

# Holding forth the word of life. Phil. 2:15

## SPRING 2003 REPORT

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Tom Lothamer  
Executive Director

CHANGE IS GOOD. And change can be scary. This past fall, when executive director Ray Paget resigned to take a position at his church, Baptists for Life stood on the brink of change. As a staff we felt a little fear: What would the

future hold? But we also felt excited by the prospects of stretching and growing.

Coming through such a time of uncertainty, I'm happy to report that, rather than resorting to the safe and comfortable, our board and staff seized the opportunity to examine our ministry focus. We asked ourselves: What is unique about BFL? What should we be known for? What is our niche? What are our strengths? What should the focus of the ministry be in years to come?

We're still working through the process of answering these questions, but here's what we're committed to so far:

- 1** BFL will be known for its commitment to prayer on every matter.
- 2** BFL will direct its efforts toward the proclamation of the Gospel and the provision of ministry opportunities for God's people.
- 3** BFL will continue encouraging and assisting local churches in the development of evangelistic and compassionate sanctity of human life outreaches.
- 4** BFL will continue working closely with pregnancy care centers (PCCs) to develop and support their efforts.
- 5** BFL will continue working with missionaries to equip them for service in pro-life ministry that builds local churches in the United States and around the world.

**6** BFL staff will be available to speak at conferences and participate with other organizations for the advancement of pro-life ministry throughout the US and the world.

**7** BFL will continue its membership with the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, operating with the highest integrity.

BFL HAS WEATHERED seasons of change in the past, but it may interest you to note that over the nearly 20 years of our existence we've remained true to one mission – helping the Church of Jesus Christ articulate the biblical pro-life message in word and deed.

In our fall report I'll present more fully a course of action to which we find the Lord leading us. Please continue to pray for us as we face these and other challenges.

## Foreign Missions

This spring, BFL deepened our commitment to foreign missions with trips to India and South Africa. At the same time we were able to demonstrate our dedication to local church ministry.

The needs in India are great and were readily evident to Jack Horton, BFL's director of ministry development, when he traveled there in April to conduct two training seminars with Evelyn Stone (ABWE missionary to Lima, Peru). Abortion was legalized in India shortly before the US, with over six million abortions conducted each year – the majority of the victims being unborn baby girls. The churches have been largely silent and unprepared to address the sanctity of human life, yet they have a genuine desire to not only confront the issue but also to develop PCCs.

Pastor H. C. Stephen of Delhi plans to use the outreach of a PCC as an integral part of the church planting efforts in a new work of less than 100 members. From this small



Jack Horton, Director of  
Ministry Development

but vibrant ministry, about 25 people completed the first seminar. Jack said, "It was an incredibly moving experience to train these wonderful believers in Delhi. Their attentiveness and stamina gave us the strength needed for the long hours of training, speaking, and preaching. Their expressed desire and prayer is that they will have a new PCC up and running as a 'Christmas present' by the end of this year."

The second training was held in a remote eastern village in Manipur. Here Jack and Evelyn were blessed to share the challenge of PCC ministry with nearly 75 people. Because of the number of churches in the area and the fact they already own a building that can readily be adapted for use as a PCC, it's expected this ministry will be operational in just a few months.

As the team planted the seed for the future ministry, they were



Trainees in Delhi pay close attention.

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thrilled by the response. Many of the trainees had either had abortions or participated in them in the past. Jack says, "We were privileged to see the transformation of their hearts and minds almost immediately, as they verbally wrestled with the content of our message and then testified of their conviction and determination to respond accordingly."

South Africa's story is similarly desperate, but on another front. The entire region is being devastated by AIDS. While 8,500 people die of AIDS every day in the world, 6,500 of them are from the southern part of Africa. Too many are dying without ever hearing of the love of Christ.



Ruth TenBrink (third from left) and Jerry Thacker (center) with some of the missionaries and others who were trained in Durban.

When Tom Lothamer and the AIDS Hospice training team – LIFT trainer Ruth TenBrink and Scepter Institute's Jerry Thacker – left for South Africa, they were aware of the pandemic's horrors, but it gripped their hearts to see firsthand the effects of AIDS on that country. Jerry says, "It's hard to even know where to start in helping these folks. The challenge is God-sized in every way. Sin exacerbates the problems of misery and poverty so that an entire society cannot escape it easily. And the amount of suffering is mind numbing."

The first part of the trip was dedicated to an AIDS Hospice conference in Durban, attended by over 50 missionaries, pastors and church people. The aim was to give the students a thorough understanding of HIV/AIDS and to share a vision of how they can minister to those dying of this dreadful disease.

The team also visited the Bethesda Children's Orphanage near Pretoria, where the plight of AIDS sufferers is so real. There are seven million AIDS orphans in South Africa today; by the year 2010, that number is expected to reach 43 million.

This trip to South Africa was beneficial in several ways: 1) After hearing of it, four ABWE missionaries requested LIFT training in Grand Rapids later this year. 2) Our partnerships with ABWE, EBM, the Baptist Church Union of South Africa, and local church pastors have been strengthened. 3) New doors of ministry are opening in other parts of Africa.

## Home Missions

Pregnancy care centers represent "home missions" for many US churches. They offer tremendous opportunities for volunteers from local churches to reach out into their communities. PCCs are highly effective at evangelizing the lost and discipling the newly saved.

One of our centers, Alternatives of Kalamazoo, recently reported that their first week in a new location was inaugurated by a client's new birth in Christ. Praise the Lord for the way He uses PCCs!

BFL's goal is to continue to strengthen the evangelistic efforts of PCCs. With that in mind, we're offering volunteers a course in biblical counseling at our Grand Rapids Leadership Summit this summer. They will also learn how to deal with clients who profess to be saved but are not living like it.

Our Pennsylvania Leadership Summit later this summer will feature pro-life apologist Scott Klusendorf, from Stand to Reason. Over the course of two days, he'll teach *Know What You Believe* and *Say What You Believe*, equipping attendees to persuasively communicate their pro-life convictions with compassion.

## Church Ministry

As one means of assisting local churches, BFL is embarking on a major project to create a 13-week Sunday School curriculum for grades four through six. The goal is to equip teachers with a resource for educating students about the sanctity of human life and sexual purity. We're enlisting the input of a wide range of experts and interested individuals. The project will take several years to complete, and we will appreciate your prayers for this endeavor.

## Financial Review



Jim Comden  
Director of Finance

Financial support for ministries was down in 2002 and our experience was no exception. Yet, because of the generosity of donors, careful spending, and a carry over from 2001, we ended the year owing our bank line of credit only \$10,000.

Already we've seen an increase in giving during the first quarter of 2003. And we are encouraged by several recent expressions of support:

- A family in Tennessee donated a 1998 Chrysler Concord to the ministry.
- The salary and expenses of a part-time fundraising associate were underwritten by a family in Florida.
- Two foundations – one in Grand Rapids and another in Pennsylvania – gave \$5,000 each for special projects, such as our Leadership Summits and support of Clinica ProVita in Brasov, Romania.
- Another foundation will match up to \$30,000 toward the construction a home at Bethesda Children's Outreach in South Africa. To date, \$10,000 has come in; we have until December 31 to raise the rest.