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WASHINGTON--Baptist leaders condemn racism, call for action.

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Baptist leaders condemn
racism, call for action

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
12/18/95

WASHINGTON (BP)--Leaders of the major Baptist conventions in the United States have issued a condemnation of racism and a call for Baptists of all races to work for racial harmony.

In a meeting Dec. 14 at the headquarters of the Baptist World Alliance, leaders from such groups as the Southern Baptist Convention, American Baptist Churches, USA, and the predominantly African American National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., and Progressive National Baptist Convention adopted a statement calling "upon our people to repent of racism, to forgive one another, and to work actively for the eradication of racism from our churches, schools and society."

The statement includes a five-part call to action:

-- "To take concrete actions that demonstrate the authenticity of our repentance.

-- "To move beyond polite and politically correct language to engage each other in open and frank discussion about the sins of racism and prejudice in our society and in all levels of our church life.

-- "To disavow race-based economic and political exploitation and call upon Baptist corporate, business and political leaders to embrace and implement a biblical vision of justice.

-- "To use the collective influence of Baptist communions to call America to prayer and repentance for the sins of racism and to seek for spiritual healing in the spirit of Jesus the Christ.

-- "That the leadership of Baptist communions meet again in the next six months in order to develop specific plans for the implementation of the above actions."

The statement also said, "Racism destroys the social fabric of society and is a cancer which will destroy our society, if we do not act quickly to eliminate it from our churches, schools and society at large."

Adoption of the statement followed a four-and-a-half-hour meeting in which participants discussed the differing perspectives of both blacks and whites and how racism can be overcome.

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Participants described the meeting as historic. BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz said he did not believe such a meeting between black and white national Baptist leaders had occurred even during the civil rights campaign.

Lotz said he called the meeting after reaction to the trial of O.J. Simpson and the Million Man March "brought to the surface the underlying racism that pervades much of American society."

"I think we made some positive steps today," said SBC President Jim Henry at a news conference after the meeting, "and we think in the future we're going to bring some more specific actions that will be more than words."

American Baptist Churches General Secretary Dan Weiss said, "We began something here today. We certainly haven't finished anything, but we planted some seeds. I think we, in just a few short hours, demonstrated our capacity to put things out on the table, to state our positions with frankness and began to establish a kind of relationship that bodes well for the future."

Several times during the meeting, African American participants said white pastors and laity must do more to eradicate what they described as a racist system and to produce racial harmony.

White Christians have "not dismantled what they endorsed during slavery," said John Chaplin, first vice president of the National Baptist Convention, USA. Black preachers are willing to deal with black anger, but whites "must dismantle the monster from within," he said.

There are good white people who "have been privileged by a racist system," said Bennett Smith, president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention and a pastor in Buffalo, N.Y.

It is imperative white pastors confront in their congregations corporate leaders who oppress others, Smith said.

Blacks must embrace forgiveness, while whites must "embrace their shame," said Roscoe Cooper, general secretary of the NBC, USA.

About 99 percent of whites do not see racism as a systemic problem but as an individual one, said Jere Allen, executive director of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention. It is the responsibility of whites to "understand the deep hurt" of blacks, Allen said. When some progressive whites speak out in order to help, they are "shut down" by some blacks, Allen said.

Allen and three other participants offered suggestions on how churches can combat racism. A consistent recommendation was for black and white Christians to work together in ministry.

Jack Kwok, the Arkansas Baptist Convention's director of cooperative ministries with National Baptists, said he seeks to move whites from "prejudice and paternalism ... to partnership."

In Arkansas, Southern Baptists and National Baptists have worked together to conduct evangelistic campaigns, construct church buildings and fight the legalization of gambling. Kwok's department also conducts joint seminars where racism is preached against as a sin.

Ronald Bobo, president of the BWA youth department and an African American pastor in St. Louis, recommended cooperative efforts by black and white youth and children in order to prevent them from becoming racists.

Harold Carter, an African American pastor in Baltimore, said having black and white leaders to speak out together against racism in 100 cities on the same day would have a significant impact through the news media.

Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church in Orlando, Fla., said of the SBC's June resolution acknowledging slavery's role in its formation and apologizing to and asking forgiveness of African Americans:

"It was a dynamic, spiritual experience. It was more than just holding up your hand or waving a card. And I hope that none of you at the table will mis-estimate or underestimate what that meant not only emotionally but we feel like philosophically, theologically ..."

He received some "harsh, hot letters" from black and white Christians, Henry said, but mostly SBC leaders had heard that the convention was "going in the right direction."

Carter said, "I know the SBC acted, but it had almost no impact in the black community. I don't mean to put that down, but that's the truth."

Henry said Gary Frost, the SBC's second vice president, and he hoped to offer some specific recommendations for implementation of the resolution during the Inter-agency Council meeting in February. The council consists of the heads of the SBC's agencies. Frost, an African American pastor in Youngstown, Ohio, also participated in the BWA meeting.

There were 11 African Americans and seven whites who participated in the summit. Other participants were: Ernest Mosley, executive vice president of the SBC Executive Committee; Tyrone Pitts, PNBC general secretary; Elaine Smith, ABC president; Robert Mobley, president of the Czechoslovak Baptist Convention, USA and Canada; John Peterson, vice president of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention and an Alexandria, Va., pastor; Cessar Scott, general secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Virginia; Wallace Smith, chairman of the BWA Commission on Baptists Against Racism and a Washington, D.C., pastor, and Philip Yntema, executive director of the North American Baptist Conference.

Lotz asked Henry, Cooper, Weiss and Bennett Smith to be a committee to develop plans for the next meeting on racism.

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Merrell named vice president
for SBC Executive Committee

Baptist Press
12/18/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--William Merrell has been named the new vice president for convention relations for the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

Merrell, 52, succeeds Mark Coppenger as the convention's public relations director. Coppenger became president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo., in August.

Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the Executive Committee, in making the announcement, said Merrell has exceptional communication skills, having served as a pastor, a director of missions and a denominational staff member.

"He is comfortable relating to all segments of the broadcast and print media, both religious and secular. He will be an articulate spokesman for the Executive Committee," Chapman said. "He brings to the position a wealth of knowledge about Southern Baptist doctrine and polity. His depth of understanding about the denomination will enable him to interpret to the nation the basic beliefs of the SBC as written in the Baptist Faith and Message. He loves the Lord and His Word and he loves Southern Baptists. I welcome him to the staff as a valued team member."

Merrell's appointment was approved by the officers of the Executive Committee Dec. 11. Under existing policy Chapman may, with the approval of the officers, fill an executive vacancy between Executive Committee meetings. Committee members vote on the selection at the next regular meeting in February.

Merrell's responsibilities include editing SBC LIFE, a monthly publication for the Executive Committee, writing materials and pamphlets, producing video and television clips, all designed to explain who Southern Baptists are and what they believe.

"I am delighted for the opportunity to serve the larger family of Southern Baptists," said Merrell. "I look forward to serving with Dr. Chapman and the staff of the Executive Committee in highlighting Baptist work."

Prior to coming to the CLC in early 1995 as director of communications, Merrell was director of missions for the Comanche-Cotton Baptist Association in Lawton, Okla., 1991-95. He was pastor of seven churches in Texas prior to a nine-year pastorate at Country Estates Baptist Church, Midwest City, Okla., 1982-91.

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In addition, Merrell has been active for many years in denominational work, including the SBC Resolutions Committee, the Committee on Nominations and the Committee on Committees. On a state level, Merrell served in a variety of capacities with the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, including as a member of the convention's board of directors, president of state's pastors conference, and a member of the board of trustees for Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee. Merrell also was a SBC representative at-large for the North American Baptist Fellowship of the Baptist World Alliance.

He was chaplain of both the senate and house of representatives of the State of Oklahoma and a member of the Institutional Review Board for the Comanche County Memorial Hospital. He was a founding member of the Crisis Pregnancy Centers in Oklahoma City and Southwest Oklahoma (Lawton).

His education includes a doctor of ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, a master of divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, a bachelor of science from Dallas Baptist University, and an associate of arts degree from Jacksonville College, Jacksonville, Texas.

An Oklahoma native, Merrell is married to the former Sharla Jan Smith and they have three children: Jason, Jeffrey and Jennifer.

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(BP) photo available from central office of Baptist Press, also mailed to state Baptist newspapers.

Empty shoe boxes and cookies
provide Christmas mini-miracle

Baptist Press
12/18/95

TUCSON, Ariz. (BP)--When all the pieces of a Christmas cookie distribution project came together, it was a mini-miracle in Tucson.

Southern Baptist chaplain Ron Underwood and Catalina Baptist Association director of evangelism/missions John Brackin cooperated to send Christmas cookies to Tucson's Davis-Monthan Air Force Base personnel assigned as troop support for the Bosnia Peace Force.

The duo sent a letter to the 62 churches and missions that make up the Catalina association asking them to bring gift-wrapped shoe boxes of cookies to the association office by Dec. 7. The churches were also encouraged to place a personal note, Christmas card or tract.

Seventeen churches responded to the opportunity to minister. When Sandario Baptist Church pastor Bob McSpadden brought the cookies from his church, he mentioned he had 25-30 empty shoe boxes left. Catalina association secretary Edna Gilliland said the association office would take them off his hands.

Brackin hoped someone who needed boxes for their cookies might take them, but as the deadline for receiving cookies drew near, the empty boxes remained stacked in the associational office.

Then God began to put things together.

First Southern Baptist Church, Tucson, hosted a cookies-and-coffee reception after the annual association missions Christmas tree celebration on Dec. 7. In 1994, there were not enough cookies to feed the over 200 people who attended the event. First Southern staff members were determined they would not run out of cookies at the 1995 celebration.

Several thousand cookies were baked by church members. Once again over 200 people attended the mission Christmas tree celebration. Everyone stuffed themselves with cookies, but still more than 1,000 cookies were left over.

WMU director Vera Parr offered the extra cookies to Brackin. Because the shoe boxes were in his office, he had a way to package the cookies. They were to be picked up by Underwood at 10:50 the next morning.

Brackin retrieved the boxes from the association office and took the cookies home. He packaged cookies until midnight. His wife, Anne, continued until 2:15 a.m.

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Still, the association was short of its goal of 400 boxes of cookies. The next morning when Underwood and Airman Tobie Boquè, a Southern Baptist from Houston, came in a military truck for the cookies, Brackin apologized.

In reply to Underwood's question of how many boxes he did have, Brackin answered, "Three-hundred and thirty-two boxes of cookies and two cans of mixed nuts."

Underwood replied, "We deployed 332 troops from Davis-Monthan to the base where these cookies are going."

Brackin rejoiced in the successful project.

"God provided the empty shoe boxes. Then at the last minute he filled them with cookies," Brackin said. "It never ceases to amaze me how our Lord works."

Upon seeing the room filled with cookies, Chaplain Underwood said, "Catalina Association has provided every airman (from Tucson) deployed at Aviano Air Base, Italy, with a Christmas gift. It is an amazing outpouring of Christian love."

The chaplain will personally deliver the cookies before Christmas.

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John Brackin contributed to this story appearing in the Arizona Baptist Beacon.

N. Carolinians build ties
with New York City Baptists

By Kelli Williams

Baptist Press
12/18/95

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (BP)--Churches in metropolitan New York and Charlotte and Raleigh, N.C., have decided to share some trade secrets.

"The goal is to strengthen both the churches in New York and the Charlotte and Raleigh areas," said Ron Pinkerton, executive director of the Baptist Metropolina Ministries (Charlotte's Baptist association).

The emphasis of this unique three-part partnership, which began more than a year ago, is for individual North Carolina congregations to relate directly to individual congregations in metropolitan New York.

The New York and North Carolina state conventions had already formed a statewide relationship of mutual support several years ago, but these three associations wanted to take it a step further.

"New York is an 80 percent ethnic and language association," said Roger Nix, executive director of the Raleigh Baptist Association. "Here in Raleigh it's only 10 percent, but we're growing, so we could gain a lot from them on how to do language ministry and reach out to different types of people. Where many of their churches are young and struggling, we hope our strength in numbers and experience will be positive."

Pinkerton agreed. "They're so much further ahead in urban ministries than we are and we want to learn from them. At the same time, we want to give them the resources of a stronger Baptist church population."

Help from their southern brothers is much needed, according to David Dean, executive director of the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association. The broad spectrum of people in metropolitan New York makes for a fragmented association that must deal with basic problems of language differences and finances before they can move on to more complex ministry.

Simply surviving in New York City is tough, Dean said. Because of the diverse population of cultures and languages in the association and the enormous task of even finding a meeting facility, most churches have fewer than 150 members.

"To start a church here in metropolitan New York is so different and so hard compared to Charlotte, N.C., or anywhere else. We could start 50 new churches if we had the resources, but we don't," Dean said. "Half of the established churches weren't able to contribute to the association last year. They have to use the money to maintain their churches. We have 25 Haitian churches, but only three have pastors who are paid by the church. The rest are bivocational and pay the rent on the buildings themselves for the privilege of starting a church."

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Jan Cartledge, minister of youth and education at Woodhaven Baptist Church in Apex, N.C., has seen the need. For the past three years, her church has conducted leadership training seminars for churches in Long Island, N.Y., strengthening their skills and methods as well as giving them creative ideas and practical material.

"Because the congregations are so small, they often don't have the financial resources for things like Sunday school curriculum," Cartledge said. "The churches we visited were so excited to get the information and material. It's stuff that comes across my desk every day, but they'd never seen it before."

The predominantly immigrant face of metropolitan New York has made the New York Baptist churches strong in relating to different cultures. An association of Haitian, Hispanic, Korean, Chinese, Portuguese, Arabic, African American, and Jamaican churches has much to offer the growing populations down South.

Dean recalled when the language director from Charlotte visited a Hispanic church in metropolitan New York. "It gave him the opportunity to catch a vision for missions on a level he had never seen."

An 18-member team of youth and adults from Idlewild Baptist Church in the Charlotte association spent time last July at Fellowship Baptist Church, an African American congregation on Staten Island, as part of the church's summer day camp.

"It was a tremendous experience," said senior pastor Randy Petty. "We really developed a sweet relationship with them. We tried to help them with some of the 'mechanical' aspects of Christianity and they've totally changed our attitude about worship. They came to visit in the fall, and it was like a family reunion. It's an experience I wish every church could have."

"We're encouraging our churches to develop not a 'project' mentality," Nix said, "but a long-term partnership mentality."

As more trips are taken, more prayer partnerships are formed, more building projects are completed and more ideas and experiences are shared, churches replace their "zoom-in, zoom-out" mentality of mission ministry with a commitment to long-term support, Dean said.

"We need people to really get to know each other," he said. "We need people to catch that vision of a partnership where churches can get 'under the load' with each other for the greater purpose of spreading the gospel."

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Williams is a free-lance writer in Raleigh, N.C.

Urban Baltimore congregation
aims to help, not be helped

By Rachel Gill

Baptist Press
12/18/95

BALTIMORE (BP)--Southern Baptist home missionary Jon Spencer is leading Canton Baptist Church & Neighborhood Center into a new era, from a place that receives from others to one that freely gives itself.

In 1993, the small but growing congregation made a giant leap of faith. After 85 years of sponsorship by the local Baptist association and the Home Mission Board, the mission became Canton Baptist Church & Neighborhood Center.

In its history as Canton mission, leaders of the congregation came from another church or the association -- always from another place. Members were helped, not trained. With pastor Jon Spencer's ministry, that is changing.

"At times the work here is a struggle," Spencer says. "But it's exciting to see people developing as lay leaders."

Spencer, appointed by the HMB in 1989 to direct the center, led the effort to become an autonomous congregation.

In his ministry, Spencer had no intention of being a pastor. But the role fits his easy, compassionate style. He works at getting to know his people and wants them to know him. To make sure the congregation understands that, Jon, wife Sarah and their two children live in the tight-knit southeast Baltimore neighborhood.

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"We love living here," says Spencer, whose house is across the street from a giant city park. "It's a wonderful place to bring up children."

But beyond sharing living space, Spencer believes urban pastors must address urban needs. In a city known for distinct neighborhoods, Canton has a reputation as a stable, white, working-class community with a large percentage of homeowners and a relatively low crime rate.

In recent years, however, jobs have been hard to find for those who earn a living with their hands. Increasingly, poverty, coupled with low self-esteem and depression, plague those unable to find work.

"There are problems here," Spencer says. "We can't ignore them. But if the church is to be redemptive, we must minister to the whole community."

Spencer leads the church to do that in a number of ways. He is president of a community group that works on poverty issues and lobbies the state legislature for hunger funds. He spends one morning a week at a local junior high school, training ninth-graders to foster racial harmony in school. And he works with local pastors in a collective approach to tackle other neighborhood problems.

The Neighborhood Center serves the community as an emergency food pantry. And on weekdays, the sanctuary is converted into a dining hall to host the Eating Together program, a Baltimore effort to provide seniors with one hot meal a day.

"We're working with the city and other churches," Spencer says. "If we were a 'lone ranger' working on our own, we wouldn't have much impact. If we work cooperatively, we'll be a part of good things happening in the city."

"Evangelism and social ministries are two sides of the same coin," he continues. "We're not duplicating what Social Services is doing. We're working for personal transformation. We need to lead people to real change. Real solutions."

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This story originally appeared in the September-October edition of MissionsUSA magazine. (BP) photo of Spencer (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Home Mission Board. Cutlines are in the SBCNet News Room.

He points tourists to nature
to introduce God's revelation By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
12/18/95

WILSON, Wyo. (BP)--Tiger tooth violets are one of Randy Foster's favorite object lessons.

Less than six inches tall, the flowers survive under 20 feet of snow each winter. They're so fragile, however, they wilt if someone blows on them.

The flower's lesson, Foster says, is "there is a God, and one way he's revealed himself is through nature." As a home missionary, Foster says his job includes interpreting such revelations to 3 million tourists who come to western Wyoming each year.

The average summer tourist stays in the area less than two days. To reach people in such a short time, Foster decided to "become visible at the points where they were looking."

Through Teton Resort Ministries, Foster offers guided horseback rides, climbing expeditions, canoe trips and white-water rafting. Activities vary each year, depending on the skills of the summer staff of 15 college students who live in the Foster home. Foster's wife, Ann, and their four sons also are involved in the ministry.

As tourists raft a river in the shadow of the Grand Tetons or ride a horse across the continental divide, "conversations always turn to who we are and what we're about," Foster says.

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Three years ago Foster's son led a family of four on a horseback trip. The family was amazed the 16-year-old guide knew so much about the Bible, Foster says. At home, the mother began to study the Bible herself. The family returned to Wyoming the following summer and went on another horseback outing with Teton Resort Ministries. The father wasn't as interested in spiritual things as his wife and children had become, but he tolerated their discussions, Foster says. By this summer, each member of the family, including the father, had made professions of faith.

In addition to planned activities, the Fosters minister through hospitality. One summer 187 people spent the night at their home, Ann Foster says. Kept from their outdoor plans by bad weather, visitors ranged from members of a motorcycle gang to an Amish family. They stayed with the Fosters after finding the number for Teton Resort Ministries in the phone book.

In addition to tourists, the area is home to seasonal employees, entrepreneurs in the tourist industry, vacation home owners and longtime Wyoming residents.

The last group may be the hardest to reach for Christ. "People here are very self-sufficient," Ann says. With 35 feet of snow falling every winter and isolating people in rural areas, residents have to be fairly independent to survive.

Historically, western Wyoming has drawn people seeking adventure and opportunities to express extreme individualism, Randy says.

The first missionaries came to Wyoming in 1835 to work among Indian tribes. Missionaries were viewed as "self-righteous, intolerant, easily irritable and, other than that, just hard to get along with," he says. "The mountain men thought anyone who was not like them was strange and not to be trusted."

Some of that attitude persists. "We have a neighbor who didn't speak anything but curse words to us for five years," Ann says.

Randy's attempts to reach the longtime Wyoming residents center around Wilson Baptist Church, a congregation he started 18 years ago. The church strategy, he says, is for members to "all look for opportunities to minister and witness."

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press. Outline on SBCNet.

**Nation's least-populated state
offers missions opportunities** By Sarah Zimmerman

**Baptist Press
12/18/95**

WILSON, Wyo. (BP)--According to the green highway sign, Wilson, Wyo., is home to 200 people living at 6,160 feet above sea level. Like many Wyoming towns, the elevation is more than the population.

In 1990 Wyoming had 453,600 residents, less than two people per square mile.

"Distance, isolation and weather are all factors in church work" in the nation's least-populated state, said John Herrington, director of missions and evangelism for the Wyoming Southern Baptist Convention.

Herrington moved to Wyoming 30 years ago as a pastor. "The nearest pastor of like faith and order was 108 miles away," he recalled. "It was cold and lonesome and the most wonderful thing I ever did ... I had a marvelous sense of destiny, the awesome sense of being where God wanted me."

To cope with isolation, Herrington said he reminded himself he was part of a larger denomination. "I knew I could pick up the phone and relate to millions of other Southern Baptists ... When new ministers come here, we do not fail to impress upon them that they're part of a worldwide missions effort."

Southern Baptist work in Wyoming began in 1951 with a congregation in Casper. Now the state has about 100 congregations. The largest church is in Cheyenne and averages 230 in Sunday school, but the statewide Sunday school average attendance is 52, Herrington said.

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Southern Baptists account for 3 percent of the state's population, he noted. The Catholic church claims 13 percent of Wyoming residents and the Mormon church 10 percent, according to a 1990 survey of church membership. One of his goals, Herrington said, is for people in Wyoming to realize "Southern Baptists are more than some little anti-Mormon sect."

Most of Wyoming's residents -- 52 percent -- have no church affiliation, according to the 1990 survey. Reaching the unchurched in Wyoming will require bivocational church leaders, Herrington said, because the churches are not large enough to support fully paid ministers. Wyoming doesn't offer a lot of job possibilities, however. The state's three main economic sources are cattle and sheep ranching, coal production and tourism.

About half of the state's pastors receive some Home Mission Board assistance, Herrington noted. Those who stay in the state despite the harsh winters and isolation are the cream of the crop, he said. "We have preachers here who could ring the bell anywhere."

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Dolls help her tell story
of God's love worldwide

By Teresa Dickens

Baptist Press
12/18/95

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Many missions volunteers tell their travel experiences with the aid of slides, but not Becie Kirkwood. She recounts her missions-related travel through her collection of dolls.

Kirkwood, a member of Morningview Baptist Church, Montgomery, Ala., has collected more than 100 dolls during trips to Southern Baptist mission points in 34 countries and across the United States. Kirkwood recently donated her collection to Woman's Missionary Union.

Although she had some dolls earlier, Kirkwood officially began collecting them in 1972 while serving as WMU executive director for the Baptist Convention of Ohio Baptists. She worked for the Ohio convention -- which included all of Ohio and parts of New York, Pennsylvania and West Virginia -- from 1961-76.

About 60 of the dolls were gathered in 1972 during a sabbatic leave provided by the convention. Kirkwood had planned a "trip around the world" for her sabbatic, but became ill and had to cut the trip short. She gathered another large portion of her collection in 1977 while serving as a missions volunteer in Kenya.

Some of Kirkwood's favorite dolls are those representing China around the turn of the century. These dolls intrigue her, she said, because they represent Lottie Moon's China and the advancement of the gospel in China due to efforts of Moon and other Southern Baptist missionaries.

One such doll depicts a Chinese grandfather from the era. The doll is clothed in typical Chinese dress of the early 1900s -- trousers with a matching knee-length coat and a bamboo hat -- resting in a rocking chair and smoking a pipe. Kirkwood bought the doll while in Hong Kong in 1989 on a WMU-sponsored "Tour of Lottie Moon's China."

"This doll specifically reminds me of Lottie Moon," Kirkwood shared. "Most men wore clothes similar to the doll's during Lottie Moon's time in China."

Also in this group is a family of dolls, called the Ku Dolls. Members of the Ku family were refugees from north China who escaped from their homeland during the communist invasion in the early 1900s. The family was befriended by Southern Baptist missionaries who eventually led the family to faith in Jesus Christ.

The wife of the youngest son of Ku family, which had been wealthy silk merchants in China, made and sold the dolls after fleeing her homeland to pay for her children's education. Kirkwood has had her set of Ku Dolls -- including the father, mother, nanny and two children -- for some 25 years.

The purpose of collecting the dolls was educational, Kirkwood explained.

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"Many people in the United States have no real concept of other peoples of the world," she said. "I tried to buy dolls typical of the countries I visited and have used them as a teaching tool to help people here 'see' the people of the world."

Kirkwood has used her dolls in a variety of teaching situations. Many of the experiences centered around teaching children and adults about Southern Baptist missions work around the world.

One of the more unique ways she has used the dolls is as "decoration" during dinners for participants in her church's ministry with internationals who attend Air War College in Montgomery.

Explaining that the college attracts high-ranking military officials from countries throughout the world, Kirkwood said the dolls often were conversation pieces which opened the door to tell the individual about Southern Baptist work in his or her country. In one instance, the relationship developed with an officer led to the easing of restrictions placed on Southern Baptist missionaries in his country, she noted.

Impacting individuals for the cause of missions has always been her desired result in showing the dolls, she said.

Referring to individuals who will see the display of her dolls at WMU, Kirkwood commented, "I pray that the people who see them will be made to realize more fully that God loves everybody -- not just Americans, and that we have a royal command from Jesus ... to share his love with everybody."

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(BP) photo of Kirkwood holding the Chinese grandfather doll available from WMU upon request at (205) 991-4013; CompuServe, 70423,2401.

Bill Stafford: God calls
for 'continual weakness'

By James A. Smith Sr.

Baptist Press
12/18/95

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--The spiritual radiance of an 80-year-old man -- though debilitated by a stroke -- demonstrates how people see Jesus in believers because God has given them his identity, said evangelist Bill Stafford.

Before telling about the 80-year-old -- the late Roy Hession -- Stafford preached from the account of Jacob wrestling the angel in Genesis 32 during a Dec. 12 chapel service at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo.

"The more I meet Jesus ... I am aware that he didn't need me at all unless he could bring me to continual weakness so I would cast myself on his sufficiency," said Stafford of Chattanooga, Tenn., president of the International Congress on Revival.

Contrasting the physical features of Jacob and his brother Esau, Stafford illustrated the lack of importance God places on the outward appearance of men when choosing persons for service. While Esau was the epitome of ideal masculinity, Jacob was "a mamma's boy."

Noting that Esau sold his birthright to Jacob because he "would rather have self-gratification, live for the moment" than live for God, Stafford said, "God bypasses him because he can never be broken."

Instead of Esau, God chooses Jacob, "a little unlikely crook, thief, supplanter, underminer ... a scoundrel," to continue the covenant God established with Abraham.

There are three lessons to be gleaned from the account of Jacob wrestling the angel, Stafford said.

"First of all is solitude," he said. "He's all alone. He hasn't got anybody to counsel him. He can't go to some preacher ... he is totally shut up to God.

"The greatest work God will do in you will not be when you're preaching. It won't be when you're in an assembly or a convention. It won't be when you're fellowshiping with folks. God's greatest work will be in you when you're all alone," Stafford said.

--more--

Those times "in your solitude, all alone on your face, broken before (God)" will be the most fruitful times of growth in the Christian life, Stafford said.

"Find time to get alone before God and let him speak to you personally. It's in that solitude that God makes a man and a woman of God," Stafford told the seminarians.

Following the time of solitude, Jacob was then in the midst of a struggle, Stafford continued, saying he believes the "angel" Jacob wrestled was actually "Jesus in a pre-New Testament appearance. A theophany . . . I think it is Jesus because after they wrestled (Jacob) said, 'I saw God face-to-face.'"

Although "God could have whacked him out," Stafford said that Jesus wrestled the entire night with Jacob in order to give him time to surrender to God. "That's grace.

"God hates flesh. He detests flesh," Stafford said. "He wants me surrendered, submitted, reduced, weak, out of it."

Stafford said that during the night of wrestling with Jesus, Jacob came to the awareness that if the "angel" left him, he would be "Jacob" the rest of his life.

"You will never be a man of God with a glory touch of God on your life until you can come to total sickness of everything you are that God doesn't originate," Stafford said. "God only keeps up what he starts. The rest we have to prop up and that will kill you."

Temptations, trials, impure thoughts, lust and other "flesh" must be rejected. "But you won't do it unless you're sick of it," Stafford said. "You've got to look at the flesh like God looks at it.

"I cannot let the Jacob hang on. I can't let Jacob run my life. I can't hang on to what I like and don't like. I've got to let Christ make that decision. You love what he loves. You hate what he hates. His friends are your friends. His enemies are your enemies. It's just that way."

In addition to the need of solitude and the reality of struggle, Stafford said that the surprise of Jacob's experience with the angel came when God changed his name to Israel and blessed him by "touching his thigh."

Although Jacob "went in a leaper and came out a limper," Stafford said "every step he took he was reminded, 'I met God.'"

In the same way Jacob became identified with God, Stafford said Jesus should be such an integral part of the minister's life that Jesus will shine through the sermon and people will leave in awe of Jesus.

"Every time you look at a text, just find out what it is saying about the Lamb of God and preach Jesus," said Stafford.

Stafford illustrated the importance of identity with Christ by recounting the experience he had with the English preacher and author, Roy Hession who, at age 80, had been stricken with a stroke and was only able to say the word, "yes."

While meeting in an "aristocratic" hotel restaurant in England, Stafford shared with Hession a truth he had learned from the Bible. Excited by the truth, Hession "got to hollering 'Yes!'" As a result, a boy who was working in the restaurant approached their table and asked them if they were Christians. Upon learning that the man making the commotion was the author of "The Calvary Road," the boy began weeping and reported that he came to Christ as a result of reading the book.

Because of the "preacher with a stroke, full of Jesus," revival broke out in the restaurant as the people "were captured with the manifested presence of Jesus."

Although Hession is now in heaven, Stafford said, "he cannot have any more glory on him there than he had that day when Jesus showed up through him and touched that whole restaurant with the presence and power of God through one 80-year-old man who learned the Calvary road."

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Baptist Press

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled, "FMB trustees vote to release \$10 million for overseas needs," dated Dec. 14, please delete the fifth paragraph, and substitute the following paragraph for the sixth paragraph.

The recent sale of older missionary properties in Hong Kong will plow as much as \$30 million back into the board's Global Missionary Capital fund, White said. Trustees voted to release one-third of that, up to \$10 million, for housing and automobiles around the world -- as the proceeds are received by the board. The other two-thirds will be invested, as usual, into the global capital fund.

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