensing a call to return to full-time ministry and now is pastor of that church, Faith Southern Baptist in Clay City, Ind.

Here and there across America & the world

NASHVILLE (BP)--In Kromatorsk, Ukraine, 600 people crowded into a church for worship, recounted Baptist volunteer Larry Floyd of Mooresville, Ind. -- and only six cars were in the parking lot. "The people came by foot, through any kind of weather," Floyd noted.

-- In Memphis, Tenn., 1,000-member Union Avenue Baptist Church mailed 30,000 fliers to surrounding city residents, inviting them to "slow down long enough to see our wonderful programs" -- ministries for children, youth and seniors, music and recreation, grief support, marriage enrichment and divorce recovery -- "and signs of life everywhere."

-- In Parade Magazine, former Sen. Barry Goldwater, rating the U.S. presidents he has known, said of Southern Baptist Jimmy Carter, "His being a religious man has made him, in my book, a good president."

-- In Whitefish, Mont., in his first sermon to 50 people attending the first worship service of a new Baptist congregation, Church of the Rockies, pastor Don McNeely answered "Why Another Church in Whitefish?" in the growing town of 11,000: Less than 10 percent of the townspeople attend any of the other 17 churches on an average Sunday. McNeely and his wife, Linda, began their ministry in Whitefish by launching three weekly Bible studies.

-- In New York City, Felix Hayes, pastor of First Baptist Church in Hilton Head, S.C., joined 26,000 runners in the 26-mile New York Marathon. In Harlem, Hayes spotted a young boy offering orange slices to the competitors. "He was like so many who lined our route, wanting to do what they could to help us. But this boy was so little everyone passed him by." But when Hayes stopped, the pastor sensed the lad "was so glad he could do something for somebody."

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