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October 6, 1995

95-158

TENNESSEE--Meetings for coming week.

TENNESSEE--Editors' note.

TENNESSEE--Opal recovery requires prayer, volunteers, says Jim Henry.

TEXAS--RTVC Montana documentary for ABC premieres Oct. 12.

TEXAS--Wayland to establish campus at Glorieta in New Mexico.

TEXAS--Texas ministry hosts family of 100th executed prisoner.

TENNESSEE--BSSB looking for churches to pilot outreach magazine.

TEXAS--Sunday school competition boosts 2 Texas churches.

CALENDAR

NORTH CAROLINA--Southeastern Seminary trustees, Oct. 9-10, Wake Forest.

VIRGINIA--Foreign Mission Board trustees, Oct. 9-11, Richmond.

KENTUCKY--Southern Seminary trustees, Oct. 9-11, Louisville.

CALIFORNIA--Golden Gate Seminary trustees, Oct. 9-11, Mill Valley.

EDITORS' NOTE: Baptist Press today begins a new posting time on Fridays and Mondays of noon, Central, to better serve state Baptist paper deadlines. Posting times on other weekdays will remain at 3 p.m., Central. Breaking stories after the posting time on Fridays and Mondays will be e-mailed to state Baptist newspapers.

Opal recovery requires prayer,
volunteers, says Jim Henry

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
10/6/95

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Jim Henry, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, issued a call for Southern Baptists to "pray, go and give" in response to the destruction caused by Hurricane Opal.

At the same time, volunteers from four state conventions began feeding and cleanup operations across the southeast. Other state conventions continued on standby.

Opal struck the Florida panhandle the evening of Oct. 4 with winds of up to 140 mph, with remnants continuing across Alabama and Georgia. The storm, which killed at least 15 people and caused an estimated \$1.8 billion in damage in Florida alone, was the latest in one of the busiest storm seasons on record.

Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., called on Southern Baptists to "join me in prayer for the families of those who have lost loved ones and homes, for the recovery of those who are injured and for the safety of those public servants who have been on the front lines throughout this disaster.

"I also ask that you pray for our Southern Baptist volunteers who are already at work all over the region, providing physical and spiritual food and comfort.

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"It may be that God is calling some of us to do more than pray," Henry added. "If so, let me encourage you to contact your state convention Brotherhood office first about the possibility of volunteering your services in the weeks to come, as the recovery effort continues. Or you may feel led to provide a monetary contribution in support of these efforts."

"In any event, I urge you to act," he said. "Southern Baptists are blessed to have so many avenues of involvement available to them. Let's use them to God's glory."

The Florida Baptist Convention moved 20 staff members to the area to assist in damage assessment and response planning and had set up a command post in Fort Walton Beach. Feeding units were setting up in Fort Walton, Destin, Niceville, and Panama City.

Elsewhere, an Alabama feeding unit was operating at First Baptist Church, Enterprise, Ala., while Texas Baptist Men located their feeding unit in Niceville, Fla. The Texas team made the 800-mile trek to Florida in a three-vehicle caravan: an 18-wheel tractor-trailer rig with a self-contained field kitchen; a command post, a recreational vehicle equipped with communications equipment; and a four-wheel-drive utility vehicle.

Units in Georgia were preparing meals at Central Baptist Church in Douglasville while two cleanup crews worked in the area. Another feeding unit was operating at First Baptist Church, Pine Mountain. State convention disaster units based in Mississippi, Louisiana and South Carolina remained on alert.

The aftermath of Opal opened up a third arena of involvement for Southern Baptists in disaster response. Feeding units operated by Texas Baptist Men and the Alabama Baptist Convention's Brotherhood department are continuing to provide meals in the U.S. Virgin Islands, a total of 155,000 thus far, while the Brotherhood Commission is working with the Foreign Mission Board in recruiting construction teams to serve in Antigua and St. Maarten through November.

Those who wish to make donations in support of the disaster relief effort may send contributions to the Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104. The contribution should be designated for disaster relief.

Prospective volunteers for service in Antigua and St. Maarten should call 1-800-280-1891. Volunteers for other areas should contact their state convention Brotherhood offices. The Brotherhood Commission coordinates multi-state disaster response of behalf of all Southern Baptists.

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Ken Camp contributed to this story.

RTVC Montana documentary
for ABC premieres Oct. 12

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
10/6/95

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Residents call it "the last best place."

Their reference is to Montana, site for "Beneath the Big Sky," the latest Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission-produced documentary for the ABC Television Network. It will premiere at the RTVC facility in Fort Worth, Texas, Oct. 12 at 7:30 p.m.

ABC will broadcast the program Oct. 15.

Featured in the documentary, produced in west-central Montana, are members of the Helmville Community Fellowship, a Southern Baptist church, including the pastor, Don Niemeir.

RTVC producer Bernie Hargis said the population of Helmville, Mont., is 29, with the Southern Baptist church serving a 75-square-mile area with a population of approximately 600.

"Don (Niemeir) is a bivocational pastor," Hargis said. "He's also a logger who builds log houses. He has a doctorate and was pastor of a large church in California before moving to Montana. His wife, Phyllis, is an artist who paints and does wood carving."

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The Helmville church serves Avon, Ovando and Drummond, which with a population of 200 is the largest town in the area.

"The church ministers mostly to ranching families, along with a few logging and mining families," said Hargis. "The congregation shares a building with the post office. The town also has a school, saloon and small Catholic church. The congregation began as a Bible study in various homes. Helmville was picked as the site for the church because it's the most centrally located of the four towns."

Hargis, who has produced or directed eight RTVC documentaries for ABC during his 20 years with the commission, said "Beneath the Big Sky" provides the most beautiful photography of any of the projects with which he has been associated.

"The scenery is spectacular," he said. "And the witness of all the people we interviewed was very strong. They're all anxious to express how aware they are of the presence of God in their lives and in their surroundings. It's hard to keep from dwelling on the beauty of the landscape. The remoteness also overwhelms you."

The work ethic and lifestyle of some families featured in the documentary can cause a person to think he or she is in a time warp, Hargis said.

"It's difficult to explain," he said, "but these are very hard-working people with what some might think of as a laid-back lifestyle. I was particularly impressed with the way Mick and Earline Goettle handle the work on their ranch. Their roping and branding is right out of the 1800s. In winter they even feed their cattle off horse-drawn sleighs. But even though they ranch like it was done 100 years ago, they also implement some of the most sophisticated ranching technology around today."

Many of the ranchers, Hargis said, use four-wheel vehicles to herd and feed cattle.

Another couple featured in the documentary is Ben and Vickie Harbour, who are shown driving cattle to a high mountain pasture. One of many dramatic, touching segments of the program is of Harbour baptizing his two children in a glacier-fed lake. He is a former rodeo cowboy who is now song leader at the church. For church services he plays the guitar and Earline Goettle plays the keyboard.

Among others in the documentary are Jim and Karrie Anderson and Tom Frey. The Andersons are hunting and fishing outfitters who also operate a covered wagon trip for visitors to the area. Frey is a partner in the covered wagon project.

"I was impressed with the quality of the people in the area and the spirit of the church members," said Hargis. "They're very family oriented. A family's nearest neighbor may be 25 miles away, so they're hungry for the fellowship the church provides. They have church on Sunday night because most of the members are feeding cattle on Sunday morning. And during the week they have Bible study at night at the homes of various members."

Several RTVC-produced documentaries Hargis has been involved with have received Emmy nominations. He directed "China Walls and Bridges," a documentary that received a 1989 Emmy as "Best Daytime Special."

Viewers should check program listings of their local ABC affiliates for the date and time when "Beneath the Big Sky" will be shown in their areas.

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Wayland to establish campus
at Glorieta in New Mexico

Baptist Press
10/6/95

PLAINVIEW, Texas (BP)--Wayland Baptist University will establish a New Mexico campus at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center, offering an associate degree at the campus and allowing Texas, Hawaii, Arizona and Alaska students to complete portions of their course work for baccalaureate degrees at the scenic site.

Wayland's trustees, meeting Oct. 5 at the Plainview, Texas, main campus, accepted an invitation from the New Mexico Baptist Convention and Glorieta, operated by the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, to develop and operate the campus. Classes could begin as early as next year. Glorieta also will continue as one of Southern Baptists two key conference centers.

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While several Baptist universities have either expressed an interest or inquired about operating a campus at the conference center, New Mexico convention and Glorieta officials approached Wayland administrators about establishing the campus.

Claude Cone, executive director of the New Mexico convention, and Larry Haslam, director of the Glorieta center, jointly issued the invitation in December 1994. Since that time university administrators and a Wayland board of trustees subcommittee have explored the possible campus.

Establishing a Glorieta campus is a departure from the university's past practice of locating external campuses on or near military installations. However, surveys conducted by the university and the conference center indicate many students are interested in the kind of winter experience the New Mexico campus would afford. The campus is expected to become a key recruiting tool for Wayland. Individuals enrolled on the Plainview campus will be provided the opportunity to participate in programs at the conference center campus, while students at Glorieta can either secure an associate degree there or come to the Plainview campus to complete a baccalaureate degree.

"Each would provide a unique and powerful learning experience integrating faith and knowledge," said Bill Hardage, Wayland's vice president for academic and student services.

With the formal acceptance of the invitation, Hardage said work will begin immediately on a number of details still to be worked out before Wayland can begin offering classes in New Mexico, hopefully by the fall of 1996.

Haslam said the establishment of Wayland's New Mexico campus will help Glorieta fulfill its mission. "We very much want you," Haslam told trustees attending the Plainview meeting. "We look forward to this."

Mike Arrington, BSSB executive director for corporate affairs, said in an interview, "We at the Sunday School Board are enthusiastic about this partnership opportunity and look forward to working with Wayland to finalize remaining details. We are excited that Glorieta can be the site for bringing Southern Baptist higher education to New Mexico."

Wayland's other external campuses are located in Anchorage and Fairbanks, Alaska; Honolulu; Phoenix; and San Antonio, Wichita Falls, Amarillo and Lubbock, Texas.

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Texas ministry hosts family
of 100th executed prisoner

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
10/6/95

HUNTSVILLE, Texas (BP)--The 100th convicted murderer put to death since Texas resumed capital punishment in 1982 was executed on Oct. 4. And like 42 families before them in the past nine years, the death row prisoner's brothers spent the hours surrounding their loved one's death at Texas Baptists' Hospitality House in Huntsville, Texas.

Harold Joe Lane, 50, was killed by lethal injection at the state prison shortly after 6 p.m. after telling his brothers, John and Ed Lane, members of a charismatic church in Rockwall, Texas, he had made his peace with God.

"Tell my Jesus hello," Lane said through a microphone as his brothers prayed aloud in a witness room adjoining the death chamber.

The two brothers had arrived at the Hospitality House shortly after noon and returned to spend the night there after witnessing the execution.

"When they got here and found out that their brother in prison had accepted the Lord and was ready to go, he ended up strengthening them," said Bob Norris, director of the Hospitality House, which offers a temporary home for the visiting families of inmates.

Since the Hospitality House opened its doors in August 1986, family members of 42 out of the 68 death row prisoners executed since that time have benefited from its ministries.

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"Some don't have family. A few for one reason or another don't choose to come over here," Norris said.

But those who do find a "safe haven" away from the television cameras and placard-wielding protesters demonstrating for or against the death penalty outside the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's Walls Unit.

"We protect them from the press and from any intruders. We want them to feel relaxed and at home here. We want to provide them a place that is warm and accepting, where they can just be themselves," Norris said.

"They can cry if they want to. If they want their privacy, we'll see that they get it. If they want to talk, we'll listen."

Counseling family members in the hours immediately before and after a prisoner's execution can be emotionally draining for Norris and his wife, Nelda, he admits.

"It never gets easier. It's a pretty intense four or five hours," he said.

"If the people involved have a relationship with God, we call upon him to strengthen them. We don't understand the reasons why things happen, but we rest in the assurance that God has a plan and a purpose for every person's life. And we ask God for the strength, courage and grace to endure."

Ministry to non-Christians is tougher, Norris said. Two weeks before Lane's execution, the 99th death row prisoner was put to death. He was an avowed Muslim, and his wife claimed no interest in spiritual matters.

"She had been coming to the Hospitality House since '87 or '88, but she told us, 'I'm not into religion. I don't want to talk about it,'" Norris recalled. "We were unable to crack through that shield she put up."

But the Norrises are able to "crack through" the defenses of quite a few lives that have been hardened by difficulties. In nine years, more than 46,800 people have passed through the doors of the Hospitality House, and 425 have made professions of faith in Jesus Christ as a direct result of its ministries.

Texas Baptists support the Hospitality House in Huntsville and the development of similar ministries in Amarillo and Abilene through their gifts to the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions.

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BSSB looking for churches
to pilot outreach magazine

Baptist Press
10/6/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family magazine department is inviting churches to become a part of an outreach pilot project next spring that involves the trendy concept of "mass customization."

Churches are being asked to participate in the outreach effort by purchasing personalized issues of a new magazine designed to reach the unchurched community.

Churches wanting to participate would be asked to order a specified number of "Home Life Today" magazines which would arrive at their doorstep containing information about their church on the inside cover. "The magazines could then be distributed throughout the community, and those who received them would clearly know where they came from," said Gary Hauk, director of the magazine department conducting the pilot project. "If the church wants us to, we can also direct mail them to any household of their choosing within a certain radius of their church or by zip codes."

"Home Life" magazine has ministered to church families for years, Hauk said, adding Home Life Today is designed to help the family who does not go to church strengthen their relationships with each other.

"The hope is it will encourage them to seek a relationship with Christ and connect with a local church," he said.

"People are searching for a successful family life. They want successful relationships at home and at work. This magazine will have a strong message of Christian family values and will address unique family needs. Hopefully, it will lead families into life-changing relationships centered in Christ."

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Churches interested in pricing information for ordering the customized magazines should contact Outreach Pilot Project, Sunday School Board discipleship and family magazine department, 127 Ninth Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37234-0140. All orders must be in by January, with magazine distribution set for April. Fifty churches will be enlisted for the pilot on a first-come, first-serve basis, Hawk said.

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Sunday school competition
boosts 2 Texas churches

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
10/6/95

CLEBURNE, Texas (BP)--A "Great Day in the Morning" contest between two Baptist churches in north-central Texas already has resulted in larger attendances in Sunday school and ultimately may lead to increased baptisms, their pastors say.

"Great Day in the Morning," sponsored by the Sunday school/discipleship division of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, encourages churches to have a record-breaking Sunday school attendance Oct. 29.

The statewide goal for "Great Day in the Morning" is 750,000, said Bob Fuston, consultant in the Sunday school/discipleship division. Last fall, churches set an all-time high attendance day record of 745,368.

Nolan River Road Baptist Church, Cleburne, which is averaging 92 in Sunday school, sent two members to challenge neighboring Sand Flat Baptist Church, averaging 73 in Sunday school, to outdo them on Oct. 29. The loser will host the winner at a dessert fellowship.

The following Sunday, Sand Flat sent a delegation to Nolan River Road with a banner listing all the desserts they expect Nolan River Road to serve them if Sand Flat has more people on the high attendance Sunday.

Both congregations set a "Great Day in the Morning" goal of 150 -- more than either church has ever had in Sunday school -- although Sand Flat came close with an attendance of 148 last year at "Great Day in the Morning."

Nolan River Road's highest attendance has been 129.

"This summer we banned the word 'slump' and had a contest between classes to see who could contact the most people," York, Nolan River Road's pastor.

Instead of resigning themselves to the normal summer slump, members worked hard and increased their average Sunday school attendance from about 80 for the year to more than 90 in September.

The increased attendance resulted in Nolan River Road beginning a new Sunday school class Oct. 1, and York said he can see the beginning of increased baptisms as more people come to know Jesus as Savior.

Pastor Scott Whitson of Sand Flat church said church members are excited and, instead of observing Soul-Winning Commitment Day Oct. 1, are having a soul-winning commitment month throughout October.

"We're challenging Christians to be soul-winners all year long," said Whitson.

"It was a nightmare accommodating all of the people on high attendance day last fall, but it was a wonderful problem to have."

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Leadership Network nurturing
churches' 'lay mobilization'

By Ferrell Foster

Baptist Press
10/6/95

DEERFIELD, Ill. (BP)--A proactive system for "lay mobilization" is the common element among the "islands of health and strength in churches around the country" identified by Leadership Network, according to Brad Smith, director of special projects for the nondenominational foundation based in Tyler, Texas.

In studying larger, healthy churches, Leadership Network discovered the "styles are very different," Smith said in a telephone interview. But all of those congregations "proactively went about the process of mobilizing laypeople to serve according to their gifts."

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Leadership Network doesn't have a program or system to sell, 150 leaders from a variety of evangelical and mainline churches were told during a "Lay Ministry Forum" in Deerfield, Ill., Sept. 8. Instead, the organization works to connect churches with various resources that are now surfacing, Smith said.

Lay mobilization is "not new at all," he said. What's new is various lay ministry emphases over the past 40 years are coming together.

"We're finding the conversation has turned from what is the theology of the laity to how do we actually implement systems in our churches to involve more laypeople in ministry," Smith said. "The difference is an increased emphasis on the practical nature of doing this lay involvement."

In recent decades churches have held Lay Renewal Weekends and spiritual gifts seminars, explored theology through "Experiencing God" and Navigators programs, given spiritual gifts tests and emphasized volunteer management techniques.

Healthy churches now are "trying to integrate all of these into a whole church approach to increasing lay church involvement," Smith said.

A lay ministry system can work in any size church, he said. In smaller congregations, the system will be a key to growth. In larger ones, it will be the key to moving members to greater commitment.

"Church growth of the last several decades often has focused on how to bring more people into the church," Smith said. Now, the emphasis is, "How do you take the people in the church and develop them into a community?"

Generally, a new member will leave a church if he or she does not establish significant relationships or get significant responsibilities in the first six months.

Southern Baptist churches are somewhat unique in that they usually have a good emphasis on visitation. Outreach "creates enough energy that you actually keep them longer than six months," maybe two or three years, Smith said. But "the back door is not closed; it's just delayed."

Leadership Network has found if a church continues to emphasize the front door and also builds a system for relationships and responsibilities, "you really are going to start to close that back door for good."

Effective lay ministry programs have three basic characteristics, Smith said. They are:

- The senior pastor and church leadership support and champion the program.
- There is an identifiable leader or team of leaders pointing the way and implementing the process.
- There is a comprehensive system that allows members to grow and develop as Christians through their service.

Some churches are creating a staff position with a title such as "director of lay ministry" or "equipping pastor," he said. In other churches, associate pastors are being retrained for such a role. There now are 150 to 200 such positions in the country.

In smaller churches, a volunteer can function in a similar role.

Smith said a lay mobilization system can be made to work with existing church programs. But a system will include the following seven components:

- assimilation (becoming a part of the church);
- context (biblical basis for volunteer service);
- discovery (of spiritual gifts and interests);
- matching (of gifts and interests with service);
- placement (selecting the best opportunity for service);
- coaching (training and encouragement); and
- recognition (celebration of service).

In many churches, "a huge number of people ... kind of haphazardly stumble into programs," Smith said. But when a person joins a church with an effective lay mobilization system, "immediately they're picked up" and others in the church "help them along the steps."

**Saddleback finds a home
after 16 years on the move**

LAKE FOREST, Calif. (BP)--The nation's largest church without a building finally has one. After nearly 16 years of meeting in schools, country clubs, warehouses, tents and even mental hospitals, Saddleback Valley Community Church has moved into its own facility.

Nearly 12,000 people filled the three dedication services Sept. 17 of the Lake Forest, Calif., congregation where Rick Warren is pastor.

The event included the baptism of 384 new converts in Saddleback's outdoor baptism pool on the patio of the new facility. Worshipers watched some of the baptisms projected live onto three large video screens included in the new building. "We wanted to keep the focus on the theme of our church: changed lives," said Warren. The church has baptized more than 1,000 people so far this year.

The following week, Sept. 23-24, members held a grand opening of the building for the community. Members brought hundreds of unchurched neighbors to the services resulting in 210 professions of faith and another 64 baptisms.

Saddleback has used 79 different facilities, in five different cities, in the burgeoning congregation's various ministries since beginning in Warren's home in 1980 with seven members. "If you could figure out where we were each week, you got to come!" joked a member.

In December 1992, the church purchased 74 acres of prime Orange County property worth \$9 million, paved 25 acres of parking and erected a giant 2,500 seat tent where four services have been held each weekend the past three years. In November 1994, members committed \$23.5 million in a single weekend to be used for buildings. The first building was erected in record time, 10 months later, and was completely paid for when the congregation moved in. The erection of two three-story educational buildings will be the next phase.

In June of this year, Saddleback was recognized in a study by Liberty University, Lynchburg, Va., as the fastest-growing Baptist congregation in American history, growing from one family to nearly 12,000 attenders in 16 years. Saddleback also was awarded the Key Church of the Year designation by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board at the Southern Baptist Convention sesquicentennial meeting in Atlanta.

Members attribute the church's growth to Warren's philosophy of ministry, called "The Purpose-Driven Church," which places a greater emphasis on building people rather than erecting buildings. "We've wanted to prove to the world that the church is PEOPLE, not buildings, and that you don't need buildings to grow a church. I think we made our point," said Warren.

Zondervan will release Saddleback's philosophy of ministry in a book with the same title at the end of October. The 400-page book describes the principles Warren has implemented at Saddleback and in the 25 daughter churches the congregation has started. The foreword was written by Warren's mentor, W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas. Churches interested in learning more about Saddleback's ministry, resources and conferences can contact the church via Saddleback's Internet home page at <http://www.saddleback.com>.

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