

(BP)

-- BAPTIST PRESS

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October 10, 1995

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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Opal leaves path of destruction
along Florida's Emerald Coast

Baptist Press
10/10/95

By Barbara Denman & Michael Chute

FORT WALTON BEACH, Fla. (BP)--Florida Panhandle's barrier islands took a direct hit from Hurricane Opal Oct. 4, leaving homes, businesses and high-rise condominiums resembling sand castles torn to pieces by crashing waves.

The storm surge of 140 m.p.h. winds devastated the coastline for more than 120 miles from Mexico Beach -- just east of Panama City -- to Pensacola Beach. The category four hurricane caused 19 deaths in four states -- Florida, Alabama, Georgia and North Carolina -- forced approximately 4,400 people out of their homes, and produced an estimated \$1.8 billion in damages to insured property in Florida alone.

Government officials, concerned for safety of persons amid the crumpled shoreline infrastructures, closed off access to the Florida Panhandle's Okaloosa and Holiday island communities, leaving residents, who responded to mandatory evacuation notices, stranded on the mainland.

Even before the third-costliest hurricane in U.S. history -- behind Hurricane Andrew in 1992 and 1969's Camille -- teams of Florida Baptists were racing toward the path Opal was stalking. The night Opal struck, three assessment teams waited at Blue Springs Baptist Assembly in nearby Marianna. At daybreak, they fanned out to Fort Walton Beach, Panama City and Pensacola to assess damages and determine where Baptist resources could best be used.

By nightfall, 24 hours after the storm struck, three feeding units dispatched to assigned areas prepared to feed storm victims. The units were set up at the First Baptist Churches of Panama City, Destin and Fort Walton Beach. The feeding sites were staffed by the Panhandle Disaster Relief Unit; the Orlando (Fla.) Baptist Association disaster team; and the Florida Baptist Convention's feeding unit.

On Saturday, the Texas Baptist Convention's feeding unit was dispatched to First Baptist Church of Niceville. Alabama Baptists' unit was stationed at Enterprise, Ala., and sent meals by Red Cross Emergency Relief Vehicles (ERVs) into the affected area.

According to Baptist officials, the units initially served nearly 3,000 meals a day, with the peak expected to reach 10,000 a day the week of Oct. 9.

For many Panhandle residents, Baptists offered them their first hot meal.

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Chris Richards called the response "wonderful." The day before, Richards and his son, Jason, had eaten a box of crackers after a fallen tree had knocked over their refrigerator.

His parents, Howard and Delores Richards, had been forced to evacuate their Okaloosa Island home just before the hurricane struck. Because the damage to the island was so severe, authorities had restricted any access to the island.

"We haven't been back since the storm," Delores Richards said. "We don't know anything about the place and we have nowhere else to go."

Eating at the convention's disaster relief van was the first hot meal for Florida Baptist state board of mission member Rachel Goodwin, who was without power and water. "I was really hungry," Goodwin said. "I knew you'd be here. I kept listening to the radio to hear where you were. But I told my son, Florida Baptists will be here with food."

The storm was the second hurricane in as many months to plow through the Panhandle area, coming on the heels of Hurricane Erin which struck in August. The route of the two storms intersected at Pensacola Beach where some residents had only just completed repairs caused by Erin.

Hardest-hit areas include Pensacola Beach; Navarre Beach, where the eye of the storm crossed and destroyed nearly 75 percent of the homes; Destin, where high-rise condominiums on Holiday Isle were buffeted and stripped by 15-to-20-foot waves; Okaloosa Island, which sustained winds of 140 m.p.h.; and Panama City Beach where beachfront homes received extensive damage.

Early assessment of damage to Baptist property revealed that 10 Florida Baptist churches sustained minor to moderate damage. Steeples are off three churches and several report roof damage. First Baptist of Panama City Beach sustained the most severe damage and Opal's winds took a corner off its fellowship hall. However, several Baptist families in area churches reported extensive damage to their property. But no Baptist deaths were reported.

For nearly four days after the storm, mainland residents coped with no electricity, broken trees, smashed windows, backed-up sewage and contaminated water. Cleanup began almost immediately. Perhaps the most photographed sight was the dozen 30- and 40-foot yachts perched on the road of Fort Walton Beach's Miracle Strip on Highway 98, pushed and then abandoned there by the storm's wind and water surge.

But these may seem like inconveniences when compared to the crises faced by the coastal residents, where thousands are homeless. Many residents on Pensacola and Navarre beaches have returned to where their homes were only to find an empty lot and no belongings.

Driving along the water's edge, only one out of every five residences remains as evidence of withstanding the high winds and water surge that flooded and covered the island with sand. Pieces of houses, furniture, toys and personal belongings are strewn across the island.

"We were luckier than most people here," said Pat Ford, a member of First Baptist Church of Pensacola, whose primary residence is on Pensacola Beach. Although the family lost most of their home's contents, she noted, "We still have a home." They will live with friends until they are permitted to return permanently to the island.

Next-door neighbors T.A. and Eloise Shell, also members of First Baptist Church, found their vacation home and their daughter's primary residence twisted apart.

As she gazed upon the rubble, Eloise Shell began crying. "I thought I had come to grips with this," she said. "But we have had 30 years here and lots of memories."

Pensacola Beach resident Sara Williamson was not as lucky. The uninsured renter lost everything. "I didn't really care about the furniture. I got my pictures, that's what's most important to me. I would just like to have a place to come back to and redo."

**Fla. Baptists search for ways
to help Hurricane Opal victims**

By Barbara Denman & Michael Chute

FORT WALTON BEACH, Fla. (BP)--Florida Baptists' strategy of disaster relief following Hurricane Opal was three-pronged: feeding victims, helping with the cleanup and offering counseling and financial assistance.

As persons in the devastated communities enjoyed hot meals, Florida Baptist Convention staff tried to assess individual needs around the various feeding sites. Initial feeding and cleanup ministries are expected to give way to more counseling and financial assistance needs in the days ahead.

From Baptists' command post at First Baptist Church, Fort Walton Beach, Florida Baptist teams fanned out across the affected communities assessing needs.

According to Jim Brown, coordinator of Florida Baptists' disaster response team, the staff looked for opportunities to minister, such as offering help to the elderly, single mothers and the poor who are without resources and abilities to help themselves.

During the first weekend after the Oct. 4 storm, nearly 300 volunteers filled requests, which included cutting and removing fallen trees, cleaning up, moving furniture and helping tenants move after their homes were condemned.

Bill Carmichael, director of the Florida convention's discipleship training department, told how one Baptist volunteer team helped a 93-year-old man salvage furniture and personal belongings from his home after government authorities gave him two hours to evacuate. Carmichael was one of 35 Florida convention staff sent to the hurricane area to help in the disaster relief.

Another convention staff member, Roy Liburd, regional director of African-American Ministries, said the volunteer efforts also led to several witnessing opportunities.

Damage assessment and response was also given to areas north of Interstate 10 where the storm spawned tornadoes and massive power outages.

As part of the convention's disaster relief team, staff members Brenda Forlines, Barbara Curnutt and Sharon Thompson were permitted on Pensacola Beach with the residents during the weekend. As they went door-to-door searching for needs, they provided grief counseling, offered financial assistance, moved furniture, swept out mud and tore out soaked carpet.

"We were there at the point of real need when people were encountering their loss for the first time," said Curnutt, director of Florida Baptists' Woman's Missionary Union department.

Tears streamed down Sara Williamson's face as Curnutt and Forlines prayed with her and gave some financial assistance. Williamson's home and its contents had been lost in the initial storm surge.

Another woman who lost her total home contents promised, "When I get back on my feet again, I will find a Baptist church and put this money in the offering plate."

The teams discovered several young families in despair, including one with a 12-year-old son, another expecting a child in three months and a single mother.

The single mother was standing in her home holding a Christmas ornament and crying, Thompson said. "That was all she had left of her home."

The couple and their son were worried about what the youngster would wear to school next day. "This is the worst loss I encountered on the island," Curnutt noted. "We feel impressed to do something extra."

The volunteers purchased clothes for the boy to wear to school and connected the family with members of Pensacola's First Baptist Church who would help them find a new home.

Church members also promised to help another couple in need who only two months ago had lost their first home in Erin.

Twelve of the Florida convention's staff went with residents Oct. 9 returning to Okaloosa Island to assess damage to their homes and property.

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"The people are so responsive, so grateful and so open," Curnutt said. "The most heartbreaking thing of all is that so many are leaving these islands with all of their belongings in the back of a pickup truck."

Brown said that during the next week volunteers will be stationed on other islands as the blockades are removed, to comb the devastated areas to determine what needs can be met by convention resources.

"I think we will have unique needs and opportunities for ministry once these beaches are opened," Brown said.

Although Destin -- one of the hardest-hit areas -- is an affluent community, Bob Boone, pastor of First Baptist Church, said the congregation has responded in the past to many benevolent needs in the area. The disaster response, which included one of the feeding units set up in the church parking lot, allowed them to continue that ministry.

"We want to help minister to people any way we can," Boone said. "We want to help the church and Destin get back step by step."

Many church members were concerned about their homes, especially on the affluent Holiday Isle, Boone said. He spent his days after the storm trying to help members assess the damage to their homes -- which often could only be reached by boat.

As hurricane experiences were shared around the feeding sites, the conversation often led to "the neatest witnessing opportunities," said Curnutt. "The Lord just put them here."

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Social work school transfer
negotiations hit snag at SBTS

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
10/10/95

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Negotiations to transfer the Carver School of Social Work to Samford University from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary have bogged down, trustees of the seminary were told during their fall meeting on the Louisville, Ky., campus.

The proposed transfer, announced publicly in September, would move the social work school to Samford, a Baptist-affiliated university located in Birmingham, Ala., in 1997.

The social work school found itself in controversy in March when seminary President R. Albert Mohler, Jr. dismissed the school's dean, Diana R. Garland, for breaching administrative processes by releasing a document criticizing Mohler's refusal to approve a social work faculty nominee. The transfer proposal was initiated by Samford officials after a five-member seminary trustee committee was appointed in April to study the future of the Carver school.

Paul B. "Skip" Stam Jr., a trustee from Apex, N.C., and chairman of the Carver study committee, told social work school students Oct. 9 negotiations were continuing but there was a problem. He did not elaborate. Since Samford's trustees had already approved the plan, it appeared Southern's officials found a problem in the proposal. Stam, a lawyer, told the students the snag would cause a postponement by the seminary's trustees in approving the plan during their Oct. 9-11 meeting.

Some campus sources have speculated that Samford officials feel the proposal should include all that has been a part of the Carver legacy, which includes contributions that have endowed a teaching position, scholarships, etc.

Originally, the SBC Woman's Missionary Union, with offices in Birmingham, had a school of missions by that name for a number of years. In the 1950's, WMU turned the school over to the SBC. That school merged with Southern in 1963. The Carver School of Social Work was begun in 1984 by the seminary. William Hull, Samford University provost, could not be reached for comment October 10 about the negotiations.

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Under the terms of the proposed transfer, Samford would acquire all books, periodicals, audio visuals, computer software and other library holdings specifically related to the Carver school. This includes a collection of about 5,200 books and 700 bound periodicals.

Southern would also furnish Samford a list of its M.S.W. graduates, the names of prospective students for the Carver school and all documents related to the Carver school's accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education.

Southern would continue to offer a concentration in social ministries within its master of divinity and master of arts degrees.

Stam's committee asked the trustees to empower the administration to continue negotiations to move the social work school to an appropriate institution and to allow their executive committee to approve an agreement instead of waiting for the trustee's spring meeting in 1996.

Controversy over the Carver school has led to a planned visit by the Council on Social Work Education, the school's accrediting agency, next month and planned visits by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the two primary accrediting agencies for the seminary.

The Carver school has 63 students and two full-time faculty members.

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Volunteers still needed
for St. Maarten/Antigua

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
10/10/95

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Urgent needs exist for Southern Baptist volunteers to help rebuild homes and churches damaged by recent hurricanes on the Caribbean islands of St. Maarten and Antigua.

The most pressing needs are for Southern Baptist volunteers to work stints of one or two weeks from now until mid-December on the Dutch/French island of St. Maarten. The rebuilding is part of a Southern Baptist relief effort there and on the nearby British island of Antigua, both wrecked by Hurricane Luis' 140 mile-per-hour winds in early September. The project is sponsored by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and Brotherhood Commission.

"There's a desperate need for volunteers, especially on St. Maarten," said Mickey Caison, national disaster relief coordinator/director for the Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn. "We need people willing to do 'handyman' type work. It's not elaborate construction."

A team of eight volunteers started working on Antigua Sept. 30, when rebuilding was to have begun on both islands. Another team arrived on Antigua Oct. 7. But the first construction volunteers won't get to St. Maarten until Oct. 14, since no one signed up for the first weeks of the project there, Caison said.

"There's been a very slow response for St. Maarten," Caison said. That's probably because it costs more for round-trip airfare to go there than for Antigua, he said. "Most people want to go for the cheaper trip."

To help fill vacancies, project planners are seeking lower-cost airfares and recruiting volunteers for one week in addition to the originally advertised two-week trip, Caison said. For a two-week stay, the cost is about \$540 plus airfare. That price (slightly lower for volunteers staying only a week) includes food, lodging, insurance, transportation on the island and building materials.

Southern Baptists also are needed to help recruit volunteers to fill teams of 10 to 12 members. Recruiters may -- but aren't required to -- go to the islands to help with the construction project.

To volunteer to meet any of these needs, contact Beth Huneycutt at the Brotherhood Commission, 800-280-1891. Financial contributions may be sent to the Human Needs Department, Foreign Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230-0767, or the Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104.

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The first team on St. Maarten will help rebuild Bible Baptist Church, where volunteers will be housed. St. Maarten volunteers also will replace the roof on New Testament Baptist Church and on the home of Foreign Mission Board missionaries Tom and Patti Higginbotham, from Walker, La.

Meanwhile, volunteers on Antigua are repairing a Christian sports center used for volunteer housing and packaging of food distributed by Antiguan Baptist churches. On each island, a volunteer operates a water purification unit donated by Southern Baptists to help provide clean water to islanders.

On Antigua, the first construction team got off to a slow start because of delays in the shipment of building materials. But they made the best of it, according to FMB missionaries Karen and Jerry Cowin, who arrived on their new field of Antigua just four days before Luis hit.

"The (first) team went ahead with what supplies we already had and then were able to purchase at local hardware stores," said Mrs. Cowin, from Imperial, Mo., in a telephone interview. "But things are going slowly. Pray for patience ... when people are sitting without roofs over their heads or without a house at all, it's easy to get frustrated and impatient. Pray that all of us trying to help won't get 'weary in well doing.'"

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African athletes discover
another way to win in life

Baptist Press
10/10/95

HARARE, Zimbabwe (BP)--Six thousand athletes -- visions of the Olympics spurring them on -- came to the All Africa Games in Zimbabwe to leap the bar, swim the pool, spring from the board, throw the distance and run the race set before them.

A small band of Baptists -- visions of another kind of victory encouraging their tireless efforts -- moved quietly amidst the hubbub of churning cleats, splashing water, gasps for air, grunts of exertion, the ecstasy of victory and the agony of defeat.

Baptists challenged athletes from 49 countries and spectators at the games, a preliminary for the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, to think about what winning really means as they run the race of life set before them.

They explained how a relationship with Jesus makes one a winner in life -- and 600 people had accepted him as Savior at the mid-point of the 11-day games. The project at the mid-September games followed a two-week tour of Zimbabwe by a volunteer basketball team of former American collegiate players, resulting in 1,200 decisions for Christ.

The all-Africa competition played itself out in Harare and Bulawayo before thousands of spectators -- and some 100 African Baptist volunteers from eight nations, 15 Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionaries and 10 Southern Baptist volunteers from five states.

Baptists found opportunities in deeds -- not just tracts and talk. Everything from sports medicine to feats of strength became key components of ministry to the athletes.

Many African teams didn't have a trainer or sports medicine expert, said Paul Waller, an athletic trainer from Arlington, Texas.

"Helping injured athletes opens doors to spread the gospel through relationships," said Waller, of Arlington's Fielder Road Baptist Church. "One diver injured his back, and I massaged a spasm out of it. I developed a good friendship with him and shared that I was a Christian. He accepted a Bible."

Many athletes had never seen, much less owned, a Bible. They received them in their language in distributed packets and through personal contacts. A number of them attended nightly Bible study sessions.

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Jared Ellis came from his short-term medical assignment at Sanyati Baptist Hospital in Zimbabwe to assist with the games. Ellis and his wife, Shannon, treated injured athletes -- and shared their faith in Jesus Christ.

"Seeing 6,000 athletes from 49 countries has shown us the God-sized task of reaching others for Christ," said Ellis, of Southside Baptist Church, Huntsville, Ala.

Meanwhile, professional strongman Tom Owen, from Birmingham, Ala., performed in tents set up in strategic areas. He helped draw visitors with feats of strength -- like letting trucks drive onto his stomach or pulling a vehicle with a rope clenched in his teeth.

When visitors asked if a witch doctor had given him a spirit or herbs to make him so strong, Owen replied God's Holy Spirit was the only spirit in him. Several opened up to his testimony that true strength is the spiritual strength only Christ can give. They accepted Christ on the spot.

In the shelter of the tents, visitors also relaxed from sweltering heat with a cup of cold water, listened to singing groups and viewed a multimedia presentation. African Baptist volunteers shared their faith in Christ with tent visitors and in neighborhoods around the stadiums.

Besides the response to witnessing efforts, the ministry at the games also broke new ground for Baptist work. Officials accredited Baptist teams -- giving them unrestricted access to athletes and spectators.

"Normally, we can only stand outside the gates and pass out tracts to passing athletes or spectators in the stands," said Fred Sorrells, a Southern Baptist missionary from Texas who helped manage the outreach.

"Being on the inside gave us direct personal contact with athletes from many countries," including some with limited access to the gospel.

Besides a Bible, gift packets contained toiletries, a sewing kit, a Christian sports magazine with athlete testimonies and a cassette tape with African Christian music and testimonies.

Many athletes also saw "Winners," a nine-projector, three-screen multimedia presentation by Campus Crusade for Christ. It challenged highly competitive athletes to think about what winning really means.

People who registered decisions received packets with a decision card, the Gospel of John, Christian literature and AIDS information. Their names were given to local pastors or Christians in other countries for follow-up.

International Sports Federation volunteers will follow up the contacts, said Cheryl Wolfinger, director of ISF, which recruits volunteers for Foreign Mission Board sports evangelism projects. (Call ISF at 800-280-1891 for information about sports evangelism projects.)

Under the umbrella of ISF, housed at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn., volunteers will write letters and perhaps even visit athletes contacted during the games, she said. Contacts with athletes from "World A" areas with little or no access to the gospel and closed to missionaries are especially valuable, she said.

Many of the same athletes will travel to Atlanta for the 1996 Olympics, where Southern Baptists will minister to athletes from all over the world.

"I believe God uniquely touched the All Africa Games because we had a heart for follow-up," Sorrells said. "We had one of the best strategies I've ever seen for follow-up of contacts made during a sports mega-event.

"Our contacts with athletes from World A -- and our being able to follow them up them after the games through ISF -- is fantastic."

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Steve Evans, Kim Davis, Beth Butler and Tim Cummins contributed to this story. All are Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionaries in eastern and southern Africa. (BP) photo (horizontal) mailed 10/10/95 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet News Room.

EDITORS: Below is a list of U.S. volunteers involved in the All Africa Games:
 ALABAMA -- Jared and Shannon Ellis, Jackson; Jade Acker, Alabaster; Mark Seanor, Huntsville; Tom Owen, Birmingham.

TEXAS -- Annice Norman, Lewisville; Paul Waller, Arlington.

FLORIDA -- Jeff Clarkson, Jacksonville.

INDIANA -- Derek Coleman, Clarksville.

TENNESSEE -- Cheryl Wolfinger, Memphis.

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Missionaries sought
 to serve in Austria

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press
 10/10/95

VIENNA, Austria (BP)--Southern Baptists are seeking two new Foreign Mission Board missionary couples to start churches in Austria, to fill the first personnel requests from there in five years.

They will help Austrian Baptists meet their goal of 10 new churches by the year 2000.

One church planter would begin work where virtually no Baptist witness exists. A second would team up with an existing church to develop cell groups, intending to start new congregations.

The workers probably would be assigned to the Vienna area of lower Austria, the Carinthia/Styria area or the Salzburg/Innsbruck region.

The couple tackling either assignment will need patience and endurance "and must be able to deal with rejection, disappointment and slow growth," the request warns.

New missionaries will work with seven other Foreign Mission Board missionaries already assigned to Austria. The board now has more than 450 missionaries in Europe. While many have been assigned to Eastern Europe in recent years, the board also has maintained a strong presence in Western Europe, increasing personnel in most countries.

Foreign Mission Board missionaries working in Italy and Austria have merged into one administrative unit to streamline their work, freeing time to concentrate on church planting. Similar reorganization has taken place across Europe.

Austria's 7.7 million people live amid striking, mountainous beauty; the movie "The Sound of Music" was set here. But Austria has been known as a difficult place for evangelistic outreach.

Though 86 percent of Austrians say they are Roman Catholic, actual church involvement is low. Baptists are not seen as a legitimate church group and usually are labeled as a sect, especially in rural areas, said Foreign Mission Board missionary Jerry Jones, based in Salzburg.

But there are signs of hope. Austrian Baptists have adopted a strong program of home missions, and they added their 1,000th member in 1993. And Bible study groups in several areas and a student ministry in the Vienna area have been started.

The 140-member Hooteldorf Baptist Church in Vienna, for example, has started one new church in the past two years and helped finance three others. Hooteldorf's new building was partly financed by funds from the Southern Baptist Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions.

"They have a strong history of being evangelically aggressive and generous in giving and support," said Southern Baptist missionary Charlie Brown, based in Graz.

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Rural churches in urban fringe
confront survival decisions

By Ken Walker

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--In the mid-1980s, Little Flock Baptist Church exemplified the rural Southern Baptist congregation, with hymn-based worship and average Sunday attendance of less than 200.

This fall the church, located four miles south of the freeway that rings suburban Louisville, Ky., passed the 800 mark on Sunday mornings and welcomed 76 students to its new elementary school. There is room for more growth, since the sanctuary seats 1,200.

While the church moved just half a mile down the road in 1992, its physical expansion symbolizes a larger shift -- from country congregation to suburban.

"A local pastor said he couldn't believe the changes we had made," said Ron Shaver, Little Flock's pastor since 1987. "I'm convinced our biggest job was moving from a committee-driven to a staff-driven church."

Little Flock is part of a select group, according to Vernon Cole, director of church growth and administration for the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Most country churches touched by suburban sprawl fail to adapt because the transition is painful, he said. "The leadership has to be visionary enough to adjust or be hurting enough to realize they have to change.

"The hardest task is to do a turnaround. It's a lot easier to start one than take on a new identity. Think of a person moving from being highly introverted to mildly extroverted and you have the idea."

Country churches in the path of suburban development are common, according to Gary Farley of the Home Mission Board's metropolitan missions department. Nationally, there are approximately 11,000 SBC churches in "collar" counties around metropolitan centers, he said.

One-third of the Southern Baptist Convention's 15 million members live in such areas and the numbers are likely to increase, Farley said, citing Atlanta as a prime example. Currently some 60 miles wide, the metropolitan area is projected to nearly double during the 21st century.

"(Many cities) have gone out and incorporated small places, and they have gradually become part of it," he said. "There will be more pressure on rural areas to change, and tension between urban and rural residents."

One of these conflicts concerns music and worship style, with boomers and busters not comfortable in traditional country settings, he said.

Other issues Farley identified include differences in pastoral leadership, openness to female participation and power. The latter stems from "old money" families and church founders mixing with newcomers seeking a voice in church policies, he said.

However, that doesn't automatically mean churches must adapt to survive: "In Atlanta we see a lot of rural churches that continue to be rural with the city all around them. Some of them will die (in the future) because the pool they're fishing out of will become smaller."

One way Little Flock stayed afloat was studying local demographics. With help from the Kentucky convention and other agencies, it conducted studies of residents within a one-, three- and five-mile radius.

Little Flock discovered a multitude of young parents, teens and children living around the church, and they placed a high value on education and teaching of values. The former led the congregation to place more emphasis on youth outreach.

"Unless you're in a resort area, most harvesting is done between 14 and 35 years of age," Shaver said. "You have to decide what fields you're going to work in and where you'll send your laborers."

Churches generally fall in one of three models that find parallels in the business world, the pastor said. They include:

- Excellence and creativity, as represented by AT&T.
- High quality, low cost, such as Walmart.

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-- High touch, represented by retailers like Nordstrom's.

In the past, Little Flock was "moderately low cost," he said. It has switched to an excellence model, expecting commitment and involvement from its members. He said this makes the church more attractive to baby boomers and busters.

Among other changes aimed at suburbanites was a modification of its worship style, which now mixes praise choruses with hymns and features a 20-piece orchestra.

As Little Flock grew, it also had to shift from the committee-driven structure common to churches of between 150 and 300 to a staff-driven model customary in larger bodies.

While committees have not been replaced, Shaver said, they cooperate with staff members to reach a consensus that enables the church to move forward.

Though Little Flock is 185 years old, the strains of change affect newer churches, too. Several miles to the north is Maple Grove Baptist, founded in the mid-1950s. It recently dedicated a family life center, which pastor Steve Spencer hopes will provide more community interaction.

"We hope to provide recreation and fellowship opportunities that we've never offered before," he said, "and make more contacts than through traditional Bible study and worship."

Many of Maple Grove's founders came from rural Kentucky and southern Indiana for jobs at neighboring industrial plants. But the maturing of their children and further suburban development have altered traditions.

Demand for new ways of doing things comes from younger people with differing ideas and expectations of what ministry should mean, Spencer said.

While Maple Grove has a great heritage, he said traditional methods aren't always the best way to reach the unchurched.

Thus, instead of insisting that everyone go out to homes during visitation, some members stay behind to call prospects and missing members.

The church videotapes worship services and special events as an outreach tool and is looking at forming home Bible studies at apartment complexes.

Services feature more drama, musical presentations and sometimes the singing of praise songs. A recent "Bluegrass Mountain Sunday" utilized a blue jeans and casual attire dress mode, which Spencer said was well received in the community.

Maple Grove has also strengthened its Wednesday evening program, which includes children's choir, missions groups and Bible study. The pastor discovered the appeal of the midweek service when he invited a visitor to return the next Sunday.

"When Sunday rolls around it's hard for us to get to church," she told him. "We work six days a week and by Sunday we're so stressed out. That's our day to visit relatives and spend time with family. Wednesday nights are better for us."

"It's going to be different in every community," Spencer said of the changes. "You have to adapt. There has to be some continuity with the past. At the same time you have to develop other approaches."

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Musicians say God's grace
eases on-the-road trials

By Julie A. Nall

Baptist Press
10/10/95

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--The air conditioner on the bus went out again, and there's a 110-degree heat index outside. You open your lunch bag and find still another ham-and-cheese sandwich, making it six ham-and-cheese lunches in six days. The man in charge leaves you as the man in charge, and you lose the money bag just before intermission tape and T-shirt sales.

Yet when the music begins, you hop on stage and sing praise to the Lord with all your heart. And this is just an average day.

You must be a Christian musician on the road.

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Raughnsen Payne, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board US-2 missionary with the Missouri Baptist Convention, started many days as a trumpet player for The Continentals with a plate of scrambled eggs in front of him. Payne said the host families who housed the musicians wanted to make a special breakfast for their guests, and usually it was scrambled eggs. He said there were days when he would have given about anything for a plain bowl of Cheerios.

After a hearty breakfast, the singers and instrumentalists boarded the faithful buses and found a seat -- next to someone different from the day before. The group was given "friendly reminders" to "spread themselves around," Payne explained, so they would get to know one another. The rotating seating arrangements also discouraged budding TCs (tour couples), as dating was not allowed on The Continentals tours.

One's life possessions were stored in a 26-inch suitcase, one hanging bag and one carry-on case, surrounded by similar gear of the 30 to 40 people who shared the bus. As Continentals, they all paid a healthy sum to be a part of this traveling-musician lifestyle.

"Bus life was packed," Payne said. "You wore the same clothes over and over and over. You just got used to it." For The Continentals, new clothes and more space were only 12 weeks in the future.

For former Word & Way newswriter Brian Smith, the bus way of life did not end for several years. Smith played trombone with the group Truth.

"You live with these people," Smith said. "In effect, you're roommates: 20 of you on a bus. There are no secrets. If one is having financial difficulty, everybody knows it. If one is having romantic trouble, everybody knows it. On one hand it's a blessing because you get prayer support. On the other hand, it could be a curse if you are a person who likes privacy.

"It was kind of hard living out of a suitcase. Every morning you had to iron your shirt because it came out of a suitcase."

Payne and Smith were traveling musicians some years back, but Emily Adkisson and Jeremy Asher, who were vocalists for The Continentals tour in summer 1995, described a life much the same. For Adkisson, a member of First Southern Baptist Church in Florence, Colo., the hardest part of the tour was being away from her family for so long.

That trial was rivaled by the daily grind of a routine, she said. It was hard to get up, travel all day, set up and then do a concert with a high energy and excitement level. Such tribulations were coupled with bizarre occurrences like the bus engine cracking, singers getting terribly ill and going through seven bus drivers on one tour.

"Can you imagine how boring tour would be if nothing went wrong?" asked Asher, a member of Temple Baptist Church in Ruston, La.

Adkisson said one of the most special times of the entire trip happened when the bus broke down. "We didn't have anything else to do but sit there for eight hours. We started sharing testimonies and really got to know one another."

Smith recalled relationships were hard to maintain because Truth was in a new town every day. "The other side of that is, the people in the group, because you live with them, essentially become your best friends."

That proved true for Payne, who met his wife, Holly, on his third tour with The Continentals. As a vocalist, Holly's favorite time of a tour day was the hour before the concert when the group would join to pray and sing, focusing on the Lord. "Every night, no matter what time, even if we were running late, everything would stop one hour before the concert and we would meet," she said.

And every night after the concert, the members went to the homes of host families. Holly Payne said she enjoyed staying with different people and getting to do one-on-one ministry in the homes.

Asher remarked, "That's a weird feeling, sleeping in a different bed every night. It will be strange going back home, being in the same time zone for more than a week."

Holly Payne said there were a lot of times group members were able to witness and encourage. "I got to lead one girl to the Lord like that. We would have a quiet time on the bus each day. Also, sometimes we would get on the loudspeaker and share decisions and discuss prayer requests from the concerts."

Traveling across the United States and to places like Canada, India and Russia might seem reason enough to be a traveling musician. But the spiritual joys are the payback for the difficulties of the bus life, the ham-and-cheese diet and the 26-inch suitcase space, the musicians agreed.

"During the end of the concert, during the invitation, when you look out there and see people crying or raising a hand" is the real reward, Asher said. Also, Raughnsen Payne related, the members practiced a daily walk spiritually.

Smith found a personal satisfaction from being on stage. "I was saved at a Truth concert, so I knew from the audience perspective what it was like. I liked to see the concert from the platform perspective as well. I could see what God was doing."

Allen Speer, pastor of Memorial Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Mo., has employed various groups such as The Continentals, Truth, Eternity and others for an encouragement ministry. He said the church's response to the ministry of the musicians has been great.

"One of the first things you have to learn to do is share your faith because, whether you like it or not, you are in the limelight and people will talk to you," Payne said. "I got to lead a lot of kids and teen-agers to the Lord because of it."

The musicians learned to minister to one another as well. "You learn to love one another like you never thought you could," Payne explained. "My very first tour I met a guy, and on the second day I was ready to strangle him. His personality was contrary to any I'd seen. I prayed, 'Lord, for the next three months I get to be on a bus with him. I can't start out this way. Show me what you love in him.'"

Although he found he had to say that same prayer several times on tour, Payne admitted, God always showed him what he loved in the other musicians, and Payne learned to love them, too.

"In three years' time, I traveled close to 600,000 miles," Payne said. "Some people say that alone is worth it. I disagree. Without the Spirit, you'd kill each other."

Smith described the work as much like a 9-to-5 job, except the work days are more like 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Still, he claims he would do it all again.

While some people might look at the life of a traveling musician as a vacation, it is a tremendous amount of work coupled with not enough sleep and an extreme amount of energy required. These Christian musicians agree: In this work, it's by the grace of God you survive to play or sing another night.

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