

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420,17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Martin King, 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 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

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee
94-40

March 8, 1994

NASHVILLE -- News advisory.

OKLAHOMA CITY -- CLC trustees give award to Russian dissident.

LOS ANGELES -- New 'utensil' proves vital for disaster relief workers; photos.

MISSISSIPPI -- 'Can Lady' remains grateful for missionaries in China.

ALABAMA -- They seek to 'interpret' church to the unchurched.

ALABAMA -- Church meets media challenge with sense of humor, creativity.

ALABAMA -- Church's media tools include 'FaithFax,' sermon promos.

NEWS ADVISORY: Trustees at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, voted March 8 to dis-invite R. Keith Parks as the spring 1994 commencement speaker. Parks is former president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board who left the agency over disagreements with FMB trustees. He now is missions coordinator for the Baptist moderates' Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The voice vote by Southwestern trustees, with no opposition voiced, came at the first plenary session in their March 7-9 meeting. Seminary President Russell H. Dilday defended having Parks as commencement speaker and noted the invitation had been extended long before Parks' departure from the FMB. Baptist Press will post a story on the trustee meeting March 9.

CLC trustees give award
to Russian dissident

By Louis Moore

Baptist Press
3/8/94

OKLAHOMA CITY--(BP) In their semiannual meeting March 3, Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission trustees voted unanimously to present Father Gleb Yakunin, an evangelical Russian Orthodox priest who was once imprisoned and exiled for his stand on religious liberty, the CLC's John Leland Religious Liberty Award.

Yakunin is noted for his stand for religious liberty for all Russian religious believers.

In 1965 the Soviet KGB barred Yakunin from performing his priestly duties because of his opposition to religious repression in the Soviet Union. In 1976 he founded the Committee for the Protection of Religious Rights in the Soviet Union. He was imprisoned repeatedly during the 1980s for his stand against religious repression in the Soviet Union. As the former Soviet Union began coming apart, Yakunin was released and given amnesty in 1987.

But in late 1993, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian Orthodox Church stripped Yakunin of his priesthood because of his continued fight for religious liberty for all believers.

The Russian Orthodox Church has lobbied with the Russian government for preeminence over religious affairs in Russia, and Yakunin has emerged as the church's biggest critic.

Among his many stands, Yakunin has supported the influx of evangelical missionaries, including those from the Southern Baptist Convention, into Russia.

--more--

He also fought against the previous Russian Parliament's efforts to curb religious freedom in Russia.

During his report to the commissioners' meeting in Oklahoma City, CLC Executive Director Richard Land commended President Bill Clinton for including religious values as a part of discussions about solutions to problems in America.

"I would agree with Bill Bennett that we ought to give credit where credit is due," Land said. "Bill Clinton has been more than most presidents in the recent past -- and certainly most Democratic presidents -- in making it clear that there are moral difficulties in our nation that only moral answers will suffice. Now, in the interest of fairness, I want to say that, so far, I like his diagnosis a lot better than I like his prescription.

"But I must tell you," Land told the trustees, "that I believe that his quoting of (the recent Stephen Carter book) 'The Culture of Disbelief' and his turning to it on several occasions, and many of the things he said in response to reading that book, is the answer. These are direct answers to the prayers of millions of Christians who have been obedient to the command of our Lord to pray for those who are in authority, with the sure and certain knowledge that the heart of the king is in the hands of the Lord."

Land said his positive comments about Clinton do not "mean that we have any idea that he agrees with us on a lot of issues. We know that he does not. We know that he has different presuppositions and different conclusions on many issues. But you have to understand that the people who have been supportive of his party have, by and large, been people who have been attempting to marginalize religious conviction and religious faith in any public policy debate in this country. It's going to be very difficult for them to do that when the president has said, 'This is the best of what America is about.' That is an enormous victory for those of us who share the concerns that we share in this room, and we ought to claim it as such. We ought to seize this opportunity and redeem it and use it for good purposes."

In other action, the trustees unanimously adopted a motion making clear that a previous motion adopted six months ago endorsing the 50th anniversary celebration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should not be misused as endorsing special rights for homosexuals.

The motion said, "Nothing the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has said in the past or in the future about the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be misconstrued as endorsement of special rights for homosexuals."

The trustees approved the revision of the agency's charter, which limits the board's size to 34 after all of the trustees who were moved to the CLC board after the former Public Affairs Committee was merged with the CLC board have completed their terms in office.

The board also voted resolutions of commendations to the staff of the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger for their assistance in the operation of the newsroom at the 1994 CLC annual seminar in Oklahoma City and to the members of First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., for their "finest expressions of Christian hospitality" during the CLC's 1994 event held at the church. This was the first year the CLC has held its seminar in a local church.

--30--

New 'utensil' proves vital
for disaster relief workers

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
3/8/94

LOS ANGELES (BP)--Along with pots and pans, food in cans and the full range of other items used by Southern Baptist volunteers who minister to thousands wherever disaster strikes, a brand-new "utensil" has proven indispensable.

Copies of a small, yellow, tract-like pamphlet called "Hope in Crisis" (and its Spanish-language companion, "Esperanza en la Crisis") were pressed into service for the first time in the weeks that followed the Jan. 17 earthquake in Southern California.

--more--

"It was used broadly and well by the great team (of disaster volunteers) that Southern Baptists sent," said Jess Moody, pastor of Shepherd of the Hills church in Porter Ranch, Calif. "At our campus, there were 67 professions of faith through Hope in Crisis."

The American Red Cross set up a shelter at the church and were joined by Southern Baptist volunteers, including staffers and members of Shepherd of the Hills.

"I remember a well-to-do man seated at the shelter who kept saying, 'I simply cannot believe that God allowed this to happen,'" Moody said. "So I handed a copy of (Hope in Crisis) to him and we discussed what was in it. He said, 'That clarified it for me. I just might accept your Messiah, if his church is willing to send people out like this.'

"Another time, I talked to a Buddhist, and I asked him where the Buddhists were now," Moody said. As they watched the volunteers work the feeding line, Moody said he "stressed the idea of knowing real believers by their fruits."

The man responded, "Maybe there is something to this Christianity."

The pamphlet was developed by concerned Southern Baptist Brotherhood disaster relief leaders for spiritual counseling during disasters.

"Gospel tracts that begin with God's love and wonderful plans for our lives don't communicate well to someone who just had their house knocked off its foundation. Their questions center around the issues of abandonment and loss of hope," said Jim Burton of the Brotherhood Commission staff, who was national off-site coordinator of disaster relief following the California quake. "During disaster response, there are very natural opportunities to relate to victims and help them work through these questions."

The pamphlet relates the story of Job as one who found hope in crisis and tells the reader this same hope is still available.

"God does not abandon people in crisis, but anger sets in following disaster, and people often abandon God because they lose hope. Is this how you feel?" it asks the reader. "If you have ever placed your faith in Jesus Christ, you have hope."

Hope in Crisis also was distributed during special services held on the Shepherd of the Hills campus.

"Many people came to Christ because of it," said Rob Myers, minister of church growth. "We preached the gospel and used the pamphlet as a follow-up. It's very effective."

Luis Kucharuk, a layman who is missions director of First Hispanic Southern Baptist Church in Los Angeles, used the Spanish-language version of Hope in Crisis while working with Southern Baptist feeding units based at the Van Nuys airport.

"I made time to talk to the people who came to eat, especially the Hispanic people. We would start to talk, and after that I would give them the tract. If the person had some time, I would sit down with them and read the tract through with them," Kucharuk said.

He wrote his name and telephone number on back of the pamphlets and got several calls after the recipients had returned home.

"Now is a good time for churches in this area to use this tract during visitation and make some relation to the disaster relief work in their conversation," he added. "Many decisions for Christ could be made."

The extensive use of the pamphlet in Southern California was made possible by a financial gift from World Missionary Evangelism, Inc., based in Dallas. The interdenominational group's assistance to Brotherhood disaster responses began in 1991 with the Southern Baptist agency's involvement in Iran and Iraq. WME also contributed to a project in the Ukraine sponsored by Texas Baptist Men.

Hope in Crisis is currently available only to state convention disaster relief directors, but the publication of a "generic" version for use in a wider range of crisis counseling situations is being considered by the Brotherhood Commission.

**'Can Lady' remains grateful
for missionaries in China**

By Tim Nicholas

CLEVELAND, Miss. (BP)--Frances Wong walks seven miles a day. She likes the exercise and along the way she's done a ton of work for the Lord.

The ton is the approximate weight, 2,060 lbs to be exact, of the aluminum cans she has picked up since last May which unheeding people have littered the streets of Cleveland, Miss., with.

Because of her walks, the Mississippi Delta woman has earned the title of "Can Lady for the Lord," a moniker given by a neighbor child.

Not only does she help with the litter problem, for the last several years Wong has recycled the cans and donated the money to student summer missions at Delta State University's Baptist Student Union.

Bill Kirkpatrick, BSU director at Delta State, reported her can money has brought in \$566 toward this year's BSU goal of \$7,300.

"Every can I pick up, I say, 'Lord, this is yours,'" said Wong, who added some times people give her money thinking perhaps she is in need. "I dress raggedy in winter," she said, offering the explanation, adding, "It all goes to the Lord."

Wong became involved with the BSU five years ago when Jimmy Breland, BSU director, now retired, invited her to work in the kitchen of the BSU, which serves free lunches on Wednesdays. Breland and Kirkpatrick preach at the Chinese Baptist Church in Cleveland on alternate Sundays. She has continued her volunteer work with Kirkpatrick since he replaced Breland three years ago.

She's at the BSU center about five hours on Wednesdays -- setting the table, running the kitchen and mopping the floors after the free lunch which serves 80 to 110 students.

"It is a blessing to see all these young people come together in fellowship and love in Jesus," she said.

Said Kirkpatrick, "We think the world of her. She is like a right arm."

Wong feels a special affinity for missions because she is a product of missions herself.

Born in Louise, Miss., the daughter of Chinese immigrants, Wong was converted to Christianity in China. Her parents had sent her to a Baptist girls' school in Canton to learn the culture, language and history of China. "And that's where I found the Lord," she said, at a revival service led by a missionary from the United States.

"That's why every December when the Lottie Moon Offering (for foreign missions) comes around, I give what I can because it reached a lost soul like me in China."

Though she lost her husband to a heart attack last year -- he'd been Chinese church treasurer more than 37 years -- she stays active in Christian service. She recently returned from a two-week work trip to the Baptist Village in Israel where a group from First Baptist Church in Cleveland enlarged the dining room and kitchen, built shelves and cooked.

"I believe the Lord has been so good in our lives," Wong said, "that I owe him so much more service 'til the day he comes for me."

--30--

**They seek to 'interpret'
church to the unchurched**

By Mark Baggett

Baptist Press
3/8/94

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Jesse Palmer regrets the term "imaging the church" when it comes to his job description.

"Some churches want to do cosmetic surgery, but we're not into that," said Palmer, president of Details, a Birmingham, Ala., firm that specializes in marketing and design for churches. "You can create an image, but unless the person has the same experience within the church, you're worse off than before you paid all that money."

--more--

Palmer said he believes marketing the church is more than just advertising; it is a comprehensive, international strategy for reaching people -- the preaching, the friendliness of the people, the programming, as well as its public relations in the media.

"I see it as a parable of communication," he said. "This is the cultivating of the soil to receive the seed, to use the parable of the seed and the sower. I have a deep belief there is no substitute for personal evangelism or for sharing the gospel one-on-one. But you can prepare the soil so that when you sow the seed, there is a better chance it will fall on fertile soil."

In 1991, Palmer teamed with Brian Jones, the firm's vice president and creative director, to create Details, whose clients include several churches in Alabama as well as both Baptist and non-Baptist churches in other parts of the country.

Palmer and Jones know the territory of church life well. In fact, Palmer, with a degree in religion from Samford University in Birmingham and a master's in religious education from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., was the first staff member at The Church of Brook Hills in Birmingham, serving as minister of church growth during the church's first two years.

Details' brochures promote "becoming a market-driven church," but Palmer said that doesn't mean the firm is "selling the holiness of God" or cheapening the gospel.

"I am committed to being true to Scripture," he said. "The biblical background for us is that the church is the body of Christ in the world. I see the life of Christ and see him responding with compassion to those who have needs. Our goal is to help churches impact the lives of people today."

Thus, Details likes to use a quotation from George MacLeod found in "Draper's Book of Quotations for the Christian World" to illustrate the point: "I argue that the cross be raised again at the center of the marketplace as well as on the steeple of the church; that Jesus was not crucified in a cathedral between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves, on the town garbage heap; at a crossroads so cosmopolitan that they had to write His title in Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek; at the kind of place where cynics talk smut, and thieves curse, and soldiers gamble. Because that is where He died. And that is what He died about ... that is what churchmen should be about."

Palmer called it "interpreting" the church to its unchurched audience. "Sometimes what we do is not so much using the medium, but in helping a church communicate its ministry and message. We ask what the church has to offer people for their lives."

With Jones' graphic design talents, Details produces carefully crafted work, professional brochures, ads and mailouts with quality pictures and a conversational, engaging prose style.

"There has to be a certain vitality to the look," said Palmer, who avoids "churchy, preachy language" or promises that can't be delivered. "You can't compete with all the other messages in the mailbox if you have a mimeographed or xeroxed piece of paper from the local church. You have to arrest a person's attention first. Visually, we focus on people by using photography with drama and action. Color-wise and layout-wise, we create action so that the piece has a video feel."

He said he also believes the marketing should be inclusive. After doing an Easter piece that seemed to be speaking only to the Anglo community, Details revised it to show more racial diversity. One prospective client church decided not to use the piece, without explanation. But Palmer stands firm: "You may target people, but you don't have to be exclusive."

At the same time, he said he grows more convinced of the need to target the audience. "I believe strongly that the gospel is for everyone, but in targeting, we recognize that every church is not for everyone.

For instance, some churches speak only in English; some are charismatic; some meet only at 11 on Sunday morning. Even when we used to build the high steps in front of the church, we were targeting people without physical limitations."

In the meantime, Details goes on pushing the edges of the traditional church limits on marketing. Birmingham newspaper readers, for example, recently turned to the movie section of the local paper to find an ad for The Church at Brook Hills disguised as a movie ad. Palmer and pastor Rick Ousley knew the ad would catch the eye of someone who would never glance at a church ad, and that the person might become more familiar with the church and perhaps more receptive.

But Palmer denied that such advertising is manipulative. "We work aboveboard," he said. "That's the only way to go. We never think about Jesus being a product. We think about the kind of life that comes from accepting Jesus. But our faith is one of the marketplace."

--30--

Church meets media challenge
with sense of humor, creativity By Mark Baggett

Baptist Press
3/8/94

MOBILE, Ala. (BP)--The billboard near the massive Dauphin Way Baptist Church posed this question to thousands of Mobilians traveling to and from work:

"Which of the following best describes the church at the intersection of I-65 and Dauphin Street?

"A. Six Flags Over Jesus

"B. The Church at the Immaculate Intersection

"C. Dauphin Way Country Club: the Home of the Old, Cold, and Gold.

"D. Fort God"

Followed by this message: "To see if you have the best answer, come visit us Sunday."

The work of subversives, you say, mocking some of the church's popular nametags in town? Think again.

In fact, this expensive satire was financed by the church itself -- an idea hatched by pastor Larry Thompson and Mike Jeffries, creative resources minister and minister to missions, who decided to hit the church's image problem head on.

"Instead of taking offense to what we were being called around town, we took those labels and turned them into a positive," Thompson said. "Rather than react, we played them for what it was worth."

Curious visitors who followed up on the billboard heard Thompson the next Sunday preach on the four themes. Yes, he said, for example, the church resembles "Six Flags Over Jesus" because there is joy and happiness within the congregation.

The idea worked, and compared to some of the other media strategies, the "Six Flags Over Jesus" billboard almost seems tame.

When the church introduced Thompson as its new pastor two and a half years ago, a group of deacons used the same billboard, at one of the busiest intersections in Alabama, to blow up a picture of Elvis Presley's head and superimpose it on Thompson's body. "Come meet our new pastor," the sign read to startled Mobile commuters the next morning.

Thompson is no Baptist Barnum, however. He said he knows the idea of marketing the church ("Selling Jesus," as one recent book puts it) doesn't sit well in traditional quarters, and he knows that the practice has been abused. Often church marketing is a poorly done, cheap imitation of commercial advertising frantically promoting a dull, listless church program.

Thompson and Jeffries come by their gifts naturally; both are deeply experienced in using the media. Even among secular experts, Thompson and Jeffries get high marks for their creativity, innovation, quality and results.

--more--

Since Thompson has come to Dauphin Way as pastor, soon after the proud, established church had moved from a declining downtown area to its high-profile location, the church has grown rapidly, bringing in hundreds of newer, younger families to add to the older congregation. The huge indebtedness has been shaved dramatically and steadily is being whittled down.

Jeffries is a former professor of journalism at Oral Roberts University responsible for directing all the school's publications and later was a reporter at the Tulsa World. He said the total budget for advertising at the church is only \$20,000 but noted it is spent carefully.

"We make sure we have a reason for advertising," he said. Both he and Thompson believe the "isolationist attitude" of the church toward the media has hampered its ministry.

"We haven't compromised our convictions," Thompson said. "But we have cooperated with the media so they can trust us. We have intentionally cultivated our relationships with the media, and it has effected a lot of change for us. Most of the religious world has neglected its relationships with the media."

In the recent debate over allowing gambling casinos in Mobile County, where the mayor of Mobile is pro-gambling, Thompson said he was able to get his anti-gambling position heard because of this relationship.

"It is important that the world sees that I am not just against everything," he explained. "This allows me to take a pro-active stance on issues."

Not all of Dauphin Way's marketing depends on shock value. The strategy usually features Dauphin Way's people or capitalizes on themes ("That's the Dauphin Way").

Perhaps the church's most prominent image comes from the Gulf Coast Christmas Festival in which Thompson, a former theater major in college, treads the boards as a crotchety Scrooge-like toy store owner in a musical called "Dickens' Christmas Journey" involving 450 actors, singers and musicians.

One spinoff promotion is the sending of holiday baskets with cookies and candy to media outlets; inside is a press release for the festival.

All of the church's varied promotions are designed to reach people with a new image of the church, Thompson said. "Familiarity breeds a mistaken contempt," he said of the traditional church image. "We want them to see that the stereotype of the hard-shell, hard-core Baptist was shaken several years ago. This is a new generation, and while the medium may change, the message remains the same."

--30--

Church's media tools include
'FaithFax,' sermon promos

Baptist Press
3/8/94

MOBILE, Ala. (BP)--Among other marketing methods used by Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., are:

-- FaithFax. Media staff member Mike Jeffries's idea, 400 FaithFaxes are sent out Monday morning to targeted audiences in the Mobile area. The idea has been adapted by a number of churches. "Our members who receive it have sometimes ... made copies for their friends and co-workers," Jeffries said.

-- Selected promotion of sermons on contemporary themes. After the gay and lesbian march on Washington last year, pastor Larry Thompson addressed the topic from the pulpit in a sermon advertised as "Living in the Gay '90s." Some of the local homosexual community came to hear the sermon without incident.

-- The church newspaper. "Our newspaper is totally different from the typical church newsletter," Thompson said. "It is designed to inform and to be attractive to the eye." With eye-catching graphics and a professional layout, the newspaper has a high-quality look, but without the "Cadillac" price tag. "Mike's expertise can keep costs down," Thompson said.

-- Closed captioned equipment. Thompson said the government has required all televisions to have closed captioned boxes by 1995, and the church is anticipating the future. Dauphin Way perhaps will be the first Southern Baptist church to have purchased the equipment, thanks to a generous donation by a church member.

--30--

HOUSE MAIL

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, TN 37203

Southern Baptist Library and
Archives