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CALENDAR

TENNESSEE--SBC Executive Committee meeting, Sept. 16-18, Nashville.

**CLC targets persecution,
employs 3 staff members**

By Dwayne Hastings

**Baptist Press
9/13/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Voicing concern over increasingly frequent reports of Christian persecution, trustees of the Christian Life Commission expressed vigorous support for a day of prayer for believers being persecuted for their faith -- keystone of a resolution passed during the Southern Baptist Convention last June.

Trustees also moved to expand the staff of the Southern Baptists' agency for ethical, moral and religious liberty issues during the Christian Life Commission's semiannual trustee meeting Sept. 10-11 in Nashville, Tenn.

In his report to trustees, CLC President Richard Land said the commission continues "to not give in to the temptation to assess the political equation, but to speak God's truth to Republicans and Democrats alike, to conservatives and liberals alike."

"We are going to speak the truth at all times to both kings and majority leaders," said Land, citing Psalm 119:46-47.

Joining with the World Evangelical Fellowship and others, trustees indicated their support of the worldwide day of prayer for persecuted Christians, Sept. 29, by agreeing to underwrite the cost of mailing an information packet to every pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention.

The board agreed every effort must be made "to make Southern Baptists and Christians everywhere aware of the persecution Christians are suffering around the world," calling on Southern Baptists to exhort the U.S. government to pressure governments which are allowing the persecution within their borders.

"As American Christians become more and more aware, they are becoming more and more incensed that their government is doing business on a routine basis with governments that are actively involved themselves in the persecution, imprisonment, torture and in some cases, literal crucifixion of Christian believers," Land said.

In their action approving three new employees, the trustees voted to employ Jeff Carter as director of citizenship concerns and legal counsel in the commission's Washington office. Carter, who holds a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, as well as a doctor of jurisprudence from the University of Texas School at Law in Austin, Texas, most recently served as minister to married adults at Second Baptist Church, Houston.

Also approved was Barrett Duke Jr. as director of convention relations in the commission's Nashville office. Duke, who fills the position vacated by Lamar Cooper's departure to Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as academic dean, holds the master of arts in Old Testament from Denver Seminary and is a Ph.D. candidate in the joint doctoral program of the University of Denver and the Iliff School of Theology. He is currently pastor of First Baptist Church of Highlands Ranch, Littleton, Col.

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Steve Nelson was named director of hunger concerns, a new position made possible by cooperative funding from Southern Baptists' Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board and the CLC. Pastor of First Baptist Church, Lafayette, Tenn., Nelson earned his doctor of ministry from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and his master of divinity degree from Southwestern.

The trustees named Vi Galyean, a former CLC trustee who lives in Christiansburg, Va., as the 1997 recipient of the Distinguished Service Award. The award, given annually since 1965 by the CLC, recognizes an individual who renders unique and outstanding service in the field of social ethics.

Galyean, who suffers from Lou Gehrig's disease, has been active in leadership of the Crisis Pregnancy Center of the New River Valley in Virginia, as well as serving as a speaker for the Mary and Elizabeth Project, a statewide ministry dealing with teenage pregnancy.

Charles Betts, pastor of First Baptist Church, Vandalia, Ohio, was re-elected chairman of the trustees. Steven Wright, pastor of Houston Northwest Baptist Church, Houston, Texas, was elected vice chairman; James Powell, a retired physician from Ellensburg, Wash., was chosen as the board's secretary.

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**Southern Baptist disaster units
continue post-Fran relief work**

By Steve Barber & Art Toalston

**Baptist Press
9/13/96**

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist disaster relief units were continuing feeding operations in mid-September after Hurricane Fran's 115 mph North Carolina landfall Sept. 5, which killed at least 25 people.

As of Sept. 12, a total of 263,514 meals had been served, according to the Brotherhood Commission, which coordinates Southern Baptists' multi-state disaster response. By a North Carolina estimate Sept. 13, Southern Baptist relief units were serving an average of 50,000 meals a day. At just one site in Wilmington, N.C., 24,000 meals were served Sept. 11.

Meanwhile, portable kitchens operated by Brotherhood units in Texas and Alabama were on standby Sept. 13 for relief of Hurricane Hortense in Puerto Rico, which was heavily damaged by that storm's 120 mph winds.

No damage report has yet been compiled for the coastal North Carolina Caswell Baptist Assembly, which sustained a direct hit from Fran. By one preliminary estimate, however, the facility suffered twice as much as it did from Hurricane Bertha in July, which left behind \$250,000 in damages.

The Caswell facility, a former Army base purchased by North Carolina Baptists in 1948, has accommodations for several hundred and a mile of coastline. Its main lodge is close to the water's edge and unprotected.

Cleanup continued at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., which was hit by wind and rain as Fran traveled inland, toppling numerous trees; damaging various buildings; and taking a toll on automobiles and housing of faculty, staff and students.

Mickey Caison, the Brotherhood Commission's on-site disaster relief coordinator in North Carolina, reported Sept. 13, "A big weekend is coming up with many work crews coming in to help. The spirit of the people is good. Power is returning slowly -- 60-80 percent of urban areas have power, 50-60 percent of rural areas."

Caison reconfirmed the following locations for disaster relief feeding units: North Carolina (first unit) and South Carolina (first unit) in Wilmington; North Carolina (second unit) in Goldsboro, N.C.; South Carolina (second unit) in Wilson; Alabama in Raleigh, N.C., along with a North Carolina associational unit; Florida in Fayetteville, N.C.; Kentucky in Jacksonville, N.C.; Georgia (two units) in Warsaw and Burgaw, N.C..

A North Carolina associational unit had discontinued its operation in Durham, N.C.

The Ohio unit, based at Old Fields, W.Va., was continuing to serve meals for an eight-county, flood-stricken area deluged in Hurricane Fran's inland route.

The Virginia unit is serving meals at Harrisonburg, Va., another area hit by Fran's winds and rain.

Fran marked the second time this year the southeast coast has faced a major storm. In mid-July, Hurricane Bertha plowed into North and South Carolina, killing nine people and causing \$100 million in damage, with Southern Baptist feeding units from both states serving more than 70,000 meals in the aftermath.

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The Southern Baptist response to Hurricane Andrew in August 1992 stands as the largest in the ministry's 26-year history. Feeding and child care units from 15 states were called into service, with 10,000 volunteers providing 2.6 million meals and care for hundreds of children in south Florida and Louisiana after Andrew killed 15 people and caused \$30 billion in damage.

The American Red Cross has estimated Southern Baptist disaster volunteers have prepared 80 percent of the meals served under ARC auspices since Hurricane Hugo in 1989.

Contributions in support of the disaster relief effort, coordinated by the Brotherhood Commission on behalf of Southern Baptists, may be made to the Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104.

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**Elliff: Open life's 'suitcases,'
take sin contents to the cross**

By Don Hinkle

**Baptist Press
9/13/96**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--"What can wash a--way my sins?" sang music leader Ron Owens.

"Nothing but the blood of Je--sus," was the congregation's thunderous answer.

"What can make me whole again?" he asked.

"Nothing but the blood of Je--sus," came another glass-rattling response.

This back-and-forth singing of Robert Lowry's beloved 19th-century hymn was one of a dozen songs sang by the 1,400 worshipers packed into Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Alumni Chapel Sept. 10 for a special convocation. The service, titled "Back to the Cross," was the fifth in a series of seven convocations called by Southern Baptist Convention President Tom Elliff at Baptist seminaries across the country during the first two weeks of September. The purpose: to focus on the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross and to pray for spiritual awakening in America.

"The cross on which Jesus died was payment for our sins," Elliff told the gathering of students, school faculty and staff, area pastors and church workers at the Louisville, Ky., seminary. "Jesus bore all of our sins on the cross. You were in him on the cross. This is why the apostle Paul said, 'I am crucified with Christ.' So these next few hours are a call back to the cross ... because ... the cross is a prerequisite for going forward.

"The cross is the instrument, the circumstance, the issue that God brings into your life to get you to put aside your agenda and yourself in favor of him. Everything changes after the cross."

Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., challenged the throng to open their life "suitcases" and "listen to God as he examines the contents and asks, 'Who gave you this? What is this? Where did this come from? This habit, this bitterness, this wrong relationship, this fault, this malice -- where did you get them?' We've got to hate those things Jesus died on the cross to overcome," Elliff said. "That's what getting back to the cross does."

He warned the seminarians and pastors in attention to "get it out of your minds that it's got to be business as usual in this nation, that it's got to be pastor and CEO of some church corporation. Listen, it must be a passion," he implored, noting there are too many in the pulpit now who are more concerned about losing their pastorates than prophetically speaking against sin.

Elliff then called for a time of prayer. Many knelt in their pews, some came to the altar and knelt, while others huddled in corners.

Following Elliff's message, Owens, Home Mission Board associate in the prayer and spiritual awakening office, led the congregation in another round of hymns and choruses. Then Henry Blackaby, author of the "Experiencing God" discipleship materials and director of HMB prayer and spiritual awakening office, addressed the gathering.

"As I travel across our land and make my way around the world, I want you to know that never in my life have I seen such a stirring of God in the hearts of his people as I have in these past months," Blackaby said with excitement. "There's something that God's about to do!" he said amid a plethora of "Amens."

Blackaby echoed Elliff's call for God's children to come "back to the cross." He told the assemblage "the cross will continue to be the most decisive moment in your own personal life."

"We die to sin and become alive to God at the cross. The cross is why sin no longer has dominion over us."

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Drawing on John 20:19-21, Blackaby noted how Jesus' disciple, Thomas, doubted Jesus was alive following the crucifixion, but Jesus returned and "took Thomas back to the cross" by instructing him to place his fingers in Jesus' unscarred hands and his hand on Christ's unpierced side.

"The cross deals with our sin," Blackaby said before calling those gathered to break into groups of three or four to pray. Many knelt in aisles, some sat together in pews, while others stood, forming circles as they held each other. Many wept as they prayed.

Owens then led the congregation in another round of singing before Avery Willis, author of the "MasterLife" discipleship materials and Foreign Mission Board senior vice president, spoke. "If we walk in the light like Jesus walks in light ... we have fellowship and the blood of Jesus keeps on cleansing us from all unrighteousness," Willis said before calling the gathering to another round of prayer.

Again, small groups scattered throughout the chapel. Some held sobbing friends as they prayed.

"When things are at their worst, God is at his best," Blackaby said after the service. "And I think we are at our worst. I think this is a prelude to what is going to be. This was certainly a huge movement of God (at Southern). I've been praying for 10 years that God would bring revival to the seminary campuses, but you must wait until God's time, keep doing what you know (God wants done) and then you're right there when he's ready."

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary, said it may be eternity before it is known exactly what God did at the campus Sept. 10, and Mohler said he was humbled by what he experienced and witnessed.

"What took place here wasn't about Southern Seminary," Mohler said. "It wasn't about what anyone said or did. It was about what the Lord came to do. Southern Seminary will be a different institution because of what took place here today, but far more important than that, I believe those who were in this room will be different people because of what happened."

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Hinkle is a news writer at Southern Seminary.

Naylor says 'Southwesterner' is name not to be dishonored

By Craig Bird

**Baptist Press
9/13/96**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--"Southwesterner' is an honorable and noble name," President Emeritus Robert Naylor told the men and women who registered at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for the first time in September as they stood in chapel to the applause of the faculty, staff and hundreds of their fellow students.

"I officially declare you Southwesterners -- and you'd be better dead than bring dishonor to that title," Naylor said.

President Ken Hemphill challenged the 711-member "freshman class" to move beyond "keeping a list of things you don't do" to taking moral and ethical stands that would mark them as "men and women of God."

Moral absolutes are vital, he said, "but if the only mark of a real Christian is what one does not do, you could walk through a cemetery and be surrounded by spiritual giants. You might find it comfortable here on seminary hill, but God often works by putting godly men and women in ungodly places and empowering them to transform their surroundings."

Hemphill noted "only 15 percent of an individual's success depends on skill and intelligence while 85 percent is based on an ability to build relationships." He surmised one reason the students had come to the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary to study is because "you value relationships. You could have studied on the Internet or someplace else, but you came here to benefit from and contribute to the productive personal relationships that are at the core of this institution."

Hemphill repeated his commitment that SWBTS be a place where "people help people" as it produces Christian leaders with "less mediocrity and more integrity -- which is what this world needs."

And the world is exactly where Southwestern graduates go. And come from.

The entering class colored four more countries -- Croatia, Scotland, Luthania and Ukraine -- to the seminary's global alumni map. Although most of the new students come from Texas and neighboring states, 31 of them represent 17 foreign countries. Overall, the student body draws from 46 foreign countries and 47 states as well as the District of Columbia.

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The 1996 influx dwarfs the 539 new students enrolled in the fall of 1995. The increase from last year is larger than the total enrollment of most Christian seminaries around the world, since the average size is approximately 200.

The 87-year-old Naylor, president of SWBTS from 1958-78, noted the choice of Southwestern indicated several things about a student. "It reveals how you feel about the Bible -- that is the infallible Word of God. It reveals how you feel about a world that is spiritually lost and needs to be told about Jesus Christ. And it reveals how you feel about God calling you personally to a specific vocational task that you can prepare for here."

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(BP) photo available upon request from Southwestern's public relations office.

**Baptist college foresees ties
with telecommunications giant**

By William H. Perkins Jr.

**Baptist Press
9/13/96**

CLINTON, Miss. (BP)--The head of the nation's fourth-largest telecommunications provider confirmed Sept. 9 that the multi-billion-dollar company will purchase 85 acres from Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College and relocate its corporate headquarters near the school's Clinton campus.

Bernie Ebbers, president and chief executive officer of Jackson-based WorldCom, Inc., said his company plans to construct a four-building, campus-like office complex on the undeveloped site, which is across Interstate 20 from the school's main facilities.

MC officials expressed confidence the proximity of the company to the school will result in a close working relationship between the two entities.

Ebbers, a native of Canada, is an MC graduate who currently serves on the college's trustee board. He has publicly expressed his affection for MC and termed his years at the school as among the "finest" of his life.

Ebbers is also a member of First Baptist Church, Brookhaven, Miss., which in past years has led the entire Southern Baptist Convention in support for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions.

The former athletic coach is credited with building WorldCom -- formerly known as LDDS -- from a small, local provider of long-distance service into a worldwide telecommunications giant and Fortune 500 company with the resources to swallow other companies worth billions of dollars.

WorldCom's latest acquisition came on Aug. 19 with the announcement that the company will pay \$14.4 billion dollars for MFS Communications Co. of Omaha, Neb.

The move to Clinton will consolidate the company's 700 employees, presently working in two locations in downtown and north Jackson, into one facility. Employment at the company is expected to boom as future acquisitions and expansions come on line.

MC President Howell W. Todd said in a television interview after the announcement he hoped WorldCom's move to Clinton would result in partnerships between the company and the school and its students.

Much speculation has centered on the future of the present WorldCom headquarters building on Amite Street in downtown Jackson, which was completely renovated in 1993.

The MC School of Law on Griffith Street in downtown Jackson is nearing capacity, but both Ebbers and Todd said no discussions have been held on the possibility the law school could move into the company's Amite Street facility.

Ebbers told Jackson television station WLBT that factors contributing to the move include lukewarm support from the Jackson City Council for the company's downtown expansion plans -- now canceled -- along with an "anti-business" attitude among some council members and a proposed special tax on downtown businesses.

He said the company considered a number of relocation sites in the metropolitan area outside Jackson before settling on the Clinton site. Ebbers pointed out he recused himself from the selection process because of his close ties to MC.

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Seamen's ministry reaches 1,000 contacts per month

By Michelle Shermer

MOBILE, Ala. (BP)--In 1970, the officers of a deteriorating Peruvian ship abandoned their vessel near Mobile, Ala., leaving the crew behind without food, communications or adequate clothing.

"It was incredible," said Virginia Paredes, one of the first Mobilites to offer assistance to the seamen. "They had no food. The ship was filthy and they had no way to clean it.

"They had just come from a cold climate into Mobile Bay in spring and didn't have the right kind of clothing. And they had no hope of ever getting back home."

But she and several other women from Gage Avenue Baptist Church in Mobile came to their rescue, bringing everything needed to meet their physical needs and the word of Christ to meet their spiritual needs. Despite some people who thought they had "lost their minds," the church members brought the 30 seaman back to the church and into their homes.

"I baptized a bunch of them," said then-pastor Quincy T. "Q.T." Curtis, who has since retired. "And then we just got a vision of what this thing could be."

That was the birth of Mobile's International Seaman's Center, which has ministered to thousands of seamen from 127 different nations during the past 26 years.

At one point, the seamen's center ministered to men of more nationalities than the Foreign Mission Board had missionaries in countries overseas, said Aias de Souza, who has directed the center since 1979.

"The mission field is the Alabama State Docks," Paredes said. "It was just something that couldn't be stopped."

From those beginnings, the center now is located off Interstate 10 within sight of the Mobile River and is a complete recreational facility. It offers a full-size soccer field, a gymnasium, three pool tables, ping-pong, television, free used clothing, free transportation anywhere in the city, postal service and telephones. The International Seamen's Center has become the backbone of the Mobile Baptist Association's International Ministries.

The seamen's center also has a wall-length bookshelf lined from floor to ceiling with Bibles in more than 75 languages. About 2,000 Bibles are given to seamen every year, de Souza said.

"Our mission is to present the gospel to the seamen and to assist them socially, spiritually and many times physically with no distinction to race, religion or nationality," he said.

Each month, more than 1,000 men are ministered to either at the center or on board their ships. Last year, 395 seamen accepted Christ, de Souza said.

One South American wanted to take back several Bibles and a plastic bag, de Souza recounted. "Why the plastic bag?" he asked. "Because when they come out in canoes to greet the ship I want to throw the Bibles overboard to them," the sailor replied.

Chapel services also are conducted daily, which sometimes can be a challenge to de Souza -- especially when dealing with a multiplicity of religions, cultures and foreign laws.

One Sunday, a group of Chinese men wanted to see the town. Part of the "tour package" included visiting the local church for the service and lunch. Because their country is communist, however, they were not allowed to go inside the church.

So de Souza packed them on the bus and preached to them in the bus -- in sight of the church instead of in it.

Another time, a KGB officer with a Russian crew told de Souza his men were not allowed to attend religious services. De Souza said he understood, but asked if it would be OK if he only addressed the Filipinos and Spanish. De Souza completed the service while the Russians were in the same room listening.

De Souza also has heard some unusual requests. Instead of wanting to go to the mall, a group of Polish seamen wanted to go to a junkyard. They were looking for old car parts to bring back home, because their cars in Poland were so expensive to maintain.

Another time, some Muslim seamen from Pakistan wanted to see a Christian cemetery. De Souza used the opportunity to talk about religions. "It was the most wonderful way to witness to a group, and they were not offended," he said.

De Souza said he has learned the most important thing in this field is to be flexible. His efforts have not gone unrewarded.

One time, a ship's chief officer from Israel and his 11 men were in the center and de Souza encouraged them to attend chapel. The officer refused and banned his men from attending.

But as de Souza walked upstairs, he decided to have chapel downstairs. The officer caught on to de Souza's scheme and walked out of the center angry. De Souza followed him and offered a Bible to make amends.

Nine months later, the officer returned and said he had read the book front to back three times over. He accepted Christ in de Souza's office and insisted de Souza baptize him.

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Shermer is a correspondent for The Alabama Baptist newsjournal.

**Bill Mack's 'Blue' streak
boosts 'Country Crossroads'**

By Gayla Thornburgh

**Baptist Press
9/13/96**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--"Country Crossroads" co-host Bill Mack is anything but blue over the success of a new country hit titled, "Blue."

The reason for the excitement is that one of country music's newest stars, 13-year-old LeAnn Rimes, is on her way to the top of the charts singing a song written by Mack.

"I'm so proud of Bill's accomplishments," said Beth Broyles, producer of the TV version of Country Crossroads, produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission. "He is a very talented musician and speaker and is well-loved by country music artists and fans alike. Bill certainly deserves the recognition and it doesn't hurt that Country Crossroads gets some attention in the process."

The song, "Blue," originally was written by Mack in 1961 for Patsy Cline. Before she was able to record the song, however, Cline was killed in a plane crash. After Cline's death, the song was recorded once, but Mack did not pitch it to another singer simply because no one else's voice fit the piece. No one, that is, until LeAnn Rimes.

After hearing Rimes sing the national anthem at a Dallas Cowboys game, Mack offered "Blue" to her. Although Rimes' father originally thought it sounded too old for her, she recorded the song as the title cut of her first album and has since been hailed a young singing sensation in the music industry. "Blue" debuted as a single at number four on "The Billboard 200," selling an astounding 124,000 copies its first week in stores.

"I think it is wonderful how God works things out," Broyles said. "Because of a song that Bill Mack wrote more than 30 years ago, more people will know about Country Crossroads, more people will tune in and, therefore, more people will hear the message of hope that we share in each show.

"Only God knows where this will lead, but we are grateful that he has chosen to use us in a greater capacity to point others to him."

Country Crossroads, a weekly 30-minute television program produced by the RTVC, airs on FamilyNet Mondays at 11 p.m., Tuesdays at 6 p.m., Fridays at noon and Saturdays at 5 p.m. ACTS, carried on the ODYSSEY Channel, telecasts the program at 5 p.m. on Saturdays. All times are Eastern.

"Blue" will be featured on Country Crossroads the weeks of Oct. 5 and Nov. 16.

The RTVC also produces a radio version of Country Crossroads. More than 850 radio stations worldwide broadcast Country Crossroads weekly.

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Thornburgh is a newswriter at the RTVC.

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