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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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Reconciling Families

Arkansas Baptist

March 1, 1990



1,000
Churches
In His
Lifetime?

page 5

In This Issue

Cover Story



HMB photo

1,000 Churches 5

With the help of the Annie Armstrong Offering for Home Missions, church planter Franklin Bane hopes to start 1,000 churches in his lifetime.

Editor's Page 3

Speak Up

You'll Be Glad to Know 4

Woman's Viewpoint 4

Local & State

In the Name of Christ 6

Arkansas All Over 7

Doctrine Conference 10

Nation

Joint Growth Efforts 11

CLC Seminar Slated 11

Lessons 13-14

World

Overseas Baptisms Up 12

Bell Will Toll Again 15

Divorce Policy Upheld 16

IT'S UPLIFTING

Work Still Hampered

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia—Fighting between government and rebel troops in northern Ethiopia continues to restrict the work of Southern Baptist missionaries in the country. Since mid-October, 17 Southern Baptist workers have waited in Addis Ababa, the capital, for the fighting to stop so they can return to their work in the north. They have not been able to determine how feeding centers and other mission property in embattled areas have fared in the fighting. Renewed famine now threatens many people in rebel-held areas, according to news reports.

Aid to Hospital

MOSCOW—Southern Baptists and Mennonites joined together in December to purchase a \$15,000 rebuilt portable CAT scan unit for the geriatric ward of Kashehenko Hospital, a major mental health facility in Moscow. Contact with the hospital began when volunteers from Moscow Baptist Church were allowed to minister to geriatric ward patients in 1988. The gift "represents a declaration of partnership with Soviet evangelicals as they seek to contribute to health and wholeness in their country," said a joint statement

from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and the Mennonite Central Committee. It is "intended as an encouragement to the staff at the hospital to strive for high quality care."

Flood of Applicants

GAZA—"The situation in Gaza has stabilized somewhat, even though the *intifada* continues," said Dale Thorne, director of Southern Baptist work in the Middle East and North Africa, of the ongoing Palestinian uprising. In March the Baptist-operated School of Allied Health Sciences in Gaza plans to enroll a new class for the nursing degree it offers. The school expects as many as 8,000 applications for 15 openings at the school, Thorne reported.

Legal Status for Mission

CONAKRY, Guinea—Southern Baptist missionaries in Guinea report the government has granted a "protocol" to their mission organization. The protocol is official recognition that the mission has a legal right to work. The government recently required all mission groups to submit applications; Southern Baptists were one of the first groups to be approved.

GOOD NEWS!

Unusual Love

Romans 5:8

Karl Barth was once asked by a young professor if he could state the chief message of Christianity in just one sentence. Barth responded that he believed it is expressed in a song he learned at his mother's knees: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

The Bible repeatedly declares God's love for man. This declaration is doubted by many, however. A college professor asked his students to write out what was their greatest problem with the Christian faith. The one response given more than any other was, "How can God be a God of love with the world like it is?"

The Lord God has declared his love; he has conclusively demonstrated it. In so doing he has shown his love to be unusual.

God's love is unusual because of its objects—A man once asked his pastor, "What can I do to make God love me?" Obviously the man could do nothing, for God already loved him. Paul said that God loved us even while we were yet sinners.

God's love is unusual because of its offering—There is a thin line that separates real love from the imitations. That line is the length love goes in sacrifice.

So many expressions of love today are really self-centered. Love songs declare a feeling for someone because of what that someone does. Human love is often grounded in getting and not giving.

The sacrifice of God's love was his Son. He gave the very best he had for those he loves.

God's love is unusual because of its objective—It is God's desire that all men saved (2 Pet. 3:9). The objective of his love for us is that in our response to him we come to experience his salvation.

One of the most beautiful love poems in English literature asks and answers: "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways ways." The way man can tell how much God really loves him is simply by looking at the cross.

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DON MOORE

You'll Be Glad To Know



The simple truth about our nation is that we are in desperate need of a spiritual awakening. What can we do? Without a doubt, prayer is the most outstanding thing that can be done. Regular, passionate praying will be used of God to turn us back to him. You can pray for more missionaries, more ministries, but especially for more churches and more effective churches.

The darkness of unbelief and immorality, it seems, are going to engulf us. Personal greed, indulgence and materialism control most actions in the broad streams of our society. Schools are in big trouble with poor support, no discipline, and no values allowed to be taught, such as Christian absolutes. Politically, the system and the politicians too often are suspect with the level of trust falling with each edition of the news. When schools and government crumble, we would like to say we still have the family and church. If you are like me, you find little hope in those basic structures. Can we do more than pray?

Yes, we can do our part to make our churches and our home mighty forces for righteousness. We can stop cowering down to every godless idea that sounds like freedom or democracy. Many have come to view the Constitution as taking precedence over God's Word. There are many things that are legal but before God are wrong. We can't keep compromising and claim to have a valid witness. Can we do anything else?

Yes, our Home Mission Board is working feverishly to reach our nation with the transforming power of Jesus Christ. They have no money except what we provide them. They have 3,817 missionaries that must be maintained. They have 1,270 missionaries who are working with 85 of the 200 different language groups in our country. More than half of their budget comes from the Annie Armstrong offering.

Pastors, you have received information you can use to inform your people about home missions. Sometime this month share this information and give everyone an opportunity to give to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. The offering goal is \$41 million. Thanks for your help!

Don Moore is executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Woman's Viewpoint For Today's Children

NAN OWENS

Life today is hard for the average school-age child, kindergartener to senior. Television, peer pressure, and self-fulfilling parents make it that way.

Television probably influences the average child more than any other one thing in his life, including his family. Unfortunately, there is very little on television to influence anyone toward a moral or godly life. Anything goes. Wrong is rationalized to be right, or at least acceptable and desirable. Life-styles contrary to Christian teachings are viewed so frequently that they unconsciously become the mental norm, eventually translating into life.

Heroes, which are essential to the young, are often chosen from violent or



asinine television shows or professional sports with no regard for character. Feeding on the TV greatly weakens the child's chances of a positive encounter with Jesus Christ or of spiritual development if he should become a Christian.

Overwhelming communications and exposure to what the world offers intensify peer pressure. Link that to the determination of parents to see their children accepted and succeeding socially, and the pressure is further

intensified.

The best-intentioned parents sometimes overlook the obvious. In their drive to succeed and to be "fulfilled," they fail to give their child what he needs most—themselves. The "quality time" theory is deceiving. A child needs quantity quality time. For parents to shortchange a child in order to have more time for selfish pursuits does an unrectifiable injustice to the child.

As I said, life is hard for today's children. Of course, I don't have any children; but that's the way it looks from behind the teacher's desk.

Nan Owens is a former foreign missionary and currently teaches junior high English at Parkers Chapel High School. She is a member of Second Church, El Dorado.

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HOME MISSIONS EMPHASIS

1,000 Churches

by Mark Wingfield
SBC Home Mission Board

MIAMI, Fla.—Even though he's only 33, Franklin Beam has an ambitious goal for his lifetime: to start 1,000 churches

But he's not trying to do it alone. Beam is depending upon the support of Southern Baptists nationwide and the abilities of churches throughout southern Florida.

Beam is a church extension consultant for five Baptist associations in Florida, stretching 300 miles from Vero Beach to Key West. He is one of 3,827 home missionaries who benefit each year from the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions.

"My personal goal is to start 1,000 churches in my lifetime," he said. "I'd rather start 1,000 churches than be pastor of a church with 1,000 members."

Beam hopes to accomplish this goal by becoming a catalyst to inspire existing congregations to sponsor new ones. "If I do it for them, it may not be effective. But if I teach them to do it, they'll buy into it," he said.

To illustrate the greater impact, he recalled a family trip to the Florida Keys. Four people shared one fishing pole and caught one fish. But a single man nearby, using only five simple strings and no pole, caught a bucketful of fish.

Applying that lesson to spreading the gospel, he concludes, "If I can develop fishermen (churches) that will fish day in and day out, that's a whole lot better than me going to the fishing hole once a week."

Beam travels from church to church, speaks at associational meetings, to Baptist Men's groups and Woman's Missionary Union meetings. He carries an arsenal of newspaper and magazine clippings and missions videos to get pastors and church members thinking about what they could do in church starting.

And he asks questions.

"Part of my role is to ask questions rather than give answers," he said. "If churches didn't have me asking the questions, possibly no one would. The question they're asking now is, 'Can we do this?' I'm trying to help them add one little word and ask, 'How can we do this?'"

Although Beam's role is a relatively new one in Southern Baptist life, it parallels what businesses have been doing for years, he said: "If I was working for IBM, I'd be in research and development. If I was working for a shopping mall, I'd be in charge of market analysis. If I was in construction, I'd be determining what kind of



Church planter Franklin Beam and David Hughes, pastor of Sheridan Hills Church.

homes to build."

Beam faces a task that even McDonald's and IBM might find daunting. The five associations he serves cover nine counties and range from rural areas to resort areas to retirement areas to the ethnically diverse inner city of Miami to the burgeoning suburbs created by "white flight."

Beam was a successful church starter in Texas before moving to Florida two years ago. While attending a conference in Florida and telling about the work in Texas, he received a challenge that startled him.

"I asked for questions, and one director of missions stood up and said, 'Son, when are you coming to Florida to put what you've been saying into practice?'"

Beam had been praying for God to send him to an area of pioneer work for Southern Baptists. "When I asked the Lord to send me to a pioneer area, I didn't think of Florida. But southern Florida is a pioneer area."

Although Southern Baptists have been in southern Florida for more than a century, they have not been able to keep up with either the rapid population growth or the radical social changes.

Miami Baptist Association has lost 26 churches in the past 25 years as the city has transformed from mostly Anglo to a mix of Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Nicaraguans, Mexicans and Jamaicans. It is now a city with no predominant racial group.

In Miami, newer ethnic churches are booming while older Anglo churches are dying. "The one thing you've got to understand about Miami is that this is foreign missions," says Director of Associational Missions Doyle Wetherington.

"We only have five or six churches capable of sponsoring new churches in the traditional way. We must have partnering churches and associations to approach these starts," Wetherington said.

Yet just north of Miami in Broward

County, Beam faces a different challenge with Gulf Stream Baptist Association. Thousands of people that Southern Baptists could readily assimilate into more traditional churches move in every month but are not being reached.

The story of one woman contacted in a recent telephone blitz illustrates the challenge. When invited to attend a new church being started in her area, she replied: "I wish you had called me 12 years ago. We moved here, and no church ever contacted us. We raised our family, and my husband died last month. Now I'm moving to Wyoming, and it's too late."

To meet the diverse challenges of these areas, Beam helps Southern Baptist churches find innovative approaches to church starting:

— Through telemarketing, Sheridan Hills Baptist Church in Hollywood recently started a congregation in a new subdivision. The area is growing so rapidly that "you could have a ministry just chasing moving vans," quips mission pastor David Hughes. After the first six months, 150 people are attending the mission each week.

— Another missionary from Sheridan Hills, Lew Stewart, has begun teaching Bible studies in nearby mobile home parks. "I have a vision for reaching people who would never get in the doors of a church," he said, noting that in a non-traditional setting, "things happen that absolutely astounded me. Unsaved people want to pray."

— In a strip shopping center in a new suburban area, Pembroke Road Baptist Church has begun a satellite day care center in order to start a new congregation. With the high cost of real estate and a lack of public meeting places, the church opted to extend its already successful day care ministry as a means to finance the church start. Also, the unchurched parents who bring their children to the day care become instant prospects for the mission.

— In Miami, pastor Murrill Boitnott has led his church to start a new work aimed at reaching the predominantly white community which Southern Baptists used to attract. Before a mission pastor was called, Boitnott traveled between his church and the mission every Sunday morning, preaching at 9:30 and 11. "If we don't start Anglo churches here, we're going to lose this city in 10 years," he explained.

"He comes into my office and does this to my mind," Boitnott said, stretching an imaginary rubber band between his fingers. "He causes us to think, to dream."

Beam believes that dreaming is an important element in missions that money can't buy. "We need the Cooperative Program and Annie Armstrong offering, but we also need people of vision for winning America to Christ."

In the Name of Christ

by J. Everett Sneed
Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries is committed to a ministry of reconciliation for children and families. "Our goal is to assist children, troubled young people and troubled families in becoming what God desires them to be," declared Executive Director Johnny Biggs. Currently the Children's Homes and Family Ministries is conducting a campaign with individuals to raise \$3 million to enable them to add new ministries and to make the old ones more effective.

Among the new ministries the agency hopes to start is a home for unwed mothers and the continuation of a boy's ranch for teenage boys who have been involved in substance abuse.

The agency has touched the lives of hundreds of individuals across the years. For example, the staff recently received a letter from a young man who ran away from the home on numerous occasions at Monticello. He had come from a very disturbed home which made it difficult for him to properly relate to the staff. On seven different occasions he ran away from the home. Upon reaching 18 years of age the staff assisted him in entering into the Marine Corps.

Recently the young man wrote a letter to the staff at Monticello. In the letter he said, "Thank you for turning my view of the world around." He urged the other residents to develop the kind of discipline that would help them to get along in life. He said, "Discipline is simply doing what you're told and doing it now."

Not only did this young man make a profession of faith while he was a resident at Monticello, but he is now developing into a worthwhile and constructive adult. Hundreds of lives have been changed just as this young man's life was turned around.

One of the possible opportunities facing Children's Home and Family Ministries is the beginning of a new ministry which would offer unmarried, pregnant girls a Christian alternative to abortion. This ministry would include a home where a girl could stay during her pregnancy and



Photo / Jim Veneman

Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries is seeking to expand its ministry base.

immediately after her baby is delivered. Family Ministries would also offer the new mother counseling, life enriching experiences, and adoption services within a Christian atmosphere.

A house with seven bedrooms, three baths, a large living area, a recreational area, a large dining area, and a brand new kitchen, on a nine-acre tract, was given to Family Ministries by Melvyn and Darlene Bell of Little Rock. The property has been appraised at approximately \$350,000.

Two years ago Family and Child Care Services conducted an assessment to determine the need for a ministry for unwed mothers. The information furnished by Baptist pastors in Arkansas reflected that there was ample need for such a ministry, just from referrals made by pastors. This survey, of course, did not include needs from area social agencies.

In addition, a couple has volunteered to give two years of service without salary. The man is a retired pastor and his wife is a retired nurse who has specialized in children's work. Medical facilities are available in the area, as well as the Arkansas Educational Center, a residential program for the University of Arkansas medical residents. When the endowment money of \$1 million is raised, the home for unwed mothers and adoption services will be begun.

Another area of need is to establish an endowment for a boy's ranch at Harrison. In 1989 the Shawnee Valley Boy's Ranch was given to Family Ministries with the understanding that a deed would be given to the agency after two years of successful operation. The ministry is an intermediate care facility for teenagers who have com-

pleted an intensive substance abuse rehabilitation program.

The ranch consists of 360 acres and four buildings. Mrs. Bernice Jones provided money for start-up money and one year of operation. Much of the remodeling of the cabin which is currently being used was done through volunteer labor.

Referrals come from hospitals across Arkansas. The majority of these referrals have come from Baptist Rehabilitation Institute. Currently the boy's ranch can care for nine boys. Since its beginning there have been 16 boys who have been involved in the program. Twelve of these young men have made professions of faith.

The program includes professional counseling, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, recreation, spiritual training, and other activities designed to help these boys move through this crucial time in their lives.

The boys attend church at the Eagle Heights Church, Harrison. Biggs said, "The church has reached out to the boys in a wonderful way. They minister to them effectively."

Family Ministries has a goal of serving 40 boys in this ministry. Biggs observed that since drug addiction, including alcohol, is the number one problem with teens today, there is a tremendous need for this ministry.

An additional \$500,000 for capital and program improvements for the Children's Home at Monticello is needed. This would include renovation and improvement of facilities, vans for transportation, educational aides and recreational equipment.

Finally, the endowment program includes \$500,000 for general fund endowment to strengthen existing ministries and to undergird future developments. In order to keep abreast with the ever changing ministry and family needs, continual surveys, education and planning are necessary. Such activities require funds.

The endowment campaign was begun in October of 1989. No activity took place in November or December out of deference to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions and the Thanksgiving Offering for the Children's Homes and Family Ministries. During 1990, one banquet per month will be conducted, except during the month of March, when the Home Mission offering is taken. In addition, coffees will be held in some areas of the state for friends. At this point approximately \$400,000 has been given or pledged to the campaign.

Biggs said, "Our goal is to minister to children, young people and troubled families. We want to minister, in the name of Christ, wherever there is need in family life."

Arkansas All Over

MILLIE GILL

Briefly

New Hope Church at Black Oak recently launched a missions awareness program through the organization of a Woman's Missionary Union.

New Hope Church at Jonesboro recently licensed Maurice Morgan to the preaching ministry.

Wynne Church received Matt Dunavant to the preaching ministry Feb. 18.

Fordyce First Church launched Children's Church for four and five year olds Feb. 18. Tammy Byers is serving as director.

Highland Drive Church in Jonesboro will dedicate a new facility March 4 with activities beginning at 10:45 a.m. and concluding with a 7 p.m. service. Speakers will include J. Everett Sneed, editor of the *Arkansas Baptist*; Don Moore, ABSC executive director; Hubert Brodell, mayor of Jonesboro; Harold Ray, director of missions for Mount Zion Association; and Pastor Michael L. Trammell.

Arkansas River Valley Association will hold an evangelism rally March 2 at First

Church in Russellville, beginning at 7 p.m. J. Roy Fish, professor of evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; J. Everett Sneed, editor of the *Arkansas Baptist*; and Wilma Yocum will be the featured speakers. Jeff P. Cheatham Jr. is director of missions.

Brinkley First Church, in recognition of 20 years of service by Pastor Jim McDaniel, is sponsoring a Jim McDaniel Family Life Conference March 17-19. Events will begin March 17 at 7 p.m. with a musical presentation of "Bind Us Together," featuring a combined choir of area churches. Sunday night, March 18, 6 to 8 p.m., begins a seminar, "You and You Family," with Tim LaHaye as leader.

Pangburn First Church will celebrate payment of its indebtedness with a noteburning service March 11.

Searcy Trinity Church celebrated its 28th anniversary Feb. 25 with a noteburning service.

Liberty Church at Lincoln ordained Jody Cheatham to the deacon ministry Feb. 11. Those on program were Herman Reed and Harold Gateley, director of missions for Washington-Madison Association. Gene Hodges is pastor.

Calvary Church in North Little Rock

women had a Show and Tell Tea Feb. 18, displaying old treasures or meaningful items. Marjorie Grober, ABSC WMU president, was guest speaker.

People

Danny Branton will join the staff of Jacksonville First Church March 18 as minister of music and senior adults, coming there from Dallas Avenue Church in Mena.

Bill Files has joined the staff of Grand Avenue Church in Fort Smith as interim business administrator. Files, who has been an active member of the church since 1979, is a graduate of Westark Community College.

Walter Crosson began serving Feb. 25 as pastor of First Church in Cotton Plant, coming there from Vannsdale Church.

D. C. McAtee completed his service Feb. 18 as interim pastor of First Church in Cotton Plant.

David Clements has resigned as pastor of Corinth Church

Mike Thompson joined the staff of Magnolia Church in Crossett Feb. 28 as music and youth director, coming there from Immanuel Church in Vicksburg, Miss. Thompson and his wife, Dora, have two children, Naomi, and Nathan.

Garner Autry Sr. of Sherwood died Feb. 17 at age 87. A retired Southern Baptist minister, he was a member of Oakwood Church in North Little Rock. Survivors include his wife, Mary Etta Hayes Autry; four sons, Garner S. Autry Jr. of Cabot, Aubrey Autry of North Little Rock, Lonnie Autry of Sherwood, and Doyle Autry of San Antonio, Texas; three daughters, Emily Ewing of Sherwood, Ann Herron of Little Rock and Belle Gregory of Bossier City, La.; a sister; 24 grandchildren; and 32 great-grandchildren.

Keith Tomlinson is serving as interim pastor of First Church in Judsonia. He formerly served as pastor of Central Chapel in Mont Alto, Penn.

Aaron Thompson has resigned as pastor of First Southern Church in Redfield due to health reasons.

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by Mark Kelly

Managing Editor, Arkansas Baptist

The goal of doctrine study is far more than mere knowledge, the author of Southern Baptists' 1990 study on the doctrine of creation told a Little Rock audience Feb. 19.

"I have little patience with those who want their questions answered but don't want to put what they have learned into practice," said Daniel Vestal, pastor of Dunwoody Baptist Church in suburban Atlanta, Ga. Vestal is the author of *The Doctrine of Creation*, the textbook for a nationwide study scheduled for April 16-20.

Vestal was the keynote speaker for the National Baptist Doctrine Conference, held Feb. 19-21 at Little Rock's Immanuel Baptist Church. The annual event draws church and convention workers and laypeople from across the Southern Baptist Convention and prepares them to lead the study on their own fields of service.

The purpose of doctrine study is not to simply answer the students questions, Vestal explained. In fact, he said, serious

study often raises more questions than it answers. Rather, the study of doctrine must issue in greater love and service for God.

"Doctrine which is not connected to practice must not be called Christian doctrine," Vestal asserted. "If a Christian properly understands doctrine, he will be concerned about all sorts of serious issues: ecology, the sanctity of life, social justice, racial equality, human dignity, health and well-being, and the eternal destiny of every God-created soul."

Indeed, there is an evangelistic aspect to studying the doctrine of creation, Vestal pointed out.

"Studying the doctrine of creation moves unsaved people closer to salvation because it is the only way to make sense out of this world," he insisted. "Some people need to be shown they can believe the Genesis accounts of creation and still be intelligent, respectable members of the human race."

"There are people in your pews and in your community who want to understand how the God of the Bible relates to the

science they hear about every day. They are hungry for truth, and we serve God better by helping them understand."

Vestal delivered eight addresses during the three-day conference. Each message was dedicated to a chapter of his book.

Also speaking during the conference was Herschel H. Hobbs, emeritus pastor of First Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, Okla., and one of Southern Baptists' most prolific and respected doctrinal writers. The 82-year-old Hobbs, spoke three times on Monday and Tuesday.

Other program personalities included James T. Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church in Euless, Texas; William H. Stephens, curriculum coordinator for the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship training department; Brian Harbour, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock; and Richard Land, executive director of the SBC Christian Life Commission.

Ken Medema, a Southern Baptist composer, songwriter, and recording artist from San Francisco, Calif., provided musical interpretations of the conference theme. Wanda Pearce of Malvern directed her play, "Creation Rings," which was commissioned for the event. Ouachita Baptist University's choir also presented special music under the direction of Charles Wright, dean of the OBU School of Music.

The Doctrine of Creation addresses issues such as human nature, the nature of God, ecology, salvation, abortion, and solutions to social ills. In addition to the adult text and workbook, resources designed for youth, children, and preschoolers are available through the Baptist Book Store.

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Joint Growth Efforts

by Linda Lawson & Jim Newlon
Baptist Press

ATLANTA (BP)—Plans to develop a comprehensive, coordinated approach to church growth that includes Sunday school, evangelism, ministry, church extension, music and discipleship training were announced by the presidents of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and Sunday School Board.

Lloyd Elder of the Sunday School Board and Larry Lewis of the Home Mission Board described the cooperative new effort in a press briefing at the close of the Southern Baptist Press Association in February.

Lewis pointed to research done by the Sunday School Board that indicates two-thirds of Southern Baptist churches are either declining or have plateaued and are not growing at a rate exceeding 10 percent over a five-year period.

"Our goals at the Home Mission Board are clear," Lewis said. "Working with the Sunday School Board, we want to help our churches grow and reverse this trend. By the year 2000, our goal is to see the statistics reverse and to see 75 percent of the churches in the Southern Baptist Convention growing, not just 33 percent."

Elder said church growth must become a top priority in the last decade of the SBC's Bold Mission Thrust evangelism/missions campaign. "We believe this joint agreement will enable us to speak with one voice on the priority of church growth and, in the process, better meet the needs of churches," he said.

Lewis said the key to the cooperative relationship between the two agencies is "serving the churches more effectively." He added that some churches are crying for help, and they don't know where to turn.

Both Elder and Lewis said that every person involved in the process for both agencies had sought to lay aside concerns about "turf protection" and work together to better serve the churches.

In his presentation, Elder announced plans by the Sunday School Board to begin a new quarterly magazine called *Growing Churches* starting in October. Edited by Gary Hardin, the new 64-page magazine will include church-growth ideas, stories

about growing churches, interviews with church-growth leaders and inspiring testimonies, Elder said.

Lewis announced plans for a National Church Growth Conference to be held Dec. 3-5 in Phoenix, Ariz. The conference will feature addresses by some of the fastest-growing churches in the convention, offering practical suggestions on how other churches can grow effectively, Lewis said.

Both Lewis and Elder told the editors their agencies had each established church growth councils comprised of staff members to coordinate what units within the two boards are doing regarding church growth.

In addition, a nine-member coordinating team from the two agencies developed a definition of church growth and common characteristics of growing churches. They also developed strategies by which the two agencies will respond to church growth needs within the denomination.

Elder said the two agencies address church growth through joint projects such as church starts, new Sunday schools, witness training, bus outreach and evangelism, church and associational planning, Scripture distribution and others.

"In addition, the Home Mission Board and the Sunday School Board are independently involved in helping churches in other dimensions of church growth through our respective convention-assigned programs," said Elder. "In these areas, it is important that each agency base its materials and programs off the same understanding of church growth."

The definition developed by the inter-agency team states:

"Church growth is God at work through his redeemed people in adding to a church those who are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and helping inactive believers come to renewed commitment. It is new believers added to existing churches or gathered into new churches and equipped to become responsible church members who minister and witness as personal soul-winners to others. It is strengthening the churches in fellowship, organization and in world missions commitment."

Elder pointed out the definition calls for

growing churches to put top priority on evangelism, leading people to faith in Jesus Christ. It also includes reclaiming inactive church members and leading Christians to become disciples who minister and witness. Church growth takes place when existing churches reach more people and grow larger, and when new churches and church-type missions are started, Elder said.

Elder also announced plans to release a planning manual for churches, titled "The Southern Baptist Church Growth Plan," in June 1991. "This plan will become the basis of church growth training efforts by the Sunday School Board and Home Mission Board," said Elder.

Both Elder and Lewis stressed the commitment of the two agencies to work together in the area of church growth. "The job is too big for us to try to do it alone," Lewis said.

CLC Annual Seminar Slated

NASHVILLE—"Addictions and Family Crises" is the theme for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's annual seminar March 12-14 at the Wynfrey Hotel in Birmingham, Alabama.

The seminar will focus on the variety of addictions afflicting people today including alcohol and drug abuse, sex pornography, work, domestic violence and gambling.

Registration at the seminar begins at 10 a.m. Monday, March 12. The meeting gets under way at 1:30 p.m. The meeting ends at 11:40 a.m. Wednesday, March 14. Registration is \$45. A \$10 discount is available prior to March 1. The fee for spouses and students is \$21.50.

For more information, call 615-224-2495 or write the Christian Life Commission at 901 Commerce, Suite 550, Nashville, TN 37203.

Next Issue

The next edition of the *Arkansas Baptist* will be published on March 15. The Sunday School lesson commentaries for March 3 and March 10 are contained in this issue.

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Overseas Baptisms Up

by Donald D. Martin
SBC Foreign Mission Board

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Baptisms in overseas churches related to Southern Baptist foreign mission work increased 14.9 percent in 1989, reversing a 3 percent decline the year before.

Overseas churches baptized 227,437 new believers in 1989—an average of nearly one baptism every two minutes—up from 197,863 in 1988.

The 1989 total, a record, reflects a ratio of one baptism for every 10.7 church members overseas, compared to one baptism for every 40 members of Southern Baptist churches in the United States, said Jim Slack of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's research and planning office. Slack prepares the annual statistical survey of foreign missions.

In other highlights of the 1989 survey, overseas Baptists' church membership increased 16.4 percent during the year, climbing by 345,818 members to 2.4 million and bringing average church membership to 115.4 per church.

Overseas Baptists added three and a half times as many new members as Southern Baptist churches in the United States, said FMB President R. Keith Parks. "Southern Baptists need to know that the spiritual, human and financial resources they are investing in foreign missions are being

multiplied and utilized by God's spirit in a significant way," he said.

The number of Baptist churches overseas grew from 19,199 in 1988 to 21,239 in 1989—a 10.6 percent increase in net church growth. The actual number of churches started in 1989 was 1,059. The other 981 additions came from more accurate church counts in a number of countries.

Sunday school membership grew from 1.5 million to almost 1.9 million, a gain of 356,535 members, or 23.4 percent.

Discipleship training in 1989 saw an increase of 1,120 participants, to 19,764. Training includes the use of programs such as MasterLife, Bible Way and Survival Kit for the Christian Journey.

But Slack expressed concern about the low number of mission congregations or "preaching points" that matured into churches during the year. Although 1989 saw new preaching points grow from 18,250 to 21,234, only 5.4 percent of the preaching points counted in 1988 became churches in 1989.

That percentage is extremely low compared to work by other mission groups, noted Slack, who said a realistic rate is 20 percent. "This points out that we are good at starting, but poor at maturing. We have started concentrating more on the maturing of new units into churches," he said. The need for better discipleship training in the early stages of church growth does not mean efforts at starting new preaching points should be neglected, Slack added.

"It is a basic principle of church growth all over the world that as you evangelize farther and farther from the center of your

work, the greater your returns will be," he said.

Baptist work moved into 135 cities previously untouched by Baptist outreach—up from 110 new cities in 1988. And the new non-residential missionary program had placed 14 couples overseas by the end of 1989. They are working to evangelize unreached people groups in restricted regions with a total population of more than 120 million people from bases outside those regions.

"These kinds of outreach demonstrate new dimensions in our mission program," Parks said.

Southern Baptists sent 310 new missionaries abroad last year.

The appointment and reappointment of 310 missionaries fell below the 371 total in 1988, bringing the total Southern Baptist missionary force to 3,780 at the end of 1989—a net loss of 87 from the previous year after subtracting retirements, resignations, completions of service and deaths. It was the first net loss in the mission force since 1972.

"Our career personnel picture is not as positive as we wish it was. We have had a steady decline in appointments the last five years," Parks said. "However, the prospects for this year are encouraging. We never know with certainty this early in the year how many the Lord will call out. We do know that the numbers of those in contact with us who have the possibility of appointment are more encouraging than in recent years."

Southern Baptists spent \$5.2 million for overseas hunger and relief projects in 1989—less than half of 1988's total. The money supported 191 projects in 44 nations.

The drop in money spent for hunger and relief ministry occurred partly because a number of major projects were finished in 1989, said John Cheyne, who coordinates the board's human needs program. Completion of food distribution projects in Ethiopia and Mozambique and a development project in Brazil accounted for a significant part of the decrease, he reported.

Medical missionaries and workers treated almost 1.4 million patients. Missionaries and Baptists produced 51,000 television and radio broadcasts on 483 stations last year. They distributed 6.5 million Christian periodicals, 3.9 million books and 19.5 million tracts.

The number of overseas Baptist pastors increased by 850 to 18,411 in 1989. That's a 4.8 percent jump, but below 1988's growth of 5.2 percent. Existing churches and preaching points need 42,473 pastors—more than twice as many as are available.

Classifieds

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Convention Uniform

The Fruit of Love

by Tom M. Deere, First Church, Plainview

Basic passage: John 15:1-17

Focal passage: John 15:1-10

Central truth: The fruit of love is produced by the indwelling Christ.

An old farmer once said, "Gardening is an activity that requires a cast-iron back with a hinge in the middle of it." It is an endless task, but aren't we glad that God never tires of doing the work of a gardener? Without his constant pruning and tender care, Christians could not yield the fruit of love that glorifies and honors our Father, "the vine dresser," (v. 1). "The Vine and the Branches," an allegory taught by Christ to his disciples, conveys spiritual truths that are valid for all of Christ's disciples.

(1) Christian disciples must be prepared (v. 1-6). It was natural for Jesus to frame his lessons in an agrarian setting that was familiar to his disciples. They knew the quality of care that a vineyard needed and that a vine dresser had the responsibility to care for it. Christ presented himself as "the true vine" which implied that Israel had been an imperfect foreshadowing of the perfection found in Christ. A vine yields nourishment to all the branches. It is this sap which supplies the life-giving property that plants require. Without it plants would die. The branches that are cut off, "taken away" (v. 1) and "burned" (v. 6) refer to professing Christians who, like Judas, are not genuinely saved. Like a dead branch, a person without Christ is spiritually dead. Even fruitful branches (v. 2), referring to Christians, require pruning periodically to enhance fruit production. God's Word (v. 3) like a two-edged sword (He. 4:12) that cuts away all of the unproductive growth in a Christian's life, and the gospel when received (Ep. 5:26) brings cleansing from sin.

(2) Christian disciples are given a promise (v. 7). Jesus is the source and sustainer of eternal life. As Christians are fed and nourished by the life-giver through his word, they will abide in him, and his word will abide in them. As a result, whatever they "desire" will be prompted by the will of God and will be done for them because it was the will of the Father originally.

(3) Christian disciples have a purpose (v. 8-10). The Father is glorified (v. 8) when Christians bear "much fruit." One of which will be the fruit of love.

Life and Work

One Thing

by Frank C. Gantz, Nall's Memorial Church, Little Rock

Basic passage: Mark 10:21-25; 12:41-44

Focal passage: Mark 10:21-25

Central truth: One thing may prevent us from walking with the Lord.

A few years ago, Gary Anderson, the former Arkansas Razorback was racing down the field toward the end zone. Without a defender near him, it seemed as if he would score a touchdown for the San Diego Chargers. He crossed the goal line, but he did not celebrate. He sadly heard the cheers turn to groans. He watched the referee signal that the ball belonged to the other team instead of raising his arms for a touchdown signal.

How could this occur? A few yards before the goal line, Anderson had dropped the ball. He lacked one thing. He seemed to do everything else just right, but without the ball he could not score.

The rich young ruler (and many like him) heard Jesus utter the words, "One thing thou lackest" (Mk. 10:21). Jesus was not being picky. He knew that this one thing was an indication of the whole person. This man was not as saintly as he appeared. He had actually shattered the entirety of the law, James 2:10 says, "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

Notice that in his initial comments, Jesus only asked the man about five of the ten commandments. It is worth noting to see which ones Jesus did omit. He did not say anything about the first four commandments. The first four deal directly with the way we relate to God. The final six deal with the way we relate to man. Of these six, Jesus asked about each one except "thou shalt not covet." As the rich young ruler indicated by his actions, he had serious problems with the commandments that Jesus did not ask.

Jesus zeroed in on this man's lawbreaking by telling him to sell all that he had and give it to the poor. The man lacked this one thing. This one thing was so vital because it indicated that he was a covetous man. It also indicated that he was a breaker of the commands which deal with God. He did have a god which was greater to him than the Lord. He bowed to his money and walked away from the Lord. It may not be our money, but is there any one thing which you lack?

Bible Book

When Power is Greater

by Tommy Cunningham, Life Line Church, Little Rock

Basic passage: Judges 6:12-14; 25:27a; 7:19-21

Focal passage: Judges 6:1; 8:27

Central truth: The forces of evil are destroyed more effectively by a few dedicated people rather than a large number of unprepared people.

The judgeship of Gideon is a narrative that projects many practical truths for the believer today. Once again God's people had fallen into a backslidden condition and the chastisement of God had come upon them. The dominance of Midian (6:1-2) produces a cry for deliverance (6:6) from God's people.

The ministry of Gideon begins with his call in verse 11. Notice six observations about Gideon. First, note the unbelief of Gideon (v. 13). Like Gideon, it is common for men to believe that God is not with them when he is chastening them for their disobedience. Second, note the humility of Gideon (6:15). People who God uses for leadership are always aware of their total insufficiency to carry out God's mission in their own power. Third, Gideon received assurance of victory (6:14-16). The principle is always the same, if God sends us (6:14-16). The principle is always the same, if God sends us (6:14) then he goes with us (6:16). His presence is the absolute assurance of victory. Fourth, is the hesitancy of Gideon (6:17-22, 36-40; 7:9-15). Fifth, was the reduction of Gideon's army (7:2-8). Finally, there is the plan of attack (7:16-22).

The reduction of Gideon's army illustrates that the forces of evil are more effectively defeated by a smaller number of dedicated warriors than by the masses of uncommitted people. The reduction had a two-fold effect: (1) it eliminated the fearful and the careless and (2) it made certain that God would receive the glory for the impending deliverance.

After Gideon's victory over the Midianites, the men of Israel urged him to be a king. Gideon resisted this temptation, but fell into the snare of making an ephod from the gold of the captured enemy. This ephod became an object of idolatrous worship (8:22-27). This lesson is so significant. We must be careful that the spoils of victory don't become objects of admiration that eventually take the place of true worship.

Convention Uniform

Our Faithful Guide

by Tom M. Deere, First Church, Plainview

Basic passage: John 16:12-24

Focal passage: John 16:12-15

Central truth: The spirit of truth will always be our faithful guide.

Christians tend to believe what they want to believe whether it is true or not. As one man put it: "Jumping to conclusions is not half as good an exercise as digging for the facts." Even the disciples of Christ had difficulty understanding and accepting the truth. They had grown spiritually insensitive, too dull of hearing to learn Christ's lessons. For this reason Jesus said, "You cannot bear them now." (v. 12). Only the Holy Spirit could open their minds further to receive the truth, "to dig for the facts."

(1) The Holy Spirit has an authoritative ministry. His ministry is authoritative because he came from God (Jn. 15:26). He will guide disciples of Christ "into all truth" (v. 13). Truth about Christ and his word, truth about ourselves and God's love for us are only a few of the spiritual truths the Holy Spirit will teach us. This is important because our enemy, the devil, is a deceiver and a liar. "There is not truth in him" (Jn. 8:44). He will try to teach us false doctrine and will lie about God's love and concern for us. Although these lies come from the enemy, those who are born of the Spirit of God will know the difference between "the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 Jn. 4:6).

(2) The Holy Spirit has an anointed message. "Whatever he hears he will speak" (v. 13). It is impossible for human beings to know the mind and will of God apart from the Holy Spirit. Knowledge of God and of Christ (v. 14) is revelation knowledge. Whatever is necessary for Christ's disciples to know, the spirit of truth will reveal to them "things to come" (v. 13). This truth should relieve Christians of any needless worry over the future and what it will bring.

(3) The Holy Spirit has an appropriate motive. The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit is Christocentric, Christ-centered. Jesus said the Holy Spirit "will glorify me" (v. 14). Since it is the desire and purpose of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ, it is equally necessary for all Christians to do the same through their witness to others.

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Life and Work

Whatever Happened?

by Frank C. Gantz, Nall's Memorial Church, Little Rock

Basic passage: Mark 10:35-45

Focal passage: Mark 10:35-45

Central truth: Those who serve will be successful.

Do you remember when you could pull up to a gas station and a man with an oil rag in his hand would fill your tank, check your oil, and wash your windshield? That kind of service is hard to find in our day. In fact, we used to call these places service stations. Whatever happened to service?

Do you remember when a waitress was tipped according to the quality of service rendered? Now the tip is figured by percentage into the bill. In fact, tips stood for "To Insure Prompt Service." Whatever happened to service?

Do you remember when Christians joined a church so that they could serve? Today Christians join so that they can be entertained. Do you remember when church members would volunteer for menial tasks in the church without any recognition? Do you remember when pastors looked to where they could serve and not at being served? In fact, Christians are called to be ministers (Mk. 10:43) and servants (Ph. 1:1). A new theology of name it and claim it has challenged the very call to servanthood.

James and John demonstrated this mentality when they asked Jesus to seat them at his side. They wanted the positions of prominence and prestige. In Mark 10:38, Jesus indicated that "Ye know not what ye ask." Their request was based on their ignorance. We are just as ignorant today when we approach God and others on the basis of gaining prestige. Humility is an important virtue to any leader (1 P. 5:1-6).

Their request also brought discord among the disciples. Mark 10:41 indicates that the others were "much displeased with James and John." The greater we serve others the closer the bond between us will be. My wife loves me more than any other human. Why? (She may be asking the same question.) The reason we grow so close to each other is because we want to serve and please the other. Our churches will have the unity that they should when we begin to serve each other. To paraphrase President Kennedy, "Ask not what your God or fellow man can do for you. Ask what you can do for God and man."

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Bible Book

A Victory

by Tommy Cunningham, Life Line Church, Little Rock

Basic passage: Judges 10:10-16;

11:30-32, 34-35

Focal passage: Judges 10:10-16;

11:30-39

Central truth: In the midst of spiritual battle, be careful with the promises you make to God.

We see the cycle of Judges repeating itself in this week's text. Once again the children of Israel had turned to idolatry, serving the gods of Canaan, Syria, Zidon, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia. God allowed the Ammonites to oppress them for 18 years (10:6-9).

There are a number of points of special interest in this narrative. First, notice the testimony of the children of Israel about their sin (v. 10). They had forsaken God and begun to serve Baal.

Second, see the compassion of God even with such a rebellious people (vv. 10-16). This passage illustrates that a true repentance causes God to turn from his purpose of chastisement to that of deliverance.

The need for a leader is depicted in verses 17 and 18. How true that today, just as in the days of Judges, human leaders are needed to lead us with God's call against the enemy. The call of Jephthah is presented in 11:1-8. God often calls those that the world would least expect.

The secret of Jephthah's success is found in verse 29. Even with this biblical affirmation of his strength, the following verse (30) depicts him rashly vowing that if God gave him victory over the Ammonites, he would offer unto God the first thing he saw coming from his house upon his return.

This serious commitment to God resulted in Jephthah giving up his daughter (11:35-39). The sacredness of a vow is firmly established in Scripture. Vows to God must be kept (Nu. 30:2; Ec. 5:1-7).

The joy of victory can suddenly be turned to sorrow if one rashly makes a vow to God. Probably since God's Word forbade human sacrifice, Jephthah consecrated his daughter to a life of celibacy.

Note the submissiveness of Jephthah's daughter (vv. 36-40). She was willing to sacrifice herself in order to honor the vow her father had made to God. She understood the significance of making a vow to God and with a reverence for God requested that the vow be kept.

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Bell Will Toll Again

by Mary E. Speidel
SBC Foreign Mission Board

CORN ISLAND, Nicaragua (BP)—McNeil Bryan wept when he saw the broken bell lying among toppled pews and palm branches.

In October 1988, Hurricane Joan knocked down the bell tower, ripped off the roof and destroyed the walls at Ebenezer Baptist Church on Corn Island, Nicaragua. The storm destroyed all but about 25 homes on the island of English-speaking inhabitants, about 45 miles off Nicaragua's eastern coast.

More than a year has passed since Bryan, Ebenezer's lay pastor, surveyed the damage in the church yard. Now the church has been rebuilt, thanks to the efforts of Southern Baptist volunteers.

Two teams of volunteers spent part of January and February reconstructing the two-story structure, the oldest Baptist church building in Nicaragua. Russell Fox, Southern Baptist missionary to Honduras, coordinated the project. Fox is from Fayetteville, Ark.



Pat High of Hot Springs helps rebuild Nicaraguan church.

In addition to the sanctuary, the first team of 11 volunteers from Arkansas and Georgia built a vestibule, office and bell tower.

"It was a difficult construction project," said Ken Evans, team leader from University Baptist Church in Fayetteville. His team spent Jan. 13-30 working on the project.

But work went so fast that the workers nearly finished the entire church. They slowed their pace when they realized there might not be enough work left to keep the next team busy.

The second team of nine volunteers from Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas finished Ebenezer during their stay Jan. 30-Feb. 13. They had enough materials left to build a steeple and office at Briggs Bay Baptist Church and trusses for the roof of Queen's Hill Baptist Mission on the island.

Volunteers also took time for evangelism. Members of the first group taught Sun-

day school and led church services at Baptist churches in Managua, Nicaragua's capital, and in the three Baptist churches on Corn Island.

The second team's lighter construction responsibilities gave members extra time to lead evangelistic services almost every night. And Bruce Edwards, pastor of South Oaks Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas, took volunteers with him each day to visit islanders.

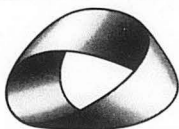
Edwards and Mark Dammeyer, a layman at South Oaks, talked to 88 people about spiritual matters during one morning of evangelistic visitation. "They were just so open and honest," Dammeyer said. "They'd tell you right up front that they'd fallen away from the church and exactly why."

Throughout the project, "we (volunteers) were concerned about rebuilding the church building," said Danny Wright, an attorney from Fayetteville and member of the first team. "They (islanders) were concerned about rebuilding the church people."

The second team returned to the United States Feb. 13. The next day Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees voted to re-establish a missionary presence in Nicaragua. Southern Baptist missionaries have not lived in Nicaragua since 1983, when the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua advised furloughing missionaries not to return to the country for safety reasons.

Since missionaries left, the Foreign Mission Board has provided funds for disaster relief and hunger relief and literature ministry in Nicaragua. Board officials have visited Nicaragua several times, including a disaster survey trip following Hurricane Joan in 1988. The Corn Island project grew out of that visit.

Ebenezer Baptist Church now stands as the tallest building on Corn Island. And soon the church bell will be tolling again.



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WORLD

FOREIGN MISSION BOARD

Divorce Policy Upheld

by Donald D. Martin

SBC Foreign Mission Board

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees unanimously agreed Feb. 14 that the board continue its longstanding policy of not appointing divorced people as missionaries.

The trustee action, following a yearlong study, was in response to a motion adopted at the 1988 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting calling for an evaluation of the mission board's divorce policy.

"From the outset, our committee was determined to do a comprehensive study of the matter of appointing missionary personnel with a history of divorce," said Harmon Moore of Indianapolis, chairman of the special trustee committee that studied the divorce issue and recommended reaffirmation of the policy.

"We did not approach this study with our minds made up on what the conclusions ought to be," said Moore. "I know that the conclusion will not suit everybody by any means. This thing has been brought up at the Southern Baptist Convention for a new explanation more years than it hasn't."

The committee studied theological issues surrounding divorce, Christian ministry and divorce, missiological and practical issues and other relevant matters. It also gathered information from surveys sent to other evangelical missionary sending groups, theological papers written by committee members and surveys of national attitudes in 116 countries where Southern Baptist missionaries work.

"We approached the entire problem with compassion for those who have had a divorce," Moore said. "We sought to learn how (Baptists overseas) would respond to persons with a history of divorce. We tried to be sensitive to our biblical moorings and avoid basing our report purely on current sociological issues. We think we have done the most thorough study on the matter since the Foreign Mission Board was formed."

According to the overseas survey, only 7 percent of the national Baptist leaders

questioned said missionaries who had been divorced would be received well in their countries; 78 percent said they would not accept or would accept with reservations missionaries who had been divorced.

Among missionaries questioned, 14 percent said their missionary colleagues would not accept a divorced missionary; 63 percent said they would accept a divorced missionary with reservations. Ten percent would willingly receive a divorced person as a co-worker.

The survey also sought information on possible legal problems for divorced missionaries in the countries where they would work, visitation rights for the spouse of a divorced missionary with children, attitudes of local churches and national attitudes toward remarriages. In almost all cases, the survey found that local reaction to a divorced missionary would hinder rather than support mission work.

The committee also contacted other evangelical mission agencies about their divorce policies. The majority of the groups said they do not normally appoint people who have been divorced. The groups surveyed included American Baptists, Assemblies of God, Conservative Baptists, Evangelical Lutherans, Pentecostals, Presbyterians and United Methodists.

Some groups make exceptions, especially for missionaries already on the field who get divorced, but in some cases divorced people are limited to short-term work.

Since 1979, the Foreign Mission Board has allowed qualified people who have been divorced to serve in support roles overseas through Mission Service Corps, a two-year program now part of the board's International Service Corps.

Moore said he hoped the study would put the divorce issue to rest. "That's one of the things that pushed us to broaden the scope of the study," he said. "We tried to bring in as many factors as we could so we would have a better view of things. I think when folks look at this study they will see that we have never before brought together this many factors to have bearing on the decision we have made."

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