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U.S. relief workers exit Iraq,
but Kurdish colleagues face death By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press
9/16/96

ANKARA, Turkey (BP)--Most relief workers from America -- including Southern Baptists -- have safely departed northern Iraq in the wake of Saddam Hussein's sweep into the area, but hundreds of their local Kurdish employees could face execution at the hands of Iraqi secret police.

Four Southern Baptist workers and their children left the town of Zakho in northern Iraq and crossed into Turkey after 40,000 Iraqi troops streamed into Irbil, the regional capital, at the invitation of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). The Iraqis helped KDP forces defeat another Kurdish faction, the Iranian-backed Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

The United States responded by bombing Iraqi anti-aircraft installations, expanding the allied "no fly" zone in the south and pledging to uphold the "no fly" zone over the Kurdish region. But regardless of what happens in the skies, Saddam Hussein has regained virtual control of the north on the ground through the KDP and a horde of secret police sent in behind Iraqi troops.

"We're trying to get our Kurdish workers out of there," a Southern Baptist worker said in a Sept. 13 phone interview from Ankara, Turkey. The worker, who asked not to be identified for security reasons, oversees relief and medical work Southern Baptists have performed in northern Iraq since the end of the Gulf War.

"We have about 60 (Kurdish) staff, and about 300 people including all their family members," he said. "We've been here for a week talking to the U.S. Embassy, representatives of the U.S. Office of Disaster Assistance (OFDA), UNICEF, the U.N. High Commission for Refugees and others. We can't get them to give us a definite answer."

Although the Iraqi-allied KDP has said they will protect these workers, Saddam has made no secret of his intention to punish Kurds who have worked with the U.S. government or Western aid groups since the Gulf War.

"To Saddam it doesn't make any difference whether they're a direct hire or work for a (private agency)," said the worker. "He's going to kill them just the same. They need protection and they need to get out."

U.S. authorities say they are evacuating Kurdish workers employed by the military operation and humanitarian projects sponsored by "Operation Provide Comfort," the five-year-old allied effort to guarantee a safe haven for Kurds in northern Iraq.

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But so far, the evacuation includes only Kurds directly hired by the American military and U.S. government agencies, according to sources in Turkey and Washington. On Sept. 15, those Kurdish workers and their families -- numbering about 2,000 -- began departing in buses under armed guard for refugee camps in Turkey. From there they are being flown to a U.S. military base in Guam, where they will be processed for refugee resettlement in the United States and elsewhere.

That leaves hundreds of Kurdish employees of Western aid groups and non-government organizations -- plus their spouses and several thousand children -- at grave risk.

"That's our people, and we're afraid the Americans are going to leave them stranded there to face Saddam without any kind of help," the Southern Baptist worker said.

A U.S. Embassy official in Turkey told the Southern Baptist worker that Kurdish employees of private relief agencies were "not even part of the discussion anymore" as evacuation plans developed.

Officials at the U.S. State Department's Office of Disaster Assistance (OFDA) said Sept. 13 they were trying to avoid "another Vietnam" in northern Iraq -- recalling scenes of Americans fleeing Saigon in helicopters from the U.S. Embassy's roof while their terrified Vietnamese co-workers were left behind to face victorious communists rolling into the city.

"It's true that the first batch (of planned evacuees) is U.S. government direct hires," said OFDA officer Getahum Reta. "But OFDA has asked all (humanitarian agencies) to give us a list of Kurdish hires who have worked under U.S. government grants ... and we're in the process of gathering those names to pass them on to higher authorities."

The final decision on whether to rescue Kurds at risk, Reta said, is in the hands of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, the National Security Council -- and the White House.

Contacted Sept. 16, State Department Iraq desk officer David Bame said that decision still had not been made, but would be "fairly soon. I've been told it's under expedited consideration at very, very high levels of the U.S. government."

InterAction, a Washington-based umbrella coalition of 150 humanitarian agencies, sent an urgent letter to the State Department and National Security Council appealing for immediate steps to "protect the (Kurdish) employees who have put their lives at risk by working for the international relief effort."

Several Kurdish employees of a Catholic relief agency in northern Iraq already have been shot in Irbil, according to InterAction sources. The United States, the letter said, is "in a position to foresee that such brutal executions will continue if immediate action is not taken."

Berta Romero, program officer of InterAction's migration and refugee affairs office, urged American citizens to contact the State Department and National Security Council directly or through their congressmen.

"They need a lot of pressure. They need to be hearing from everybody," Romero said. "They're dragging their feet on the whole issue."

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed 9/16/96 to Baptist state papers by the Richmond (overseas) bureau of Baptist Press. Outline available in SBCNet News Room.

Action Box:
how you can help

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--To appeal to the U.S. government to evacuate Kurdish workers associated with Southern Baptist relief work and other Western humanitarian efforts in northern Iraq, immediately call your U.S. congressman, senators and the White House to request their urgent intervention. Or call:

Phyllis Oakley
Assistant Secretary of State
Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration
Dept. of State, Washington, D.C.
Phone: 202-647-7360
FAX: 202-647-8162

Warren Christopher
U.S. Secretary of State
Dept. of State, Washington, D.C.
Phone: 202-647-5291
FAX: 202-647-1533

Eric Schwartz
Senior Director for Human Rights, Refugees and Humanitarian Affairs
National Security Council, Washington, D.C.
Phone: 202-456-9141
FAX: 456-9140

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**Lawsuits derail Ark. campaign
to outlaw all gambling in state** By Trennis Henderson

Baptist Press
9/16/96

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--Efforts to outlaw gambling in Arkansas may have to be put on hold until 1998, according to Larry Page, executive director of the Christian Civic Action Committee. Page and other CCAC leaders have opted against contesting a pair of lawsuits challenging the organization's proposed anti-gambling amendment.

"The announcement we are making today causes us a great deal of pain," Page told reporters during a Sept. 6 news conference. "But it is something we must do because it is the right thing to do."

Lawsuits filed by gambling proponents associated with Oaklawn Park and Southland Greyhound Park challenged the way volunteers collected signatures to place the anti-gambling measure on the November ballot.

Although Arkansas Baptists and others succeeded in gaining more than 87,000 signatures to qualify Amendment 6 for the ballot, Page acknowledged that "some of the canvassers of our petitions inadvertently and innocently failed to comply with some of the technical rules regarding the circulation of petitions." He added that "it appears there are enough of these infractions to call into question the validity of a sufficient number of our signatures to have Amendment 6 disqualified from the ballot."

Page explained typical infractions involved pastors or church members who "simply had the petition passed around various Sunday school classrooms or put on a table in the church foyer ... for people to sign" rather than personally witnessing each person sign the petition as required by law.

As a result, the CCAC's executive committee adopted a resolution calling for the secretary of state and attorney general "to enter into a consent judgment in the action challenging proposed Amendment 6 in the Supreme Court of Arkansas." The consent judgment, if accepted by the Supreme Court, will have the effect of removing the anti-gambling proposal from the Nov. 5 ballot.

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Page said financial limitations as well as "concern for the people in our network" were among factors that led to the CCAC's decision. "The investigative process carried on by the law firms hired by the challengers of Amendment 6 was a painful one for some of our people," he explained. "Our people are too valuable to us to expose them to further harassment and humiliation."

Despite the anti-gambling setback, Page said CCAC officials remained committed to stopping the expansion of gambling in the state. The group will continue to actively oppose four pro-gambling proposals on the November ballot which would legalize lotteries, casinos and video poker.

"Stopping the expansion of gambling in Arkansas remains our top priority," Page emphasized. "We've got to count the cost and cut our losses and get on with things."

"We are not going away," he insisted. "We are as committed as ever to stopping the expansion of gambling in our state."

In addition to the recent legal developments, CCAC officials have begun a series of 15 "town hall meetings" to debate the issue of legalized gambling. The first two events were held Sept. 3 in Searcy and Sept. 5 in West Memphis. Additional meetings are scheduled for mid- and late September and throughout October.

The inaugural meeting, held on the campus of Harding University in Searcy, attracted an estimated 250 participants, many of them vocally opposed to gambling in the state.

Page and Barry King, the CCAC's gambling campaign coordinator, represented anti-gambling advocates while Joyce Taylor, representing The Committee for Lottery, Charitable Bingo and Raffles, and Video Terminal Games (proposed Amendment 5), was the lone pro-gambling representative to participate in the dialogue. She sat on the stage next to three empty chairs which offered a constant reminder that proponents of the other three gambling measures had declined to attend the event.

Highlighting the benefits of Amendment 5, Taylor said the measure will be funded entirely by the private sector and will not involve casino gambling. She noted profits from the plan would be used to help fund education, police enforcement, shelters for battered women and prescription medicine for senior adults.

Page countered video gambling is as detrimental as casinos. "What is a casino?" he asked. "It is where you bet." He said video gambling would "dot the state" with betting terminals and "cause an inordinate amount of misery to the people of this state."

"I don't view Miss Taylor as my adversary but I do view her opinions as very dangerous," Page added. Describing gambling promoters as "selfish, greedy people who are trying to pull the wool over Arkansas," he encouraged concerned citizens to "stop Amendment 5 and these other greedy power grabs that are being foisted on the people of Arkansas."

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Liberian views destruction;
BWA launches special appeal

By Wendy Ryan

Baptist Press
9/16/96

WASHINGTON (BP)--A day before civil war broke loose again in Liberia -- just as the Christian world was preparing to celebrate Easter -- Liberian Baptist leader Emile D.E. Sam-Peal was preparing to welcome a team of leaders from the Baptist World Alliance to help encourage the country's pastors and bring much-needed medical and relief supplies.

That BWA visit was stopped by the April 6 outbreak of fighting that overwhelmed Liberia's capital, Monrovia, and sent Sam-Peal and his family running to live as refugees in neighboring Cote D'Ivoire (formerly Ivory Coast).

Five months later, Sam-Peal, accompanied by Eleazar Ziherambere, general secretary of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship, returned to Liberia from Sept. 3-7 without his family to find his house in Paynesville, a suburb of Monrovia, much damaged and looted, but still there.

"I praise God to be back home," Sam-Peal said, "but the brokenness is very much pronounced in structure as well as in lives. Hope is gradually waning"

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Sam-Peal described how he and Ziherambere "slept in my home on the floor" and he thanked God for the encouragement that Ziherambere, a refugee from his homeland of Rwanda, had been able to bring not only to him but to Liberian Baptists.

"We praise God that Eleazar was able to come and be an encouragement to us and let us know that our Baptist family in Africa and the world is praying for us," Sam-Peal said.

In his words of greeting to Liberian Baptists, who were called to the meeting through two radio broadcasts, Ziherambere told them he was there on behalf of the Baptist World Alliance and Baptists around the world to tell them "how much we love you, pray for you and share your burden."

"This visit gives me a firsthand experience to share with all of your brothers and sisters so we can pray accordingly," Ziherambere said.

Ziherambere told them their message to Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary, two years ago after another round of destructive fighting, that they were "helpless but not hopeless," had been shared around the world and that delegates to the April 22 All Africa Baptist Fellowship meeting in Abidjan were saddened because they could not visit Liberia.

"I know one day God will take away the tears from your eyes," Ziherambere said.

Now, an Aug. 17 cease fire seems to be holding with an interim Liberian government led by Ruth Perry. "Who knows, after all men have failed to bring peace, God can use this woman to restore it so that no one can claim peace came about because of his might or power," Ziherambere told the Baptist leaders.

As they requested help from Baptist World Aid (BWAid), Liberian leaders asked not only for help with the physical reconstruction of their buildings, but for resources to care for the hungry, sick and homeless; to equip Baptists for taking part in the peace process, disarm the fighters and demobilize the factions. The Baptist leaders also want help to prepare to be monitors/observers of the promised presidential elections scheduled next year.

In response to their request, BWAid has launched a special appeal for funds. Donations to BWAid's "Liberia Appeal" may be sent to BWAid, Baptist World Alliance, 6733 Curran Street, McLean, VA 22101-6005.

While all aid agencies, including BWAid, have not been able to do much in Liberia since this recent outbreak of fighting, BWAid has been providing funds to a children's feeding program in Danane, Cote D'Ivoire, run by exiled Liberians. In addition, funds also have been provided for the purchase of two houses in Danane used as reception centers for refugees coming across the Liberian borders.

BWAid has also given funds to the Baptist Convention of Ghana to support its Liberian refugee program. Before April 6, BWAid worked with the Liberian convention on a number of relief and development projects.

In his appeal for funds for Liberia, Paul Montacute, BWAid director, said, "We need to continue to walk the extra miles with the Liberian people who have suffered much for so long and have experienced so many false hopes in past peace processes."

During the September visit to Liberia, visits to churches and Baptist institutions were enough to make Sam-Peal and Ziherambere cry.

Accompanied by another displaced Baptist pastor who now lives in the compound of the Southern Baptist mission, and Moses Roulac, vice president of the convention, they saw the Ricks Institute, a Baptist college now occupied by peacekeeping forces.

The Lott Carey Mission high school has been looted and vandalized but the staff discussed the possibility of reopening the school.

From the school they went to the Baptist seminary, which has been almost destroyed. "The seminary is a monument of the tragic history Liberia has gone through," said Ziherambere. Now also occupied by peacekeeping troops, "we had to give much explanation (to them) for our visit to the seminary," Ziherambere said.

The duo also tried unsuccessfully to retrieve vehicles owned by the Liberian convention and the Southern Baptist mission.

"One of my biggest challenges when I arrived was to see so many check points," Ziherambere said. "They reminded me of my own country of Rwanda and the traumatic experience of the killings that took place."

While Ziherambere valued the visit to report on the needs in Liberia, he said he most valued the opportunity "to be with our beloved brother Emile Sam-Peal and together to minister to the Liberian Baptist leadership" whom he said has not lost hope in spite of this.

"They expect a miracle from God to save their country from the chaotic situation it is in now," Ziherambere said.

He said Liberian Baptists thank Baptists around the world for the help they have received as refugees in Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire, where Sam-Peal's wife and small daughter now live while he tries to minister in Liberia.

"We ask for your prayerful support," Sam-Peal said, "and we will do our best to keep you informed of the situation in Liberia as it unfolds." From a personal standpoint, he added, "Please remember my family in Cote D'Ivoire and pray that the Lord will protect and provide for them."

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**Baptist volunteers enter
new phase in Fran relief**

By Clay Renick

**Baptist Press
9/16/96**

WILMINGTON, N.C. (BP)--Jerry Lethco saw his house after Hurricane Fran left and whispered one question.

"How in the world will I ever get this cleaned up?"

Lethco is director of missions for the Wilmington Baptist Association. The Sept. 5 storm dropped trees in his yard and pulled shingles from his roof.

"Our community looked like a bomb had gone off," he said. "You think we're never going to get out of this."

According to the Associated Press, 34 people died in the hurricane, 21 from North Carolina. The state has 1,200 dump trucks hauling debris; in Raleigh alone, they will have to load up 30,000 times. Jim Hunt, governor of the state, estimated damage at more than \$4 billion.

Tony Powell brought a cleanup team in from Arrowwood Baptist Church in Chesnee, S.C. They started on the yard of Jerry Lethco, the director of missions.

"The guys just spread out all over the neighborhood," Lethco said. "You can see hope reborn."

It was the first trip for the Arrowwood team. They raised \$8,000 for equipment and have 25 on the team. That's from a church with 250 in Sunday school.

"We're country boys and all of us have used chain saws," said Powell. "It was worth it from the smiles and the tears of the people we helped."

The North Carolina Baptist Convention asked for volunteers in the cleanup. The weekend of Sept. 13-15, more than 400 came from seven states.

"Some of the people we usually count on to help were affected themselves," explained Richard Brunson, executive director for North Carolina Baptist Men. "It's real heartwarming to see people from other states who want to come and help."

The Florida Baptist Convention sent a check for \$25,000 one day after the storm hit. They followed with more than 100 volunteers in cleanup and feeding units.

"Richard Brunson and the volunteers from North Carolina have been a tremendous help to Florida," explained Cecil Seagle, state missions director for Florida Baptists. "We'll come and stay as long as they need us."

Joe Church led a feeding unit from Florida. They went to Fayetteville, N.C., and served 4,400 meals a day. Some of their volunteers rode with Red Cross units to distribute the food.

That prompted questions from victims. Some asked about cost for meals.

"Our people had a chance to tell them that God loves them and we do too," Church added. "They really couldn't understand why we would do that."

Choice Watson helped lead the effort from South Carolina. He's director of missions in the North Spartanburg Baptist Association and had more than 100 volunteers. Approximately 70 were on chain saw units. They completed 125 cleanup projects and served 25,000 meals.

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"We're ready to respond as soon as they call," Watson explained.

Georgia Baptists sent two feeding units, three cleanup teams and a communications group.

"It was great to be able to help them out," said Ray Newman, Brotherhood director for Georgia Baptists.

Kentucky Baptists sent a feeding unit and cleanup teams also. They had more than 90 volunteers and served 29,000 meals. One Kentucky unit responded to a house with beer cans thrown across the back yard. The group cleared fallen trees from the yard and talked with the man for three hours.

"When ya'll come back, bring a Bible," the owner told them.

"That makes it all worthwhile," reported Michael Klein, Kentucky's on-site coordinator.

"It's hard to see people suffer," Klein added. "Some of the homes were completely destroyed."

According to Mickey Caison of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission staff, the cleanup is entering a new phase as four kitchens close and the operation focuses on three counties along the coast.

"Hundreds of homes and yards have been cleared," said Caison, Brotherhood's national disaster relief coordinator. "We continue to encourage people to remember in prayer the victims and volunteers."

Persons interested in helping should contact North Carolina Baptist Men, which is directing all teams from their office at (919) 467-5100, ext. 335.

"There's so much to be done," Brunson said. "The cleanup and recovery is going to take a good while."

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EDITORS' NOTE: The following story updates one in Baptist Press Sept. 13 with the same headline.

Southern Baptist disaster units
continue post-Fran relief work

Baptist Press
9/16/96

By Steve Barber & Art Toalston

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 34 people.

As of Sept. 15, more than 500,000 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 received notice Sept. 15 they will not be needed for relief work from Hurricane Hortense in Puerto Rico, which was heavily damaged by that storm's 120 mph winds.

In North Carolina, Baptist volunteer crews wanting to tackle cleanup from Fran are being coordinated by Baptist Men, at (919) 467-5100. Crews are asked to notify the office to receive assignments where they are most needed.

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.

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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) in Wilmington; North Carolina (second unit) in Goldsboro, N.C., moving to Kinston Sept. 16; Alabama in Raleigh, N.C., along with a North Carolina associational unit; and Kentucky in Jacksonville, N.C.

A North Carolina associational unit had discontinued its operation in Durham, N.C., Sept. 13. A South Carolina at Wilson, N.C., the Florida unit at Fayetteville, N.C., and Georgia units in Warsaw and Burgaw, N.C., were to discontinue operations after supper Sept. 15. Another South Carolina unit, in Wilmington, was to discontinue its feeding operation Sept. 16.

The Ohio unit, based at Old Fields, W.Va., was to continue serving meals through Sept. 16 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.

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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Kelley: God lit a flame
at New Orleans Seminary

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press
9/16/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"We have no agenda but a heart to discover your agenda," prayed Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, opening the final convocation in a series focusing on the crucified life and prayer for spiritual awakening.

"Back to the Cross" was the theme for the day Sept. 12 as New Orleans Seminary hosted area ministers, lay leaders and church members.

At the request of newly elected SBC President Tom Elliff, each SBC seminary was asked to conduct a special chapel service on its campus. The first convocation was held Aug. 29 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., followed by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, Sept. 3; Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., Sept. 4; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., Sept. 10; Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo., Sept. 11; and finally New Orleans Sept. 12.

In addition to the SBC seminaries, a convocation was held Sept. 5 at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Memphis, Tenn., as well as Sept. 9 at the Home Mission Board in Alpharetta, Ga., for that SBC agency's trustees and staff and members of the SBC Implementation Task Force involved in the "Covenant for a New Century" convention-wide restructuring.

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All morning Thursday, Sept. 12, cars, vans and buses pulled onto the New Orleans campus to pray for revival to begin and spread throughout the Southern Baptist Convention and extending across the United States and to the world. Beginning at 7:30 a.m., Baptist ministers, lay leaders and church members joined NOBTS faculty, staff and students as they gathered in small groups throughout the seminary's Roland Q. Leavell Chapel, praying quietly yet fervently.

By the 10 a.m. service, more than 1,000 people were gathered in the chapel to begin the two-hour convocation. Leading in special music for worship throughout the service were Ron and Patricia Owens, music associates with SBC Home Mission Board's office of prayer and spiritual awakening.

Elliff, pastor of the First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., was the keynote speaker for the first hour; Avery Willis, author of the widely used "MasterLife" discipleship curricula and senior vice president of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, spoke during the second hour.

"The way to awakening is by the way of the cross," Elliff said. "The cross is the forgotten issue in the crucified life." Too many people today go to the cross for the wrong reason, he said; "it's become a schmaltzy thing."

"It's not a place where you just go to bleed. It's a place where you go to die.

"It's a perplexing place. ... It's not gilded; it's gory."

Elliff challenged those gathered to first go to the cross themselves, then call their family members, then their church members to the cross.

"Most of us want to skip the cross and go straight to Pentecost," he said, "but it's the cross that changes everything."

Decrying a shortage in SBC churches of preaching on belief and lordship, Elliff said, "We haven't filled our churches, but we've sure filled our rolls." In illustration, he told of a recent prayer service he held for pastors at which six longtime SBC ministers confessed their lack of belief and became true Christians.

"Look at the suitcase of your life," Elliff challenged, using imagery of airline security systems.

Just as inspectors ask questions concerning luggage items, Elliff said Christ says, "I died to bury all of this. What are you going to do with this? Who gave you this? How long have you carried this? What is this doing in here?"

But sin can't be preached to the cross, Elliff said. "It has to be personally delivered.

"What this nation needs is the cross," Willis said. Recalling his experience of ministering in Indonesia as spiritual awakening and revival occurred "during a most unlikely time, in a most unlikely place," Willis said revival can happen in the Southern Baptist Convention and in America.

"God starts revival in our hearts," he said. "So much of what we do is wood, hay and stubble. God wants to get rid of all of that. ...

"It's not until you have a real crucifixion that you can have a real resurrection," Willis said.

"God struck a match this morning," Kelley said as the service concluded and groups were still in prayer throughout the chapel, across the front steps and underneath the 20-foot cross erected on the platform area.

"Let's each walk out with a candle that has been lit by that flame," he said. "Go out and continually come back to the cross, bringing others with you."

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NOBTS campus thankful
for call to cross

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press
9/16/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Following the Sept. 12 convocation at New Orleans Baptist Theological emphasizing the crucified life and prayer for spiritual awakening, a mood that "God is up to something," as seminary President Chuck Kelley described it, reverberated across the campus.

Clusters of students were seen praying together in various portions of the campus before the school day, between classes, in the afternoons and evenings.

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"People are taking this seriously," said Kenny Annamalai, NOBTS staff member and student from Singapore preparing to enter the doctoral program.

"We weren't looking for any type of outward demonstration or anything that anyone can glory in," said Avery Willis, one of two keynote speakers Sept. 12. "We simply wanted people to meet God, to claim again what Christ did in their hearts when they got saved so they can now be his servants."

"The convocation was one of those rare experiences," Kelley said, "when Southern Baptists of every sort -- seminary students, faculty members, denominational workers, church staff members, laypeople -- all gathered together with a simple agenda: to worship Jesus and lift high his cross.

"I came away thinking if I could give just one message to Southern Baptists it would be this: Let's embrace the cross in the way we live and let's lift high the cross to everyone we know.

"More than ever before, I believe God is up to something in Southern Baptist life -- and that something is revival," Kelley said.

"God came near," said Mark Foley, vice president for student development.

"This convocation was without doubt a mountaintop experience here at NOBTS," said Chuck Register, director of the seminary's Leavell Center for Evangelism and Church Growth and coordinator of the day's events. "The call back to the cross is a call every Southern Baptist needs to hear, for it's at the foot of the cross that we come clean before God. When we're clean before God, revival has occurred."

"The chapel service was overwhelming and very much needed," said Deanna Corbett, a student from Gulf Shores, Ala., in the master of divinity degree program. "My prayer is that what began yesterday will continue and that we will have the courage to act on what God did with us as individuals."

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Historical Society begins transition, independence

By Kim Medley

Baptist Press
9/16/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Historical Society's transition from the Southern Baptist Historical Commission to Oklahoma Baptist University is under way. The SBHS, which has served history needs of Southern Baptists and their churches since 1938, selected OBU as its new home during its April 1996 meeting.

The offices of the Historical Commission will be closed effective June 17, 1997. Commission employees will receive a severance package if they remain with the commission through April 30, 1997. Effective July 1, 1997, the positions will be terminated.

Beginning in July 1997, SBHS officers have determined that the staff of the society will consist of director Slayden Yarbrough, an assistant director and student help supplied by OBU. Plans call for Kim Medley, Historical Commission director of communications, to assume the position of assistant director beginning in July 1997.

Yarbrough, interim executive director of the Historical Commission since June 1995, returned to Oklahoma Baptist University's campus Aug. 17 where he will not only continue to teach religion and Baptist history courses but also make preparations for relocating the program of the Southern Baptist Historical Society from the Historical Commission offices in Nashville, Tenn., to the Shawnee, Okla., campus.

Beginning in July 1997, the offices of the SBHS will be located in OBU's Mabee Learning Center in the area formerly occupied by the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Commission. The state's historical offices were moved from the campus to the Oklahoma Baptist Convention's Baptist Building in 1995.

In June of this year, messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting in New Orleans voted to approve a revision of the convention's Bylaw 15, the last step in a restructuring of the Southern Baptist Convention, which includes dissolution of the Historical Commission.

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Commission staff and trustees are still working with the SBHS during the transition period. Messengers to the SBC approved a nine-month budget for the Historical Commission to carry the agency through June 1997 and the transfer of various functions of the commission to the Southern Baptist Historical Society.

What does this mean for employees of the Historical Commission? The Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, formerly operated by the commission, will now be administered by the Council of Seminary Presidents, with Bill Summers as SBHLA director. At this time, Summers is the only commission employee who has been named to continue employment although a decision on other SBHLA employees is expected to be announced by the Council of Seminary Presidents during the September 1996 meeting of the SBC Executive Committee.

Albert Wardin, SBHS treasurer and director emeritus, reported the organization's endowment fund is growing. Wardin and Yarbrough have set a goal of \$150,000 for the SBHS endowment fund by July 1, 1997. As of May 1, 1996, the society had an endowment fund of approximately \$90,000. As of Aug. 30, the endowment fund has grown an additional \$7,850 for a total of \$97,850. Several memorial contributions to the SBHS have already been made following the death of the Historical Commission's longtime executive, Lynn May.

Six state Baptist conventions have given financial support to the SBHS: Texas, Arizona, Florida, Mississippi, Hawaii and Maryland/Delaware. Other states are in the process of considering annual support of the SBHS as well as a number of associations, churches and individuals.

To receive an information sheet on the Southern Baptist Historical Society, including special incentives for churches to join the SBHS, call 1-800-966-2278.

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Baptist colleges registering
support of historical society

By Kim Medley

Baptist Press
9/16/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A growing group of Baptist universities, colleges and individuals are giving support to the Southern Baptist Historical Society. Pledges of financial support to the society continue even though some scholars liken both today and the years to come as a "post-denominational age."

If denominations are losing ground, why are Baptists supporting an organization intent on preserving their denominational heritage?

Bill Leonard, dean of Wake Forest University's divinity school and former professor of history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said he disagrees with the idea that denominations are on the decline, saying denominations are simply going through a period of downsizing. He said he also believes the "post-denominational" label is wrong. "I don't like to use the term 'post-denominational,'" he stated. "The door to Christian ministry is still the denomination."

"We need such organizations as the Southern Baptist Historical Society because there is no such thing as generic Christianity," Leonard said. "As the old denominational mechanisms change, we have to be more intentional than ever before about our identity. We need the SBHS like we need our family tree."

Slayden Yarbrough, SBHS director, agreed. "In a world of rapid denominational change, the Southern Baptist Historical Society will continue to provide resources for telling the stories of our faith. Both the society and these stories have renewed relevance for Baptist churches, individuals and institutions addressing the impact of a new century."

First organized as an independent organization in 1938 to prepare for the Southern Baptist Convention's centennial anniversary, the SBHS became an auxiliary of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission in 1953. The society kept its auxiliary status until last year when the SBHS obtained a charter returning the organization to its former independent status, a move necessitated by approval of the "Covenant for a New Century," a convention-wide downsizing plan approved by messengers to the SBC annual meeting in Atlanta.

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"The Southern Baptist Historical Society had no recourse but to restate its charter removing it as an auxiliary of an agency that was being dissolved," stated Albert Wardin, president of the SBHS from 1994-95. "The commission and the society had worked together cooperatively for more than 40 years. The Southern Baptist Historical Society will now continue that heritage in the years ahead."

With the loss of financial support from the Southern Baptist Historical Commission, SBHS officers approached several Baptist colleges and universities for any support they could give to the continued preservation and communication of Baptist history. Yarbrough said he has been very encouraged by the schools' response.

Dallas Baptist University was the first institution to pledge annual support to the SBHS. Gary Cook, DBU president, said he is pleased that the Southern Baptist Historical Society will continue the work formerly done by the SBC Historical Commission. "I believe Baptists need the Southern Baptist Historical Society," Cook said, "and if such an organization (as the SBHS) was not in place, we would need to create one. We must know and understand our past in order to make wise decisions today and in the future."

Other institutions supporting the SBHS share DBU's commitment. "We are happy to be a part," said H. Douglas Lee, president of Stetson University, another school providing financial assistance to the SBHS and home of the Florida Baptist Historical Society. "... we believe that the Southern Baptist Historical Society has preserved its integrity and demonstrated fairness in dealing with the diversity of traditions that are a part of Baptist history."

A Georgia Baptist school also has pledged its support to the organization. "Shorter College is glad to be identified with Baptist heritage," noted Larry McSwain, Shorter College president. "We have chosen to (support) the effort to continue the SBHS . . . (We) believe it is important for Baptist people to maintain a repository of their collective memory and the historical events which have shaped their common life."

Baptist colleges and universities pledging annual support to the Southern Baptist Historical Society also include Baylor University, Hardin-Simmons University, Campbell University, Mississippi College, Carson-Newman College, Oklahoma Baptist University and Ouachita Baptist University. Other institutions have also made or are considering commitments to supporting the SBHS annually.

By July 1, 1997, SBHS officers hope other Baptist institutions and individuals will have also contributed to the society and that the organization's endowment fund will have reached its goal of \$150,000, an amount which represents only 30 percent of the annual budget formerly given to the Historical Commission, the smallest agency of the Southern Baptist Convention. As of Aug. 30, the fund had reached \$97,850.

"... our Baptist heritage should be both understood and published to our constituency," stated H.K. Neely, dean of Hardin-Simmons' Logsdon School of Theology. "We feel that the Southern Baptist Historical Society is the proper agency to do those tasks. Therefore, we ... applaud their efforts both by our encouragement and our finances."

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