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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, CompuServe 70420,2501
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232, CompuServe 70420,1115
NASHVILLE Linda Lawson, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300, CompuServe 70420,2955
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151, CompuServe 70420,7138
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223, CompuServe 71100,819

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Baptist basketball team
scores big in Zimbabwe

By Jim Johnston

Baptist Press
9/12/95

HARARE, Zimbabwe (BP)--Ngonie Mukukura made sure he didn't miss the opportunity to show his appreciation to his new friends.

The 21-year-old native of Harare, Zimbabwe, was waiting outside the Prince Edward High School dormitory at 7:30 a.m. on the last day of the International Sports Federation's basketball tour. He had something to tell the 10-member basketball team.

"I want to thank you for telling me about Jesus Christ," Mukukura said. "Today I am new man because of what you shared with me. I am now your brother in Christ and I want to tell you how grateful I am."

Mukukura was one of more than 1,200 Zimbabweans who accepted Christ during the ISF team's two-week tour. The team traveled from Harare to Mutare to Bulwayo and back to the nation's capital from Aug. 20 to Sept. 2, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ through exhibition games and basketball clinics.

The team, made up of former American collegiate players, was successful on the court and off, finishing 7-0 on the tour. The record included three conquests of the Zimbabwean national team, a victory over the Malawi national team and three wins over club teams from the three cities.

But winning wasn't the focus of the ISF tour. Working in concert with Zimbabwean ISF representative Fred Sorrells, the team hoped to build relationships with the Zimbabwean team by helping it prepare for the 48-nation All-Africa Games, making contacts with other African countries and spreading the good news across the width and breadth of the nation.

Sorrells was certain the mission was accomplished.

"This is just what we needed," Sorrells said. "The work of this team was so important in establishing our credibility in Africa. Because of the work these young men did, we have a base to grow from in Africa."

The team was the seventh commissioned to go overseas by the ISF and its sponsoring organization, the Brotherhood Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. It also was the most effective.

"This was the best team we've taken out," said ISF coach Scott Matthews, a former player and assistant coach at Mary Hardin-Baylor University, Belton, Texas. "The guys were flexible, they were bold in sharing their faith and they were excellent on the court. We couldn't have asked for a better group to go out and share Christ."

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Nashville, Tennessee

On game days, players and coaches arrived at the arenas early for shoot-arounds and fellowship time with fans and opposing players. At halftime, two players shared their testimonies and Randy Shepherd of Crossfire Ministries, Asheville, N.C., closed the evangelical time by putting on a ball-handling exhibition and sharing the plan of salvation. Decisions were recorded and information sheets were filled out and given to local pastors for follow-up.

During clinics in high-density suburban areas, players shared basketball instruction and the good news with youth and adults alike. The clinics normally were followed by scrimmages with local club teams. They proved to be catalysts for one-on-one evangelism.

"I can't preach," said 6-foot-3 ISF point guard Bryant Bond, "but I can play basketball and make some friends while I'm doing it. I feel like God used my talents to make some special things happen."

Despite the number of decisions and the success on the court, the tour was not without its challenges. Just three days prior to the team's departure from Dallas, Matthews wasn't exactly sure who would be on the trip. Job and school commitments made the team's recruitment a difficult proposition.

Bryant Bond, a native of Houston, was a last-minute replacement for Melvin Adams, who was under consideration for the Harlem Globetrotters' international traveling team. Matt Nelson joined the ISF tour at the last minute as well after making sure an African friend, new to the United States, was being cared for.

For both players, their inclusion on trip was not viewed as accidental, but providential.

"It was obvious God wanted me on this trip," said Bond, who played college basketball at Cameron (Okla.) University. "He wanted me to see the needs in this world. He wanted to use me."

The ISF team also was used to make an impact on the lives of the Malawi national team, who traveled with the Americans for a week of the tour. Three members of the team became Christians as a result of the influence of the ISF.

"Our guys needed this," said Jack Sears, a Baptist missionary in Blantyre, Malawi, who ministers to the team by officiating their games and helping them refine their basketball skills. "They needed to see people living their faith and that's what they got with the ISF team."

One of the highlights of the ISF trip was a visit to the rural village of Nyazura, 70 kilometers from the mountain town of Mutare. The players showed Nyazura's residents a little about basketball, shared the message of Jesus Christ and helped Godfrey Galfes, the pastor of the city's Baptist church, lay a foundation to reach others.

"You really see how much you have in the United States when you come out here and visit with these folks," said Willie Black, a former standout at the University of North Carolina-Asheville. "We have everything and we're not happy. These people have nothing and they have a smile on their face. They want to know about Jesus. They want to be his disciples."

A willingness to hear about Jesus was a characteristic the team found throughout Zimbabwe. This open attitude made sharing their faith easy for the players.

"One thing I'll always remember about this trip was sharing my faith for the first time," said Devlin Bell, a native of Detroit. "I'm a young Christian, but I'm trying to grow. Being able to give your testimony is a part of that growth. It helped me that the people we met were so open to Christ."

Growth for the ISF players came in many different areas. The players learned to adjust to culture shock, the Zimbabwean diet and fatigue brought on by too many games, too many miles and too little sleep. But when the group's plane touched down in Atlanta Sept. 3, there weren't any complaints.

"This was the trip of a lifetime," Bond said. "These were some of the best days of my life. I think everyone should go on this kind of mission trip. There's no doubt you'll want to go back. I sure do."

Before our very eyes from those whom we've come to expect grand self-promotion came clear testimonies to virtue, humility, loyalty, teamwork and community, family, racial harmony and dedicated hard work. What better example of the preacher's words about faithful work, "whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Eccl. 9:10). We offer our congratulations to Cal Ripkin Jr. Let's hope we have seen the beginning of a new kind of hero.

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Dockery is vice president for academic administration and dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

Expert: Churches not immune
to sexual misconduct lawsuits By Russell N. Dilday

Baptist Press
9/12/95

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--Warning about the legal risks of sexual misconduct that churches face, church liability expert Richard Hammar emphasized, "We live in a different day today than in the past."

Hammar, an attorney, accountant and author specializing in legal and tax issues affecting churches and clergy, was the featured speaker during a statewide "Risk Management Seminar" at Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, Ark.

"Twenty years ago people never even considered suing a church," Hammar explained. "That is simply not a safe assumption anymore. People are increasingly suing churches and we need to take affirmative steps to respond to those risks."

The Aug. 17 seminar, sponsored by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and Southern Baptist Annuity Board, was offered to pastors and church staff, as well as attorneys and insurance agents who work with churches.

Hammar is the author of "Pastor, Church and Law and Church and Clergy Tax." He also writes the Church Law and Tax Report, a bimonthly newsletter reviewing legal and tax developments affecting churches and is editor of the Church Treasurer Alert!

Highlighting "three trends for the 1990s" in preparing to respond to church liability issues, Hammar highlighted the "increase in litigation involving churches."

Noting an overall increase in litigation in the United States, he said the main reason for the increase is the size of the nation's legal profession. "There are 865,000 legal attorneys," he said. "We have 27 times more attorneys per capita than Japan and 20 times of any country in the Western Hemisphere.

"There were over 100 million cases filed in state courts alone," Hammar noted. "As the legal profession swells, the amount of litigation grows."

He cited increased regulation of churches by government as the second trend and an increase in child molestation as the third.

"The No. 1 risk that we are going to be talking about today is child abuse and child molestation occurring in the church," he said. "People ask me, 'Is this something that is just being reported more?' The answer to that is absolutely not. The numbers of children being molested today are significantly higher than they have been in the past.

"The reason for that is it's a consequence of the breakdown of the American family," he continued. "What is unique today as opposed to any other time in our nation's history are the number of children who are being raised in homes with non-biological custodians.

"The incidence of child molestation is much higher among those relationships than it is among a biological parent and child relationship," he said.

Hammar shared data from a survey about sexual misconduct in churches of all sizes, denominations and locations.

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The survey question, "How many churches have had an incident of sexual misconduct with an adult occur on their premises?" resulted in 8 percent of churches answering yes, but an affirmative answer increased to 19 percent among churches with more than 1,000 in attendance, Hammar noted.

He also pointed out only one out of three churches reported screening unpaid employees who work with minors and only 44 percent screen paid employees.

Reaffirming the survey results, he said, "The No. 1 risk facing your church today is child molestation and the potential dollar money damages that can be assessed in these cases can be very significant.

"The frequency of cases is on the increase but generally given low priority in the life of the church because of low screening," he said. "So you have an atmosphere where this issue is denied, it is ignored and you are setting up a situation where child molesters can thrive. We need to transform the behavior of church leaders to address this risk."

Reviewing ways churches seek to handle the risk of child molestation, Hammar said administrative, legal and theological responses generally gain little support or compliance.

"An approach much more likely to enlist support," he remarked, "is the mission approach, asking, 'What is the mission of our church?' It is the protection of children entrusted to us and to protect our church workers."

Hammar identified "four distinct problems of sexual misconduct," including harassment. Sharing specific details about the other three problems, Hammar described:

-- Pedophilia: "Sexual contact with a pre-adolescent minor. With pedophilia, the perpetrator can be an adult male or female, adolescent male or female, with heterosexual or homosexual contact. A pedophile is a predator that has a promiscuous lifestyle that can range up to as many as 500 victims over the course of a lifetime. The best evidence today says that one in 20, 5 percent, of adult Americans are pedophiles."

-- Ephebophilia: "Sexual misconduct with a minor who is an adolescent," he said, usually between a male clergy member or Sunday school teacher and a female adolescent.

"There are two very important reasons to distinguish these first two kinds of conduct. Pedophilia is a promiscuous lifestyle, but that is not the case with this second kind of misconduct," he explained. "The best evidence shows that the pedophile is incurable.

"Screening is very effective with respect to the first type of child abuse, but it is of very little value as to the second. Supervision is the only effective way of dealing with the second type of child abuse."

-- Seduction: "The victim here is usually a counselee and the perpetrator typically is a male clergy," he said.

Hammar also addressed the history of litigation against churches and typical church responses.

"It is unbelievable, but the first case in this country finding a church liable for sexual misconduct was not until 1983," he said. "This is a new development in our country."

Pointing out the "unique vulnerability of churches" in lawsuits, he described the church as an institution of trust. When there are no screening procedures, there are ample opportunities for child molestation, he added.

Noting the response of other charities to molestation cases, he said, many organizations have taken extraordinary steps to reduce risks. Boy Scouts, since 1975, has been sued more than 1,700 times for child molestation.

"The result is that many pedophiles have left those organizations and come to see the church increasingly as a place where they have potential contacts with victims in an atmosphere of blind trust," he said. "What better situation could you have? A church that doesn't screen."

Hammar blamed a greater willingness to sue churches on "astronomical jury verdicts," therapy sessions where "many counselors tell victims to sue as a way to resolve" and media publicity.

The typical church response, he said, is "one of denial, one of minimalization and one of blame. That's the three-level response of most churches, according to the attorney who has sued more churches than any other attorney in the U.S. I interviewed him."

He said most successful lawsuits against churches are for negligence, usually the "negligent selection or retention of a worker or supervision of the worker."

"The courts refer to negligence as a failure to exercise reasonable care," he explained. "The churches are not guarantors of the safety of children, but you are held to a standard of reasonable care."

"Did you act reasonably?" he asked. "When you have a church that says, 'No, we didn't do anything to screen this person or did nothing to supervise them. We didn't think this was a problem,' you can see that you not only have established a case of negligence but potentially of recklessness or gross negligence."

The consequences of a single incident to the church -- the publicity, money damages, the consequences to the victim and the victim's family -- are "enormous. The insurance industry cannot continue to insure churches when there is no attempt to respond to the risk," Hammar insisted.

"I can see in the future that coverage will depend on what steps a church has taken to respond to this risk."

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Church precautions listed
to prevent potential abuse

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
9/12/95

OWENSBORO, Ky. (BP)--Churches must take all the precautions they can to reduce their vulnerability to criminal predators such as child molesters and to criminal opportunists looking for an easy lawsuit to file, according to Mary Sells, minister to children at Highview Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.

Sells led a session on "Legal Issues in the Ministry to Preschoolers and Children" during Kentucky Baptists' Super Saturday event at First Baptist Church, Owensboro, Aug. 12.

She cited three reasons the church is vulnerable:

- The church exists as a community of trust.
- Most churches are "ignorant of the facts" of abuse and "are not aware of what's going on in the real world."
- Most churches lack appropriate safeguards, because they never have thought about what is the best way to ensure safety and security for children in their care.

Increased attention to legal liability has caused most businesses and organizations in American society to be more careful and cautious, Sells noted. "There's not any organization left that's vulnerable -- except the church."

This creates the perfect environment both for the abusive adult and for the person looking to level false claims and file a quick lawsuit, Sells said. She urged churches to "take all the precautions you can" to prevent either problem.

Even if a false claim is filed, the resulting media coverage and turmoil within the church can be devastating to a congregation, Sells explained.

The best advice is to create situations where abuse cannot easily happen and where false claims cannot easily be made, she said.

Among suggestions offered by Sells and others in the conference:

- Implement some form of child claim-check program, so that only the parent who dr ps off a preschool child is allowed to pick up that child.

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-- Maintain a roster of all children present in each classroom every day, and in case of fire or other hazard, make sure the teacher carries the list out to double-check the head count.

-- Place maps in each classroom showing how to exit the building in case of a fire, and instruct all teachers on how to get children out of the building.

-- Know where you can locate a doctor or nurse at all times.

-- Keep a first aid kit in an accessible location in the church.

-- Never leave one worker alone with children or youth, both for the protection of the children and of the worker.

-- Don't allow anyone to be a teacher in children's classes until he or she has been a church member at least six months.

-- Develop screening forms for hired staff and volunteers in the children's area. Ask pertinent questions of all workers, and be willing to verify a newcomer's character with his or her previous church.

-- Install interior windows or glass doors between classrooms and other open areas.

-- Avoid creating obscure nooks and crannies or out-of-the-way classrooms where abuse could be perpetrated or alleged without possibility of a witness.

-- Develop permission forms for parents to sign when church groups take children away from the building or on overnight trips.

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Adolescents give parents advice
in Nov.'s Living with Teenagers By Terri Lackey

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Any parent of a teen-ager could probably tell you his kid doesn't feel the least bit awkward about dishing out advice. Moms and Dads likely bear the brunt of questionable counsel from their pubescent offspring daily.

But young people do have good advice rolling around in their noggins, and much of it is godly, according to the editor of "Living with Teenagers," a magazine for parents of adolescents produced by the Baptist Sunday School Board. That's why the team that edits the periodical gave 16 teens a chance to offer advice formally to parents through articles in the November issue.

"We think good teen-agers get sold short, and they think so too," said the magazine's editor in chief, Ellen Oldacre. "That's why we dedicated an entire issue for teen-agers to give their parents some godly advice.

"We know a lot of parents pick up this magazine every month, and we thought parents might hear advice differently if it came from a teen-ager they don't live with."

Oldacre acknowledged the concept of allowing teens to write the copy for the entire November issue was risky.

"It was a risk, but they did better than many of my adult writers. Every one of them sent their articles back on time," she said. "One even sent a revised version two weeks later right on deadline. He said he had reworked it and felt it was more God-led. Of course, I used it.

"Another girl was just precious. She wrote us a cover letter that asked us to please check for grammatical errors," Oldacre said.

"I've had dealings with countless writers, both amateur and professional, but I have never encountered the level of conscientiousness I found in these teens," Oldacre wrote in the issue's editor's column.

"They were prompt, prepared, insightful and honest. They are far wiser than their years and demonstrate a deep spiritual commitment to their Lord, their families and theirs. They are seeking to understand themselves and their parents and honestly share what they are learning." Oldacre expects the fall issue of "Living with Teenagers," written entirely by young people, to become an annual event. The 1995 edition is designed like a high school annual, she said.

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The issue includes articles about family time together, conversation between adults and teens, embarrassing things parents do, how parents hurt their teens' feelings and understanding change. On teen, Lisa Marie Angotti, a senior and member of Bellevue Baptist Church, suburban Memphis, Tenn., wrote about the health struggles she and her family have encountered after she contracted Lyme disease. An active child, Angotti recounts how the first awareness she had health problems came when she was riding her bicycle as a 12-year-old.

"Our first clue was in December when one evening riding my bike up the driveway I had a sharp pain in my knees. I wondered how I'd hurt them, never realizing I was about to embark on a journey that would change the course of my life forever," she wrote. "By the end of December, a throbbing headache and crippling joint pain had become part of my existence. By January 1991, I was bedridden with unbearable pain, what I termed knives' that migrated from joint to joint." Angotti goes on to tell about the constant love and care her parents have given her since she became sick.

"When the troubles come, we must trust that God is binding our family close together with unbreakable bonds of love," she wrote.

"Unbreakable, because love never fails."

In a separate story, Nora Frost, a sophomore and member of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Texas, writes about how families with teens can manage to have fun together.

"Family quality time was easy to do when children were small," she wrote. "The zoo and swimming were fun 10 years ago, but now school, sports, friends, hobbies and studying the opposite sex take away a big chunk of time for most teenagers."

In her advice story, Frost suggested parents get their teens' input for family outings.

"Start by having dinner, all together, (yes -- this can be achieved) and ask for various suggestions for family outings and for possible dates on which the activities may be done. Keep in mind, though, the activities don't necessarily have to be done outside the home. Remember, the key to family activities is to spend time together and enjoy each other, so spring cleaning does not count," she wrote.

"Family time is an important time for bonding," she continued. "It provides fun and family entertainment. With family bondings, parents and teens learn to appreciate each other and hopefully stop taking one another for granted."

Southern Baptist teens besides Frost and Angotti who contributed to the magazine include Elizabeth Atcheson, Tuscaloosa, Ala.; Chris Strube, Belleville, Ill.; Allison Lepper, Crestwood, Ky.; Neechia Beckner, Jefferson City, Mo.; Shelly Noble, Las Vegas, Nev.; Beth Pirkle, Atlanta; Evan Lenow, Memphis, Tenn.; Linda Epp, Delta, British Columbia, Canada; David Portillo, San Antonio; Nikia Dixon and Stuart Lamkin, Nashville, Tenn.; and Matt Snowden, Meridian, Miss.

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Copies of articles by teens from Alabama, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, Nevada, Georgia, Texas, Tennessee, Mississippi and Canada are being sent to those respective state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Computer keyboard vital
to this minister of music

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
9/12/95

OWENSBORO, Ky. (BP)--Computers offer more to church music ministries than just electronic keyboards.

Bill Tiemann, music minister at Buena Vista Baptist Church, Owensboro, Ky., said computers, in fact, can revolutionize the music minister's life. He explained how in a three-hour conference during Kentucky Baptists' Super Saturday Aug. 12 in Owensboro.

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"It's really difficult for me to imagine doing my job now without a computer," he said.

Tiemann, who never has taken a computer course, now uses his computer to manage his music budget, keep track of choir member information and attendance, generate publicity, arrange music, write new music, transpose music into new keys and create instrumental parts to favorite anthems and hymns.

While this may sound overwhelming to the music minister who never has turned on a computer, the key is seeing the computer as a helpful tool, Tiemann said.

In the hands-on session, he demonstrated a number of computer applications that aid his music ministry:

-- Worship planning. Tiemann does his weekly worship planning in a word-processing program and keeps a file for each week. This gives him access to orders of worship from past weeks, from which he can readily draw responsive readings, hymn texts and other items to use again.

-- Communication. Through word-processing programs, the minister may write articles for the church newsletter, write individual letters, create form letters, postcards and fliers, design posters and much more, Tiemann said.

-- Budgeting. Tiemann demonstrated forms he has developed in WordPerfect, a popular word-processing program, that help him do budget projections and budget requests and keep track of all spending.

-- Member information. Several common computer programs can help the minister keep track of attendance, record information about each choir member, keep track of robe numbers and folder numbers, he said.

-- Music library maintenance. Computerizing the church music library offers greater convenience and speed when searching for a particular piece of music, Tiemann said.

-- Hymnal reference. Reference software is available to help the music minister make better use of the hymnal, he explained. This allows the minister to search for hymns based on various criteria and to keep records of what hymns were used in worship.

-- Writing music. "With a computer, you can write your own music and print it out in such a manner that it looks as good as any music printed by publishing houses," he said. "You may want to write original compositions for your choirs and ensembles, or you may want to arrange previously composed music and hymns. You may want to write praise choruses and be able to print them right in the worship program for your congregation."

-- Creating accompaniment tracks. Using an interface with an electronic keyboard, computers can be used to make accompaniment tracks for soloists, ensembles and choirs, Tiemann said. These tracks may be customized to avoid duplicating live instruments used in the church while adding in the sounds of other instruments unavailable for live performance.

Hardware for a starter system for the music minister can cost as little as \$1,600, while an "excellent" system can be had for about \$3,000, he said.

Some software programs are available at discounted prices to educators and music ministers, Tiemann noted. For example, two of the most popular composition programs are available with discounts of more than 50 percent, he said.

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