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

Ministry offers awareness
of Delta region's needs

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
3/15/94

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Southern Baptists must be willing to cross their comfort zones if they are to successfully minister along the Mississippi River, speakers said during a conference on missions in that region.

"It's nice to be a missionary on the mountains of Colorado during ski season, but it's not fun to be a missionary in the Delta during mosquito season," said Don Moore, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

During the meeting on the Mississippi River Ministry, March 11-12 at First Baptist Church of Jackson, Miss., Moore and others challenged Southern Baptists to overcome racism, poor working conditions and other barriers.

More than 200 Southern Baptists attended the conference, which highlighted the problems, resources and possible solutions for ministering to and evangelizing residents along the Delta region.

More than 125 counties and parishes from Illinois to Louisiana have been targeted for ministry, particularly to the poor. A 1990 federal government study found what many describe as "Third-World" living conditions, including:

- One-third of the families live in substandard or dilapidated housing.
- Almost half of the adults have not graduated from high school.
- Fifteen counties and parishes have infant mortality rates worse than Chile and Cuba.

Despite such daunting statistics, Moore said Christians should not be satisfied with the possible.

"God's not accustomed to asking us to do what we can do in our own ability," he said. "I believe God is ready to do things through Baptists in these states that never have been done before."

Concentrated efforts in the region began in August 1992. In the first 18 months, about 1,000 volunteers have worked in more than 65 ministries, said Andrea Ramage, assistant regional coordinator for the project.

The region's poverty requires Christians offer ministries that gain credibility with the hurting, said Don Anders, director of church and community ministries with the Missouri Baptist Convention.

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"It's reaching people who maybe can't hear the gospel until you put some food in their bellies," he said. "They need to see God's love made tangible before they can understand."

Southern comedian Jerry Clower said he has seen the transforming power of God. "After you get folks saved, then they try to follow the Lord. They give up some things that's been putting them in that mess in the first place."

Clower noted, however, Southern Baptists still must overcome racism and class distinctions in their own congregations. "The most segregated society in the world is Southern Baptist churches on Sunday," he said. "Some of them are segregated because they don't come. But some of them are segregated because they won't let them come."

Tommy Goode, regional coordinator for the project, agreed racism remains a problem. "It's kept us out of some communities," he said. "The white community is just now struggling with how to do ministry with the black community."

Another dilemma is convincing some churches of the need for ministries in their own communities, said Richard Brogan, coordinator for the project with the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

"Missions is always done better outside your own barriers," he said. "You give yourself permission to see it there."

Chris McNairy, pastor of Westhaven Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., said the Mississippi River Ministry effort may open some people's eyes. "Sometimes it may take going to another ministry area for a person to see what's in their own backyard."

If Southern Baptists see the need and get involved, Anders said the potential is tremendous. The denomination comprises more than 20 percent of the region's population.

"The most valuable resource Baptists have is our people," Anders said. "If we would find the key to mobilizing our people, we could turn the world upside down, just like Jesus did."

More information about ministry opportunities in the Delta is available from state directors of missions in Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana. The regional coordinator's office is at the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, (501) 376-4791, ext. 5249.

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(BP) photo and the Mississippi River Ministry logo to be mailed this week to state Baptist newspapers by the Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

Speaker says 4 challenges
face Baptists in Miss. Delta

By Colleen Backus

Baptist Press
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JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Poverty-stricken people with inadequate health care, high illiteracy and poor housing sounds like a foreign mission field ripe for harvest by Southern Baptists. But this mission field is not in Central America or Eastern Europe -- it is in THE heart of the United States. Portions of the Mississippi River basin, stretching through seven states, often seem comparable to a Third World region.

But four very real barriers must be overcome to serve God in this region via Southern Baptists' Mississippi River Ministry, said Don Moore, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, addressing a convocation for the outreach March 11-12 in Jackson, Miss.

The first, he said, is indifference. "We must overcome our customs and traditions with overriding spiritual realities."

The second is familiarity and proximity. "If 1,000 young people had to choose to do a mission trip in Florida, Guatemala or the Mississippi Delta, where do you think they would choose?" Moore asked. The reluctance to do missions so close to home must be overcome, he emphasized.

The third obstacle is racism and classism. "We haven't come far enough," Moore noted. "Classism in the Delta is real We must build new churches and find new places for ministry."

The fourth obstacle is cowardice and conformity, Moore said. Ministry affected by such obstacles "becomes diffused and diluted," he declared. "God must work in our hearts to spiritually and dramatically grip us."

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The Mississippi River Ministry will "take off," Moore asserted, "when we see and feel like God does."

Citing Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 from Mark 8, Moore emphasized the need for practical missions. "We ought to do things nobody else can do. We're not through when we deal with the physical and social problems -- they're just the fruits of the problem. We need to deal with the roots of the problem."

When those barriers are overcome, Moore asserted, "the image of God finally will blossom in these lives."

"I am here because I believe God is ready to do things through Baptists that have never been done before," Moore said. "We have a world mission field right at our doorstep."

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Increasingly fatherless society
will pay dearly, speakers say

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
3/15/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--What accounts for society's 14-year-old boys with guns and 14-year-old girls with babies?

"An increasingly fatherless society," said David Blankenhorn.

The founder-president of the New York City-based Institute for American Values warned of "a massive separation -- historically unprecedented -- of men from their offspring that is cutting across the entire society."

Fatherlessness will exact a terrible toll on American society, noted Blankenhorn, a native of Jackson, Miss., who spoke on "The State of Fatherhood in America" during a March 14-15 ethics conference in Nashville sponsored by the Baptist moderate organization Baptist Center for Ethics. Blankenhorn's essays on family issues have appeared in USA Today, The New York Times and other national periodicals.

"Thirty-six percent of all children will go to bed (tonight) in homes where their fathers don't live," Blankenhorn said. More than half of America's children will spend a significant part of childhood apart from their fathers, he added.

Fatherlessness is becoming as common for America's children as a home with a father, he said. "We're losing the idea of fatherhood -- fatherhood as a cultural value." Society is depicting fatherhood as less and less necessary, he said.

But the truth is, "The father's contribution to his child is unique and irreplaceable," Blankenhorn said.

"Fathers are not assistant mothers," he said, nor are they simply a source of financial support. "Fathers give things to their children that shape the confidence and character of their children in ways that cannot be replaced."

From the moment of birth, a father's relationship to a child is different than a mother's. The father tends to be playful and to encourage a child to new challenges while the mother tends to provide soothing comfort attuned to a child's emotional needs.

"The child very much needs both," Blankenhorn said. But especially with the father, he is "the first 'other' for the child," a kind of "gateway to the world" and the future experiences of life.

"When you don't have it, you get some big social problems," Blankenhorn said, such as 14-year-old boys with guns and 14-year-old girls with babies.

"The most important predictor of criminal activity among young males ... is whether or not these boys have fathers," a cause that "overwhelms all other factors," Blankenhorn said.

"We're building more and more prisons because we have fewer and fewer fathers," he said.

And with pregnant teen-age girls, the underlying problems "relate more closely to the absence of a father" than economics or other factors, Blankenhorn said.

"Which tells us that what the father is doing for the child is hard to replace in prisons, teachers, social workers and police officers," he said.

The problem "is across the board" in society, not just a problem of the poor -- and not one that can be remedied simply by reforming the welfare system to give economic incentives for two-parent homes rather than those headed by single mothers, Blankenhorn said.

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A third of all children are born outside marriage, Blankenhorn said. Increasingly "if (these fathers') kids saw them on the street, their kids wouldn't recognize them," he said.

Among divorced men, only about 10 percent cooperate with their former wives in regular visitation and other ways to meet the children's needs, Blankenhorn continued. As to the other 90 percent, "They drift away from the lives of their children."

A father's abandonment by choice is far different than a father's death, Blankenhorn said. Instead of experiencing grief, the child experiences anxiety and self-blame and feels, "The most important male person in my life left me."

Meanwhile, the church is "abandoning and leaving to others the task of socializing men into the role of fatherhood, ... letting the problem be defined by the secular culture," Blankenhorn said.

"The church is the custodian of whatever wisdom we have" and ought to be taking the crisis more seriously, especially in such family building efforts as of marriage preparation and enrichment, Blankenhorn said.

Said Don Garner, chairman of the religion department at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., "The church may be the place where we need to start asking, How do you spell success?" in being a father.

"Our culture rewards and produces economic providers," he said, suggesting the church should strive to develop "emotional providers," fathers who are not so intent on "real income," but "real relationships."

Garner reminded, "... there are absentee fathers in two-parent families, physically present ... (but) absent emotionally ... preoccupied with work and stress."

Ray Higgins, assistant professor of ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, said churches should squarely admit a crisis exists and, rather than leaving families on their own to raise their children, provide "an entire network of relationships for families."

Higgins listed 10 models for fatherhood, noting that not all men act out each role and that some men might act them out in harmful ways:

Starting with number 10, Higgins listed:

10) father as friend, "fathers who will accept (their children) as they are, fathers who enjoy being with them. ... Too many children know their fathers as an enemy and not as a friend," often leaving the children unable to conceive of God as a friendly parent. Higgins warned, however, being too much of a "pal" or "buddy" can become an "unfair burden" for their children.

9) father as coach, teaching children "how to compete and to cooperate," but avoiding any sort of "winner-loser" emphasis.

8) father as protector, helping children anticipate dangers. Without such protection, children might go through life without a sense of a loving God, Higgins said. If, on the other hand, a parent is overprotective, his children may become too dependent, unable to take risks.

7) father as disciplinarian. "Children need boundaries. They are not wise enough to set all of the rules on their own," Higgins said. Two extremes should be avoided, he said: dumping all the discipline on mothers and relating to children only as a disciplinarian. Nor should fathers be too lenient, Higgins said, because children may grow up not knowing how to set boundaries and keep themselves out of trouble. Also, they may become angry if they later try, unsuccessfully, to begin using rules.

6) father as teacher. "The most powerful way fathers teach their children is through who we are," Higgins said.

5) father as caregiver. "Children need nurturing" and it shouldn't be seen as anti-masculine, he said.

4) father as provider. Higgins cited the apostle Paul's admonition for fathers to work to support their families, but added, "Many fathers have been too narrow ... bringing home the bacon but not bringing up the kids." He said too many men stay later at the office to provide financially when they should come home earlier to provide emotionally.

3) father as male. "Our children mean something different when they say Dad than when they say Mom and they need both," Higgins said.

2) father as leader. A passive father, he said, fails to help children learn how to take risks and make commitments. An authoritarian father, however, shows children how to misuse power for selfish reasons, he said.

1) father as Christian. "Children are spiritual beings created in the image of God," Higgins said. Fathers shouldn't try "to make our children become Christians on our timetable" or in a certain way or with certain words, yet neither should they be uninvolved, hoping that others "will bail us out of this responsibility."

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Religious liberty concerns
voiced during BWA meeting

By Wendy Ryan

Baptist Press
3/15/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--The heart-rending pictures of murdered ethnic Russian Baptist Vladimir Limorev and his four children in their coffins at their funeral in Tajikistan provided a graphic reminder to BWA executive committee members that the BWA must continue to plead for religious freedom around the world.

Limorev, his children and four others were brutally beaten, then killed or left to die in a burning home on New Year's Eve in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan.

While the nine martyrs reflect a worst-case scenario of religious persecution, Baptists in Bulgaria, Burma and in some of the states of the former Soviet Union all face varying forms of religious persecution from either their governments or the majority religions in their countries, about 80 BWA executive committee members, representing 15 countries, were told during their March 8-10 meeting at Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria Va.

Displaying the pictures of the martyred Baptists in Tajikistan, George Boltnew, special assistant to the BWA general secretary for the former Soviet Union, said, "In spite of what happened, people still hope in Christ and there is no bitterness among the Baptists in the Dushanbe church."

In Bulgaria, "Since 1993, we have received much opposition from the Orthodox," said Theo Angelov, president of the Union of Baptist Churches in Bulgaria and of the Evangelical Alliance of Bulgaria, "and this is true for most of the former communist countries.

"This trend in this part of Europe is dangerous," said Angelov, one of three special guests at the BWA meeting. Baptists have been targets of a mass media campaign funded by the Orthodox and the government accusing them of giving drugs to young people, teaching suicide and eating small children for breakfast, Angelov recounted.

Because of a media blackout to Baptists, they have not been able to respond to such outrageous charges, Angelov said, and appeals to their government have not been heard.

Meanwhile Baptists find themselves locked out of their churches; pushed out of the meeting halls they had rented once democracy came; and forced to meet on the street in winter and meet in homes, he said.

"It is the same like in communist times," Angelov said. "We are accused of bringing Western influences into Bulgaria, buying the souls of people with our humanitarian help and being a danger to national security."

In February, the Bulgarian Parliament passed two laws restricting activities of the evangelical churches in schools and in other ways and putting restrictions on foreigners who want to enter Bulgaria. This has caused visa problems for missionaries there and could affect those who want to help Baptists in Bulgaria, Angelov said.

This was done because many groups -- and cults -- have come in, he said. "Some bad things have come in.

"What can we do? Angelov asked. "We have come to you, Baptists in the BWA. We need your prayers, understanding and help."

While in Washington, the BWA arranged for Angelov to meet with leaders at the Bulgarian desk of the U.S. State Department. "They were very much concerned and want to help," he reported, "especially in light of the Helsinki Accords of 1975 and the human rights agreements there."

Also, during the BWA executive committee meeting, Karl-Heinz Walter, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation reported he finally had received an answer to one of his letters from the president of Bulgaria.

"He promised not to break the law that calls for religious freedom," Walter said.

In spite of the current problems, Angelov said he remains hopeful. "We believe the Lord can do miracles," Angelov said. "We have survived communism. We are sure we will survive the post-communist time too."

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Bulgarian Baptists will pray and fast on April 24 for human rights and religious freedom in their country and will be joined by Baptists in Europe.

Among those helping Baptists to survive the unfolding post-communist era in Eastern Europe is Anatoly V. Pchelincev, director of the Christian Legal Center Institute of Religion and Law, another special guest at the BWA meeting.

A former general in the Russian army and a lawyer, Pchelincev is now leading the fight for religious freedom in his country and helping Baptists and others who, for religious reasons, do not want to serve in the army.

"Everything in our constitution supports freedom of conscience and freedom of religion," said Pchelincev, "however in daily life, this is not always kept."

Pchelincev said some Orthodox priests and communists have written articles describing Baptists as "a church of Satan."

"Our institute is now preparing a court case against some of the writers of those articles," Pchelincev said.

A former convinced Marxist and Leninist, Pchelincev began a serious search for God after his life was saved when he fell from a parachute in a bank of snow.

Though he suffered serious trauma, Pchelincev survived. When he revived, his commander said, "God must be with you."

Pchelincev knew about God from his Baptist mother and grandmother who had taken him to church when he was young. A Soviet education left him an unbeliever. "I am a typical product of the Soviet Union," he said.

In his search for God, Pchelincev finally returned to his mother's church, Central Baptist in Moscow. After three years of attending church, and "repenting three times publicly," Pchelincev finally received his assurance of God's forgiveness and was baptized four years ago.

With his conversion, his focus as a lawyer changed. "As a lawyer, I saw many injustices against believers in Russia," he said. "Many people disappeared, taken at night."

This led Pchelincev to study law and, five years ago, he proposed a law for the Soviet Supreme Court that would give alternative ways of serving in the army. While the law was not received, Pchelincev became an expert in this area and served as a military lawyer.

"I defended Christian soldiers when the army tried to imprison them because they refused to bear arms," Pchelincev said. He published articles on the subject and formed the Association of Christian Soldiers. While most were Orthodox, they elected him, a Baptist, as their leader.

"But things are still complex even to this day, because Baptists are considered second-class," Pchelincev said. "While there is no direct persecution, they constantly try to humble you."

Pchelincev said he and his group "worked very hard to make sure" the proposed 1993 religious law that would have severely limited religious freedom, except for the Orthodox, did not pass.

"We worked for three months on the new law and on the part with freedom of conscience," Pchelincev said, speaking about the law Russian President Yeltsin signed after the failed coup against him.

Pchelincev appealed to the BWA for Christian lawyers who can help his group. "We have much work to do," he said. "We have very few people."

From Myanmar (formerly Burma), a Burmese pastor, who was also a special guest at the meeting, spoke movingly of the continued threat his church faces from the socialist military government.

While there are more than 1 million people in Baptist churches in Burma, Baptists and other Christians are only 5.6 percent of a population that is 85 percent Buddhist. All other groups are only 15 percent.

"The political situation in Burma affects the religious situation," he said, and the government is increasingly attempting to make Burma a Buddhist state and use Buddhism as a weapon to control the state.

Because Buddhism is "the unofficial and undeclared state religion," Baptists, the largest of the Christian groups often are discriminated against, the pastor said.

"We are not happy," he said, "but we have no right to express our feelings."

Far is another reason Burmese Baptist pastors do not speak out against injustices in their country. "We are still not yet free from fear," the pastor said.

As he described the suffering of the people in the church he leads, the Burmese pastor said: "Now we understand what (the apostle) Paul meant by joy in suffering. These oppressions strengthen our faith." He thanked the BWA for its support, encouragement and prayer.

He also stated neither economic hardships nor political pressure will move Burmese Baptists from their goal to reach Burma for Christ by A.D. 2000 with the theme, "Christ our Only Hope."

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Leaders say need heightened
for BWA 'global perspective'

By Wendy Ryan

Baptist Press
3/15/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist World Alliance's "global perspective" is needed more than ever, BWA leaders declared during the March 8-10 BWA executive committee meeting in Alexandria, Va.

"We need this fellowship to bring the good news to the end of the world," said BWA President Knud Wumpelmann of Denmark. "(Baptist) unions and conventions by themselves cannot bring the global perspective."

"We must take seriously how to evangelize the secularized West," said Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary, said in his address to about 80 Baptist leaders from 15 countries meeting at Alexandria's Alfred Street Baptist Church.

"Cross-cultural evangelism is needed and the BWA is more important than ever in helping the West overcome secularism," Lotz said. "We need non-Western missionaries to help us with how to evangelize the world."

The evangelism reports Baptist leaders heard from the non-Western world tell of rapidly growing churches -- in many cases in spite of persecution and lack of religious freedom in their countries.

"The main problem in our churches is not enough seating," said Theo Angelov, president of the Baptist Union of Bulgaria. "To see so many people coming to church and bringing their problems after so many years of atheistic propaganda is marvelous," he said.

While Bulgarian Baptists are currently under attack from the Orthodox church and the government, Angelov said, "it is still a time of freedom and possibilities, and our churches are growing and growing."

While Baptists in the former Soviet republic of Georgia "cannot even buy one egg with their month's pay, they are still planting churches," said George Boltnew, president of the Russian-Ukrainian Evangelical Baptist Union, USA, Inc.

Boltnew, who serves as a special adviser to the BWA general secretary on the former USSR, reported on several new churches in the former Soviet Union.

One Baptist church made up of Kurds recently was formed in Georgia, he said.

Although the Russians are leaving because of the continuing war with Armenia, the first church in Azerbaijan has just been established. Because it is a predominantly Muslim country, the men and women must be divided when they meet.

In Abkhazia, where separatists are fighting the government of Georgia, the church in Sukhumi, once almost empty because of the war, is filling up with believers again. In spite of the war, they never missed one of their services and met three times a week.

For more than a year and a half, they have not been able to work because there is no energy. There is no pay and they are totally dependent on outside help, Boltnew reported.

In Armenia, another war-ravaged state, believers still meet, even though there is no electricity. "They get one hour of energy every 24 hours," Boltnew said. "Now there are not even candles, but the believers still come."

While a Burmese pastor and his wife earn less than it costs for a bag of rice, Burmese pastors in Myammar are still evangelizing.

"We have faith and hope and we want 'Myammar for Christ,'" said the Burmese pastor at the BWA meeting. "We want to see the whole country saturated with the gospel and we are praying for renewal and revival in our churches."

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Currently there are 92 churches in the Burmese Baptist Union, but they hope for 200 by the end of the century and each of the 14 regional groups that make up the Myanmar Baptist Convention have similar goals.

Baptists in Cuba are growing even though the economic situation is even worse than it was just two years ago.

John Sundquist, director of international ministries for the American Baptist Churches USA visited Cuba in January. "I was shocked at what I saw," he said, but his visit to one church showed the faith of Cuban Baptists.

"I could not believe," said Sundquist, "when I visited one church that was so broken down and had no roof, the people filled the church area and sang, 'O give thanks to the Lord for he is good for his mercy endureth forever.'"

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Crisis pregnancy center sees
billboard effort saving lives

By Dana Williamson

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3/15/94

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Sometimes a woman in a crisis pregnancy situation just needs to know there is someone out there who cares. The Oklahoma City Crisis Pregnancy Center has taken another step toward letting her know of the help available through its facility.

Since Oct. 1, billboards featuring the center's phone number have sprung up in four Oklahoma City locations, thanks to the generosity of an Oklahoma City woman.

The woman, who wishes to remain anonymous, called Crisis Pregnancy Center coordinator Lou Allard to say she wanted to talk about billboards. What the woman didn't know is that billboards were on Allard's CPC prayer "wish list." (Allard's husband, Leo, is pastor of Westminster Road Baptist Church in Midwest City, Okla.)

Since the billboards went up, CPC has averaged one to two clients per week from women who have seen them and visited the center, Allard said, noting that's more than 30 babies who already may have been saved.

And in addition to the babies, there has been at least one mother saved.

"A young girl called and said she had seen the billboards and wanted to come in," Allard said. "She said it was not the right time to have a baby, that her stepfather would be upset."

After watching the ultrasound video and being witnessed to, which is the norm for any woman visiting the center, she accepted Jesus.

"As she left the center, her comment was, "Two lives have been saved today."

It is estimated 120,000 cars per day pass by one of the four billboards which picture a fetus and the words, "You never hear the cry."

After the donor's initial call to Allard, the billboard effort with the CPC began taking shape when the woman got to Allard's office, told how God had impressed on her heart she needed to do billboards and asked if the CPC's phone number could be used on them.

Allard asked to see what the billboards would look like, then faxed copies to CPC members for input.

The donor, who said she wanted to do something because of God's goodness to her, said doors kept opening leading to billboards.

"It is hard for me to believe our country is allowing abortions," she said. "I feel people need to be educated, and when I saw a physician advisory ad against abortion, the Lord impressed upon me that he wanted me to do pro-life billboards."

She called a billboard company and asked the cost for various Oklahoma City locations. The man on the phone gave her prices, then inquired why she was asking. It turned out he was a Christian with the same pro-life interest, and he provided help in designing the billboards.

In fact, he was the one who suggested a name and phone number be placed on the billboards so people could be counseled and witnessed to.

"We had both heard about the Crisis Pregnancy Center," the woman, who is a member of a non-denominational church in Oklahoma City, related, "and he insisted that I call."

"After the billboards were up, I thought I would feel I had done everything I needed to," the woman related.

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"But it isn't enough. God has given me Scriptures saying I am supposed to raise more money for additional billboards."

The donor and her husband have paid for the billboard advertising for four months and raised funds for two more months, which was the original commitment.

The woman has written letters asking for a one-time donation or six-months commitment. The billboards currently up cost \$450 a month, but higher traffic areas can run anywhere from \$600 to \$1,200 a month.

"It has been a really unbelievable experience for me seeing how God has worked through these billboards," the donor said. "I have been sharing the results with my friends and those who have contributed to the cost of the billboards, so they can share in the joy too."

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Determined church body drives
'citadel of evil' from town

By William H. Perkins Jr.

Baptist Press
3/15/94

SOUTHAVEN, Miss. (BP)--When God moves and his people listen, anything is possible. That's the lesson members of a Mississippi church learned over the past few weeks, and as a result their community will soon be rid of the only abortion clinic in northwest Mississippi.

Steve Bennett, pastor of Colonial Hills Baptist Church in Southaven, announced recently the church has negotiated a three-year lease/purchase agreement with the Memphis businessman who owns the building occupied by Tri-State Women's Medical Center on U.S. 51 in Southaven, almost within walking distance of the Memphis city limits.

That means the church is now the legal occupant of the building, and the clinic's owner, abortionist Thomas Tucker, has agreed to vacate the building by April 29, Bennett said.

How the church managed to complete the difficult and expensive leasing process in only two weeks -- without spending a penny from the church's budget -- has but one explanation, Bennett said.

"We had a word from God. It was so spontaneous and so strong, we said, 'Let's trust God to bring down the greatest concentration of wickedness in this city.' People grabbed their water guns and ran toward hell. They just believed God could do anything," he said. A pair of church members originally approached him about buying the clinic property, Bennett said, so he prayed about it and decided to present the idea to the church body during a Wednesday night prayer meeting.

When an invitation was given at the end of the prayer meeting, hundreds of people came forward for more than an hour to donate money, jewelry and other items to the cause, according to Bennett.

"People gave their wedding rings. One person brought the title to his car and another donated 10 acres of land. We had over \$40,000 in cash alone," he said.

Representatives of the church began talks with the building owner but decided to cease negotiations after the owner rejected six offers, Bennett recounted.

The pastor said he knew the purchase plan was then in God's hands, and -- sure enough -- less than two days later the building owner called to say he would accept their sixth offer.

In the midst of their joy at driving out what Bennett described as "a citadel of evil under the authority of hell," he said church members have been quick to give God credit for their victory.

They also have thought about the sobering fact that Tucker's clinic could make a comeback elsewhere in the city, according to Bennett.

"We can't control what he does, but God told us to get this building and we got it. Christians all over the county -- not just Baptists -- have been praying about this. We owe this to the glory of the Lord. We had a part in this, but God made it happen," he said.

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Women's ministry leaders
discuss new strategies

By Debbie Moore

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Southern Baptist women's ministry leaders heard representatives from Woman's Missionary Union, Home Mission Board and Baptist Sunday School Board discuss new initiatives during the recent Women's Leadership Consultation IV and "Lord, Change Me" women's rally at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Fourteen speakers addressed the fourth annual event, with the theme of "Think Globally, Act Locally" and encompassing both general sessions and small-group discussions.

"Missions is our reason for being," Dellanna O'Brien, executive director of the Woman's Missionary Union in Birmingham, Ala., told the meeting of women's ministry leaders mainly from the Southeast. In the wake of recent major changes in women's ministry programs at both the Woman's Missionary Union and the Baptist Sunday School Board, O'Brien said, "Having the opportunity to meet and learn from women leaders throughout the Southern Baptist Convention has been beneficial in promoting mutual understanding, sharing resources and cooperative ventures."

O'Brien explained the purpose behind Women on Mission, a new term in WMU which replaces both Baptist Women and Baptist Young Women designations. This one women's missions organization will include multiple options to meet the needs and changing dynamics of women's ministries in today's churches, O'Brien said. She also introduced "Missions Mosaic," the new WMU magazine that will replace Royal Service and Contempo in the fall of 1995. The magazine's format will give women's groups more options and is more reader friendly, she said.

O'Brien attended the first three consultations, all held at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. At these conferences, coordinated by Monte Clendinning of the seminary's World Mission and Evangelism Center, "we began to see we needed to change and what we needed to change," O'Brien said. They also identified areas that will not change, she said, including the need to do missions activities.

Betty Jo Lewis, wife of Larry Lewis, president of the SBC's Home Mission Board in Atlanta, said, "Missions education is our link to the past and our lifeline to the future."

Women will fulfill their search for significance as they obey and fulfill the Great Commission, Lewis said. "That will last. That is significant stuff."

Esther Burroughs, assistant director of the HMB church growth and evangelism department, gave examples of the many missions opportunities both at home and abroad women can be involved in. An active participant in missions activities herself, "It's your serve," she reminded participants, emphasizing the HMB theme for 1994.

Paula Hemphill, wife of Ken Hemphill, director of the Southern Baptist Center for Church Growth in Atlanta, gave principles for women's ministries. "Principles are universally applicable," she said, "but methods are contextual." Emphasizing the need for Bible study, she said, "We have a doctrinal famine that has led to anorexic believers."

Dottie Williamson, a HMB missionary and director of multihousing ministries in Clinton, Miss., shared her testimony with participants and said, "Your ministry is evidence of your Christian belief." Noting action is as important as preparation, she said, "God didn't call you to be a professional sponge. ... If you're not getting anything out of (this meeting), it's because you haven't squeezed out a drop from last Sunday."

Denise George, women's enrichment ministry specialist for the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, presented the BSSB's new vision statement for women's ministries: "We help churches begin and build ministries that meet the unique needs of women, reach women for Christ, disciple women in Christ and equip women to reach out to others through resources, training and enrichment events, consulting and networking."

Hundreds of women's ministries are springing up in churches all over the United States, said George, who assumed her newly created position at the BSSB four months ago and continues to reside in Birmingham, Ala. The BSSB's new approach to women's ministry "has been met by overwhelming enthusiasm, she said. "I want this ministry to women to begin at the foot of the cross and stay there."

Keynote speaker Lee Ezell, noted author and speaker from Newport Beach, Calif., spoke about an idea she called the "Cinderella Syndrome," a tendency women have to wait for "someday."

"The difficulties in your life will not magically go away," Ezell said. "You can find happiness and contentment right where you are. ... Happiness isn't in getting what you want; it's in enjoying what you've got."

The other keynote speaker, Chuck Kelley, associate professor of evangelism at New Orleans Seminary, presented statistics about change, baby boomers, baby busters and correlations to today's church. For instance, baby boomers, unlike their grandparents and parents, are "a generation that doesn't ask if there is an SBC church in the neighborhood" when they move to a new location, he said. "Relationships, a place where they feel a connection, is more important than a denomination" for baby boomers.

Citing "Kelley's Korollary," he said, "It is possible for the church to institutionalize inefficiency. ... What you have been doing is responsible for what you have. The only way to change what you have is to adjust what you are doing."

"Women's ministry is a priority in the recovery of the church," Kelley said, citing statistics showing the plateau and decline of many churches today. "We'll never turn it around without women's ministry." Clendinning, who spearheaded the first three consultations, said she has seen the women's ministry quadruple at her church, Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. Distressed that they were not reaching the younger women in her church, Clendinning worked with the church's older women to reorganize the women's ministry by "holding on to things that are basic, but putting them in a new package," she said.

"We recognized the fact that multitudes of women today face problems older women never faced when they were their age," Clendinning said, such as dangers in the public schools and latch-key children. "The needs of today's woman need to be addressed and what better place than the church?" she said.

Women's Leadership Consultation IV was coordinated by Jo Ann Leavell, wife of New Orleans Seminary President Landrum P. Leavell II, and Rhonda Kelley, wife of Chuck Kelley. Both have been frequent speakers at women's retreats and conferences across the country for many years, as well as authors of inspirational books and articles for women.

Women's Leadership Consultation V is scheduled for Feb. 24-25, 1995, at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., and will be coordinated by Dorothy Patterson, wife of Southeastern Seminary President Paige Patterson. A similar conference will be held March 24-25, 1995, at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., coordinated by Betty Ferguson, wife of Midwestern Seminary President Milton Ferguson.

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(BP) photos available from New Orleans Seminary's office of public relations.

**Seminary tackles new role
to help start churches**

**Baptist Press
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MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary has joined the California Southern Baptist Convention, Home Mission Board and local Baptist associations to start churches.

"Golden Gate Partnership in Church Planting" will send students out in pairs to start a new church with an HMB church planter strategist. Students will work with a strategist for one year to birth and grow a new church.

The new program is unique among Southern Baptist Convention seminaries, said Gary Bulley, church planter strategist in northern California. Golden Gate is one of six SBC seminaries and the convention's sole agency in the West.

The program not only starts churches, but mentors students in church planting, Bulley said. It is designed to facilitate strong church planters, pastors and missionaries, as well as strong, healthy new churches, he added.

Funding, resources and training are provided by the HMB, Golden Gate Seminary and local Baptist associations. Each student receives a part-time salary of \$800 to \$1,000 per month and significant seminary credit -- 10 to 22 units -- through Praxis, supervised ministry and church start intern programs.

Because students receive salary and academic credit, they can focus on ministerial growth and success.

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"Experts agree that being mentored in a ministry environment while doing ministry is the best preparation for leadership," Bulley noted. "However, class schedules, part-time jobs, family responsibilities and ministry roles are difficult to juggle. The one-year, student-centered approach allows students to concentrate on growing churches and on growing in their spiritual leadership."

All candidates for the program must be approved by the seminary, the local strategist, the local director of missions and a representative from the local sponsoring church. For more information, call G.W. Schweer, GGBTS professor of evangelism, at (415) 388-8080.

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Olford says expository preaching
vital to 'grasping the message'

By Mary Wimberley

Baptist Press
3/15/94

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--"Expository preaching is not an option, it is the only way of preaching," said Stephen F. Olford during a series of lectures at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School.

The noted biblical expositor was the speaker for the William E. Conger Jr. Lectures on Biblical Preaching March 8-10 at the Birmingham, Ala., school.

Olford, 75, knows his subject well. He was pastor of churches in England and New York City before founding Encounter Ministries, Inc., in 1970. The organization sponsors crusades, conferences and training in biblical exposition for pastors and lay people through its Institute for Biblical Preaching.

"Expository preaching," Olford said, defining his subject, "is exposing, explaining and interpreting the Word of God historically, contextually and with accuracy."

Interpretations must be accurate -- historically, contextually, grammatically and doctrinally, he said.

Never come to a passage without searching out its historical accuracy, and no verse should be interpreted in isolation from its context, he said.

"The Bible is one book: a unity of diversity," he said.

Regarding grammar, "Get to grips with your Hebrew and Greek," he advised the largely student audience, most of whom are enrolled in master of divinity or doctor of ministry programs.

And, he said, "Never leave a passage without determining the doctrinal message. In every good expository sermon, there is a unity, a movement and a purpose."

That purpose, he said, is the theological power that comes out of that passage in terms of truth.

Every sermon also needs clarity and passion, he said. When analyzing a passage, he advised asking three questions: What is the dominating theme? What are the integrating thoughts? and What is the motivating thrust?

Deal with one theme at a time, and don't read the Scripture too fast, Olford cautioned. "The most important thing that happens in a worship service is the reading of God's Word."

Each point must be logical, he said, explaining, "Your audience has never taken a course in logic, but God has placed a computer of logic in their minds."

Good expository preaching demands authority in the sense of competence in the Holy Scriptures and confidence in the Holy Spirit, Olford said. "I cannot preach something I don't believe," he said.

After writing a sermon, Olford advised, read it over and over and rehearse it before God.

He centered his final lecture on the proclamation of the Word of God, citing 2 Timothy, chapter 4, in which Paul tells Timothy to preach the word, even when critical, crucial times come and people may want to turn away from the truth.

Olford challenged his audience to preach the word conscientiously, continuously, comprehensively and courageously.

"There will be judgement on how we've handled our preaching," he warned. "You must preach conscientiously because there's a day coming when your preaching will be assessed."

Preach continuously, even when it's out of season, he said. Take and make opportunities to preach. Make opportunities out of the non-opportunities.

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"Our Lord Jesus could turn a mountain-into a conference center; and a wellside into a counseling booth," he said, noting Jesus and the disciples "preach d everywhere."

"Some of the greatest experiences in my life have come from preaching out of season," he said, recalling a certain crusade in Birmingham, England, when he impetuously jumped into a boxing ring between matches to invite the audience to the crusade.

"When I finished, I jumped down and ran out quickly!" he admitted, adding many in the crowd did later attend his services.

"Somehow, we've become so patterned and confined in the rigid way we think preaching should be done."

Preach the Word comprehensively, he said. "Every time we get up to preach there must be the convictive word." He learned that tenet as a child when he watched his missionary father bring toughened African warriors to tears with the way he presented the Word of God.

"You must preach the Word of God courageously in every aspect. Be courageously realistic, altruistic, evangelistic and optimistic."

The evangelistic mandate to us means two things, he said: proclamation of the message and invitation to the Savior.

"Men must grasp the message before they are invited to receive it," he said.

Finally, be optimistic. Even though he might have used his engineering degree to make more money to support missions, Olford said he has never regretted his decision to pursue preaching as a career. "How can you step down from being a preacher to be a mere king?"

Preaching, he said, is "the highest calling."

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