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Prayer support urged
for chaplains in Bosnia

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
1/22/96

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--Two Southern Baptist chaplains serving with American troops in Bosnia need prayer support from their fellow Baptists, chaplaincy leaders said.

Jeff Bruns and David Campbell, who each served in Europe, were reassigned to Bosnia. In addition, three Southern Baptist stateside chaplains were transferred to Germany to take the places of those moved from Germany to Bosnia.

"I pray for their strength, sensitivity and faithfulness as they minister to their troops where they are," said Lew Burnett, recently retired Home Mission Board director of military chaplaincy.

"Pray not so much for the chaplain's safety as for his ministry to military personnel, from the commander to the private," said Pat Davis, retired Army chaplain and Home Mission Board interim director of military chaplaincy.

Tennessee Air National Guard chaplain Larry Kirk agreed that chaplains would probably prefer more prayer for their ministry than their safety. Kirk also is director of missions for Tennessee Baptists.

In 1992 Kirk spent 10 days in Germany ministering to troops flying humanitarian aid into Bosnia. Those troops were on Bosnian ground only a few minutes to deliver supplies. Troops there today are in greater danger, he said, then added, "It's a golden opportunity for chaplains to give witness to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Davis said family separation is a great source of stress for soldiers. Often children do not understand why their parents have to be away from home.

Kirk suggested U.S. churches should minister to soldiers' families. Experienced military families may be used to separation, but that doesn't mean they're happy about it, he said.

**Air Force Reserves
seeks more chaplains**

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--The Air Force Reserves needs 25 to 40 new chaplains following many unexpected retirements, said Pat Davis, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board interim director of military chaplaincy.

The number of days reserve chaplains serve per month is negotiable, Davis said. For information on becoming an Air Force Reserve chaplain, contact the HMB chaplaincy division at 4200 North Point Parkway, Alpharetta, GA 30202-4174 or (770) 410-6490.

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EDITORS' NOTE: The following four stories can be used in connection with Race Relations Sunday in the Southern Baptist Convention, Feb. 11.

Recent books prompt thinking
on racial reconciliation

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists have observed the second Sunday in February as Race Relations Sunday since 1965.

But this year's observance marks the first time the day will be observed since the passage of the historic "Resolution on Racial Reconciliation" at the Southern Baptist Convention sesquicentennial last summer in Atlanta.

The 18-paragraph SBC resolution stated, "... we apologize to all African-Americans for condoning and/or perpetuating individual and systemic racism in our lifetime; and we genuinely repent of racism of which we have been guilty, whether consciously or unconsciously."

The resolution described racism as "deplorable sin" and stated, "... we lament and repudiate historic acts of evil such as slavery from which we continue to reap a bitter harvest."

Gary L. Frost, the SBC's second vice president, accepted the convention's apology "on behalf of all those African American believers in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who are committed to be obedient to the Word of God and long to see healing and unity in the body of Christ."

Frost is the author of a special bulletin insert prepared by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission for this year's Race Relations Sunday.

"A refreshing wind is blowing across our land as believers in Jesus Christ surmount cultural differences," Frost writes. "... Believers of various nationalities and ethnic backgrounds are unifying in Christian oneness."

Akin to Frost's observation, several recent books on the topic of racial reconciliation give Christians a range of pointers on becoming informed and involved in the work of racial healing.

A survey by Baptist Press of the evangelical book market found these volumes:

-- "Resurrecting Hope: Powerful Stories of How God Is Moving to Reach Our Inner Cities," by John Perkins with Jo Kadlecek (Ventura, Calif: Regal Books, 1995). "Can the contemporary Church make the current welfare system obsolete? Yes, and the (10) churches profiled in this book are reaching out and doing it," writes John Perkins, founder of a broad range of Christian ministries and publisher of Urban Family magazine. Ten chapters detail the lives of churches of various denominations across the United States that are "applying healing ointment to the myriad wounds of our cities," Perkins wrote.

A reviewer in Moody Monthly said the book "opens the reader to the reality of a God who can work in the most difficult situations. ... It is about congregations willing to take responsibility for the economic, educational and spiritual welfare of individuals and families in their neighborhoods."

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-- "He's My Brother: A Black Activist and a Former Klansman Tell Their Stories," by John Perkins and Thomas A. Tarrant III (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Chosen Books, 1994). "I believe it is an awesome display of God's power that Tom Tarrant and I are such good friends. It is ironic to realize that he and I were both active in the civil rights battles taking place in the American South, ... but on diametrically opposed sides," Perkins wrote of Tarrant, a one-time Klansman who was convicted of terrorist-type crimes.

"It is must reading for anyone who's serious about Christianity and racial reconciliation," wrote a Prism magazine reviewer about the book, which contains alternating, first-hand accounts from Tarrant and Perkins about their lives as activists and as Christians.

-- "Let's Get to Know Each Other: What White Christians Should Know About Black Christians," by Tony Evans (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995). Evans provides a thorough Bible study on black people in Scripture and familiarizes readers with the history and contemporary state of African American churches. He emphasizes the biblical mandate for racial unity and makes suggestions on how readers can bring this about.

According to a reviewer in Moody Monthly, the book "calls all Christians, black and white, to biblical unity as the only grounds for reconciliation. ... (Evans) is zealous for the cause of unity among black and white Christians."

-- "We Stand Together: Reconciling Men of Different Color," by Rodney L. Cooper (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995). The book includes chapters by men of various ethnic backgrounds, including white, black, Hispanic, American Indian and Asian. Three of the writers, including Cooper, are officials with Promise Keepers.

The book states a "war" is under way between American men of various ethnic backgrounds and Christian men have a responsibility to work for reconciliation. The book offers insight into the general characteristics of particular American ethnic groups and makes specific suggestions on how to build good relationships with men of a different ethnicity than oneself.

-- "Let Justice Roll Down," by John Perkins (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1976). Perkins describes the difficulties of his own infancy and childhood in Mississippi, where he grew up in a sharecropping family long before the days of the modern civil-rights movement. The book is a vivid, first-hand account of his pilgrimage to adulthood in the early 1970s, when he fought to defend himself and others against a judicial system that was biased against African Americans.

"The story of John Perkins reveals the transforming and revolutionary power of Jesus Christ," wrote U.S. Senator Mark O. Hatfield in the book's foreword. "This book ... is a gripping portrayal of what happens when faith in Christ thrusts a person into the midst of the struggle against racism, oppression and injustice."

-- "Healing America's Wounds: Hope at Last -- An Amazing Report of God Breaking Through," by John Dawson (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1994). The book gives numerous moving stories of reconciliation between people of different races. Some of the stories are in group settings where a public apology for prejudice is offered to a large audience; other stories are about interpersonal repentance. Dawson provides extensive historical and biblical studies on the causes and cures for racism.

Bert Warden, a reviewer in Alliance Life, wrote that the book is "written on the basis of God's love and the shed blood of Christ that promotes confession and repentance for wrongs done. (It) is certainly to be welcomed."

-- "More Than Equals: Racial Healing for the Sake of the Gospel," by Spencer Perkins and Chris Rice (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993). Perkins, an African American, is the son of author John Perkins. Rice, who is white, joined an interracial church in Mississippi, where he met Spencer Perkins. Through sharing personal stories, Perkins and Rice lay out a three-fold strategy for Christians who want racial reconciliation: 1) admit: Christians must acknowledge that racial discrimination continues and that all races struggle with unhealthy attitudes; 2) submit: Christians should be willing to submit both to God and to each other, "white to black and black to white;" 3) commit: Christians should forge intentional friendships with believers of a different race, not simply based on affection or compatibility but "for the benefit of the kingdom."

According to an article by Edward Gilbreath in Christianity Today, "Rice and Perkins exhibit a relationship that in itself proves the chasm between white and black Christians need not remain." Gilbreath called their book "highly significant" for evangelicals.

-- "Breaking Down Walls: A Model for Reconciliation in an Age of Racial Strife," by Raleigh Washington and Glen Kehrein (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993). The book describes the efforts of a black Christian (Washington) and a white Christian (Kehrein) who developed a model of racial cooperation and reconciliation in inner-city Chicago -- namely Circle Urban Ministries and Rock of Our Salvation Church, which they describe as "a wholistic ministry that unites faith and works." Much of the book is devoted to describing eight principles that helped them in their efforts: commitment to relationship, intentionality, sincerity, sensitivity, interdependence, sacrifice, empowerment and call.

"The book ... takes a closer look at the principles ... for cross-cultural fellowship. Their many examples of time-tested strategies help bring the book's eight principles of reconciliation to life," wrote Edward Gilbreath in Christianity Today.

-- "The Coming Race Wars? A Cry for Reconciliation," by William Pannell (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1993). Pannell's book has been controversial and, at times, largely rejected by some evangelical thinkers. The author is critical of conservative politics in America, especially in the Republican Party, as destructive to the well-being of blacks and to the goal of racial reconciliation. Pannell criticizes such politicians as Dan Quayle, George Bush and Ronald Reagan, and he accuses Christianity Today and Moody Monthly of catering almost exclusively to whites. The oppression of blacks, according to Pannell, raises the likely specter of widespread race wars in America's future.

Tom Snyder, a reviewer in Answer in Action Journal, wrote, "Pannell's book is filled with moral hypocrisy. ... Not only are Pannell's arguments unbiblical and not truly Christian, they are also historically inaccurate and factually incorrect."

A different view of Pannell's ideas came from reviewer Mark R. Gornik, who wrote in the Westminster Theological Journal that the book "should be required reading for all evangelical leaders. ... If we fail to heed Pannell's call to repentance and reconciliation, the outcome may very well be the removal, in future editions, of the question mark in the book's title."

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EDITORS' NOTE: The following book excerpt is from "Resurrecting Hope: Powerful Stories of How God Is Moving to Reach Our Inner Cities," by John Perkins with Jo Kadlecek.

FIRST-PERSON

Solution to urban crisis
is church's healing message

By John Perkins

Baptist Press
1/22/96

PASADENA, Calif. (BP)--Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?

Thus cried the prophet Jeremiah ... Jeremiah's grief was for his people who were caught in the calamity and ruin of their city; his despair was for the horrible conditions that had taken hold of their land.

In many ways, the plight of Jeremiah's people is much like the plight of our own in America's inner cities today. Problems abound in every city, on every street corner. Children are without fathers, young girls are having babies, mothers are strung out on crack and men can't find decent jobs to support their families. We are all concerned with the waste and destruction of the conditions in the urban community, conditions that are dragging down the entire nation. Many people blame the problems on those who live in the inner cities, yet the bureaucratic and impersonal government is also responsible because it rewards the girls who have babies and the men who leave home.

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We also need to recognize that the Church and the way it has served the poor has often compounded the problem in the cities. Because many Christians have removed themselves from these problems, they have not been available to apply any biblical solutions.

I believe the Church's retreat to suburbia and its obsession with church growth, combined with the government's superficial "solutions," have helped to make the problem of our cities worse. When certain white congregations, along with middle-class blacks, moved away from the urban communities to the suburbs to build comfortable lifestyles and homogeneous congregations, they kept their sense of superiority, disengaging themselves from the issues of the poor and the urban community.

But the problems don't end there. Of course, I believe the sins of the people in the cities are also a factor. If we as Christians see ourselves as the salt of the earth, however, something has to change. Yes, the problem lies in the sinful nature of humans; the lack of the solution lies with the Church because it has too often withdrawn from its mandate to minister.

Like Jeremiah, however, the miseries of our country ought to become the grief of our souls. They ought to show us that cures are available only if God's people will begin to act again as the Church was intended to act in providing holistic solutions to the problems at hand. And like Jeremiah, we ought to know that God is ready to apply the healing ointments to our cities in crisis if we are willing to submit to His methods.

And God is bringing restoration through simple, human lives, through people who are willing to sacrifice for the sake of the gospel. These people remind us that we as Christians already have the solutions to the urban crisis; Christ is in us as the hope of glory, living out his life through us. Therefore, we can no longer simply pray for God to do something in our cities; we must pray for God to energize us to do something. We must be available to His Spirit to do His work in the land.

The unique time in which we live is ripe with opportunities for Christians to act as restorative agents. Of course, no one would argue that we live in a time when our country is seeking answers, solutions and change for our cities. Like Jeremiah, many are asking if there is a balm strong enough to heal the ghettos. Sadly, many would say there is no hope, that the cities are beyond repair and that the Church is too removed.

As we look at our country, we see the quick rejection of the liberal democratic fix for society, and conservatives not having many new solutions for change. Thus, the Church is in a prime place to influence the country. I believe this is just the opportunity we need to bring the healing message of the gospel to society, to be the Church again.

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"Resurrecting Hope: Powerful Stories of How God Is Moving to Reach Our Inner Cities," was published in 1995 by Regal Books, Ventura, CA 93003. Used by permission. Perkins is founder and publisher of Urban Family magazine; founder and chairman of the Christian Community Development Association; founder and president, John M. Perkins Foundation for Reconciliation and Development, Pasadena, Calif.; and founder and president emeritus, Voice of Calvary Ministries, based initially in Mendenhall, Miss., now in Jackson, initiating a number of community development efforts in the state. Kadlec is a free-lance writer who is relocating to New York City.

2 congregations become 1,
transcending racial lines

Baptist Press
1/22/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Reports of racial dissent and turmoil are common these days -- and that makes the story about the union of a pair of Baptist churches in New Orleans even more uncommon.

The tale begins in 1982. Marshall Truehill is working to start a new mission in a public housing development in New Orleans. He decides to approach Central Baptist Church about sponsoring the work.

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That Truehill even could approach the church with the request is interesting enough. Central Baptist Church was established in 1907 with 13 charter members. From that point on, it had what longtime member H.B. Wheeler describes as "a long and interesting history" in its New Orleans location.

However, the church -- located on Jefferson Davis Parkway, with a statue of the Confederate leader still overlooking traffic out front -- eventually began to experience decline, finding itself caught in a trap many inner-city churches encounter. Started as a white Southern Baptist church, Central now found itself in a transitional neighborhood.

The new surroundings necessitated change, but change was resisted by some. In 1981, however, interim pastor and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary professor Terry Young led the church to adopt an open-door policy regarding membership and to commit itself to reach out to people of all races.

It was a crossroads moment, Wheeler noted in a letter to the Baptist Message, newsjournal of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

It also set the stage for Truehill to approach the church a year later with his request for sponsorship.

By this time, Joe Clement was pastor at Central. He followed Young's path and led Central members to sponsor Faith in Action. "From that time on, the two churches enjoyed a special relationship," Wheeler recounted.

However, Central still was experiencing changes. "Central was becoming what is known as an old downtown church, with a declining, senior membership and an inability to attract members of other races, especially blacks," Wheeler said.

Open policy or not, Central Baptist Church was beginning to die.

By the fall of 1993, Sam Hamilton had arrived as pastor at Central. He proposed a daring idea to the church, suggesting that Central seek out a black church that needed a place to meet and ask them to become part of the Central membership in order to help reach the surrounding community.

Once again, Central church members embraced the idea -- and the search began.

Ironically, Faith in Action had faced changes that were forcing it to set off in search of a new home at the same time.

In November 1993, leaders of both congregations began to meet together. "The final goal was to merge into one church with a black and white membership and black and white co-pastors sharing responsibilities and resources," Wheeler noted.

Within weeks, the two congregations began to share worship services. "We worshiped together, prayed together and agonized together," Wheeler said.

"However, sometimes the idea of merging the two congregations seemed far away.

"But our leadership persevered and the Holy Spirit prevailed."

In the meanwhile, Hamilton moved to another pastorate -- and Central called New Orleans Seminary professor Walter Brown as interim pastor. Brown immediately began to urge formalization of the merger.

"After much prayer, soul-searching and coming to grips with the doubts and fears of each congregation about the other, our people moved together," Wheeler said.

On Feb. 12, 1995, members of the congregations took the final step, voting to officially merge their churches.

The merger accomplishes several things, Wheeler said. It preserves the heritage of Central Baptist Church in the Mid-City area of New Orleans. It also joins two churches unselfishly together "in order to minister adequately to a changing population in the Mid-City area, intentionally building a Christian fellowship that ministers to -- and is made up of -- people of all races, cultures, social states and economic levels," Wheeler said.

As one would expect, the overriding focus of the church is on bringing people to faith in Christ, teaching them how to live for Christ, ministering to and with them for Christ and worshiping together to Christ, Wheeler said.

That focus is reflected in the new name of the church as well. On March 26, after a process of consideration, Faith in Action and Central members voted to join under one name -- First United Baptist Church.

The name is a fitting one for a church committed to reaching out to all people as a "demonstration of the reality and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ," Wheeler said.

Indeed, in announcing the action to a subsequent meeting of the Baptist Association of Greater New Orleans, Wheeler issued a truly gospel invitation to those in attendance. "We invite you to visit us," he said, "and observe people of different races, who love and respect one another (and share) the objective of reaching all people for Christ."

"People keep asking me: 'Who's gonna be the boss?'" said Central's new white co-pastor, Rod Kirby. "I tell them: 'The Lord, Jesus Christ.' Marshall and I are just shepherds."

"If we can cross those (racial) lines, I think we bear stronger witness," Truehill said. "I'm trying to get everyone, black and white, to see our responsibility for the city at large."

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Based on stories in the Baptist Message and the Times-Post News Service.

Blood brothers: Stranger helps
sickle cell patient survive

By Clay Harden

Baptist Press
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PEARL, Miss. (BP)--When Clarence Jermaine Carter met Robin Nichols for the first time, Carter was nudged to give a hug to his new acquaintance.

Carter, a slender and shy teen-ager, went from an expression of relief at Nichols' verbal respite -- "He doesn't look like the hugging kind," Nichols said -- to doubling over in laughter when someone quipped, "You can't say he is not your type."

Carter, a 19-year-old African American, and Nichols, a 46-year-old white, are near perfect matches.

That is why Nichols, an associate in the Mississippi Baptist Convention's church-minister relations and annuity department, has donated his blood exclusively to Carter for almost 10 years.

Carter has suffered with sickle cell anemia since he was 3 years old. It is a disease which keeps his red blood cells from carrying the needed oxygen and nutrients his body needs.

He had a stroke at age 3 which paralyzed his left side. And without periodic transfusions, Carter could suffer a fatal stroke.

The two met for the first time at the new Mississippi Blood Service drawing station at Cross Park Plaza shopping center in Pearl, Miss., hours after the facility celebrated its grand opening last November.

"I don't have the words to say how it feels to meet (Nichols)," said Carter, of Rolling Fork, Miss., who has come far enough in his rehabilitation from the stroke as a toddler to perform all normal body functions. "I didn't know about him, that one man was giving me all this blood. I didn't know who he was until today."

Nichols, of Brandon, Miss., knew only he was giving the blood to Clarence Carter, a teen who lived out of the Jackson metro area. He has to give Carter's name every time he donates blood.

"I had thought it would be nice to be able to meet the young man," Nichols said. "It gives me a great sense of satisfaction to know I can make a contribution to greatly improve the quality of life for another human being."

Carter knows when it is time for a transfusion. His body begins to ache all over.

"I soak in a hot tub, take plenty of Tylenol and go to sleep," said Carter, slender and soft spoken. "Then I get a transfusion the next day."

Carter has had more than 33 gallons of transfusions over 16 years with a significant amount from Nichols.

He began receiving Nichols' blood at age 10 when it became necessary to receive blood which was a close match.

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Carter developed a blood group factor shared by only 2 percent of the population, negative to the "little e" factor.

"As Clarence got older, his body developed these antibodies so it became imperative he have an exact match," said Ben Woods, administrator of corporate services and human resources for Mississippi Blood Services. "It is hard to find because so few people have those traits, and many of those who do are African Americans who may have sickle cell disease or sickle cell traits.

"One in 400 blacks has sickle cell, and one in 10 has the trait. That is why we are constantly trying to find black donors."

As Carter gets older and grows larger, he needs more blood. He also receives blood from a handful of other donors, but none has donated as long as Nichols.

The blood from other donors is frozen first, but when he gets blood from Nichols, it is fresh out of the refrigerator.

"Clarence is most accustomed to Mr. Nichols' blood, so we give it to him fresh," said Glendora Williams, MBS manager of donor services. "It does him the most good."

Carter, who once needed monthly transfusions, can go two months without new blood.

"I feel pretty good most of the time," Carter said. "I just have to stay out of the sun and take liquids. I can't get dehydrated."

Nichols punctuated his first face-to-face meeting with his old friend by giving blood as Carter watched.

The beaming smile Carter gave Nichols as he left for home was thanks enough.

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Harden is a reporter for The Clarion-Ledger, Jackson, Miss.

Southern Baptist presence felt
at National Affairs Briefing By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
1/22/96

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--It was a mix of God and country, religion and politics. And prominent Southern Baptists were key figures at the National Affairs Briefing, Jan. 19-20. Held at The Pyramid in Memphis, Tenn., the NAB was sponsored by The Roundtable, a nationwide group of conservative organizations, churches and individuals.

Its purpose: "... to set the agenda for the presidential candidates to discuss the social issues and spiritual values that are shaping our country."

Ed McAteer, a member of Bellevue Baptist Church in nearby Cordova, chaired the two-day session. A similar NAB in 1980 was widely credited with helping Ronald Reagan become president. Another NAB was held in Dallas in 1992.

Every candidate for the 1996 election was invited to the Memphis sessions, although President Bill Clinton, himself a Southern Baptist, and three top Republicans, former Tennessee governor Lamar Alexander, Forbes magazine CEO Steve Forbes, and the front-runner U.S. Senator Bob Dole, did not attend. Still, there were plenty of candidates and lots of talk about Christian activism.

Candidates speaking to the conservative evangelical audience were commentator Pat Buchanan, Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas, Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana, former diplomat Alan Keyes of Maryland, Congressman Robert Dornan of California, businessman Charles Collins of Florida and Harry Browne, the Libertarian Party's candidate from Franklin, Tenn.

But the presidential candidates had to share the podium with a who's who list of conservative activists and religious speakers, including Ralph Reed of the Christian Coalition, Beverly LaHaye of Concerned Women for America, Don Wildmon of the American Family Association and Howard Phillips of the Conservative Caucus.

The meeting included an interesting mix of politics and conservative social activism. But a prominent Southern Baptist pastor, in a sermon, gave participants a "word from the Lord."

Adrian Rogers, three-time president of the SBC and pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, said America is number one -- in homosexuality, radical feminism, divorce, destructive family issues, abortion, the occult, new age religion, crime and violence.

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"The nation born in 1776 must be born again or it will join the graveyard of nations," Rogers said. No nation had such a Christian beginning dependent on God, Rogers added; "... our government was born in the fires of revival."

Giving politicians a warning, Rogers said, "America today is more concerned about a balanced budget than righteousness. We need to get right with God.

"Government cannot make us good, only God can do it," Rogers said.

Speaking from 2 Chronicles 7:14, Rogers said there is hope for America -- "absolutely."

It will come as God's people seek renewal through repentance and confession of sin and return to God, Rogers said.

Richard Land, president of the SBC Christian Life Commission, also in a sermon, used Ephesians 5 to call America to "walk circumspectly." Land said it is a critical moment in U.S. history; there is a need for a "profound moral and spiritual renewal."

"The problem in America begins with us," Land said. "We should be a moral disinfectant to our society."

However, Land said, only the "light of the gospel" can change hearts.

Later in the session, Land introduced Republican presidential hopeful, and fellow Texan, Phil Gramm. Land said he had known Gramm from his earlier days in Texas but told the media he was not endorsing the candidate.

"As I said from the podium, as president of the CLC I do not endorse candidates for political office. I was asked by the Gramm staff to introduce the senator at the NAB and I agreed to do so with the understanding that I had not, nor would I, endorse a candidate for president.

"I introduced Sen. Gramm from the perspective of my personal knowledge of, and experience with, him over 15 years. He was my senator (when I lived in Texas) and we even discussed his nominating me to service in the Reagan administration in 1984. My experience of Sen. Gramm is that of a man who is pro-life and pro-family and a senator who has been sympathetic to the consensus the Christian Life Commission has shared with him on moral, social and public policy issues. He has always kept his word when he has given it and has always dealt squarely with us. I introduced him to the NAB as a man who I know from personal experience has stood for the pro-life and pro-family values we share. It is for the people themselves to determine whether the other candidates do so as well and it is for the people themselves to decide who deserves their support."

Other prominent Southern Baptists on the program included Georgia pastors James Merritt of Snellville and Richard Lee of Atlanta.

Although organizers had hoped to draw 10,000 for the NAB, estimates ranged from 5,000 to 7,500 for the meeting. McAteer said another NAB would be held this year, probably in August in San Diego, Calif.

A colorful sight at the meeting was the group of 1,300 citizens from Pontotoc County, Miss. Arriving in a 200-plus-car caravan, they had driven the 90 miles north to Memphis to enthusiastically display their posters, banners and support prayer in public schools. A recent lawsuit filed in the county has resulted in banning morning devotionals over the school intercom.

The county made national headlines in the school prayer issue when a mother of five children in the school system filed suit in federal court to stop the morning devotionals and elective courses in biblical history. With legal assistance from the American Civil Liberties Union and People for the American Way, she contends both practices are unconstitutional. Her lawsuit is expected to go to trial in March.

Most of the presidential candidates at the meeting appeared to support the religious conservative agenda.

Buchanan sounded his familiar theme of "America First" on economic issues and made numerous references to God and country during his speech.

Since the 1992 Republican National Convention, Buchanan said he has consistently urged voters to join him in a cultural war to achieve a more conservative social and economic order.

Phillips said the founding fathers understood God's law is supreme. Today, the government insists on being the final authority, he said. "The law of God is fixed for all generations."

Keyes continued his attack on abortion, calling it a "self-destructive freedom."

Gramm said he was the candidate who could deliver the kind of change Christian conservatives seek.

"If we're going to change America, we're going to have to have someone who is tough and committed," Gramm said.

And several speakers emphasized Christian conservatives were not going to shy away from the political arena:

"You had darn well better get used to Christian conservatives being in the political arena because we're here to stay and we're not going to go away," said Ralph Reed of the Christian Coalition.

"To say that we can't be involved in public policy and bring our conviction into the public arena is discrimination against religion. It is censorship of religion," said Land.

Jerry Falwell, pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Va., and a founder of the Moral Majority, said, "Our problem is not numbers, it's motivation."

Donald Wildmon had a word for the liberals.

"It's not that liberals are bad people. I really believe they want mankind to see the benefits we want to see. It's just that their philosophy corrupts, ruins, destroys the very thing they are trying to create."

The two-day session had its protesters, and police had a street in front of The Pyramid blocked off as a caution. About 100 protesters, with signs and posters, were seen the first day but had dwindled to a handful on the second day.

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Louisiana College puts
central Louisiana on-line

By K. Michele Trice

Baptist Press
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ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)--People from around the world can learn about central Louisiana via a "Virtual Community" home page on the Internet provided by Louisiana College.

The Virtual Community is the first and most complete guide to all of the Alexandria/Pineville area's on-line information, according to Bart Marable, LC Online instructor and primary designer of the college's World Wide Web site and Virtual Community.

Provided as a public service by the Baptist-affiliated college, the Virtual Community can be accessed 24 hours a day, said Marable.

"Anyone with computer access to the Internet can access the Virtual Community from any location in the world," Marable said. Since its creation last June, the site has had thousands of visitors, including computer users in the United Kingdom, Japan, Canada, France, Germany and numerous other countries.

The home page is designed around central Louisiana landmarks such as Kent House, the Levee Park, St. Francis Xavier Cathedral and homes in the garden district. Each of the images opens new pages of information about the region and the resources it has to offer.

Business, education, government, civic and religious organizations, current events and neighborhood information are included. Any Internet site which has information related to the central Louisiana area may be listed in the Virtual Community at no charge. The design and content are provided both by LC and by Interface Web Site Designers, a local Internet publisher.

"The Virtual Community serves as a public directory to all Internet sites in the central Louisiana region," Marable said. "This is one way Louisiana College is giving something back to her host community."

As a part of that public service, Louisiana College is now providing many nonprofit and community interest organizations with the ability to have a presence on the Internet with a World Wide Web location without cost.

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"This means that organizations which otherwise may be unable to have a part in the Virtual Community will be able to provide information about their organization to Internet users and community members," Marable said.

Some of these sites will be designed as special projects by Louisiana College and LC Online students enrolled in this spring's "Global Communications" course.

There are several ways to find the Virtual Community on the World Wide Web. First, an Internet user can access it by entering the World Wide Web address: <http://cenla.lacollege.edu>.

The Virtual Community is also listed on many frequently consulted Internet directories, such as Yahoo!, City.Net and City Link, which guide Internet users to community-related sites.

Internet users also may find the Virtual Community by performing Internet searches, using key words such as "Alexandria," "Pineville" and "Louisiana."

Further information about the Virtual Community can be obtained from Marable at (318) 487-7235 or, via E-mail, at Marable@andria.lacollege.edu.

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Ethnic missions get boost
toward a 'home of their own'

By James Dotson

Baptist Press
1/22/96

LILBURN, Ga. (BP)--An effort to help language missions secure their own facilities without forcing a long-term commitment to buying expensive property has been launched by the Georgia Baptist Convention and Gwinnett Metro Baptist Association.

Leaders and congregation members broke ground Dec. 10 for the International Mission Center, which will allow four Atlanta-area mission congregations to meet in separate modular buildings on one 10-acre site in the Lilburn-Norcross area.

Sid Hopkins, director of missions for Gwinnett association, said the idea came about as an alternative to finding sites for individual missions. That area of the county has become increasingly popular among internationals, and several mission congregations were interested in locating there. The problem is, property costs about \$50,000 an acre in the area, and a church normally buys about five acres to start.

"The financial burden of purchasing land and providing facilities on the sites is far beyond what most of these small congregations can afford," Hopkins said. "Without places where they can meet for Bible study and worship, they are doomed to failure."

With all of the development costs factored in, the cost of establishing four churches on the site is about half what it would be for four conventional churches.

Under the partnership agreement, the Georgia Baptist Convention bought the land, Gwinnett Metro Association is handling development and management of the site and the individual missions are purchasing their buildings.

By using modular buildings -- each of which is about 4,100 square feet -- the churches would be free to either sell their building when they are ready to move to a larger facility or move the entire structure to a new site. Also, the property could be disposed of easily if necessary at some point in the future.

"When the life cycle of this area has run its course or if the ethnic population shifts, we can move the modular buildings and sell the vacant land to recover funds for the association and the Georgia Baptist Convention," Hopkins said.

Initially, the Briarlake Hispanic Mission and the Lighthouse Korean Mission would move to the property, expected to be ready for use by Easter. The Briarlake mission currently meets at Briarlake Baptist Church in Decatur, while Lighthouse currently meets at Briarwood Baptist Church in Norcross.

Jerry Baker, director of the Georgia Baptist language missions department, said the approach makes sense in an area that lacks sufficient facilities in existing churches for the language missions that are needed.

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Also, he said, the center will give mission congregations the opportunity of having a meeting place they can call their own.

"It's a little bit like moving from an apartment to a starter home, knowing that a starter home will let you grow before moving to a bigger house," he said.

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Croat minister first heard
gospel from SBC in Las Vegas

By Frances Meeker

Baptist Press
1/22/96

BIHAC, Bosnia (BP)--Rotco Renenar, a native of Croatia, was living in Las Vegas when the Southern Baptist Convention met there in 1989.

Although he did not attend the convention, Southern Baptists helped change his life.

Renenar was alone when some Southern Baptists came by his home one day during door-to-door evangelistic witnessing as part of the three-day Baptist meeting.

"I listened to them and I liked what they told me," Renenar said in an interview in Bosnia, where he now works as a Protestant Christian counselor in a country where Protestants are a distinct minority. He said part of his Christian ministry is helping women from neighboring countries who have come to Bosnia during the war as prostitutes. He said those who are pregnant can't make a living and they can't go home.

Renenar also works with groups that set up adoptions for the babies.

Renenar and Ladislau Rusicka, minister of a 100-member Baptist congregation from Croatia, are apprehensive about the future of small Protestant groups in a nation where religion is synonymous with nationalism.

"To be Catholic is to be Croatian and to be Croatian is to be Catholic," Renenar said. "The same is true of the Orthodox Christian Serbs. Here, religion has nothing to do with the heart; it has everything to do with nationalism. Religion is their identity."

Renenar said the new Croatian constitution that will make Croatia a European nation guarantees freedom of religion. However, according to the constitution, only religious groups with at least 30,000 members will be officially recognized as a church or denomination.

"Under those conditions, only the Catholic Church can be recognized as an official church," said Renenar, a former Catholic. "The small Protestant churches, which are called sects here, will have to call themselves a community or fellowship, but not a church."

The Catholic Church, as the only official church in Croatia, will continue to be subsidized by the government. Many countries have a government-subsidized state church.

Rusicka's small Baptist congregation in a town near Zagreb is the only Protestant church in an area of several thousand people, he said.

Rusicka and Renenar accompanied a group from the United States recently, led by Franklin Graham, son of evangelist Billy Graham, in their travels in Croatia and Bosnia.

Graham is head of Samaritan's Purse, based in Boone, N.C., a no-frills, no-red-tape relief organization that provides emergency relief to countries plagued by war, famine and other disasters.

The group of about 75 people going into Bosnia with Graham just prior to Christmas included several from England and Canada. They were helping distribute about 800,000 shoe boxes filled with toys and personal items from children and families in the United States and several European countries. It was a Christmas effort called Operation Christmas Child.

In the cargo of Christmas boxes airlifted from Charlotte, N.C., to Croatia and trucked into Bosnia were 550 boxes from Nashville. Employees of the Nashville-based Thomas Nelson Publishers filled 500 boxes. Students at Franklin's Grassland Middle School prepared 50 boot boxes filled with goodies. The boxes were for children of Croatia and Bosnia, including Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims. Many cannot remember when their homeland was not at war.

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The adults bearing gifts for children arrived in Bihac in an 11-van convoy after a three-hour drive through snow-locked mountains from Zagreb, Croatia's capital city.

Much of the area between the two cities is a no-man's-land. Visitors saw the ghost towns in Croatia where Serb grenades and bullets ripped off the roofs of houses formerly occupied by Croats and left sagging holes where windows and doors used to be.

"Serbs dropped 3,500 grenades on this town in four hours," Rusicka said. "Ninety percent of the houses were Croatian and every one of them was destroyed. At least 250 people were killed."

Down the highway, abandoned towns of empty and deteriorating houses testify to the exodus of Serbs, who fled the wrath of Croatian neighbors. The Serbs can't return for fear of being treated as war criminals. The local Croatians cannot buy the former Serb property because of the confusion and unrest in local governments.

Renenar said Croats had been there for centuries, but the Serb army came during the war and took it over. When the Croats got it back, the local Serbs who had been here for about 150 years left and now are refugees in Serbia.

It is different in Bosnia now, Renenar said. Catholic Croats, Orthodox Serbs and Muslims, who are of Croatian and Serbian ancestry, will continue to try to live together. They will be in their own enclaves within the country, following the signing of the peace accords in Paris in December.

In all this chaos, Rotco Renenar, a Baptist who heard the gospel in Las Vegas, is trying to help others make a difference for good.

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Meeker is a writer with the Nashville (Tenn.) Banner. She traveled with several other news reporters to the Balkan area a few days before Christmas. She wrote this story for the Tennessee Baptist and Reflector.

Romanian pastor-architect
recalls 'underground' role

By Lee Weeks

Baptist Press
1/22/96

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--For nearly 20 years, Ovidiu Bulzan secretly disciplined Christians throughout Romania. By day, he worked as an architect. At night, he was an "underground" missionary.

He joined a group called the Navigators, an international ministry dedicated to spreading Christianity. In Romania, the Navigators met privately, in dimly lit homes, trying to remain as inconspicuous as possible.

If a Romanian was caught reading the Bible or praying with someone other than their family, they could be fined half their monthly income, imprisoned or exiled.

"When you won't have your liberties anymore, you'll start reading (the Bible)," Bulzan said.

But six years ago, the chains of communism were lifted off Romania following a successful revolution.

A spiritual rebirth has blossomed throughout the country. Today, Bulzan said, there are about 250,000 Baptists in Romania.

In Arad, Bulzan's home city in western Romania near the Hungarian border, there are 16 Baptist churches. With a population of 220,000, the city is called the "Jerusalem of Baptists." Nearly 400 churches were built or remodeled throughout the country within two years after the fall of the communist regime. Previously, Bulzan said, "We haven't been allowed to build or maintain our churches.

"Even the church I pastor now has been a desecrated place for 10 years." Since the revolution, Bulzan said, the church in Arad has grown in membership from 77 to 350. Today, it is the fastest-growing congregation in western Romania.

"They are the smartest church in all of Eastern Europe because they have found that the cheapest way to hire an architect is to hire him as pastor."

Since the revolution, Bulzan has designed plans for five new churches and directed the remodeling of nearly 50 others.

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Bulzan, who also is secretary general of the Evangelical Alliance of Romania, is attending Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary this year in pursuit of a master of divinity degree. In addition to the biblical training provided by his parents and the Navigators, Bulzan has studied at the London Bible College in England.

"I see Southeastern already playing a very major role in my molding," he said. "It's not only academics but also the sweet spirit"

Last year Bulzan worked as an interpreter for Billy Graham's Global Mission campaign, broadcast via satellite from Puerto Rico to Romania and throughout the world. Two years ago he worked as an interpreter for Graham in Germany.

Bulzan said his parents, who were Baptist pioneers in Eastern Europe, stressed the importance of a good education.

The communist government portrayed Protestants as "ignorant" and "second-class citizens," he said. At age 3, he learned German. At 6, he learned to play the piano and by 7 he was speaking French.

"We were really pushed," Bulzan said. "We had no possessions." Bulzan, his wife and four children, walked away from a comfortable lifestyle in Arad to attend Southeastern. "We are very rich in our culture," he acknowledged.

When they arrived at the seminary's Wake Forest, N.C., campus, they were met by a large empty apartment. Bulzan said he now has more furniture than he can use, thanks to donations.

Christianity is spreading throughout the eastern world in large part because churches are working together, Bulzan stated.

"What I see lacking in the western world is the 'us' and the 'we' of the Christian testimony," he said. "I'm not part of a successful me. I'm part of a successful ministry."

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This article first appeared in The Olive Press newsjournal, a new publication of Southeastern Seminary.

Romanian student arrives
penniless but faith-filled

By Lee Weeks

Baptist Press
1/22/96

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--When Matei (Matthew) Istudor arrived at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in August, all he had was his clothes and a week's supply of food. He didn't have a car, nor any money.

The 22-year-old Romanian had just returned from a month-long visit to his native country, where he had worked at several orphanages sharing the love of Christ with hundreds of children.

"The teen-agers in Moldavia, they have such a hunger for God," Istudor said.

Moldavia is a country of about 4.5 million located between Russia and Romania.

The trip cost him more than \$2,000, completely exhausting his savings. Still, Istudor wasn't worried about his future. "I'm nuts on faith," he said. "I know where God guides, he provides." He's seen it happen more than once.

On a pitch-black night in August 1986, Istudor's father fled the communist-ruled country by swimming across the wide Danube River separating Romania from the former Yugoslavia. "It was life or death," Istudor said. "If they see you, they shoot you."

After crossing the river, Istudor's father was arrested and jailed at a refugee camp for a short while before being allowed to go to California to visit relatives.

In March 1988, Istudor, his mother, two brothers and two sisters were reunited with their father in Atlanta.

Istudor finished high school and enrolled at Tennessee Temple University in Dayton, Tenn., where he planned to major in accounting and minor in missions.

"If I had my plans, I would not be here," Istudor said. "I would be rich somewhere." But Istudor's plans changed the day his Old Testament professor said: "There's a need for somebody to take the torch."

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"The Lord made a whole lot of sense in my life," Istudor said. He realized why his grandmother walked 30 miles to start a Baptist church in Romania. "No compromise," she would tell him. He was reminded of the lessons he learned during catechism following his conversion at 14.

Before being baptized, Istudor said, he was tutored four months on his Christian faith dealing with fundamental concepts such as the Trinity, sanctification and the church.

"Everybody was watching Christians and you're going to be persecuted, so you better know what you believe," he said. "I'm waiting for some persecution." Istudor is working toward a master of divinity degree in Christian education at Southeastern's Wake Forest, N.C., campus. Along with his studies, he serves as president of the Rumanian Baptist Youth Association of the United States and Canada.

Istudor said he has a burden for discipling Romanian youth. "What are we going to do for the next generation?" Istudor asked. "Watching movies and playing Nintendo and going to parties doesn't do a lot for your spiritual life."

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This article first appeared in The Olive Press newsjournal, a new publication of Southeastern Seminary.

Snowstorm gives student team
added ministry opportunities

By Alison E. Fanning

Baptist Press
1/22/96

MOBILE, Ala. (BP)--While the biggest snowstorm in Baltimore history paralyzed most of the city, a University of Mobile mission team turned the disaster into spiritual victory.

Twenty-four students from the University of Mobile's Baptist Campus Ministries had planned to spend part of their Christmas break working at Barnesville Baptist Church and Canton Center. Their week began with painting, cleaning, organizing food closets, insulating the pastorium and raking the church yard. After five days of hard work, the team prepared to return home to Alabama. Little did they know their work had just begun.

The Blizzard of '96 hit the northeastern states with temperatures in the low teens and wind chills plummeting to 15 below zero. Interstates and airports were at a virtual standstill while 27 inches of snow piled high. Among the many stranded by the storm was the UM mission team.

With the snow came opportunities to further the gospel in ways the college students had never planned. Some team members took the opportunity to help some of the homeless in the community, offering money for food and shelter. Jay Jerrell of Centerpoint, Ala., recalled one man in particular.

"It was cold and windy and several of the homeless were asking for help, but one man kept coming back to us. After everyone went inside, I stayed and witnessed to him about Christ. He told me that he was 'ready' and that as long as he had Christ, he had hope," said Jerrell. "It was amazing to me that even though he was in a bad situation, he still had hope because of Christ."

The encounter reminded some students of the story of the one leper who came back and thanked Jesus for healing him. "There were so many people who just looked the other way and ignored this homeless man," said Robyn Blakeney of Huntsville, Ala. "He was so grateful when we helped him. He shook each of our hands and was sincerely thankful. He couldn't believe people were so helpful."

"The last we saw of him, he was going into a restaurant to buy some food with the money we gave him," Jerrell added.

Other team members shoveled snow for the elderly in the community, witnessing as they went. They began shoveling snow for the elderly church members but soon were asking where they could find unchurched people they could help.

Ron Devery of Mobile said their quest led them to a man with cancer. "At first he was reluctant to let us help him, and then wanted to pay us for our work. We finally convinced him that we were there because we wanted to help," said Devery. "Shoveling snow for him gave us an opportunity to witness to him."

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Devery said they left not knowing if the man ever accepted Christ. Although the man did not immediately make a decision, Devery was satisfied a seed had been planted. "Shoveling this man's sidewalk left him a physical reminder that we had been there. Anytime it snows, he will remember what we did for him and what we shared with him."

Later that night someone called the church and thanked the team for "being such a blessing." "You say to your brother, 'be well fed,' but then we never do anything about it," said Devery. "It was great to take every opportunity to help someone and bless them by doing good works."

Not only did the Baltimore community benefit from the "good works," but so did the team. "I saw people put what resources they had to good use and make the most of every opportunity," said Blakeney. "God used that time to teach us a lot about ourselves. We have a common bond now. People that you weren't so close to are good friends now."

"We all had the right attitudes," said Devery, "and God took all of us and used us."

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Fanning is a newswriter at the University of Mobile.

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "SBC's Jim Henry discusses restructuring, race relations," dated 1/19/96, please correct the initial sentence to read, "I don't know how it works, but it does,"

Thanks,
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