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NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committ
901 Commerce #7:
Nashville, Tennessee 372
(615) 244-23:
Herb Hollinger, Vice Preside
Fax (615) 742-89
CompuServe ID# 70420,

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
NASHVILLE Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

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Southern Baptists make
Olympian effort at Games

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press
2/25/94

LILLEHAMMER, Norway (BP)--They didn't win medals, but a Southern Baptist team competed hard at the Olympics.

A 15-member team of Foreign Mission Board missionaries and Southern Baptist volunteers from the United States put in long hours in sub-freezing temperatures to spread the gospel among athletes and visitors.

While Bonnie Blair and Dan Jansen speed-skated into Olympic history and figure skaters Nancy Kerrigan and Tonya Harding faced off on Olympic ice -- more than a dozen people were praying to receive Christ as personal Savior.

But those spiritual decisions, registered as of the midpoint of the 1994 Winter Games, were only part of the Baptist team's work. The workers prayed with scores of others seeking a closer relationship to God. They also evangelized hundreds, passed out cases of Christian literature, provided personal counseling to many and made numerous contacts for follow-up.

"We're not just passing out paper," missionary team coordinator Fred Dallas of Friendswood, Texas, said in an interview in Lillehammer. "Lots of groups can do that."

Instead, team members tried to build friendships so they could establish a meaningful dialogue on the Christian faith. Repeat visits and conversations were sought.

"I talked to one woman the other night and you could see the pain, the longing in her face to have a relationship with the Lord," said volunteer David Atkins, minister of music and youth at Little Cypress Baptist Church in Orange, Texas.

Team members talked to people on the icy walkways before and after events, as well as in restaurants, coffee shops and other public places where crowds took refuge from temperatures hovering in the teens.

Volunteer Jim Faulk of Waco, Texas, set up shop at a new McDonald's restaurant, telling people about Christ between bites of burgers and fries. Faulk, a contemporary Christian musician producing his fourth album, works with Action Ministries. It provides training in evangelism and discipleship, especially to college students on 160 campuses across the United States.

Dallas, who has now coordinated three Olympic ministries, directed a mammoth outreach effort at the 1992 Summer Games in Barcelona, Spain. As a missionary to Spain, Dallas lives near Barcelona, but he has spent most of his time in Lillehammer since last October preparing for the Winter Games.

Hundreds of Baptist volunteers from several countries took part in the Barcelona effort. But this time weather and other factors led Dallas to assemble a small team of Southern Baptist ministry professionals who could adapt more easily to Lillehammer's chilly confines.

Action Ministries, led by David Guinn of West Point, Ga., provided volunteer team members from the United States.

Guinn has a special interest in Olympics outreach. A former world-class wrestler, he took part in the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City. His 177 wins and six losses ranked him fifth in the world that year. But he turned from the mat to the campus when he became a college youth minister.

Like any coach, Guinn was proud of the team he brought to Lillehammer.

"All of them are trained in working with students, evangelism and discipleship," he said. "For what we're doing they're the best you could find anywhere. They're making contacts one after the other. The whole intent is evangelism, sharing Jesus. That's why we're here. We're committed to go 100 percent for the 17 days."

The Olympics offer a rare chance to evangelize people from scores of nations, Guinn added.

"It's the closest to Pentecost we'll ever find. It's where the whole world comes together, people are responsive and they'll listen to you," he said. Further, athletes are one of the most envied and admired groups on the planet. An athlete reached for Christ can share in ways ordinary people cannot, he explained.

Home base for the team was Lillehammer Baptist Church, a 76-member congregation that made an all-out effort to evangelize and minister during the Olympics.

Team members met each morning at the church for prayer and Bible study, then set out through Lillehammer's icy streets for a day of contacts. Each wore a distinctive black jacket emblazoned with "Olympics Sports Chaplain" logos. Each carried bags packed with multilingual evangelistic tracts.

But the real secret weapon for the team was specially designed pins featuring the name of Jesus on an Olympic torch. Olympics-related pins are eagerly collected by Olympics visitors; an unusual pin can bring hundreds of dollars. Pins were bought, sold and swapped all over Lillehammer.

Missionary Tim Vaughn wore a collection of pins on his cowboy hat -- a walking ad that often drew questions.

While Olympians and their fans dreamed of gold, silver and bronze, Vaughn and other team members always stood ready to swap or give away their special pins with a different color scheme. Each was color coded for presenting the plan of salvation: black for sin, red for the shed blood of Christ, white for forgiven sin and green for growth in Jesus Christ.

During the Russia/Germany ice hockey match, Vaughn and fellow missionary Wayne Jenkins used the pins to start a conversation with a German family. In a few minutes they were explaining the plan of salvation as suggested by the pins. Soon they were handing out Christian literature. Both Vaughn and Jenkins are stationed in Germany and speak fluent German.

Southern Baptist missionary Tony Ludlow, based in Japan, was present to study Olympics ministry so he can be prepared for ministry when the Winter Games come to his country in 1998.

Moscow-based missionary Mel Skinner spent time witnessing to Russians, including some of the Olympics competitors, and made many contacts for later follow-up.

Volunteer Steve Crosby of New Braunfels, Texas, echoed other team members when he said many Norwegians were open to discussing spiritual matters. But most think of religion only in terms of church membership, not a personal relationship with Christ.

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"Many people claim to be a part of the state church (Lutheran) and seem to think that's all there is to being a Christian," agreed team member Wes Yeary, family life director of Dunwoody Baptist Church in Atlanta, site of the 1996 Summer Games. Southern Baptists already have plans under way to minister at the Atlanta Olympics.

About 88 percent of Norway's 4.2 million people were baptized as infants and some 1,700 Lutheran churches and chapels are sprinkled across the country. But Baptists point out that actual church involvement is probably about 5 percent at best.

Dallas said he hopes results of the Olympics effort in Lillehammer will duplicate those in Barcelona. While a lot of good responses resulted from sharing the gospel during the Barcelona Olympics, the best result probably was that church outreach and growth were higher after the Olympics than before.

"The excitement and motion associated with the Olympics present a unique opportunity to adjust the focus of local churches towards evangelism," he said.

"That means the results will be long-term for many people, not just the ones who hear the gospel during the few days of the Games."

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(BP) photos (two horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outlines available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Lillehammer Baptists
strive for the gold

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press
2/25/94

LILLEHAMMER, Norway (BP)--When you prepare for the Olympics, you've got to "go for the gold" no matter what you do.

Just ask Roald Juliussen, pastor of Lillehammer Baptist Church.

Juliussen, a former missionary to Zaire, attacked the Olympics with the same passion for ministry that his country's athletes applied to training for skiing, skating and other winter events.

He took a volunteer evangelism team from his church to the 1992 Winter Olympics in Albertville, France, and has prepared his church for the Lillehammer Games even longer -- for four years.

"I think this congregation was the first to congratulate the commune of Lillehammer for winning" the right to play host to the Games, he said with a smile.

It was a sizable undertaking for the 76-member congregation housed in an attractive building a few blocks from downtown Lillehammer. The church threw open its doors and invited Olympics fans to come for coffee or to special nightly services, all under the theme: "Christ's Way through Norway."

A daily coffeehouse featured a large-screen TV showing Olympics events nonstop. Some days the church's young people hauled a sled equipped with a coffee urn to serve shivering Olympics fans waiting in line for events.

Each night the church offered worship services with special music, dramas and Bible-based messages. A 15-member Southern Baptist evangelism team used the church as its home base through a special partnership worked out between Juliussen and Southern Baptist missionary Fred Dallas, the team's coordinator.

Dallas, of Friendswood, Texas, has been in Lillehammer since last October preparing for the Olympics and has preached in the church almost every weekend he has been in town.

"Fred has an open door here. He's a man who has gifts to make contacts with people outside the church," Juliussen explained in an interview in Lillehammer.

Dallas emphasized the partnership with the church was just that -- a good working arrangement that pleased everyone. "We really did want to work alongside them, not just use their facilities and go home," he said.

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But the church also welcomed other groups that came to minister during the Olympics: French evangelicals, Norwegian Baptist youths and seminary students, a group from Spurgeon's College in London and others.

The church base gave the visiting Southern Baptist team another platform for ministry. Team members spent many hours there talking to young people about their faith. They also found themselves giving ministry advice to Norwegian seminary students headed to their first pastorates in coming months.

Lillehammer Baptists also took part in an interdenominational church committee that brought Baptists, Pentecostals, Orthodox, Reformed believers, Roman Catholics and Salvation Army members together with the predominant Lutheran Church, the state church of Norway.

"We hope such cooperation will last past the Olympics," said George Hille, a retired Lutheran bishop and chairman of the Olympic Church Committee. Hille visited Lillehammer Baptist Church to chat with Juliussen about Baptist work and looked on approvingly at the busy comings and goings of visitors.

While the visiting Southern Baptist team had kind words for the church's ministry, they reserved their highest praise for Juliussen's wife, Solveig.

She really went for the gold -- taking on the mammoth task of doing their laundry.

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Churches can help
heal family violence

By Louis A. Moore

Baptist Press
2/25/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Fact: Some parents hit their children so hard their necks break or their internal organs collapse.

Fact: Parents or caregivers each year kill more than 2,000 children.

Fact: Some children shoot their parents with guns, stab them with knives or strangle them with ropes.

Fact: Some husbands break their wives' bones, knock out their teeth and leave permanent scars.

Fact: Parents abuse more than 2 million children each year.

Fact: One of four females under age 18 and one of every 10 males under age 18 say they have been sexually abused.

Fact: The incidence of wives injuring and even mutilating their husbands is on the increase.

Fact: Abused children are much more likely to grow up to become abusers themselves. This keeps the cycle flowing through many generations.

Family violence, including child and spouse abuse, has reached epidemic proportions in the United States today.

This abuse takes three forms: physical, emotional and sexual.

Sadly, Christians find that the finger of guilt sometimes points back to them as well.

"Before we become smug and perhaps self-righteous, consider that incestuous abuse tends to involve religious, churchgoing men as perpetrators," said Joe E. Richardson Jr., a psychologist who is a personnel counselor at the Baptist Sunday School Board. "Abuse also crosses all races, religions and socioeconomic backgrounds. In other words, abuse is also a Southern Baptist problem.

"The church must accept the fact that abuse -- physical, sexual, emotional and neglect -- occurs within the church," he said.

Ocala, Fla., police chief Lee McGehee, an active Southern Baptist and a Christian Life Commission trustee, said, "While I feel that a majority of child abuse occurs in unchurched families, I have seen abuse -- especially emotional abuse -- within Christian families. Within these families, however, are other signs of dysfunctionality: pressures for success, financial security, community or church reputations and so forth. Just because we are a body of believers doesn't isolate us from Satan's attacks."

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Whether inside or outside the church, abus is becoming a front-burner issue for many Southern Baptists.

"Churches seem to have a growing awareness to openly address child abuse," McGehee said. "I have noticed incr ased discussion on SBCN t among churches wh are developing policies to ensure positive, healthy programs for children and youth."

Churches can do many things to address this issue, said David Gushee, assistant professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. "The greatest answer to this problem in our society is that we have lives tamed by the Spirit of God.

"The Bible clearly teaches that in marriage men and women are to be loving, gentle and kind to one another and to exhibit the fruits of the Spirit. That contrasts markedly to the scenes of domestic violence."

Pastors need to address from their pulpits the family-abuse issue, Gushee said. "It is not God's will that we would take the family and make that a plac where people get abused, and that fact ought to be said from the pulpit. Therapeutic approaches are part of the answer, but straight-out preaching is what is most needed from our churches."

Also, churches need to offer ministries that grapple with and address directly the issue, he said. "The church ought to be a place of community support -- a trusting environment -- where people can deal openly and authentically with things they are wrestling with, such as family violence and abuse."

As a police chief, McGehee said he is gravely concerned about the statistics that show child abusers were themselves victims of child abuse.

Gushee said this generational connection between those who abuse and those who were abused helps explain how abuse turns up among Christians as well.

"Christians can't exempt themselves from having grown up in that kind of environment," he said. In an article in Church Administration magazine, Richardson advocated that churches tighten their guidelines and procedures to keep incidences of physical, emotional and sexual abuse from occurring in church settings.

"In several cases of child sexual abuse with which I'm familiar involving an active church member, the family was allowed to simply disappear," he said. "Th abuse never was reported or investigated. Those church members aware of the problem had a variety of reasons for not handling the situation. ... Doing nothing generally springs from not wanting to accept the reality of the problem."

McGehee said he also believes Christians must confront underlying societal vils, such as alcohol and drug abuse, pornography and television violence, which contribute to family violence and physical, sexual and emotional abuse today.

"I recently saw a political cartoon that showed two men standing on a street corner," McGehee recounted. "Behind them were signs saying: 'Now playing: Blood Bath,' 'Abortions R Us,' 'Women in Chains.' The caption under that cartoon said, 'I just don't understand why kids have such a lack of respect for human life these days.'"

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Protests to Congress prompt
home, private school exemptions By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
2/25/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--Expressing an opinion to members of Congress sometimes works. Action in the House of Representatives proved so recently.

Responding to a deluge of phone calls from home school and private school supporters, the House recently removed nonpublic schools from potential supervision by the federal government.

In two lopsided votes, the House approved amendments which clarified home, religious and other private schools will not come under the jurisdiction f an elementary and secondary education reauthorization act.

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Without the amendments, the act may have been interpreted to mean home school parents and private school teachers would have been required to be certified by the state, many home and Christian school leaders said. If such certification were mandated, it would have had the effect of placing a ban on the home school movement in the country and would have severely hampered many Christian schools, leaders in these educational circles said.

The House approved by a 424-1 vote an amendment by Rep. William Ford, D.-Mich., chairman of the Education and Labor Committee, striking the controversial certification language and adding: "Nothing in this Act shall be construed to affect home schools." Only Rep. George Miller, D.-Calif., who introduced the certification language in the committee, voted against it.

After passage of the Ford amendment, the congressmen voted 374-53 in favor of an amendment by Rep. Dick Arney, R.-Texas, specifying the bill would not be interpreted to mandate certification of home school or private school teachers or to authorize federal control of any aspect of a home, religious or other private school.

"These votes demonstrate that concerned Christians can make a difference, that we don't have to stand idly by while our government takes action to restrict our freedoms," said James A. Smith, director of government relations for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"We have just had a magnificent lesson that participatory democracy works," said Michael Farris in a prepared statement. Farris is the president of the Home School Legal Defense Association.

Several of those who spoke during debate on Arney's amendment commented on the number of calls to their offices opposing the certification language. Rep. Jennifer Dunn, R.-Wash., said her office received more than 1,500 calls. His office took more than 1,000 calls, Rep. Sam Johnson, R.-Texas, said. One House member estimated Congress received more than one million calls, Farris said.

In the days preceding the vote, calls to Miller's Washington office were not being accepted because of the number of calls about the bill and its impact on home schooling, a recorded message said.

The outcry began after it became known by home school, Christian school and other organizations an amendment by Miller to The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (H.R. 6) mandated each state seeking federal funds must provide assurance it "will require each local educational agency within the state to certify that each full time teacher in schools under the jurisdiction of the agency is certified to teach in the subject area to which he or she is assigned." The requirement was to take effect after July 1, 1998.

The measure defined school as a "nonprofit day or residential school" which provides education. The word "nonprofit" was not included in the definitions in current law, Farris wrote in an alert to members of his organization. The addition of "nonprofit" clarified the "intent of this law is to add all forms of private education to the federal definition of school," Farris wrote.

While Miller denied his intention was to affect any schools other than public ones, Farris and others called for an amendment specifically exempting home, religious and other private schools.

"If I went to court to argue that it was the intent of Congress to limit the application to public schools, the judge would simply look at the language and say, 'Well, Mr. Farris, if Congress meant to limit this rule to public schools only, they would have only needed to say so expressly,'" Farris said after the amendments' passage. "I can't prove my case in court by saying, 'But Charlotte from Mr. Miller's office told me that they had no intent of regulating home schools.'"

If teacher certification were required, it would be "an effective ban on home education for more than 99 percent of all home schoolers," Farris said before the votes. An official with the American Association of Christian Schools said probably less than 1 percent of the teachers in their 1,000 schools are state-certified.

Arney's amendment also included language clarifying the bill would not be construed "to bar private, religious or home schools from participation in programs or services under the Act."

Other amendments to H.R. 6 remained for debate when the House adjourned Feb. 24 for the weekend.

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**Conservative group holds
discussions in Nashville**

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
2/25/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Conservative leaders from California to Virginia gathered at a hotel in Nashville following the SBC Executive Committee meeting but the organizer of the meeting said it was an informal group which discussed "a lot of different topics."

James W. Richards Jr., pastor of Southminster Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, La., and chairman of the SBC Christian Life Commission, told Baptist Press the meeting, held Feb. 23-24 at a hotel next to the SBC building, was of "like-minded people who meet for support and encouragement."

Asked if the group, numbering from 40 to 50 men, talked about strategies of conservatives at the state convention level, Richards said the group has a broader base than activities in the convention although individuals did share their experiences in the states.

"There was no format, no planning strategy," Richards said. "There was nothing of a 'here's what you should do' in any state."

The private meeting -- Bob Terry, editor of the Missouri Word and Way was asked to leave -- included men who have met over the past two or three years. Richards said they met for a concentrated time of prayer, praying for revival for the nation, God's direction in the SBC, blessings for the various ministries represented and for one another.

Although not in the meeting at the time when Terry was asked to leave, Richards said the group generally feels it is a private meeting, which allows people more liberty for discussion.

Richards said he set up the meeting but someone else may do the next, there are no officers, no name or formal organization. Someone else arranged the last meeting, in Louisville, Ky., Richards said. He said he does not know where or when the next meeting will be.

Apparently at that Kentucky meeting, the group did endorse Fred H. Wolfe, Alabama pastor and chairman of the SBC Executive Committee, for president of the SBC. Wolfe told news media two weeks ago he would be nominated for the SBC presidency and had the support of a group of conservatives who met last fall in Kentucky. A new president will be elected at the June 14-16 annual meeting of the SBC in Orlando, Fla., where Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, could be a conservative candidate as well.

"I would feel virtually all those present would support Wolfe," Richards said when asked about the group's support of Wolfe.

Wolfe told Baptist Press Feb. 25 that he had been invited to attend the informal meeting but, since he had a plane departure in the early afternoon, did not stay very long.

"These are good people," Wolfe said.

A number of SBC Executive Committee members attended the meeting, including some of the officers, according to Terry and other state paper editors who were at the hotel meeting site.

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Churches 'missing the bus' if
not reaching single parents By Terri Lackey

GULF SHORES, Ala.(BP)--Single parents are the fastest-growing population segment in America today, and churches that aren't ministering to them are "missing the bus," an official with the Missouri Baptist Convention said.

"About 50 percent of American adults are single, and a high percentage of those are parents," said John Sissom, who works in discipleship and family ministry for the Missouri Baptist Convention.

Sissom said statistics show anywhere from one in four to one in seven of today's unmarried single adults are parents.

Sissom led classes at two separate events for leaders and ministers of single adults, Feb. 18-23 in Gulf Shores, Ala. Conferences for the National Single Adult Leadership Convention and the Southern Baptist Association of Ministers to Single Adults were sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board and co-planned with a network of Southern Baptist single adult ministers.

"In 1990, 27 percent of all children lived with only one parent, and 50 to 60 percent of all children spend some portion of their childhood in single-parent homes," Sissom said. "Thirty percent will have had two to three different living arrangements by the time they are 18."

These statistics verify the fact that churches need to be dealing with this specialized population, both the parents and their children, Sissom said.

"Single-adult families are our neighbors, our friends, our co-workers," he said. "Folks, they is us. And I think the church is still missing the bus with this population."

Sissom said churches should consider beginning a single-parent ministry for three reasons. It is a:

-- biblical mission (Luke 4:17). "Jesus defined his mission as ministry to all people in need."

-- biblical model (Genesis 21:17-21; I Kings 17: 7-24). "The Bible indicates God has always been acutely sensitive to the needs of single parents."

-- biblical mandate (Matthew 2:18-19). "As single adults become a larger segment of society, they will become a big part of our mission field. Our outreach should be hitting more and more single-adult parents. Churches with single-parent ministry are on the cutting edge."

Sissom listed several ideas for churches wanting to begin a single-adult ministry. Most of the ideas were taken from the workbook, "Developing Ministries with Single Parent Families," by Jerry and Lana Wilkerson, Convention Press, 1993.

1) Successful models for single-parent family ministry are built around well organized Sunday morning Bible studies, complimented by needs-focused through-the-week programs.

2) The ministry will vary with the size of church, the community demographics and the availability of resources including financial, leadership and space.

3) Start where you are with who you have and trust God to build it from there. "Indicate to single-adult parents you care," Sissom said. "It only takes two people to start a support group ..."

4) Utilize existing inreach and outreach programs.

5) Focus on life relevant Bible teaching with sensitive leadership.

6) Recognize that single-parent ministry must be family ministry. 7) Make sure children's program leaders are aware of the unique needs of single-parent children.

"Avoid negative terminology such as broken homes," he said. "Church leaders should also be aware that the custodial parent doesn't have the child every Sunday," Sissom said. "They should avoid placing the child at a disadvantage such as rewards for attendance."

8) Find ways to facilitate same-gender role models.

9) Examine the financial ramifications of your programs. "Some reasons your single parents aren't involved is because of the price tags."

- 10) Recognize that single parents do not come in "one-size-fits-all."
 11) Lay off the guilt trips when attendance is sporadic or nonexistent.
 "Single parents are already strapped for time."
 12) Watch the days you schedule events. "Steer clear of Sunday nights because it could conflict with the custodial parents' rights."
 13) Involve single parents in outreach and leadership. "You get more involvement when people have ownership. You can build confidence, excitement and self-image."
 14) Develop a needs-based ministry. "Survey needs and meet them." 15) Think holistic. "There are lots of support groups in our society, but the church is the only institution that can meet their spiritual needs too," Sissom said.
 "Don't be afraid to be creative. Find other churches that are doing single parent ministry and tailor their ideas to fit your own circumstances."

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Seminarians find missions possible through church work

By Susan Simko

Baptist Press
2/25/94

ARLINGTON, Texas (BP)--Michael Goar sat in a folding chair in his church's sanctuary -- a remodeled hardware shop. The Peach Street Community Church congregation milled around him, clad mostly in jeans and sweat pants.

"Look around," Goar said, waving his hand over the 50 or so people. Hispanic mothers scooped their children into their laps.

African Americans chatted with their Caucasian friends. "Everybody might have different opinions, but when the pastor preaches, he brings everyone together."

The pastor is Jerry Lemons, a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, one of several Southwestern students involved in Mission Arlington, a ministry of First Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas. Mission Arlington has started almost 140 new works like Peach Street, drawing congregations of unchurched people from low-income apartments. God's message transforms their lives, Lemons said.

As an example, Lemons points to Patrick, the former hard-rock band member who moved into the apartments behind Peach Street in March. Lemons invited him to church and a few weeks later Patrick rededicated his life to Jesus, shunning secular concerts and seedy bars. He played the drums at his own baptism, and now he writes the praise music for Mission Arlington and leads the worship with his electric guitar on Sunday mornings.

People like Patrick make seminary classroom theory spring to life, Lemons said.

"I get to see what the gospel does in the lives of people rather than see it just on paper," he said. "It's just amazing to see that."

Mission Arlington also has helped Lemons and his wife, Deanna, prepare for life after graduation. They want to be foreign missionaries and Peach Street has taught them how to communicate the gospel in other cultures.

"In a way you have to learn another language -- the language of the streets. It is a culture shock," Lemons said.

Another Southwestern student, Jason Ballou, experienced a culture clash the first Sunday he worked with Mission Arlington. After the evening Spanish service at Peach Street, the Spanish pastor asked him to drive five teenagers home.

When Ballou stopped the car, the youths jumped out without a word and dashed toward their apartment. They didn't make it. A group of teens from a rival street gang piled out of a following car and attacked them. Ballou watched the fight, dumbfounded. When one boy pulled out a tire iron, the first set of teens escaped into the apartment. "I never dared ask what caused that," Ballou said. "Anyway, the bottom line on that was a few weeks later two of the guys accepted Christ."

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Not every day at Mission Arlington is as dangerous as that one, Ballou said, but each experience does teach him more about Christian work.

"I've learned a lot as far as ministry goes. I've learned the hard way. I've learned how not to do things," he said. "I'm still trying to figure out the right ways to do things. It's been challenging getting involved and working with people who are different from me."

Tillie Burgin, who started Mission Arlington seven years ago, said seminary students meet the challenges with "maturity and a strong sense of call."

"They are so strategic for us," she said. "They have a background in Bible and a sense of mission."

But the mission can be frustrating, Raja Kandanada, a student from India, said. Two years ago, he began teaching English, American culture and the Bible to Kurdish residents in Arlington. He longed to see them forsake Islam and turn to Jesus, but after he spent months building friendships, the Kurds stopped coming to his class. They had learned enough about the United States to function on their own.

"I haven't seen anyone converted, but I've learned. I've tried," Kandanada said. "I was there when they needed some help."

Southwestern student Eric Friedrich doles out hugs, acceptance and the Christian message to the children at Peach Street. Many of them come from abusive homes, Friedrich said. He wants his Sunday school classroom to be a haven.

"It's given me an outlet for practical ministry. It helps me to keep from getting too puffed up, which is easy with all the knowledge that we acquire (in seminary) in any given week," Friedrich said. "It's a way to be real and to be reminded weekly that God has called us to love. You can have all this knowledge, but if you can't love, it's useless."

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