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SBC hunger convocation canceled
after disappointing registration By Louis Moore

Baptist Press
4/26/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--The six Southern Baptist Convention agencies planning a national hunger convocation at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center in May have decided to cancel the event due to lack of registrations.

Despite the distribution of more than 100,000 brochures announcing the event, it failed to draw the necessary numbers to make the event possible, said C. Ben Mitchell, ad hoc chair of the planning committee and a staff member of the SBC Christian Life Commission.

"We've done more advertising for this than for any of the Christian Life Commission's annual seminars, and we drew a smaller number than any of us on the planning committee could have imagined," he said. "We had less than a dozen paid registrants."

Sponsoring the event were the Baptist Sunday School Board, Brotherhood Commission, Christian Life Commission, Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board and Woman's Missionary Union.

The cancellation comes at a time when top FMB leaders have voiced alarm at figures showing Southern Baptist giving for overseas hunger and disaster relief slid last year and have veered even more sharply downward in 1994.

In 1993 receipts dipped by 13 percent from 1992; 1993 giving finished at \$6.6 million, down from \$7.6 million the year before. And through March 1994 receipts show a 26 percent decline from the same period of 1993.

If the giving pattern persists, the board would collect \$4.9 million in human needs offerings this year. It would be the lowest figure since 1981's \$4.8 million.

Mitchell said he is puzzled by the low number of registrants. "I'm hopeful that this poor showing doesn't indicate a lack of interest in the hunger issue, but we've yet to clearly identify the reason for such a dismal response.

"Southern Baptists continue to do hunger ministry at home and abroad, and it may be that they did not see a need for a national conference at this time. It may be time for us to rethink our strategy for motivating and supporting hunger ministry. If not through a national conference, somehow, someday we need to redouble our efforts, using some other strategy to intensify interest in this area."

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June Whitlow, the WMU's ad hoc committee representative, said, "I am particularly disappointed that the convocation was canceled because hunger is WMU's nationwide emphasis for 1994-1995. I had hoped that many WMU members would attend. However, I know that during this next year we will be focusing on hunger through our programming, and WMU members will be involved in combatting hunger in their own hometowns."

She said WMU's executive board voted in 1993 to identify one social issue annually for specific intervention through national projects. Hunger is the focus of the first WMU national ministry project.

"I am also disappointed that the convocation was canceled because WMU has published a book on hunger, 'Servants of the Banquet,' specifically for the event," Whitlow said. Describing it as a valuable resource about hunger, she said it will be available through WMU and Baptist Book Stores.

Nathan Porter, the Home Mission Board's representative on the ad hoc committee, praised the planning for the convocation's workshops and presentations but said Southern Baptists "simply did not learn about the convocation in time to plan to attend."

"Southern Baptists need a focus on hunger and human suffering, and I regret that this convocation will not be a reality," he said. "The lack of response to this conference in no way reflects the commitment or interest of the Southern Baptist people to the issue of hunger."

John Cheyne, representing the Foreign Mission Board on the ad hoc committee, said, "Our constituency has been absolutely distracted from a focus on world hunger over the last nine months to a year. I think all relief agencies are feeling the same impact."

He said the news media "has completely avoided any discussion about the reality of what's happening about world hunger. It's just not one of those things on the agenda today with the average person in our constituency. We've also been caught up in the problems of our convention itself -- Southwestern (where the seminary president was fired) and things like that -- that are a further distraction."

Cheyne said, "What the public has not been made aware of is that we have now been told by the World Health Organization that the drought in Ethiopia and Eastern and Southern Africa is likely to exceed the drought that took place in '84 and '85. The predictions are as dire as anything that has been presented."

"With all the political agitation in Burundi, Rwanda and South Africa, the other aspects of human needs have taken last place to the emphasis upon the human dilemma."

Cheyne also said, "I think the track record of Southern Baptists over the last 15 years where we have averaged giving \$6.4 million is as commendable as any denomination in the world, but right now with problems within the convention that continue to raise their heads, such as the situation at Southwestern, I do think there's much more focus even within our constituency on the problems within the convention than there is on specific issues such as world hunger."

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Retiring human needs chief
found another way to preach

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
4/26/94

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--In 1982, as masses of Cambodians driven by Vietnamese occupation forces spilled into Thailand, thousands filtered into refugee camps where Southern Baptist teams worked.

In some camps, parents who had seen years of war destroy their fields were so desperately trying to feed themselves that their children were starving. Relief workers pulled the young ones away, housed them separately and gave them their own food.

Under one tent, a little boy stood out in the crowd of about 150 children. He was 6 but looked 3, his ribs shrink-wrapped in a thin layer of skin.

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As coordinator of Southern Baptist hunger and relief efforts overseas, John Cheyne was touring the area. He saw the boy, m ved in cl ser, pulled his camera to his eye. Then he stooped over and focused. As the boy stared up at him, Cheyne clicked the picture.

Cheyne saw the boy suck in a gasp of air, then fall over. He lay there, lifeless.

"That always stuck with me," Cheyne said recently, still visibly moved. "Just to see that boy die ... right there in front of me before I could help. I was there so I could tell other people the story, but he died before I could do anything."

Cheyne, 65, retired in March after 40 years with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. The Chicago native, who attended high school and college in Alabama, spent the first 24 of those years as a missionary preacher and administrator in Africa with his wife, Marie. The last 16 he led the board's world hunger and relief program -- just out of the starting blocks when he took it over in 1978.

The Thailand refugee camp tour was only one of many survey trips he made into needy areas -- areas where he helped missionaries find ways to relieve suffering as part of their Christian witness. Multifaceted projects he helped plan have brought fr sh water, food, healing, sanitation and salvation to people worldwide.

Recently he has played a key role in projects aiding Kazakhstan, Romania and other parts of the former Soviet bloc since it splintered in the late 1980s.

During his tenure Southern Baptist giving to human needs grew from less than \$2 million in 1978 to peak at nearly \$12 million in 1985 -- the year the world responded to the Ethiopian famine. Giving in recent years has averaged between \$7 million and \$8 million.

Cheyne credits timing for the growth. He came to the human needs job, he maintained, just as television became especially adept at transmitting starving faces to Americans' supper tables -- and as Southern Baptists were beginning to respond.

"They put pressure on us," he said of the thousands of local church members who sent money for relief ministry. "When your offering doubles three years in a row, it forces you to do as good a job as you can to effectively and efficiently use the funds."

Early on, Cheyne rejected the idea of using hunger relief only as a means to an end: gaining Christian converts. Instead, he championed "holistic ministry" -- addressing the evolving needs of people, helping them raise their physical quality of life and meeting emotional and spiritual needs as they surface.

He advocated "transformation" as a way to change lives rather than a more humanistic approach. Humanism holds out sin-racked man as the answer to his own problems, he said. It fails to deal with a person's need to become spiritually whole and transform society.

Under Cheyne's direction, human needs projects became more than a way to get someone to sit still long enough to listen to the gospel story. Rather, they became another way to express simple truths of the gospel like "love your neighbor" and "do unt others"

Still, the projects he helped missionaries plan were effective in leading people to Jesus Christ and starting churches. For example, an early pilot project using hundr ds of Southern Baptist volunteers focused around a dam in the African nation of Burkina Faso gave birth to a cadre of strong churches.

Now, nearly three decades after he and a team of missionaries started toying with the idea as a way to reach a remote Ethiopian Orthodox area in 1966, "holism" in human needs ministry has become commonplace overseas.

Most Southern Baptist missionaries know no other way. And the holistic approach helped lay the foundation for Cooperative Services International, the Southern Baptist aid agency now operating in places where missionaries usually cannot -- but where educators and other highly skilled experts are welcome.

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On one of his trips, Cheyne was haunted by a question upon leaving one of Brazil's urban "misery villages." Thousands of rural villagers had migrated there and set up tar paper shacks along a ditch draining waste from a nearby factory. He had met an illiterate, 25-year-old mother in the village with no husband and no marketable skills. The young woman had descended to the edge of total despair.

"I wondered, 'When she looks up at the night sky or when she tries to pray, how -- and who -- does she imagine God to be?'" Cheyne recalled.

Words alone, he realized, would not help this woman. Yet, as her physical needs were met by Brazilian Christians, she began to develop a picture of God's love and became open to the gospel.

"I am convinced that the best method of evangelism is to so manifest the Father that if they cannot comprehend it in words, they will comprehend it in our lives," said Cheyne.

Therein lies a certain irony in the story of Cheyne's missions career. On paper at least, it seems clearly divided between his church-starting, gospel-preaching terms as a missionary in Africa and his human needs work worldwide.

But the distinction isn't as clear as it seems. Actually, Cheyne's human needs work found driving power from his desire to share the gospel through preaching. In meeting human needs, he helped teach missionaries how to preach with a cold cup of water in addition to their oratory.

Still, the first two years in his new ministry were some of the hardest in his life.

"I kept wondering, why had the Lord set me aside from what I most wanted to do: preaching and starting churches? From the very beginning I had been a church planter in evangelism. Now I had suddenly become known as a 'human needs person.'"

Cheyne came to the board after he and missionary colleagues in Ethiopia attracted attention through an innovative "rural development" project. It focused on teaching people how to help themselves and used among its tools mobile medical clinics, veterinary services, handicrafts and Bible tapes for Ethiopian priests.

Revival broke out among Ethiopian believers, and missionaries from other countries came to study the project. Cheyne soon found himself helping missionaries around the world reach people in similar ways.

Now, after four decades with the Foreign Mission Board and after rearing five children -- including a Korean girl they adopted in 1985 -- the Cheynes are ready for a new challenge. He has been named president of Reign Storm, an Alabama-based nonprofit group formed to provide water purification equipment on the mission field.

No doubt he'll continue to preach as much as he has. After all, "I'm basically just a preacher," he said. "I always have been."

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

Angolan Baptists keep working
despite seemingly endless war

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
4/26/94

LUANDA, Angola (BP)--Civil war isn't the only thing going on in Angola. So is the work of the church.

Despite the suffering they have endured with other Angolans in a savage and seemingly endless conflict, Angolan Baptists are trying to meet current and future needs.

Baptists are operating humanitarian aid projects, getting ready to publish their first locally edited Bible study materials, starting churches and continuing seminary training.

"They're excited and working hard even under very difficult circumstances," said Southern Baptist missionary Curtis Dixon of Stroud, Okla.

Dixon and his wife, Betty, of Guymon, Okla., are the only Southern Baptist missionaries still in embattled Angola.

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The newest Baptist church is in Luanda, Angola's capital city. Samba Baptist Church organized in January and asked Dixon to be interim pastor. Three months later the church has 40 people awaiting baptism and 14 being trained in Christian discipleship by Dixon. It also has started a mission congregation.

In Huambo, a symbol of Angola's four decades of war after being captured and recaptured numerous times -- always with tremendous loss of life -- another church grew out of an English-language Bible study started by missionaries Mark and Susan Hatfield.

Even after the Hatfields had to evacuate the country, the group kept meeting in the missionaries' home. During 40 days of the worst fighting last year, approximately 50 people took shelter in the house and continued their prayer and Bible study meetings.

When the violence calmed down, the group organized into a church, called a pastor and moved into its own building down the road from the house.

Baptist pastors also re-started the seminary program in Huambo. Seven students, who had lost an average of 20 pounds each because of the severe food shortages in the town, decided to quit waiting for the fighting to stop and resumed classes.

Back in Luanda, 22 seminary students continue to meet for theological training. Dixon recently completed teaching a course on New Testament theology for that group.

The human needs effort, meanwhile, is funded by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board but totally staffed by Angolan Baptists.

Baptists are providing medicine for an existing medical clinic, opening a new clinic and operating three feeding stations for malnourished children. The feeding program provides children one high-protein, high-calorie meal a day. Once a week their mothers are educated in hygiene and trained in how to provide a healthy diet for their families using food available on the local market.

The Bible study material, now ready for the printer, culminates two years of work. Mrs. Dixon helped edit the material.

"We wanted to write our own, but when we saw the range of English-language material available from International Publications Services (the Foreign Mission Board's literature effort for eastern and southern Africa) we realized we didn't have to reinvent the wheel," she said.

One book in particular, "The Christian in a World Full of Spirits," caught the Angolans' eyes. They decided it was so relevant to the situation facing Angolan churches that it should be the pilot project.

"This will be the first literature Angolan Baptists have had since independence that is written in an African context," Mrs. Dixon said.

The first printing will include 2,500 student books and 500 teacher's guides.

"We hope to have the books in all 105 of our churches," Dixon added.

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Somalia fighting forces
Baptist workers out again

Baptist Press
4/26/94

MOGADISHU, Somalia (BP)--Southern Baptists working with relief agencies in Mogadishu, Somalia, have been forced out of the embattled city again.

The last workers evacuated in late April -- the day before all flights were canceled -- after being escorted to the Mogadishu airport by United Nations peacekeepers in tanks.

Several of the Southern Baptists hoped to return in early May. But the outlook, as one worker described it, is "not optimistic."

"We're anxious to resume work, but I don't see how we can have Americans riding around if (Somali warlord Mohammed Farah) Aideed's troops are everywhere -- and right now he pretty much has the city under his control," the worker added.

When Aideed and other clan leaders signed a peace treaty in March, he publicly promised there would be no clan fighting among Somalis after U.N. troops pulled out.

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But in late April two clans got into a fight over a loudspeaker. When one clan shot out the speaker after another clan refused to lower the volume, fighting spread throughout Mogadishu. Several U.N. troops from Nepal were killed and other troops were injured. Casualty figures among Somalis are unknown.

Relief programs funded by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board continue to aid Somalis in locations outside Mogadishu.

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Trustees who voted Dilday ouster
fielding media, alumni questions By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
4/26/94

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--In media interviews and special meetings, trustees who voted for the firing of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's longtime president Russell H. Dilday Jr. have been seeking to state their case.

"I have a peace that we did the right thing," Jim Leftwich told the Florida Baptist Witness in one of the more in-depth interviews of Dilday opponents. Leftwich was attending his second meeting as the only trustee from Florida on the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary's board when Dilday was fired March 9.

"In short, he (Dilday) didn't demonstrate a willingness to be under the leadership that God had placed over him at the seminary or at the convention (SBC)," contended Leftwich, pastor of Harbor City Baptist Church in Melbourne and a 1985 Southwestern graduate.

Critics of the firing also have been active in stating their case, with numerous news stories devoted to points made especially by Wayne Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church in Carrollton, Texas, who was the conservatives' candidate last November for president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and Kenneth Cooper, internationally known founder of the aerobics physical fitness movement and immediate past chairman of the seminary's Southwestern Council of community supporters.

Leftwich, in the interview with the Florida Baptist Witness, noted while Southwestern's trustees are "very positive" about the direction and future of the Southern Baptist Convention, particularly the "conservative resurgence," Dilday did not share that vision and had a combative spirit toward many of the trustees both in and out of the board meetings. "We had reached the place of mutual mistrust," Leftwich said.

Also, trustees had stated "in no uncertain terms" they didn't want the seminary used as a platform for the Baptist moderates' Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Leftwich said. In the March meeting, he recounted, Dilday "surprised us totally with the announcement that Keith Parks was to be the commencement speaker." Parks, former president of the SBC Foreign Mission Board who retired early citing interference from trustees as a major reason, now serves as CBF missions coordinator.

"That was totally inappropriate," Leftwich said. "It would be especially damaging to students who are forming their conception of the SBC to have the CBF presented and promoted on campus."

Leftwich also cited theological reasons for the trustee action, including issues of inspiration of the Bible and women's ordination.

A comparison of seminary founder B.H. Carroll's book on the inspiration of the Bible and Dilday's 1982 book on the doctrine of biblical authority would reveal "a definite drift from the obvious Southern Baptist position which Carroll represented," Leftwich argued.

"I would not call Dr. Dilday a classic liberal, but his views in that book would be called veiled neo-orthodoxy," Leftwich said. "A wavering view of Bible inspiration leads to a multitude of division in Bible interpretation.

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"For example," Leftwich continued, "he (Dilday) would not tak a stand on th issu of women pastors. While I acknowledge that's a local church autonomy matter, the seminary is n t the local church and the seminary should clearly present the SBC position on that. The SBC's position, which has been stated in resolution form, is clearly that women are not to hold the position of pastor. Dr. Dilday wouldn't do that although the trustees had."

Leftwich said he wouldn't deny there were political reasons for the firing but claimed they were not the major factor. "But you know, Dr. Dilday made Southwestern political because his stance and statements were very clearly against conservative leadership in the convention," Leftwich said.

Leftwich also stated that for the last five to 10 years many students coming to Southwestern have been looking at it as "the Masada for the moderates," when historically the school has been the SBC's most conservative seminary. "I'm not saying Southwestern's gone liberal at all," Leftwich said. "But the president has tak n the position in all these areas that's not with mainstream Southern Baptists and the leadership of the convention."

Leftwich praised Dilday as "amiable and a very likeable man" and said his vote was not a personal attack against Dilday. Yet, he added "the trustees have been trying to work with him for years without success." Leftwich cited the retirement package which Dilday rejected as an example: "At the point he turned down the generous retirement offer, it became obvious it was his personal agenda ahead of the progress of the seminary."

In Alabama, Paul Balducci, the only board member from the state, fielded sharp questions from Southwestern alumni in a "family meeting" at a Montgomery church attended by 125 people, including Dilday's daughter, Ellen Garrett, interim minister of education at Brookwood Baptist Church in Birmingham.

With a few exceptions, those who made statements criticized the firing and the trustees, and their statements were often applauded.

Balducci, pastor of West Mobile Baptist Church, defended the firing in his introductory remarks, claiming the trustees' relationship with Dilday had reached a stalemate and that Dilday had violated trustee expectations by inviting Parks as this spring's graduation speaker.

The board clearly sees the CBF in an adversarial relationship with the SBC, competing for Cooperative Program dollars and missionaries, Balducci recounted, noting trustees did not want to send "mixed signals" by inviting Parks, who was invited when he was FMB president.

But one questioner asked if the board itself was sending mixed signals by accepting CBF funds, which Balducci estimated to be \$200,000. "You say it was a matter of integrity not to have Keith Parks speak," the questioner said. "But doesn't it violate integrity for the board to accept funds from the CBF?"

Balducci said the board currently is discussing the matter of CBF funds, and the sentiment is against accepting them.

Frank Wells, a former missionary and pastor of First Baptist Church in Elba, told Balducci, "I owe you and the trustees a debt of gratitude for what you've done becaus in one day you did more to convince my daughter (a Southwestern student) and other Southern Baptists of the malignant nature of what's taking place in our d n mination than I've been able to communicate in 14 years."

Bill Hand, pastor of First Baptist Church in Ashford, said, "Personally, I don't think Keith Parks would have tried to recruit had he spoken for graduation. I have faith in the integrity of the man."

In response to a speaker who defended Dilday's theology, Balducci said he did not have a problem with Dilday's theological stance, which a news release from the trustees listed as one reason for the firing.

"That reason doesn't reflect my view," said Balducci, who said different trustees had their own reasons for firing Dilday. "In fact, I went back and reread his book, and I have a hard time finding problems with that."

In other media accounts:

-- The lone Southwest trustee from Georgia, Grady Roan, pastor of First Baptist Church in Vidalia, told The Christian Index, Georgia Baptists' state paper, the dismissal marked "one of the saddest days of my life" yet it climaxed "a long-standing adversarial relationship between the president and the trustees, and an unwillingness on the part of the president to acknowledge the authority of the trustees on policy matters."

Crediting Dilday with being "a dynamic leader" who has done "a lot of wonderful things for our seminary," Roan also stated, "I just think he's a very strong person and was not really willing to listen a lot of times to the ideas of these men who had been put there by our convention to strengthen the seminary." Citing a lack of trust on both sides during trustee meetings, Roan said, "I've never been in a meeting where people spoke to each other like that."

Tensions particularly heightened when Dilday characterized the conservative movement as "Satanic" after the 1990 SBC annual meeting in New Orleans, Roan said.

Roan said he probably would have been willing for Dilday to continue in office for another 18 months until he reached age 65. But Dilday reportedly had said he planned to remain as president until age 67 or 68, and Roan said he felt the best decision was to face the issue now rather than endure several more years of continued tension.

"I think that it was time for Dr. Dilday to retire," Roan said. "I just wish that it could have been done in a different way."

-- Trustee Ted Russell, an insurance agent in Aztec, N.M., told the Baptist New Mexican trustees weighed and understood ramifications that could come from firing Dilday. Nothing was said, however, that the repercussions might be dramatic, said Russell, who was attending only his second meeting as a trustee and otherwise said he didn't feel "I'm in a position to answer questions" on specific matters.

-- Trustee Sid West, pastor of Waynedale Baptist Church in Fort Wayne, Ind., told the Indiana Baptist newsjournal he voted for firing Dilday because of the impasse with trustees and dissatisfaction with faculty appointments recommended by Dilday. West objected to a weakness in the area of church music, which he described as continuing in "a high church, liturgical" emphasis that does not encourage a heart for evangelism.

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New Mexico church planter
draws on faith, experience

By Clay Renick

Baptist Press
4/26/94

TIJERAS, N.M. (BP)--The question seemed odd for a church planter in the desert: "How do you handle failure?"

Horace Kennedy was finishing a survey from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

"I've never had a failure," he responded.

A psychologist later called with a question about the comment.

"There's been a 100 things I couldn't do," Kennedy told him. "I never gave up on them. I'm still working."

And the lessons he's learned along the way must have helped. Kennedy dropped out of grade school then developed one of the largest lumber businesses in New Mexico. Later as a church planter, he used that same go-at-it approach.

"He's got more energy than most of us," said David Bunch, executive director of the Colorado Baptist General Convention. "(He) just focuses on reaching people and developing the people he reaches."

"You look and see where the problems are," Kennedy explained. "Then you look for someone who's solved the problem. ... If you can't get it one way, try another."

Sounds good. He could have retired at 63 but helped build or revamp 32 churches in New Mexico. Then he served as interim pastor for eight congregations and put up a girls' dorm at an orphanage in Guatemala.

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Problems hardly slow him. Kennedy grew up in the ranch lands of New Mexico, where rock formations interrupt the horizon like grey clouds. His own family had a ranch in the area, but he dropped out of grade school. World War II came and Kennedy joined the Navy to build floating dry docks.

He used that skill after the war to start a lumber company. And his approach later helped in the ministry.

"We studied the lumbering men in the area to see why some went broke," Kennedy noted. They would expand too fast in housing booms. He avoided the flux as a supplier. He found a large produce company that needed lumber for orange crates.

"We only got \$70 per thousand foot," he added. "But it was steady. They agreed to take all the lumber we could give them year 'round."

Housing booms found them with extra crews. When the housing market dropped, they still supplied wood to the fruit packer.

"We made a lot of money," Kennedy said. "But the guys who relied on the boom went broke, and we brought up all their equipment."

He then felt a call to the ministry. By then Kennedy had five children and no guarantees for income.

"I set out to find why some pastors would stay in a church for years," he said, "while others had to leave early. ... It's all in the visitation program, just knocking on doors.

"You also got to have biblical preaching," he added.

His ministry took him across several states and through many churches. One Sunday morning he felt dizzy during a service in Nebraska.

"Seemed like there was pins in my head," he said.

His doctor suggested a vacation.

"We can't leave," replied Kennedy.

"Who do you work for?" asked the doctor.

"The church."

"No," said the doctor. "You work for the Lord. Don't you think he can provide?"

The next day Kennedy found \$100 in the mail. It was from a Sunday school class in another church. A second letter had a \$150 check from a church in Texas.

"It was enough money for us to go for 10 days," Kennedy recalled.

He took his wife and youngest daughter back to New Mexico. They stopped in Farmington for a service. Kennedy was able to preach and two people asked Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior.

Another stop found them in Logan, N.M. Kennedy was pastor there years earlier. But now they were about to close.

He used vacation time to visit ranches around town. The next Sunday the Logan congregation had 46 at the service. They now average more than 100.

"I think the Lord had something for us to do for a week," Kennedy said. "When we got home we felt great."

One of the strangest experiences happened in a snowstorm. Kennedy took several people to an association meeting in Sidney, Neb.

The trip home was 147 miles. Snow was falling with temperatures at 25 below zero. Kennedy had five adults and two children in the car.

But he only had a quarter tank of gas.

"No one was open," he said. Another 60 miles passed. The gauge was on empty with snow blowing in sheets.

One route could take them 40 miles to the next town. Or they could use a country road to Benkleman. It was 20 miles across the open space.

"We decided we couldn't stop," Kennedy said. "We'd pray up one hill and coast down the next."

They made it to the station.

"The Lord just stretched the gasoline," he paused. "We never noticed the gauge to be off."

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