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March 15, 1990

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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When Is It Enough?

Arkansas Baptist

March 15, 1990



'Look to the Fields'

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HMB photo

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IT'S UPLIFTING

Open Meetings

CLUJ-NAPOCA, Romania (BP)—The Romanian Christian Medical Association, started five years ago as an underground group, received an official organization permit from the national court system in late February.

Begun with 25 members, the association now numbers 160, said Ionel-Alexandru Dan, a Baptist layman and dentist who helped organize the group and is president. The group held its first public meeting Jan. 3 after the anti-communist revolution swept the country in December.

"For the first time, we could pray together the Lord's Prayer without fear," said Dan, whose brother, Titus, is a Southern Baptist missionary in Australia.

Members include adherents of 10 of the 14 principal religious groups in Romania, including Catholics, Orthodox, Baptists and other evangelicals. Nineteen medical and dental specialties are represented

among members.

"The purpose of the association is to emphasize spiritual unity through medicine," Dan said. The association will be a mediator between churches in the United States and Romania for meeting medical needs in Romania.

Movement Shunned

GLASGOW, Scotland—The Baptist Union of Scotland has voted against affiliating with a proposed ecumenical organization including denominations is England, Ireland, and Scotland. According to Ecumenical Press Service, a number of Scottish Baptists objected to being associated with Roman Catholics and Anglicans. One opponent of the ecumenical movement said participation by Scottish Baptists "would imply the acknowledgment that Romanism is a valid expression of the Christian faith."

GOOD NEWS!

When Trouble Comes

Romans 8:28-30

What does a millionaire banker have in common with a hobo? What does a society matron have in common with a lonely widow? One thing all these have in common is trouble.

God never promised the Christian immunization from trouble. Jesus said, "In this world you will have tribulation" (Jn. 16:33, RSV). The Lord does give encouragement for times of trouble.

The promise: "In everything God works for good" (v. 8, RSV)—This promise relates to God's people. Trouble comes to us, but the Lord is at work for the good of the believer in life's troubles.

This promise relates to God's purpose. The Lord didn't say that everything will turn out right in the end. His purpose in our lives is that we become like Christ (v. 29). God is at work in trouble to accomplish this purpose.

The prophet: "God works for good"—The Lord is able to bring good out of bad. He can use what appears to be a disaster for our profit. First, trouble can strengthen our faith. Second, trouble can encourage prayer. Third, trouble can enrich life. Former Viet Cong prisoner Major James Rowe said: "I wouldn't go through those five years again, but I wouldn't trade the

experience for anything. I've got more potential than I ever had before. The VC will never realize how much I thank them for taking everything material away from me and reducing me to the point where I didn't have anything but faith in God. I had a chance to look at myself and realize that you can do things you never imagined were possible."

One must respond correctly in trouble for it to be profitable. The Lord wants to use trouble to make the Christian more like Christ, and this demands the right response.

The presence: "In everything God works"—The Christian is not alone in his trouble. The God who is at work in our troubles is with us in trouble. Christians need to learn to practice the presence of God in troubling times. This means to live with an awareness of the truth that God is always present (Ps. 23:4). To practice God's presence in trouble will save us from despair, disillusionment, and defeat.

The big question about trouble is not if we will have any but what we do when trouble comes. What happens to us is not nearly so important as how we respond to it. The Lord God can use the troubling times of life to make men more like Christ, providing they look to him.

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1990-91 SBC BUDGET

Dramatic Change Proposed

by Marv Knox
Baptist Press

NASHVILLE (BP) — Southern Baptists will face a "clear alternative" regarding their religious liberty voice when they gather for their annual meeting this summer in New Orleans.

They will be asked to vote on two items — a new budget and a change in a program assignment — that would move \$341,796 and the convention's primary religious liberty/First Amendment platform from the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs to the Christian Life Commission.

The proposals were approved by the SBC Executive Committee during its winter meeting Feb. 19-20 in Nashville. The 1990-91 proposed SBC unified budget totals \$137 million. It will be presented to messengers for their consideration June 12-14 in New Orleans.

The proposed Cooperative Program allocation budget goal is 1.89 percent larger than the current \$134,787,543 goal. The new goal is based on actual Cooperative Program receipts for the latest fiscal year completed, which ended last Sept. 30.

The financial recommendation contains a \$341,796 reduction in SBC budget funds allocated to the Baptist Joint Committee, a nine-denomination religious liberty organization in Washington. The proposal would drop the convention's contribution to the BJC from \$391,796 to \$50,000, an 87.24 percent reduction.

It also includes a \$365,328 increase in funding for the Christian Life Commission, the convention's Nashville-based moral concerns agency, which has a Washington office. The CLC would get \$1,262,836, a 40.70 percent gain from the current \$897,508. The increase is comprised of the 1.89 percent growth in the overall SBC budget, plus funds that would be transferred from the BJC.

The budget proposal will be paired with a recommendation that would change the CLC's program assignment, allowing it to address religious liberty issues as well as Christian social ethics.

The combined proposals represent "the clearest alternative... concerning how we will do our religious liberty work," said David E. Hankins, chairman of the Executive Committee's business and finance subcommittee and pastor from Lake Charles, La.

The BJC has been a point of contention in the SBC for most of the past decade.

Detractors fault the BJC for not supporting school-prayer and anti-abortion amendments, as well as not siding with

them on several legislative issues. They also have said it is not as accountable to the SBC as it should be and that the SBC provides a disproportionate share of BJC funding.

Supporters have said the BJC strictly upholds the historic Baptist belief in church-state separation and cannot get involved in moral concerns except as they involve religious liberty. They have said it is accountable to the SBC through its trustees, more than one-third Southern Baptist.

Three special committees have studied the BJC since 1986, and messengers to SBC annual meetings have turned back efforts to defund the BJC five times. The Executive Committee has proposed and rescinded plans for creating an SBC Religious Liberty Commission. At the winter meeting, the Executive Committee defeated a plan to more than quadruple the budget of the SBC Public Affairs Committee — the 18-member committee through which the convention relates to the BJC — which would have given PAC members a more active role in addressing religious liberty.

If a majority of messengers to the New Orleans annual meeting agree, the latest alternative — decreased funding for the BJC; increased funding and an expanded

program assignment for the CLC — will take effect when the convention's fiscal year begins next October. Longtime observers predicted BJC defenders will have an uphill battle, since an Executive Committee budget proposal has not been overturned in decades.

Originally, the budget proposal called for increasing the Public Affairs Committee's allocation from \$23,704 to \$96,600, an increase of more than 300 percent.

But after a three-and-one-half hour marathon discussion of the religious liberty issue on Feb. 20, Executive Committee members voted 44-25 to transfer \$71,600 of the PAC allocation to the Christian Life Commission.

Hankins made the motion to amend the proposed budget. Several committee members had expressed concerns that funding three entities concerned with religious liberty was unwise. Hankins agreed, saying he believed "we may not have given the clearest alternative to the Southern Baptist Convention concerning how we will do our religious liberty work."

The 1990-91 budget will still contain an item for the Public Affairs Committee, however. The proposed PAC allocation will be \$25,000, an increase of 5.47 percent over 1989-90.

(More on the subject—pp. 4-6)

Also On the Agenda...

In addition to a three-and-one-half hour debate on religious liberty, the SBC SBC Executive Committee also dealt with more than two dozen other items of business during its two-day winter meeting Feb. 19-20 in Nashville.

Among 29 items approved in 35 minutes were:

— Acknowledgment of a Missouri Baptist Convention resolution of support for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, which stated that messengers to that convention's latest annual meeting expressed "strong reservations about any attempt to reduce or terminate the Southern Baptist Convention's cooperation with" the Baptist Joint Committee.

— Approval of the Baptist Convention of New York — with 25,838 members, 206 churches and 100 church-type missions — for full representation on SBC entities; and approval of the Hawaii Baptist Convention — with 15,384 members in 55 churches and 26 church-type missions — for representation on the Executive Committee and "other appropriate committees" of the SBC.

— Receipt of information that the Executive Committee will sign a contract with C. Barry McCarty, president of Cincinnati (Ohio) Bible College and Seminary, to be parliamentarian for SBC President Jerry Vines at the SBC annual meeting this summer. McCarty is to receive \$960 per day and \$120 per hour for pre- or post-convention consultations, plus expenses. In 1989, he was paid \$14,555 by the SBC.

— Support for the SBC resolution designating 1990 as the International Year of Bible Reading. The committee also voted to encourage all Southern Baptists to participate by reading the entire Bible during the year.

— Acknowledgment of the "significant role of local and/or at-large trustees for some of the SBC entities;" recognition that the need for such trustees "may not be as great today as in the past;" and a request that "each such entity... study the concept for a possible recommended amendment to its charter to discontinue or reduce local and/or at-large trustees;" with the reductions to be made by attrition.

BJC DEFUNDING

Arkansans Disagree

by Mark Kelly
Managing Editor

Arkansas' two representatives to the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee differ dramatically on a proposal to cut Southern Baptist funding to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs by more than \$341,000.

In fact, one Arkansas member disagrees strongly enough that he is helping draft a minority report which takes exception to some of the criticisms leveled at the Washington, D.C.-based religious liberty organization (see article p. 5).

The virtual defunding of the Baptist Joint Committee is part of a budget proposal to be presented to messengers at the SBC annual meeting June 12-14 in New Orleans. The \$137 million budget would reduce support of the BJC by more than 87 percent. It would shift \$341,796 to the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, the convention's moral concerns agency, and expand the CLC's program statement to include responsibility for religious liberty and church-state separation.

The proposed budget also includes \$25,000 for the work of the SBC Public Affairs Committee, which has a similar assignment, and maintains \$50,000 for the Baptist Joint Committee. The budget must be approved by messengers to the annual meeting before it can be implemented.

Frank Lady, an attorney and member of Jonesboro's Central Baptist Church, told *Arkansas Baptist* Editor J. Everett Sneed he believed the effort to reduce the Southern Baptist contribution to the BJC was a "bad move" which could cause many churches and state conventions to designate funds for the BJC. The result would be that receipts for the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified budget, would be harmed.

Although Lady acknowledged there were some legitimate grounds for criticizing the work of the BJC, he said he had

mixed emotions about the radical reduction of funds. Lady believes it is important for Southern Baptists to maintain the cooperative relations they have with the eight other Baptist bodies which comprise the Baptist Joint Committee.

He told the ABN he would have favored a \$300,000 funding level for the BJC, a reduction of 23.42 percent from 1989, with \$91,796 going to the Christian Life Commission for a new expanded religious liberty role. Lady would maintain funding for the Public Affairs Committee in the short term, but questions the long-term need for the committee.

Lady expressed serious reservations about an eight-page statement drafted by the officers of the Executive Committee as a rationale for the proposal to reduce BJC funding to a minimal level. As a result, he is joining with 13 other Executive Committee members in drafting a minority report which he believes will "add balance" and "give credit to the BJC for the good work it has done" for Southern Baptists over the years.

He said the proposed budget was an "unreasonable cut . . . which will do great damage to the Baptist Joint Committee."

By contrast, Arkansas' other Executive Committee representative, Ronnie Floyd, pastor of Springdale First Baptist Church, endorsed the budget proposal as an oppor-

tunity for Southern Baptists to put behind them "once and for all" the discussion about funding of the Baptist Joint Committee.

Floyd said he believes the decision to drastically reduce BJC funding and shift the resources to the Christian Life Commission would be a good move for two reasons.

First, he said the new budget proposal clarifies the choice Southern Baptists will face regarding their religious liberty work.

Southern Baptists have voted five times on proposals to defund the Baptist Joint Committee, and three special committees have studied the matter in the last three years. Floyd said he believed previous proposals were unclear, but that the new recommendation simplifies the choice.

Second, Floyd said dramatically cutting the level of BJC support would help reduce the confusion caused by having three Southern Baptist religious liberty voices in the nation's capital. He said the latest proposal would establish only one voice speaking independently for Southern Baptists.

Currently Southern Baptists provide funds for two religious liberty/church-state separation entities: the Baptist Joint Committee and the SBC Public Affairs Committee. The Christian Life Commission also maintains a small Washington office for its moral concerns agenda.

The new budget would continue to provide some funding for both the Baptist Joint Committee and the Public Affairs Committee, and would establish a \$341,796 budget and a religious liberty



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agenda for the Christian Life Commission as well.

Floyd added that he does favor Southern Baptists maintaining two religious liberty voices in the nation's capital, however. He said he believed Southern Baptists needed a presence in a "cooperative" voice like the Baptist Joint Committee, in addition to an "independent" voice which could speak uniquely to Southern Baptist concerns.

He said the Baptist Joint Committee has been "a controversial part of Baptist life" for several years, and that he is glad Southern Baptists will have an opportunity to vote "once for all" on how they should conduct their religious liberty affairs.

The vote at the New Orleans annual meeting will "set the agenda for years to come," Floyd said. He added that he hoped the vote would allow Southern Baptists to "put this issue behind them and move ahead."

He noted that the realities of cooperation require that "not everybody is going to get what they want . . . there has to be some give and take."

ABSC Convention President Mike Huckabee echoed Frank Lady's "mixed emotions" about the proposed reduction in BJC funding. Huckabee, who is pastor of Texarkana's Beech Street First Baptist Church, was a non-voting observer at the February Executive Committee meeting in Nashville, Tenn., where the budget proposal was hammered out.

Huckabee, who was elected to his first term as state convention president at the

1989 ABSC annual meeting, said he was "torn" by the idea of taking money from the Baptist Joint Committee and using it to fund a separate Washington presence through the Christian Life Commission.

Huckabee noted his sympathy with those who feel the Baptist Joint Committee has not represented rank and file Southern Baptists in recent years, but he said it appears that the real issue has been BJC Executive Director James Dunn's "perceived insensitivity" and occasionally "inflammatory statements."

"It is very unfortunate that the long history of the Baptist Joint Committee in helping preserve religious liberty and protecting the interests of our missionaries abroad is being eclipsed by the combative style of the current director," Huckabee said. "I doubt this issue would ever have occurred had the leadership at the BJC been more responsive to the variety of viewpoints among Southern Baptists regarding the school prayer issue and abortion."

While Huckabee affirmed his "great confidence" in CLC Executive Director Richard Land and that agency's leadership, he also expressed his concern about the timing of the move.

"In light of such meager Cooperative Program increases to our missions entities . . . I'm not sure that the timing is right," Huckabee explained. "I have appreciated the recent emphasis on soul-winning and missions, and, with the events in eastern Europe, I was personally hoping we would shift our focus and finances on winning that area of world to Jesus."

MINORITY REPORT PLANNED

Statements Available

Should Southern Baptists make a radical change in the way they address religious liberty and church-state separation issues?

Such a change will be recommended to messengers who convene in New Orleans June 12-14 for the SBC annual meeting. They will be asked to vote on two items — a new budget and a change in a program assignment — that would move \$341,796 and the convention's primary religious liberty/First Amendment platform from the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs to the Christian Life Commission.

Southern Baptists will get to study the issue themselves before they vote. The Executive Committee decided to publish an eight-page statement drafted by its officers that gives a rationale for making the change.

Executive Committee members also agreed to allow publication of a minority report that is to defend sustaining the level of BJC support. Fourteen members of the committee met in Nashville following the Executive Committee meeting to discuss development of the report. The group named a drafting committee comprised of James F. Yates of Yazoo City, Miss.; Wallace E. Jones of Bridgeton, Mo.; Martin Bradley of Nashville, Tenn.; and Frank Lady of Jonesboro, Ark.

The opposing statements will be published in the May issue of *The Baptist Program*, the Executive Committee's magazine, and in a brochure which will be available upon request from the Executive Committee, 901 Commerce, Nashville, Tenn. 37203.

A response to the officers' statement critical of the Baptist Joint Committee may be obtained by contacting the BJC at 200 Maryland Ave. NE, Washington, DC 20002; telephone 202-442-7728.

(An editorial perspective—p. 6)

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When Is It Enough?

J. EVERETT SNEED

The primary proposal to come from the recent meeting of the SBC Executive Committee is to cut the funds of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs from \$391,796 to \$50,000. This represents an 87.24 percent decrease in the funding of the Washington-based religious liberty coalition sponsored by eight Baptist groups in the United States. Southern Baptists were a leading force in the founding of the organization.

This proposed change would give Southern Baptists three "religious voices" in Washington: the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the Public Affairs Committee and the Christian Life Commission. Such an approach would not only be confusing to our Baptist constituency, but would be ineffective with legislators. Of course, before any of this can come to pass it must be approved by the SBC messengers to the New Orleans annual convention June 12-14.

Separation of church and state is more than mere religious liberty. A Baptist organization designed to protect religious liberty would work to protect the rights of all religious groups to set forth their teachings. An organization which works to maintain separation of church and state would strive to see that churches do not exercise authority over the state nor the state over churches.

Those supporting the effort to defund the BJCPA maintain that this is an opportunity for the messengers to put to rest once and for all the debate over the Baptist Joint Committee. They say messengers this year will have an opportunity to once and for all vote up or down on the Baptist Joint Committee. It, however, should be noted that the SBC defeated a motion to defund the BJCPA in 1984; a motion to defund the BJCPA was referred by the messengers to the Executive Committee and a special fact finding committee was appointed in 1986; in 1987, after a year long study, dozens of meetings, at a cost of nearly a \$250,000 the SBC voted to "continue to relate to the BJCPA." In 1988, the Baptist Joint Committee was given a special line item status in the convention budget although the BJ's budget was reduced by 11 percent; and in 1989 a motion on the floor of the convention to reconsider the Baptist Joint Committee's budget was soundly defeated by



messengers.

Proponents of the Executive Committee's recommendation say that this year's proposal will put to rest once and for all the debate over the Baptist Joint Committee. It appears that those who oppose the Baptist Joint Committee plan to come back year after year until they succeed in defunding or separating Southern Baptists from the organization. The question arises: When is enough enough? How loudly does the Southern Baptist Convention have to speak about maintaining the work of the Baptist Joint Committee before the message is heard by the SBC Executive Committee?

Some who oppose the Baptist Joint Committee obviously want a political action group that will endorse their particular point of view. These individuals

wanted the BJCPA to endorse Robert Bork for the Supreme Court. They also would like for the organization to become involved in abortion legislation. Historically, the Joint Committee has never endorsed any individual. Their purpose is to maintain the wall of separation between church and state. Hence, action in regard to abortion no matter how important, is contrary to the organization's purpose.

The Baptist Joint Committee deserves the money that the Executive Committee is proposing to take from it. The Joint Committee is extremely effective in the area of government relations. Through research and petition, they have saved Baptist pastors untold amounts of money.

The Joint Committee has also effectively eased the tax burden on missionaries. Conservatively it has saved the SBC \$10 million during the past eight years. R. Keith Parks, president of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, said, "the Baptist Joint Committee's knowledge of how things work in Washington has saved Southern Baptist missionaries more than \$1 million each year in overseas taxes. . . and has helped us gain stronger reassurance that the CIA will not allow CIA agents to act under the cover of missionary identity overseas."

It is essential that Southern Baptists fully inform themselves on this important issue. When all of the facts are in hand we believe that our messengers will restore the funds that the Executive Committee has taken from the Joint Committee. Southern Baptists probably receive more per dollar from the BJCPA than from any other group. The small amount of money that Southern Baptists provide for this group returns manifold dividends.

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FAITH AT WORK



HMB photo

Migrant ministers map out witnessing strategy.

'Look to the Fields'

by Ken Camp
Texas Baptist Standard

WESLACO, Texas (BP)—Baptist migrant farm workers were challenged to "look to the fields" not only for their livelihood, but also for a potential harvest of lost souls during the Missionary Workshop for Baptist Migrants, Feb. 3 at Grace Hispanic Baptist Church in Weslaco, Texas.

Twelve migrant farm workers ultimately bound for California, Minnesota, Iowa, Michigan and Arkansas were commissioned as lay missionaries at a service held in conjunction with the workshop, sponsored by the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Rio Grande Valley Baptist Association and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Rosendo Lopez, associate director of missions for Rio Grande Valley Baptist

Association, said at least 85 migrant farm families belong to Southern Baptist churches in his association, and in several churches, half of the congregations' members are seasonal farm workers.

The workshop was designed to equip the migrant workers, most of whom now are non-resident church members six months out of every year, to become effective witnesses for Christ as they travel, according to Robert Sowell, Christian social missions consultant, for the Texas convention. Training seminars for the migrant workers were offered in personal evangelism, outreach Bible studies, and ministry to people in need.

Armando Ramos, mission director for Cliff Temple Baptist Church in Dallas, said one of the most important goals of the

workshop was to introduce the farm workers to Baptist missionaries in the areas through which they will travel.

Southern Baptist home missionaries from 13 states attended the workshop, meeting Baptist migrant workers who will travel to or through their fields of service.

"When the migrants go out for the first time, they go with a lot of fear," Ramos said. "When they leave, most of them have enough food and supplies to carry them to their first stop along the way. It's when they get to that first stop that they start needing food, razor blades and other things. We want them to know we have out-of-state people ready to give them health kits, food, directions or whatever."

"And working with local churches along the way, they could have health kits that include evangelistic tracts ready for the migrants to distribute in their camps."

Spiritual preparation is one of the greatest needs among the migrant farm workers, Ramos added.

"They need to learn to keep healthy spiritually. They'll face a lot of problems—pressure from bosses and crew leaders, accidents and adversity. We need to start helping them prepare," he explained.

"But this is really exciting. These are the people who can do the work, migrants reaching migrants. We've been preaching the priesthood of the believer, but this isn't just preaching or theory. This is a chance for them to practice their priesthood."

His comments were underscored by Richard Vera, ethnic evangelism associate with the Texas convention, who emphasized being prepared to share a personal testimony of how faith in Jesus makes a difference in daily experiences. He also reviewed tracts that are potentially useful in witnessing encounters.

About a dozen pastors of lower Rio Grande Valley churches participated in planning and promoting the workshop, said to Jerry Johnson, associational director of missions.

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I couldn't be more proud of our Arkansas team. No, I'm not talking about Razor-backs. I'm talking about our Church Extension team. Headed by Jack Ramsey, our team, made up of some part-time associates, a few consultants, some directors of missions and a number of sponsoring churches, have done a superb job in helping to start new congregations that may grow into churches.

In a recent meeting in Los Angeles, Calif., where church planting was being emphasized, Arkansas was listed as number one in the Southern Baptist Convention in the number of new church starts in proportion to the membership of our churches. Though we are one of the smaller states, we were number seven in the total number of new churches started. To God be the glory!

Our Home Mission Board is responsible for helping us see the need, provide materials, assist with resources so that this could be done. They have also helped us be leaders in prison chaplaincy. Arkansas was the first to have such a program. Our work with National Baptists (black Baptists) is also recognized throughout the Southern Baptist Convention. The Home Mission Board helps us with that.

The Home Mission Board has also helped us with summer missionaries, their enlistment and orientation. Our BSU and Missions Department work together on this. The 96 working last summer saw 469 professions of faith and a number of other decisions.

The Home Mission Board has developed the idea and resources for our Here's Hope revivals coming in March and April. They are helping with 85 different language groups in the U.S. In fact, many of our ministries could not exist were it not for the help the Home Mission Board gives us.

Therefore, let me urge you and your church to receive an Annie Armstrong Home Mission offering during this month. If you will do this, you'll be supporting the work of 3,817 missionaries. Almost half of their support comes from this offering. The Cooperative Program is their other major support.

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

BOB PARKER

Today's Issues

Walls

The narrow corridor into Berlin with its Soviet imposed tight restrictions regarding air space caused the most turbulent flight during our 1963 Study Tour of Europe and the Bible lands. At the time it was the only way in and out of the divided city. "Check Point Charlie" was the only way tourists could go into East Berlin through the wall which had divided the city since 1961.

Gratefully, the obnoxious wall with jagged pieces of steel and broken glass imbedded in its top at that time is currently being removed.

There is a lesson today for us from the Berlin Wall. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only entrance into heaven. He declared himself as the only way, the truth and the life needed to enter the Kingdom of God now and for eternity. He further

taught that the way is narrow and few enter therein compared to the broad way which lures many to eternal destruction.

Too, there are many "walls" in our society that are causing people to be obstructed from the real salvation and freedom that comes through Christ. Sexual immorality, alcohol and other dangerous addictions, such as drugs, gambling, gossip, dissension, fault finding and self righteousness form walls or partitions that can be broken down by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pray that in the power of Christ, you will be an instrument in tearing down these obnoxious walls in our day.

Robert A. Parker is director of the Christian Life Council.



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Letters to the Editor

Inerrancy Questions

The word "inerrancy" gives me some very disturbing concerns. The first question arising is the question of authority in determining inerrancy. Who made this decision? Other than God, who has the right to determine the inerrancy of the Bible? Most of those who hold to this concept regard only the "autographs" as inerrant, then every other copy of the Old and New Testaments contains errors. Since we do not have any of the original autographs, all translations of the Scriptures are based on error prone copies.

The King James Version, which is the favorite of most inerrantists, was not translated from the original Greek but from the Latin Vulgate. According to stories of the lives of some of the translators of this version, the real Christianity of some could be questioned.

I realize that raising these questions also raises the question of my own personal belief in the Scriptures. The questions I have raised raises a question as to whether God had a hand in the original autographs only. I answer with a resounding no! I do not believe God is an absentee landlord in regard to his world; nor is he in the translation of his Word to mankind. Not only did God have his hand and spirit in the original words that were penned by whomever wrote the originals, but he has by his Spirit had a hand in the translation of every sort since that time. Not only the original autographs but the Vulgate, the KJV, NIV, RSV, NASB, American Standard Version, NKJV, and all the others, along with modern paraphrases have felt the moving of God's Spirit in the work.

Thus I believe that the Bible, in whatever version or paraphrase, is God's authentic, authoritative, trustworthy word to mankind concerning the way of reconciliation to himself and instructive guide for living an acceptable life before him. I personally like some versions better than others, but whichever one it is, it is God's Word.—Carl M. Overton, Hot Springs

Exceptional Gratitude

"Oh happy day!" So many of you have been faithful in prayer for me. After eight chemotherapy treatments for lymphoma (cancer of the lymph gland system) in as many months, my doctor has declared that I'm in remission! If I'm still in remission (no further evidence of cancer) in four years, my doctor will label me cured! "Oh happy day!"

Early on, I asked my oncologist to give me the bad news and the good news, in that order. He said that if nothing goes right, I would have about four years to live. The good news was that if everything goes right, I could live 20 years or more and die of something else! Guess what my goal is? I plan to see you around for years and years and years.

Dr. Bernie Siegel is a cancer surgeon who teaches at Yale and practices in New Haven. In his books, he describes three kinds of cancer patients: defeated patients, passive patients, and exceptional patients.

Exceptional patients have faith in God, believe in their doctors, and have a positive attitude toward being cured. Dr. Siegel says that exceptional patients live a better quality of life, and live longer (I agree!). He explains that a positive attitude produces hormones that help the body's immune system. A positive Christian attitude and God's sovereign grace give ample space for a miracle. I believe it happens!

During the treatment period I served as interim pastor at First Church, Hot Springs, preaching on Sundays and Wednesdays. Juanita and I enjoyed this ministry very much. She takes "good care." I also built a gazebo, patterned after the one on the Assembly grounds at Siloam Springs, in my back yard. I won't recommend my preaching as exceptional, but you ought to see my gazebo!

Again, I am grateful to my Arkansas Baptist friends for your continued prayers. And, I love you.—Lawson Hatfield, Malvern

WILLIAM J. REYNOLDS

Hymns Baptists Sing



God of Earth . . .

"God of Earth and Outer Space"

Thad Roberts, Jr., was inspired to write this hymn by the historic flight of Apollo II, July 16-24, 1969, the first lunar landing mission by astronauts Neil A. Armstrong, Michael Collins, and Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr. During this flight, Roberts and his wife Kitty drove to Gloriaeta, N. M., where he was on the faculty for Church Music Week. The hymn began to take shape on the trip, and he continued working on it at Gloriaeta. The hymn was finished during a few days vacation at Red River, N. M.

From the beginning he had shaped the stanzas to fit the sturdy Welsh tune "Aberystwyth," composed in 1879 by Joseph Parry and named for the city where he taught music at the Welsh University College.

A native of Louisiana, Roberts was educated at Centenary College, Oklahoma Baptist University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Teachers' College, Columbia University. From 1955, until his death on January 8, 1987, Roberts served Houston's South Main Baptist Church as minister of music. His 32 years there reveal an era of extraordinary leadership in church music.

In his honor, David and Charis Smith, members of South Main Baptist Church, established the Thad Roberts Chair of Music Ministry at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

William J. Reynolds is professor of church music at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

THINK ABOUT IT

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LOCAL & STATE

Arkansas All Over

MILLIE GILL

People

H. Doyne Robertson, who has been serving under appointment by the SBC Foreign Mission Board in Peru for the past 10 years, is serving as pastor of Melbourne First Church. He and his wife, Martha, have two children, Leah, a student at Ouachita Baptist University, and Stephen.



Robertson

Dwayne Monk has joined the staff of Grand Avenue Church in Hot Springs as associate pastor. Monk has served several churches as supply preacher over the past

five years. He is a deacon and Sunday School teacher at Grand Avenue Church.

Joe Loghry has resigned as director of Cedar Glade Encampment at Imboden.

Jerry L. Davis of Sherwood has been elected as president of Arkansas alumni of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Davis, who is chaplain at the Baptist Rehabilitation Institute of Arkansas in Little Rock, will serve as a member of the seminary's Alumni Advisory Council.

John Q. Eason of Heber Springs died Feb. 24 at age 69. He was a retired Southern Baptist minister and a member of Pines Church. Survivors are his wife, Myrtle Eason; four sons, Jimmy Eason of Texarkana, Marvin Eason of Little Rock, Jerry Eason of Jacksonville, and Bill Eason of Quitman; a daughter, Corrinne Stark of Heber Springs; a brother; two sisters; 10 grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

Dennis Dorsey has joined the staff of North Park Mission in Osceola as music director, coming there from Bloomington, Ill.

Mary Frances Heard of North Little Rock died Feb. 25 at age 82. She was a member of Park Hill Church in North Little Rock, where her son, S. Cary Heard Jr., serves as pastor. She was the widow of Samuel Cary Heard Sr. Other survivors include a daughter, Leticia H. Drinkwater of Dallas; a sister; five grandchildren; and a great-grandchild. Memorials may be made to Park Hill Church Media Center.

J.B. Kyger has resigned as pastor of College Avenue Church in Fayetteville.

Jere Mitchell recently observed 10 years of service as pastor of First Church in Fayetteville. He and his wife, Royce Ann, were presented with a love offering in the morning worship service.

H.D. McCarty, pastor of University

DOMs Elect Officers, Director of the Year

Photos / Pete Petty



Jordan, Hickey, Kite



Atchison and Elrod

When ABSC directors of missions held their annual retreat Feb. 28-March 2 at DeGray Lodge near Arkadelphia they elected as officers for 1990-91 (left to right) L.B. Jordan, DOM for Red River Association, secretary-treasurer; Glenn Hickey, DOM for Pulaski Association, president; and Billy O. Kite, DOM for Ashley County Association, president-elect.

Ouachita Baptist University hosted its annual banquet Thursday evening, March 1, as a part of the DOM retreat, recognizing L. B. Atchison, director of missions for North Arkansas Association, as DOM of the Year. OBU President Ben Elrod (right) made the plaque presentation, recognizing Atchison's more than five years service in North Arkansas Association. Atchison is a graduate of East Texas Baptist College, Marshall, Texas, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and Luther Rice Seminary.

Church in Fayetteville, was recently a guest speaker at the U.S. Air Force Base in Azores. On Friday, Feb. 9, he addressed their national prayer breakfast and on Sunday he spoke at the dedication services of their new chapel.

Tommy Townsend is serving as pastor of Lancaster Road Church in Little Rock. He has pastored Green Memorial, Roland and Natural Steps churches, as well as serving as a staff member at Sunset Lane Church in Little Rock.

Brian Huskey is serving as music director at Shannon Church in Pochontas. He is a student at Southern Baptist College.

Eric Shrum has resigned as pastor of First Church in Peach Orchard.

Tony Cherry is serving as pastor of Newark Southern Church, coming there from Diaz.

Thurlo Lee will be honored March 25 at White River Church in recognition of 50 years of service in the ministry. He has pastored churches in Arkansas and Missouri and served as a director of missions in Stone, Van Buren and Searcy Associations. He has been pastor of White River Church since Oct. 1, 1986.

Richard Jones of Magnolia has recently been called as pastor of Second Church in McNeil. Jones is a graduate of Arlington Baptist College, the University of Texas, and East Texas State University. He is currently working on his doctorate at East Texas State University. Jones has pastored several churches in Texas and Arkansas. He is currently employed by the Magnolia Public School as director of the Adult Education Center.

Trent Edwards has joined the staff of First Church in Harrisburg as minister of youth and education, coming there from First Church in Walnut Ridge.

James Thomason is serving as pastor of Freeman Heights Church in Berryville, coming there from Graves Memorial Church in North Little Rock.

Jay Harmon is serving as interim pastor of Lakeland Church.

Eddie Pentecost has accepted a call to serve as youth minister for Lakeside Church in Hot Springs. He is married to the former Joyce Bradley of Marianna. Both attended Ouachita Baptist University. Pentecost, who has served on the staff of a church in his hometown of Bossier City, La., also attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Bill Taylor is serving as pastor of Barton Chapel, Barton.

Wilbur Herring of Jonesboro will complete his services March 18 as interim pastor of First Church in Tyrnza.

Dr. and Mrs. Erwin L. McDonald of North Little Rock recently observed their 60th wedding anniversary. Mrs. McDonald is the former Mary Elsie Pike. The couple, both natives of London (Polk County) were married March 1, 1920, at which time both were school teachers. Dr. McDonald, an ordained Southern Baptist minister since 1938, was editor of the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* for 15 years, serving from March 1957 to March 1972. He has pastored churches at London, Washington, and Atkins. The McDonald's are parents of two daughters, Jeannine Jones of Dothan, Ala., and Judy McDonald Lucas of Little Rock. They have three grandchildren, Rebecca Maglio of Jupiter, Fla., Alison McGee of Dothan, and Jay Wesley Lucas of Little Rock.

Lou Alley has resigned as organist of South Highland Church in Little Rock, following eight years of service.

John Small is serving as pastor of Harmony Hill Church at Arkadelphia.

Everett Martindale Sr. of Little Rock died March 3 at age 80. A retired Southern Baptist minister, he was a member of Little Rock First Church and had pastored churches in Arkansas and Illinois. Survivors include his wife, Lucille Carter Martindale; a son, Everett Martindale Jr. of Little Rock; two daughters, Alice Brown of Pine Bluff and Kathy Whipple of Waco, Texas; a brother; a sister; five grandchildren; and a great-grandchild. Memorials may be made to Ouachita Baptist University.

Alvin W. Knapps of Hot Springs died Jan. 24 at age 70. A native of West Point, he was a deacon, Sunday School teacher, and a choir member of Park Place Church in Hot Springs. Survivors include his wife, Helen Knapps of Hot Springs; a son, Gary A. Knapps of Hot Springs; one daughter, Gail Kruse of Palo Alto, Calif.; one sister; and two grandchildren.

Winfred Bridges began serving March 4 as pastor of Second Church in Paragould. He will continue to teach English at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro.

Tom Cox of Mountainburg recently observed his 20th anniversary of service as a full-time evangelist, having sung and preached in more than 2,000 Southern Baptist churches and led crusades in 65 countries. A member of Van Buren First Church, he currently serves as parliamentarian of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists.



The McDaniel Family

Brinkley First Honors Pastor

Members of Brinkley First Baptist Church will honor their pastor, James E. McDaniel, as he begins his twentieth year as their pastor.

The congregation will host the "Jim McDaniel Family Life Conference" March 17-19 in recognition of his years of service and continual emphasis on the importance of the Christian home and family.

The conference will open Saturday night with a musical performance by the combined choirs of several area churches. Conference sessions will be led by Tim LaHaye, noted speaker and author from Dallas, Texas.

McDaniel, a native of St. Louis, Mo., is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Prior to accepting the pastorate at Brinkley in 1971, he served congregations in Bay, Tyrnza, and Indiana.

McDaniel currently serves as vice-president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board. He is a member of the Southern Baptist Education Commission and serves on the Advisory Council for Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn.

Since 1984, he has led several construction trips to Belize in Central America.

McDaniel is married to the former Beverly Worell of Jacksonville, and they are the parents of three children: Joel, Diana, and Michael.



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Bruce E. Schlesier

Briefly

England First Church is conducting a "Here's Hope, Jesus Cares for You" revival March 11-16. Faron Rogers, pastor of First Church in DeQueen, is evangelist. Doug Moore, a music evangelist from Newport, is directing music.

Life Line Church in Little Rock deacons sponsored a widows/widowers banquet March 8.

Harrison First Church Woman's Missionary Union recently sponsored an open house that was attended by approximately 150. The event featured displays highlighting mission projects and general information of the church's missions education organizations. It was designed to create a greater interest in missions and the church's missions organizations, according to Jaquelyn Coffman, WMU director.

Harlan Park Church in Conway held a revival March 4-7. Billy and Winky Foote of Longview, Texas, were revival leaders.

Highland Drive Church in Jonesboro deacons have launched a prayer ministry that will include manning the prayer room each Sunday morning.

Southland Church in Little Rock ordained Alan Moore, minister of music and youth, to the gospel ministry Feb. 25.

Foothills Mission will hold a Lay Renewal March 16-18.

Indian Springs Church at Bryant student ministry hosted a Valentine Blast Feb. 14, with Rick Caldwell of Little Rock, and David Bell of Waco, Texas, as featured guests.

Scotland Church is enlarging its facility with the addition of new class rooms and enlargement of the fellowship hall.

Formosa Church has purchased property on Highway 9 to build a complete new church plant.

Friendship Church at Clinton has plan-

ned a summer building program that will include the addition of six class rooms, a kitchen, and enlargement of the fellowship hall.

Hot Springs First Church ordained Don Slaton and Mike Wiles to the deacon ministry Jan. 28.

Mountain Home First Church held a prayer conference March 4-7 with Don Miller of Fort Worth, Texas, as leader.

Indianhead Lake Church at Sherwood observed Race Relations Day Feb. 11 by inviting Highland Park First Church in Little Rock for a joint evening service. On Feb. 18, Indianhead Lake Church visited Highland Park First Church for a joint service. The visiting church choir presented a program at each service. The musical program was followed by a sermon preached by the visiting pastor. Ron Young is pastor of Indianhead Lake Church and W.W. Walker is pastor of Highland Park First Church.

Bingham Road Church at Little Rock celebrated its 15th homecoming March 4.

Highland Church Relocates

The Highland Drive Church, Jonesboro, held a dedication service March 4 for its newly relocated facility. The dream to relocate the church had its inception in the late 1970s under the leadership of Pastor Don Dunavant, currently pastor of Wynne Church. In 1979, the congregation purchased seven acres of land at a cost of \$84,000. The land, paid for in approximately a year, is now valued at more than two times its original purchase price.

The new building was constructed at a cost of \$750,000 with an additional \$30,000 being spent on site improvement. The 16,656 square foot facility is an octagonal construction on the outside with a rectangular worship center. There are 23 Sunday School rooms on the right side of the corridor surrounding the auditorium. The facility is carpeted and has zoned-computerized heating and air conditioning throughout, as well as a kitchen, library, prayer room, and activities room. The facility is constructed to accommodate 400 people in worship and education.

The congregation had its highest worship attendance in history on the dedication date, with 318 in attendance. The church was averaging approximately 140



ABN photo / J. Everett Sneed

The newly relocated Highland Church in Jonesboro

in Sunday School at the Fisher Street location and is currently averaging more than 180.

The morning dedicatory message was delivered by Pastor Michael L. Trammell. Other guests present included Jonesboro Mayor Hubert Brodell and Editor J. Everett Sneed. A late afternoon Christian music concert was performed by Robbie Hiner. Greetings for the evening service were delivered by Harold Ray, director

of missions for Mt. Zion Association. The evening dedicatory sermon was presented by Don Moore, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

The congregation participated in a "Together We Build Program" which, with the sale of the Fisher Street properties, made it possible to pay for approximately half of the cost of the construction of the new facilities.

Former pastors Bill Elliott and R.D. Harrington were speakers and music was directed by Larry White, a former music director. Bill Hilburn is pastor.

Clarksville Second Church ordained Gary Patrick Blackard, Robert Edward Charlton, Vester H. Felkins and Oran K. Soard to the deacon ministry Feb. 25 in a service led by Marvin E. James. Others participating were Charles M. Morris, Gerald Vaught, John Casey, Melvin Brown, Ed Bradley Jr., Judy Hargraves, James Crumrine, Virgil Knight, George Domerese, director of missions for Clear Creek Association, Dean Pratt, Lawrence Richards, Herb Stalcup, and Bill Coats.

Brinkley First Church Acteens will be participating in the Acteen Activator mission thrust July 1-6 by working at the Hope Migrant Mission Center with home missionaries Bob and Karen Gross.

Maple Avenue Church in Smackover will dedicate its remodeled auditorium in an afternoon service March 25.

Pangburn First Church will hold its "Here's Hope, Jesus Cares for You" revival March 18-22. Bill Fitzhugh of Pine Bluff

will be evangelist. Pat Batchelor of Maumelle will direct music. Charles Christie is pastor.

Arkadelphia Second Church recently observed Volunteers in Missions Sunday with a program coordinated by Pastor Carl Kluck and Doris M. Lisemby, a Mission Service Corps volunteer and area consultant for District No. 7 in Arkansas.

Batavia Church at Harrison Acteens will be a part of the first statewide Activators team, working July 14-21 at the Migrant Mission Center in Hope with Bob and Karen Gross. Jackie Scott is leader.

Lowell Church will conduct its "Here's Hope, Jesus Cares for You" revival March 25-28. Roy Woodard, pastor of First Church in Centerton, will be evangelist for the evening services, as well as the noonday services March 26-28. Jim Wallis is pastor.

Reydel Church will hold its "Here's Hope, Jesus Cares for You" revival March 16-18 with Lynwood Henderson, director of missions for Centennial Association, as evangelist. Dale Schimmel will direct music. Harold Green is pastor.

ACTEENS

New Scholarship At Ouachita

ARKADELPHIA—An Acteens Scholarship will be offered to students beginning enrollment at Ouachita Baptist University in the 1990 fall semester, according to Harold Johnson, director student financial aid at OBU.

The scholarship monies may be received in addition to other Ouachita scholarships so long as total charges for tuition, fees, room and board are not exceeded. A grade point average of 2.50 is required for retention of the scholarship, which provides levels support depending on the awards earned through the Acteen program.

For more information, persons may contact Johnson at OBU, P.O. Box 3774, Arkadelphia, AR 71923; telephone 501-246-4531, ext. 570. Additional information may be obtained by contacting the State Acteen Director, Arkansas Baptist State Convention, P.O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203; telephone 501-376-4791.

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Dellanna N. Brien

Executive Director
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'Conservatives' Map Strategy

by Dan Martin & Bob Terry

Baptist Press

ATLANTA (BP)—More than 250 "conservatives" from 21 states mapped strategy in Atlanta Feb. 22 for the election of Morris Chapman as next president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, recently announced his willingness to be nominated. John Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church of Houston, said he plans to nominate his fellow Texan as the "conservative" standard bearer.

The 256 "conservative" pastors and laypeople were invited to the meeting by Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta and former president of the SBC.

Another former SBC president, Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., presided over the gathering, and current SBC President Jerry Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, gave greetings to participants over a telephone hookup.

"The meeting was to reaffirm our goals and directions," said Fred Powell, senior associate pastor of the Atlanta church and the organizer of the gathering.

"We wanted to assess the situation as to where we are and what we can expect in New Orleans," Rogers told Baptist Press.

"There were three basic things we feel we need to do," he added. "First, we need to refocus the issue on the Word of God. The central issue is the Bible. It is not a matter of separation of church and state, the priesthood of the believer, women ministers or anything else, as important as they might be.

"The issue is . . . the theological issue, and the heart of the theological issue is Holy Scripture. We need to keep the focus on that, because there are those who are trying to shift the issue.

"The second thing is the duplicity of the 'moderates' (who are) crying out against political maneuvering and who are doing more and at greater expense than we ever been done."

He quoted a statement made by "moderate" candidate Daniel Vestal, pastor of Dunwoody Baptist Church in suburban Atlanta, that politics is "immoral," and said: "There is talk of exorbitant amounts of money being spent . . . with flying around, whistle stoppers, organizations with paid full-time workers.

"I don't say they don't have the right to spend their money; the point is they are doing the very thing they decry so much. They can't have it both ways."

The third point of the meeting, Rogers said, "was that we talked about Morris Chapman, and that he is indeed the one we felt was surfaced after prayer and discussion. Fred Wolfe was there and very much encouraged support for Morris as the candidate."

"Little rumors have been floating that Fred (Wolfe) was bypassed for Morris (Chapman). The 'moderates' would like to believe there is division in our camp, but assurance was given there is none."

Wolfe, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., at first surfaced as the "conservative" candidate, but withdrew a few days before his candidacy officially was to be announced.

Wolfe told Baptist Press he "spoke a word on behalf of Morris. He is God's man . . . and I think he will be the man to lead us."

The meeting, according to Wolfe, was "very positive. It did not deal in personalities. It was not a bash Dan Vestal meeting; it was an informative meeting for people involved in the 'conservative' movement."

Powell said the meeting "wasn't so much a pep rally for Morris (Chapman) as to keep our act straight, to keep on target."

Chapman was called a "thoroughbred conservative" by Rogers, who urged participants to "get behind God's man." He predicted several prominent Southern Baptists from the "broad middle" will unite behind Chapman's candidacy.

"Some who have heretofore been in the middle of the road, but who have had 'conservative' beliefs, have made it known they

are going to support Morris Chapman. Not the least of these is John Bisagno," Rogers said, predicting a "great number of people," similar to Bisagno "will do the same thing."

He declined to list possible supporters because "we felt it would be better for them to surface their own names."

Rogers told the gathering, "I believe we will see in New Orleans the greatest victory ever seen" (for the "conservatives"), and added that another "conservative" victory—to go with 11 years of electing "conservative" presidents—will mean an end to the SBC conflict.

However, he added, "Conservatives' realize they cannot take anything for granted and will do everything they can to have every messenger possible present in New Orleans."

James Hefley, a freelance writer from Hannibal, Mo., told the *Word and Way*, newjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention, Stanley announced to the gathering he will nominate Richard Lee, pastor of Rehoboth Baptist Church in suburban Atlanta for vice president. Hefley said several other names were discussed but no candidate agreed on.

Hefley also said "conservative" leaders expressed concern about the announcement of Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler as moderate candidate for first vice president. He said fear was expressed she would attempt to establish a precinct type organization in each state through Woman's Missionary Union since she is the former executive director of the WMU SBC.

Leaders pledged to monitor WMU to make sure it is not used for political purposes, Hefley said.

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O'Brien Welcomes Monitoring

by Susan Todd & Karen Benson

SBC Woman's Missionary Union

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union Executive Director Dellanna W. O'Brien said Feb. 28 she welcomes monitoring of WMU.

Southern Baptist Convention "conservative" leaders, during a meeting in Atlanta Feb. 22, expressed concern that Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, an announced candidate for SBC first vice president, would use her position as former national executive director of WMU to establish a "precinct-type organization in each state through WMU," according to James Hefley, a meeting participant.

"Conservative" leaders pledged to monitor WMU to make sure it is not used "for political purposes," Hefley said.

"I welcome any and all people who want to monitor WMU for any purpose," O'Brien said. "I am confident that once individuals completely monitor our organization, their commitment to missions—not controversy—will be challenged."

Those monitoring WMU may find themselves challenged to join other WMU members "in our single commitment to missions—studying it, supporting it and participating in it," O'Brien said.

O'Brien outlined several avenues for monitoring WMU:

- By attending local church WMU meetings and activities—including Baptist Women (for women ages 35 and older),

- Baptist Young Women (for women ages 18-34), Acteens (for girls in grades seven through 12), Girls in Action (for girls in grades one through six), and Mission Friends (for preschool boys and girls);

- By participating in associational WMU meetings, activities and sponsored events;

- By attending state WMU meetings, retreats and activities, such as the annual state WMU house party or annual meeting, and state BW and BYW retreats;

- By participating in the national WMU annual meetings. This year, the national WMU annual meeting will be held June 11-12 at the New Orleans Convention Center. "For me, the WMU annual meeting is the most inspirational and exciting meeting of the whole Southern Baptist Convention, because we celebrate missions," O'Brien said. The first session begins at 2:15 p.m. Sunday, June 11;

- By subscribing to all WMU organizational periodicals—*Dimension* magazine for WMU and church leaders; *Royal Service* magazine for Baptist Women, *Contempo* magazine for Baptist Young Women, *Accent* magazine for Acteens, *Discovery* magazine for Girls in Action, *Awake* magazine for GA leaders, and *Start and Share* periodicals for Mission Friends members and leaders;

- By subscribing to *Magazette*, a quarterly publication for pastors' wives which is produced by WMU, and to *Prayer Patterns*, a monthly publication to aid all

church members in their prayer efforts for missions; and

— By purchasing each product produced by WMU or New Hope, a publishing arm of WMU which provides missions-related materials for the broader Christian market. O'Brien also issued a public invitation for any of the convention leaders—regardless of their political stance—to visit the national WMU headquarters in Birmingham, where they will be given a VIP tour and opportunities to visit with national staff members.

The pledge by "conservative" leaders to monitor WMU could not come at a more appropriate time, O'Brien said.

She learned of the "conservative" leaders' concern just days after returning from a several-day retreat with state WMU executive directors. At that retreat, O'Brien had announced her own pledge to keep WMU on a level "above the convention controversy."

Her pledge was met with strong affirmation and was returned by pledges of support from the state WMU leaders, O'Brien said.

"Any time missions is monitored, nothing but good can come of it," O'Brien said. "Perhaps those who are monitoring WMU see how much more there is to be done. They can be strategic catalysts in moving Southern Baptists toward a stronger missions commitment."

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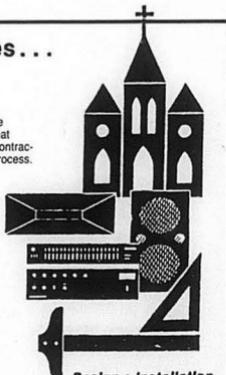
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HERE'S HOPE

Revival Breaks Out

by Mark Wingfield
SBC Home Mission Board

OAKLAND, Calif. (BP)—A California church has been forced to postpone its "Here's Hope" revival because advance outreach already has brought in 1,250 new converts, filling the church's sanctuary to overflowing.

True Vine Baptist Church in Oakland, will host its "Here's Hope" revival in September rather than April. That will allow the church to secure a meeting hall large enough to seat the crowds that already are too large for Sunday services, Pastor Newton Carey Jr. says.

Meanwhile, church members continue to share their faith through door-to-door distribution of "Here's Hope" New Testaments throughout Oakland. The church has nearly depleted its supply of 12,000 marked testaments.

True Vine is one of thousands of Southern Baptist churches nationwide preparing for the "Here's Hope, Jesus cares for you" simultaneous revivals sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Most revivals are planned for March and April.

The 500-member True Vine Church has experienced revival before the scheduled meeting, Carey said. "How could you have a better revival than 1,250 people already saved?" he asks.

The church will host a revival meeting during the time scheduled for its "Here's Hope" revival in April but will focus on a larger "Here's Hope" meeting now scheduled for September.

"They're winning people to Christ so fast they can't even keep up with the records," says home missionary Bill Simms, who is assisting in the outreach.

Despite the addition of a Friday night worship service, the response has caused overflow conditions in the church's tiny sanctuary. At the 11 a.m. Sunday morning service, visitors fill the aisles, sit on the platform and stand outside the doors.

"I tell people, 'If you're not here at 10:30, don't come; there's no room,'" Carey says.

About 75 people started attending the Friday night service, but those pews were filled the next Sunday, the pastor says, noting, "We never saw the vacant seats."

Carey credits two human factors as instrumental in the revival: Continuing Witness Training and the "Here's Hope" New Testaments. CWT is a program of personal evangelism supported by the Home Mission Board's evangelism section. The

marked, paperback New Testaments were produced by the Holman publishing division of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. The testaments and other "Here's Hope" materials are available by calling the "Here's Hope" toll-free number, (800) 346-1990.

Since November, members of True Vine have given one Saturday per month to door-to-door visitation throughout Oakland. The members knock on doors, present residents with "Here's Hope" New Testaments and offer to point out a few key Scriptures.

If the recipient is open, the lay evangelists go through the plan of Christian salvation that is outlined in the marked New Testament.

True Vine is a predominantly black congregation, situated in a poor neighborhood of Oakland. The city is best known for its high drug-related crime rate and for being the site of the double-decker freeway collapse during last fall's World Series Earthquake.

Just around the corner from the small stucco church building is the Acorn Housing Project, 750 apartments the government reserves strictly for single black women with children.

"Here's Hope" has been more appropriate than anything Southern Baptists could have done for us," explains Sallie

Carey, the pastor's wife and church evangelism director. "When you see a family whose 14-year-old child has been killed in an accident, babies on crack, and you go to those families and say 'Here's Hope,' wouldn't that catch your eye?" she says, holding up one of the blue-and-gold New Testaments with the "Here's Hope" logo.

"This church has taken 'Here's Hope' to the N-th degree," says Simms. "It's just tailored to this church. I'd say it's the biggest thing that ever hit Oakland. This town is on the verge of a dynamic revival. Something is going to happen here."

Armed with nothing but the gospel, the church determined to claim the Acorn Housing Project for Christ, she says. At that time, the buildings in the housing project were riddled with bullet holes, and drug deals transpired openly on the streets.

"The police didn't even come in here at night," Carey says. "But we used Jesus and went on over."

Mrs. Carey and a handful of True Vine members marched around the project seven times, stopping at strategic points to pray and claim the neighborhood for Christ. But nothing happened.

So they marched around seven more times, praying for a miracle. Soon afterward, the church held a block party for the project's residents, and things began to change.

"The walls of Jericho didn't fall down because they marched," the pastor explained, drawing upon Joshua's similar march around the biblical city. "They fell because the people believed."

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Church Starts Top Goal

by Mark Wingfield
SBC Home Mission Board

LOS ANGELES (BP)—Southern Baptists started 842 congregations in the United States and Puerto Rico in 1988-89, thrusting the total number of their congregations above the 1989 goal set for the Bold Mission Thrust campaign.

The statistics on church starting for the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, 1989, were released during a national church extension leadership training conference sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Figures were compiled by the board's extension section using reports from state directors of missions.

Bold Mission Thrust is the denomination's effort to present the gospel to every person on earth by the year 2000. The emphasis calls for 50,000 Southern Baptist churches and missions by that year. To monitor progress toward that goal, the board has set goals for each year.

The 842 new congregations reported by state missions directors brings the total number of SBC congregations to 42,735. That is 69 more than the Bold Mission Thrust goal of 42,666 set for 1988-89.

However, the 842 starts are 111 fewer than the 953 new churches or missions reported started the previous year.

Texas Baptists led the denomination in number of church starts, with 169. They were followed by California, 90; Florida, 82; North Carolina, 55; Missouri, 36;

Georgia, 27; Tennessee, 24; Arkansas, 23; Louisiana and New York, 20.

While the older state conventions showed the largest number of new congregations, younger state conventions continued to show the best ratio of starts to existing churches.

Although the Dakotas Fellowship started only seven congregations, it led the way in ratio of new starts. Dakota Baptists needed an average of 11 existing congregations to start one congregation, compared to a ratio of more than 100-to-1 for older state conventions.

Other leaders in ratio of existing congregations to new ones were Puerto Rico and New England, 12-to-1; Alaska and New York, 14-to-1; California, Colorado and Michigan, 15-to-1; Minnesota-Wisconsin and Utah-Idaho, 16-to-1.

The number of new congregations reported by other state conventions are Alabama, 13; Alaska, 6; Arizona, 14; Colorado, 14; District of Columbia, 2; Hawaii, 3; Illinois, 7; Indiana, 5; Iowa, 3; Kansas-Nebraska, 11.

Also Kentucky, 10; Maryland-Delaware, 19; Michigan, 18; Minnesota-Wisconsin, 7; Mississippi, 15; Montana, 4; Nevada, 7; New England, 13; New Mexico, 10; Northwest, 16; Ohio, 13; Oklahoma, 17; Pennsylvania-South Jersey, 10; Puerto Rico, 4; South Carolina, 19; Utah-Idaho, 9; Virginia, 11; West Virginia, 3; and Wyoming, 3.

The figures include congregations started among all people groups. Of the total, 478 are predominantly anglo congregations, 285 are ethnic congregations and 79 are predominantly black congregations.

Also, Southern Baptists reported starting 10 congregations in Canada last year, bringing the total number of Southern Baptist congregations there to 106.



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WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Harvest of Peace Resolution was introduced last month in Congress by Sen. Mark Hatfield (R-OR) and Rep. Matt McHugh (D-NY). The resolution calls for the nations of the world to reduce military spending in half by the year 2000 and redirect resources toward ending hunger. The resolution also calls for reduced military assistance to developing nations, as regional conflicts are one of the

primary causes of hunger.

"There is no excuse for hunger, only a lack of public outrage and political will," said Art Simon, president of Bread for the World, a grassroots movement against hunger. "Democracy was a strong enough force to tear down the Berlin Wall; it can also be strong enough to dismantle the 'pork barrel barricade' in Congress which protect our excessive defense budget."

While Congress has increased defense spending during a time of peace and rapidly fading communist threats, effective human needs programs have been cut or ignored. For example, the Head Start program reaches only 20 percent of those eligible. The Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) reaches only 50 percent of eligible high-risk mothers and children. Job training for low-income people reaches only 6 percent of those who need preparation to enter the job market.

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LESSONS FOR LIVING

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Making Decisions

by Tom M. Deere, First Church, Plainview

Basic passage: John 18:1-14

Focal passage: John 18:1-11

Central truth: Facing tough times requires tough decisions.

A wealthy business man was asked to share the secret of his success. "Making right decisions," he explained. "And how do you make right decisions?" he was asked. "Making right decisions is learned from years of experience, and experience is what you get when you make bad decisions." Certainly all Christians want to make the right choices in life, especially when circumstances become so complex that making right decisions seems virtually out of reach. Let us not forget God's Holy Word. Notice what Jesus did when he was faced with the toughest event in his earthly life.

(1) He considered the facts (v. 4). First of all Jesus had complete knowledge of what was about to happen. Hostile Roman soldiers, along with angry officers of the chief priests and the Pharisees, led by the traitor, Judas, were heavily armed, ready for trouble, and were coming after Jesus. Jesus had no fear because he had all the facts. He knew that his Father was greater than the threat before him.

(2) He confided in the Word. Jesus, who was armed only with the Word of God, "the sword of the Spirit" (Ep. 6:17) "went forward" (v. 4) to meet the approaching lynch-mob without fear or intimidation. When threatened Jesus was not overwhelmed because he had perfect knowledge of the Word of God. Whatever he spoke (v. 9) was always fulfilled because he was the all-knowing Word of God (Jn. 1:1, 6:39, 17:112). He knew that no immediate harm would come to the disciples and that he must finish his redemptive work on the cross.

(3) He controlled his emotions. There is a tendency to panic sometimes when Christians are faced with threatening, uncontrollable circumstances. Peter reacted impulsively to the threat by severing the right ear of Malchus with his sword (v. 10). Because his emotions compelled Peter rather than his faith, Jesus corrected him (v. 11) and explained there was no need for violence. We can take comfort in the knowledge of God is still in control even during the tough times of our lives. We can trust him with our future.

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Life and Work

The Wrong Love

by Frank C. Gantz, Nall's Memorial Church, Little Rock

Basic passage: Mark 11:15-18; 12:6-8,38-40

Focal passage: Mark 12:38-40

Central truth: It is not enough to love. We must love the right things.

A popular song a few years ago echoed the ethic of many, "If loving you is wrong, I don't want to be right." While that song presented an ungodly ethic, it also revealed a possible option. We do have the option of loving the wrong things. We usually think that if only we had more love, then we would be alright. We must have not only love, but we must also have the proper object of our love.

Jesus warned his listeners about the scribes because they had the wrong loves. Their first wrong love was that they loved to be dressed for success. The scribal robes were all white linen robes with fringe on the bottom. Colored garments were left to the common people. Some probably felt "called" to be scribes because they desired to wear those long white linen robes. Do preachers preach because they are called and desire to serve God, or are they attracted by the desire to wear a suit everyday?

Another wrong love of the scribes was that they "love salutations in the market places" (Mk. 12:38). The marketplace was the place of business. When a scribe walked in the marketplace, the people would rise with respect. The only exception to this was when tradesmen were actually at labor. While respect is clearly not wrong, Jesus is condemning men who are motivated by the love of having others show their respect. This love for respect carried over to the scribe having the best seat in the synagogue and at feasts. At the synagogue, the scribe would sit with his back against the box which held the Torah and faced the congregation. All eyes would be focused on him. Men desired the office of a scribe for the perks and not for the ministry. Do Jesus' words condemn only a previous generation? I think not.

Mark 12:40 indicates that these men so demand service that those who really have needs are neglected. They must also try to generate some sense of spirituality although it is only hypocrisy. For this Jesus assigns a "greater damnation." What do you love?

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Bible Book

Samson the Grinder

by Tommy Cunningham, Life Line Church, Little Rock

Basic passage: Judges 13:3-5; 16:18-21,28-30

Focal passage: Judges 13:3-5; 16:18-30

Central truth: Empowered people can lose their effect by not maintaining a godly lifestyle.

The account of Samson is one of the most well-known of the Old Testament judges.

The background for this text is once again the sinful condition of Israel. This time the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for 40 years (13:1).

As the Philistines increased their oppression of God's people the Lord began preparations for their deliverance. The angel of the Lord appeared to a barren Danite woman and announced the impending birth of a child who would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

Samson was to be the child's name. He was a most unique individual. He possessed great strength, (13:25; 14:6; 14:19; 15:14; 16:4; 16:30). He was a man whose life fell prey to his lack of self-control. Out of this lack of temperance came his eventual capture by the Philistines. There are at least five defects projected by Samson.

First, he had an intemperate character. He had little or no control over his flesh. Second, he was filled with pride. Third, he possessed a rebellious spirit. He was rebellious against his parents (14:3) and he was rebellious against God. He broke his Nazarite vow by touching dead things (14:9), and by consuming strong drink (14:10). Fourth, he was self-sufficient. Finally, he was vindictive. He had a passion for vengeance.

Samson allowed his spirit to be overcome by his fleshly appetite for sensual gratification.

He revealed to Delilah the secret of his strength (16:18-20). For a few moments' pleasure, he lost his strength, he became a prisoner of the Philistines, he was blinded by his captors and he was made to grind in the prison house (16:20-21). He paid a high price for his lack of self-control.

The last look at Samson is a view of a man who has finally come to see sin for what it really is. He called upon God to strengthen him one last time and through his mighty strength he became an instrument of God's judgment (16:22-31).

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CLC Launches Effort

Letter-Writing Initiative against Abortion Actions

by Louis Moore

SBC Christian Life Commission

NASHVILLE (BP)—The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has launched a three-pronged letter-writing initiative against recent abortion related actions by the American Bar Association and the AFL-CIO as well as against proposed pro-abortion legislation in the U.S. Congress.

The letters seek to "bring Southern Baptist influence to bear on all three entities to reevaluate their pro-abortion efforts," said Richard Land, executive director of the CLC, the ethical/moral concerns agency of the Southern Baptist Convention.

On Wednesday, Feb. 28, Land sent letters to various government, union and bar association leaders, including U.S. Attorney General Richard L. Thornburgh, AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland and all U.S. senators and congressmen, on the abortion issue.

"Over the last 10 years the Southern Baptist Convention has adopted five resolutions at its annual meetings affirming the sanctity of unborn human life and called for federal and state legislation and/or a constitutional amendment to protect unborn human life," Land said. "Most Southern Baptists are strongly in favor of severely restricting the number and types of abortions performed in the United

States."

In the letter to Kirkland, Land expressed "great concern over your appointment of a special committee, the Ad Hoc Committee of Reproductive Issues, to consider whether the AFL-CIO should take a position on the issue of abortion rights."

"Many Southern Baptist union members would be gravely concerned to learn about the possibility of the AFL-CIO endorsing abortion rights."

Land said press reports indicate at least nine of the 14 members of the Ad Hoc Committee of Reproductive Issues favor abortion rights. "This ratio greatly skews the true opinions of union members on abortion," he said.

He said the CLC is "especially disturbed that if a pro-abortion resolution is adopted," the AFL-CIO would "unless your well-funded lobbyists on Capitol Hill and state legislatures to lobby for abortion. Additionally, the AFL-CIO could also actively work against federal and state legislators and other candidates for public office because they are pro-life."

In a letter to L. Stanley Chauvin Jr., president of the American Bar Association, Land said, "I am writing in response to the action taken by the ABA House of Delegates on Feb. 13 endorsing broad abortion rights.

"Now that the ABA has gone on record to endorse abortion on demand, we feel that the (ABA's) Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary will be hopelessly biased against potential federal judges who

believe in the sanctity of unborn human life," he wrote.

In the letter to Thornburgh, Land said, "The ABA's decision to go on record in favor of wide-ranging abortion rights seriously compromises the objectivity of the ABA's Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary.

"Unless the ABA rescinds this egregiously pro-abortion resolution, its Standing Committee will be hopelessly biased against potential jurists who believe in the sanctity of human life."

If the ABA does not rescind its action, it should "no longer enjoy its privileged status as a confidential reviewer of appointees to the federal courts," Land told Thornburgh.

Land wrote the U.S. Senators and Congressmen to protest H.R. 3700/S.1912, popularly known as the Freedom of Choice Act.

"Possibly the most radical pro-abortion bill the United States Congress will ever consider, H.R. 3700/S. 1912, is an all-out frontal assault on the sanctity of human life," Land said in the letter.

"Proponents of the so-called Freedom of Choice Act have represented this bill simply as a codification of the 1973 Supreme Court Roe v. Wade decision," he said. "In fact, H.R. 3700 and S. 1912 would go much further than that erroneous decision.

Land said the Freedom of Choice Act is "quite simply . . . a federal mandate on the states for abortion on demand from conception to birth."

"This bill would circumvent the will of many Americans, including most Southern Baptists, who support various restrictions and regulations on the practice of abortion," he wrote.

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BJC to Examine Formula

WASHINGTON (BP)—An ad hoc committee has been appointed to evaluate how member bodies are represented on the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

During its March 5 meeting, the BJC executive committee appointed its officers to serve as a bylaws change committee. That committee is to examine the agency's bylaws and recommend whether changes should be made in the formula used to determine representation on the BJC.

In establishing the ad hoc committee, executive committee members agreed that any change in the current BJC representation formula should take into consideration four principles:

— The jointness of the BJC should be

maintained.

— Although some relationship should exist between financial contributions and the number of each body's representatives, contributions alone should not determine representation.

— No member body's number of representatives should dominate the BJC.

— The number of representatives to the BJC should be kept at a practical size.

Members of the BJC executive committee said an evaluation of the agency's representation formula is appropriate in light of a proposed cut in Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program unified budget funding, as well as increased contributions from groups such as the Southern Baptist Alliance and state Baptist conventions.

SOUTH AFRICA

Violence Slows Work

by Craig Bird
SBC Foreign Mission Board

EAST LONDON, South Africa (BP)—Rioting and looting after a military coup in the South African homeland of Ciskei left 20 people dead and more than 200 injured. Eight Southern Baptist missionaries assigned there are safe.

No injuries to Ciskei Baptists or damage to churches were reported in the wake of the March coup. However, attempts to contact pastors in two of the hardest-hit areas were unsuccessful as of March 6.

Ciskei army leaders seized control of the homeland, located on the Indian Ocean coast of South Africa, March 4. South African troops sealed off the country March 6 "to protect South African citizens and property," said South African foreign minister Pik Botha.

Missionary Gene Elder of Shepherdsville, Ky., who works with 23 churches in Ciskei, contacted pastors in Zwelisha, Gomototown and the Ciskei capital of Bisho. He was told church members apparently stayed away from the rioting, which focused on stores and government offices and homes, and that the situation was much calmer March 6.

Missionary Rue Scott, head of the Baptist seminary in Debe Nek, Ciskei, said trucks and buses loaded with cheering students passed the seminary March 5 and 6, apparently heading to Bisho for rallies celebrating the overthrow of President-for-life Lennox Sebe. Ciskei, designated a homeland in 1981, is not recognized as an independent country by any nation except South Africa.

Police reported 70 factories had been burned, and damage estimates were in the tens of millions of dollars. Hospitals reported a severe blood shortage and admitted scores of youths suffering from trauma resulting from drunkenness. About 18,000 jobs were lost when factories were torched.

Scott said he does not expect classes at the seminary to be affected, although concern exists that food supplies will be disrupted if South African troops do not restore order rapidly.

Elder, who lives on the border of Ciskei in the South African town of East London, said pastors told him troops had sealed off all borders and urged him not to travel in the area for a time. He and his wife, Ellamae, of Greenville, Ala., canceled weekly visits in the area. A scheduled March 8 trip to take 65 mattresses to a tent camp of 1,000 refugees inside Ciskei also was postponed.

Two other Southern Baptist missionary couples work in Ciskei besides Rue and Gwen Scott, of Westbrook, Texas, and Cleveland, Okla., respectively, and the Elders. They are Troy and Marjorie Bennett of Winston-Salem, N.C., and Chagrin Falls, Ohio, respectively; and Gerald and Florence Pinkston of Levelland and Hereford, Texas, respectively.

Eastern Europe Packet Available

RICHMOND, Va.—An overview of Baptist work in Eastern Europe in the midst of sweeping political changes has been prepared by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

The "Eastern Europe Update" is available at no cost by writing to the Foreign Mission Board, Distribution Coordination, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230.

Missionary Notes

Judson and Dorothy Blair, missionaries since 1949, retired from active missionary service in January 1990. They served as publication workers at the El Palo Baptist Publications Mission. Both consider El Paso, Texas, their hometown. She is the former Dorothy Rose Sullivan, born in Monticello. They may be addressed at 5198 Buffalo Creek Dr., El Paso, TX 79936.

Don and Angie Finley, missionaries to Brazil, have completed language study and arrived on their field of service (address: Rua Jose Teixeira, 1020, Praia do Canto, 29.055 Vitoria, ES, Brazil). He is a native of Missouri. The former Angie Coston, she was born in Clarksville and considers Hot Springs her hometown. They were appointed by the Foreign Mission Board in 1988.

David and Martha Miller, missionaries to Peru, have completed language study in Costa Rica and arrived on their field of service (address: Apartado 3177, Lima, Peru). They are natives of Arkansas. He is from Little Rock. The former Martha Savage, she was born in DeQueen and considers Walnut Ridge her hometown. They were appointed in 1986.

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WORLD

SOVIET UNION

Reflecting Change

by Art Toalston

SBC Foreign Mission Board

MOSCOW (BP)—In an era of *perestroika* in the Soviet Union, Baptists likewise are restructuring.

The Soviet Union's largest Baptist body changed its name, scaled down its statistics, abolished its general secretary post, strengthened its presidency and created three vice presidential posts responsible for activities once discouraged—and in some cases outlawed—by the government.

More than 700 Baptist delegates attended the 44th congress of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in late February, some of them traveling across 11 time zones to Moscow. They voted to rename their national body the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, a change that suggests more autonomy for Baptist unions in the various republics, observers said.

Delegates also heard firsthand accounts from Baptists in Azerbaijan and other Soviet republics with majority Muslim populations, where Christians have faced persecution.

Many Christians in these regions fear for their lives, reported Denton Lotz, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, who attended the congress. Some Muslims have threatened to cut out Christians' tongues, he said. One Baptist leader said religious tensions have spurred 73 people in his congregation to abandon their homes; only seven have stayed.

In keeping with *glasnost*, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's thrust for "openness," Soviet Baptists scaled down their reported numbers from an estimated 500,000 members in 5,000 churches to about 250,000 members in 3,000 churches. That drops the union from the fourth-largest to the eighth-largest constituency in the Baptist World Alliance, even though reports indicate union churches have given more than 40,000 people in the past five years.

Baptist leaders were concerned that "numbers must be true, especially for the Christian," Alexei Bichkov, outgoing general secretary, told the congress. "We felt we should correct the error, whatever the consequences."

The erroneous figure was first reported after World War II, and it may have included family members, Bichkov explained. Subsequent Baptist leaders avoided the embarrassment of admitting the mistake, he said.

The lower figure also reflects losses of

Baptists, Pentecostals and German Mennonites who have emigrated to the West, and 42,000 Pentecostals, who, in the spirit of new Soviet openness, have withdrawn to form their own denomination.

Delegates abolished the general secretary post as part of their restructuring and elected Gregory Komendant of Kiev as the new president. The union's new bylaws assign executive powers to the president formerly shared with the general secretary.

Bichkov, general secretary since 1971, was elected to one of three new vice presidencies. He will oversee education and communication. Nicolai Kolesniko, outgoing treasurer, was elected vice president for evangelism, a post that also includes missions. Both posts reflect new opportunities Soviet Baptists are exploring in light of the country's new freedoms.

Alexander Firisyuk, who had been deputy superintendent of Baptist work in the Republic of Byelorussia, was elected vice president for administration and finance.

At 44, Komendant is the youngest person ever to lead Soviet Baptists. He had been deputy superintendent of Baptist work in the Ukraine since 1981. His father and grandfather were Baptist pastors. His grandfather was arrested in 1949 and never was heard from again.

Komendant, also a pastor in Kiev since the early 1970s, entered Baptist administrative work in the city and surrounding region in 1975 after finishing seminary studies in Hamburg, West Germany.

"This was the first time in many years that no pressure was exerted on us by authorities concerning whom to elect," commented Vasile Logvinenko, the union's outgoing president, during a news conference that included reporters from such Soviet government news operations as Tass.

"Especially in our country God has given us new opportunities," Firisyuk said in the opening message of the congress. "Everyone in the world is looking at us to see how we will use them."

In another moment of *glasnost*, Bichkov told the congress that Baptists have lost an opportunity to buy a building within a couple of miles of the Kremlin to use as a seminary. The Soviet government's Department of Religious Affairs had promised the building to Baptists, but Moscow's City Council approved its sale to another party.

Bichkov quoted a religious affairs official as saying: "We are in a very confusing situation. If we can't return this piece of property to you, we will seek other solutions."