

(BP)

-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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

BUREAUS

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

July 14, 1994

94-118

VIETNAM--Southern Baptists helping Vietnamese farmers with crops; photos.
VIETNAM--Grace under pressure: Vietnam's Grace Baptist; photos.
VIETNAM--He now helps in Vietnam where he once fought war; photos.
TENNESSEE--CBF sends churches instruction: 'send two checks instead of one.'
TEXAS--He knows something Bo doesn't: How to share faith with Muslims.
NORTH CAROLINA--Baptists too 'hung up' on structures, pastor says; photo.
NORTH CAROLINA--Fryson's career affirms God's all-sufficiency; photo.
NORTH CAROLINA--Multicultural kit enhances relevance of Bible study; photo.
NORTH CAROLINA--Boys keep coming back to Camp Ridgecrest; photos.
UTAH--First Person: Better to birth a church than bury one, she writes.

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

EDITORS' NOTE: Baptist Press overseas correspondent Mike Creswell and photographer Warren Johnson recently visited Vietnam and Cambodia. The following three stories report what they found in Vietnam.

Southern Baptists helping
Vietnamese farmers with crops

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press
7/14/94

PHU LUONG DISTRICT, Vietnam (BP)--Tea farmer Nguyen Van Rau grows more tea these days -- thanks to Southern Baptists.

Foreign missionaries are still barred from Vietnam. But as Americans slowly return to do business in this land where they once fought a war, they'll find Southern Baptists already there -- helping thousands of farmers improve their agricultural output.

The implications are significant in the impoverished, largely rural nation of 73 million people -- the second-largest population in Southeast Asia.

The Southern Baptist assistance comes from the Mindanao Baptist Rural Life Center -- an agricultural development center in the Philippines -- via a program coordinated by Cooperative Services International (CSI), a Southern Baptist aid agency.

The program began in 1989, when veteran Southern Baptist agriculturist Harold Watson of Brooklyn, Miss., visited Vietnam from his base in the Philippines. He went to discuss ways the nation could expand food production and improve the lot of farmers scraping out a living from poor-quality land.

Watson's "SALT" (Sloping Agricultural Land Technology) program, which converts denuded, useless hillsides into food-producing farms, has been adapted to many areas throughout Asia. In 1985 Watson won the Ramon Magsaysay Award -- Asia's equivalent of the Nobel Prize -- as recognition for his contributions to agriculture.

Watson visited Agricultural University No. 3 near Thai Nguyen City in Vietnam's northern Bac Thai Province. There he met with agricultural teachers to discuss how area farmers could grow more food. Later in 1989 Cooperative Services International joined with another humanitarian agency, Bread for the World, to send 20 Vietnamese farmers and agriculturists to the Rural Life Center.

--more--

The farmers quickly saw how easily they could adapt the SALT program to small farms in hilly areas back home. Watson showed how planting rows of fast-growing, nitrogen-fixing trees on the natural contours of a hillside could enrich soil, prevent erosion and develop farmable terraces.

In 1992 another group of Vietnamese agricultural workers visited the Rural Life Center. One was Tu Quang Hien, director of the department of science and international relations at Agricultural University No. 3.

An intense man who likes to work, he returned to the university and immediately began teaching the SALT concepts to his students and farmers across the province.

By training farmers who in turn trained others, he has educated almost 1,000 farmers in SALT technology.

One of his first "converts" was tea farmer Nguyen Van Rau. Nguyen's farm covers several acres, most of it on steeply sloped land in Phu Luong District, about an hour's bumpy ride from the university in Thai Nguyen City.

Southern Baptist worker Jeff Palmer, an agriculturist with the Rural Life Center, visited Nguyen's farm in June. He saw how the enterprising farmer has neatly set out "Trephosia candida" trees along terraced rows of his tea crop to control erosion and enrich soil. This is one of two types of trees that grow well in Vietnam and are suitable to SALT projects, Rural Life Center workers have discovered.

"These types of trees will enrich the soil and can be used for fuel because they grow quickly," said Palmer, of Waverly, Tenn. "One reason we've worked with universities is because it took some research to discover the best type of tree to use and they're already set up to do this. Besides, the government won't allow us to work with villages directly."

Asked if the improvements have helped his production, Nguyen smiled and nodded eagerly.

Between April and August, Nguyen processes about 20 pounds a day of strong green tea -- the kind preferred in the region. All of it is dried for four hours over a kiln beside his sturdy, tile-roofed house.

"Prices are down now but they will go up later in the year," he said.

With profits from an annual tea crop of just over half a ton, plus some sugar cane, Nguyen can feed and clothe his seven-member family. Surrounding farms on the sharply rippled land mirror Nguyen's in size and hilliness.

"Now that farm over there has followed the contours well. That one there is off a bit -- you see those places where the land is eroded?" asked Palmer as he strode across the hillsides, surveying them with a practiced eye.

During a meeting with leaders of the People's Committee, the top provincial government leaders, First Vice President Nguyen An told Palmer about half the population of Bac Thai Province lives in mountainous areas similar to that around Phu Luong District.

The provincial government has set up its own agricultural center with 325 new extension and forestry workers to help increase production, the leader said. A new gardening association also has been established to spread improved agricultural methods more quickly. Government leaders asked Cooperative Services International to help farmers in the most isolated areas of the district, among other requests.

Another major CSI project involves improving the quality of Vietnam's goats, one of the most common farm animals. Palmer has been working with the Bac Thai school and with the University of Agriculture and Forestry in Ho Chi Minh City to improve their goat stocks, which will be shared with farmers in wide areas around the schools.

"In the first two generations we increased the size of goats from 15 kilograms to about 50 kilograms," said Palmer. "Since goat meat sells well at markets, these improved goats will have a significant effect both on the income of farmers as well as help put more meat into diets here."

--more--

So far, tea farmer Nguyen has no idea who Jesus Christ is, much less who Southern Baptists are. But he does know that an American has helped him grow more tea.

For now in Vietnam, that's a good start.

--30--

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

Grace under pressure:
Vietnam's Grace Baptist

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press
7/14/94

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam (BP)--By 6:30 on a Sunday morning, motor scooters and bicycles pack the courtyard of Grace Baptist Church.

By the time the first hymn is sung, about 350 adults and scores of children crowd the building and spill over into a covered patio.

With a large sign announcing its presence on a main street near the airport, there's nothing secretive about the church in Ho Chi Minh City, better known to Americans by its former name: Saigon.

After the city of 6.5 million people -- and South Vietnam -- fell to the communists in 1975, contact with foreigners was outlawed, although the church remained open. Christians from abroad weren't allowed to visit until 1986.

Since the late 1980s, the nation has moved slowly toward a market economy and the government has loosened its grip on religious activities. More than 40 evangelical churches now meet in the city, most allied with the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Grace is the only Baptist church meeting openly.

For now, the government doesn't question the church about its activities or visitors, said pastor Chanh Quoc. "But I always prepare answers in case they ask," he added.

Chanh, 56, has been criticized in some circles for cooperating with the government and keeping the church open. He did so during years when many underground Christian churches were organized throughout the country, especially in the south.

But the church baptized 297 people last year and another 36 in April -- proof that it's solidly evangelistic. Chanh declined to discuss some of the church's ministries.

How do Baptists share the gospel?

"We have outreach committees and we ask church members to bring their friends and relatives to church," Chanh answered. "We also do home visitation. We're not able to go to every street corner and preach, but it's OK to do person-by-person outreach. Before, personal witnessing was a problem with the government. But now they let us do whatever we want in personal witnessing, but not outside preaching or gatherings."

Foreign missionaries still cannot serve in the country, Chanh said. And when foreign Christians visit the church he asks them only to pray, not preach.

"We must have a permit from the government to allow them to preach. This is still impossible," he said.

The church aims to grow by planting small congregations about the city instead of trying to develop one super church. Leaders identify areas of the city where members live so they can be organized into separate congregations.

The church also seeks to regain ownership of several church buildings taken over by the government, such as a facility at Binh Thanh, an outlying Ho Chi Minh suburb where about 30 Grace members live. If the church gets the building back, members must reimburse the government for improvements.

"We trust in God and his will because he is the only one able to open the door," Chanh said of the effort.

Vietnamese who become Christians still face problems with their families and in the workplace, the pastor acknowledged. But the country's changing society makes it easier for people to become Christians these days.

--mor --

"In the past, when the government checked your work records and they found you claimed to be a Christian, you had problems. But now there are many Christians, and when their lives are changed, they become good workers. They make a good testimony with the boss and their companies, so now they love to have Christians work for them," Chanh said with a laugh.

Grace members include 10 former drug addicts whose lives were changed completely by the gospel. Intrigued government representatives visited to see what kind of medicine the church had used on the addicts.

"When they saw that the church only preached the gospel, they were surprised," Chanh said.

"I'm not saying we don't have any problems, but that's the reason the government respects the church now."

--30--

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

He now helps in Vietnam
where he once fought war

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press
7/14/94

THAI NGUYEN CITY, Vietnam (BP)--Bob Bell fought in Vietnam in the 1960s to win a war, dodging sniper bullets while he and other U.S. Navy Seabees constructed landing strips, buildings and roads.

Now, more than 20 years later, he's one of the first Southern Baptists back in postwar Vietnam to help rebuild the country.

Bell and his wife, Suzanne, teach English under the sponsorship of Cooperative Services International, the Southern Baptist aid organization.

Communist Vietnam still bans missionaries, but it welcomes English teachers and development workers. Bell left a promising career in prison chaplaincy in Missouri to return to a land where he once spent some of the most harrowing moments of his life. Mrs. Bell, an attorney, left a career in insurance law. They arrived in August last year after one earlier visit.

The Bells and their two young sons live in a modest four-room apartment on the campus of the Agricultural University No. 3, located outside Thai Nguyen City in Bac Thai Province north of Hanoi.

Like Vietnam itself, the university struggles to upgrade itself. Visitors reach the campus -- a collection of buildings grouped around fish ponds -- via a rough road that runs atop a dike holding back waters for surrounding rice fields.

New buildings are rising, and university leaders are excited about their increasing ability to improve farming and forestry techniques for their people.

English instruction plays a key role in their plans for the future. It's the main language of business and agriculture throughout Asia and the rest of the world. About eight of every 10 students in the country study English, university leaders say. About 130,000 reportedly study English in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) alone.

Four times a week Bell teaches English to as many as three dozen students. Equipped with a wide range of books, he emphasizes conversation. On a typical morning he may discuss an article in one of Vietnam's new English-language newspapers or play a board game that emphasizes English words.

Bell is obviously an American but says he has found no bitterness toward him left over from the war.

"I was invited to a village about six miles from here and went out there with one of my students," he said. "A woman was giving a party for her younger brother who was going off to school. The woman's father mentioned they were fortunate. They had lost only one of their 10 children and that one had been killed by an American. But there was no hostility in the room."

Bell carefully avoids "missionary work" but said he shares his faith as any Christian should. He is cautious about giving too many details.

--more--

A native of Florida, Bell grew up in Miami and Ecuador, where his father's work as attorney often took him. At age 18 he joined the U.S. Navy and served two terms in Vietnam, where he was based in Chu Lai, south of Da Nang, and at Phu Bai. Later he was a police officer in Miami for 13 years. He received degrees in criminal justice and Bible from Miami Christian College.

He served three Southern Baptist churches in Miami and Kansas City as youth minister, then became a chaplain at the Kansas state penitentiary in Lansing and the federal prison in Leavenworth, Kan. He later served as a prison chaplain in Florida and Missouri.

Suzanne Bell was born in Germany, where her father served with the U.S. military, and grew up in Ohio. After graduating from the University of Miami with degrees in psychology and law, she became an attorney in 1979. She worked with the Missouri state agency that regulates insurance companies. She also taught Sunday school at First Baptist Church in Fulton, Mo.

Partnership missions trips to Indonesia, Thailand and New Zealand helped the Bells become aware of opportunities in Vietnam.

Mrs. Bell home schools their sons Andrew, age 10, and John, 8. Their nature lessons include catching lizards to become dinner for their pet snake; international studies include learning Vietnamese to talk with their neighborhood friends.

Electricity fades and surges, dimming or brightening the lights. Rice is a major part of the daily diet. The tropical heat is tiring.

It's all part of the price tag of being pioneers.

--30--

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

CBF sends churches instruction:
'send two checks instead of one' By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
7/14/94

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has asked churches who have been sending funds to SBC agencies through the CBF to "send two checks instead of one" in response to SBC action in Orlando in June.

Messengers at the annual meeting of the SBC in Orlando in June directed all SBC agencies to discontinue receiving funds via the CBF. CBF officials sent a letter to those contributing churches with instructions on how the churches can allocate their mission dollars to both CBF and the SBC.

SBC Executive Committee President Morris H. Chapman, however, said the letter contains a number of critical remarks about the SBC and, although CBF officials say the SBC action attempts to dictate to local churches, the CBF letter, ironically, instructs local churches on how to give their mission funds.

Chapman said nowhere in the CBF letter is mentioned that the churches could send their mission funds through the state conventions via the Cooperative Program.

"We have 70 years of experience that proves the Cooperative Program is an efficient, effective method of missions giving," Chapman said. "The Cooperative Program was designed to respect the autonomy of each Southern Baptist church as it decides how much to give to world missions."

The CBF letter also included a bulletin-type insert, in question-and-answer format, that churches could use to explain "the ramifications of the SBC's action."

Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, CBF moderator, and Cecil E. Sherman, CBF coordinator, signed the lengthy June 21 letter which included some "observations" about the SBC action.

"We are grieved by the convention's action. We wish it had not happened. But it has happened and now some things are changed," Crumpler and Sherman wrote.

--more--

In the observations, the two CBF officials criticize the SBC action, calling it "ironic" that the SBC would refuse "Southern Baptist gifts channeled through the Fellowship that are now considered tainted and unacceptable" and yet encouraged dialogue with Roman Catholics.

The letter also called the SBC action an infringement "at least in spirit," on local church autonomy.

Although the action was directed to SBC agencies, "... the real targets are all of those churches which now give both to the SBC and the Fellowship."

"It is an effort to force you to be an 'either/or' church rather than a 'both/and' church. Your church is being told how you must give your money.

"Something is tragically wrong when punishing CBF becomes more important than witness and ministry in Christ's name," the two wrote.

Chapman charged the CBF is trying to inaccurately characterize the SBC action as a "blow to our Christian witness."

"We are not the one who started a shadow denomination, and we are not the one attempting to funnel money away from the traditional Southern Baptist method for supporting world missions," Chapman said.

The CBF letter then gives instructions to churches on how to give to CBF giving plans and to the SBC agencies: by writing two checks. The letter encourages churches to send a check to the SBC, via the SBC Executive Committee, with instructions as to which agencies should receive funds. The letter urges the use of the percentages in two of the CBF giving plans which send some funds to SBC agencies but exclude the Executive Committee, the Christian Life Commission and, in one plan, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"This is exactly the type of confusion the Cooperative Program was designed to eliminate," Chapman said. "Before CP, Baptists were inundated with requests for funds and often the agency with the most articulate spokesman received the most money. Baptists found the process burdensome. The CBF is asking our churches to travel a road they have already traveled and found disappointing."

In an answer to a question posed in the bulletin insert, the CBF writer says "Southern Baptists love their missionaries, but they are weary of the narrow and mean-spirited agenda of those who have seized control of their denomination."

Chapman, however, said the Orlando convention was reported by most of the media as a harmonious and warm-spirited meeting.

Another response in the insert says the "CBF's emphasis is not competitive with other mission efforts."

However, Chapman countered that the CBF emphasis is "indeed very competitive."

"Putting the (CBF's) Vision 2000 plan first (in the letter) shows it is competition," Chapman said. The CBF's Vision 2000 budget plan is for CBF causes only.

The bulletin insert also said the CBF would "honor the wishes of every individual or church which sends contributions."

"CBF has disbursed to SBC agencies and institutions all contributions received by the Fellowship through June 15. We also have written to the executives of all SBC agencies and institutions, asking their intentions in response to the action of the SBC. When we receive official notification indicating that gifts through the Fellowship will be refused, we will then notify the appropriate churches and individuals and ask for further instructions about the distribution of their gifts."

Several SBC agencies already have decided not to accept further contributions from the CBF while others are awaiting boards of trustees' or directors' action on the matter.

H knows something Bo doesn't:
How to share faith with Muslims By Brian Smith

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A popular TV commercial a few years ago claimed star athlete Bo Jackson knows a lot about many things. But does he know Islam?

Samuel Shahid, adjunct professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a native of the Middle East, does. He understands Muslim culture. He knows how Muslims dress. He knows how they think. Perhaps most important, he knows how to reach them through Christian ministry.

This fall at Southwestern, Shahid will teach the Arabic language, "a must for people interested in working with Muslims," he said. "Muslims believe that when God revealed the Koran to Mohammed, he revealed it in Arabic and that the language is God's language. If Southwestern does not take the initiative (in teaching about the Islam faith), who will?"

Sharing his knowledge of the Islam faith with other Christians is Shahid's passion. "We Christians have the most wonderful message in the world," he said. "Why should we hesitate to reach out to Muslims?"

Shahid sees his background as preparation for God's call on his life to train people to reach out to Muslims. "When I came to (the United States), I realized the growth of the Islamic movement," he said. "After I had finished my studies and gotten settled, I started to document their activities here. The Lord made it clear to me that I should do something about it."

His response was to start an organization called Good News for the Crescent World to help churches understand Islam, along with the mind-set and culture of people of that religion. The organization also tries to educate people about the needs of converted Muslims.

In 1993, Shahid moved the organization from New Jersey to Arlington, Texas, not far from Southwestern Seminary. "Because of the aggressiveness of Islam in this country, our pastors and missionaries realized they weren't equipped well to deal with them," he said. "They feel a great need to have courses in Islamic studies at Southwestern."

History is important in understanding the Muslim social, economic, political and religious issues in a country, because the religion can't be separated from the state or the society, Shahid said.

Born in Palestine and raised in Jordan, Shahid has spent his entire life working with the Islamic world. His father was a pastor, and Shahid was involved in ministry to Muslims even before he became a Christian.

"If you graduated from high school and wanted to teach, the Ministry of Education in Jordan would send you to the remote villages, where people with bachelor degrees or master degrees didn't like to go," he said. "So I taught in these villages, some of which are purely Islamic."

There was a time when Shahid was the only Christian in a town of 500 Muslims. "I was a strong, nominal Christian and tried to argue my points intellectually and not by faith," he said. "I believed intellectually, but my life was not really that of a Christian."

He committed his life to Christ in 1960 while living in Irbid, Jordan. The same year, he moved to Lebanon to attend the American University in Beirut, where he received his master's degree in Middle Eastern and Islamic studies. During his years in Lebanon he became deeply involved in writing and taught at the Southern Baptist seminary and Haigazian College. He wrote for many newspapers and magazines as a secular writer. Later, his first Christian books were well received by the secular world, he said.

"I may be the only born-again Arab Christian who is able to penetrate the secular world by his Christian books," he said. Shahid has now published more than 30 books in both English and Arabic.

--more--

Due to the civil war in Lebanon, Shahid' and his family moved to Chicago in 1976 where he earned a doctor of philosophy degree at the University of Chicago. Afterward, he taught Middle Eastern studies at Monmouth College in West Long Branch, N.J., and spent five years translating the Old Testament into modern Arabic for Living Bibles International. His translation is now the most popular Arabic translation of the Bible among Arab communities worldwide and is used by many missionaries working among Arabs, he reported.

--30--

**Baptists too 'hung up'
on structures, pastor says**

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
7/14/94

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Southern Baptists have gotten so sidetracked with the care and feeding of church structures, rules and regulations that they're failing to give attention to the church as a living organism, Eugene Gibson told pastors attending a Sunday school growth session during Black Church Week at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Gibson, pastor of Mission of Faith Baptist Church in Chicago, led daily sessions during the July 2-8 conference sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Home and Foreign Mission boards, Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood Commission.

"Southern Baptists -- no matter what color -- were spiritual people," said Gibson, who became a Southern Baptist 17 years ago. "We find ourselves not that anymore because we are hung up on organization."

Emphasizing the need for churches to look outside themselves to the needs of people who are not Christians, Gibson said: "Our world seems to be going to hell on a jet plane. We need to get off our seat, on our feet and into the street.

"Many of us live in fine homes, but they are really glorified jails," he added. "We've got almost a lost generation out there."

Gibson said churches don't grow because leaders don't think about growth or plan for it.

"We just think whatever the Lord wants to happen will happen. But God planned this earth," he said.

Part of growth planning and thinking involves evaluating church activities and terminology. At Gibson's church the title of auxiliaries for activities such as the choir and ushers was changed to ministries.

"Auxiliary suggests raising money, but ministry suggests going out and saving people," Gibson said.

He acknowledged the difficulty of personal visitation in inner-city neighborhoods where people are being killed and gangs sometimes control access to buildings. Take precautions such as only visiting in daytime hours, but keep on going where the people are, he urged.

Gibson also called on pastors to evaluate their policies, noting some churches traditionally have not allowed women to wear slacks to services.

"Maybe our church isn't growing because we've got too many rules and regulations," he said.

To provide a tool for planning and evaluation, Gibson urged development of a church mission statement.

"The mission statement should be your guideline for planning anything and everything in your church," he said.

Another mind-set change that may be needed, especially in African American churches, Gibson said, is away from the idea that "kids go to Sunday school and grownups go to church."

Growing churches provide Sunday morning Bible study for all ages, he said.

"You learn it first (Sunday school) and you shout it later (worship)," Gibson said.

Trained, effective Sunday school teachers are a key to reaching and teaching people, he said.

--mor --

"As pastor charged with feeding your sheep (church members), you've got the feed bucket," Gibson said. "In Sunday school, you give teachers the feed bucket."

H said he personally conducts orientation sessions with all potential teachers, reviewing particularly the Baptist Faith and Message and the church mission statement. He conducts sessions on Sunday school organization, the needs of people, being an effective communicator and why become a Sunday school teacher.

"Teaching God's Word is too important to turn it over to just anybody," he said.

Describing the Ridgecrest conference as "historic" in providing help to African American churches in all facets of church life, Gibson urged the pastors to go home "prepared for the cold water committee."

He suggested conducting mini-workshops at the church to equip leaders unable to attend the conference.

"Have a little Ridgecrest right there," he said.

--30--

(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press. The cutline, gibson.txt, is posted in the SBCNet News Room.

Fryson's career affirms
God's all-sufficiency

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
7/14/94

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--The twin pressures of teaching school and managing a burgeoning concert performance career were taking their toll on Robert Fryson when he was brought up short by the comment of a student.

"We know you like to sing and travel, but we miss you when you're gone," the student told Fryson in the mid-1970s.

That statement precipitated the realization that the time had come to go full-time with his concert career or give it up. He sought God's guidance.

The response he got -- "I am, and I'm able to take care of you" -- led Fryson to launch out in a full-time performing, recording, composing and lecturing career. It also resulted in his most-recorded composition, "God Is." It has been recorded by James Cleveland, Soul Children of Chicago and his own group, Voices Supreme, among others.

"That song was my release," said Fryson, of New Carolton, Md., who served as guest artist during Black Church Week, July 2-8, at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

"The theology of that song, that God is everything you need, is something everyone seems able to identify with," he said.

"What is gratifying is that the song is almost 20 years old, and people are recording it like it's brand new. That's a blessing," said Fryson, a soft-spoken, introspective man.

At times, he admitted, he finds it a mixed blessing in that audiences always expect "God Is" to be included on his concert programs. When he sang it, backed up by the conference choir at Ridgecrest, the audience stood, clapped, waved and cheered throughout.

Among his compositions, Fryson's personal favorite, "With All That I Am," describes his desire to love and serve God.

In the black worship tradition, music always has been important, but Fryson said he believes progress is being made in integrating music and preaching into one holistic experience.

"Music used to be seen as a vehicle to get the preacher started," Fryson said. "Now it's seen more as going hand in hand with preaching."

He described himself as "offended" when preachers, referring to the music that has gone before their sermon, say something like, "Now we'll have the word of God."

Contrasting music as part of white and black worship, Fryson said: "In the white church, music may be more of an entertainment entity. I think we're more involved in our music."

--more--

Rather than seeking to blend musical styles across racial lines, he said Christians should celebrate the differences.

"I think God intended that we have different cultures and respect each other's cultures. If God had intended us all to be alike, he would have created just one race," Fryson said.

"He demands worship from all creeds and cultures."

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

--30--

BP photo (vertical) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press. The cutline, fryson.txt, is posted in the SBCNet News Room.

**Multicultural kit enhances
relevance of Bible study**

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
7/14/94

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Making the Bible relevant to the specific needs of black and Hispanic teen-agers was cited as the goal of a new multicultural resource kit, according to one of its writers.

The first edition of the kit, which accompanies Convention Uniform or International Sunday school lessons, was released for the July-August-September 1994 quarter by the Baptist Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division.

Stephanie Jones, a youth worker from Community Fellowship Baptist Church in Missouri City, Texas, called the experience of helping to design the kit and writing lesson plans for black youth a "challenge but I loved it." The kit also contains teaching plans for Hispanic teens.

She led a conference introducing the kit during Black Church Week, July 2-8, at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

All kit items include photos of black and Hispanic teens and real-life illustrations and situations.

"We're trying to make the curriculum as relevant as possible by using real experiences," said Jones, who also has written teaching helps distributed on SBCNet, the SBC computer information service.

Conference participants reviewed kit items, including an exercise in which teens are asked to determine the law in a given situation, evaluate the meaning of doing the right thing and differentiate between their own wants and needs.

One goal of the kit, Jones said, is to "give the black teachers something they can use to come away from the lecture and get the youth involved."

She said she favors the multicultural approach rather than separate kits for blacks or Hispanics.

"For the larger city especially, workers will benefit more from the cross-cultural approach," Jones said.

--30--

(BP) photo (vertical) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press. The cutline, kitcut.txt, is posted in the SBCNet News Room.

**Boys keep coming back
to Camp Ridgecrest**

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
7/14/94

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Like the potato chips that you can't stop eating after one, Camp Ridgecrest for Boys is a place to come back to.

In its 66th summer of operation, many campers and staffers have a long track record of attendance. And a special program, counselors in training, provides an opportunity for rising high school juniors to begin the process toward becoming full-fledged counselors after their freshman year in college.

--more--

Darien Bohannon of Savannah, Ga., is spending his sixth summer at Camp Ridgecrest and his first as director of the CIT program. The recent Winthrop University graduate is supervising 10 CITs. Nine of them are former campers.

CITs, who spend a minimum of four weeks at camp, begin as observers assigned to a cabin of 10 campers supervised by an experienced counselor. They rotate in skill areas such as basketball, riflery, horseback or tennis, gaining experience and insight into the role they'd like to fulfill as a junior counselor, co-counselor or ultimately a full-fledged counselor.

CITs give devotionals in the cabins and carry out other duties assigned by Bohannon or their counselor.

Bohannon, who conducts regular sessions with each CIT, experiences fulfillment in "helping these guys make a transition from being dependent and sort of children to becoming more mature and having kids dependent on them.

"We see a huge maturity in these kids (CITs) by the end of the summer," he said.

CITs cited relationships and experience that will help them become counselors.

"Through CIT, I can learn what being a staffer is like, learning how to deal with different kinds of situations," said David Carpenter of Atlanta, who was a camper for six years.

Matt Trummel of Crystal Lake, Ill., and a seven-year camper, said, "Sometimes you feel overworked and frustrated when you work with a camper on a skill and h doesn't show improvement. You have to learn to be patient."

Blake Arrington of Franklin, Tenn., the only CIT with no experience at Camp Ridgecrest, said it has been difficult at times "to come in and know everybody. You can't be withdrawn. You have to be outgoing."

Billy Wilson of Orlando, Fla., a nine-year camper, said, "I think I've taken everything that's come my way pretty well."

All CITs agreed the rewards far outweigh the challenges.

Chase Lott, a three-year camper from Douglas, Ga., said the best moments are "when an 8- or 9-year-old feels comfortable enough around me to tell me a secret."

Chase Heard, a six-year camper from Orlando, said he "enjoys getting to know the campers well and teaching them skills, especially horseback."

John Dickens, a seven-year camper from Atlanta, finds satisfaction in "doing something for a camper that makes his stay better."

All 10 CITs plan to return to Camp Ridgecrest in 1995. Bohannon, who is looking for a teaching position in the Asheville, N.C., area, also anticipates being back at camp in 1995.

"I've never had an experience anywhere else in my entire life like here," he said. "The grounds are special. The relationships I have with the kids are unbelievable."

Camp Ridgecrest is an operation of Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center.

--30--

(BP) photos (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines are posted in the SBCNet News Room; slug is camp.

FIRST-PERSON

Better to birth a church
than bury one, she writes

By Berniece Gardner

Baptist Press
7/14/94

KANAB, Utah (BP)--Yesterday, I went to a funeral. Victory Baptist Church in Kanab, Utah, was laid to rest.

The services were conducted by a lawyer from St. George, Utah. There was no music, no Scripture, no sermon, no mourners.

After the opening prayer, the lawyer explained certain legal requirements must be met to dissolve the legal entity that was Victory Baptist Church.

--more--

A motion was made to declare Victory Baptist Church disbanded and to elect the chairman of trustees legal representative to sign all papers for the disbandment of the church. A second came very quickly. The seven members of the church voted. Six were in favor; one abstained.

A motion was made for the disposal of assets. The building was to be sold. The buyer was one of the visitors. The motion was seconded. All in favor? Unanimous. No dissension.

A motion to adjourn. All in favor, rise. Amen.

Victory Baptist Church no longer exists.

What does it mean to dissolve? Is the church put in a test tube and covered with sulfuric acid? Has the church been through such a bad time that they are destroyed?

Disbanded. The cord that binds church members together is gone. No one is a part of that "group."

As I sat at this funeral, I remembered the birth of this church. It was a joyous occasion. Dedicated Christian men and women started this church. They gave sacrificially of themselves, their time and their money. Utah-Idaho Southern Baptists had a part in this church. Friends from across the South gave to the building.

When a Christian dies, there is the certainty of resurrection. There is no hope of life after death for Victory Baptist Church. Is there a witness that will live? Did this church die in vain?

I do not know the answer. I only know that a funeral for a church is a very sad event. My heart is crying. I am in mourning.

I much prefer a birthing.

--30--

Gardner is the wife of Bruce Gardner, interim director of missions for Color Country Baptist Association in Utah.

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, TN 37234

F
I
R
S
T

C
L
A
S
S

Southern Baptist Library
and Archives