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Increasing number of singles passing by Baptist churches

By Mark Wingfield

DALLAS (ABP) -- One is the loneliest number, if the old song by Three Dog Night was right, but it's also becoming an increasingly popular number.

New data from the 2000 U.S. Census confirms a trend that could have far-reaching impact on churches: Single adults are becoming an ever-increasing part of the population.

The trend is fueled not by divorce but by more young adults delaying marriage.

Over the last 30 years, the percentage of women ages 20 to 24 who never have married has doubled. The proportion of never-married women ages 30 to 34 has tripled.

In 2000, 72.8 percent of women ages 20 to 24 had never been married, up from 35.8 percent of women in that age bracket in 1970. Likewise in 2000, 22 percent of women ages 30 to 34 never had married, up from 6 percent of women in that age bracket in 1970.

Similar patterns are seen among males. In 1970, 81 percent of males were married before their 30th birthday. In 2000, less than half of all adult males under 30 had married.

Over this 30-year period, the median age at first marriage for women increased by 4.3 years to 25, and the median age at first marriage for men increased by 3.6 years to 27.

"The postponement of marriage has led to a substantial increase in the proportion of young, never-married adults," explained Jason Fields, a Census Bureau employee who specializes in family issues.

That's a message churches should pay attention to if they want to be effective in reaching their communities with the gospel, according to two Baptist singles ministers.

"Churches need to realize this is a huge group that is sitting in your congregation," said Tiffany Terry, minister to singles at Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas. "We have opportunities to either reach them or alienate them." "The single adult population in Texas may be the most under-evangelized group in the state," said Ron Hill, minister of education and singles at Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio.

"If we ever really want to consider ourselves evangelists, we need to wake up to the demographics," he said. "The stats don't lie. They're here."

But they're not in Baptist churches -- at least not in proportion to their presence in the general population, said Hill, one of the longest-tenured singles ministers in the nation.

Despite the clearly changing demographics, "I don't see churches trying to do anything about it," Hill said. "The turnoff singles have to churches is greater than ever." Since singles most often visit worship first rather than any other church activities, it is imperative for church leadership to be sensitive to singles in planning worship, Terry said. If the pastor talks only about traditional families, for example, singles will feel unwelcome.

"On holidays like Mother's Day and Father's Day, include the single parents you have, the divorced singles you have," she urged. "They're reality." Also, remember something as simple as listing singles activities in the church bulletin that's handed out on Sunday mornings, Terry added. That sends a signal to visiting singles that this church cares about them, she said.

And if the church has a singles minister, that person's name should be listed somewhere in the worship bulletin also, Terry advised. "Having a singles minister on staff speaks volumes to a single who walks in." The trend toward later marriage is just a fact of modern life, Terry acknowledged. "I'm 30 years old and I'm single. I never would have thought I'd be single at 30."

This means churches must appeal to a different and more discriminating group of single adults than in decades past, when churches focused on an all-purpose "college and career" singles department.

"Today's singles are used to high quality," Terry said. "Whatever kind of social things they are used to doing, they're used to top-quality things. We must offer the same quality things in our churches."

Also, singles want to be integrated into the whole life of a church, she said. "Singles want to be in churches that are intergenerational, to be a part of something bigger than the fact that they're single."

"Single adults want to be the church too," Hill added. "And the truth is they are, but a lot of churches don't let them be. If you're married, you're treated differently."

Today's often-older and more sophisticated single adults have found great acceptance in the workforce but too often still struggle for recognition at church, Hill said. "At work, the issue never is are you married or single. It's can you do your work. In the church, the question is not whether you can do the work, it's whether you're married or single. The questions change.

"What I'm seeing is more and more single adults just passing the church by because they're not allowed in many churches to serve on committees, to be heads of committees, to be deacons, to be a real part of the church." At a minimum, church leaders should see the issue from an evangelistic standpoint, Hill reiterated.

"Baptists have the greatest opportunity of anybody I know of to reach single adults for Christ. If we do that, we become a better local church and a better denomination because we have become more inclusive." Among other Census findings related to single adults:

- The proportion of U.S. households consisting of one person living alone increased from 17 percent in 1970 to 26 percent in 2000.

- The number of single mothers increased between 1970 and 2000, from 3 million to 10 million.

- The number of single fathers increased also, from 393,000 to 2 million.

- Among 18- to 24-year-old males, relatively few live alone, even this age bracket represents a huge pool of singles. More than half (56.4 percent) of males this age were living at home with at least one parent in 2000.

Aging of boomer generation signals lean times for churches, Barna says

By Lisa Sergent

PEORIA, Ill. (ABP) -- Churches may face rough financial waters as the baby boom generation, the more than 76 million adults born between 1946 and 1964, hit their retirement years, says pollster George Barna. The head of a leading marketing research firm that tracks cultural and religious trends cited the demographic group's "tenuous ties to the church" as the basis for his forecast.

Barna, recently in Chicago and Peoria, Ill., for seminars on church leadership, told the Illinois Baptist newspaper that baby boomers "are becoming the wealthiest generation and the most self-absorbed" as they age. "In days to come, I see them dropping out (of the church) as their children continue leaving the home."

Boomers are now between 37 and 55 years old and in their peak earning potential. As they adjust to more limited incomes in retirement -- or if they start to drop out of churches as Barna foresees -- they'll be followed by the baby busters, a smaller segment of the population unlikely to amass the boomers' collective financial strength.

That will lead to financial woes for churches, including foreclosures, Barna said, because the "baby busters are not as inclined to give" and are less inclined to attend church than their parents.

It's all happening at a time when church loyalty, as Barna described in his book, *Boiling Point* (Regal Books), is one of the "values abandoned by Christians."

That abandonment has been occurring, not necessarily because past generations had been more faithful, but because today's generation has more activities and distractions to fill its time, said Pat Pajak, pastor of Tabernacle Baptist of Decatur, Ill., and vice president of the Illinois Baptist State Association. "In the past, people would say, 'My granddad and great-granddad were Southern Baptists, and so I'm going to be a Southern Baptist,'" he said. That loyalty is gone and needs to be taught.

Tim Lewis, pastor of Bethel Baptist of Troy, Ill., and the IBSA's president, agreed that people will no longer stay with a church "just because their grandpa and grandma went there." The church can't automatically assume each generation will come to it, he said. "There needs to be clear evangelism directed at each generation."

Churches develop loyalty when they "expand core leadership and help them find their giftedness and explore it," Lewis said. They then help them "find how they can use that purpose."

Lewis believes it is important for people to "grasp that every member is a minister. Every role is helping fulfill the mission of the church." It's also vital to have a clear sense of identity. If it doesn't, "a church becomes irrelevant, not really impacting the community and becoming cloistered in society. This is the real threat to the church.

Although generational groups have been moving away from the church, Pajak said many "churches today are already responding and reacting to this trend." Those churches who are making an impact in their communities recognize where to find the "front door," that place that is the first point of contact for a church with its community.

"In the 1950s, Sunday school was the front door to the church. Then a shift came in the 1960s when worship became more celebrative. In the process, the worship service became the front door to the church. This was true until the 1980s."

That's when the front door shifted to programs that matched with peoples' needs, such as grief counseling, divorce care or women's aerobics. This drew people into church and worship, he said. "And if you win them over, they come to Sunday school," Pajak said. Preaching, worship and Sunday school are no longer

the first draw that brings people who aren't Christians to church, and "more and more churches are waking up to this trend."

The church also has to respond to new technology to keep younger generations involved. "Worship has to be good and be high quality for busters. They have grown up with the Internet, CDs and video games. This is a much more rapid-fire generation," Pajak said.

That means worship needs to be more visual to connect with younger generations -- often considered under-evangelized -- because they best learn visually. "If we are not singing choruses and moving along in the worship service, we need visual stimulation like projecting the words (for songs and sermon outlines) and using bits of video clips."

And although younger generations are less inclined to open their pocketbooks, they are willing to give of their time. Lewis and Pajak both considered this to be a way for churches to tap into their energy.

"We should use their willingness to volunteer," Pajak said. They "have an excitement about missions and will take half of their vacation to fly somewhere to do missions work."

With that connection, churches can teach about the biblical directive to tithe, giving a 10th of one's income to the church. "If you enlist people in service and ministry, and they are plugged into doing something that makes a difference, the money will follow," Lewis said. "When a church is focused on purpose and clear vision, changing lives and impacting people, they are caught by that."

And the need to teach tithing is clear, according to a study by the Barna Research Group, which shows that churches lost financial ground last year. The study found that 78 percent of adults -- more than three out of every four -- donated money to a nonprofit organization or a church last year. However, that's a drop of 6 percent from 1999 and a 9 percent decline from 1998 when 87 percent of all adults had donated funds. Among born-again Christians, there was a 16 percent decline in dollars contributed to all nonprofits and churches in 2000.

"The problem for the succeeding generations is that they see things costing more and they want to have nice things," Pajak said. "Because of this, they are more selfish and preaching tithing rubs them the wrong way. Giving is a sore subject for them."

Barna's study found that about six out of 10 adults, 61 percent, gave money to one or more churches, a 5 percent decline from the previous two years. The average church donor contributed a mean of \$649 to churches last year, down from \$806 in the prior year.

The study found that few people practiced tithing. One out of every six adults -- 17 percent -- claimed to tithe. However, a comparison of the amount that people gave to churches and their household income revealed that just 6 percent actually gave a 10th of their income, pre-tax or post-tax, to churches.

The level of misreporting didn't fare better among born-again Christians: 32 percent reported tithing but only 12 percent actually did so in 2000.

Barna said his research showed that the baby buster generation, people who are in their 20s through their mid-30s, barely gives to churches or religious organizations. Their predecessors, the baby boomers, are generous donors but simply do not assume they ought to give to churches, he said.

"As these two generations become more prolific within churches, their tendency to give less to churches will challenge ministries to reconceptualize their budgeting, fund-raising and planning practices," Barna said in his report.

"I don't think churches will go belly up," Pajak said, "but churches need to be aware of the situation."

Ordained woman gets doctorate from Southeastern Seminary

By Jimmy Allen

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) -- Nothing was plain about Jane Chen Pan receiving a doctor of ministry degree May 26 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. Unlike her fellow doctoral graduates, Pan is a woman. And she is an ordained minister who serves as co-pastor of the Chinese Baptist Church, a mission of Forest Hills Baptist Church in Raleigh.

The seminary has adopted the 2000 "Baptist Faith and Message" as part of its official theological position, and the faith statement includes a section stating only men should be pastors. The 1999 president of the Southern Baptist Convention who appointed the committee that developed the wording for latest revisions was Southeastern President Paige Patterson, who helped give Pan her doctoral hood.

During the ceremony, doctoral graduates were described by their titles such as associate pastor or pastor. Pan's title of co-pastor wasn't mentioned, however, even though she and other graduates were asked to write their titles and church names for the introduction. Dean Russ Bush introduced her as "serving" at Forest Hills Baptist Church.

George Braswell, the only current faculty member not to voluntarily endorse the "Baptist Faith and Message," said about three or four women have earned the doctor of ministry degree at Southeastern. Pan is the first woman since Patterson became president in 1992, he said.

"She is a special, special person," Braswell said. "She's brilliant enough to (have entered) a Ph.D. program anywhere she wanted to go."

Larry Harper, senior pastor of Forest Hills, said he is impressed with Pan's leadership of the mission church.

"The level of compassion she has for people and the zeal for evangelism are just exceptional," Harper said, "and could be a model for a lot of churches."

Although Chinese Baptist is a mission of Forest Hills, the 150-member congregation led by Pan and her husband, Robert, is self-supporting except for lacking its own facilities, Harper said.

Patterson said he didn't see any irony in the fact that an ordained woman who serves as a co-pastor earned her degree at Southeastern. The faculty's signing of the "Baptist Faith and Message" doesn't affect the students, he said. Some students aren't sympathetic to the faith statement, and those students are treated charitably and kindly, unlike conservative students from a previous era, he said.

During his seminary days, Patterson said he continually experienced berating for holding unpopular views. "I'm determined we will not do that," he said.

While students of different views are to be treated kindly, Patterson said the seminary does advocate certain positions, including salvation by grace, the authority of Scripture and that women shouldn't serve as pastors.

Pan decided to enter the doctoral program at Southeastern in 1998, three years after graduating from the seminary with a master of divinity degree. Pan said she prayed about her decision and sensed God's peace in heading to Wake Forest, about a 40-minute drive from her home in Apex, N.C.

She also saw herself as having an influence on people at the seminary. "I have something to share with them, too," she said. "I can set an example."

While working on her master's degree, Pan said some people on campus did give her a "hassle" about being a woman who is ordained.

"I would just tell them face to face this is my calling," Pan said. If they persisted, Pan would tell them she worships one true God and that the person doesn't take the place of God in her life. If the person continued by using the Bible, Pan would tell them that is their interpretation and then follow that comment with biblical examples of women serving as ministers, including Priscilla.

"(There are) many examples of women called by God to minister," Pan said.

Most of her professors and fellow students were respectful and supportive, said Pan, who noted she didn't hide any of her thoughts when writing papers or essays. Privately, the professors would tell her that she and Robert, her husband and fellow co-pastor, are "doing a good job with their ministry," she said. "They'll say that, but they won't say they support women pastors."

One professor, though, did "very abruptly" argue during class against women being ordained, Pan said. "I just listened with a humble heart," she said, and prepared herself to speak if given the opportunity. She wasn't given the opportunity.

After class, some of her fellow students approached her and said, "'We don't really agree with what he said.' ... just a hint-hint to me they thought the professor was out of place."

Patterson made two responses when told of the incident. One, Pan never reported the argument to him and, two, "What's abrupt to one person is convictional to another."

Pan credits her husband, their congregation, fellow students and Braswell for supporting her in ministry.

"I know if I'm not doing this, I'm not obeying my God," Pan said.

Her doctoral ministry project focused on providing marriage and family enrichment to Chinese-Americans as a way to foster their spiritual growth. China's communist government is involved in private lives to the point of limiting families to having one child only, she said, but the government doesn't teach anything about family life.

In the United States, people of Chinese descent not only experience culture shock, they often struggle with family problems. They would ask the Pans "we can't do well at home, how can we do well at church?"

So the co-pastors developed a workshop in 1991 that helps participants with subjects ranging from parenting to spirituality. Pan developed a self-evaluation for the participants along with an interview to determine if the workshops were helping. Her research concluded that those who repeated workshops rated themselves as more involved in church than those who only took the workshop once. Those who participated in the workshop were more involved in church than the control group, which didn't take the workshop. The differences were quite significant statistically, Pan said.

The two areas showing the greatest improvement -- communication and conflict resolution -- were identified as the weakest areas for participants prior to taking the workshop, she said.

Pan was born in China, a place she and Robert planned to visit for a third consecutive year this summer to teach English.

Her father had attended a Christian college, but because of the upheavals of civil war, the family moved to Taiwan and then to Okinawa, Japan, where she attended a school run by Christian missionaries and where her father, a Christian, later helped establish a church.

He arrived in the United States the end of last year to be with his daughter. "He really wanted to see me graduate. That was his wish." He was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer at the beginning of the semester and stayed in the United States for treatment. On a Wednesday in March, Pan's doctoral committee approved her project, enabling her to graduate, and when she got home, she called her father to tell him the news.

"He was so elated over the phone," she said.

Knowing she needed to lead the Wednesday night service, Pan told her father that she would visit him the next morning. He died that night.

Although he didn't see her daughter graduate, he lived long enough to know she had completed the journey.

"At least, he lived to see her affirmed," Braswell said.

Carter calls for alliance of Baptists in U.S., Europe

By Greg Warner

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Jimmy Carter still wants to be called a Baptist, even though he disagrees strongly with the group most often identified with the term -- the Southern Baptist Convention.

"I'm not troubled by the term 'Baptist,'" Carter told reporters June 29.

In fact, Carter is spearheading an effort to bring together like-minded Baptists on two continents to cooperate on missions, education and other joint projects. It's all part of his commitment to preserve the Baptist principles he has espoused since his youth.

Carter still calls himself a "traditional Southern Baptist," even though he renounced his ties to the Southern Baptist Convention last year in disagreement with the SBC's revised faith statement.

That statement, which reflects the more conservative beliefs of the SBC's current leaders, is being used as a creed to restrict traditional Baptist faith, Carter said.

"They claimed it wouldn't be a creed to be enforced, but it is being used that way," Carter said in a joint interview with Associated Baptist Press, the New York Times, Dallas Morning News and the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. "And it will permeate other areas of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Carter said the two decades of denominational warfare that has divided the Southern Baptist Convention has been "a tortured episode" for all involved. But, he added, "that struggle is over. What can we do to move on?"

Carter is calling for a new alliance of Baptists in the United States and Europe. He already has met with moderate groups on the losing end of the SBC battle. Now he wants to expand the dialogue to include other Baptists in the U.S., such as American Baptist Churches and African-American conventions, and the European Baptist Federation.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Baptist General Convention of Texas, Baptist General Association of Virginia and Baptists Committed, all groups estranged from the SBC, were part of earlier unpublicized meetings hosted by the Carter Center in Atlanta .

Some of the same groups will be involved in an August meeting in Europe. Carter wants the groups to talk about joint mission efforts. No other details of the meeting were immediately available.

No merger of the groups is being considered, the former president said, but a model of "partnership" is preferred, in which the groups would cooperate but retain their separate identities.

"If there are other Baptists who don't respond and don't want to cooperate, who cares? Forget them and move on as Christians and as Baptists, just following Jesus," Carter said in a June 29 speech to members of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, earlier identified themselves with the CBF in a speech to the group in 1993.

Putting together such a coalition may take 15 to 20 years and will require a lot of "prayer and forgiveness," he told the reporters before his speech. But working together instead of separately "may bring a new vitality" to the worldwide Baptist movement, he predicted.

"Traditional" Baptists can unite around a broad statement of shared beliefs, Carter said. Among those beliefs he cited local-church autonomy, the separation of church and state, equality of men and women, respect for all persons, a rejection of creedalism, and a belief in the authority and inspiration of Scripture as interpreted by the teachings and example of Jesus.

A partnership model is best suited to today's religious climate, Carter told the reporters. The fact that fewer and fewer churches draw their identity from a national denomination is "probably a healthy thing," he said, and the partnership model gives local churches more responsibility and control.

Carter has been working to build bridges among Baptists for several years, relying on his peacemaking abilities and visibility as a former president.

In 1998 he met with conservative and moderate leaders to try to overcome differences, which Carter said seemed "superficial" in light of Christianity's worldwide mission mandate and urgent social needs. But that became a "frustrated hope" when nothing lasting came from the meetings, he said.

Since then he has become convinced that the best strategy for "traditional" Baptists is to walk away from the SBC.

Last year Carter, a Sunday school teacher at Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, Ga., went public with his objections to the SBC's new confession of faith, "The Baptist Faith and Message."

His denunciation of the document as a new "creed" was touted by moderate Baptists in Texas, who were trying to get their state convention to reduce funding to the national coffers of the Southern Baptist Convention. Carter, in turn, was accused by the SBC of meddling in Texas Baptist politics.

But Carter told Associated Baptist Press his opposition was intended to keep his own state body, the Georgia Baptist Convention, from endorsing the revised faith statement. "I didn't have any thought about the election in Texas," he said.

Carter, a lifelong Southern Baptist, served as a mission volunteer and denominational leader before his election as Georgia's governor. He even considered serving as SBC president before he was elected to the Oval Office, he said.

Like a lot of moderate Baptists, he was reluctant to abandon hope for peace among the SBC's factions. For a long time, he said, he thought the controversy was "transient" and would eventually blow over. Now he thinks differently, he told reporters.

"I think it's best to go our separate ways."

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Texas Baptist leader lauds CBF stand on gays

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- Charles Wade, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, applauded the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly for making what he called a clear statement against homosexuality.

Wade noted that the values affirmed in the policy statement by the Atlanta-based CBF are shared by Texas Baptists, who are on record as stating that homosexual practices are sinful and in conflict with the biblical teachings.

While critics of the 5,500-church BGCT often accuse its moderate leaders of being soft on controversial issues including homosexuality, Wade insisted: "Texas Baptists are opposed to homosexual behavior. The Baptist General Convention of Texas does not accept money from churches who ordain or place in leadership roles acting homosexuals," Wade said.

"I was pleased that the majority of those represented at the CBF General Assembly affirmed the position that Texas Baptists have held all along," he said.

Meeting in Atlanta June 28-30, a majority at the General Assembly declined to review a policy statement adopted last October by the CBF Coordinating Council. The policy prohibits funding for "organizations that condone, advocate or affirm homosexual practice."

That statement describes faithfulness in marriage and celibacy by singles as the "foundation of a Christian sexual ethic," and prohibits the "purposeful" hiring of homosexuals as CBF staff or missionaries.

The statement rejects homosexual practice as contrary to God's will, but it goes on to acknowledge "the love and grace of God for all people, both those who live by this understanding of the biblical standard and those who do not."

A similar report adopted by the BGCT in 1996 stated: "The Bible teaches that the ideal for sexual behavior is the marital union between husband and wife and that all other sexual relations -- whether premarital, extramarital, or homosexual -- are contrary to God's purposes and thus sinful. Homosexual practice is therefore in conflict with the Bible."

The BGCT Executive Board acted decisively in 1998 by refusing to accept any financial support from an Austin church that ordained a practicing homosexual as a deacon and asking the church to cease identifying itself as being affiliated with the BGCT. Even so, the BGCT position on homosexual behavior has been "consistently misrepresented," Wade noted.

"I am personally glad to see the CBF make its stance clear," Wade added.

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-- Bob Allen contributed to this article.

Baptist Center for Ethics celebrates 10th anniversary

By Alex Smirnov

ATLANTA (ABP) -- A Baptist historian blessed the 10-year-old Baptist Center for Ethics at a June 28 anniversary banquet for supplying proactive resources to the Christian community.

"Bless you, BCE, for designing and distributing one of the very best and most useable electronic newsletters available to ministers and Christians in local churches," said Walter Shurden, the Callaway professor of Christianity at Mercer University in Macon, Ga. "I have recommended [bcE*byte] to my children, friends and to some of my enemies."

Since forming in May 1991, BCE has helped congregations avoid pitfalls of spiritual, intellectual and theological elitism, Shurden told some 400 people gathered at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta.

"The symbols most associated with the Jesus of Nazareth are cross and towel, not the Ph.D. degree or a well-stuffed portfolio," he said.

Shurden urged BCE to continue taking seriously "what Jesus took seriously -- including the excluded, blessing the unblessed and learning to live on less."

Addressing the core meaning of Baptist faith, Shurden said the spirit of the Lord would come upon believers not because of individual ecstasy or the power of attracting crowds, but "because we preach good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives and restore sight to the blind."

"The poetry in Luke 4 is suggestive and imaginative, not exhaustive and prescriptive," he added.

Other speakers underscored BCE's mission of providing proactive, rather than reactive, resources.

While family related hysteria has turned into a national past time, BCE refused to feed people's anxiety over the state of the American family, said Bob Setzer, a BCE board member and pastor of First Baptist Church in Macon, Ga.

"BCE is both pastoral and prophetic," he said. "It helps people follow Jesus without fear."

Emmanuel McCall, a founding BCE board member and pastor of Christian Fellowship Baptist Church in College Park, Ga., focused on BCE's media involvement. He said the organization's charisma in examining the news and interpreting the Bible help people live pro-actively in their congregations.

"I am confident that what [BCE] offers will speak to our needs and that the best years are yet to come," said Doug Dortch, a BCE board member and pastor of First Baptist Church in Tallahassee, Fla.

BCE's conferences on citizenship, family, churches in transition and questions of leadership have challenged people and delivered voices otherwise not heard, Dortch said.

"I hope that you are still standing strong 100 hundred years from now to teach us that we need compassion to be the controlling and central idea of our lives," Shurden said. "God bless you, BCE, and bless us through you."

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-- Alex Smirnov is research associate for the Baptist Center for Ethics.

Veteran Baptist journalist Barry Garrett, 85, dies

By Larry Chesser

FRANKLIN, N.C. (ABP) -- Barry Garrett Jr., 85, a veteran Baptist journalist noted for his service as the first Washington bureau chief of Baptist Press, died June 20 at a nursing home in Franklin, N.C.

A native of Oklahoma, Garrett joined the staff of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in 1958 as director of information services. That year he opened the first bureau for Baptist Press and later gained press credentials for Congress and the White House.

During his nearly 21-year tenure at the BJC, Garrett was an accredited news reporter for Vatican II in Rome during 1963-1965. He also was a participant and speaker at the first European Baptist Conference on Church and State at the Baptist Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, in 1963 and at the Southern Baptist-Roman Catholic dialogue at Daytona Beach, Fla., in 1971. Garrett also served as editor of Report from the Capital, then a monthly publication of the BJC.

Before joining the BJC staff, Garrett served for more than 10 years as editor of the Baptist Beacon, news publication of the Baptist General Convention of Arizona.

Garrett was a graduate of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. After earning a master of theology degree at Southern Seminary, Garrett served as pastor of Baptist congregations in North Carolina, South Carolina, Oklahoma and Arizona.

Stan Hastey, executive director of the Alliance of Baptists and a former colleague of Garrett on the BJC staff, remembers Garrett as "a trailblazing journalist for Baptists and others."

Hastey, who joined the BJC staff in 1974 and succeeded Garrett as the agency's director of information services in 1978, said Garrett's "rightly acclaimed work in Washington over a span of two decades set a new standard of excellence in coverage of national and world events for readers of Baptist and other religious publications."

"He was a committed Christian, a convinced Baptist and a world citizen," Hastey added. "Barry was my example and mentor in journalism and a friend to whom I am permanently indebted."

Garrett was born Oct. 2, 1915, a son of the late Wilkens B. Garrett Sr. and Willie Lattimer Garrett. He is survived by his wife of 65 years, LaVerne Johnson Garrett; two daughters, Katherine A. Howell and

husband Thomas B. of Olney, Md., and Nancy L. Ballew and husband James B. of Franklin, N.C.; one sister, Jane Jolly of Payson, Ariz.; a brother, James P. Garrett of Oklahoma City; six grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren.

Private services were held in Franklin, N.C., on July 1. A memorial service is scheduled at 11 a.m. July 7 at Kensington Baptist Church in Kensington, Md. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to the Baptist Joint Committee.

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Fire destroys donated medical supplies

By John Hall

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (ABP) -- A 3-alarm fire July 1 burned a warehouse in Falls Church, Va., causing over \$3 million in damages, including an estimated \$600,000 in donated hospital supplies that were to go toward 55 missionary efforts in third-world countries.

The blaze started at one end of the warehouse and quickly spread through merchandise owned by 11 other businesses before reaching the hospital supplies owned by Crosslink, a Christian humanitarian-aid group that works with groups including Baptists.

Up to 75 firefighters battled the inferno before extinguishing it Monday night. Arlington, Va., Fire Chief Edward Plaugher said about 75 percent of the first floor was burned, but the Crosslink area remained partially protected by the steel and drywall that made up the warehouse walls.

No one was in the warehouse when the fire started, but four firefighters were taken to the hospital for minor injuries and later released.

An investigation into the cause of the fire, led by Arlington Chief Fire Marshall Shawn Kelley and assisted by a team from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, began July 3. Plaugher said investigations similar to this one normally take about three days.

Carrie Lemaster, an administrative assistant at Crosslink International, said the group has received many phone calls from concerned people who want to donate supplies to replace the burnt ones. Lemaster said while the support is appreciated, the company has not found another place to store the new supplies.

Lemaster said the fire department told the group that it would not be allowed into the warehouse until the department determines the warehouse is structurally secure. At that time, Lemaster said, the company will be able to better estimate the losses.

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CORRECTION: The June 21 ABP story "Southern Baptist, civil-rights leader spar on ethics of death penalty " contains a reporting error in the 12th paragraph that was recently discovered. Please correct the paraphrase of Barrett Duke's comments from "acknowledging that the state has undoubtedly killed innocent people ... " to "acknowledging that the state has undoubtedly convicted innocent people facing the death penalty."

Duke said the death penalty has problems related to race and economics but opposes a moratorium while problems are studied."

In clearing up the error, Duke said: "Somewhere in the distant past, some government has probably executed an innocent person. But I don't see any evidence that has happened in recent U.S. history."

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END
