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EDITORS' NOTE: Specific locations and names have been changed or omitted in the following story because of restrictions on Christian work in the region profiled.

**A million people, five Christians:
That's progress in northern Africa** By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
7/8/94

NORTHERN AFRICA (BP)--How do you share the gospel with a tribe of 1 million people, spread across three countries, who've had no known contact with Christianity in more than 1,000 years?

First, forget everything you know about baseball. Because if you quit after only three strikes, not many folks will ever have the opportunity to understand and respond to the claims of Christ.

That rule applies across large chunks of the enormous expanse of the Middle East and northern Africa.

"There are many reasons the people in these areas are unreached," one Southern Baptist mission strategist explained. "Anyone wanting to witness starts out with a lot more than three strikes against him or her."

Barriers include:

- Language -- Many tribes and ethnic groups speak dialects that have no written form and obviously no translations of the Bible.
- Culture -- Many societies are so saturated with Islam and traditional beliefs they form almost a seamless whole. To reject the religion of the group is to reject the group.
- Remoteness -- Experience in camel riding is valuable and enough mechanical ability to keep a four-wheel-drive moving through the sand almost mandatory.
- Climate -- It features fierce heat, scarce rainfall and penetrating winds.

In many places, add political instability, an ancient and violent tradition of blood feuds and intertribal warfare and a rising militancy among Muslim militants.

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So how does the Christian message get presented? A common answer: by living out a Christian commitment.

"If we follow Jesus' command in Matthew 25 (to feed the hungry, provide water to the thirsty, care for strangers, clothe the naked, heal the sick and visit the prisoners) then often people also become open to hearing the truth of John 3:16," noted another observer. "Many of these people have never actually met a Christian, and what they know about Christianity is the distortions and untruths they've heard repeated by their religious leaders."

Millions of people in this part of the world are hungry, thirsty, sick and naked -- physically and spiritually. Especially refugees.

"Refugees are a problem to the host countries, most of whom have large populations of poor citizens of their own to worry about," said George Reichter (not his real name), a missionary with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. "So if we can offer funds and staff to help ease the strain refugees put on them, governments are happy for aid groups to come in and help as long as they aren't overtly Christian."

The accompanying evangelism, a natural outgrowth of meeting human needs, is both subtle and cautious (if not underground).

"We want to make disciples, but we have no desire to make unnecessary martyrs or get kicked out of an area by making our witness unnecessarily public," Reichter explained.

Reichter's work, which typifies a number of Foreign Mission Board efforts across the region, has developed along developmental lines.

He and his wife, veterans of traditional mission assignments in a country where missionaries are welcome, were challenged by the mission board's growing emphasis on unreached people groups. They felt drawn to a tribe of more than 1 million people, spread across three countries, with no known formal contact with Christianity in more than 1,000 years.

"That doesn't mean there may not have been an occasional Christian from that ethnic group, just that there was no record of it," Reichter added.

Four years ago they were reassigned to seek ways to tell the tribe about Jesus. For more than a year they and their children lived in one of the countries where the people group can be found. They learned the language and culture, developed contacts with other Christians in the country who might be bridges to their focus tribe -- and endured heat, loneliness and frustration.

Christianity isn't legally banned in the country, but it is tightly restricted and oppressed. Yet in those months Reichter preached in public 65 times and 75 people -- some Muslims and some from other traditional religion backgrounds -- became Christians.

One of the 75 came from the Reichter's target tribal group. "David" actually had become a Christian years before after encountering the Bible while studying in another country. But he had not been ready to make the public commitment of baptism until Reichter taught him more about Christianity.

The missionary also made contacts in the government, with relief agencies and among the leaders of the tribe. He showed the "Jesus" film to four businessmen brothers at their home one evening after they had begun talking about the unfairness of life and the evil in the world. Relief projects -- including digging wells at a refugee camp, establishing farm cooperatives and teaching crafts to help women generate income -- produced other opportunities to talk one-on-one about Jesus Christ.

In one refugee camp, with no advertising, Reichter set up a projector and showed the "Jesus" film in Arabic. More than 1,000 people gathered.

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"I sat in the car after I started the film and kind of slouched down and hoped no police or religious leaders would happen by," Reichter said. "That's the only time I've done something like that, but it just seemed like God was leading me to do that that night. There's a church in that section of the camp now, though I don't work directly with it."

Another time Reichter dropped into the government office that supervised refugee work in that district.

"The man who said what we could and couldn't do was visibly upset," Reichter remembered. "When I asked why, he told me he was being replaced for political reasons -- he thought his career was over. I felt the Lord wanted me to give him a Bible but I thought long and hard about doing that. If it upset him, he could kick me out of the country. But I gave him the Bible and told him how it had some answers that could help him."

The next week the firing was canceled and the man was promoted. Now he oversees relief work for the entire country and is close friends with Reichter.

"He knows I'm a Christian who tells other people about Christ, yet anytime I need to see him I can get an appointment," said the missionary. "God knew what he was doing. That man approved us to set up projects in other areas of the country. It doesn't hurt either that he knows Baptists are willing to go to the hard, remote places where many aid groups don't want to go."

Meanwhile, Reichter and David heard a rumor about 100 members of the tribe becoming Christians at a remote village in the desert. Accompanied by Isaac, a Christian from another ethnic group, they climbed into the truck and went looking.

The trio didn't have a security permit to leave the main highway. After a short but intense prayer session, however, they headed across the sand track. Hours later they came upon a police checkpoint. For the only time in his four years in the country, Reichter was not asked for his travel papers.

As they talked, Isaac sensed the policemen were worried about something and asked if they needed anything from the nearby village. Relieved, the men admitted they had nothing to eat. They asked Isaac to find the brother of one of the policemen in the village and bring back some food.

In the village, the visitors failed to find the rumored group of Christians but did pass out Bibles and witness. They also located the brother and got several sacks of food, which they dropped off at the checkpoint as they headed back toward the main highway.

"The Lord didn't close those guards' eyes to keep them from checking our papers or finding the Bibles in the truck," Reichter said. "But he used Isaac's loving, Christian concern to smooth our way."

The three men then drove through the desert all night, re-entering the highway just before the next major police checkpoint.

"When they checked the time we had passed the last checkpoint and allowed time for us to have slept along the road we were OK," the missionary said. "It never occurred to them that we had made a 300-mile detour into the desert and shared the gospel with some people who had never heard it before."

There are now five Christians in the tribe. Reichter has taken part in their baptisms. He and other Christians have helped the new believers through discipleship courses.

"Five out of a million doesn't sound very significant," he admitted. "But if you look at it another way, the number of known Christians in the tribe has increased 500 percent in four years! And the exciting thing is that the truth of Christianity is penetrating this people group, slowly perhaps but surely."

Christian relief workers, including some of the recent converts, continue witnessing to the people they are feeding, clothing and "watering," thanks to funds provided by Southern Baptists through the Foreign Mission Board.

But Reichter's job isn't limited to relief work. One priority is to get the Bible to the people. He is attacking that barrier on two fronts: getting the Scriptures to the people orally and getting the Bible into written form.

"Our best hope for the oral presentation of the Bible is a credit card-sized oral tract," he said. "The 30-minute sermon on it can be played up to 1,000 times before the battery runs down. That's 1,000 times the Word of God can be preached around a campfire or during coffee ceremonies or even while the listener is riding on a camel."

Work already has begun on putting the tribal language into written form. David will play a key role in translating the Bible after he completes a college degree in a neighboring country.

The "Jesus" film also is being dubbed into the language, since 75 percent of the people speak only their tribal tongue. Broadcasts over Christian shortwave radio stations are being produced.

Two other couples will soon join the Reichters in working with the tribe. A single man, who already has worked two years in the country and witnessed to the tribe through relief projects, is entering seminary with plans to return to the country when he completes his education.

"Sometimes when you spend a day in 120-degree heat or when the government bureaucracy is overwhelming, it can seem like we're working at the end of the earth," Reichter admitted while recovering from a bruising nine-hour drive that covered a mere 125 miles of desert.

"But then, Jesus did tell us we were to take the gospel exactly there -- to the ends of the earth. If we do that, the Holy Spirit will take care of the rest."

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

Broadman & Holman to distribute
'Christy,' Billy Graham videos

Baptist Press
7/8/94

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Broadman & Holman Publishers has gained exclusive distribution rights to home video versions of a recent CBS television hit and more than 100 movies produced by Billy Graham's World Wide Pictures.

The two-hour premiere of "Christy," based on the best-selling novel by the late Catherine Marshall, will be released to the home video market by B&H in October, according to spokesman Harold King. The 96-minute pilot originally aired on CBS in April, capturing a major share of the American television audience.

King said MTM Entertainment, Inc. granted B&H exclusive religious distribution rights for the program following heavy bidding among several large corporations.

"We are thrilled to be the major channel of distribution of this new American classic into the religious market," King said. "This acquisition only continues to extend our goals to be the best provider of quality film and videos that enhance strong moral and biblical values."

"Christy" stars Kellie Martin (formerly of ABC's "Life Goes On") in the title role and four-time Emmy award winner Tyne Daly as her mentor, Miss Alice Henderson, who encourages young Christy to forsake her comfortable city life and become a teacher in a poor Appalachian community. The story takes place in the early 1900s.

In a separate development, B&H officials also announced they have been granted exclusive distribution rights to the current catalog of videos from evangelist Billy Graham's World Wide Pictures.

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Since the early 1950s, WWP has produced more than 100 Christian films, including well-known titles such as "The Hiding Place," "Joni," and "The Prodigal." Viewed by more than 100 million people around the world, the films have been shown in a variety of locations, including movie theaters, church sanctuaries, prisons and even in remote jungle locations.

The most recent feature film to be added to the WWP catalog is "Eye of the Storm" starring Connie Sellecca ("Hotel", "Greatest American Hero") and Jeff Conaway ("Taxi", "Grease"). The video, which is also available in Spanish, will be released in July.

King said distributing WWP products fits well with B&H's goal of "serving the family by targeting the home market with quality video. We feel that a solid relationship with World Wide Pictures has emerged as a result of our common goals and efforts to impact the lives of families."

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Boycott products named
in protest against RU 486

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
7/8/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and four other organizations recently joined with the National Right to Life Committee to release a product boycott list in protest against the introduction of the French abortion pill RU 486 into the United States.

The boycott targets drugs produced by Hoechst-Roussel Pharmaceuticals and Copley Pharmaceutical, which are American subsidiaries of Hoechst AG. Hoechst AG, a German company, owns Roussel Uclaf, the French manufacturer of RU 486.

Among the Copley over-the-counter drugs listed in the boycott are Bromatapp tablets, a decongestant/antihistamine, and Tolnaftate 1% solution, which treats skin infections. Copley produces a large number of generic drugs, a NRLC spokesman said.

Hoechst prescription drugs on the list include Lasix, a diuretic, and A/T/S, an acne solution.

In mid-May, after repeated urging by the Clinton administration, Roussel Uclaf donated its United States patent rights for mifepristone, commonly known as RU 486, to the Population Council Inc., a nonprofit corporation. The action cleared the way for the Population Council to pursue the manufacture, testing, licensing and marketing of the controversial pill in this country. RU 486 may be available for use in the United States by early 1996.

Roussel Uclaf, which has been lobbied fervently by both pro-life and pro-choice advocates in recent years, previously had refused to attempt introduction of the drug into this country because of the controversy.

Although Roussel Uclaf is not marketing RU 486 in the United States, "we hold Roussel Uclaf and Hoechst AG, its parent company, responsible for bringing RU 486, the abortion drug, to our shores," said NRLC President Wanda Franz at a July 7 news conference. "The boycott is on."

The goal of the coalition -- which also consists of Focus on the Family, Concerned Women for America, Christian Coalition and Family Research Council -- is to convince Hoechst AG and Roussel to withdraw the patent from the Population Council and eventually to stop production of RU 486, Franz said. The coalition plans to continue the boycott until the patent is withdrawn, she said.

The Christian Life Commission will urge Southern Baptist pastors, denominational leaders and laity to participate in the boycott, said James A. Smith, CLC director of government relations. Information about the boycott and the product list will be issued through a CLC publication to every SBC church, he said.

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"This assault on human life by the Clinton administration and the companies affiliated with Hoechst AG must be answered by the pro-life movement," Smith said at the news conference.

In the June meeting at Orlando, SBC messengers adopted a resolution opposing the introduction of RU 486 into the country and calling on Southern Baptists to support the boycott.

Boycott supporters not only criticized the Clinton administration for its part in promoting a new abortion technique but for RU 486's potential impact on women. The procedure has killed one woman and injured others in Europe, Franz said.

The pro-life coalition had announced the boycott June 1 but did not release the list of products until July 7. Postcards to the heads of both companies, as well as cards listing the boycott items, will be available for purchase in bulk quantities from NRLC, 419 7th St. NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20004, (202) 626-8800, ext. 225.

RU 486 can be used only through the seventh week of pregnancy. The procedure requires several visits to a medical facility, the use of two different drugs and close monitoring of the participants for complications.

More than 150,000 women have used RU 486 as an abortifacient in Europe. While RU 486 is being studied for other uses, it has been marketed as an abortion drug in France, Great Britain and Sweden.

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Southern Baptists respond
to flooding in Southeast

By Tim Yarbrough

Baptist Press
7/8/94

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Intense flooding from rainfall produced by tropical storm Alberto has paralyzed many parts of Georgia, Alabama and Florida, but not the efforts of Southern Baptist relief volunteers.

Five disaster relief feeding units from the affected states were on site July 8 preparing and serving meals to displaced residents. A Georgia unit was the first to arrive on the field Monday, July 4.

Preliminary reports indicated that as many as 7,000 families in the three states have been affected, according to the American Red Cross. The Red Cross has opened 74 shelters in the states. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has requested the Army Corps of Engineers to provide water for four Georgia counties.

Two Georgia feeding units are located in Montezuma (Macon County) and one unit at Cordele (Crisp County), said Rick Patchin, on-site coordinator of Georgia relief efforts. Patchin, associate Georgia Brotherhood director, also said a shelter has been opened at Norman Park Baptist Assembly to accommodate families.

In Florida, a feeding unit is located at the Agricultural Center in Bonifay, according to Cecil Seagle, Florida Brotherhood director and on-site coordinator of Florida relief. Two other Florida units have been placed on stand-by status for possible mobilization, said Seagle.

In Alabama, a feeding unit is located at First Baptist Church in Enterprise, said Tommy Puckett, Alabama Brotherhood director and on-site coordinator of Alabama flood relief. The unit was to start preparing two meals daily for residents in the Dale, Coffee and Geneva Baptist associations starting Friday, Puckett said. He said these associations were the hardest hit by flooding.

The Flint River literally "splits the town" of Montezuma, Ga., said Patchin. The river was scheduled to crest Friday.

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"The commercial district is completely wiped out," said Mik Clark, a deacon at First Baptist Church in Montezuma. Clark said flooding has damaged all roads out of town and knocked out a water main, which hindered firefighters when a blaze engulfed a major industry in town.

Americus, Ga., which received up to 21 inches of rain, has been cut off by flooding of the Flint River, said Patchin. Americus is located about 60 miles southwest of Macon.

"At this point and time I don't think we can get in there," said Patchin. "I've talked to the director of missions in Americus. They have plenty of drinking water right now and plenty of food."

So far, 18 deaths have been attributed to flooding in Georgia alone, according to published sources.

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Clay Renick in Martinez, Ga., contributed to this story.

Southern Baptist workers
plan return to Yemen

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
7/8/94

LARNACA, Cyprus (BP)--Southern Baptist workers who fled Yemen in early May started planning their return July 8, after northern Yemeni forces declared victory in a 65-day civil war.

The north completed a campaign against the southern port city of Aden July 7, driving out troops rebelling against the central government and sending their leaders fleeing to neighboring Oman. Quiet reportedly settled into the region after weeks of fierce fighting.

"We're ready to get home to our things and our jobs, and the kids are ready to get back to their toys," said a relieved Drew Whitson. Whitson and his wife, Martha, are Southern Baptist workers who flew to Cyprus with their four children about a week into the war after a Scud missile landed a mile from their home in Yemen.

The Whitsons, from Dallas, hoped to return to Yemen July 12 or 13.

They and some other workers assigned to Yemen, along with their families, have been staying on Cyprus, an island nation in the Mediterranean. Altogether, 16 Southern Baptist workers left Yemen in May because of the war. Others left later during the 65-day period for other reasons.

"We're sending them back as soon as we can get them in," said Dale Thorne, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board area director for the region.

Other Southern Baptist workers who remained in Yemen throughout the conflict -- and had begun anticipating their own evacuation -- now can stay. New personnel, including a family and two shorter-term International Service Corps workers, also are preparing to enter Yemen now that peace has been established.

About 50 Southern Baptist workers were in the country when war broke out May 5 with a southern attack against the nation's capital, Sanaa. Most of them are assigned to work at the Jibla Baptist Hospital, in a remote area between Sanaa and Aden.

As fighting intensified around Aden, the hospital staff had become increasingly burdened with civilian patients who were being shut out of government hospitals to make room for wounded soldiers.

The hospital, located with a clinic on a 22-acre compound, opened in 1967 under the direction of Southern Baptist workers James and June Young. It has gained prominence throughout the region since then.

Yemen became a new nation uniting separate northern and southern entities on May 22, 1990. It immediately faced economic deterioration triggered by sanctions imposed against it and other allies of Iraq during the Gulf War.

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Differences between the governments of President Ali Abdullah Saleh from the north and his vice president, Ali Salem al-Beidh from the south, were never resolved and prevented integration of the armed forces. Sporadic clashes broke into all-out war May 5 when southern bombers started striking key government posts, including the presidential palace.

Within days most of the fighting had moved toward Aden, where northern forces claimed imminent victory. As it moved into oil-rich areas of southern Yemen, however, the conflict appeared to be at a standoff. But the southern port city of Mukalla -- headquarters for al-Beidh -- fell July 4, setting the stage for the north's victory in Aden.

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**First Black Church Week
draws positive reviews**

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
7/8/94

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--The strongest indication of support for a separate conference designed for the unique needs of black Southern Baptists perhaps is that the largest group attending the first Black Church Week, July 2-8, traveled across country from California to Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

A total of 35 California congregations were represented at the conference which drew almost 600 participants from throughout the United States, including Alaska.

"We had been holding separate conference sessions and worship services in conjunction with the Small Sunday School Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M. conference center), but this was our first separate conference," said Elgia Wells, manager of the black church development section at the Baptist Sunday School Board.

The week was jointly sponsored by the BSSB, Home and Foreign Mission boards, Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood Commission.

Conference sessions offered training for Sunday school, discipleship training, music and missions leaders, along with training for pastors and other staff members. Worship services were conducted in the black tradition. A different pastor spoke each evening.

A special offering for Rwanda relief was collected in one service. The \$1,698 will be forwarded to the Florida Baptist Convention which has a partnership with the war-torn African nation.

Noting there are about 1,500 predominantly black Southern Baptist churches, Wells said, "We can serve them better with a multi-program approach while being able to bring in the cultural dimension."

After attending Black Church Week, he said he hopes many participants will be motivated to gain more specialized training from other conference center weeks.

"We're not trying to separate ourselves (through the conference)," Wells said. "We're trying to be ourselves in the fullest sense of the word."

David Cornelius, director of black church relations for the Foreign Mission Board, said the conference represented an opportunity to place the challenge of foreign missions before the churches.

Among Southern Baptists' 4,000 foreign missionaries, only two blacks currently are on the field, he said. However, he noted, nine others are in the appointment process and seven are in school, preparing for career missions.

Katherine Gooden, minister of education at Emmanuel Baptist Church in San Jose, Calif., said participants in her conference on outreach and evangelism "came with a willingness to share."

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Gooden, who had served as a conference leader for a Sunday school week earlier in the summer at Glorieta, said Black Church Week offered a "uniqueness and allowed for a different type of participation."

Carlos Jones, pastor of Community Fellowship Baptist Church in Missouri City, Texas, led sessions for adult Sunday school workers and called the conference a "joyous week."

"It seems people are beginning to catch the vision of Sunday school -- techniques, methods, how to study, teach and relate to their members.

With a separate week for blacks, Jones said "everyone has freedom to talk about their concerns, what they don't know and what they fear. Some also look forward to coming together with all colors and cultures."

Audrey Lampkin, a project director at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, said participants in her preschool leadership sessions "came with a determination to learn new ideas and concepts and get away from old ways of doing things."

John Scott, associate pastor of Mount Herman Baptist Church in Nashville, said he "came specifically for the MasterLife and Sunday school conferences. I believe the Lord really met us here."

The 1995 Black Church Week will be July 17-21 at Glorieta.

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Black pastors share
experiences, ideas

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
7/8/94

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Cato Brooks believes inner cities have been lost three or four blocks at a time and his church is trying to win one back the same way.

"In a two-mile radius we have taken full responsibility for every facet of ministry in that area," said Brooks, pastor of Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church in Gary, Ind., and chairman of the board of a separate community development corporation.

Brooks and three other black Southern Baptist pastors were among those sharing their philosophy and practice of ministry during a pastors' forum at Black Church Week, July 2-8 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center. Others were Phil Davis, pastor of Nations Ford Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C.; George McCalep, pastor of Greenforest Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga.; and E.W. McCall, pastor of St. Stephen Baptist Church in LaPuente, Calif.

Believing "true evangelism is meeting people at their point of need," Brooks led his church to set up the community development corporation to carry out ministries to the homeless, troubled families, school dropouts, drug abusers and many others.

Formerly vacant apartment buildings are being refurbished, people are receiving job counseling and assistance to become homeowners, dropouts are earning high school diplomas and going on to college and people who used to break into the church are now singing in the choir.

"Everything we do through the development corporation points toward evangelism. It's not social ministry," said Brooks, who emphasizes the importance of developing a vision and strategic plan for a church and clearly articulating it to every member.

Davis, who had begun an inner-city church in Charlotte in 1982, moved to the suburbs in 1988 and started Nations Ford with one concern paramount.

Because most of the volunteers for his inner-city ministries had come from white suburban churches, Davis said he realized a need existed to motivate and equip upper middle-class blacks to minister to their poorer brothers and sisters.

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With 87 percent of its 1,500 members under the age of 55, Davis said the church "takes a lot of risks," allowing members to use their gifts and skills.

"I have a style of leadership which can best be described as 'family operated.' As pastor, I do not make all the decisions; however, I have veto power over all decisions. I see my role as that of a trainer -- one who is to train the followers to be the leaders while I project, promote and communicate the vision," Davis said.

The vision Davis communicates is to "be a regional full-service church, reaching people of all races, enhancing their quality of life by ministering to the whole man: spirit, soul and body."

In only their seventh year of existence, Nations Ford has been among the leading churches in North Carolina in discipleship training diplomas.

"We make discipleship training available at all times," Davis said. Courses include Survival Kit for New Christians, Parenting by Grace, MasterLife, Search for Significance and others. Leaders of home cell groups complete three months of training to earn the title "lay pastor."

"We have unleashed the church," Davis said.

McCalep was called to become pastor of Greenforest, ordained and installed "almost at the same time" in 1978.

After a successful career in business and college teaching, he stopped running from God's call to the ministry at the age of 40 and enrolled in seminary. Shortly thereafter, in 1979, he was called as pastor of Greenforest, a struggling congregation in a suburban neighborhood in transition.

"I'm homegrown at Greenforest," said McCalep of his only pastorate. "That's why I know I'm there forever."

Today, the church has an annual budget of \$2 million, approximately 3,000 active members, a 30-acre facility, a day-care center and academy and a variety of community ministries, but their education ministries, especially in Sunday school, are what they're known for.

"The community sees us as a Sunday school church, and we're happy about that," McCalep said. He recalled a seminary professor who hammered one statement into his students' heads: "Christian education is that ministry of the church that undergirds every other ministry of the church."

Of his church's phenomenal progress, McCalep emphasizes, "God did it."

McCall listed elements of a five-star church: missions evangelism, stewardship, worship and Sunday school, all of which need continuous attention.

He described stewardship as "one area people have amnesia about," but emphasized, "we should not be afraid to preach on tithing."

All St. Stephen ministries are funded by tithes and offerings, McCall said. "We don't sell anything in our church."

McCall, who was a bivocational pastor continuing to teach school until the church reached a membership of 2,000 (it now has 4,200 members), used his education background to build strong ministries in Sunday school, missions and training.

"I think my job right now is to spread people out and send ministers out to start satellite churches," he said.

Elgia Wells, manager of the black church development section of the Baptist Sunday School Board and facilitator of the pastors' forum, said its purpose to facilitate sharing of ministry ideas, illustrating that different models work in different situations.

Almost 600 persons attended Black Church Week which was sponsored by the BSSB, Home Mission Board, Foreign Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Woman's Missionary Union.

**Pastor urges urgency
in discipleship process**

By Linda Lawson

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--A person taking a driving or parachute-jumping class who knows at the end of the course he will be required to drive a car or jump out of an airplane learns differently than one who is only studying a subject of theoretical interest.

Absorbing the content and practicing the skills takes on a sense of urgency for the person who must put his new-found knowledge into practice.

David Perrin believes Christians should feel that same sense of urgency when they study the Bible, learn how to tell others about their faith or gain tips on ministry needs.

"We have people taking classes but not for the purpose of pouring it (knowledge) into anyone else," said Perrin, pastor of Church of the Great Commission in District Heights, Md. He led a daily conference on discipleship during Black Church Week, July 2-8 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

"Discipleship is a process. We are to be making disciples," he reiterated. "The highest thing God wants us to be is not a disciple but a discipler.

"Discipleship flows through my blood," Perrin said. "If I could have one desire, it would be that someone could write of me, here was a man who lived to fulfill the Great Commission" (Jesus' command to go to all the world, teaching and making disciples).

However, he is quick to acknowledge discipleship has not always been a driving force in his life or ministry. While attending a MasterLife discipleship workshop in the mid-1980s, Perrin said he realized, as a pastor, he was "making leaders, ushers, my own little kingdom, but I wasn't making disciples. I wept like a baby.

"That began the quest to understand the process of discipleship. I haven't arrived, but I think I've found the trail," Perrin said.

"The Great Commission is the last words of Jesus Christ. He reduced his life purpose to a few sentences given to a few people he had taught well," he said. "If you do the Great Commission, you will have made disciples who walk like Jesus, talk like Jesus, have compassion like Jesus, have the character of Jesus.

"Our work is making disciples," said Perrin, emphasizing "make." "A lot of folks think even when we're talking about it, we're doing it."

In his classes, he uses the railroad analogy of a "switch track," the tracks used by trains to pull off the main track, to describe sidetracks taken by many Christians away from the discipleship process.

One of his own sidetracks, Perrin acknowledged, was to lead his church to become what he termed a "teaching church," without adequate emphasis on its purpose.

"Being a teaching church was our claim to fame," he said, noting that courses were offered on discipleship, coping with life concerns and many other topics.

"God taught me that Jesus' teaching was always a means to an end, not an end in itself," he said. "We had become somewhat arrogant in our knowledge. People were not fulfilling the Great Commission."

That realization led Perrin to refocus the teaching ministry of his congregation and clarify its purpose.

"The real goal is to take the teaching and see it result in people becoming a ministering people with a balanced life as Jesus had," he said.

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As he has continued his journey of becoming a disciple and discipler, one constant has been the study and teaching of MasterLife. Perrin cites the primary designer of the course, Avery Willis, executive vice president of the Foreign Mission Board, as the most important influence in his life and ministry.

"As I've taught MasterLife year after year, it's been like a plumb line," he said. "Through the use of that tool, I get a sense of how far away we are from what God has asked us to do."

Even more important, Perrin turns to the Bible, especially the Great Commission.

"I could spend days in just those three verses (Matthew 28:18-20). I could live there in things I have never seen before that are implied as well as those that are overtly stated.

"The more I practice the art of discipleship, the more I see."

Almost 600 people attended Black Church Week which was sponsored by the Home and Foreign Mission boards, Sunday School Board, Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood Commission.

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Ministering to divorce pain is
goal of aids for youth & parents By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
7/8/94

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--By the time you count to 60, two couples in the United States will have divorced. Count to 60 again and another man and woman will have severed the knot.

A 1990 survey reports a couple legally breaks its marriage vow every 30 seconds, according to Cindy Pitts, author of a new support group resource for children whose parents have divorced.

"Children are the losers here. While divorce seems to be the solution to adult problems, it causes tons of problems for the children," said Pitts, children's minister at First Baptist Church in Houston, in reviewing the contents of "KidShare, What Do I Do Now?" for a group of children's leaders attending Discipleship and Family Leadership Week at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center, July 2-8.

Support groups were introduced this week also for divorced persons and teen-aged victims of parents' divorce. All three resources will be released in September.

The 12-week support group for children in grades three through six focuses on specific emotional needs of the children and "just getting them to talk about their problems," Pitts said.

"After a couple of sessions, the problem is getting them to take turns talking, not opening up," Pitts said.

Pitts said she developed the materials for the Houston church after becoming certified to teach another denomination's program that did not satisfy her church's needs. The Baptist Sunday School Board heard about her efforts and contracted with her to write the resource for all Southern Baptist churches, she said.

The overall goals of the KidShare resource, she said, are:

- To provide a safe place for children to talk about their feelings.
- To lead children to discover they can trust God to help them daily in practical ways.
- To promote emotional, spiritual, social and mental health.
- To help children look forward to the future with optimism.

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"Children of divorce suffer some real self-esteem problems," Pitts said. "They have a really hard struggle emotionally, which can cause them not to be able to concentrate in school, leading to their low self-esteem."

Pitts said a 1990 census bureau study revealed that more than 11 million children live in single-parent homes. Of the children born in 1987, Pitts said 63 percent will spend part of their childhood in a single-parent home.

"One in five children experience emotional problems due directly to the divorce of their parents." Sixty-eight percent of the suicides reported among children and teen-agers were living in single-parent homes, she said.

Pitts said the KidShare program requires a parent-child orientation up front, with participants committing to attend every meeting if possible. She said about 50 percent of the children come of their own accord, with the remainder being "urged strongly" to go by their parents.

"But I tell you what, we've never had a dropout. It is important, though, for the leaders to try to win them in the first session."

Each of the 12 sessions is centered on a selected theme, she said. Session one is designed to develop and reinforce a positive self-image. Session two is on denial. Children discuss their feelings and understand the stages of grief.

Session three deals with anger, Pitts said. Here, children are taught to deal with anger toward God, self and divorced parents. They also learn to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate ways to handle anger.

The fourth session teaches children about bargaining and encourages them to live one day at a time, she said. The fifth session is on depression. Children identify feelings of depression and explore ways they can deal with their sadness.

Session six is on acceptance and developing an optimistic attitude. In session seven they learn how their parents' divorce affects their ability to trust, and they discuss qualities of people they can trust. Session eight deals with blame and the guilt that accompanies it.

The remainder of the sessions deal with questions and practical issues facing children of divorce, Pitts said. They often wonder what will happen to them if their parents remarry, or they feel they are to blame for the divorce. In the final session, Pitts asks parents and children to write a love note to each other and privately share it in a corner of the classroom.

Pitts emphatically points out that KidShare is not a substitute for professional counseling. Leaders are not professional counselors. However, the meetings are confidential, she said. "Nothing leaves the room. The kids sign a confidentiality covenant that works very well."

Meanwhile, Dale McCleskey, editor of LIFE Support materials for the Sunday School Board introduced the course, "A Time for Healing: Coming to Terms with Your Divorce" to participants at discipleship week.

Written by Harold Ivan Smith, frequent speaker at Southern Baptist single adult events and president of a consulting firm that deals with singles in the workplace, the six-week course offers the concept of divorce recovery as a lifelong process, not a quick heal.

"Healing the Wounds: Teenagers Learning to Cope with Divorce" is the new LIFE Support Group Series course for teens whose parents have divorced, McCleskey said.

McCleskey said a church can begin a simultaneous divorce recovery ministry among parents, youth and children with the three courses which are due out September.

For more information on the courses, call McCleskey at (615) 251-3670. Resources may be obtained by calling the board's toll-free number, 1-800-458-2772, or from Baptist and LifeWay Christian Book Stores after Sept. 1.

**Graham tells evangelists
America is finding revival**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The world's most famous evangelist told his colleagues from across the United States and Canada that America is experiencing a spiritual awakening at a time "when there has been a great moral slipping."

In his keynote address to the North American Conference for Itinerant Evangelists (NACIE '94), Billy Graham said people have become disillusioned by secular answers to life's problems. They've found no satisfaction in materialism, politics, drugs, alcohol, sex and false philosophies and religions, he said.

"Seldom has the soil of the human heart and mind been better prepared than today. ... I've never seen so many people come to salvation in such a short period of time."

Graham addressed more than 2,500 evangelists and their spouses, ministerial students and pastors at the conference, June 30-July 1 in Louisville, Ky.'s Commonwealth Convention Center. The event was supported by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and more than 40 denominations and fellowships, including the Southern Baptist Convention.

At the conference, Graham warned evangelists not to let the opportunity for revival pass them by. "Historians will look back, if we live that long, and say this has been a great period of revival," he said. "Wouldn't it be awful if you slept through it. We're here because of the urgency of the hour. All that we see happening in the world is a preparation for the gospel."

In another address, Charles Colson, president of Prison Fellowship, urged evangelists to "understand the culture in which we live."

In 1976, "it was fashionable to be born again," said the former special counsel to President Richard Nixon. Now, however, evangelicals have become one of the "most feared groups" in America, he said. "We live in a time when many believe there is no absolute truth."

Colson noted that 18 months ago people were worried about the economy, but now he said they are concerned about the restoration of values. "This is a rare opportunity for the church," he said.

Yet the church must not diminish its opportunity for evangelism by watering down the gospel, said Lewis A. Drummond, Billy Graham professor of evangelism and church growth at Samford University's Besson Divinity School in Birmingham, Ala.

"Anything presented that is not the full gospel designed to win people to genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ through repentance and trust, and that fails to bring glory to God, is unworthy of the very meaning of being an evangelist," said the veteran Southern Baptist professor.

In North American churches, "50 percent of the so-called converts show no fruit of the Spirit; many cannot even be found six months after an evangelistic effort," said Drummond. "Something," he said, "must be lacking."

Southern Baptist pastor Adrian Rogers spoke about the evangelist as a leader and role model. He told the conferees, "What we need in America today is a burning, passionate and emotional love for Jesus Christ."

Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in suburban Memphis, Tenn., said he was "grateful for cassette tapes, but we've got too many 'Milli Vanilli' preachers. We've got people preaching things they have never experienced. They have tried to capture somebody else's God. It's better to be fresh and it's better to be real."

The conference's final speaker, E.V. Hill, pastor of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles, encouraged evangelists to go outside the church to proclaim the gospel message.

"I believe there is a trend where evangelists now are going into what are 'highways and hedges' proclaiming the good news," Hill said. "There was a time when evangelists were hired by a church to do a revival, but this is not true anymore."

Hill, who serves as vice president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, cited the example of an evangelist who pitched his tent in the heart of the red light district of Montgomery, Ala., and stayed there for several months. The local sheriff, Hill said, observed that the area had experienced a noticeable decrease in crime during the evangelist's crusade. "This kind of new innovative outreach by evangelists is what we have to do today, because sinners are not walking into the church anymore," he said.

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Compiled by Pat Cole.

Sharing gospel needn't be
uncomfortable, speaker says

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
7/8/94

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Many Christians confronted with giving their personal testimonies may find themselves grinding a toe into the ground or staring at their fingernails in fearful silence.

Knowing that God has commissioned them to tell others about Jesus does not necessarily make even the most obedient of Christians comfortable at sharing the gospel, a conference leader said.

"We need guidelines in such an important task," Anna Marie Edgemon told a group at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center reviewing the new LIFE course, "Witnessing Through Your Relationships." Edgemon, frequent conference leader and wife of Roy Edgemon, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division, was teaching the witnessing course during discipleship week, July 2-8.

"As Christians, we are responsible for leading others into a relationship with God," Edgemon said.

One of the worst mistakes a Christian can make is confronting someone they suspect of being a non-Christian and blasting him with the gospel, she said.

"We must first define our circle of influence, and we have to evaluate a lost person's attitude toward the gospel. We must sense where they are and meet them at the point of their need.

"We must adapt our witness to the person's receptivity," she said.

"Witnessing Through Your Relationships" uses the strategy of the biblical character Paul at being all things to all people as a way to win non-Christians to Christ, she said.

"You have to start where they are, build trust, cultivate a relationship and then move into your comfortable one-on-one relationship," Edgemon said. "By being inclusive, not exclusive, and willing to become all things to all people, we can find some common ground.

"We must earn our right to be heard," she said.

Even Christians who have a gift for cultivating relationships and building trust with others need witnessing skills and strategies, Edgemon said.

"Everyone must learn how to present the gospel to a lost person in a way that he or she can relate to. We must be confident and competent in our presentation," she said.

Edgemon said the LIFE course gives principles for preparing one's testimony. She listed them as:

-- Follow an outline. "Think about what you need to say."

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-- Write it out.

-- Place the emphasis on Jesus, not on ourselves. "We come to him from different levels. We need to focus on Jesus, not on how bad or good we were before we met him."

-- Avoid "Christianese." "Speak English. Develop your personal testimony in words non-Christians can understand."

"In your personal testimony, you need to include what your life was like before you received Christ, how you realized you needed to receive Christ, how you received him and became a Christian, and how Christ has and is helping you in your day-by-day life," she said.

To be an effective witness, Edgemon said Christians must have spiritual discipline. She said that means daily talks with God, daily Bible study, remaining open to God's instruction "so that he can pinpoint those things that need to be changed in our lives.

"It also means living a disciplined life. We cannot live a life that says, 'Do as I say, not as I do.' We have to be obedient to God in our lifestyle choices."

The 12-week LIFE course, "Witnessing Through Your Relationships," is available in Baptist Book Stores and LifeWay Christian Stores. Authors of the course are Jack Smith, associate director of the Home Mission Board's personal evangelism department, and Jennifer Kennedy Dean, an author, speaker and conference leader from Atlanta.

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