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Historical Commission, SBC  
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Churches deal with trauma  
of school shooting rampage

By Lonnie Wilkey

Baptist Press  
11/28/95

PULASKI, Tenn. (BP)--Baptist leaders in Giles County, Tenn., don't believe it was a coincidence the Power Team, an evangelistic group geared toward youth, was in town when tragedy struck Richland High School in Lynnville.

On Wednesday, Nov. 15, a student entered the high school and went on a shooting rampage, killing two people -- a student and a teacher -- and injuring another teacher.

"Only the providence of God could have had the Power Team here," said Carl Bond, director of missions for the Giles County Baptist Association. "Their ministry during this time was very important."

Ron Galyon, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pulaski, which sponsored the five-day crusade, noted there were more young people than expected at the crusade on its first night, Nov. 15. Many were from Richland High School, he noted.

The crusade gave them "a place to turn to," Galyon said.

Power Team member Berry Handley was scheduled to speak at the school at an afternoon assembly.

The shootings, which made national news, "made us realize what we say in school assemblies may have an impact that could have life-and-death proportions," Handley said.

Handley, who speaks at numerous schools each year, said the shootings are an example of spiritual warfare that goes on constantly. "This week it manifested itself violently and ugly. This goes on all the time," he said.

"We're in a warfare for our young people. Whatever our tools, we need to reach them."

The tragedy has shaken the entire community, local ministers agree; Richland High School is one of only two high schools in the county.

"There is still a lot of anxiety and fear among the teachers and students," Bond said. "You have the shock itself, but there's a fear that it could happen again."

Bond said he has ministered in areas where tornadoes have struck and has seen how people respond and often turn to God.

"What I've seen here is similar. For many there is a turning to God, for they are looking for a source to place their faith," he said.

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Danny Jones, pastor of Richland Baptist Church which is within sight of the school, echoed Bond.

"This has been devastating," Jones said. "We still can't believe it happened."

Jones said there are about 25 Richland students who attend First Baptist. On the Sunday following the shootings, Nov. 19, the Richland congregation was still stunned, Jones said. The church seats 125 people but on that Sunday attendance reached about 150, Jones said.

He said he purposely did not mention the shootings other than during the prayer time. "I preached a message on salvation -- a message that there is hope in Jesus Christ," he said. He said four people accepted Christ that morning and one other person joined from another church.

Galyon said it is still hard to believe "something like this could happen in our schools. It has profoundly shaken our church." He noted the church has members who teach at the high school in addition to several students who were in the hallway when the shootings occurred.

Other Baptist ministers in the county were involved in ministry at the school in various ways. Some went to the school when it reopened Nov. 17 and again on Nov. 20 to counsel students, Bond said.

"We had ministers and laypeople counseling at the school. If the students wanted to pray, the counselors were allowed to pray with them," Bond said. "That says God is winning some victories out of this."

Louis Thomas, minister of youth at First Baptist Church, said he has kept an open line for students needing to talk.

On the night of the tragedy about 150 students gathered and "we just let them talk," Thomas said, adding they prayed and shared Scripture.

The following Sunday they did the same thing during Sunday school, Thomas said. "We had a big circle of prayer with the Richland students in the center," he said.

"All we are trying to do is to keep them talking and let them know God is there and he is still God," Thomas said.

Thomas led a memorial service at Richland High School the week following the shootings.

Jones, whose wife, Debbie, works at the school, said in the aftermath of the tragedy it is important to "rally around the school."

He asked Baptists to continue to pray for the students and teachers. "It's really difficult," he said.

Bond said he feels the county is on the verge of a great spiritual revival. "I feel God will use these events to bring spiritual renewal," he said.

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Small church & Power Team  
see 343 professions of faith

By Lonnie Wilkey

Baptist Press  
11/28/95

PULASKI, Tenn. (BP)--The five-day crusade hosted by First Baptist Church, Pulaski, Tenn., definitely was not the typical Southern Baptist revival.

But neither were the results -- more than 900 decisions, including 343 professions of faith and 466 recommitments. Approximately 8,500 people attended the five services held at Martin Methodist College's Curry Christian Life Center.

Using the Power Team, a group of world-class athletes who capture the audience's attention by feats of strength, First Baptist accomplished its goal of attracting people to the services who probably would not have gone to a "typical" church service.

"We were not reaching the people we wanted to reach," said Ron Galyon, the church's pastor. "We needed a tool to reach those people and the Power Team was that tool."

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Blowing up hot water bottles until they burst, breaking concrete blocks with their heads, snapping handcuffs, breaking baseball bats and bending steel bars were just some of the "attention-getters" used by the Power Team, a Dallas-based group founded 18 years ago and led by John Jacobs.

Throughout their feats of strength, the Power Team constantly pointed out the real source of power and strength for any person is Jesus Christ.

"We're not here to show off our muscles. We're here to encourage you in the Lord," Jacobs told nearly 2,000 people who attended the last night of the crusade.

"Our whole message is to bring people to the direction of the Cross," added Power Team member Berry Handley.

In addition to the crusade services, Power Team members also delivered anti-drug and alcohol assemblies in five area schools. A sixth assembly was scheduled and later canceled at Richland High School the day a student entered the school and shot two teachers and a student, two of whom died.

The Power Team drew people to the crusade because it was not the typical revival, Galyon said.

"So many times our evangelism efforts draw primarily Christians," he noted. "But in order to be fishers of men, you have to use bait that will reach the people who need it (the gospel)."

Yet the crusade also attracted its share of Christians especially early in the week, Galyon said. Many of them returned later in the week and brought a lost person with them, he said.

The church fell short of its goal of 1,000 professions of faith, but they were very satisfied with the results, especially the rededications, Galyon said, explaining, "We didn't expect so many rededications. That meant we had a lot of Christians there."

Although the Power Team crusade primarily was sponsored and funded by First Baptist Church, they had plenty of help, Galyon said, counting 10 other area Baptist churches that assisted in the effort as counselors and in other roles. In addition several churches from other denominations played an important role as did Martin Methodist College, Galyon said.

He noted in order to carry out a Power Team crusade, "you have to have a church completely ready to work together. Our church worked harder than any I've ever seen." The church paid all the expenses of the Power Team, plus the expenses related to their feats of strength. The team received donations at the door plus a love offering, Galyon said.

He said he feels First Baptist has proven a smaller church can tackle such an overwhelming project.

"God used our people to pull it off," he affirmed.

Peggy Beasley, who served as crusade coordinator, noted excitement among the members built up as the crusade date drew near.

In addition, the bond it has created among churches in the area has been tremendous, Beasley said.

"The unity among churches of different denominations is something I haven't seen in Giles County," she observed.

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N.Y., L.A. Southern Baptists  
sense God's call, dream big

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press  
11/28/95

NEW YORK and LOS ANGELES (BP)--The nation's largest Protestant denomination still has minority status in America's largest cities.

Compared to virtually any city in the South, Southern Baptist numbers in New York City and Los Angeles are meager; making an impact in urban centers dominated by ethnic groups is slow for Southern Baptists with rural, predominantly Anglo roots.

"The enormity can be overwhelming," admits David Dean, director of missions for Metropolitan New York Baptist Association.

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It can also be challenging. "It's like David and Goliath. The giant's so big you can't miss," says Doyle Braden, director of missions for southern California's Orange County Baptist Association.

Perhaps no one is more aware of differences between the Bible Belt and these cities than Robert Sowell and Barbara Oden. Three years ago they worked for Houston's Union Baptist Association, the largest association in the Southern Baptist Convention. With more than 500 churches and missions, the association primarily serves a county with 3 million residents.

Sowell left Houston in 1993 to become director of missions for Los Angeles Baptist Association, one of eight associations in the Los Angeles area. Together those associations have five times as many people as Houston but only 150 more churches.

Oden left Houston to start churches in multi-housing units in the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association which has 18 million people and 197 congregations. With the help of strong churches in Houston, Oden says she could do things on her own strength there. In New York City, she says, "I've had to go to praying."

The cost of living in these cities impacts churches twice, Sowell says. First, a southern California church might pay \$700 to \$1,200 a month to rent space for Sunday services. Second, it takes a lot of money to support a full-time pastor.

"In Texas, a church with 200 members could have two full-time staff. Here a church with 200 members can't pay the pastor well. A lot of pastors have no medical insurance and no retirement," Sowell says. "The money that the church can give to the association and to the Cooperative Program is affected."

The same is true in New York City where a two-bedroom condominium was listed for \$70,000 this fall. In addition to the mortgage payment, owners must pay a monthly \$850 maintenance fee. With prices like that, less than one-third of the churches in the New York association have their own buildings and half of the pastors are bivocational, Dean says.

Consequently churches share facilities. The associational office in New York City is paid for, and six congregations use it throughout the week.

In California's Orange County, 39 of the association's 101 congregations own their meeting places, Braden says. Thirty-two of those which own buildings share their facilities with another congregation; one building is home to five congregations.

Lack of resources, however, doesn't keep Southern Baptists there from dreaming big.

Home missionary Taylor Fields is pastor/director of East Seventh Baptist Ministry, better known as the Graffiti Center, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Running out of space in a storefront building, Graffiti considered buying an abandoned synagogue across the street. Four years ago it went on the auction block with bids starting at \$137,000.

With a number of small gifts, Graffiti raised \$50,000 before the building was withdrawn from the auction.

Graffiti continued to save money and collected \$120,000 by the time the former synagogue returned to the auction block this year. Graffiti purchased it for \$50,000.

The renovation project will cost \$750,000, Fields says. Graffiti has raised more than \$200,000, and he doesn't seem to doubt God will provide the rest.

Michael Chance trains church leaders in metropolitan New York. His dream is for New Yorkers to teach fellow Southern Baptists how to reach out to urban dwellers and people from other countries.

Sowell's goal is leading churches to prayerfully develop a vision of how God wants to use them in their communities. "Reaching L.A. is ambitious, but not for God."

Many California churches were started by people from the South, Braden says. These churches frequently reach other southern transplants but not native Californians or even the church starters' children.

"At one church, I asked six leaders how many of them had children in Southern Baptist churches. Only one said yes," Braden says. The one child who is a member of a Southern Baptist church goes to a church with a contemporary worship style.

Braden says his challenge is to help Southern Baptists accept that it's OK to be different to a point. "I don't believe that all churches have to be alike, but they do have to have a Great Commission purpose."

Missionaries in both cities say residents are open to the gospel.

Before eating dinner at a restaurant on Long Island, N.Y., home missionary Phyllis Adams and her guests bowed their heads to pray. The waitress noticed and asked if the group would pray for her, saying she desired inner peace. Adams assured her inner peace was possible and made a mental note to eat at that restaurant often to follow-up with the waitress.

"People from the South think people here are cold to the gospel, but that's not true," says Adams, an Oklahoma native. "They have to be shown God's love by meeting their needs."

Another Oklahoma native, Paul Wilkerson, agrees. "I've never found ministry here difficult," says the Calvary-Arrowhead Baptist Association director of missions who has been in southern California 30 years. "People are open and hungry for the gospel. It's a laid-back, casual society with not a lot of pretenses. People are open here. It's refreshing."

In New York City, Oden says the key to getting residents interested in multi-housing ministries is teaching English as a second language. "We love them and teach them English and the Bible study comes easy," she says.

"It takes a long time for people to think it through, but once they do, they're committed. One man took a year and a half to decide to be baptized."

Because it can take a long time for people to respond, ministries in these areas require long-term commitments.

John Craig was assigned to New York City as a US-2 missionary, a college graduate serving two years in home missions. He specialized in helping churches develop youth ministries. When he completed his two-year term, he was offered a position as a church youth minister in the South.

"I had to ask myself, who do I feel called to minister to?" Craig says. He decided many people want church jobs in the Bible Belt, but not everyone would work in New York City. He chose to stay.

"You've got to have a sense of call," Dean says. "If you know that, what else do you need?"

In California, Sowell says, "At 39, I have no expectation of doing anything else. I don't expect short-term results. I came to this position with a clear, unprecedented call from God. God said, 'I'm doing something in L.A., and you have the opportunity to participate.' The conditions didn't call me."

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(BP) photos (two vertical, one horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press. Outlines on SBCNet.

New York City vols venture  
to Alaska's missions frontier By Karen L. Willoughby

Baptist Press  
11/28/95

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (BP)--Familiar with the concrete canyons of New York City, a nine-person mission team from the city's Graffiti ministry center gasped at their first exposure to Alaska.

"It was just the most gorgeous place," said Brandon Boozer, a senior at New York University and president of the Baptist Student Union there. "It's a wilderness with a little bit of city thrown in."

Added to the visual grandeur during the next eight days would be an earthquake and a staredown with a moose.

Boozer, three other BSUers, three leaders of the Graffiti congregation and two women members went to Alaska to help in construction work at two Anchorage churches.

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"I didn't expect (Rabbit Creek Community Church) to be as big as it was," Boozer said. "I think we were the 40th team that had come to help them."

Rabbit Creek's old worship center held about 90 people; the new, about 450, said Terry Hill, the church's pastor. About 170 gather for worship each Sunday, he said.

Boozer spent most of his time at Rabbit Creek straddling a six-inch-wide beam that was 12 feet off the ground.

"It needed to be painted," Boozer said. "I didn't realize we would be doing so much touch-up work."

That was what was needed, said Judy Rice, missions ministries/Woman's Missionary Union director for Alaskan Baptists who coordinated the missions teams' assignments.

"Because of our harsh weather, we need to repaint on a regular basis," Rice said. "A lot of work goes into keeping our buildings looking attractive. It worked out perfectly that this was the kind of thing they were skilled in doing and excited about doing."

Graffiti's mission team also worked at Hillside Baptist Church, where a congregation of about 50 was meeting without a pastor. Hillside invited the mission team to sleep on the church floor and provided a daily lunch for them.

The mission team edged the lawn, cleaned up the grounds and polished everything in the church, all in the light of mid-May's 22-hour days.

"The earthquake hit at 3:20 a.m.," Boozer recounted. "It was a 5.9, and there were two aftershocks of 4-plus each. We were sleeping on the floor and, in the middle of the two hours of night when the floor moved, we did too."

"It was fantastic, though, everything about the mission trip," he said. "A few people felt more of a sense of community with BSU. Others got the really neat feeling that you've done something. In New York, you're just a number. On the mission trip, we were feeling like we were helping people."

The seed of Graffiti's mission trip started when a couple of women in the church joked about visiting every state that started with the letter "A," said trip organizer Susan Field, who with her husband, Taylor, serve in New York City church and community ministries as Southern Baptist Home Mission Board missionaries.

The seed took root and a couple of months later, Field contacted the HMB.

"I told them we're a small mission church and have some students and young women who'd like to come on a mission trip to Alaska," Field said. "They put me in contact with Judy Rice, and she helped us get a good rate on airline tickets. The mission team worked for six days and went sightseeing for two, but they didn't need to leave the church grounds to experience wildlife. They saw an Alaskan bull moose on the church parking lot."

"I got within 30 feet of him," Boozer said. "Then he saw me and got spooked. He shuddered in all four feet and stood there staring at me while I edged my way sideways into some trees."

Moose attack by running over their prey and trampling them, Boozer said. "I wanted to avoid that."

And after his hike up Flattop, a mountain near Anchorage, he wants to avoid mountain climbing too, Boozer said.

"We were falling in waist-deep snow, but that wasn't the bad part," Boozer said. "I was determined to get to the top, and it only took us four hours to go 1,500 feet."

"Getting back down, now that was the bad part." Boozer said he learned what trusting God was all about while trying barehanded and in Nike Crosstrainer shoes to feel his way down a 20-foot wall of snow.

Returning to New York City wasn't much more fun, Boozer said.

"It was like a return to reality," he said. "The view from the World Trade Center is really nice, but you can't see even to Central Park because of all the buildings and the smog."

Graffiti -- its official name is East Seventh Baptist Ministry -- reaches out to the people who cower in the shadowy corners of some of those buildings in New York City's infamous Lower East Side.

Established in 1974 by a Maryland student missions team, Graffiti provides ministry to all age groups from its operational base, a 16-by-20-foot brick storefront within eyesight of the former homeless haven, Tompkins Square Park.

Although the homeless were booted from the park after a three-day riot in the late 1980s, they cling to the neighborhood. So do the elderly, children, users and sellers of drugs, students of nearby New York University and urbanites in general.

"Our mission is to empower people to meet Christ and be freed from bondage," Field said. "That would include any economic group."

Because of limited space and multiple needs, Graffiti ministers in 26 locations.

"God said spread out," Field said. "Now we're ingrained in the neighborhood all over the Lower East Side."

Graffiti purchased a former Jewish synagogue in May for \$50,000 just down the block from the ministry center. The synagogue will be demolished but its turn-of-the-century front will grace the new building, Field said.

Because of the positive impact of the Alaska trip on the Graffiti group, Field said she would not be surprised if there would be a similar mission project in a year or two.

"Who knows," Field said. "God might send us to Arizona!"

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Willoughby is a free-lance writer in Visalia, Calif.

**Volunteers in Alaska need  
purpose, eye for grandeur**

By Karen L. Willoughby

**Baptist Press  
11/28/95**

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (BP)--At least 30 mission teams take a giant step north beyond Canada to Alaska each year.

Most fly in; some drive the Alaskan Highway. Judy Rice, the state's director of missions ministries and Woman's Missionary Union, said she knows of none who have taken a cruise ship in order to participate in a mission project.

"We can't involve just numerous, numerous teams," Rice said. "We only have 62 churches and 26 missions.

"It takes planning and coordination for mission groups to have an effective ministry in Alaska," she said. "We need to have some kind of strategy in place so what the volunteers do is effective and builds on what we're doing in Alaska."

Most of the mission teams come to Alaska in the summer months, and November is not too soon for them to start planning, Rice said. All types of ministries are needed -- Vacation Bible Schools, neighborhood surveys, revivals, skilled and unskilled construction and more.

"Volunteers best help when they come with the mind-set to be flexible when needed, to allow God's Holy Spirit to empower them to do things they hadn't planned on," Rice said. "God may have a better plan that will benefit the work more in the long run."

But planning is essential. For one reason: "Alaska has 1 million acres of land for every day of the year," Rice said. "The state still has a lot of places it's hard to get to and costly to get to."

Brandon Boozer of Arlington, Texas, and a student at New York University, participated in a recent mission trip to Anchorage.

"When I went to Alaska, it was just like going to Texas, only colder," he said. "It was just the most gorgeous place, and so many of the people were from Texas."

And so many people have the same story as to how they got to Alaska, said Susan Field, a Southern Baptist home missionary in New York City who participated in the same mission trip.

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"Several said their dad came home one day and said, 'Let's go to Alaska,'" Field said. "They packed up and went and never looked back. Burned their bridges and made this their home. What a pioneer spirit."

Prices for consumables such as food, gasoline and clothing in Anchorage are comparable to "outside," Rice said, but transportation costs drive them up in the interior.

"The most expensive thing in Alaska is housing, even in Anchorage," she said. "Most Alaskan families don't buy a house larger than they need. This makes it hard to get volunteers." They don't have anywhere to stay at a minimal cost.

Volunteers can expect any number of surprises weather-wise, Rice said. Fashion-wise, they're instructed to come prepared with the layered look. Summer temperatures can soar to 95 and above in places; in winter, mercury dips to 70 below are standard in some locations.

Volunteers are encouraged to plan to spend some time in seeing the beauty of Alaska, Rice said.

"I think we must take time to see the beauty God has displayed in our state," Rice said. "If we go and don't see what's around us, I don't think we enjoy what God has given us to enjoy."

In addition to churches and missions, God has provided Southern Baptists in Alaska with glaciers, tundra, northern lights, breathtaking vistas and a cacophony of human needs in a place where depression, spousal and child abuse, alcoholism and other heartbreaks germinate during long winter nights.

"Our work here is stable," Rice said. "Still, there is a lot of work that needs to be done. What I tell people is, be in tune with God and his plans, and be prepared for obstacles. If you want to see a mission field, look around you."

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His mountaintop experience  
yielded more than euphoria

By Karen L. Willoughby

Baptist Press  
11/28/95

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (BP)--The problem with mountaintop experiences is there is no where to go but down.

Brandon Boozer of Arlington, Texas, and a senior at New York University, decided to spend his last day on a mission trip to Alaska climbing Flatop, a plateau rising 3,000 feet above the valley floor near Anchorage.

He was with other eight members of the mission team from Graffiti inner-city ministry center in New York City. They had worked six days in unskilled construction tasks at two Anchorage churches and had given themselves two days to explore the state.

Five members of the ministry team dropped out of the king-on-the-mountain game when they broke through the crust to waist-deep Alaskan snow. In May.

Boozer, fellow BSUer Amy Raines, and Taylor Field, pastor/director at Graffiti, determined to go all the way. It was only 1,500 feet more.

Which took four hours to climb.

Raines and Field had the proper footgear. Boozer was in Nike Crosstrainers with hard soles.

"Things were getting slick in the mist," Boozer said. "The last 50 feet was a vertical climb with an 80- to 85-degree angle. The top 15 to 20 feet was just snow, and I wasn't wearing gloves."

Through the sheer grit learned in 14 years of martial arts training, Boozer pulled himself atop the plateau behind Raines and Field.

"I was ecstatic," exclaimed Boozer, who is graduating in December with a double major in marketing and international business. "All the correlations came into my mind. In life, you do your best to climb up, and only a few make it. I made it to the top!

"Then I realized that unlike life's ladder, I had to get off the mountain. I was scared. I didn't have the guts to go down. I knew it would be a long fall onto the rocks below."

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But climbing backwards was the only way off the mountain.

"As I went down, all I had to rely on was Taylor's voice," Boozer said. "He would tell me 'a little to the right' or 'down a little more' and I would have to trust that where he was guiding me to was a good foothold.

"I was panicky. My hands were slippery -- no gloves. My shoes were sliding. I just kept trusting that voice."

A scriptural analogy came to him, Boozer said.

"In life, things can happen and you just slip," he said. "You didn't mean to. You didn't plan to. As we go down from our mountaintop experiences with the Lord, we can slip.

"Unlike the mountain, though, God is much more forgiving," Boozer said.

Boozer said he also learned about trust and obedience as he crawled backward down the mountain.

"Listening to Taylor lead me, I realized that as long as you trust God and do what he says, you're OK. Only God can get you safely down the mountain."

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Church active in missions  
locally, internationally

By Dana Williamson

Baptist Press  
11/28/95

BROKEN ARROW, Okla. (BP)--First Baptist Church of Broken Arrow, Okla., is an Acts 1:8 church.

Its pastor, staff and members believe in taking the gospel to Broken Arrow (Jerusalem), Oklahoma (Judea), the United States (Samaria) and the world (uttermost part of the earth).

And they believe in doing it all at the same time.

The 3,000-member church has members now serving in short-term mission projects in Serbia and India. Congregations of Russians, Cambodians, Native Americans and Hispanics meet weekly in the church's facilities and in home Bible studies. Minimum security prisoners are transported from Tulsa state prisons to join in Sunday worship services.

All told, more than a dozen ethnic groups are involved in the church's international ministry headed by volunteer Debbie Morris.

Perhaps the most visible ministry to area residents is Cornerstone Mission House, a rock house on the corner of the church's property, just south of Main Street in downtown Broken Arrow. More than \$90,000 worth of services was provided last year through food and clothing distribution, aid with utilities, rental assistance, help for transients and a free medical clinic which alone saw 28 people come to Christ last year. Lisa Efaw is volunteer coordinator of Cornerstone.

Although one of the largest congregations in Tulsa Metro Baptist Association as well as the state, the church is not content to just continue the ministries it has started.

In the planning stages are one to two preaching points for lower socio-economic groups, an African American congregation, mission trips to the Rio Grande area, Venezuela and Vietnam, plus a partnership with North and South Dakota.

Coordinating the missions efforts is Lanny Loe, minister of missions, who came to Broken Arrow in June from a pastorate in Texarkana, Ark.

Loe is no stranger to missions work, and when he met First Baptist pastor Nick Garland while Garland was leading a revival in Texarkana, the two linked up, and Loe became one of the few ministers of missions in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Loe got his first taste of working with internationals while attending Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, when he helped to plant a Laotian church.

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A native of Camden, Ark. and graduate of East Texas Baptist College in Marshall, Loe said God called him to ministry when he was 16.

He met his wife, Isabel, who also had been called to missions, at East Texas, and the two were married during his sophomore year.

His first pastorate was an open-country church near Terrell, Texas, and while there he became a chaplain with the Terrell police department.

The Loes were well indoctrinated to missions when they went as Home Mission Board missionaries to northeast Utah to work with the Ute Indians. Many of the Indians were not happy with the Loes being there and medicine men put a curse on the family, issuing a death warrant for them.

"It was the first time we were actually physically attacked," Loe said. "We had two preschool children, and I would always go into our house to check it out before I would let my family come in."

Even through the threats of physical danger, the Loes planted a church, and during their six months there, the work grew from three to 70 members.

Following the mission experience in Utah, the Loes moved to Arkansas where he served one year as Native American consultant with the Arkansas Baptist Convention.

In 1987 he began an eight-year pastorate in Texarkana, but not in a normal setting. Loe merged two churches that were declining and located in post-transitional areas. Because he encouraged the members in missions, the church started a work in Montana, sending teams to minister and to build a church facility. Mission teams also were sent into Wyoming and the Dakotas.

Loe employed a black man as associate pastor, and as a result the church planted a black congregation that is still thriving.

Because the Texarkana church was willing to reach out in mission endeavors, it saw Sunday school growth, evangelism growth and record baptisms.

Loe said he believes there are two types of pastors in growing church situations.

"There are those who pastor growing churches," he said, "and there are growing church pastors, who want to see the church grow."

"Statistics show there are about 250 families a month moving to Broken Arrow," Loe pointed out. "A lot of these are black and a lot are Hispanic. We want to minister to them as well as all the international groups that are here."

"American Christianity, where we mainly just go to church, is not what most internationals are doing," Loe explained. "They're bringing a fresh, life-commitment approach. It is a radical change for them."

In addition to ministry to ethnics, the church also has special ministries to other groups such as divorcees and single parents, which come under Loe's umbrella.

Although the Broken Arrow church plans to continue to start new congregations for ethnic groups and internationals, the strategy is to turn them into self-supporting churches.

"Our goal is to birth churches and constitute them into self-supporting, autonomous churches," Loe stated. "You don't grow by keeping them, but by sending them out."

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "ISC couple in Ireland finds God at work among Catholics," dated 11/27/95, please change the headline to read "ISC couple finds God at work in Ireland."

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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