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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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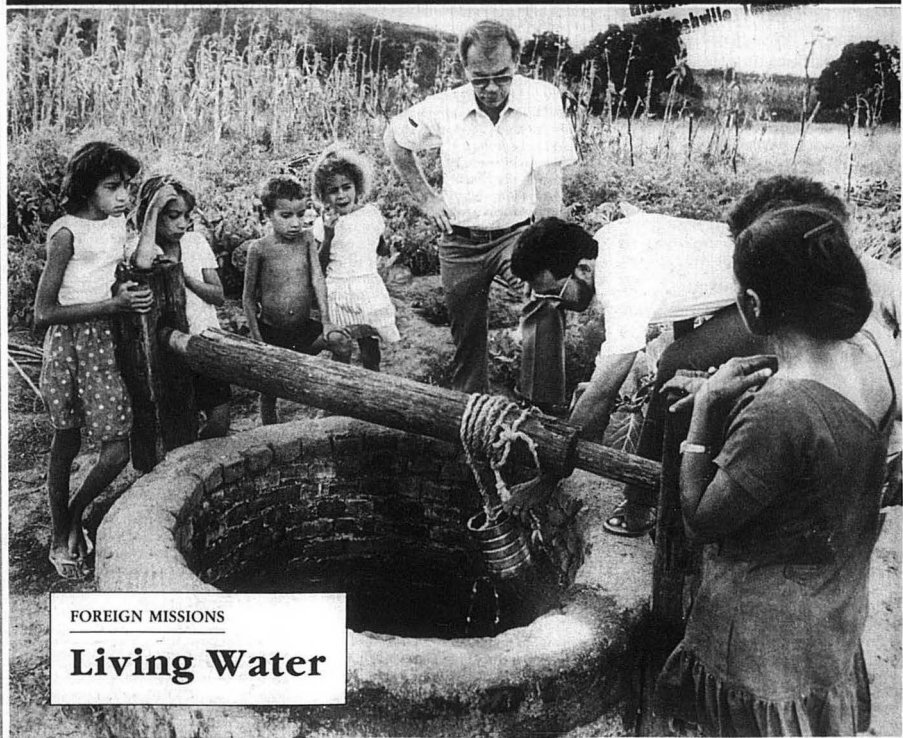
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A Land of Spires

Arkansas Baptist

December 1, 1988

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(BP) photo / Don Rutledge

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IT'S UPLIFTING

Love Makes The Difference

GOLEA, Mali (BP)—Presenting the gospel without proof of love has little effect in Africa.

This is true in Mali, where Mike and Patricia Krahwinkel of Owensboro, Ky., are Southern Baptist missionaries. Krahwinkel is an agriculturist and evangelist.

"People aren't searching for something new" in religion, Krahwinkel says. "They are happy in their tradition. But when you do something to help them that you don't have to do or that is not of direct benefit to you, they search for the reason that motivates it."

The missionaries found a village lacking water and health care. With their young

daughters, Karissa and Kamille, they made hazardous journeys twice weekly up an hour-long trail to the mountaintop village.

They transported water, gave first aid, told Bible stories and taught Christian songs. They carried sick people to a hospital in another town. They used equipment and dynamite to dig a well. Word spread and another village invited them to do the same.

The Krahwinkels started several popular prayer meetings and Bible studies and distributed two types of seeds: those of the gospel and those for crops.

"By helping with food, water, medicine, by helping lepers and by providing seed, it proves that Christ's love is real," Krahwinkel says.

GOOD NEWS!

Family Resemblance

Galatians 3:26-27

J. B. Phillips has a refreshing translation of this passage: "For now that you have faith in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God. All of you who were baptized 'into' Christ have put on the family likeness of Christ."

Family relationships—Paul used a family illustration to interpret what it means to be rescued from the law and to become a child in God's family. The law is like a tutor or a strict governess until we go to the school of Christ that we may be justified by faith in him (Ga. 3:23-27), thereby becoming a child whose obedience is prompted not by rules, but by love.

Family values—From the law we learn moral values and priorities. We are taught to have one God, one day to worship. We are cautioned to a new value system which teaches that (1) persons are infinitely valuable (do not commit adultery); (2) that property ownership is a person's right (do not steal); (3) that social and personal relationships must be based on trust (do not lie); (4) that greed motivates hatred, wars, and destruction (do not covet).

Family motivation—Living under grace and not under law excites a new motivation. We may learn the law, but we cannot keep it. We may live by the law and become upright, honest, decent, religious; but if the law is only our tutor, we become like the law we obey—self-righteous, rigid, legalistic, judgmental.

New life in Christ is a family affair. Love and grace enter in. We can become slaves

to the law, rigidly legalistic, but miss the warmth of relationship. As Christians, our actions are no longer dictated by calculating adherence to the law but by loving obedience to our Father.

Family status—When a person is born of the Spirit, he becomes a child of God. "You are not a servant any longer; through God you are a son" (Ga. 4:5-6, Phillips).

When we have put on God's family likeness, we are no longer just good, moral persons. We now have a changed status. We have, by faith, come into our full inheritance. We are no longer aliens, but sons.

Of all the names of God in the Scripture, the name which Jesus used was "Father." This is unique among world religions in its implication of relationship. When Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father," he revealed to us a providing, caring God of love, whose concern for us expresses itself through his availability to meet our needs.

"Remember whose you are," a father cautioned his teenage daughter before leaving with her boyfriend on a date. The father's concern for her integrity grew out of his love for her. She was his daughter and a child of God. Love makes a difference.

Only when the Holy Spirit enters our hearts, are we able, by faith, to cry, "Abba, Father." God is no longer a stranger. Our relationship to him has changed. Because we now call him by his most personal name, "Father," we bear his family likeness. We really are his children.

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A Day at the Track?

J. EVERETT SNEED

According to a Hot Springs newspaper, when Oaklawn opens this year, fifth grade classes will be taken to observe the gambling activities. The supposed purpose is to teach the children the economic benefits derived from horse racing. We believe that the actual purpose is to brainwash the children into believing that it is all right to gamble.

The strategy has a twofold purpose. First, they want to make the children believe that they have moved into the adult world, and second they hope that this strategy will also help to eliminate any doubts that parents have about the presence of gambling in our state. A spokesman said, "The children's lights go on and attendance goes up because they can relate the things talked about in economics with the things in everyday life. They think it is adult stuff and say I am big now."

It has long been known that the perspective of an individual is largely shaped during his or her first 12 years of life. If a 10- or 11-year-old child can be convinced that horse racing is an economic boon to Arkansas and that gambling is just a fun sport during these formative years, he will support gambling all of his life. It should be observed that some of these people will become compulsive gamblers and lose all they make as a result of this early training.

This raises some very real questions. Is horse racing of great economic assistance to Arkansas' economy? Is gambling really wrong? First, let us consider the so-called "economic boost" horse racing brings to Arkansas. Repeatedly Little Rock business men say, "My business is always down during the racing season." It is certain that the citizens of Arkansas are not the big gainers from paramutual gambling, since much of the money bet at the race track will leave the state. Furthermore, the state receives no tax money from illegal gambling. Much of the money that is bet each year is bet in a fashion contrary to the laws of Arkansas.

In recent years, the attendance and money spent at Oaklawn has been decreasing in spite of the extension of the racing season. This is probably the reason that an all-out effort is being made to brainwash our children into believing that paramutual gambling is of great economic help to our state. Those involved in this endeavor surely are hoping that these children will be the gamblers of tomorrow.



There are those who argue that gambling not only has always been with us but that there is nothing wrong with it. They maintain we should legalize it, control it and receive the tax revenues it produces. Such arguments simply do not hold up when correctly and honestly evaluated. When a practice is morally wrong, we simply place our stamp of approval on it by making it legal.

Gambling is a disease which develops greed and dishonesty in individuals who, through their passionate endeavor to gain something for nothing, become a menace to the whole community. Their crimes cost more than the increased revenue that gambling taxes produce.

Any comprehensive police report will reveal the increase in crime due to gambling in Arkansas or any other state. It has

often been reported that gambling has led to the control of law enforcement agents by the professional gambling industry.

Even the casual reader of the Bible knows that greed affects man's relationship with God and his fellow man. The Ten commandments say, "Thou shall not covet . . . anything that is thy neighbor's" (Ex. 20:17). Furthermore, covetousness keeps a person from treating his neighbor as he would wish to be treated.

Again, the Bible teaches that we are to give an honest day's work for the wages we receive. (Ex. 20:9; 2 Th. 3:10-12) The major premise which underlies gambling is the desire to get something for nothing.

Finally, the Scripture teaches that an ungodly love of money will produce all kinds of evil (2 Tim. 6:6-11). The gambler is dominated by his desire for material gain.

The Bible declares, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Pr. 22:6). Rather than providing positive training, it appears, at least in this instance, that our schools are providing negative training for the children. One of the teachers involved in the program said, "In no way is gambling or horse racing being endorsed." The plain truth is that anything that parents or school teachers present to children as wholesome and helpful is receiving a positive endorsement in the mind of the child.

We believe that it is time for such programs as this to come to a crashing halt! There are many other ways that on-site economic training can be provided for children. Anything that is taught in our public schools should be designed to strengthen morals and never to undercut them.

Arkansas Baptist

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DON MOORE

You'll Be Glad To Know

We can make a difference! This is the reason we have been redeemed and left in this world. From the five year old to the 95 year old, we can make a difference.

Every church can make a difference! From those having 10 to 20 in attendance to those few having 1,000 to 2,000 in attendance, they all can make a difference!

How can one person or one small church make a difference? Only when their efforts are combined with others efforts. Proportionately, many small churches do more than larger churches. It is great to have a means of giving every individual and every church an avenue for impacting the world.

Since we all know the Word of God never returns void or fruitless, and since we know the gospel of Christ transforms lives, communities and nations; if we are to make a lasting difference in people's eternal destiny and in the quality of their life on earth, it will have to be through these spiritual means.

Again, how can one or a few get the Word throughout the earth? Working together is our only hope. The two main ways of sharing in this awesome responsibility are the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Dr. Keith Parks, president of our Foreign Mission Board, recently said that the world's largest evangelical missions effort "is in jeopardy." The reasons are two—(1) Cooperative Program gifts have barely kept pace with inflation. (2) The shortfall of the Lottie Moon Christmas offering the past several years.

For the sake of the gospel, let's not waste any more time analyzing why mission support has not grown as it should. Let's get on with support based upon the measure of God's blessings to us! If we should ever adopt the biblical principle of proportionate giving, the needs would always be met.

Two appeals—(1) Let's have 100 percent of our churches receiving the Lottie Moon Christmas offering this year. Usually 200 or more do not take the offering. (2) It's time many of our churches began to improve their Cooperative Program support. Over half of our churches give less than 8 percent through the Cooperative Program.

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



Woman's Viewpoint God and His Creation

PAULINE MCDONALD

Twilight comes early at this season. My days seem too short, and the long night hours limit the plans and activities I wish to accomplish. But as I feel impatience with the early darkness, I look to the heavens and am rewarded with the spectacular beauty and wonder that only the handiwork of God reveals.

I recall my childhood when I believed that if I knew enough numbers, I could count the stars. Later I learned to recognize some star patterns and knew these were constellations. I was puzzled at their changing positions. I read with eagerness about ancient people who with the crudest of instruments, or none, learned so much astronomy.

Each discovery made others possible. God led in



quiring minds to continue the study that had fascinated and challenged others in earlier generations. A moon visit by our astronauts is history, and a journey to Mars is being seriously considered. Stars we did not know exist are seen and studied by scientists whose modern instruments probe the sky. There are claims that a galaxy, so far distant that its existence was not suspected until very recent years, has become the subject of great interest and study. I believe that other discoveries beyond my imagination are possible and

probable.

Distances familiar to me are measured in miles; I cannot think in terms of light years. While I am awed by the power and glory of God, I know no measure to show how insignificant I am in his creation. I know a yearning to understand more and to be assured I hold some humble purpose in the universe. Comfort and joy overwhelm me as I read again the words of Jesus to his grieving disciples, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet without your Father's leave not one of them can fall to the ground." How wonderful that God who made all that is does not forget the least of his creation.

Pauline McDonald is a Sunday School teacher at West Helena Church. She is a retired schoolteacher and the widow of a Baptist minister.

MK Birthday Prayer Calendar: December

Missionary Kids Attending College in Arkansas

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 24 Susan Greenwood
(Guatemala) | OBU, Box 3443
Arkadelphia, AR 71923 |
| 27 David Hardister
(Jordan) | OBU, Box 3870
Arkadelphia, AR 71923 |
| 29 Holly Mitchell
(Tanzania) | OBU, Box 3251
Arkadelphia, AR 71923 |

Note: The OBU campus will close for the Christmas holidays on Dec. 20. Cards or gifts should be sent before this date.

A SMILE OR TWO

Betty Jane Moen went to visit a friend who was babysitting her six-year-old grandson and the newest arrival, a granddaughter. Betty hadn't seen the baby girl and when she arrived at the house, the little guy said, "Come see my sister."

Betty said he took her by the hand and led her into the nursery, where the baby had been put down for a nap.

"She's beautiful," Betty said. "And I'll bet she's already spoiled."

"Naw, she's not spoiled," big brother said. "She smelled like that when they brought her home from the hospital."

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BEN EARLY

Early Reflections



Christmas Memories

Christmas has always been a very special time in my life. The beautiful carols, lovely decorations, and exciting aromas along with the special remembrance of the Savior's birth makes a season filled with memories.

I remember we began celebrating the birth of Christ the day following Thanksgiving. As we'd decorate, laughter and music would echo throughout the entire house. One of my best remembrances was when we'd put the angel on top of the tree and plug in the lights, I'd always recall how Christ was the light of the world and I knew my light was to shine.

The next several days were spent in shopping with my parents, always reminding me how much better it was to give than to receive. At times when money was short we'd work and make gifts, recalling how fortunate we were to share through this labor of love.

During all of this time there was that fantastic fragrance of baked goods being prepared in the kitchen. The kitchen was a special place and I loved to go and sit and talk with my mother. It was always amazing how problems seemed to disappear in that kitchen.

We knew on Christmas morning the exact number of presents that would be under the tree for each person. Everyone would laugh with delight at my poorly made gifts and I thought I'd made the best gifts ever found.

Love permeated all we did and said. There was never a cross word, just warm tenderness, and always much thanks for everything.

The special part of Christmas morning was to read the Christmas story from the Bible and I couldn't wait until I was old enough to read the precious words myself.

After a worship service at church, we'd return home and bring everyone with us we could. Then, we'd laugh, sing, and eat. It always seemed the lights on the tree became brighter and brighter.

Christ's birthday was the best birthday all year and I always knew the greatest gift of all was that Jesus was part of our home and life, and that has made all the difference in my life and home.

Ben Early is director of public relations for Southern Baptist College.

FORMER ADDICT

Living Testimony

by Breana Kent Palne
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

NEW ORLEANS—Because a seminary student cares enough, the lives of a community are being changed.

Michael York, a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary from Pineville, Ky., began a mission in eastern New Orleans last year, and people in the neighborhood have been coming to Christ ever since.

One man York met while visiting in the neighborhood seemed particularly interested in what he had to say and promised to come to church.

The man's name was Daniel, and "Lo, and behold, there he was the next Sunday with his four sons—two youth and two children." York said the service was especially moving, and the man and his sons approached him afterwards.

"Daniel said, 'I've been trying to tell my sons how to be born again, but I'm having a difficult time. I really don't know how. Pastor, will you lead my sons to the Lord?' York promised he would visit them in their home that week.

That Thursday night, Daniel was killed in a car accident.

"The Sunday after the funeral, the mother came with all her boys," said York. She and her oldest son made a public profession of faith. That evening, her second to oldest son made a decision.

"There's been a wonderful transformation. I baptized all three of them, and they've rarely missed a Sunday since," said York.

Daniel's family is only one of the examples of the many people who have accepted Christ in eastern New Orleans through the ministry of York and the mission he planted there less than a year ago.

Eastview Baptist Mission, a mission of Elysian Fields Baptist Church in New Orleans, held its first service in a small motel in June of 1987; 19 people attended. Now, 70 people are enrolled in Sunday School, there have been about 20 professions of faith, and more are coming to Christ every week.

The mission is located in a low socio-economical area where most of the families are of black, low-income households. Some of the families York ministers to are fighting drug addiction, alcohol addiction, and AIDS.

"We've seen God do some amazing things," said York. "This is especially rewarding because I was a drug addict for seven years before becoming a Christian." York is a living testimony to the people he

ministers to that God can work changes in peoples lives—changes that last.

One girl York met had two small children and lived in a poor neighborhood with a man who was not her husband.

"Suzie came and accepted Christ in one of our Sunday meeting services, and that night, she brought her boyfriend."

"She really stands out as a courageous young woman," York continued. "I know she had the determination to make something out of her life."

And Suzie did. "Everytime you'd see her, she'd say, 'I'm so glad I accepted Christ. (He) has made such a difference in my life.' " Happy, and growing as a Christian, she and her children moved out of the apartment and began a new life in Texas;

her boyfriend, however, accuses York of "ruining" his life.

A student in the Master of Divinity degree program at New Orleans Seminary, York said, "There's no greater satisfaction than being where God wants you."

"We came here with the idea of doing pioneer missions in the Midwest. We didn't know when we came we'd be starting a mission here."

York feels some limitations in his ministry because of racial differences. "There are some who will respond to a white pastor and some who won't. If I were black, I could do a lot more," he said.

York's dream is for the mission to have a black pastor. With black leadership, "neighborhoods like this that we're ministering through could really be powerhouses for the Lord," he said.

But, for now, York is where God wants him to be, and lives are being transformed because of it.

NOBTS photo



Michael York witnesses in a low-income neighborhood.

LOCAL & STATE

Arkansas All Over

MILLIE GILL

People

J.R. DeBusk will begin serving Dec. 4 as pastor of South Side Church, Pine Bluff, coming from First Church, Augusta.

Ben Early has resigned as director of public relations and alumni affairs at Southern Baptist College, effective Dec. 31. He and his wife, Gloria, will move to the home missions new work area in Billings, Mont., where he will serve as pastor of the Rimrock Church.

Bill H. Lewis began his fifth year of service Nov. 17 as director of missions for Harmony Association.

Johnny Harp is serving Quitman Church as music director. He and his wife, Cheryl, and their son, Matthew, are residents of Conway.

Chris Pauley is serving England First Church as part-time minister of music. He is a junior at Ouachita Baptist University, majoring in music education.

Dale Perry has resigned as pastor of Pleasant Hill Church, Harrisburg, to serve as pastor of Wild Peach Church in Brazoria, Texas.



DeBusk



Early

Roma Zeltner of Fort Smith has joined the staff of Grand Avenue Church in Fort Smith as director of preschool and children's ministries.

Bill Brown II is serving Harlan Park Church in Conway as minister of music and college, coming there from Bayou Meto Church in Jacksonville where he has been serving as youth minister.

Richard Jones is serving as pastor of Big Flat Mission in White River Association. He and his wife, Vesta, moved there from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Joe Hudson is serving as pastor of New Hope Church, Yellville.

Briefly

Shell Lake Church observed homecoming Nov. 6 with a service to dedicate its new sanctuary and furniture. Robert Tucker, director of missions for Tri-County Association, was speaker.

East Side Church in Fort Smith began an extension Sunday School Nov. 20 in the Cameo Mobile Home Park in Barling. Assisting the church with this new work are Concord Association and the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Buford Latta is directing the new work, assisted by his wife, Sharon, and their daughter, Kelly. Other teaching staff will come from East Side Church with Eddie Combs serving as coordinator.

Little Rock Calvary Church ordained Larry Henderson and Bill Payne to the deacon ministry Nov. 20.

Gravel Ridge First Church has experienced a recent growth through 10 professions of faith, five additions by letter, and two additions by statement.

Friendship Church at Marianna held a recent revival that resulted in nine professions of faith, eight baptisms, and 15 other decisions. Mark Green of Greenville, Mo., was evangelist. John D. Noland is pastor.

Park Hill Church at Arkadelphia held a revival Nov. 6-11 that resulted in 24 professions of faith and many rededications. Danny Veteto, pastor of First Church, Gravel Ridge, was evangelist, and Clarence Hill of Hot Springs directed music. Pastor Bobby Cook reported that the revival was preceded by six weeks of prayer and preparation.

Lake City Church recently dedicated a new building, recognizing Henry Stone, who gave four months of his time and labor free to construct the facility. Program personalities included Harold Ray, director of missions for Mount Zion Association, John Basinger, Alvin Harms, and Mrs. Harold Wright. Wayne Sanders is pastor.

Tichnor Church ordained Bill Edmondson and Wendell Greenhill to the deacon ministry as a part of the church's Thanksgiving celebration. Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Greenhill also were recognized for their 50th wedding anniversary. Russell E. Branson is pastor.

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Picking Up the Pieces



Arkansas Baptists were quick to respond when tornadoes ravaged central and western parts of the state Tuesday night, Nov. 15. The twisters left six persons dead and more than 60 injured and caused millions of dollars worth of damage in eight communities. At Scott, in southeastern Pulaski County (left photo), three persons—a young couple and their one-year-old child—lost their lives when their mobile home was destroyed in the storm.

ABN photos / Millie Gill

The Arkansas Baptist Men disaster relief bus set up at Damascus Wednesday morning after a tornado had killed one person and injured five Tuesday evening. A team led by Bill Wilson of Fairfield Bay established a kitchen at the Southside Church and served 600 meals per day through Saturday. Meanwhile, the bus moved on to Scott (right photo), where a crew led by Ed Lauderdale of Quitman served 600 meals a day and sent another 1,200 meals on to Lonoke, where a tornado left two dead and caused nearly \$4 million in damage. Baptist Men from Mountain Home, Jonesboro, Little Rock, North Little Rock, Beebe, and Fairfield Bay served on the crews.



Jesse Kidd

Honorary Citizen

Arkansas native Jesse Kidd's 30 years of missionary service was recognized Sept. 21 when the council of Montes Claros, Brazil, made him an honorary citizen of that city.

Kidd is the first non-Brazilian to be awarded this honor by the city, which is located in the state of Minas Gerais. City Councilman Joel Guimaraes de Souza, a member of Montes Claros First Baptist Church, presented the award.

He and his wife, Wilma, recently returned to Arkansas for furlough after 30 years of missionary service in Brazil. Kidd went to Brazil in 1958, but not under the auspices of the SBC Foreign Mission Board. There he met his wife, the former Wilma Alice Gimmel, who was serving as a Southern Baptist missionary. They were married in 1967.

During his ministry, Kidd was instrumental in establishing a Bible institute, which was recently renamed in his honor. He also has assisted in planting 19 churches, bringing the total in the association to 35. Mrs. Kidd has served as a music

specialist.

Besides Montes Claros, Kidd has served as missionary in Volta Redonda, Santa Catarina, and Belo Horizonte.

In addition to the recognition from the Montes Claros city council, the Kidds received a plaque Aug. 30 expressing the appreciation of Brazilian Baptists for their ministry.

The Kidds will remain on furlough until December 1989, at which time they plan to retire. They may be contacted in care of First Church, Calion, at P.O. Box 106, Calion, AR 71724. Kidd was pastor of the Calion Church while a student at Ouachita Baptist University.

Haynes Joins Program

Michael K. Haynes, author of "The god of Rock" has been added to the program for Joy Explor, the Arkansas Baptist State Youth Evangelism Conference, Dec. 29-30 at the Hot Springs Convention Center.

Haynes is widely known for his 90-minute, multi-media seminar which analyzes the multi-billion dollar rock music industry and addresses questions of serious concern to Christian parents and youth. A former professional musician, Haynes has conducted more than 200 of the seminars.

Haynes will address satanism and the occult during Joy Explor. His one-hour presentation will be designed to offer practical solutions to youth who are exposed to these forces.

Also featured on the Joy Explor program will be evangelists Jaime Mayorga and Buster Soaries.

Mayorga, of Dallas, Texas, has conducted revivals in more than 200 Southern Baptist churches and has spoken to more than



500,000 teenagers in high school assembly programs and crusades. The son of a teenage prostitute, Mayorga struggled with physical abuse and drug addiction until he was converted on the streets of New Orleans, La.

Soaries, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., is a full-time youth speaker and evangelist. He is the author of articles which have appeared in *Christianity Today*, *Campus Life*, and *Contemporary Christian Music*.

Music for Joy Explor will be provided by Al Denson and the Arkansas Baptist All-State Youth Choir and All-State Band.

Denson has performed in more than 40 states before more than 500,000 people. He has worked with other notable musicians, such as the Bill Gaither Trio and the Imperials. He has produced a music video which was part of a television special, "Kids in Crisis," with Dawson McAllister.

A multi-screen video, "Love in a Twisted World," also will be part of the Joy Explor program.

Registration will begin at 12 noon, Thursday Dec. 29. The conference will conclude at noon Friday, Dec. 30.

For more information, contact the Evangelism Department of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention at 376-4791.

'Glory of Christmas'

Immanuel Church of Little Rock will present its third annual "Glory of Christmas" pageant Dec. 10 and 11.

The three-part musical program, directed by Lynn Madden, associate pastor for music and media, will consist of both sacred and secular Christmas selections and will feature the Immanuel sanctuary choir, orchestra, brass ensemble, and bell choir.

Three performances are scheduled: Saturday, Dec. 10, at 7 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 11, at 4:30 and 7 p.m. There will be no admission charge. Tickets may be reserved by calling the Immanuel music ministry office at 376-3071. An expense of fering will be taken at each performance.

Tournament Set

The second annual volleyball tournament to benefit the Arkansas Baptist Home for Children in Monticello will be held Jan. 21, 1989.

The double elimination tournament is sponsored by Monticello First Church. All receipts above trophy costs and gym rentals will be donated to the children's home.

Teams must be mixed, with at least two women per team. Entry fees are \$40 for each team. Registration deadline is Jan. 7.

For more information, or to request an entry form, contact Tom McCone at First Baptist Church, Box 187, Monticello, AR 71655; telephone 367-3449.

Acteens Panelists Chosen

Four teenage girls have been selected to serve on the 1988-89 Arkansas Acteens Advisory Panel.

Chosen by the State Acteens Committee were Suzette Hopkins of Pine Bluff Matthews Memorial Church, Jeannie Knight of Searcy Trinity Church, Kimberly Meacham of Search Trinity Church, and Becky Steele of Charleston First Church. Selected as alternate was Sandy Shelton of Little Rock Archview Church.

Panelists are high school students who are involved in Acteens and church and

school activities. During their term of service, they help plan and lead the state Acteens Encounter. In addition, they are available to speak at associational and local church Acteens activities.

Acteens is the missions organization of Woman's Missionary Union for girls ages 12-17. There are approximately 2,200 girls involved in Acteens organizations in Arkansas and more than 18,000 in Acteens nationwide. Acteens seeks to help girls grow spiritually through Bible study, prayer, and witnessing.



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Exciting Opportunity

by J. Everett Sneed
Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Recently James Sawyer, a retired dentist who now lives in Little Rock, spent two months in Benin, Africa, manning a clinic in Bohicon. He left the United States on September 1. When the clinic opened, there were 24 patients waiting to see him. During those two months he saw approximately 500 patients.

Benin is a small country located near the equator. Neighboring countries include Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, Niger, and Burkina. The country has a population of approximately 4 million. The per capita income is very low, only about \$310 a year.

The dental clinic in Bohicon was established by a career missionary who worked for three years to secure the land, build the office building, obtain dental equipment and get the proper permits from the government. He operated the clinic for six months and had to return to the United States because of health problems.

The Foreign Mission Board is attempting to keep the clinic going, which has been in operation for approximately six years, through the use of short-term volunteer dentists. Currently there is no dentist scheduled to operate the clinic.

The two major cities in Benin are Porto Novo, the capital, and Cotonou, the major city of the country. The government required that the clinic be located in Bohicon, a city of approximately 15,000 people, so that there would be no competition with national dentists. There are only 15 dentists located in the entire country and their offices are located in the major cities.

Bohicon is considered the international seat of fetishism, voodoo, ancestor worship and superstition. There are very few Baptists in the town. The majority of Christians are Catholic but most of the people are involved in superstition and paganism. Southern Baptists have six missionary families in the country.

Dr. Sawyer was able to travel with his dental assistant who spoke French, the official language of the country, and Fon, a

tribal language spoken by a majority of the residents. He also taught the *Priesthood of the Believer*, by Walter Shurden, to the mission families.

Dr. Sawyer observed, "Our Baptist work is not very strong. We have been in the country since 1970. Our missionaries are now trying to develop an indigenous work using nationals to preach, to minister and to lead in mission activities. The missionaries serve as teachers and enablers."

Currently the churches have no ordaining pastors. They are using lay preachers who have received some training and guidance from the missionaries.

The Foreign Mission Board is now requiring that the missionaries learn at least one of the tribal languages (tribal languages include Fon, Haaja, and Yoruba) in addition to the official language of French. The missionaries are proficient in French but many are still struggling with the tribal languages.

Dr. Sawyer said that his most exciting opportunity came when a dental assistant brought an eight-year-old boy to him who had never grown teeth.

Dr. Sawyer said, "I was excited since I had never seen an individual in all my 42 years of practice who had not grown teeth. Sawyer made dentures for the little boy and recalls, "This was one of the most exciting opportunities I've ever had."

Sawyer recalls that his greatest difficulty during the two months he spent in Benin was how to witness to his patients. He asked missionaries in the area to help him learn to speak some of the local language so that he could personally tell the people about the love of Jesus. His dental assistant was of great help in assisting him to communicate how to be saved.

When Dr. Sawyer arrived by plane in Benin he was greeted by a group of people waving handkerchiefs. Someone beside him said, "Is that your family?" Sawyer replied, "Yes that's my family. I don't know all of them yet but they're going to be my family."

Dr. Sawyer rejoices over the opportunity that was his to serve in Benin and to tell the 500 patients that he worked with about the love of Jesus.



James Sawyer made dentures for a boy who had never grown teeth.



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A Land of Spires

Church Planters Work Hard Soil in Utah

by Mark Wingfield

SBC Home Mission Board

PROVO, Utah (BP)—Southern Baptist missionaries serving in the Utah Valley carry the cross in a land of spires.

The valley is the heart of Mormon country, a stronghold for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mormon settlers risked their lives crossing the Rocky Mountains to settle the area.

Churches now dot the landscape of a dozen small communities around Provo. But spires, not crosses, pierce the sky from their steeples.

That's a subtle distinction not everyone would notice. However, Southern Baptist home missionary Ron Smith says it symbolizes the struggle he faces.

"We're dealing with people who think they're saved but who don't know who Jesus Christ is," he says, explaining that the crucifixion of Christ is not central to Mormon theology, as it is for Baptists.

Mormonism teaches that Jesus is the son of God and that Satan is his half-brother. Smith says, Jesus' death was sufficient to cover only some sins, according to Mormonism.

Nearly 90 percent of the valley's 240,000 residents are members of the Mormon Church. One survey found only 2,200 Christians, less than 1 percent of the population.

The valley holds more than 400 wards, or congregations, of the Mormon Church and less than two dozen evangelical Christian churches. Some towns have no evangelical witness.

Payson, a town of 6,000 people, has 15 Mormon wards—one within walking distance of every home. It also has two small evangelical Christian churches, one of them a Baptist chapel where Southern Baptist missionary Don Carrothers is pastor.

Carrothers and Smith are church planters, although a more appropriate title would be church re-planters. Like the rugged mountain terrain, the dominant Mormon culture forms hard soil for growing new Baptist churches, they say.

In less than a year, Smith and his wife, Fern, have breathed new life into First Baptist Church of Pleasant Grove. The 30-year-old church had dwindled to four members but now averages 25 in worship.

In the same amount of time, Carrothers and his wife, Marinell, have begun to grow the Baptist chapel in Payson. The work has been going on for seven years, with roller-coaster success. Attendance averages 18 now, a good number for the area.

Although the numbers appear low, members show high commitment, the pastors say. But bucking the accepted pattern and attending a non-Mormon church requires strong conviction.

"Nobody comes to our church to gain status in the community," Carrothers says.

He has scheduled four appointments with the president of the local Chamber of Commerce to inquire about joining. Each time the president has been unable to attend.

Such difficulties are the result of zealous individuals rather than organized persecution by the Mormon Church, reports Bruce Gardner, director of missions for the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention.

"It's not the kind of situation where they catch you and beat you up in the alley," he says. "People do not know us. They're suspicious of outsiders with religions they've never heard of."

"The whole mentality and approach to life is in a different dimension," adds John Meador, pastor of First Baptist Church in Provo for 10 years. Meador moved to Utah from Oklahoma. His church sponsors the chapel in Payson.

Other than the Middle East, Utah is the most difficult Baptist mission field in the world, Meador claims: "The question out here is not, 'Should Christians go to dances?' but 'Who is Jesus Christ?' That's a major question, even on the third- and fourth-grade level."

Smith and Carrothers use Bible studies,

social work and community involvement to address those questions in their communities. Some people who will not attend a non-Mormon church will attend a Bible study. Others just need the assurance that Baptists have come to town to stay.

Both missionaries also attempt to minister those not touched by the Mormon Church. Smith recently began a mission among poor Hispanic farm workers. The Mormon Church has an extensive social program but gives assistance only to church members in good standing.

By traditional standards, Smith has six baptisms to report. That's not a denominational record, but it represents the first baptisms reported from Pleasant Grove in eight years.

More importantly, Smith says, people are being disciplined and learning how to live the Christian life. Also, the town has a positive impression of the Baptist church for perhaps the first time.

"From the secular point of view, our work may not be worthwhile yet," Carrothers explains. "But Southern Baptists are being faithful to the Great Commission to reach every person with the gospel."

"We're called to make disciples in all the world. Numbers are important because they represent people, but I'm glad we haven't put a stipulation on how big a place has to be before we send missionaries."

Even without many visible results, the Smiths and Carrothers stick to their call because the need is so great.

Smith dreams of the day crosses will replace spires on every church in Pleasant Grove. "My vision is that every building that's called a church will become a church of Jesus Christ," he says.

(BP) photo / Ken Touchton



Ron Smith prays for God's power in reaching Pleasant Grove, Utah.

Against the Watchtower

Cult Victim Exposes Jehovah's Witnesses

by Sheila Sullivan
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)—As a third-generation Jehovah's Witness-turned-Southern Baptist minister, Paul Blizzard, now leads a crusade against the Watchtower leadership he once followed.

Blizzard, a theology student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., speaks to churches, television audiences and newspapers about dangers he sees in his former faith.

He recently appeared on the "Oprah Winfrey Show," one of three guests who said they had suffered religious abuse.

His primary purpose in appearing on the show was "to expose the organization," he said. "Secondly, it was to reach out to Jehovah's Witnesses who are alienated from religion—who have nothing to do with religion."

But public speaking isn't Blizzard's only ministry. He is associate pastor of Shively Heights Baptist Church in Louisville and operates his ministry to Jehovah's Witnesses from there.

Blizzard spends 40 hours per week answering phone calls and letters from across the country, he said, noting he received more than 500 letters and had one Christian salvation experience reported since his appearance on Winfrey's show.

Most of his personal counseling is done with people who have left or been kicked out of the Watchtower society, the Jehovah's Witness fellowship. Blizzard hopes to work with more television projects, support groups and eventually a network of information phone lines, he said: "I want to help people move from religion to relationship with God through Christ. Being a Jehovah's Witness is repressive and oppressive. Being a Christian means freedom and openness."

While Christianity does not involve bondage to an organization, Blizzard said the Watchtower claims to be the only earthly authority for God. Witnesses, he added, are told everyone outside of the society will go to hell.

Salvation will be earned by 144,000 Witnesses from a punitive God, not given by grace, Blizzard stressed. Witnesses wait for the destruction of the world, which has

been predicted by the Watchtower several times, he said.

Blizzard quit high school in 1971 "because the world was going to end in 1975" and went into full-time work as a Witness.

"I expected to see Manhattan sink into the ocean. I even had a spot picked out to watch it," he explained. "I was disappointed (when it didn't happen). The elders explained it all away. We licked our wounds and went on."

During his service at world headquarters in New York, he began to question silently the leaders' practices and beliefs. Later, after returning to his local congregation in Texas he expressed his doubts to his father.

"My father told the elders of the congregation. My wife and I were brought before a judicial committee and tried for apostasy," Blizzard said.

A record of the trial was put in the couple's permanent file for reference. That file still exists, Blizzard said, and is constantly updated. "I have been threatened a couple of times," he added.

While the couple "repented" for two years, their daughter Jenny was born. So was a new brand kind of trouble.

Jenny had a rare blood disease and needed a blood transfusion. The Blizzards refused the transfusion because it was against their religion.

A court order charged the couple with child abuse and neglect and guaranteed Jenny a transfusion. She lived until age 6 and then died when a liver donor could not be found.

Because Blizzard had refused to kidnap Jenny at the elders' request and the transfusion occurred, life became more difficult as a Witness. Jenny was shunned by the congregation as contaminated, he reported.

He and his wife began to question their beliefs more deeply, eventually buying an American Standard Bible, which was forbidden by the Watchtower.

After months of searching, he sought help from a local Baptist minister.

The Blizzards eventually were "disfellowshipped for conduct unbecoming a Christian," he said, because they had joined a Baptist Church.

"We became Christians. I felt like I was being pushed by God to jump right in the middle of things," Blizzard said. "I feel like I have a mission."



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LESSONS FOR LIVING

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God's Promise Questioned

by Norene A. Reed, Bartholomew Association, Warren

Basic passage: Luke 1:5-13, 18-20, 24-25

Focal passage: Luke 1:5-13, 18-20, 24-25

Central truth: God's promises are to be accepted without question.

Zacharias and Elizabeth lived in the days when the prophecy in Amos 8:11-12 concerning a famine of the hearing of the Lord's words had come true. It had been centuries since a well-substantiated special revelation from God had taken place. Through these years, life had gone on according to the ordinary course of history. There were people who continued to worship God and follow his commandments.

The couple, each descended from Aaron, were among the faithful worshippers of God, serving him from hearts of love. During his priestly duties, Zacharias was chosen by lot to burn incense in the Holy Place while the people prayed in the courtyard. When one considers the silence of God from the previous centuries, it is not hard to imagine Zacharias' feelings when an angel appeared and spoke to him.

God had concern for this elderly husband and wife who had no children and he knew the heartbreak of a barren Elizabeth. He sent a messenger to make a promise to Zacharias of not just a child, but a son. The questions of Zacharias seem natural and harmless, but they indicate his desire for proof and a doubting of God's ability to fulfill his promise. The angel identified himself as Gabriel, sent from the presence of God, and that because of unbelief Zacharias would be unable to speak until the promise was fulfilled.

God has given many promises in the Bible for people today: salvation, the presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, eternal life, help in times of need, peace, joy, guidance, power and ability to serve him, and many others. We can learn from the experience of Zacharias that God wants us to accept his promises to faith without doubting or needing proof.

The promise of God to Zacharias and Elizabeth came about like the angel had said and met a sincere yearning in their hearts. God knows each person as an individual. He has concern and love and a desire to bless. This aspect of God becomes more real through a personal relationship with the Lord which does not stop at salvation, but matures.

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Life and Work

Continuing to Grow

by Stephen Pate, Second Church, Little Rock

Basic passage: Acts 20:17-32; Ephesians 4:14-5:10

Focal passage: Acts 20:31-32; Ephesians 4:19-25; 5:6-10

Central truth: The Christian life calls for continued growth in understanding the truth and applying it to our lives.

Paul had just boarded a ship at Assos enroute to Jerusalem. It was not just a "direct" cruise as he made stops at some of the major towns on his journey. Realizing that he wanted to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost and he also wished to address the Christian leaders from the church at Ephesus, he decided to stop at Miletus and send for the church leaders at Ephesus. In his address to them he stresses the importance of strengthening their personal relationships with God. This carried extra weight as a message as he indicated that it would be the last time he would see them.

The message in Acts 20:31-32 is so clear. I spent three years helping you so that you might not be led astray by false teachings. Because you will not see me again it is of the utmost importance to rely totally upon God to lead you to build you up that through God your continued growth in faithfulness and obedience can flourish.

Application of these key verses to us in the 1980s is so simple. God does give us special people who uncover and explain to us God's truth and message. They are a gift of God as Paul was a gift to the church at Ephesus. But men and women will not always remain, only God will. It is vitally important that the personal relationship with him be nurtured to the place when the time arises that it is just God and me.

In Ephesians 4:19-21 we are revealed additional truths concerning the importance of continued growth in the Lord. Paul discussed with them lasciviousness which is the result of uncontrolled desires and greediness, the opposite of a sacrificial love. Evidently some in the church at Ephesus were having difficulty with this. Paul was far from beating around the bush with them. He was blunt and straight forward with his message. You did not learn Christ to be acting in this manner. To learn Christ was to hear the facts about him and understand the truths which were revealed through him.

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Bible Book

Covenant Worship

by Bradley A. Rogge, Forest Tower Church, Hensley

Basic passage: Exodus 25-29

Focal passage: Exodus 25:1-2, 8-9, 19-22; 29:42-46

Central truth: Faithful stewardship will bring us and others closer to God.

'Tis the season to be jolly. As Christmas fast approaches, we hurry to find gifts for everyone we can think of. This year let us not forget to give a gift to the one whose birth we celebrate.

During this time of year offerings in our local churches suffer. It is a strange thing to me. God long ago, as our passage points out, taught us that money was needed to provide a place for worship. Even though Christmas is important in our gift giving, the fact remains that the light bill still must be paid, salaries met, and materials ordered.

God had Moses create the tabernacle as a place of worship and a place where peace could be found. Today, our churches stand in that place. We must support them.

This is the time of year for our Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions. Gifts are down. Yet, millions of people are hungry for places to hear God's words of hope and mercy. Our work in missions is vital to what we are as Southern Baptists. Jesus has set the example for us by becoming the first missionary. He came from a far away place to minister to us.

Not only do we need places to worship, but people to share that experience with others. Moses was told to set aside some men as priests. God is still in need of people to serve. To serve, the people must be trained and provided for. Again we talk about the need of money.

God wants his message to live forever until he returns. What we place in the collection plates today insures a church for tomorrow. The child we buy that extra toy for might benefit more from one less toy and a stronger church for tomorrow.

As a father of a three-year-old and a six-year-old, I know I want to give them the best Christmas possible. The best gift I can give them, along with the train and doll, is a gift to my church over and above my title. The toy will be set aside in a few hours and the kids will play with the boxes. My church must stand forever—so I can watch my grandchildren find peace in the Lord tomorrow.

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Nothing Comes Easy

Missionaries Persevere in 'Spiritual Desert'

By Michael Chute
SBC Foreign Mission Board

Bob and Jeannie Spear are church planters. There's no scoreboard with large numbers of baptisms to prove it, but they're good at it.

The Spears work long, hard hours. For 33 years, their concern for their adopted country of Thailand has been charted in blood, sweat and tears. But probably most important, Thai Christians say they're effective.

Still, it's difficult to measure success as a church planter in Thailand. It's the kind of place that causes the strong to doubt, the fearless to tremble.

Nothing comes easy for a church planter in Thailand. The hours are always long. The work is always difficult. The rewards are generally few. Seeing someone make a profession of faith in Christ in the devoutly Buddhist land is a rarity.

In addition, the Spears have had their share of personal tragedy. Two years ago their daughter, Cheryl, was nearly killed in a car accident. Hit by a drunk driver, today she continues to battle back from brain damage.

A few years ago, Jeannie contracted tropical sprue. The disease nearly ended their missionary career. It's a chronic illness that can flare up again. Today, she faces the challenge of breast cancer discovered while on furlough. Backed by the prayers of Southern Baptists, she and

Bob plan to return to Thailand after she completes chemotherapy treatments.

It would be easy to throw in the towel. But the Spears never have. Instead, they always fight back, choosing the most difficult assignments.

That's just the kind of assignment they have now. The odds are against the Spears even making a dent in this area. But they have one goal: start a church in Krabi city.

To call this place of 16,000 inhabitants a "pioneer" city for missions is a gross understatement. There's never been any kind of evangelical church in the city. Further, there are no other missionaries, of any faith, in the whole Krabi Province. Consequently, there are less than 200 Christians in the entire province of nearly 300,000 people. A scenic, seaside town, Krabi is a spiritual desert, barren and destitute.

Evangelizing this area is not for the faint-hearted. The odds often seem insurmountable. But the Spears are up to it. And they know they aren't in it alone. They have the Holy Spirit and call on him several times every day.

The Spears' living situation is unique. They live in a "hong taw," a narrow storefront building usually reserved for businesses. The "hong taw" has only three rooms, each on a separate floor. The first floor is the ministry center for their work in Krabi. It's 18 feet wide with expanding steel doors that open onto the sidewalk, making the whole front of their "house"

open to the street. This also is the kitchen-dining-living area. Upstairs are two bedrooms.

Sunday is always a long day for the Spears. Driving over a large portion of Krabi Province, Bob preaches three sermons. Jeannie leads Bible studies. They even squeeze an English Bible study class in before the evening worship service.

It's nearly midnight when Bob pulls the white mini-van into the downstairs living area. By night it becomes the garage. Jeannie pushes the couch and chairs to one side to make room. Over the door is their sign: Baptist Christian Center.

Bob closes the huge metal doors on this day. He climbs the stairs. Their bedroom light is one of the few in Krabi still burning. It's late. Tomorrow is another busy day.

There's one more thing against Bob and Jeannie Spear—time. The Spears don't have a lot of time left in Thailand. They're in their last four-year term before retirement. They want one more church in place when they finally leave this adopted land.

The Spears' approach at this time is what's called "climatizing" in church-planter lingo. They live among the people, keeping a high profile.

They are constantly visiting with people. When the traffic in front of their "house" slows, they take to the streets. They share a witness with anyone who'll stand still long enough. Often it has to be low-key.

Bob explains: "There's a fine line of giving encouragement and witness that will bring a person to a decision, and of going too far, too fast so as to alienate the very people we are trying to help."

The Spears know where that line is. Thirty-three years of experience is a good teacher. They've had plenty of practice as church planters for most of their tenure.

The church has also taught them patience. Bob relates what happens when Christianity is pushed on a Thai too fast—or, at least, when they think it is. "Already, some of our favorite little friends can no longer come to Sunday School or church services because families are afraid they are getting too much Christianity," he says, a hint of dejection in his voice.

Still, in these two years since the move to Krabi, the Spears have accomplished their basic goal: being accepted as members of the community. Relationships are so important in Thai society. If anyone can build those relationships, it's Bob and Jeannie Spear.

In this country, that's the initial step in bringing people to accept Christ. Prayers from Southern Baptists at home, and gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering help make that step a little easier.

They're depending on the Holy Spirit to help them do the rest.



(FMB) photo / Don Rutledge

Bob Spears closes the door on a long day in Krabi Province.

Living Water

by Eric Miller

SBC Foreign Mission Board

BOQUEIRAO DOS COCHOS, Brazil (BP)—The mayor cried each time he attended the funeral of a child from his town who had starved to death. But he could do little.

A deadly drought had settled in northeastern Brazil.

Djaci Farias Brasileiro is a doctor as well as the mayor of Boqueirao dos Cochos, a community of farmers. Before the drought, local people farmed during the four months of rain each year. When the drought came, few crops grew and families had little food or money.

A federal tanker truck brought water each week and drew long lines of thirsty people. The few who had money bought staples from a mobile store that also came once a week.

This was the situation when Southern Baptist missionaries found the people suffering through a five-year drought in the early 1980s. The missionaries and Brazilian Baptists came to their rescue with a \$3 million hunger-relief effort known as the Living Water Project.

The project is one of the largest-hunger relief efforts ever undertaken by Southern Baptists. It encompasses 14 counties in Brazil, three Baptist outreach centers, dentists, nurses, a doctor, three factories, urban water systems, irrigation systems, a model farm, school gardens, agricultural technicians and radio broadcasts. Numerous Brazilian Baptist home missionaries and Southern Baptist missionaries have played major roles.

Overall funding of the five-year project is scheduled to end in January. But parts of the work, such as irrigation, may get continued funding from Southern Baptists. Revenue from the project's factories will support the outreach centers. Funds and assistance also have come from Brazilian Baptist churches, their National Mission Board and the Brazilian government.

Breaking the hunger cycle has been the main purpose of this effort, says Southern Baptist missionary Ed Trott, who is about to retire after completing his work as project director. It also is improving the economy of an area populated by 150,000 people and changing many of their lives spiritually.

Brick and furniture factories and a model farm have put people to work. Agricultural technicians have improved farming methods and led Bible studies. Nurses and a doctor are reducing infant mortality. People are taking courses in sewing, cooking, typing and crafts. The gospel is penetrating remote areas, and churches are starting,

missionaries report.

"Things are different now," says Trott, who is from Vinita, Okla. Before the project came, some families in the area settled disputes with guns. A murder per day occurred in the project headquarters of Itaporanga, a town of 10,000 people. The last murder was six months ago.

"I think the gospel has its influence on the way people act," Trott says. "A chief of police told me, 'I just can't believe what's happened here.'"

The irrigation systems pump water from an artificial lake, built by the Brazilian government, to dozens of farms near Mayor

Project agricultural technicians showed their rural community how to irrigate and grow 14 vegetables. Thousands of students are eating better and learning nutrition. Project workers enlisted schools to plant gardens to put extra vegetables on school lunch plates.

Missionaries say starting the project in an area with a longstanding Catholic heritage, where people prayed to a dead Catholic priest, was difficult. "The people were very prejudiced against evangelicals," Trott recalls. A group tried to oust a Brazilian Baptist missionary from Itaporanga in the early 1980s.

Some Catholics called the Baptists "goats," adds missionary Bruce Oliver. One priest publicly opposed the project and warned people not to "sell your souls" to

(BP) photo / Don Rutledge



A \$3 million hunger relief project seeks to break the physical and spiritual drought in northeastern Brazil.

Brasileiro's town, keeping fields green with crops year-round in the drought-prone part of Brazil. Project workers have improved farming methods and boosted yields. They plan to start a guava-processing factory in Boqueirao dos Cochos.

"People say that the gifts that came from the Baptists would fall from the heavens to the city," the mayor says. "The gifts were so good that they never expected anything like this from any people here on earth—that people were not able to do such things, only God."

Only one town in the 14-county region had a permanent water system before the project began. Now all do. More than 60 farms are irrigated. Farmers pool their money to form irrigation associations and maintain equipment.

Others living outside of towns are thankful for the project, too. Joventino Angelo Cavalcante, 48, and his wife, Ana, live in the mountains by a dirt road in a house made of sticks and mud. They have 12 children.

"We had a very difficult time from 1983 to 1986," says Cavalcante, a farmer who never attended school. Before the project, his family lived off of beans, rice and corn.

Cavalcante's neighbor, Terezinha Silva, says welfare funds once were her family's only income: "We almost starved. We would sell a little rice and corn and just barely get by."

"those communists." The priest asked government officials not to cooperate with project workers.

But soon people saw the project's benefits and told the missionaries, "Please forgive our priest." He later left town. Recently another priest praised the project and invited a colleague to see it.

Before the project started, only one Baptist church and two small mission congregations existed in the area. Now churches and missions exist in nine cities and smaller "preaching points" are in nine rural areas.

A key church planter in the project is Cirenio Refosco. Visiting congregations and preaching, he drives 3,000 miles some months, mostly on dirt roads.

Suyene Carvalho, director of the Baptist center in Conceicao, works with people who live in slum houses where pigs roam freely inside. Their families eat on the floor, and unclothed children get parasitic worms while their physical and mental development suffers from poor nutrition. The families have been exploited as laborers and receive little pay, she says.

"This town needs to come to believe that love still exists," Carvalho said. "We Baptists give with one hand, but we don't come to take back something with the other. We support with the other hand."

Many of the people in 14 forgotten counties of northeastern Brazil know that now,

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WORLD

The Koran Can Help!

by Art Tolston

SBC Foreign Mission Board

ROCKVILLE, Va. (BP)—The Koran itself says Jesus was "faultless."

Dudley Woodberry, a Christian expert on Islam, thinks that claim and other verses from Islam's holy book are "stepping stones towards Christ" for Muslims.

Woodberry, assistant professor of Islamic studies at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., led a workshop Nov. 7-11 at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's Missionary Learning Center in Rockville, Va.

Woodberry's Christian work overseas has included two years in Lebanon, five in Pakistan, three in Afghanistan and three in Saudi Arabia. He has written two books on Islam to be released during the coming year.

Muslims generally regard Mohammed as sinless, but the Koran itself does not, Woodberry noted. In several passages, Mohammed is told to seek forgiveness for sin—"sins of the past and those to come," as one verse puts it.

But Jesus, who is counted with several Old Testament figures as an Islamic prophet, is described as faultless in the Koran's 19th chapter, Woodberry said. The specific verse varies in different systems used for dividing the Koran's 114 chapters. Chapters in the Koran are called "suras."

He cited sura 3, verse 49, in the Koran as another verse affirming Jesus' uniqueness. It says Jesus gave sight to the blind, healed lepers and raised the dead. The Koran attributes no such miracles to Mohammed, although Muslims generally believe he performed miracles. They also regard the revelation of the Koran to Mohammed over a 22-year period as miraculous, Woodberry said.

In sura 10, verse 19, Jesus is called "the word of God." The Arabic language of the verse seems to mean that God created Jesus by speaking his creative word into Mary's womb, Woodberry said.

Although not in the Koran, two other passages in authoritative Islamic writings assert that every human is "touched" by Satan at birth except for Jesus and the Virgin Mary, he added.

Other Koranic verses describe Jesus as "a statement of the truth," and "a sign." Muslim tradition teaches that a sign of the approaching day of judgment will be Jesus' bodily return to earth, he said. Muslims believe Jesus will face death and that he and all other people will be resurrected for the judgment, he noted.

Three verses in the Koran also affirm the Bible, Woodberry said. In sura 3, verse 2, Mohammed is told that the Koranic revela-

tion confirms "what was already present, as he (God) revealed the Torah and gospel before." In sura 10, verse 94, Mohammed is counseled to resolve any doubts by asking "those who read the Scriptures before you."

Such Koranic passages can help Christians who encounter Muslims to "start on common ground before we get to those very crucial areas where we differ," Woodberry said.

Three Koranic verses generally have been interpreted as meaning that the Bible has been corrupted, he said. The Koran denies that anyone could be the Son of God and denies that Jesus was crucified. Sura 4, verse 157, says Christ only "appeared" to have been crucified.

And Mohammed's centrality in Islam, Woodberry said, arises from numerous Koranic references to him, including the distinction of being the final prophet or "the seal of the prophets." Over the course of several centuries after Mohammed's death in A.D. 632, Muslims intensified their reverence for him largely as a reaction to Jesus' centrality in Christianity, the professor said.

Various dynamics have spurred Muslims to embrace Christ as the Son of God, Woodberry said. In a few instances, Muslims have been convinced simply by the references to Christ in the Koran. One underground group of Christians in Africa traces its start to this kind of realization, he reported.

Some Muslims compare Mohammed to Christ and turn to Christ. "Mohammed was a man of great stature," Woodberry said. "Yet he was a very warlike person who fought, raided caravans, even raided one caravan in a sacred month when even pagan Arabs would not raid caravans. He killed a poet who wrote sarcastic poems about him."

"When you compare this with Jesus Christ in the gospels, who was sinless and said to turn the other cheek, and when you see the beauty of the Sermon on the Mount and other teachings of our Lord, it becomes rather obvious that Jesus is far more than a prophet."

Christians should remember "there is a whole spectrum of Muslims. We see only one part of the spectrum in the militant activists on our television screens," Woodberry said. "There are also extremely pious, gentle Muslims."

By developing such awarenesses, Christians may find many opportunities to share with Muslim friends "how our Christian faith helps us handle problems or how we feel the presence of God in trying times—and then build from there."

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