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95-90

SOUTH KOREA--Evangelical groups seek an end run to end times; photo.
SOUTH KOREA--Korean soil--common ground for Central Asia Christians.
SOUTH KOREA--No rain checks needed for Korean students; photos.
MISSISSIPPI--Key constitutional issues at stake in school dispute.
FLORIDA--Florida board targets Stetson for nod to alcohol on campus.
GEORGIA--Merritt to nominate Wynn as SBC 1st v.p.
ARKANSAS--Southern Baptist teen leads relief fund for bomb victims.
ANTIGUA--Heart attack kills mission volunteer.
ARKANSAS--Point of Grace among top Christian music groups.
MISSISSIPPI--Minister using cordless phone learns privacy thrown to wind.

Evangelical groups seek
an end run to end times

By Don Martin

Baptist Press
5/31/95

SEOUL, South Korea (BP)--More than 4,000 Christians concluded a nine-day world conference in Seoul, South Korea, with a global commitment to taking the gospel to the world's least evangelized people.

Global Consultation on World Evangelization (GCOWE '95), brought together church leaders, Christian lay leaders and mission personnel from 186 countries. They met to explore ways of increasing the pace of world evangelization during the last five years of the century.

The meetings, May 17-25, included representatives from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and Home Mission Board.

"The full job of world evangelization is beyond any one group or denomination," said Avery Willis, FMB senior vice president of overseas operations. "This conference helps make it possible to discover what we can do together."

Conference organizers used the theme of "A church for every people and the gospel for every person by AD 2000" to stress a need for unity and partnerships in the evangelical world.

"The main unity comes from having a common vision, not necessarily a common, detailed ideological statement," said Luis Bush, international director of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement, an organization based in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Organizers created the AD2000 and Beyond Movement out of a felt need for more coordination of outreach ministries after Lausanne II in 1989, explained Thomas Wang, chairman of AD2000. Lausanne II in Manila, Philippines, called evangelicals to unity in missions.

"We have a five-year plan. We are hoping that the churches of the world will really take up this vision and work toward these goals year by year," Wang said. "By the grace of God, we hope to see that the Great Commission will be fulfilled by the year 2000."

Each day of the global conference was packed with meetings, yet often activity in the halls reflected the true essence of the AD2000 movement. Delegates a range of para-church and mission organizations networked with each other to exchange information and project proposals.

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"These expanding networks make it clear that those (Christian organizations) who choose to work alone will find themselves left far behind and isolated," reflected Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin. "CSI (Cooperative Service International) has long been a player in these networks. They are in their natural element with these groups (which) are on the cutting edge of missions."

CSI focuses exclusively on the unreached people of World A. In 1994, CSI started 144 new churches in World A -- that part of the world where people have never had a chance to hear the Christian gospel.

The GCOWE '95 conference stressed part of World A called the "10/40 Window," the unreached peoples in an area extending eastward from Northwest Africa to East Asia.

At the conference's first plenary session, missions strategist Patrick Johnstone expressed his hopes for reaching World A. Johnstone's book, "Operation World," has become a key resource in missions planning.

"As I prepared 'Operation World,' one thing amazed me -- the astonishing growth and expansion of the gospel over the past two centuries," said Johnstone, who is from the United Kingdom. "When William Carey left for India 200 years ago, evangelical Christianity had only penetrated a handful of the then possibly 8,000 to 9,000 people (groups) outside Europe and eastern North America."

Of the 12,000 people (groups) in 237 countries, more than 9,000 now have the resources to reach their own people, Johnstone estimated. "What a change," he said. "In round figures, 3,000 non-Christian peoples still need cross-cultural, pioneer, church-planting ministries."

In reaching the world's people, "We need to be servants. We need to cooperate and work together whenever we can," the FMB's Willis told conference delegates.

The hard realities of world evangelization can be overwhelming, said Willis, who led the conference's denominational leaders track. Southern Baptists can't by their own means achieve the denomination's Bold Mission Thrust goal of giving every person in the world the opportunity to hear, understand and respond to the gospel by A.D. 2000. The goal's success rests with God, Willis said.

During prayer about that goal, "God said to me, 'Avery, that (goal) is not a Southern Baptist goal. That's my goal,'" Willis related. "'It just took 2,000 years for Southern Baptists to vote on it.'"

In his speech, Willis said the FMB will give to any Christian organization a free electronic copy of its data base on unreached people groups. The data base tracks the status of global evangelization and provides core information on the world's unreached peoples.

Willis, as well as the other main speakers, delivered their remarks to a body of Christian leaders who for the most part had never attended other world-level congresses. This conference also had one of the largest showings of Christian leaders from the developing world.

"There is a major paradigm shift to full ownership in the cause of advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ worldwide," said AD2000's Bush. The evidence of that shift "comes from the bottom-line commitment of the people who are here. Two-thirds of (them) are from the developing world."

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed May 31 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Korean soil -- common ground
for Central Asia Christians

By Don Martin

Baptist Press
5/31/95

SEOUL, South Korea (BP)--The success of the Global Consultation on World Evangelization conference was as much changed hearts as advanced agendas.

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When more than 4,000 Christians worked for nine days, May 17-25, to find ways to take the gospel to the whole world by A.D. 2000, it was easy to talk in grand numbers and strategies. Yet the global evangelization meetings were at their best when Christians talked face-to-face.

This was the case for Christians from countries of the former Soviet Union's Central Asian republics. During the conference, these Central Asian Christians met together for the first time ever, explained a Southern Baptist worker who works with an unreached people group in Central Asia.

"What we saw happen in this meeting was phenomenal," he said.

The Central Asia meeting brought together Christians from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

"We had Kazaks, Kyrgyzs, Uzbeks, Turkmen and Western expatriates from different churches. There were Russian Baptists, Pentecostals, charismatics -- all sitting down at one time."

At first the meeting was conducted in English and guided by Western workers who were mostly from the United States and Western Europe.

"Some of the (Western) expatriates had gotten together earlier and agreed that our common hearts' desire was to see nationals from each area doing great things for the Lord in their home countries -- sending their own missionaries, reaching their own people," the Southern Baptist worker said. "We wanted to step back and support and not lead."

As the meeting progressed, the Central Asians were asked to tell what God was doing in their respective countries. As they talked, the mutual need for trained church leaders emerged.

Excitement about this shared conviction spread.

By the last hour of the meeting, the discussion had shifted to Russian, and the Western expatriates could only listen as the group caught hold of a shared vision.

"I don't think an expatriate said a word in the last half of the meeting. It was incredible to see this shift of leadership.

"We had Russian Baptists and Pentecostals -- who traditionally haven't even believed each other to be real believers -- talking together about their common needs in the work," the Baptist worker said. "The change in this meeting was incredible."

"We had tried to start the meeting with singing. When we tried a chorus, the Pentecostals joined in while the Russian Baptists just sat there watching. So we would invite the Russian Baptists to start us off and they would sing a hymn and the Pentecostals and charismatics would sit and watch them sing their hymn. The expatriates would try and sing with both, as best we could.

"But, by the end of the meeting, we were all singing the chorus 'Hallelujah.' It wasn't too jazzy for the Baptists and wasn't too stilted for the others."

The united spirit continued after the meeting and on the two-hour bus ride back to the hotel. Many of the Central Asian delegates were dancing in the bus aisle.

"The charismatics were dancing and the Baptists were clapping. Someone would teach an Uzbek chorus. Then they would all sing something in Russian, and then they would try and learn something in Turkmen. They were shouting 'Hallelujah' and singing all the way back," the Baptist worker said.

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No rain checks needed
for Korean students

By Don Martin

Baptist Press
5/31/95

SEOUL, South Korea (BP)--Rain mixed with tears on the cheeks of thousands of South Korean students who dedicated themselves to missions May 20 in the Seoul Olympic Main Stadium.

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More than 80,000 Korean students signed mission declarations at the "Student Mission 2000" meeting held in conjunction with Global Consultation on World Evangelization (GCOWE '95).

The students marched into the Olympic stadium in a cold, misting rain to commit themselves to missions. Many entered the stadium in a colorful parade with students carrying flags from every nation and singing: "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations."

"This kind of intensity, this kind of commitment is moving," said Tom Wolf, teaching pastor of The Church on Brady in Los Angeles and chairman of the missions department at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif.

The students pledged to pursue some form of overseas missions or serve as part of a corps of volunteers who will move quickly into North Korea if there is a unification of the two nations.

South Korean President Young-Sam Kim offered a challenge to the students and the attending GCOWE delegates through a videotaped address.

"Today's world is in great need of the love and service of fellow human beings and going beyond the interests of any one particular race," he said.

Later, raising their right hands, the Korean students promised before these international witnesses to work for church renewal, to pray and work for Korea's unification and to dedicate themselves to world evangelization.

"I made a commitment to long-term missions," He Jung Kim, 20, said. "I can't explain what God has said to me, but this evening confirmed that God is calling me. This was the biggest event in my life."

Byung Hoon Oh, 26, a student at Han Yang University, hopes to follow through with this commitment in China. "I had thought about doing something for God through missions. Tonight, I finally made that commitment. As a Korean, I have seen people come here to tell us about Christ. It's time now for us to go as God gives us a mission. Missionaries came here to give away the gospel. It is now time to pay for that debt of service."

The evening program lasted nearly four hours. Despite the late hour, cold mist and sporadic rain, thousands of students lingered to pray.

Well after most of the stadium lights were turned off, many students bowed to pray in groups on the stadium track. Some stood while others kneeled on the wet ground, soaking their pants and dresses as they prayed on their knees for more than an hour.

In the stands, many of the delegates stayed to pray and watch a new generation of missionaries worship God.

"I felt as we watched those students pray for such a long time after the program that we were sitting in the bleachers of the future," Wolf said. "This is an excellent way to begin."

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(BP) photos (two vertical, one horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers May 31 by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Key constitutional issues
at stake in school dispute

By Bill Merrell

Baptist Press
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PONTOTOC, Miss. (BP)--Multi-colored ribbon bouquets adorn the stretch of State Highway 6 running west out of Tupelo to Pontotoc, Miss. They are accompanied by yard signs proclaiming, "4 Religious Freedom." A newcomer would probably think, correctly, "Something must be going on here."

Pontotoc County, Miss., population 23,000, has become the scene of a struggle for religious liberty with national implications. North Pontotoc schools have recognized religious expression rights of its students as far back as anyone can remember. All of that is being challenged now.

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Michael Whitehead and the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission he serves as general counsel have agreed to assist the school district in a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union and People for the American Way challenging student-initiated voluntary prayer and an elective Bible history course at North Pontotoc Attendance Center.

The case, Herdahl vs. Pontotoc School District, was filed in federal court in Mississippi in December 1994 on behalf of Lisa Herdahl, mother of six children, some of whom entered Pontotoc schools two years ago after the family relocated to the area from Wisconsin.

"Students meet in their homerooms prior to the beginning of the school day, at which time the principal gives announcements," Whitehead recounted. "After the announcements, he has permitted any student or student group to take 2-3 minutes to give announcements, read an inspirational passage or pray. Mrs. Herdahl objected to the practice, but refused offers to excuse her children from the classroom so they would not be exposed to the reading and prayers she found objectionable."

The district judge granted a preliminary injunction against the practice of students' praying and set a trial date for March 1996 to consider making the injunction permanent.

"The order also prohibits teachers from permitting elementary students to say grace together before going to the school cafeteria," Whitehead said. "The order does not yet address the subject of the elective course in Middle Eastern history which uses the Bible as a text."

In the interim, the court has agreed to permit students to assemble in the gym before school for student-led Bible reading or prayer. This practice has not yet been challenged by the ACLU.

The citizenry of the area have rallied in support of the school board, exemplified by a "God and Country" gathering at the Pontotoc Court Square in January, in which 3,500 people sang hymns and heard newly elected Rep. Roger Wicker, R.-Miss., vow to fight for school prayer with every legal and ethical means at his disposal.

On the Sunday before Memorial Day in the town dotted with hundreds of yard signs and ribbon bouquets, Richard D. Land, CLC executive director, addressed an early morning religious liberty prayer breakfast and morning worship services at First Baptist Church, Pontotoc. "I want you to know that people all across America are praying for you," Land told those in attendance. "Your struggle to exercise your heritage and your rights as citizens of the United States is an inspiration and an encouragement to many people across the country and it is a symbol of the struggle for the nation's soul."

Encouragement has come to the church and community leaders from many quarters, but not without a mixture of criticism. William Sims, First Baptist's pastor, said, "We have received more than 40,000 letters which are overwhelmingly affirming. We've had about 100 or so that seem to come from an atheistic perspective and oppose what we are doing. Many are so obscene as to be grotesque. I wouldn't even repeat them. One I could repeat wrote, 'God is not the answer, the church is not the answer, and you're surely not the answer. Playboy, sex and casinos are what America needs. Surely not your God -- where is He?'"

Students, of course, are caught up in the events and seem overwhelmingly supportive of the contested policy. A group of students entering their sophomore year, gathered at the local pizza parlor, were asked to express their thoughts. "We took a vote in our school to see what the students thought. It was 98 percent for it and 2 percent who said it didn't matter which way it was," said John Reeder.

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Kevin Stegall agreed, "I think nearly everybody's for praying at school. If you asked for all who wanted to pray to go to the gym, nearly everybody would go." Brady Nix said simply, "I'm for prayer in school. It helps to start the school day and makes everybody's attitude better." Lee Hill said, "Prayer is important. We are not trying to offend anybody. The majority around here are Baptists and Methodists, but we have a Muslim friend and last year he prayed. It kind of startled us, but it sure doesn't offend us."

The issue will not be decided, however, by the majority viewpoint of students or adults. The case has been described by the Washington Post as "the most important prayer case now before the courts." Both side expect it to address key constitutional questions.

Land addressed one of them at the prayer breakfast: "The two clauses of the First Amendment mean there will be no governmental establishment of religion and ... no governmental interference with the free exercise of religion. There have been times in our past when the greatest danger to the First Amendment was a violation of the 'establishment clause.' That is not the case any longer; it has not been the case for many decades.

"The chief violations of the First Amendment in my lifetime and in yours are government attempts to suppress the free exercise rights of American citizens to express their religious convictions out in the public square or in public institutions. That is what we have been called in our lifetime to defend.

"The question of students' praying and expressing their religious convictions in public school is nothing less than a defense of the free exercise clause of the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America.

"Students are American citizens, too, and they do not leave their First Amendment rights to the free exercise of their religious convictions on the boundary line of the public school," Land said. "They have the right to voluntarily pray together. That doesn't mean that the teacher shall lead. It doesn't mean that the school should tell them to; but it means that the school can't tell them that they can't. That is their right as an American citizen.

"This is purely and simply a question of whether we're going to defend our children's and our young peoples' rights as American citizens."

Whitehead concurred: "This case is not about teacher-led or school-sponsored prayer. The school does not 'sponsor' student speech just because it permits student speech. What the school sponsors in this forum is freedom."

The situation in Pontotoc illustrates the confusion that has existed in the United States since the Supreme Court ruling of 1962 declaring the recitation of a school-led, state-written prayer unconstitutional. Some feel that only a constitutional amendment can end the confusion.

Land said the CLC came "reluctantly" to accept the necessity of such an amendment. "For 32 years now, we've patiently waited for the courts to straighten this out. An amendment will have the effect of saying, 'Nothing in this constitution is intended to suppress the rights of citizens to freely practice their religion.' We don't believe in this country in freedom from religion, but in freedom for religion."

He expanded, "The ACLU has fostered an attitude of brooding hostility against religion, intimidating citizens by threatening lawsuits. We're glad folks like those in Pontotoc are standing up to that intimidation. We are going to stand with them."

Said Whitehead: "This case provides a classic example of the need for a constitutional amendment. A Religious Equality Amendment would clearly establish that religious speech must be treated equally with all other kinds of speech. We believe the First Amendment should be interpreted in this manner already, so that this school district should win this lawsuit.

"However, since ACLU and PAW see the Constitution differently, the court must decide this lawsuit," Whitehead said. "An amendment could eliminate such lawsuits in the future and could save public bodies millions of dollars in legal fees. More importantly, an amendment would let th students pray in peace, over the P.A. system or over a p anut butter sandwich."

**Florida board targets Stetson
for nod to alcohol on campus**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--Florida Baptists' state board of missions has named a four-member committee to study the convention's relationship with Stetson University, which has reversed a century-old ban on the use of alcoholic beverages on campus.

The Florida missions board also registered its "dismay" and "sincere and anguished distress" May 19 over a decision by trustees of the Baptist-related college in DeLand, Fla., to allow beer, wine and wine coolers at approved parties and in some student residence halls.

The Florida board said its stance is rooted in "scriptural mandate and historic Baptist principles."

The study committee is to present its findings to the Florida Baptist Convention annual meeting Nov. 14-16.

Stetson University elects trustees independently and receives no direct Cooperative Program funding from the Florida Baptist Convention. However, each church is provided an opportunity on its remittance form to forward gifts to the university.

During a board of missions subcommittee meeting, Ken Whitten, president of the Florida Baptist Convention, noted there is "an implied endorsement when we handle funds and send it somewhere else."

Board member Tim Patterson of Glen St. Mary called for the board to sever its "fraternal relationship," as described by John Sullivan, the convention's executive director-treasurer, with Stetson.

But board member Don Guthrie of Perry suggested board members meet with Stetson trustees before "punitive action is taken. Let's keep the relationship if we can. It's 110 years old."

In response to the discussion, the board created the study committee.

Board members were spurred in their discussion by a request from the Pensacola Baptist Association to take such action.

In a related response to the action, Jerry Passmore, director of the convention's evangelism division, announced that "Super Summer," a week-long youth discipleship camp held annually at Stetson, will be consolidated into Lake Yale Assembly, where an identical camp already had been scheduled.

The April 21 decision by Stetson trustees to open the campus to alcohol consumption followed a two-year study.

David Bergen, associate dean for campus life at Stetson, told a Daytona Beach newspaper 43 percent of the judicial cases handled internally at the school this year involved alcohol violations.

Stetson President Doug Lee issued a statement noting the new policy, which includes increased alcohol awareness education, "makes it possible for us to implement a more reasonable and enforceable alcohol policy, with strict guidelines, that we hope will help students to be more responsible. Alcohol use is common among college students and its abuse is the top problem for young adults.

"We were unable to deal with alcohol abuse with integrity as long as we denied our students had a problem," Lee said. "This decision will allow us to face the problem squarely and strengthen our educational and counseling program to help our students deal responsibly with alcohol."

Drinking on campus will not be permitted for students under age 21, Florida's legal drinking age. Forty-one percent of Stetson's students are 21. Some dorms will remain alcohol-free, and students can request housing in them, said Jim Beasley, vice president for campus life.

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Sullivan, in a column in the May 4 issue of the Florida Baptist Witness, voiced opposition to the Stetson action, saying, "I have read the (Stetson) rationale, I simply do not agree. . . . My comments are from one Baptist preacher, but quitting or compromising on any social issue that destroys as many people as alcohol abuse is not acceptable as a spiritual model or positive adaptation. If an institution cannot complement the ministry of the churches, it must be extremely careful not to negate it."

C. Ben Mitchell, consultant on biomedical and life issues for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, which has responsibility for the convention's efforts countering alcohol use, issued a statement May 31, noting, "There are no words to describe how irresponsible the Stetson policy really is. . . . The policy is simply murderous." Mitchell said 240,000 to 360,000 current college-age students nationwide "will eventually die of alcohol-related causes. That's comparable to the entire undergraduate body of the Big Ten dropping dead."

The Stetson action "sends all the wrong messages to our college-aged youth," Mitchell said. "We should not be echoing the slogans of the beer commercials -- 'if you drink, drink responsibly' -- we should be saying, 'Just Say No' and 'If you drink, you die.'"

"This so-called Baptist school has caved in to cultural pressures. Even most secular universities do not permit alcohol in campus residences and at campus activities," Mitchell maintained, quoting the University of Tennessee's policy: "University regulations prohibit all student organizations from serving or permitting the consumption, possession or display of any alcoholic beverage or containers at any time, or by anyone on University premises."

Universities that ban alcohol on campus realize "the liability is just too great. The consequences are too lethal," Mitchell said.

Alcohol use at Stetson, he added, "will be devastating to the lives of Stetson students. Perhaps the university should establish a fund to pay for the counseling, injury and death which will directly result."

Baptist Press offered Lee, Stetson's president, an opportunity for further comment May 31, but had not received a response by its mid-afternoon deadline.

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Compiled by Art Toalston.

Merritt to nominate
Wynn as SBC 1st v.p.

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SNELLVILLE, Ga. (BP)--James Merritt, president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference, has announced he will nominate Larry Wynn as first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention during the SBC annual meeting June 20-22 in Atlanta.

Wynn, pastor of Hebron Baptist Church, Dacula, Ga., since 1978, has been president of the Georgia Baptist Convention and vice president of the SBC Pastors' Conference, as well as serving in numerous other committees and associational positions.

The church Wynn leads has seen attendance grow from 100 to more than 4,400 in 1994. Hebron was ranked first in total number of baptisms in Georgia in 1988-1989 and 1989-90 and was ranked among the top 20 churches in baptisms in the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Larry is preeminently qualified to serve in this position," said Merritt, pastor, First Baptist Church, Snellville, Ga., and a member of the SBC Executive Committee. "He has built a wonderful soul-winning church. In addition, he has been a faithful denominational servant, is well-respected by his peers and would be an able and strong supporter of the convention president."

Merritt's is the first public announcement of a nominee for either the first or second vice presidential post of the SBC. Current SBC President Jim Henry has announced he will allow his nomination for a second one-year term.

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Southern Baptist teen leads relief fund for bomb victims By Russell N. Dilday

ALEXANDER, Ark. (BP)--The motivation of an Arkansas Baptist teen and th generosity of his church has led to a significant financial gift to assist victims of the Oklahoma bombing disaster.

Karlas Stephens, 13, a member of First Baptist Church, Alexander, Ark., led efforts that raised more than \$1,600 for victims of the blast that destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City April 19.

Karlas, along with his Sunday school teacher, Steve Nortier, came up with the church fund-raising idea.

Explaining his motivation for raising the money, Karlas noted, "Everything got taken away (from the victims). Their families got messed up, they lost their buildings."

The next Sunday, he approached the church's youth group, then adult Sunday school classes, with the idea. "We set a goal of \$1,500 and raised it in three weeks," he said. "Somebody said the goal should be \$250, but that was too low. We got that in five minutes."

Nortier said despite his age, Karlas is a leader in the youth group. "Even the high school kids listened to him." He is president of his Sunday school class and recently worked on staff at the Royal Ambassador Congress.

Karlas' fund-raising strategy was simple: "We just went in to the classrooms and said we needed it," he explained.

He added he was "kinda surprised by the response. Most gave quickly. Two kids gave \$20 apiece. Somebody gave \$250."

He also had two friends visiting his class. "One gave a dollar and the other (from a poor, single parent family) gave 40 cents. It was all he had."

The response did not surprise pastor Ed Stoddard. "I think right now in the church there is an openness to needs in the community," he said. "It was only natural that as they were alerted to the needs that they responded."

Karlas and Nortier traveled to Oklahoma City May 21 to personally deliver the \$1,655.84 check from the church to the Brotherhood department of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. The money will be used to assist residents of the Regency Tower Apartments, a low-income housing structure.

Mary Stephens of the Brotherhood department said the gift was "among one of the largest" given by a single church to be used for relief through the department. "We had several in the vicinity of \$1,500. We even had \$4,000 that came from a non-Southern Baptist church in Alaska. As soon as it (the bombing) happened, we were swamped with calls."

Karlas received the thanks of Oklahoma Brotherhood director Laddie Adams in a small ceremony, along with a lapel pin in honor of his work. "I felt good, but I was nervous," Karlas admitted. "I hadn't done anything that big before."

The ceremony was "emotional" for the Arkansans, said Nortier. "When Laddie handed Karlas the lapel pin, I had to turn and look out the window. It was an emotional time."

The trip also included tours of the Oklahoma disaster relief feeding unit, Oklahoma Baptist Boys' Ranch and the bomb site.

Karlas remembered the visit to the bombed Murrah building. It was the day before engineers imploded the building, reducing it to rubble. "There were all kinds of flowers and stuffed animals (at the chain link barricade around the building). It was sad. There were Scriptures and notes to those that were lost."

He also met a few Oklahomans affected by the blast, such as a "husband and wife who were Sunday school teachers. They had a (class member) killed, a 39-year-old woman who was going to get married May 5.

"I wish we could take everybody there and show them," Karlas r flected. "It changes your attitude."

**Heart attack kills
mission volunteer**

By David Williard

ST. JOHNS, Antigua (BP)--Southern Baptist foreign mission volunteer Phillip Knott died May 30 of a massive heart attack on the Caribbean island of Nevis.

Knott, 54, of Swan Quarter, N.C., was serving a three-month stint as pastor of First Baptist Church of Brick-kiln on Nevis. He had been there since May 1.

The day before his death, he told missionary John Hamilton how excited he was about the work there. "We are having good response" to the gospel and are "preparing to start a Sunday school class for young people," Knott told Hamilton, a Foreign Mission Board missionary on the nearby island of Antigua.

On the afternoon of his death, Knott apparently complained of indigestion and appeared to respond to treatment at a local clinic, Hamilton said. As plans were being made to evacuate him from the island, Knott took a turn for the worse. He died quickly thereafter.

News of Knott's death came as a shock to his wife, Karen. At 4 p.m. on May 30, she heard he was experiencing difficulties and six hours later learned he had died.

"I know he was doing what the Lord wanted him to do, he was where the Lord wanted him to be, that he is now with the Lord. That's what I have to focus on now," she said.

Indeed, Knott was a missions enthusiast who at one time sought appointment with the Foreign Mission Board as a missionary associate. Knott was "the epitome of the man with the volunteer heart," said Jim Furgerson, director of the FMB's volunteers in missions department. "He couldn't go enough. He loved it. He found fulfillment and a sense of calling by going."

In the early 1990s Knott was a two-year volunteer through the board's International Service Corps, serving as pastor of an international Baptist congregation in Japan. He participated in several other volunteer projects, including trips to France, Togo and Haiti. Knott felt called to missions while on a volunteer trip to the Dominican Republic in 1979.

The Nevis trip was his fourth volunteer mission assignment to the Caribbean, according to the FMB volunteer department. Said Furgerson, "We hate to see a guy like that (pass away). Who will take his place?"

Born in Louisburg, N.C., Knott was a graduate of Hardbarger Business College in Raleigh and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest. He was pastor of three churches in eastern North Carolina before accepting the assignment in Japan. He recently served as a supply preacher for Rose Bay Baptist Church in Swan Quarter.

Knott is survived by his wife, Karen; two children, Christine Avery and Charles Glen; two brothers and two sisters. The body is tentatively scheduled to arrive in Raleigh-Durham, N.C., on June 1. Funeral arrangements are incomplete.

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**Point of Grace among top
Christian music groups**

By Trennis Henderson

**Baptist Press
5/31/95**

NORTH LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--It's official: Point of Grace is one of the hottest vocal groups in the rapidly expanding field of contemporary Christian music.

The group of four young women, named last year's new artist of the year during the Gospel Music Association's annual Dove Awards, is no stranger to Southern Baptists. The foursome sang during last year's Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Orlando, Fla., and is scheduled to perform at the 1995 SBC Pastors' Conference in Atlanta.

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The four vocalists, formerly known as Say So, are all alumnae of Arkansas Baptists' Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark. The group was back in Arkansas recently to perform a pair of sold-out concerts at Park Hill Baptist Church in North Little Rock. Sold-out concerts are becoming commonplace for Point of Grace, especially on its current 25-city tour, which also includes guest appearances by Phillips, Craig & Dean and soloist Cheri Keaggy.

Point of Grace got its start at Ouachita in 1991 when Oklahoma natives Terry (Lang) Jones, Denise (Masters) Jones and Heather Floyd teamed up with Shelley Phillips of Little Rock. Their big break came two years later when they were "discovered" by a Word Records producer during a "Praise in the Rockies" gathering in Colorado.

Point of Grace was offered a recording contract and their debut album generated six consecutive No. 1 hits -- the only group in history to produce that many hits on its first album. The group's latest album, "The Whole Truth," already has produced another No. 1 hit with the single, "The Great Divide."

The New York Times has described Point of Grace as "the Supremes of Christian rock." USA Weekend magazine has compared them to the secular pop group Wilson Phillips.

How has commercial success and growing fame impacted the group?

"It definitely was great to receive the new artist of the year award last year," Phillips noted. "It gave us validity and name recognition.

"We are so excited to be where we're at," she acknowledged, but even with the growing recognition coming their way, "we're still the same old girls."

Although the group didn't bring home any Dove Awards this year, they were nominated for four awards, including artist of the year, group of the year, inspirational album of the year and a song of the year nomination for the single, "Jesus Will Still Be There."

Affirming the individuals and groups who did win this year, Phillips pointed out, "We're still very much the newest of the new. It was a bittersweet feeling but it was an honor to perform" on the nationally televised awards show. They also performed last year in the popular "Young Messiah Tour," a traveling showcase of Christian recording artists.

Noting their "overnight success" actually was "a gradual thing," Phillips explained, "It built gradually into what it is day by day." Even so, she said it often feels like "all of a sudden we blinked and we had this ministry."

Phillips said one of the most significant growth experiences for the group has been taking time "to catch up with ourselves spiritually." Amid the hectic pace of recording, promoting, performing and touring, she said group members consciously reminded themselves of "the importance of being fresh for the people and realizing it's OK to take time for ourselves."

Emphasizing each of the group members "definitely comes from strong church backgrounds," Denise Jones said they have discovered the importance of realizing "God can be real and be fresh every day."

"Our first record was songs that ministered to us. We picked them because they spoke to our hearts," Phillips noted. She said their second record reflects their spiritual pilgrimage "after we've been through a year and a half of adulthood -- it's more evangelistic."

"People are ready to hear songs with blatant, simple, honest Christian lyrics," she said. "I think people are ready to get back to the basics."

Citing the success of "Jesus Will Still Be There," Jones added, "They're just hungry for simple truth. ... There are so many people searching for love and God is the answer."

During one of the North Little Rock concerts, Terry Jones told the enthusiastic crowd, "Our prayer this whole year is that we would be one in Christ. That's a message our churches need to hear today, too -- we are all one in Christ."

"The reason we are here is because Jesus Christ can heal your broken heart. Jesus Christ is always there for you," Denise Jones shared. "Our God's greatest characteristics are his forgiveness and his love and his mercy. He's waiting for you to rest in him tonight."

Encouraging the audience to join Point of Grace in "celebrating the love of God together," Phillips summed up the group's fast-paced ministry opportunities as she told her hometown supporters, "It's been a crazy ride the last few years ... but it's really been a blessing."

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Minister using cordless phone
learns privacy thrown to wind By William H. Perkins Jr.

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JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Think your confidential telephone conversations are private? Better think again if you have a cordless telephone, says a Mississippi minister who found out the hard way.

The minister, who wishes to remain anonymous, recently used the cordless telephone in his residence to share some personal matters with a longtime friend and confidant in another state.

He had no idea that a local electronics buff was using his sophisticated equipment to listen in on the radio waves being transmitted by the cordless telephone. A friend came to him a short time later and told him that his conversation had been overheard.

The minister was even more shocked when his friend related specific details of the telephone conversation that apparently had been spread around town by the electronics buff.

"I was in the den of my home when the conversation took place, and this guy picked it up on his scanner five miles away. I can't describe the feeling of violation, that someone in my community would sit there and listen to other people's conversations and then go out and talk about it," the minister said.

"It was almost voyeuristic. It's certainly not healthy," he added.

Many people don't understand that their cordless telephones, while convenient, operate on radio waves that can be snatched out of thin air, said Gene Dobbs, administrative assistant for ministry at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board and a licensed amateur radio operator for 27 years.

"Each component of a cordless telephone unit has a transmitter and receiver. Anyone with a receiver or sequential-type scanner can listen in," he explained.

Cellular telephones work in much the same way, Dobbs added.

"There are a lot of people out there who get a great deal of satisfaction from listening in on other people's conversations. If the call is confidential or very private, stay off portable telephones," he warned.

That's a point the violated minister won't soon forget. He called local police and the telephone company, only to discover it is not illegal to intercept radio waves. He has since converted all the telephones in his house to the wired variety that plug directly into the wall.

His advice to cordless telephone owners?

"Don't use them -- any time," he said.

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