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FMB appoints 4,000th missionary,
discusses Catholic-evangelical pact

By Toby Druin

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Southern Baptists marked the passing of a milestone April 26 when appointment of Texan David Thompson pushed the active foreign missionary force to 4,000.

Thompson, a 42-year-old accountant from San Angelo, who will work in the mission business manager's office in Malawi, advanced the total to 4,000 when he and his wife, Janey, were appointed with 31 others at a service attended by 6,850 in Tarrant County Convention Center in Fort Worth, Texas. The appointment service was held in conjunction with the spring meeting of the Foreign Mission Board trustees.

Appointment of the 33 new missionaries pushes the total to 4,011 serving in 129 countries. The total includes 3,493 career and associate missionaries and 518 two-year workers in the International Service Corps.

It took Southern Baptists 110 years to reach the 1,000 mark in 1955 and another 10 years to appoint the 2,000th in 1965. The 3,000th came 14 years later in 1979 and the 4,000th after another 15 years had elapsed.

A total of 12,091 people have been appointed since the board was organized with the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845.

In his charge to the new missionaries, FMB President Jerry Rankin questioned why only 4,000 of more than 15 million Southern Baptists have responded to God's call to serve.

"By what right is any Christian exempted?" he questioned. "Are you called but not chosen by your own disposition and ears failing to hear?"

The appointment was the highlight of a Foreign Mission Board meeting that also included response to a recent document on Catholic-evangelical relations, election of officers and reports of overseas statistical growth.

The document on Catholic-evangelical relations, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millenium," calls

for reduced conflicts between evangelicals and Catholics and more cooperation on social issues such as abortion, education, pornography, religious liberty and race relations.

It also calls for the two groups to stop proselytizing or "sheep stealing" from each other's folds. The 40 signers of the document included Richard Land, director of the SBC Christian Life Commission and Larry Lewis, president of the Home Mission Board. Rankin was not asked to sign. Don Kammerdiener, FMB executive vice president, criticized the document.

Because of the public attention to the document and "interpretations" that might harm the work of foreign missions, the board approved a statement affirming:

- Commitment to the lordship of Christ and fellowship with all who share a personal faith relationship with him;
- Commitment to the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible, and to conduct work in accordance with scriptural teaching; and
- The appropriateness of missionary witness among populations and individuals characterized by nominal or former allegiance to any Christian denomination. Trustees said they reject any suggestion that such witness should be characterized as "sheep stealing," proselytizing or a wasteful use of resources.

Leon Hyatt of Pineville, La., retired former director of church extension for Louisiana Baptists, was elected chairman of the trustees, winning 57-22 over Hoyt Savage, a pastor from Las Vegas, Nev. He succeeds John Jackson, a California pastor who had served two terms as chairman.

Other officers elected were first vice chairman Gary Burden, pastor of Deer Park Church, Newport News, Va.; second vice chairman Robert Oxford, layman from Lakewood, Colo.; and recording secretary Reed Lynn, pastor of Rush Creek Church, Shawnee, Okla.

In his report to the board, Rankin said the task of reaching a lost world for Christ cannot be fulfilled by plans, policies and programs based on human wisdom but by "sensitivity to God's leadership, discernment of his will and obedience to his mission that supersedes personal preferences and stereotyped solutions."

Questions will always be raised about various strategies, he said, but "God has called us to reach the whole world. Few, if any missions agencies have been able to make an impact on as many countries and people groups as the Foreign Mission Board."

Carl Johnson, the board's business manager, reported that for the first time in four years receipts for both the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering had increased over the previous six months. He expressed special appreciation for Texas Baptists whose contributions have increased \$1.3 million.

Jim Slack, the board's church-growth consultant, reported record growth in total churches, new churches constituted in one year, membership, baptisms, Sunday school/Bible teaching enrollment, preaching points and missionaries assigned to the least-evangelized areas, called "World A."

The trustees approved a plan of reorganization for trustee committees and responsibilities. The plan includes three business sessions at each meeting instead of two and a forum between trustees and administrators to be held in executive session.

In other business, the trustees approved a resolution of appreciation for Irma Duke, a 19-year employee of the board who has been named executive director of North Carolina Woman's Missionary Union.

On free speech vs. privacy rights,
Supreme Court weighs protections

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Does setting time, place and manner restrictions on anti-abortion protesters at a Florida clinic violate their right to free speech?

The U.S. Supreme Court explored that question April 28 as it heard oral arguments in *Madsen vs. Women's Health Center*. Specifically, the court examined two buffer zones created by a judge that limits pro-life activities at a Melbourne, Fla., abortion clinic.

Protesters were forbidden by a 1992 injunction from trespassing or blocking clinic property, as well as from physically abusing patients and clinicians. The injunction also affirmed the right to free speech.

But in April 1993, the court took further action, amending the injunction to create 36-foot and 300-foot buffer zones where speech is limited. The new injunction also forbids excessive noise, such as the use of bullhorns, during surgery and recovery time.

Mathew Staver, an Orlando, Fla., attorney representing Madsen and other plaintiffs, argued that the injunction violates free-speech rights because it is viewpoint-based. He said the amended injunction also is vague and overbroad.

Instead of using "a surgical scalpel" to solve the problem, the lower court "used a butcher knife," Staver told the Supreme Court.

Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor said injunctions are designed to prohibit a particular conduct, and under Staver's theory all injunctions are viewpoint-based.

Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg asked Staver whether his clients had sought modifications of the first injunction and whether they conceded any violations of the original injunction.

Making no concessions, Staver said his clients had not asked for modifications of the first injunction.

Talbot D'Alemberte, a Tallahassee, Fla., attorney representing the health center, said that the injunction does not target all anti-abortion advocates but only those who have waged an "extensive and sustained campaign" to close the clinic by blocking access to it and creating chaos. He noted that these protesters represent only a part of the pro-life movement and that they are dedicated to shutting down the clinic regardless of the law.

U.S. Solicitor General Drew S. Days, speaking for the center, said the question before the high court is whether or not the injunction properly addressed the particular conduct at issue in the Florida court.

Conduct, not content of view, directs this injunction, Days said.

Associate Justice Antonin Scalia said that while the injunction may target conduct, it also affects speech.

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America's neglect of children
poses 'quiet crisis,' experts say

By Mark Wingfield

(ABP) -- Americans are collectively abusing many of the nation's children by neglect, according to a growing chorus of researchers, social

workers and children's advocates.

"The quality of childhood is deteriorating, and every caring American knows something is wrong," said Margaret Brodtkin, executive director of Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth in San Francisco.

"Many parents spend so much time scrambling between jobs and child care that they have almost no time to talk to children about what they want for lunch, much less explore what they think and feel," Brodtkin added.

A "quiet crisis" afflicts America's youngest children, and society must take more responsibility, declared a recent 132-page report by the Carnegie Corp. of New York. "It is time to sound -- and answer -- the alarm about the neglect of our nation's youngest children and their families."

"Children and youth in America today confront an array of challenges and difficulties. ... These difficulties are the consequences of choices society has made and values embraced," wrote Diana Garland, dean of the school of social work at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., in her book "Precious In His Sight."

"We know that every dollar spent on Head Start saves three dollars later in remedial education and medical care, yet this country has never fully funded Head Start," noted Larry Owens, director of family services for Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children. "When you know that something works, yet you don't do it, I guess that is a form of child neglect."

In last year's much-quoted Atlantic Monthly article, "Dan Quayle Was Right," Barbara Dafoe Whitehead contended society's problems are partly attributable to the growing selfishness of American adults. "What had once been regarded as hostile to children's best interests (is) now considered essential to adults' happiness," she asserted.

"Many adults today want to believe that whatever is best for them is also best for kids," she added in a recent interview. "But one of the things that's very clear is that adults' interests and children's needs are not the same."

Adults must sacrifice in order to provide for their children, she explained. "It has been a distinctive part of our national tradition to sacrifice for children so that each generation will be better off than their parents. That is, until the current generation."

Statistical evidence of the challenges faced by modern children has been widely reported:

-- American children are more likely to be poor, drug-dependent, pregnant, murdered or incarcerated than children in any other industrialized nation.

-- Nearly 70 percent of all child-care workers earn less than the average parking lot attendant.

-- One-fourth of all births in the United States today are to unwed mothers.

-- One-fourth of American children under age 3 live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level.

-- In the United States, nine of every 1,000 infants die before they reach their first birthday -- a mortality rate higher than that of 19 other nations.

-- Most U.S. kids spend three hours or more a day sitting passively in front of the television.

-- Teen suicides have tripled in the last 30 years.

But the time has come to move beyond complaining about the problems to finding ways to solve them, experts say.

And solutions will only come as society takes collective responsibility for its children, they add.

To illustrate this point, children's advocates repeatedly cite the old African proverb, "It takes an entire village to raise a child."

"Even if our own children are not among the worst off, they will suffer," Brodtkin contends in her new child-advocacy book titled "Every Kid Counts."

"Our country will be spending so much money controlling its disenfranchised people that it will not have the resources to provide a decent quality of life for the rest," she said. "This is already happening -- prison budgets are climbing, while education budgets are plummeting."

It's time for those with advantages to stop thinking of disadvantaged children as other people's children, Brodtkin wrote. "We used to think we could rely on every child's family to take care of its own problems. But the traditional family that we associate with the 1950s -- a two-parent, two-child household with a breadwinner father and a stay-at-home mother -- is nearly extinct. As one TV station put it: 'Ozzie and Harriet are dead.'"

Contrary to popular belief, people concerned about the welfare of America's children can make a difference, she said.

Brodtkin and her small, independent agency led the successful campaign in 1991 to guarantee funding of children's programs in San Francisco through passage of a ballot initiative. This made San Francisco -- where children constitute the smallest percentage of population of any major U.S. city -- the first city to set aside a percentage of annual tax revenues for a children's fund.

The problem plaguing all segments of American government is simple, she asserted: Children's programs don't get funded because children don't vote.

But when concerned advocates for children put feet to their concerns, policies and budgets can be changed, Brodtkin said.

And this is a natural role for the church, contended Garland in "Precious In His Sight," a guide to child advocacy by churches, published by Woman's Missionary Union's New Hope Press.

The Christian church has a long tradition of advocacy for children, she noted. For example, in Roman society, infants rejected by their fathers were left on garbage heaps to die. But members of the early church became well-known for rescuing abandoned babies and caring for them.

"As Christians, we are responsible for children," she said. "They are all God's children, and therefore all our children. They are Jesus in our midst. Christ was very clear about saying when you minister to the least of these, you do it to me."

But even if moral and theological arguments fail to move adults to action, the economic argument should, Garland said.

"The numbers of children in our society are shrinking; we're far below zero population growth. And these are the ones who are going to be paying our Social Security," she said.

"Every child that is not growing and becoming a vital part of society is a bad economic investment."

It costs far less to provide for children now than to pay for the consequences of neglect, Brodtkin added:

-- For the price of one prison cell, 20 kids can go to college.

-- For the price of one more police officer on the street, 20 kids can go to Head Start.

-- For the price of putting a family on welfare, 20 kids can have tutoring and job training.

Christian citizenship demands that Baptists be concerned about the kinds of legislation passed by local, state and national governments, added Owens of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children.

"As Christians, if we're really concerned about creating a community that is family friendly, we need to be involved."

And government alone isn't to blame, he said. "It's important for

companies and corporations and industry to have personnel policies that support families. For example, when companies transfer people every two or three years or have expectations of employees to work 60 hours a week, that doesn't foster healthy families."

Churches have a strong ability to offset such negatives, added Whitehead, a research associate with the Institute for American Values in New York.

"Religiously observant kids seem to have more resources to deal with what I perceive to be a harsh environment to grow up in," Whitehead reported. "They have a sense that there is a community of adults in their church who are committed to them. And that creates a strong sense of support."

For the church simply to preach for a return to the "traditional family" is not the answer to the child-rearing crisis, said Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics in Nashville, Tenn..

"The church has a responsibility to challenge the popular notion that the traditional family is the biblical family," he said. "The traditional family has far more in common with 19th century industrialized North America and Europe than it does the Bible."

Instead, the church must talk about family values which are not rooted in marketplace needs, Parham contended. The modern American family, he said, is mainly seen as an economic unit, and that is harmful.

"What value does it send children when the father leaves early in the morning, comes home late in the afternoon and doesn't interact with the children? That work is more important, that material acquisition is more important than interpersonal relationships."

By the same standard, welfare reform is desperately needed, he added. "We have some states which drive the father out of the home in order for the wife and the children to get (aid). That's a pretty anti-family value."

The Carnegie Corp. report, "Starting Points," was written by a 30-member task force appointed three years ago. The report uses urgent language to sound a call to action.

"The crisis among our children and their families is a quiet crisis," it said. "After all, babies seldom make the news. Their parents -- often young people struggling to balance their home and work responsibilities -- tend to have little economic clout and little say in community affairs."

The task force calls for four specific actions: promoting responsible parenthood, guaranteeing quality child-care choices, ensuring good health and protection, and mobilizing communities to support children and their families.

"The problems facing our youngest children and their families cannot be solved through piecemeal efforts; nor can they be solved entirely through governmental programs and business initiatives," the task force concluded. "All Americans must take responsibility for reversing the quiet crisis."

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Expert touts 'ways to save our children'

SAN FRANCISCO (ABP) -- Margaret Brodtkin, director of Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth in San Francisco, isn't content to complain about the plight of America's children. Concerned adults need to take action, she contends.

To help that happen, she has compiled a new book titled "Kids Count: 31 Ways to Save Our Children." The paperback is published by Harper Collins

and sells for \$8.

Among her 31 suggestions:

- Turn off the television.
- Adopt a child-care center.
- Fight childhood poverty.
- Help a child avoid having a child.
- Do something about child abuse.
- Include children with disabilities.
- Feed a hungry child.
- Hire a youth.
- Make your company child-friendly.
- Unlearn prejudice.
- Stop cigarette ads that lure children.
- Just say no to the liquor industry.
- Make your neighborhood safe for kids.
- Lobby for kids at budget time.
- Reach out to a child in foster care.
- Befriend a homeless family.

Brodkin offers practical suggestions for acting on every idea, including names and addresses of government officials and resource organizations.

She provides suggestions for people who have little time to give and people who have much time to give.

Suggestions if you have only five minutes: protest TV violence to the FCC; stop a magazine subscription where kids are targeted with smoking and drinking advertisements; call the White House opinion line.

Suggestions if you have one day a year: Invite a needy youth to follow you around at work to learn about job opportunities; make a presentation to a class in a public school; attend a budget hearing in your community.

Suggestions if you have an afternoon a week: Become a special advocate for a foster child; volunteer for a parental-stress hotline; chaperon an outing for homeless children; chat with a disabled child.

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Need for teaching parenting skills
'tremendous mission' for churches

(ABP) -- Churches can play a key role in reducing physical and sexual abuse of children by teaching parenting skills, experts say.

Inadequate parenting skills are the primary cause of child abuse, said Joel Griffith, a child-protection specialist with Kentucky's Cabinet for Human Resources in Frankfort.

Most people who abuse children are not psychopathic or sociopathic criminals. "The vast majority of people who hurt their children just become frustrated and lose control," he said.

The need for parenting skills presents a "tremendous mission" for churches, Griffith said. "Part of the church's role is to support families."

Improving parenting skills is "the biggest secret" to stopping sexual abuse of children, said Novella Henderson, services coordinator with Parents United, a child sex-abuse program based in Louisville, Ky.

While sexual abuse accounts for the smallest portion of reported child abuse cases, it is also the most under-reported category of child abuse, experts say.

Parents need to be taught to be "aware of what is happening to their

children," said Harrison, a member of New Salem Street Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky.

But Baptist churches have been slow to accept that responsibility, she said. "The hardest part for me in the last 10 years has been reaching the churches," she said. "I thought that would be my first place of work, and it has not been. In fact, Baptist churches have not proved to be very receptive."

Churches do not lack sympathy for sex-abuse victims, but Baptists generally are unwilling to admit there might be a problem in their midst, she said.

Sex abuse cuts across religious, social, economic and racial lines, she said, "and it's just as prevalent in church as anywhere else."

It is a crime that feeds on secrecy. Churches and Christian people could make a difference by first admitting there is a problem, she said. Also, it would help for pastors to become aware and better equipped to deal with the issue, she added.

Churches should be aware of their legal liability if child-care workers turn out to be abusers, should screen workers for criminal records and thoroughly check references, she said. They also should beware of stereotypes such as only men are sex abusers. Because of that image, "women can float around the system and men are more suspect."

"We need more men involved with the children, but a lot of men have gotten afraid to work around children," she said.

Church programs offering day-care centers, mothers' day out programs or parent conferences reduce all forms of child abuse, said Diana Garland, dean of the school of church social work at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. As much as lack of parenting skill, isolation is a factor among parents who become abusers, she said.

"The one key to children who are abused or neglected is parents who feel isolated in the task of parenting," Garland said. "This is a critical issue for the church to understand, because one of the things we do best is wrap community around people."

"The truth is two parents are not enough. Children and families need community," said Garland.

Last year, Woman's Missionary Union published Garland's book, "Precious In His Sight," a guide to child advocacy for churches. The book gives numerous practical ideas for ways churches and individual Christians can help children and their families.

Half of all incidents of physical abuse are caused unintentionally when a parent is angry, said Griffith. Because of that danger, he recommends parents avoid using physical discipline. "Children can be hurt or adults can lose control so easily. And research has not proven it to be effective in teaching kids new behavior," he said.

If parents feel they must use physical discipline, Griffith advises not using an object to strike the child and not hitting any place other than the buttocks. Even then, "remember that area on a small child is very close to the kidneys and other vulnerable organs," he said.

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-- By Mark Wingfield

Experts offer ways to help

A variety of experts on parenting and child-abuse prevention offer these suggestions to keep children safe:

-- Be a support. Offer support to relatives, friends and neighbors

coping with children. Give them a break before they become over-stressed and likely to lose their temper.

-- Teach parents. Inadequate parenting skills are cited as a major cause of child abuse. Help inexperienced parents know that children are naturally curious and quick, that anything can be a hazard to a young child, that children develop at different paces and have no self-control at young ages.

-- Build trust. Especially to guard against sexual abuse, assure children you are around that you trust and believe them, so they will tell you when someone makes them uncomfortable.

-- Report suspected abuse.

-- Become an advocate for children. Take a stand at local government meetings, school board meetings and other forums where public decisions affecting children are made.

-- Become a volunteer. Numerous opportunities exist for volunteer help with at-risk children. Volunteers are needed to be court advocates, foster parents, Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

What constitutes child abuse?

-- Physical abuse is any type of punishment to a child that results in injury to the child or substantial risk of serious harm. "Any time you're spanking a child to where you're leaving marks or bruises, you're hitting too hard," said Joel Griffith of the Kentucky Cabinet for Human Resources. "We also would consider it abuse if someone is hitting a child in an area of the body that could easily result in substantial injury, whether it is visible or not. For instance, shaking an infant is not going to leave any outside injuries but is a very dangerous behavior."

-- Neglect is simply not providing the child with the necessary food, clothing, supervision or medical care necessary for well-being. This is a little more difficult to assess, due to varying standards of cleanliness and dress, Griffith said. "We avoid becoming a cultural police. The case has to be a health hazard."

-- Sexual abuse is any contact or interaction with a child that involves sexual gratification of the alleged perpetrator. This includes fondling, exposure, showing pornographic films to children, using children in pornographic photography, making sexual propositions to a child.

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Schools should teach consensus values, panelists tell Texas CLC

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- Religious indoctrination has no place in public schools, but America's already-fraying social fabric will turn to shreds unless schools find a way to teach consensus values, speakers told the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission and its board of consultants.

A state senator joined three school board representatives for a panel discussion as the commission -- the governing body for Texas Baptists' moral concerns and public-policy agency -- met April 21-22 with members of its larger board of consultants near Dallas.

Some groups urgently concerned about teaching values to school-age children are unwilling to work with potential allies outside their circles,

said Sen. Jim Turner, D-Crockett, chairman of the Texas Commission on Children and Youth.

"We recognize the need in our society to re-establish a moral base. Yet those who represent morals and values struggle against each other. They don't know who their friends are," said Turner, a deacon at First Baptist Church, Crockett, Texas, whose commission has been criticized by the Eagle Forum, a conservative advocacy group founded by Phyllis Schlafly.

"We have a lot of distrust in our country today, most of it ill-founded, and it is pulling us apart," he said.

The vacuum in public values is causing Texas prisons to overflow, said Turner, whose work on the state's Punishment and Standards Commission sparked his interest in children and youth issues.

One of each 18 adult Texas males is in prison or jail or on probation or parole, and the ratio is expected to increase to one in 12 by decade's end, he noted.

Children need not only to learn moral values, but should also be shown love and compassion by adults, Turner said.

"We need to link caring, responsible adults to children on a long-term basis," Turner said.

Imparting values to the next generation will take more "civic energy" than some communities are willing to expend, added Sandy Kress of the Dallas School Board.

"Many primitive societies do a better job of preparing their adolescents than we do," he said.

The teaching of values should be integrated into the basic core curriculum and modeled by teachers, and not segmented into a separate part of the school day, Kress said.

Incorporating values into existing instruction is the approach that has been taken by the Leander Independent School District near Austin, said Leander School Board president Debbie Manns.

The district began by adopting 10 commonly held, non-sectarian, ethical principles, said Manns, a member at Highland Park Baptist Church in Austin.

Parents were encouraged to sign "parental pledges" to enforce certain behaviors, children were assigned to write "hero letters," and the district adopted character development as its top teaching goal.

The former president of the Dallas School Board, Mary Rutledge, cited the experience of the Dallas Independent School District in introducing "Education for Responsible Parenthood," a K-12 program that emphasized the teaching of human growth and sexuality in an age-appropriate manner.

Packets for home study were made available for parental review and use, with the understanding that parents who objected strongly could excuse their children from the program. The supporting materials also were made available to churches.

While parents, themselves, often need to be taught communication skills or receive grounding in values, parental involvement can only be encouraged and not demanded, Rutledge, a member of Cliff Temple Baptist Church in Dallas, said.

"The classroom is the only captive audience you have. You have no control over the parents," she said.

People who oppose using public schools for religious instruction should take the lead in proposing better ways of teaching values, said Weston Ware, citizenship associate with the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"Our kids are not being taught how to perpetuate our society," Ware said.

"We have to find a way to allow the teaching of values, of family, of

civilization."

Ware urged the teaching of values through stories -- historical, fictional and biblical -- as opposed to exclusively a "dilemma" approach in which students are given problems and called upon to select a course of action.

Based on every measurable indicator other than rhetoric, society does not value its children, added children's advocate Shirley Hammond.

While juvenile crime increased by 9 percent nationally in the last five years, it increased by 97 percent in Texas, said Hammond, director of Texans Care for Children -- a private, non-profit child-advocacy organization founded by Phil Strickland, director of the Texas Baptist CLC.

"Clearly, Texas does not value its children and its families," she told the commission. "The long-term results will be a disenfranchised citizenry and a ravaged economy."

The alternative, she said, is to focus on prevention and early intervention in the lives of at-risk children and youth.

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Tanzanian teenager baptized
before leaving with new arm

By Greg Warner

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (ABP) -- Tanzanian teenager John Meguliki came to the United States to be fitted with an artificial arm, but he wouldn't leave without being baptized by his American host.

On April 7, doctors at Baptist Medical Center in Jacksonville, Fla., replaced the arm 14-year-old John lost to a crocodile two years ago. His five-month medical ordeal completed, John was scheduled to return to his native Tanzania April 12. But he insisted on first being baptized by Jack Brymer, editor of the Florida Baptist Witness, the boy's guardian during his stay in the states.

John, from the small Masai village of Kiria, about 50 kilometers south of Mt. Kilimanjaro, said he made a profession of faith two years ago but had never been baptized. Brymer urged him to wait to be baptized in Tanzania so his family could participate, but the boy insisted.

Brymer performed the ceremony Sunday, April 10, at Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church in Jacksonville.

Two days later, John boarded a plane leaving the United States, culminating a trans-Atlantic mercy mission that began on another Sunday two years earlier, the day he fought off a crocodile in a Tanzanian pond.

That day in January 1992, John and a couple of friends, taking a break from tending cattle, went for a swim in a pond near his home. He was attacked by a crocodile, which managed to sever John's right arm below the elbow before the boy could struggle free.

John was still bleeding and in shock three hours later when Southern Baptist missionary Tim Tidenberg stopped in the village to visit Kiria Baptist Church, where John's parents are members. Tidenberg rushed the boy to a medical center in Moshi, three hours away, where doctors were able to save most of what remained of the arm.

John returned to his village not only handicapped but an outcast. Masai tradition insists that the right arm be used for all noble tasks. Without an arm John would never be accepted by the tribe. Viewing him as a burden, John's family "gave" him as a gift to missionary Tidenberg, who took responsibility for the child.

Officials from the Florida Baptist Convention, on a trip to arrange a mission partnership with Tanzanian Baptists, learned of John's plight and determined to help. Through Baptist Medical Center President Bill Mason, a former Southern Baptist missionary, they arranged for John to receive a prosthetic arm from stateside doctors. All medical expenses would be donated.

Tidenberg brought John to Jacksonville, accompanied by Tanzanian pastor Elimbesi Mrema, who would serve as the boy's translator. But medical complications slowed the procedure. Mrema had to return to Tanzania in February. So Brymer, who met John's parents on an mission trip to Tanzania last October, was allowed to serve as the boy's guardian.

For a while, John lived with Brymer's family and later with the family of convention official Gary Nichols. While in the states, John learned much about American culture, including Nintendo, basketball and Coke floats.

"His grasp of spoken English was amazing, learned from hours of 'Sesame Street,' Discovery Channel and John Wayne movies ...," said Carolyn Nichols, Gary's wife.

"Gary and I knew from the first night with John Meguliki that quiet evenings with our two daughters, Molly and Beth, were gone for awhile," she said. "John went to bed in the same high gear in which he awoke. After talking with other parents, though, we decided that that pattern was not so much 'African' as it was just 'boy.' Everything our girls played, he played harder and louder."

John's regimen of medical treatment included 36 visits to the doctor, more than 40 two-hour sessions in the hyperbaric chamber, 16 nights in the hospital and two surgeries -- all to prepare his arm to receive the prosthesis.

Finally, the day arrived for the artificial arm to be fitted. The procedure, which attracted local newspaper and television coverage, was a success. John demonstrated his new appendage by picking up a pen with surprising deftness.

That day a going-away party was held at the hospital, where physicians, hospital workers and others came to wish him well. He gave out pictures of himself so that his newfound friends could remember him. In return they gave him plenty of hugs and "I love yous."

Cecil Seagle, one of the Florida convention officials who first heard of John's plight while arranging the partnership in Tanzania, said the boy's struggle "would move the hardest of hearts."

"The truth is, the Lord used John Meguliki in a marvelous way to define what this partnership is all about, and it's about people."

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Baptists provide relief
to Texas tornado victims

By Ken Camp & Orville Scott

DALLAS, Tx., (ABP) -- A series of tornadoes which killed at least three people, injured scores of others and caused more than \$250 million in property damage in several North Texas communities April 25-26 generated a wave of compassion and response by Baptist volunteers.

As dazed storm survivors surveyed the wreckage of their homes, Baptist churches joined hands quickly with Texas Baptist disaster relief volunteers to provide them with food and shelter.

Baptist churches in Lancaster, DeSoto and Gainesville, Texas, served

as shelters initially and then began providing food for victims, emergency relief crews and clean-up volunteers.

On Tuesday afternoon after a twister wreaked a six-mile-long path of destruction across Lancaster, volunteers set up the Texas Baptist disaster relief mobile unit at First Baptist Church, Lancaster. The mobile unit houses a field kitchen through which volunteers can prepare up to 35,000 meals a day.

Before the unit arrived, First Baptist Church volunteers served food and cold drinks to several hundred people. When they were unable to drive into storm-ravaged areas, volunteers walked and carried food and drinks to storm victims trying to salvage some of their belongings from the debris.

In its first day of operation, more than 1,200 meals were prepared at the field kitchen of the disaster relief mobile unit.

One of three known casualties from the storm was Ed Burnett, deacon at First Baptist Church, Lancaster. Burnett, 81, and his wife, Dorothy, survived the twister huddled in a closet, but he died suddenly of an apparent heart attack while surveying the damage to their home.

Most survivors, while saddened by loss of homes and material possessions, were quick to say, "We're alive, and that's what counts."

When the storm struck, First Baptist Church member Kimberly Brown attempted to get her three children into the safest place in the house.

Her six-year-old, A.C., was in bed. As she tried to lift him, an eerie air disturbance seemed to grip him. She tugged desperately and managed to snatch him from the bed just as the room disintegrated.

As they sought shelter in the bathroom, Alexis, 8, screamed, "No mother, the mirrors," remembering warnings about broken glass. As they fled, the bathroom caved in also. They huddled in the laundry room where Brown covered the children with her body to protect them from falling debris as they sang about Jesus.

When they were able to crawl out of the remains of their house, 4-year-old Elliott said, "Jesus didn't do this."

"No, Jesus saved us," said his mother. "Jesus protected us. He gave us all the signals."

First Baptist Church, Lancaster, though surrounded by damaged homes and shattered trees, suffered little damage. Crossroads Baptist Church of Lancaster suffered minor damage to its steeple.

Hampton Road Baptist Church, DeSoto, sustained heavy damage to the upper level of its educational building, and high winds peeled back a portion of the roof on the church's worship center.

Gary Dyer, pastor of Hampton Road Baptist Church, said representatives of the American Red Cross called him at 10:30 p.m. on April 25 to ask if the church could be used as a shelter.

"When we arrived at 10:45, people were already here. We began at about 11:30 icing down soft drinks and brewing coffee," he said.

"We loaded up church vans and personal vehicles and went out into the neighborhoods, handing out muffins, soft drinks, hot coffee, cheese and crackers and circulating the word about the shelter."

While only a handful of displaced DeSoto residents spent the night at Hampton Road's overnight shelter, more than 300 disaster victims, police officers and emergency response personnel passed through the facility throughout the night, Dyer said.

About 20 volunteers from Robinwood Baptist Church, Seagoville, Texas, delivered donated food to Hampton Road and help the church rip up rain-soaked carpet, clear debris and cut away felled trees.

Plymouth Park Church, Irving, Texas, also donated food for the shelter, as did a number of area businesses, Dyer noted.

At least one member of Hampton Road Baptist Church was injured in the

storm, and several families were known to have lost their homes.

"To some extent, I would imagine every member of our church was affected," he said.

Among those members was Virginia Burk, minister of childhood education at Hampton Road Baptist Church. The roof was completely blown off of the rent house in which she had been living for about a month and a half.

When she and her adult son, Hurdie, realized they were in the path of a tornado, they ran to an interior closet and covered themselves with pillows and heavy quilts.

"We could hear things flying past the door and the sound of glass shattering. We were probably inside the closet 15 or 20 minutes altogether, just praying," she said.

"It was the strangest feeling. It was almost like I was outside myself watching it all happen. As I was holding hands with my son, praying with him, I just knew God was going to take care of us."

Throughout the day following the tornado, church members and friends helped Burk and her son sort through belongings and move into a house owned by Hampton Road Baptist Church.

Across the street from Burk, another member of Hampton Road, John Scales, was watching television with a friend in his living room when he felt a sudden drop in barometric pressure.

"I found shelter in the bathroom for myself, and my friend grabbed cover and stayed in a corner of the living room," said Scales, who had served as a disaster relief volunteer with Texas Baptist Men when a tornado hit Wichita Falls, Texas, several years ago.

Scales' friend narrowly escaped injury when a two-by-four shot through a wall and landed just inches from his head. Much of the roof was blown away, and all of the interior of the house was rain-soaked.

"I just came out of it thankful the Lord didn't take us," Scales said.

The day after tornadoes struck Lancaster and DeSoto, Bennie Slack, pastor of First Baptist Church, Gainesville, stood in the church yard and watched three funnel clouds dip down about a mile north of the church.

First Baptist Church, Gainesville, served as a shelter for about 50 residents in the community until the storm passed through, Slack said.

One of the twisters demolished a mobile home park managed by First Baptist Church member Marilyn Dowling. Fortunately, advance warnings enabled the Dowlings to alert about 65 residents of the park and get them into an underground storm shelter.

Dowling, unable to awaken one elderly mobile home resident, crawled through a window to get him out of his home and into the shelter.

"I think they would have been killed had they remained in their homes," said the Dowlings' son, Matthew, a freshman at Howard Payne University, Brownwood, Texas, who returned home to help with the cleanup. "There was nothing left of some of the homes except rubble."