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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 70420,250
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232, CompuServe 70420,115
NASHVILLE Linda Lawson, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300, CompuServe 70420,57
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151, CompuServe 70420,72
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223, CompuServe 71173,316

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Small church organizes
huge shipment to Liberia

By James Dotson

Baptist Press
11/7/95

MARIETTA, Ga. (BP)--A small Georgia Baptist church has undertaken a missions project that will benefit hundreds of Liberian Baptist churches battered by years of civil war.

Under the leadership of pastor and retired missionary to Liberia John Mark Carpenter, Labelle Heights Baptist Church, Marietta, has collected enough Bibles, hymnals, Bible study literature, clothing and other relief supplies to fill a 40-foot shipping container, a shipment scheduled to arrive in the war-torn country Nov. 7.

The project started out as a plan to fill one 20-foot shipping container, but the huge response necessitated the larger scale. "It's just been overwhelming," Carpenter said. "Now everybody is wanting to know when we are going to make the next shipment."

Carpenter first had the idea for such a large-scale shipment of relief supplies while he was a missionary. The concept was simple: Americans often have surplus quantities of so many items, and the Liberians -- especially after years of war -- have so many needs. And a large shipment is the most cost-effective way of transferring those surplus goods.

Carpenter wrote a letter making requests for contributions to about 250 churches, pastors, directors of missions and others, many of whom were involved in the Georgia/Liberia missions partnership from 1985-87. The response nearly overwhelmed the small congregation. Among the contents of the container after it was loaded Oct. 14 were the following:

-- 164 cartons of used clothing weighing 50-75 pounds, each of which will go to a different church in Liberia.

-- 270 cartons of used hymnals.

-- 42 cartons of used books and Bibles, each of which will make up a mini-library for pastors who lost most of what they owned in the civil war.

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-- 61 cartons of books for Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary library, where Carpenter served as president.

-- 20 cartons of medical supplies for Baptist relief clinics.

-- 48 cartons of literature for churches, including Bibles, Bible study books and Sunday school supplies.

-- 12 cartons of used communion sets for churches.

-- 9 cartons of used Bibles.

-- 14 cartons of new Bibles for the Living Way Bible Correspondence Course in Liberia.

-- Other miscellaneous items, including a tractor engine for Ricks Institute, a Baptist high school where Southern Baptist mission work began in 1960; two used keyboards; two typewriters; seven cartons of books for Ricks Institute; and 28 cartons of personal items for missionaries.

"It looked like a mountain," Carpenter said.

Carpenter said the project was made possible in large part because of the personal contact with Liberian Baptists many donors experienced during the missions partnership.

The scope of the project was expanded as opportunities grew.

"When we started this in July, we targeted primarily the churches in Monrovia, the capital city, because the rest of the country was still reasonably inaccessible," Carpenter said. "But now they have a new peace accord that seems to be working, and we will have access in the very near future to churches well into the interior."

In the letter, Carpenter asked donors to also send a financial contribution to help with the freight, anticipating a cost of about \$5,000 to send a smaller 20-foot container. In the end, they received more than \$13,000 in gifts, which more than covered all shipping expenses on the larger container as well as the \$2,000 for new Bibles. Most of the response was from Georgia, but donations also came from as far as Dallas and Austin, Texas. Several faculty members at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., made significant contributions for the mini-libraries to be used by pastors.

The response of the small congregation to the project also has been encouraging, Carpenter said. On the morning the container was loaded, 38 members showed up. Robert Moss, the driver who delivered the container to the church and back to Savannah for shipping, was so touched by the effort that he made a contribution of \$90.

"He got up here and saw what was going on, and the fact that a small church was doing a gigantic task like that. He, being a member of a Southern Baptist church, was just carried away," Carpenter said. "He said, 'I wish all the members of my church could be here to see this.'"

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Church's 'Biker Sunday'
bridges gap in lifestyles

By Russell N. Dilday

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NORTH LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--The roar of more than 120 motorcycles filled the Sunday morning air in North Little Rock as a group of bikers turned onto Pike Avenue and headed toward the church in the bend of the road. Instead of passing by, however, each biker pulled into the church's front parking lot and revved his cycle's engine until the church members who were gathered on the front lawn could not hear themselves talk.

The engines were cut off. Church members stared as the bikers dismounted and pulled off helmets, leather jackets and sunglasses. Then the silence was broken.

"Hi y'all!" called one of the churchgoers.

Bikers and church members embraced and greeted each other warmly, exchanging greetings and renewing relationships made over the past several years. It was the sixth annual "Biker Sunday" at Levy Baptist Church in North Little Rock. The visiting bikers, many of them members of the Christian Motorcyclists Association, attended worship services that morning, followed by a catered barbecue luncheon with church members and an evening service.

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Although many of the bikers appeared in road-worn leather and denim, subtle differences in their appearance began to appear. Many wore patches with slogans such as "Prayer Warrior," "Jesus Number One" or CMA's large "Riding for the Son" motto on their backs.

Bikers and church members heard CMA's national president, Herbie Shreve, deliver the morning message. The group's national headquarters is in Hatfield, Ark., and was begun in 1975 by Shreve's father, a Southern Baptist pastor. There are more than 400 active CMA chapters with 55,000 members across the country, plus members in 32 other countries. Arkansas has eight chapters with about 1,000 members.

Pastor Otto Brown said Biker Sunday began at the church when member Dewell Grisham, state coordinator of CMA, approached him about a ministry opportunity.

"Dewell and I got together and Dewell said, 'Can we do a Biker Sunday?'" Brown recalled. "I prayed about it and felt like the Lord would have us to have a Biker Sunday here."

Brown described the revival-type services as "a rally" which helps church members "relate to the CMA organization."

In addition to opening the church's doors to the annual Biker Sunday, Brown said the congregation allows the CMA to meet there on Monday nights for Bible study. He said the Bible study "started out with 12 people in the group and now we're running 50 to 60."

Grisham, CMA's state coordinator since 1982, said the Bible studies utilize the Navigator series curriculum, an interdenominational Bible study. "We don't dwell on denominations because we are a nondenominational group," he explained.

Church member J.N. West, a former Bible study leader, serves as a host for the study. "We started out meeting in homes," he recalled. "After the third home we were running out of room."

West said the church's ministry to bikers "opens the eyes of other individuals" to the Christian faith.

"One evening at Monday Bible study there was a lady walking down the sidewalk and she wanted to know, 'Why all the bikes?'" he noted. "'They are here for Bible study,' I said. Her remark was, 'I didn't know the two went together.'"

West emphasized the importance of churches reaching out to those who have adopted the biker lifestyle. "Most people who ride the bikes have been mistreated, mishandled or at least feel like they have been at one time or another by churches -- not just this church or that church, but churches in general. People just have to quit looking down their long noses. They're searching just like you or I are."

Herman Snipes, a Little Rock "tattoo artist" and biker, is an active member of the Monday Bible study. Noting the study helps bikers "feel welcome," he added, "Anybody can come and socialize and we can get to know each other 'cause we're all Christians. No matter what you look like, we're still with Christ."

Biker "Brother Dave" Keegan, a Little Rock postal carrier, also affirmed the church's open arms. "The group here represents Jesus Christ and what he's done for them. The only way we can express it is to be in a place where people will have us."

During the morning worship service, biker Pete Gray shared his testimony about how God helped him overcome mental illness and the drugs used to control his condition.

"All through my life, things people call normal -- making the bed, going to the store or not being scared of people in general -- that's something I couldn't do," he said. "I had problems all through my life. They had to put me on extreme doses of medication that I took every day for five years."

Then, he recalled, his sister asked him to go to church. "I accepted Christ that night. I asked the Lord what was wrong with me all my life and he told me, 'You were demon possessed.'"

"That night I told my mother, an LPN, I don't want to take my medicine anymore," he noted. "She said, 'Are you sure?' I told her that if I hadn't experienced what I experienced tonight, I'd keep n taking it forever. That's rational thinking, something I never did before and I have not had one bit of medicine since 1982."

The church's CMA partnership has not been a one-sided experience. Last year the CMA Bible study raised funds and sent Brown on a CMA mission trip to Nicaragua and Honduras.

"It was a tremendous experience," Brown said. "They raised money to buy motorcycles in the countries. We gave the seven bikes to pastors who had no way of getting around other than riding a bicycle or riding a horse, a donkey or walking.

"Motorcycles are an excellent tool for the spreading of the gospel," Brown pointed out. "Each pastor in Honduras had 10 to 12 congregations they were responsible for. They were overwhelmed and excited that a group from the U.S. would raise the money and buy them bikes. This year CMA will be giving out 100 bikes around the world."

"Our purpose is to go where the bikers are," Grisham emphasized. "There's a lot of hurting people out there, especially bikers. We go to rallies to tell them about Jesus.

"We don't push ourselves on them," he added. Noting members participate in rallies not only as Christians, but as bikers, he said, "That gives us an open door to get into their rallies. If we went as Christians up front, we would not be accepted."

"Witnessing to bikers differs in that they are usually already aware they are sinners," Shreve said. "In the biker world, they know and boast of the fact that they sin. It's much easier knowing step one, 'Admit you are a sinner.'"

Shreve said "earning the right" to witness to bikers is a thrust of the organization. "You can't go up to a biker and say, 'Heaven or hell, turn or burn.'

"You have to come up to a biker and talk about chrome, talk about leather and all that stuff," he said. "Build a relationship, biker to biker, so that he has confidence and trusts you to bear his soul to you. As a result, it's a pretty slow ministry because there's a lot of planting and sowing.

"It does work," Shreve declared. "We don't go out and say, 'We had 150 today come to the Lord.' We go out and say, 'Thank God they let me talk to them today.'"

"This is something I believe in -- getting the Word to the bikers," remarked biker Joel Norwood of Malvern. "I don't just come to Biker Sunday. I hit the runs and the rallies, the swap meets. Wherever they're at, that's where we go to witness and minister to the bikers."

He said part of "earning the right" to witness to other bikers is that "we used to be what they are now. I came out of that life. God called me out, cleaned me up and put me right back into it.

"A lot of them boys are boys I used to do drugs and alcohol with and I still see them," Norwood said. "The difference is instead of doing the lines of dope with them, now I can tell them what Jesus has done for me."

Norwood said he appreciates the Levy church's willingness to host Biker Sunday. "What's the difference in the way a person dresses or what? God is no respecter of persons. He doesn't look at the clothes. If a church looks at the clothes, they better take another look at themselves."

Challenging other churches to evaluate their openness to those in need, Norwood said, "I've heard, 'You can't come here because you've got long hair.' 'You can't come here 'cause you wear black leather.' That ain't what God said. God said salvation is for all men. Maybe we're a throwback to what the early church was, 'cause you will find us not inside the walls, but out on the highways and byways like God called us to do."

Unreached people groups a tragedy,
Rankin tells Southwestern students

By Mark Christie

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Tragic. That's how Jerry Rankin describes the number of people groups in the world who have never heard of Jesus Christ.

Speaking during Global Missions Week Nov. 2 at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, the president of the Foreign Mission Board reminded students the goal for Bold Mission Thrust -- 5,000 missionaries by the year 2000 -- will involve a mere one-third of one-tenth of 1 percent of Southern Baptists.

"Why is it we have over 100,000 pastors and staff members and denominational workers catering to and serving and ministering to the needs of our churches and so few respond to God's call?" Rankin pleaded.

Speaking from 1 Corinthians, Rankin reminded students of the "mystery" of the gospel -- communicating the reality of Jesus Christ to those who have never heard. Recent FMB statistics indicate there are 2,466 distinct ethnic/linguistic groups that still have no access to the gospel.

"Is it fair that so many millions of people have yet to hear the good news of salvation when we hear it daily?"

He indicated an increasing number of Christians don't want to believe a loving God would send unreached people groups to hell, when in reality it is "sin that condemns them," and not God.

If Christians believed that those who never heard would somehow be saved, the most effective foreign mission strategy would be to "determine never to mention the name of Jesus again outside the borders of our own community and culture," Rankin said.

Rankin expressed concern over the number of people who say they are willing to go but add God hasn't called them into missions yet. "Do they read the same Scripture I read? In order to be obedient to the command of this Word, we expect God to hit us over the head with a unique and mystical call simply to be obedient," Rankin said.

In an interview following Rankin's message, he said only 193 of the 2,466 linguistic groups identified in World A (those without access to the gospel) have a population of 1 million people or more within a specific country. While that figure may seem low, these people constitute more than 93 percent of the total population of World A, he noted.

To reach those 193 people groups, Southern Baptists would only need to assign 50 missionary units yearly for the next four years.

"Of course, this is dependent on people responding to God's call, being available to go, and our Southern Baptist churches' support of our mission efforts," Rankin said.

Support means prayer and funding, but most of all it means sending and going. According to Rankin, if only one tenth of 1 percent responded to the call to foreign mission service, Southern Baptists would have 15,000 missionaries on the field.

In short, Rankin said, "It's dependent on what happens here at home."

Global Missions Week was jointly sponsored by SWBTS and the Foreign Mission Board to enhance awareness of Southern Baptists' international missions opportunities and needs. Participants included 45 missionaries and 38 FMB staff.

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(BP) photos available on SBCNet and upon request from Southwestern's office of public relations.

FMB leaders discuss best use
of missions workers, resources By Brian Smith

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A balance must be achieved between focusing on "World A," the unevangelized portion of the world, and those areas of the world where the harvest traditionally has been strong, according to Jerry Rankin, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

"I have a deep personal, biblical, missiological conviction that we as Christians are going to be held responsible for every person that does not have an opportunity to hear the gospel of Christ," Rankin said during an Oct. 31 open forum at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"God has made provision for their salvation -- he has told us to preach the gospel to every creature."

But Rankin noted the administrative dilemma of having limited personnel and resources: "I also believe God will judge us if we fail to reap the harvest where his Spirit is moving and people are open to the gospel."

Rankin, Avery Willis, FMB vice president for overseas operations Avery Willis, and Don Kammerdiener, FMB executive vice president, answered questions from students, faculty and staff in a dialogue session held as part of the Oct. 30-Nov. 3 Global Missions Week emphasis at the seminary's Fort Worth, Texas, campus.

Rankin noted there are nearly 2,500 distinct ethnic/linguistic groups in the world who have not had access to the gospel, but the task of reaching them is not impossible.

"The resources are there, but we've got to have a heart for the world and a mind to be obedient to the Lord and join him in his mission."

Willis commented Southern Baptists traditionally have held more of a harvest theology, but "On Mission with God: The Last Frontier" is what the FMB calls a renewed push to reach the 31.5 percent of the world's population who have never heard of Jesus.

"The reasons they haven't been reached are that they're behind walls. There are hostile governments there. There are other religions there. But we're saying that does not negate the commission."

Kammerdiener explained one factor in determining how people groups are targeted is "gateway groups."

"If you touch that one group, you may have inroads into half a dozen other people groups. Good strategy would seem to say to us you ought to touch those strategic places where making an impact in one group will open other doors for you."

Another student asked if that meant the FMB needed another 4,000 missionaries.

"It's going to take that many people," Willis answered. "But one of the things we're doing in areas that are not World A is to emphasize how to get the churches that have been started to be missionaries." He said the Brazilians, Koreans and Japanese have been particularly good at going to other nations.

"One of the things the missionaries already on the field can do is help train new missionaries from those other ethnic groups to go and help the others."

Another participant asked why the process of appointment tends to be lengthy and why seminary training is necessary.

"We need to understand that World A is World A partly because it's tough," Kammerdiener answered. "There are health conditions, there is religious persecution and oppression, there is political oppression. Frankly, we are swimming against the stream of this culture to ask people to go to places like this."

He noted the FMB has the lowest attrition rate of any missions-sending agency -- 3.5 percent.

"The reason is because these folks are trained, they understand, they are oriented, they are supported. Our experience tells us that we only want to send those who have thought it through and who can carefully identify that God has called them and gifted them to be able to function in that kind of environment."

Rankin said he was enthusiastic about the current mission effort, but embarrassed about the Bold Mission Thrust goal of 5,000 missionaries on the field by the turn of the century.

"That is such an embarrassingly minimal number," he said.

The Baptist Union of New Zealand, which has about 200 to 300 churches, has one missionary for every 12 members, Rankin related.

"My math may not be too sharp, but if we had just 1 percent of the 15 million Southern Baptists -- just one out of a hundred -- how many missionaries would we have on the mission field?"

Given such enormous need, another student asked, why the concern about Woman's Missionary Union providing materials for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship?

Rankin was quick to affirm "any church supporting any mission that's trying to reach our world -- that's in the lordship of Christ. And we're not in competition with anyone trying to reach our world."

Yet he said what holds Southern Baptist churches together is not doctrine or missions, but voluntary cooperation. "So we are very committed to maintaining and continuing that cooperative unified effort of working together as a denomination in missions."

Historically, the FMB has been dependent on missions education in the church, prayer support and other work of WMU, Rankin stressed.

"We believe for the WMU, as a convention entity, to give endorsement and support to fragmented and diversified groups is simply contrary to and sabotaging that whole cooperative way of doing missions."

In another question about denominational issues, Rankin was asked about the Baptist General Convention of Texas proposal to keep more Cooperative Program gifts within the state.

"We wouldn't deny that Texas is a mission field," Rankin said. "But when you've got 1.7 billion people who don't have access to any church, and we have one missionary unit for every 2 million people overseas, to say that because we have one church for every 3,000 people we need to divert more funds and hold them at home is somehow out of balance with what we see as God's mission."

But Rankin emphasized the financial resources exist for meeting mission needs, including having 5,000 missionaries on the field by the year 2000.

Supporting 5,000 missionaries over the next five years would require approximately \$1.2 billion, Rankin said.

"That represents no more than 4 percent of the projected receipts from Southern Baptist churches over the next five years," Rankin pointed out. "The resources are there. But it takes a commitment and a focus to channel those resources to support what God would have us to do to fulfill the Great Commission."

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(BP) photos available on SBCNet and upon request from Southwestern's office of public relations.

FMB worker: Missions
not for the elite few

By Dena Dyer

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Missions is not about an offering and it's not just a trip -- it's a way of life, said Mike Stroope.

Stroope, Foreign Mission Board area director for Cooperative Services International, was the featured speaker for a Fort Worth-area missions rally Nov. 2 during Global Missions Week, a five-day emphasis sponsored by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Foreign Mission Board to increase awareness and support of international missions opportunities.

Stroope challenged the audience's preconceived notions about missions in his keynote address.

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Missions is not just something done in the summer or on a trip, he said. "Missions is our collective lives moving toward what God is doing in time and history.

"Our Lord is on mission not just to a privileged few, but to the whole earth. God wants to scatter us all over the world to be a light to the nations."

Foreign people may have strange-sounding names, but their names are on the very lips of God, Stroope said. "When we see the world as God sees it, we will begin to go to unfamiliar places."

He noted: "The world is not made up of countries but of peoples. We have begun to realize this and have changed the way we send our missionaries. And now, those people whom we have labeled 'unreached' are responding."

Missionaries have been seen as an elite group who do Christians' bidding for them, Stroope observed. "This world will not be won by 4,000 missionaries. You do the numbers -- it just won't work."

It will require the whole of the church getting involved in evangelism to reach the world, he said. "It's gonna take every last one of us."

Doctors and engineers, for example, can go where missionaries can't, Stroope pointed out. "We must give up our small ambitions, hook up to what God is doing and maximize who we are with all our unique gifts. We must give our time, our money and our very lives to be a candle in the darkness."

Christians in America have been given much, Stroope said. "To do nothing with what God has given us is decadence and disobedience -- it is sin. Take your hands off your life, and let him do whatever he wants with you."

Earlier, a parade of flags by Tarrant County (Texas) RAs and GAs preceded a testimony from Larry Driggers on "The Dangers of Saying No to God." Driggers is Southwestern's missionary-in-residence and FMB assistant area director for west Africa.

"When people think of the word 'missionary,' they think about danger," Driggers said. "Thankfully, my wife and I have never been in any real danger from civil strife or malaria like several missionary friends of ours have."

The real danger for a missionary is saying "no" to God when he calls, Driggers said. "There's a danger for all of us tonight of saying no to God as he asks us to leave a familiar place, learn a new culture and be obedient to take his message to unsaved people."

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(BP) photos available on SBCNet and upon request from Southwestern's office of public relations.

Plane crash survivor not deterred
from commitment to world missions By Dena Dyer

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--"As the plane was careening toward the runway, God reminded me ... that to live is Christ and to die is gain," Erin Thomas recalled Nov. 3 as she addressed a chapel audience at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Thomas related her experience of surviving the fiery 1991 crash of a hijacked airliner in China during Global Missions Week at the seminary's Fort Worth, Texas, campus. At the time of the crash, she was serving with International Service Corps arm of the Foreign Mission Board.

"The hijacker fought in the cockpit with the pilot as we were descending, causing our plane to crash into two other airplanes on the runway. The plane broke in pieces, and I escaped by walking toward a small shaft of light where the airliner had torn apart."

Thomas, a master of divinity student from Oklahoma City, was one of only six of the 104 on board who survived. Among those who did not was her ISC partner, Mary Anna Gilbert.

The experience, although harrowing, gave Thomas many chances to witness when she went back to China five months after the crash.

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"My English students would ask me if I had been scared to die," she said. "I shared with them that as a Christian I have no fear of dying, because if I die, I will go to be with my Father. If I live, I will continue to serve him. So whether I live or die, God is glorified."

Thomas plans to return to foreign missions after her graduation from seminary.

"One-fourth of humanity has never heard the gospel," she stated, reminding students, faculty and staff of Jesus' exhortation in Matthew 9:37-38 that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few.

"God does not tell us to pray for the harvest -- people are ready and they will respond if we share with them. But God does tell us to pray for the laborers," she stressed.

"The question is not whether God will reach the world through global evangelism, but whether you plan to join him."

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(BP) photos available on SBCNet and upon request from Southwestern's office of public relations.

Baptist workers in Pakistan
recount 'streams in the desert'

By Dena Dyer

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Todd and Susan Lafferty were willing to serve God anywhere. But the last place they expected to be was Pakistan.

Todd now serves as pastor of an international Baptist church in Karachi, the capital of Pakistan. The Foreign Mission Board missionaries spoke Nov. 3 during Global Missions Week at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

"We were sitting where you all are sitting five years ago," Todd told the chapel audience. "We asked the Lord where he wanted us, but we never expected it to be Pakistan."

Karachi has more than 12 million people, 98 percent of them Muslim. "The task seems overwhelming at times, but God is providing streams in the desert as people respond to him in miraculous ways," Todd said.

Susan recalled dealing with fear when the U.S. Consulate in Karachi issued warnings about civil strife.

"That very morning I was reading Psalm 31 and I came to verse 21. It reads, 'God showed his wonderful love to me when I was in the besieged city,'" she said.

The couple described several Karachi residents who have been changed by the gospel.

Susan recounted a young woman who grew up in Shanghai and married a Pakistani Muslim. The woman was very lonely, but through the witness of an elderly Chinese Christian she came to know Christ at a Bible study in the Lafferty's home.

"Regina found streams in the desert -- living water," Susan said.

Todd related the story of an American named Royce, who came to know Jesus during his trial on drug charges. Royce was convicted and sentenced to 10 years in a Karachi prison, but he used his prison experience to witness to other convicts.

"Royce gave away his Bible, and we gave him another one. Then he gave that one away," Todd said. "We gave away over 120 Bibles, one at a time to Muslim prisoners through that young man. He even began a loan library of Christian literature in his prison cell."

Susan related another encounter: "Last year, I was in despair over the darkness of Islam and the role of women in Islamic society. One day, I cried out to God with the Psalmist David to show me his goodness in the presence of my enemies."

Two weeks later, a young Pakistani woman was at the Lafferty's doorstep asking for help in studying the Bible. She had grown up in a strict Islamic home but had never found an answer for the emptiness in her life. She had studied world religions and converted to Catholicism after deciding Christianity was the best.

But she wanted help in reading and understanding the Scriptures, and she came to know Christ after Susan led her through the Gospel of John.

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"I never had to teach her how to witness," Susan related. "She was a very well-known Pakistani actress and model, and from the beginning she began sharing her faith with her fellow performers, makeup artists and tailors."

The actress was putting herself at great risk, Susan explained, because her conversion would be considered blasphemy in her culture. The penalty for blasphemy is death.

"But she knew she had to share her faith in obedience to Christ," Susan said.

Todd then reminded the audience of the theme for Global Missions Week -- "On Mission with God."

"Are you on mission for God? Not all of us will be on mission for God over there, but all of us need to be on mission for God wherever we are," he stressed.

"Maybe God wants you to be the leader of a missions-minded church. You can encourage your church to pray and to give, as well as to go," he said.

"Whether we walk into the missionary's shoes or we hold the rope, we are partners together on mission sharing streams in the desert -- living water."

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**Missionaries' weaknesses
used by God, speaker says**

By Dena Dyer

Baptist Press
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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Don't put missionaries at the top of a spiritual ladder, advised Steve Booth, a Southern Baptist missionary to Hungary.

Missionaries "are the smallest and weakest vessels, because we have been to a place where our weaknesses were highlighted," Booth told a Global Missions Week audience Nov. 1 at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

God delights in using weak things to reach the world, Booth reminded. "As it says in Scripture, God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. He wants a missionary candidate who has a proper self-understanding. If you think that you're not strong enough to be a missionary, maybe the fact is that you're not weak enough for God to use you.

"We must be weak vessels, totally emptied of ourselves and filled with him," Booth said. "Our example is Christ, who came to earth as a baby. As missionaries, we are often reduced to the state of a baby. We must learn to walk and talk all over again in a new culture."

He reminded the audience of the task to hold out the cross to the nations. "The cross is a reminder that God often chose the weak or the seemingly foolish instrument to do his work," Booth said.

"Paul says that proclaiming the gospel is not a foolish thing to do, but it will seem foolish to the world."

Booth recounted missionary Jim Elliot, before he was martyred in the 1950s in South America, said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

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(BP) photos available on SBCNet and upon request from Southwestern's office of public relations.

**New Mexico Baptists adjust
convention length, dates**

By John Loudat

Baptist Press
11/7/95

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--New Mexico Baptists enjoyed a harmonious annual meeting when 400 messengers and 277 guests of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico gathered at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center Oct. 31-Nov. 1. While messengers approved significant changes to the convention bylaws and those of its Children's Home, the most debated matter of business concerned the length and dates of future conventions.

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Messengers approved a budget for 1996 anticipating \$2,814,186 in Cooperative Program receipts from the churches, a reduction of \$109,674, or 3.75 percent, from the 1995 budget.

After an exception of \$69,000 in preferred items is applied, 30.5 percent of the CP receipts, an estimated \$837,282, will be forwarded to the Southern Baptist Convention for national and international missions and ministry. No increase in the percentage was recommended this year.

The remaining 69.5 percent, \$1,907,904, and additional income of \$938,800 will be used to support a total operating budget of \$2,846,704 for Baptist work in New Mexico.

While no raises for convention personnel were approved, messengers authorized the property and finance committee to grant raises of up to 4 percent retroactive to January 1996, if funds are available next July.

An amendment to the convention's bylaws also was approved, requiring executive board members to be "active members of Southern Baptist churches that are supporting members of and in cooperation with the local Baptist association, supporting and in cooperation with the state convention."

Previously, the bylaws said nothing about the church being supportive of the state convention.

Dropped was a requirement that the individual board member "shall have resided in New Mexico at least the year prior to his election." There are several members of New Mexico Baptist churches who live in bordering states.

Messengers also agreed to changes in the bylaws of the New Mexico Baptist Children's Home which will move financial accounting from convention administration to the home, making possible more effective monitoring of expenses. The bylaws also were amended to add three at-large members and to provide for replacement of directors upon the recommendation of the Children's Home board and approval by the executive board.

During the Wednesday morning business session, bivocational pastor Leonard Foster of Carlsbad brought a recommendation dealing with an issue of considerable discussion at last year's meeting -- that "the annual meeting be two days in duration."

Foster explained the change would save bivocational pastors one day of vacation or one day away from their jobs and also would make it easier for working laypeople to be involved in the annual meeting.

There being no discussion, the motion passed by a clear majority, and the length of the convention will be two days until messengers approve otherwise.

Later that afternoon, Foster attempted to change the Monday and Tuesday dates, Oct. 27-28, recommended by the nominating committee for the 1997 meeting to a Friday and Saturday, which he said would make the meeting more accessible for more people.

Discussion in opposition to the recommendation centered on the difficulty for some pastors of returning home for church the next day.

After the vote on the amendment was easily defeated, the committee's recommendation passed with no opposition -- only to be reconsidered later, during the final session that evening, when former convention President Frank Zamora of Las Cruces moved to reconsider the dates for the 1997 meeting, approved earlier in the day. Citing the importance of fellowship, Zamora said the Monday and Tuesday dates would not afford the Pastors' Conference, now in its third year, to meet prior to the convention, which he said conference participants desire. After offering substitute dates of Oct. 28-29, a Tuesday and Wednesday, his motion passed easily.

New Mexico Baptist Foundation Vice President Ross Taylor announced during the convention the \$2 million capital and endowment campaign, "To Grow ... To Serve," had just reached its goal. Pledges to the campaign had just reached \$2,046,002.35.

Foundation President Lee Black briefly announced the launching earlier this year of Foundation Ventures, a for-profit corporation. Income for the residential land-development project will be invested in ministries, Black said, for years to come.

The convention's final session featured an hour-long multimedia presentation on the ministries of the BCNM, which was described by many as a quality program the likes of which New Mexico Baptists have never had.

One New Mexican called it "absolutely first class, the best thing I've ever seen (at a state convention), and I've been here a long time."

A video version of the presentation is now being produced and should be available by December in each associational office for use by the churches.

Tom Martin, pastor of First Baptist Church, Hobbs, and Kirby Kennedy, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Roswell, were re-elected president and first vice president of the convention, respectively.

Mark Robinson, pastor of West Main Baptist Church, Artesia, was elected by acclamation as second vice president. L.W. Byous, elected to the position at last year's meeting, died last January.

J.B. Fowler, who had been named editor emeritus of the Baptist New Mexican by the executive board effective at the annual meeting, was unable to attend because of a recent surgery. While Fowler's name has now been added to the Baptist New Mexican as editor emeritus, special recognition for him and his wife, Wanda, is being planned for the state evangelism conference next January.

The final item of business was the report of the resolutions committee, which included a commitment of New Mexico Baptists to carry out "the mission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to our beloved Land of Enchantment."

The 1996 annual meeting will be Nov. 12-13 at the Carlsbad Convention Center.

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Science, religion still at odds,
70 years after Scopes trial

By Lee Hollaway

Baptist Press
11/7/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A noted creationist opposed the teaching of creationism in public schools, while a biologist-evolutionist favored it, in a symposium marking the 70th anniversary of the Scopes trial.

Kurt Wise, a self-described "young-age creationist" who teaches science at William Jennings Bryan College, Dayton, Tenn., expressed reservations about offering such instruction in public schools, saying curriculum materials currently available are not of sufficient quality. He also said it would be inappropriate for creationism to be taught by teachers who, in most cases, are evolutionists.

William Provine supported the teaching creationism for two reasons: "The majority of students are some kind of creationist, and they are now disenfranchised by having it excluded from the curriculum." And, he said, "the evolution position is weakened by not having opposing views presented." Provine is a professor of biological sciences at Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.

Wise and Provine were among participants in the Nov. 1-3 "Religion and Public Life: Seventy Years after the Scopes Trial" at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn.

Setting the tone for the discussion which followed, Madeleine Goodman, dean of Vanderbilt's college of arts and science, welcomed the symposium as an opportunity to "revisit the broader issues of science and religion" raised by the Scopes trial.

In 1925, high school teacher John Scopes was tried and convicted of violating a Tennessee law against teaching evolution in public schools. The case received national attention when Scopes was defended by prominent attorney Clarence Darrow, while the state's position was pressed by William Jennings Bryan. The trial was the first ever to be broadcast live on radio.

While clearly supporting the Darwinian worldview, Goodman acknowledged that embracing this theory still requires a leap of faith. Other speakers at the conference agreed that a "leap of faith" was required by advocates of either science or religion.

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Provine argued, however, that the leaps were of different sizes. "Belief in the virgin birth and the resurrection of Jesus requires a huge leap," he contended, compared to that required for a scientist to assume that the world operates according to naturalistic laws.

Provine described his personal pilgrimage from being raised in a religious family in the South to becoming a disciple of Darwinian evolution. As a young person, he said, "I believed that I was part of a cosmic process charged with meaning." He said he could find no purpose or design within evolution, however, and that absence of design helped to undercut his belief in God.

Provine also pointed out "the evolutionary perspective provides no ultimate foundation for ethics." For him, that meant having to "wrestle" his way to his own moral and ethical positions.

Panelist Wallace Charles Smith, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, an African American congregation in Washington, said African Americans have tended to shy away from the science-religion debate. They accept many teachings of science, he said, but not "the sacralization of science." They also are suspicious of the "calcified" positions of some religious extremists.

The worldview of many African Americans is one that is more complete, with God present in every aspect of it, Smith added.

Wise acknowledged a wide range of opinions exist within the religious community on the subject of creation. The vast majority -- perhaps 95 percent -- he characterized as "concerned consumers" who have received and accepted secondhand information about creation but are more concerned with basic life issues. A vocal minority of perhaps 4 percent, whom he called "crusaders," are highly political debaters who try to change the public school textbooks. The remaining 1 percent he described as "model builders," mostly academic scientists and philosophers who encourage a continuing dialogue with the evolutionist community. Wise placed himself within this group.

In a symposium session on the historical context of the Scopes trial, history professor Ronald Numbers of the University of Wisconsin noted historians are disagreed as to whether the trial represents the climax of the anti-evolution movement or the beginning of it.

Over the years since Scopes, "schools have become battlefields" in the continuing struggle between science and religion, according to Michael Lienesch, University of North Carolina political science professor. "For teachers, they have become minefields."

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German theologian's conversion
changed her biblical outlook

By Lee Weeks

Baptist Press
11/7/95

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--For 16 years, Etta Linnemann taught students at a seminary in Berlin, Germany, to view the Bible skeptically, professing the Gospel accounts of Jesus' miracles as more fable than fact.

But in November 1977 the German theologian's views changed radically when she accepted Christ as Lord and Savior.

Since then, Linnemann, whose doctorate is in historical-critical methodology, has been exposing the faults and weaknesses of the anti-supernatural theology she once espoused as a student of the German scholar Rudolf Bultmann.

Speaking Nov. 3 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., Linnemann said arguments held by historical-critical theologians against the inerrancy of the Bible are based on a presupposition that "research must proceed as if God does not exist."

"With this unjustified demand, historical-critical theology makes the denial of faith in the living Triune God its basic premise," she said.

Linnemann, 69, quoted C.H. Spurgeon as assessing the historical-critical theological movement: "This weed of modern theology is nothing other than unbelief that is too cowardly to own up to its name."

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Linnemann said as a student she was subtly deceived under the training of Bultmann. She said historical-critical theology mythologizes Scripture.

"He has some logical arguments founded on faulty presuppositions that he didn't tell," Linnemann said. "I wasn't conscious of those presuppositions. You take it in as if it were fact."

For years, Linnemann said, she explained the three synoptic Gospels' accounts of Jesus miracles by claiming literary dependence among the books.

"I was told -- and I was no better -- I told my students that Mark was the framework for Matthew and Luke," she said.

Through painstaking analysis of the synoptic gospels, Linnemann has refuted the literary dependence theory by showing only 22.17 percent the words examined in the three Gospels were identical.

Linnemann said claims that historical-critical theology is based on "scientific" findings are lacking proof as well.

"Instead, hypotheses that have found acceptance are treated like scientific results and circulated as facts," she said. "In the area of theology, whatever does not conform to historical-critical conventions is not acknowledged as scientific. It accordingly remains disregarded and is suppressed."

The documentary hypothesis theory, supported by historical-critical theologians and which attributes authorship of the Pentateuch to several authors instead of Moses alone, may only be accepted, Linnemann said, by "ignoring the findings of the last 100 years in archaeology."

In 1978, Linnemann said, she trashed all her writings questioning the validity of God's Word which had been based on positions held by scholars of historical-critical methodology.

"We have only to believe in the Bible," she stated confidently.

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College prepares gifts
for 3,000 prisoners

By Laura Horne

Baptist Press
11/7/95

ABILENE, Texas (BP)--Three thousand Texas prisoners will have a merry Christmas thanks to the Hardin-Simmons University Baptist Student Ministry.

For the second year in a row, the group is sponsoring a university-wide and citywide drive to make a Christmas bag for each of the inmates of the French Robertson Unit in Abilene, Texas.

Items needed for the Christmas bags include 15,000 pieces of individually wrapped hard candy; 3,000 1/2- 2-ounce tubes of toothpaste; 3,000 gospel tracts; and 3,000 zip-lock bags. Monetary donations will be used toward the purchase of these items.

Using the donated items, HSU students, faculty and staff will assemble the Christmas bags at the annual All-School Christmas Party Nov. 30.

"This is an exciting ministry because it gives us a chance to put the gospel in the hands of 3,000 people," said Palmer McCown, Baptist Student Ministry director.

Following last year's project, an inmate wrote to thank the student body for their thoughtfulness.

"I was truly shocked to learn that each of you who were involved would actually take time out from your daily activities and lives to show some concern and compassion towards what most people feel are the outcasts of society," he said.

Chaplain Stanley Wilson works with inmates at the French Robertson Unit. "When you have as little as these inmates have, when someone hands you a Christmas bag with candy, your favorite toothpaste and a tract, it makes a big impact," he said.

"It gives you a few minutes of warmth and the feeling that someone cares. It is important that these guys know that God loves them and people are concerned about them."

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Horne is a student writer in the media relations office at Hardin-Simmons University.

2 SBC authors' books
get Preaching's nod

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Books by two Southern Baptist authors are part of the annual Preaching magazine list of "Top Ten Books Every Preacher Should Read." The list of top books for preachers will appear in the January-February issue of Preaching, a bimonthly professional journal for ministers.

"The 'Ten Books' list is named annually by the editors of Preaching to recognize the volumes, published within the past year, which are of significant value to those who preach the gospel," explains Michael Duduit, editor of Preaching. He also serves as adjunct professor of preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

This year's list includes "The Purpose Driven Church" by Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Community Church, Mission Viejo, Calif., and "Marketplace Preaching" by Calvin Miller, distinguished professor of communication studies at Southwestern Baptist Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. Warren's book is published by Zondervan Press and Miller's by Baker Book House.

The January-February issue of Preaching also will include the announcement of the 1995 Book of the Year: "The Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching," edited by William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer, and published by Westminster/John Knox Press. Several Southern Baptists contributed to that volume as well, including Craig Loscalzo, James Cox and Timothy Weber of Southern Seminary, Al Fasol of Southwestern Seminary, and Raymond Bailey, pastor of Seventh & James Baptist Church, Waco, Texas.

Preaching magazine is now in its tenth year of publication, with a readership of more than 10,000 pastors in the United States and Canada. The publication also sponsors the annual National Conference on Preaching. Preaching may be addressed at P.O. Box 7728, Louisville, KY 40257.

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EDITORS' NOTE: In (BP) story titled "SBC seminary enrollment: Up at 4 schools, down at 2," dated 11/6/95, please add the following as the next-to-last paragraph:

"We had expected a decrease in total enrollment for this academic year, given issues of transitions and change in academic programs," said Southern President R. Albert Mohler Jr. "Nevertheless, we are very pleased with this enrollment and we intend to build upon it. God has called together a committed and spirited class of new students to Southern Seminary."

Thanks,
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