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Missionary fears backlash for not signing faith statement

By Mark Wingfield

GARLAND, Texas (ABP) -- Music has opened doors for Southern Baptist missionary Charlotte Greenhaw in Recife, Brazil. But she fears new doctrinal requirements by her employer, the International Mission Board, might close them.

Trained as a music educator, Greenhaw is classified as a "church and home" missionary by the Richmond, Va., -based IMB, working alongside her church-planter spouse. In practice, she is a Christian social worker who has led hundreds of people to Christ through ministry among the poor and in prisons in northeastern Brazil. Many of the inmates professing faith through her prison ministry have gone on to seminary since their release and are preparing to be pastors.

But Greenhaw says that work might be in jeopardy. The reason: She and her husband, Houston, have declined to sign an affirmation of the Southern Baptist Convention's recently revised "Baptist Faith and Message."

Music has opened doors for Greenhaw's ministry both in Brazil's prisons and with the street children of Recife.

"You can go anywhere with music," the veteran Southern Baptist Convention missionary said during a recent interview at her daughter's home in Garland, Texas, where Greenhaw was visiting a newborn grandson.

After working her way through the "Experiencing God" discipleship book, Greenhaw said she felt God leading her to move beyond the traditional music-education ministry she had done for years at the Baptist seminary in Recife. The words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 25 drew her. "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you came to visit me."

With a boldness that seems to run in her family -- her parents were legendary missionaries in Brazil, and her grandfather, "Preacher" Edgar Hallock, was a well-known Baptist pastor in Oklahoma -- Greenhaw

hit the streets. In Recife, thousands of children live on the streets, and most are addicted to sniffing glue as an escape from the suffering of poverty.

She took an electronic keyboard, sat down on a curb near a church and began to play. A crowd of curious children soon gathered. She turned that crowd into a choir with just one rule: the children must put down their glue.

From that beginning, other ministries to the street children developed in which they learned the gospel story and received help for physical needs. The ministry goes on today with leadership from seminary students and others.

Greenhaw still felt she had not accomplished all God wanted her to do, however. Matthew 25 still beckoning, she went to a prison and started an inmate choir.

The choir led to a Bible study, and the Bible study led to formation of a church within the prison walls. Prison officials eventually gave her permission to build a chapel on the prison grounds. With help from First Baptist Church of Norman, Okla., and others, a team of volunteers and the prisoners themselves built the chapel in five days.

The chapel features a well-used outdoor baptistry that serves as a visual witness to other prisoners. More than 500 prisoners are reported to have professed faith in Jesus Christ in the last three years.

Greenhaw has expanded her ministry to serve the families of prisoners. She assists them when they visit the prison on Sundays, and she devotes one day a week traveling around the region to visit prisoners' families in their homes. She has arranged for 45 prison weddings -- including 22 at one time -- having emphasized to the male prisoners the importance of a marriage commitment.

Meanwhile, she also teaches at the seminary and assists her husband in his work as a church starter among wealthy Brazilians. In a recent campaign which reached out to the whole city, more than 900 young professionals received Christ. The Baptist couple is reaching out to both ends of the socio-economic spectrum.

Greenhaw is an American, but she feels just as much Brazilian. She was born in Rio de Janeiro and had been to the United States only twice before she arrived at the University of Oklahoma to attend college.

Her parents, Edgar and Zelma Hallock, were SBC missionaries to Brazil for 45 years. Her father also was a driving force behind the Baptist World Alliance, coordinating world congresses in 1960 1990 and 1995.

Her grandfather, "Preacher" Hallock, was pastor of First Baptist Church of Norman for 46 years and a popular conference speaker.

But now she fears that legacy, her performance and her own rigorous theological examination upon appointment by the SBC as a missionary in 1980 aren't enough for anonymous critics who view missionaries with suspicion.

IMB President Jerry Rankin wrote a letter in January asking all 5,100 missionaries to affirm the current version of the "Baptist Faith and Message" and to agree to carry out responsibilities "in accordance with and not contrary to" the confessional statement.

An earlier vote by IMB trustees not to require a poll of missionaries already on the field, Rankin said, "is creating suspicion that there are IMB personnel whose beliefs and practices are inconsistent with those represented by Southern Baptists."

"While we believe this is unfounded," Rankin continued in his letter, "we do not need an issue such as this to generate needless controversy, erode support and distract us from the focus on our task at such a critical time of opportunity around the world."

But critics say "needless controversy" is precisely what Rankin's letter has generated. Some changes made to the document in 2000 were unpopular with moderate-leaning Baptists. The Baptist General Convention of Texas, the largest state convention affiliated with the SBC, went as far as to go on record as affirming the 1963 "Baptist Faith and Message" instead.

Other criticism is that the faith statement has now become an official "creed" instead of a voluntary "confession" of faith -- an important distinction in Baptist tradition. Others have said it's an insult to question the commitment of missionaries who have served for years and accuse Rankin of bowing to pressure from unnamed skeptics.

Greenhaw said she and her husband never thought the political and theological controversy that has raged among Southern Baptists in the United States since 1979 would reach missionaries who live and work outside the country. But the day they received notice that they must sign an affirmation of the convention's new faith statement, they knew the controversy had indeed touched them.

For three days, Greenhaw said she stayed awake nearly all night, reading her Bible, praying for guidance and agonizing over how to respond to the IMB mandate. Finally, she settled on Daniel 3, in which Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are thrown into Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace for refusing to bow down to his idol.

At that moment, "the Lord spoke very clearly to me not to sign," she said.

She also remembered her family's experience living in Oakington, England, before returning to Brazil. Near their home was a church graveyard where three men were buried who had spent a total of 52 years in prison rather than pledge allegiance to the Church of England under Henry VIII.

"We are not willing to sign off on somebody else's statement of belief," Greenhaw said. "I will not sign as a statement of my faith something I did not write. Neither will I promise to conduct my ministry according to a statement of belief which was prepared for a situation foreign to the culture in which I live and work."

During her appointment process in 1980, Greenhaw said, she and her husband both completed all the scrutiny required by the SBC's mission board. At the prompting of key questions, they wrote out their own statement of faith.

"My statement of beliefs still stands," she declared. "My faith has grown, and my relationship with the Lord has deepened. But my statement of beliefs still stands."

"I will notify the IMB the day it changes, but it hasn't changed."

Three of the six IMB missionaries serving in Recife have not signed the affirmation of the 2000 "Baptist Faith and Message," Greenhaw reported.

She said missionaries in Brazil were given a deadline of March 31 to sign the new faith statement.

After that deadline passed, the Greenhaws were among 12 missionaries called to a meeting with their regional leader and former IMB Executive Vice President Don Kammerdiener. At that meeting, Greenhaw said, they were asked what it would hurt them to sign the affirmation, and then they were admonished to sign it. Then they were advised to "pray about this."

Greenhaw responded that she already had prayed about it, extensively, and still would not sign.

"If you have a problem with us as missionaries, come check us out," she urged. "Come see what we're doing. Help us meet the daily spiritual and cultural challenges of ministry, instead of taking doctrinal potshots from a distance on matters foreign to our culture."

Although missionaries at the Brazil meeting asked Kammerdiener and the regional leader, "Who are these people who have questioned our beliefs?" they received no answer, Greenhaw said.

Now, as she prepares to leave her new grandson behind in Texas and return to her ministries in Brazil, Greenhaw wonders what will happen next. The missionaries in Brazil who did not sign the affirmation have not been told what will happen to them. They have been told only that IMB trustees will meet in May to discuss the matter.

"I don't know what will happen," she said matter-of-factly. "But the Lord has told me my time is not up, and I'm not leaving Brazil. I am not sure at this point who will support me, but I'm not willing to back off on what the Lord has called me to do."

Pastor asks, 'Why do we fight over worship?'

By Linda Lawson

FRANKLIN, Tenn. (ABP) -- "If worship transforms us into kinder, more loving people, then why do we fight over worship?" Paul Basden asked during a worship conference sponsored by the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

Basden, author of a book called *The Worship Maze*, spoke three times at the "In Spirit and Truth" conference, held May 10-11, at ClearView Baptist Church in Franklin, Tenn. Basden was pastor of Brookwood Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., until earlier this year. He is now laying the groundwork for a new church in a north Dallas suburb to start later in 2002.

Basden said many churches experience conflict over the appropriate style of worship. In some cases, he said, it escalates to "all-out war."

"I'm pretty sure there was never one Baptist style of worship," Basden said.

New worship styles are still emerging, he said, predicting even greater diversity in the future.

In his 1999 book, Basden identified five different worship styles: liturgical, traditional, revivalist, praise and worship, and seeker. In 2002, he said that list is "absolutely outdated."

He is now editing a book for release in 2003 titled *Worship: Six Views*, in which he outlines six styles: formal/liturgical, traditional/hymn-based, contemporary music driven, ancient-modern, charismatic, and emerging postmodern.

Basden said the so-called worship wars boil down to confusion over three issues. In each instance, he said Christians have elevated their preferences into rules that they believe should govern everyone.

First, he said, many people "think worship and worship styles are the same. They are not."

"There is no single style of worship that God blesses in the New Testament," Basden emphasized. "When you read the New Testament, you discover there already was diversity of worship."

In Jerusalem, he said, worship centered on the word, prayer and communion. The Corinthian style of worship focused on prophecy and speaking in tongues. In Asia Minor, teaching, singing and giving thanks were emphasized.

"Worship is not worship style," Basden said. "God is looking for those with a heart to worship."

Tradition and traditionalism constitute the second area of confusion, he said.

"Tradition is not necessarily bad, but traditionalism is always bad," Basden said. "When we begin to worship our traditions, we have moved to traditionalism."

He acknowledged many worship traditions among Baptists -- time and length of service, kind of songs to sing and hear sung, Bible version used, role of technology, dress, order of service -- to name a few.

"All of these are related to our habits, our comfort level. But not one is an eternal command of God," Basden said. "The only command is to worship."

"You and I should be thankful for any traditions that have served us well, but we should hold them very loosely or we could idolize them," he warned.

Finally, Basden said, confusion reigns about culture and worship.

"Culture is changing and the church must change in response. This is simply the incarnational principle of Jesus Christ," he said. "If you and I really want to reach secular people, then you and I must figure out how to communicate the good news in relevant ways."

Basden suggested churches can learn from international missionaries who reach people, not by starting churches just like those they came from in the United States, but by planting churches "indigenous to that culture."

"If we could just get clarity on these three matters, then I think the worship wars would cease," he said.

In an earlier message, Basden outlined his current definition of worship, one he said changes regularly.

The definition states: "Worship is encountering God's greatness and his grace and surrendering to his will." Basden urged about 200 pastors, ministers of music and other worship leaders attending the conference to develop a working definition of worship for themselves.

"If we don't see God in worship, we've just wasted an hour of our lives. If we don't encounter God, the next steps cannot occur," he said.

"The pinnacle of worship is always surrendering to the will of God."

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Worship can cross age boundaries, says pastor

By Linda Lawson

FRANKLIN, Tenn. (ABP) -- Acknowledging congregational differences in age, preferences, race and culture, Don Edwards has a "burden that somehow we can have worship when we're all together."

"Somehow we can be united in Christ," said Edwards, pastor of First Baptist Church of Sweetwater, Tenn. He led a session, "Crossing the Age Boundaries in Preaching" during the May 10-11 worship conference sponsored by the Tennessee Baptist Convention at ClearView Baptist Church in Franklin, Tenn.

Edwards projected a photograph on the screen in the room, noting that it could be either a sunrise or sunset. He likened it to the challenge that preachers face in communicating with a diverse audience.

"A lot of Christians are thinking we're facing the sunset of everything we've known, but others see today as a sunrise of new opportunities," Edwards said. "We really do have a challenge.

"Somehow we've got to learn to appreciate each other without throwing out the other group's stuff," Edwards said.

For example, for some senior adults the praise style of worship equates to "standing on hurting legs for 20 minutes" while young people see traditional worship as "boring hymns," he said.

"We do have a society that wants answers, but we have to touch their hearts," Edwards emphasized.

He urged preachers to try new things such as supporting their messages with computer-generated visuals.

"You never know the reaction it's going to get," Edwards said. After one of his first messages utilizing PowerPoint visuals, he said a parent reported to him that his child had asked when the pastor was going to do another sermon with pictures instead of "those boring ones."

"We live in a visual society," he said.

To get people involved in a sermon, Edwards urged pastors to tell stories.

"We have a book (the Bible) rich with stories if we'll tell them," he said. He also suggested pastors consider drama such as monologues or utilize church members in presenting short drama segments to go with a sermon.

Noting that he presents monologue sermons two to four times a year, Edwards said: "I don't do a monologue just to do a monologue. I use it for a story that needs to be told in a different way."

He also recommended the use of other art forms, object lessons, and listening sheets to help the congregation follow the message.

For Easter, Edwards said he and the church staff conducted a service of Scripture, songs, and stories. For the Lord's Supper, matzo bread was served as worshipers were asked to break the bread, pass it to the next person and say, "He died for you."

"All over the sanctuary you could hear the bread breaking," Edwards said. "And we had just been talking about Jesus' broken body."

Pastors don't have to become experts on new methods. Instead, they should involve church members, including young people, he said.

"Tell your people, 'I'm trying my best to touch all these groups,'" Edwards said. "Urge various groups to respect what touches others."

"As a church, we have to make a decision about whether we want to reach people or not," Edwards said. "Are we going to reach the culture or withdraw? It's a challenge for me, but I have a sense of excitement that it's a sunrise."

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Minister says worship leaders must be worshipers, first

By Linda Lawson

FRANKLIN, Tenn. (ABP) -- To effectively lead others to worship requires first being a worshiper, according to Wendell Boertje, minister of music at Central Baptist Church of Bearden in Knoxville, Tenn.

Boertje led sessions on "The Private Worship Life of a Public Worshiper" during the May 10-11 worship conference sponsored by the Tennessee Baptist Convention at ClearView Baptist Church in Franklin, Tenn.

"If I am to be a prompter in worship, I must bring to that leading my own experience of worship. I must be a worshiper," he said.

Acknowledging that for many years he thought of worship as something you do, Boertje said he came to the conviction more than three years ago that worship instead must be something you are.

That change, he said, led him to expand his daily private worship time so that when he encourages others in public worship, "I am a worshiper asking others to join me."

Also, he said he changed from viewing his role as "planning creative worship experiences" to "involving our people in the experience of worship."

Boertje said he emphasizes to soloists, ensembles and other groups he works with: "We're not asking people to worship. We are being worshipers. We are people after God's own heart."

In another area, Christians tend to think of their private worship time as something that benefits only themselves, he said. Instead, they should see their individual worship as something they can contribute to the worship of the church body.

"What if every person in our congregations was a personal worshiper day by day, and that presence was added to the experience of corporate worship?" he asked. "That's our call as worship leaders, to begin that process."

Boertje urged worship leaders to find a time and place for daily, private worship and maintain "the will and determination to do it."

"I think the Holy Spirit will guide you in your approach to individual worship, he said. "I'm amazed at the resources God has led me to."

Boertje said his own approach is to read the Bible through every other year. On alternating years, he chooses a daily devotional guide such as *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers or *Experiencing God Day by Day* by Henry and Richard Blackaby. He also reads books and cited authors such as Jim Cymbala, John Piper, Robert Webber, Thomas Keating, and J.I. Packer.

He begins his worship time with intercessory prayer, moves to reading the Bible, including some Scripture memorization, and reading worship resources. He concludes with meditation on his studies.

"I don't leave the room until I have those thoughts encapsulated for the day," Boertje said. He maintains a file labeled "Harvested Thoughts" that includes key insights from his worship times.

Christians who are growing in their ability to be worshipers "are positive people who have intimacy with God and understand the role of the Holy Spirit," Boertje said. "We become worshipers in our lifestyle. We're back to being rather than doing."

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Author collects famous eulogies

By Mark Wingfield

LOS ANGELES (ABP) -- Some are long, and some are short. Some are deeply theological; others scarcely mention the name of God.

They are the final words of tribute spoken about people upon their death -- the eulogies of the famous and beloved.

Author Ted Tobias has collected some of them in a new book as a lesson to all about both death and life.

Eulogies, he said, teach not only by what is said but also by what is not said. "The insights -- and blind spots -- of a eulogy are worth remembering for the honor they give to important figures and for the contribution they make to our understanding of history."

Tobias, who lives in the Los Angeles area, was inspired to tackle the project upon hearing the eulogy of Bobby Kennedy given by his brother Ted Kennedy in 1968. As a remembrance, Edward Kennedy spoke the words of his deceased brother: "Some men see things as they are and say, 'Why?' I dream of things that never were and say, 'Why not?'"

Quotes like that are published in newspapers and repeated through the years, but the context in which they were spoken often is lost, Tobias realized. So after stewing on the lack of access to the full text of famous eulogies, Tobias determined to tackle the project himself.

This turned into a three-year quest that began with figuring out who actually had delivered the eulogies he was interested in, whether a written copy of the remarks existed or whether a recording had been made. He also encountered stiff opposition from some quarters -- most often in the entertainment industry, he said.

Finally, he pulled together the eulogies of 42 prominent Americans from the latter half of the 20th century. The book is titled "In Tribute: Eulogies of Famous People." He plans to release a second volume later this year.

In reality, eulogies of the dead must help the living, according to the daughter of Norman Vincent Peale, the minister of positive thinking.

"Funerals are not for the deceased, who have already been released from the limitations of this world," Margaret Peale Everett said at her father's 1993 funeral. "Funerals are for the rest of us -- those

family and friends and admirers who are left behind. We grieve; we feel loss; we have to adjust to a new reality."

The best eulogists, Tobias' research highlights, capture the essence of a person's inner being. For example, President Richard Nixon spoke of President Dwight Eisenhower by recalling Eisenhower's own words in a speech shortly after V-E Day: "I come from the heart of America."

Nixon added: "Perhaps no one sentence could better sum up what Dwight Eisenhower meant to a whole generation of Americans. He did come from the heart of America, not only from its geographical heart but from its spiritual heart."

Other eulogists lay down historical markers of the contributions made by the deceased. Such is the case with Martin Luther King Jr.'s eulogy by Benjamin Mays, president of Morehouse College.

Mays said of King: "He died striving to desegregate and integrate America to the end that this great nation of ours, born in revolution and blood, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created free and equal, will truly become the lighthouse of freedom where none will be denied because his skin is black and none favored because his eyes are blue; where our nation will be militarily strong but perpetually at peace; economically secure but just; learned but wise; where the poorest -- the garbage collectors -- will have bread enough and to spare; where no one will be poorly housed; each educated up to his capacity; and where the richest will understand the meaning of empathy. This was his dream, and the end toward which he strove."

Tobias' research found creative adaptations of the gospel message through poignant eulogies, as in the testimony of Cardinal Roger Mahoney about farm-labor activist Cesar Chavez. In eulogizing Chavez, Mahoney adapted Jesus' Sermon on the Mount to say, in part: "Blessed are those who toil daily in the fields, but who are slow to anger, gentle with others and patient in hardship. God will reward them with the hills, the fields and the lands of the earth."

Eulogies collected by Tobias also demonstrate the power of a funeral message to preach and call people to better living.

In eulogizing Martin Luther King, for example, Mays exhorted the congregation: "No! He was not ahead of his time. No man is ahead of his time. Every man is within his star, each in his time. Each man must respond to the call of God in his lifetime and not in somebody else's time."

In rare instances, the mere selection of a eulogist carries more weight than whatever the speaker actually says. Tobias highlights, for example, the eulogy of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by King Hussein of Jordan in 1995.

"You lived as a soldier," Hussein said of his Jewish neighbor. "You died as a soldier for peace, and I believe it is time for all of us to come out openly and to speak to the camp of peace."

And sometimes, Tobias shows, eulogists best express the character of their subject by saying what the deceased might have said about themselves.

Of the comedian George Burns, movie executive Irving Fein noted: "As he often said, he knew entrances and exits. And last Saturday, he knew it was time to go."

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