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March 20, 1995

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**Brotherhood disaster workers  
feed California flood victims**

**By Jim Burton**

WATSONVILLE, Calif. (BP)--Torrential rain in northern California has left New Hope Baptist Church with a strong case of deja vu. Natural disaster has again struck this rural agricultural community and a Southern Baptist Brotherhood disaster relief feeding team is serving its victims.

The 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake coupled with 1995 floods marks Watsonville as one of very few American communities to host mobile Southern Baptist feeding units twice.

Members of the small Hispanic congregation led by pastor Jesus Gutierrez have worked daily at the shelter since the flood.

"We thank God for the disaster relief volunteers who have come to help our church and community," Gutierrez said.

Most of the more than 1,000 flood victims housed at the Santa Cruz County Fairground's American Red Cross Shelter are Hispanic migrant workers who live in the Pajaro community near Watsonville. It borders the Pajaro River, which forced evacuation when a levee broke and it overflowed its boundaries.

"They have not recovered from the January floods," said Mickey Calson, the Brotherhood Commission's national disaster relief director.

Water-saturated soil, brimming river beds and an estimated 10 inches of rain in some parts of the region contributed to the current flooding, which has claimed 15 lives.

State and federal disaster relief officials estimate more than \$2 billion in damage.

Agriculture is taking a huge hit, as thousands of acres of produce, including strawberries, lettuce and cauliflower, have been destroyed. Some homes in low-lying areas had as much as six feet of floodwater.

The California Southern Baptist Convention's state assembly, Jenness Park in Cold Springs, suffered extensive damage as floodwater rushed through the mountain camp. The flood destroyed some of the recreational facilities, washed out field dirt behind retaining walls and damaged some buildings. Facilities supervisor Rodger Schuld estimated damage between \$100,000 to \$150,000.

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Don Hargis, disaster relief director for the state convention, stationed feeding units in Watsonville at the fairgrounds and in Clovis, near Fresno. Through Sunday, March 19, Southern Baptists had prepared an estimated 19,000 meals. The Clovis unit was deactivated over the weekend.

In Watsonville, the feeding unit primarily serves shelter residents with some meals going into the community on Red Cross Emergency Response Vehicles.

County governments in the region have not begun condemning houses and other structures as uninhabitable.

"We may be a month away from rebuilding," said Mike Bailey, Home Mission Board disaster relief coordinator. "Procedurally, mudout has to take place first. Then the house has to dry out. Drying out can take a month."

Caison and Bailey are working with ARC officials to determine the need for cleanup crews and to project how many homes will need volunteer rebuilding assistance. Rebuilding efforts likely will last until late summer. An estimated 50-55 percent of homes in the region are owner-occupied.

The Brotherhood Commission and state Brotherhood directors coordinate the initial response to natural disasters. The Home Mission Board coordinates Southern Baptists' long-term response.

The Brotherhood Commission is receiving contributions for the Southern Baptist response to the California floods. Contributions may be sent to the Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104. Contributions should be designated for disaster relief.

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California floods disrupt  
life for agriculture workers

By Jim Burton

Baptist Press  
3/20/95

WATSONVILLE, Calif. (BP)--In the Harvest of Festival Hall on the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds, the lights come on around 7:15 Saturday morning. It's the wake-up call for about 500 flood victims now living in this American Red Cross temporary shelter in Watsonville, Calif.

Slowly, men, women and children rise from their cots to begin their day. They make their beds, neatly folding the blankets back over the cots. Then it's time to comb the children's hair, give them medicine and await the serving of breakfast.

For many shelter residents, this has been home for nearly a week. The swelling Pajaro River disrupted their life as police combed the Pajaro community and ordered evacuation.

There was only enough time for Alicia Arias and her family to get some blankets when police came to their home and ordered their evacuation. Clothes and other personal items were left behind. The home they rent has damage to the kitchen and bathroom. When their landlord completes repairs, the Ariases will return.

For Angelina Ramirez's family, it didn't take a warning from police to cause them to leave their home. TV news stories were enough. For a day or two they stayed with a relative. But the invitation was short-lived. The shelter became their temporary home.

The urgency of the family's situation has not escaped 4-year-old Catalina Ramirez. At first she cried, afraid that their family would drown and die. A week into the disaster, those fears continue to surface.

Juan Rodriguez Rojas also evacuated his family immediately when police came. They didn't think they would be gone long, so they didn't take anything. Rojas rents a home for his wife and two small children. They have not returned yet because it smells so bad. Unlike the Arias family, the Rojas' landlord is refusing to make repairs. Before leaving the shelter, they must make repairs themselves.

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Another consequence of the flood complicates their return. Rojas works in agriculture. H has been laid off. Thousands of acres of cropland are flooded. Instead of strawberries and lettuce, the fields are littered with hundreds of blue plastic trash-like containers that were washed from a nearby jelly processing plant. There will be little to harvest this season near Watsonville.

Some farmers in the region estimate they lost up to one foot of topsoil in the flood. One farmer said her operation now only requires 21 workers. Before the flood, she employed about 250 workers.

During the day at the Red Cross Shelter, many men leave to look for work or to salvage possessions in their homes. A child care center at the shelter occupies the children's time.

Behind the scenes, volunteers work feverishly to help the victims.

California Baptist Brotherhood Director Don Hargis directs the efforts of volunteers who work more than 12 hours a day preparing three meals. By 6 a.m., crews gather to crack egg shells, toast bread, make coffee and set out breakfast cereals.

On-site coordinator Charles Erikson has worked more than a week in Watsonville cooking an average of 3,000 meals each day. During the first week, that meant working with about 50 volunteers. One is a former Southern Baptist foreign missionary.

"When I was in Uruguay we had a big flood so I was privileged to work there with the people who were homeless, serving them food," said Mary Jo Wilburn, retired missionary to Uruguay, Mexico, and Venezuela.

"It was nothing as organized as this, but we got the food out," said the v teran of 43 years on the mission field. She is a member of Arthur Road Baptist Church, Watsonville.

Aside from the physical help offered by Southern Baptists through food preparation, there was another expression of hope.

Southern Baptist home missionary Augustine Salazar ministers to migrant workers. During the first week the shelter was opened, Salazar showed the "Jesus" film on the fairgrounds. Using the Brotherhood Commission gospel tract "Hope in Crisis," an estimated 15 people made decisions for Christ.

Red Cross officials estimate Southern Baptist Brotherhood feeding units will be needed in California for two more weeks.

The Brotherhood Commission is receiving contributions for the Southern Baptist response to the California floods. Contributions may be sent to the Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104. Contributions should be designated for disaster relief.

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(BP) photos mailed 3/20/95 to state Baptist newspapers by the Brotherhood Commission.

#### ANALYSIS

Dobson, other pro-lifers  
attack GOP's 'big tent'

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
3/20/95

WASHINGTON (BP)--James Dobson is at the forefront of evangelical leaders who are making it difficult for the Republican Party to tiptoe around the abortion issue on its way to the 1996 elections.

The Focus on the Family president, who has fired a series of recent warning shots at the GOP's "big-tent" philosophy, warned Republican National Committee Chairman Haley Barbour in a March 6 letter mailing he would do everything possible to activate Christians to oppose the party leadership if it backs away from a pro-life position.

Focus on the Family buttressed Dobson's promise with the largest dir ct-mail effort in the ministry's 18-year existence, totaling 112,000 letters.

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James A. Smith of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, voiced agreement with Dobson's concerns, saying, "... it is reasonable for pro-life Republicans to expect that the party leadership will abide by its own platform. It would be a mistake of significant political magnitude if the party moves away from its pro-life position."

Dobson, in his letter to Barbour, said Republicans could not have won majorities in the Senate and House of Representatives without the votes of evangelical Christians, most of whom are strongly pro-life.

"Nevertheless, you are prepared to disregard the concerns that brought these men and women to the polls and rewrite the party platform to exclude them," Dobson charged in his letter. "Is that not exceedingly arrogant? What political foolishness to taunt and insult those whose support you covet!

"I think you should warn the Republican presidential hopefuls that it will be impossible to skirt the moral issues in 1996," Dobson also told Barbour. "They may choose to waffle on the things that matter most, and indeed, several have already done that. But they will not be able to double-talk, side step, obfuscate and ignore the concerns that burn within our hearts. You have my word on that."

In a March 10 response to Dobson, Barbour, wrote he was surprised by the tone of the broadcaster's letter and he does not believe the phrase "big tent" is a negative one.

"To me, it simply means ours is an open party," he wrote. "While we are the conservative party, ours is a broad and diverse party. And I work hard to be inclusive, to be open."

One of the great Republican accomplishments of the last two years, Barbour said, has been: "Pro-life Republicans voting for pro-choice Republicans and pro-choice Republicans voting for pro-life Republicans."

He would not "attempt to 'rewrite the party platform to exclude (pro-life evangelical Christians),' as your letter to me states," Barbour wrote. "Being a pro-life evangelical Christian myself, I have no reason to do so, but, much more importantly, as chairman of the Republican National Committee I have no authority to do so."

It would be the "height of arrogance" for him to impose his views on a platform which should be determined by the delegates to the 1996 convention, Barbour said.

Dobson, however, said in his letter the RNC chairman was "intransigent and unsympathetic" in a recent meeting in Barbour's office.

"He and his colleagues foolishly believe Christian voters will not notice the dramatic change in the party platform -- or if they do, they will not care," Dobson told the ministers. "I think he is dead wrong."

And in his March newsletter to 2.1 million Focus on the Family constituents, Dobson encouraged them not to vote for any politician who supports abortion rights.

"To compromise on so fundamental an issue gives Republican party leaders no incentive to defend the pro-life position," Dobson wrote. "By voting for a moderate pro-abortionist who might be more desirable in the short run, we squander our influence on decision makers. Rather, when a significant number of votes are cast for a third party/pro-life candidate, even in a losing cause, that fact will not go unnoticed by political leaders."

The issue also has been voiced on his daily radio show, broadcast on 4,000 stations worldwide, and future broadcasts also will address it, Dobson said.

"If that doesn't change some hearts and minds at RNC, then we'll launch a second, third and fourth wave to generate support," he told Barbour.

The three leading candidates for the Republican presidential nomination Sen. Bob Dole, R.-Kan; Sen. Phil Gramm, R.-Texas, and former Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander -- have not shown an eagerness to address the abortion issue.

Gramm, a self-confessed pro-lifer who is considered the most conservative of the trio, said on th March 12 telecast of NBC's "Meet the Press" he would not propose as president a constitutional amendment to overturn abortion rights, The Washington Post reported. While he has supported the party's pro-life platform plank, Gramm said, "We recognize ... that we don't have unity of purpose on abortion, that we're going to have to recognize that there are good Republicans who differ," The Post reported. He opposes taxpayer funding of abortion unless the mother's life is in danger, Gramm said.

The platform plank includes endorsement of a constitutional amendment to protect unborn children from conception.

Alan Keyes, an underdog for the Republican presidential nomination, issued a rousing call for the party to stick to the pro-life plank in its platform during a New Hampshire dinner at which other candidates spoke.

An African American, Keyes was in the Reagan administration State Department. His Feb. 19 speech was broadcast two consecutive days in late February by Focus on the Family. Focus on the Family received a nearly unprecedented 9,000 telephone calls in response to the broadcasts, an organization spokesman said.

"We don't have money problems; we have moral problems. And it's time we stood up and faced that truth," Keyes said in the speech. "And I don't know how, I don't know how we're gonna face that truth, if, as was suggested here today, we can look our daughters in the eye and tell them that it is somehow consistent with freedom for them to trample on the human rights of their unborn offspring."

Ralph Reed, executive director of the Christian Coalition, warned in mid-February that Republican pro-life evangelicals and Catholics will not support a 1996 ticket which includes a pro-choice presidential or vice presidential candidate, but he seemed to soften those remarks four weeks later.

Christian Coalition's Reed issued his warning about the Republican ticket at a conservative convention, but in a television interview March 11, Reed said the organization will not make abortion a litmus test for the '96 ticket. When asked on CNN's "Evans and Novak," Reed refused to say if he would support New Jersey Gov. Christine Whitman or another pro-choicer for vice president, The Washington Times reported.

"Any party big enough to have a majority is big enough to have a diversity of views. That's not a sign of weakness; it's a sign of strength," he said.

If the Republicans remove the plank calling for an amendment to ban abortion, Reed said he would not see that alone as a signal the party was turning away from pro-lifers "as long as the party made it clear that its objective was to protect the unborn, the aged and the disabled in every way that it possibly could," The Times reported.

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Coalition, Justice to work  
against judge's RFRA ruling

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
3/20/95

WASHINGTON (BP)--The coalition supporting the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the U.S. Department of Justice plan to work to make a federal judge's ruling against RFRA only a momentary setback.

District Court Judge Lucius Bunton ruled March 13 Congress violated the U.S. Constitution in enacting RFRA "by intruding on the power and duty of the judiciary." RFRA "unconstitutionally chang(es) the burden of proof as established" in the Supreme Court's Employment Division v. Smith opinion.

The Department of Justice will join in an appeal of the decision to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, a White House spokesman said. The RFRA coalition will file a friend-of-the-court brief on appeal, members said.

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In Smith, the court ruled government no longer has to demonstrate a "compelling interest" before restricting religious freedom. RFRA, which was signed into law by President Bill Clinton in November 1993, reversed the effects of Smith and restored the previous legal standard. It requires any government body to demonstrate that a policy serves a "compelling interest" and is the "least restrictive means" in fulfilling the government's interest before limiting the free exercise of religion.

"It was foreseeable that some judge somewhere would make this ruling," said Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

The Fourteenth Amendment, which says "Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation," provides the proper response to the judge's ruling, Whitehead said.

"The Fourteenth Amendment empowers Congress to pass such statutes as RFRA to protect rights of citizens as enumerated elsewhere in the Constitution," he said. "Congress did not usurp the power of the Supreme Court or the powers reserved to the states" when it passed RFRA.

A federal judge in Hawaii had upheld RFRA in February.

White House Press Secretary Michael McCurry said, "This administration is committed to the act's full implementation in order to protect the religious liberties of all Americans, and we will continue to defend its constitutionality in the courts."

In the case, P.F. Flores, archbishop of San Antonio, had filed suit against the city of Boerne, Texas, for its refusal to permit demolition of a building in the city's historic district in order to expand a sanctuary, according to The Washington Times. The archdiocese argued the city's denial violated RFRA.

In addition to the CLC, the 67-member coalition supporting RFRA includes such diverse groups as the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Christian Legal Society, National Council of Churches, Concerned Women for America, People for the American Way, National Association of Evangelicals, American Civil Liberties Union, American Association of Christian Schools and Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

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Baylor names Russell Dilday  
Truett Seminary interim dean

Baptist Press  
3/20/95

WACO, Texas (BP)--Baylor University President Herbert H. Reynolds named Russell H. Dilday as interim dean of the George W. Truett Theological Seminary, subject to board of regents approval March 24. The appointment was effective March 17.

Truett's former dean, Robert B. Sloan, recently was elected Baylor president, succeeding Reynolds, effective June 1.

According to a Baylor news release, Reynolds said he, Sloan, Baylor Provost Donald D. Schmeltekopf, board chairman Gale L. Galloway and vice chairman Randall H. Fields agreed on Dilday's appointment.

Dilday is distinguished professor of homiletics at Truett and is special assistant to Reynolds. Dilday was fired last year as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

"Dr. Dilday's acceptance of this interim leadership position at Truett frees Dr. Sloan to concentrate on the transition to the Baylor presidency," said Reynolds, who will become Baylor chancellor June 1.

"Dr. Dilday has graciously consented to serve his alma mater in yet another important assignment while the naming of the permanent dean is being considered."

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Only one true message,  
Illinois president says

By Dwayne Hastings

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--"Christianity is not a nose of wax that can be twisted to suit the whims of those who do the twisting," said Roger Ellsworth, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Benton, Ill.

There is a message people want to hear and there is a message people need to hear -- and the two usually are not the same, said Ellsworth, president of the Illinois Baptist State Association, speaking at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. If the church is not bold in announcing the message God has entrusted to it, people will suffer the eternal consequences, he said in a message drawn from 2 Samuel.

Often the right message is not what the people want to hear or even the message the preacher wants to preach, Ellsworth said.

Many today "in religious garb" lack "the right message ... the message people most need to hear," said Ellsworth March 16 on the school's Wake Forest, N.C., campus. "They have all kinds of slick programs -- yet their message is terribly deficient."

Said Ellsworth, "If we are not careful, we too fall in the trap of thinking it is our responsibility to simply preach what men and women desire to hear. Our responsibility is to declare the one true message -- the message that God himself has revealed," said Ellsworth, who is also a member of Southeastern's board of trustees.

The true message is that man is an eternity-bound being who must someday leave this world and stand before a perfectly holy and righteous God, he said.

"If we are to preach the right message, we must declare what God demands of anyone who would enter heaven: The Bible is exceedingly clear that to enter heaven man must be perfectly holy and righteous," Ellsworth said.

"Our God takes sin with utmost seriousness," Ellsworth said. "He does not chuckle over our naughtiness saying, 'Boys will be boys.'"

The church must declare the truth that man by himself is unable to provide the righteousness God demands, Ellsworth stated. "The truth of the matter is that the sinner's heart is alienated from God ... his will completely enslaved by sin. Man has not a single shred of righteousness to offer God who has this unrelenting demand for holiness," Ellsworth said.

Yet it is not a hopeless case: "Jesus Christ has provided the righteousness man needs. He is the Lamb of God -- without blemish and spot-free -- who answered God's demands for righteousness by taking man's sins on Calvary's cross," Ellsworth said.

"Jesus in his living and dying has provided a garment of righteousness so that men can stand clothed on that great day. He who knew no sin was made sin for me." This is the message that must be preached today, Ellsworth said.

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Mexican Baptist youth  
embrace 'True Love Waits'

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press  
3/20/95

MEXICO CITY (BP)--Along with Wal-Mart and Whataburger, "True Love Waits" has hit Mexico City.

Young people from Mexico City's Anastasis Baptist Church -- energized by a study of the "Experiencing God" discipleship course -- heard about the "True Love Waits" sexual abstinence program and decided to get involved.

The "Experiencing God" study made such a big impact on their lives they began asking: "What's next?" said Larry Gay, who leads the youth with his wife, Susan. The Gays, from Birmingham, Ala., are Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionaries in Mexico City.

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That question led to the pilot project in Mexico of "True Loves Waits," a program of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. About 40 young people at Anastasis church -- in an upper-class area of Mexico City -- recently completed a Mexican version of the program, stressing the Christian plan for love, sex and marriage. Many signed pledges to wait until marriage before becoming sexually active.

But "True Love Waits" is just one slice of what God is doing in the Anastasis church, according to the Gays. "I'm speechless," said Mrs. Gay. "It's been one of those things where you just know God is working. It's nothing that we did. It's him."

So far, at least 120 people at Anastasis have taken "Experiencing God," also a Sunday School Board program. "Our church is truly having an experience with God right now," said Gay. "We didn't just take a course."

For example, since completing "Experiencing God," the church's young people have committed themselves to taking "True Love Waits" beyond their church to other Mexican Baptist youth.

To do that, they've pledged to design and publish Spanish-language materials for the 1,200 churches in the National Baptist Convention of Mexico. By July they hope to get at least 2,000 young people to sign commitment cards promising not to have sex outside marriage. They also will promote "True Love Waits" at the Mexican Baptist national youth congress, scheduled in July near Mexico City's pyramids. "Youth" in Mexico range from age 16 to 30.

The Gays led the Anastasis young people through the program using a study they wrote to supplement material from the Sunday School Board and Baptist World Alliance. BWA has translated some of the "True Love Waits" material into Spanish and several other languages.

Some of the Mexican young people already had been sexually active when they started the "True Love Waits" study, Gay said. At least four of them have been pregnant out of wedlock.

"We've said to them that your commitment (to sexual purity) begins today," he said. "The past is the past. We've emphasized (the New Testament verse), 2 Corinthians 5:17, that old things have passed away and all things are made new."

Gay and his wife, however, have stressed that past sexual sin is not without consequences. "We've said: 'We'll help you deal with that as much as you can. But as far as your sin is concerned, (Christ) has removed that. From this day forward, live as a virgin until marriage.'"

That message has been especially healing for a young woman who discovered she was pregnant just after the group began the study. She will keep the child but said she doesn't feel she can marry the father because he's not a Christian, Gay said.

During her first time to attend the "True Loves Waits" group, she shared her situation with her peers and asked for forgiveness from God and from them.

"I'm the son of an unwed mother," a young man responded. "Now I can finally understand what my mother went through. I love you and I appreciate you for what you've decided to do. As the son of an unwed mother, on behalf of your unborn child, thank you for choosing to give your child life."

In a worship service after their group meeting, the pastor of the Anastasis church preached on bearing one another's burdens as Christians and restoring a fellow believer who has strayed.

The pregnant young woman confessed her sin before the entire congregation.

In Mexican culture, such confession would be "unheard of in a public setting," Gay said. "Only in a Christian church would that take place. And even there it's not all that common."

At the close of the study, the youth took part in a commitment service which sealed their pledges to sexual purity before marriage. One young man publicly admitted he wasn't yet ready to sign a commitment card.

"This is difficult," he said. "I'm 20 years old, and I'm a virgin. It may be at least five more years before I get married. I'm not sure I can make that pledge (of abstinence)."

A 25-year-old divorcee followed. "I'm divorced," he told the congregation. "I know what I'm missing. But I'm going to sign."

Parents of the young people also were asked to sign pledges of sexual fidelity in marriage to support the young people in their commitments.

One father later said he didn't sign a card because eight years ago he had an extramarital affair. At the time he confessed his sin to his family and re-pledged his fidelity to his wife.

"In my heart, I've already signed my card," he said.

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers 3/17/95 by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outline available on SBCNet News Room.

New emphasis helping close  
overseas churches' 'back door'

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press  
3/20/95

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A new emphasis is helping Southern Baptist foreign missionaries "close the back door" on membership loss.

Creators of the process believe it can keep some church members from falling away because their walk with God isn't what it needs to be -- a concern in churches in the United States as well as overseas.

"Operation: Close the Back Door" recognized that churches lose members for several reasons, said Jim Slack, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's church growth analyst who coordinates the program. While some loss is natural -- members may die or move away -- other losses may result from a member's failure in the Christian life.

Overall membership loss in Southern Baptist churches, whether in the United States or overseas, averages from 35 percent to 55 percent over five years, Slack said.

The Foreign Mission Board initiated a five-year study to measure membership attrition, identify causes and develop strategies for "closing the back door," Slack said.

With the help of Brad Waggoner, a doctoral student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, a survey form was developed to help church members evaluate the effectiveness of their discipleship. Waggoner is now associate pastor of evangelism and discipleship at Far Hills Baptist Church, Dayton, Ohio.

A seven-member panel helped Waggoner compile a list of 26 areas of faith and practice critical to effective discipleship. Panel members were "Experiencing God" author Henry Blackaby; "MasterLife" author Avery Willis of the Foreign Mission Board; noted author Robert Coleman of Trinity Evangelical Seminary, Deerfield, Ill.; Charles Chaney, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board; Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Community Church, Orange County, Calif.; Jim Hardwicke, pastor of Frederick Boulevard Baptist Church, St. Joseph, Mo.; and Scott Burns, pastor, Trinity Baptist Church, Downey, Calif.

After trial runs in churches in the United States, the surveys were conducted in Baptist churches in two countries of Spanish South America.

The results of the study were sobering, said Ted Stanton, an associate administrator for Southern Baptist missionary work in South America.

For example, missionaries and pastors learned:

-- Almost half of church members say they seldom or never devote time to personal Bible study.

-- Almost two-thirds seldom or never pray specifically for missions.

-- Barely half seek out opportunities to share their faith.

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One point driven home by the study was "materials don't make disciples, disciples make disciples," said Mike Pennington, a Southern Baptist church developer who conducted the survey in 15 churches in Venezuela.

"The basic tendency when you identify a problem is to throw a workshop at it," Pennington said. "The difficulty is that you can have plenty of workshops and still be lacking in practice."

Slack also noted previously used discipleship approaches "helped people know what they ought to do from a biblical perspective but were weak in influencing them to go out and practice what they learned."

Pastors and leaders in the surveyed churches came to the conviction they had to put more emphasis on showing people how to live the Christian life if they were going to be more effective Christians and church members, Pennington said.

"What's the best way to teach someone to pray? Give him a book on prayer or pray with him?" he asked. "Obviously, praying with him."

"The biblical principle of modeling servanthood is what's been missing in our churches," he said. "We must invest our lives in people -- and not just in materials -- if we're going to make a difference."

While the pilot project countries have now moved on to a "fix-it" phase, Slack is scheduling new studies in other countries.

"We're going to find we have been effective in helping people learn what they ought to do, but not in teaching them how to get out and do it," he said.

"This should serve as a wake-up call to our churches. If we aren't showing people how to do it, we are falling seriously short of our responsibilities."

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WOW weekend yields

24 professions of faith

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press

3/20/95

BELLE PLAINE, Kan. (BP)--A town of 1,800, a church with 200 in Sunday school and 22-year-old training material hardly sound like the combination for a successful youth evangelistic event.

Add 109 prospects, a dynamic leader and the Holy Spirit, however, and the result is 24 professions of faith in one weekend.

A year ago, Jim Bowles, youth and music minister at First Baptist Church, Belle Plaine, Kan., received a brochure about "Win Our World." Known as "WOW," the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board material is designed to help churches begin or strengthen a Sunday school-based outreach ministry.

Bowles scheduled a WOW weekend for March 10-11 this year. In the meantime, he took names and addresses of every youth who attended special events at the church -- from fellowships after football games to monthly Sunday night discussion sessions.

When the WOW event began, Bowles had 109 names on the youth prospect list. Even though the town is small, Bowles said Christians don't have to look far to find lost people. "They're right next door."

The WOW weekend began Friday evening with a Christian concert, followed by pizza and the first WOW training session. Non-Christians were invited to the concert, and nine people made professions of faith before the pizza was served, Bowles said.

Saturday morning included more training followed by prospect visitation. The 22 youth and nine sponsors divided into teams for the visits, and they reported 10 professions of faith.

Sunday morning, Kevin Phillips, the WOW leader, preached during the church's two worship services, and five people made professions of faith.

Phillips, a student at Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, Mo., was a key to the successful weekend, Bowles said, because of his enthusiasm.

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The WOW material was written in 1973, but the principles of evangelism haven't changed. Craig Williams, US-2 missionary specializing in youth ministry, said WOW can easily be adapted to current situations.

WOW helps participants change routine Sunday school visits into evangelistic outreach, Williams said. The training includes Bible study, instruction in how to use an evangelistic tract and how to share personal testimonies.

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'God was there to help,'  
says Baptist worker in Yemen

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press  
3/20/95

JIBLA, Yemen (BP)--Two unknown Yemeni men recently stopped to help Southern Baptist representatives Bob and Bev Thomas when fragments from a rock thrown by neighborhood boys struck one of Bob's eyes.

The men's quick response indicates to the Thomases how valuable the Baptist Hospital, where they both work, is to area residents in Jibla, Yemen. They see it as an important source of help, Mrs. Thomas said.

Also, Yemeni workers at the hospital, upset by the incident, said they would talk with village authorities to prevent similar episodes in the future.

Christian workers in Yemen have reported they are pleased with an increased responsiveness to the gospel there in recent years.

The Thomases were jogging near the hospital, when five boys, ages 7 or 8, began throwing the rocks. A softball-sized rock struck the ground in front of them, throwing up fragments that shattered his eyeglasses, gashed his head, cut an eyelid -- and narrowly missed causing serious injury.

"We don't feel the rock throwing had anything to do with the hospital or with us personally," said Mrs. Thomas, a Mississippian who directs the hospital's ancillary services department. Her husband, a Tennessean, directs the nursing department.

"Boys in several cities here seem to have adopted throwing rocks at foreigners as a new pastime," she added. "We think it may be because more tourists are coming here now.

"God was there to help us," she said. "Even with the glass flying around his eye, Bob's vision wasn't affected. It could have been very serious."

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Calif. agency breaks ground  
in church mortgage bonds

By Mark A. Wyatt

Baptist Press  
3/20/95

FRESNO, Calif. (BP)--When the California Baptist Foundation set out to increase its menu of financial services, agency executives figured a modest initial program would prove they could handle mortgage bond offerings for churches. It was something no Southern Baptist agency had ever done.

"We had hoped that our first program would be between a million and two million in size, because we were pretty confident we had investors to buy that many dollars worth," said Chet Reid, vice president of the agency operated by California Southern Baptist Convention.

That goal was far surpassed, however, when the foundation completed funding for its first mortgage bond offering in January. And Reid's delight was apparent during an evening worship service as he presented an oversized check symbolizing the initial project's \$6.5 million value to Rob Zinn, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Highland, Calif.

Proceeds from the bond issue enabled Immanuel to pay off an existing construction loan for the church's worship center and to begin construction on a 33,000-square-foot education building.

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Meanwhile, the foundation is conducting a mortgage bond program for Ecclesia Church Fellowship, a congregation which is purchasing Immanuel's former site in nearby San Bernardino. Immanuel plans to use proceeds from sale of that property for a third phase of construction -- another 33,000-square-foot building. It will include space for staff offices currently located in a storefront several miles from the church campus.

California Baptist Foundation expects to handle up to eight bond programs during 1995 and plans to actively market the service in 10 western states. Currently the agency has contracts for four programs with a combined value of about \$4 million.

It took nearly four months to complete Immanuel's bond program, slightly longer than expected. The size of the offering, however, was nearly twice the national average for mortgage bonds, Reid noted. The benefits of such a program, he added, are well worth the effort.

For one thing, churches save money. Other firms typically charge 6 to 8 percent of the gross to conduct bond programs. "We can do them from 4 to 5 percent," Reid said. "The reason for that is that none of our staff is commissioned. That's where the money gets eaten up -- in the commissions.

"One of the major services mortgage bonds do for us is to give the local church the opportunity to do their own financing," Reid continued. "And it gives members and other Christian investors a higher than average rate of return," he said.

Interest rates offered to investors ranged from 7 to 10 percent, considerably higher than rates for five-year certificates of deposit, Reid said. He said that makes church mortgage bonds ideal "for those who are looking for a higher rate of return and want to use their investment dollars in the Lord's work."

Reid said nearly 80 percent of the investors who purchased Immanuel's bonds, about 400 in number, are from California. The foundation itself purchased \$1.5 million worth of the bonds for resale. Of that amount, Reid said \$500,000 worth of bonds are still available for purchase in units valued at \$250, \$500 and \$1,000.

In 48 years of issuing church securities, California Baptist Foundation has provided more than \$600 million in church financing. "That would rank us second or third in the nation among all groups which provide church securities," Reid said.

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