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MICHIGAN--Kevorkian prosecutor still fighting for life.  
MICHIGAN--Rural Catholic layman leading another Kevorkian prosecution.  
TEXAS--Scarborough to Christians: Come 'out of hibernation.'  
DALLAS--Kurds in Dallas offer thanks for clothes, food, 'great God.'  
GERMANY--European convention says farewell & welcome to execs.  
TENNESSEE--Adopted child from Latvia fulfills couple's dream; photo.  
TENNESSEE--Correction.

**Kevorkian prosecutor  
still fighting for life**

**By Daniel W. Guido**

**Baptist Press  
11/26/96**

MIDLAND, Mich. (BP)--When pastor Robert Galey heard Richard Thompson's story, he knew the Michigan Baptist Convention needed to take a stand supporting the Oakland County prosecutor in his solitary battle against physician-assisted suicide.

Thompson's grandparents and his aunts and uncles were murdered for refusing to denounce their Christian faith shortly after the turn of the century in Armenia.

When Thompson considered what his ancestors were willing to give up in order to take a stand for the sanctity of life, he decided he, too, would make a sacrifice to fight for life.

Thus, Thompson defied the will of the majority of the electorate in this upper-class Detroit suburb and twice prosecuted suicide doctor Jack Kevorkian. Although he was unsuccessful both times, Thompson is preparing to try Kevorkian once again on a 20-count warrant charging him in the deaths of six women and two men.

Earlier this year, Thompson paid for his decision to go against the current of public opinion when he lost the Republican primary for another term as Oakland County prosecutor.

Thompson said he is unsure if his successor -- who ran on a promise he would not waste taxpayer's money by prosecuting Kevorkian -- will decide to continue the prosecution or simply move to drop the charges after Thompson leaves office Dec. 31.

Such courage to go it alone impressed Galey, who invited Thompson to lunch with him and another Southern Baptist pastor, Herb Harbaugh. After hearing Thompson's story, Galey decided to recommend Michigan Baptists honor Thompson's stand for life, which they did at their Nov. 5-7 annual meeting.

"You don't often find elected officials who are willing to lose an election to take a stand for life," said Galey, pastor of Oakland Woods Baptist Church, Clarkston. "We had to do something to recognize Mr. Thompson's courage and faith."

Galey gave a special "President's Presentation" to Thompson at the meeting. The convention's executive board also issued a plaque honoring Thompson.

For his part, Thompson is "very grateful to Michigan Southern Baptists for standing behind me at such a time."

Thompson said he is busy sending out resumes, hoping to find a job as a law school professor or as a lawyer with a law firm which litigates issues that concern evangelical Christians and those with similar morals.

"I hope to find work with something like the American Center for Law and Justice or the Rutherford Institute, or something like that," said Thompson, an independent Baptist.

Though others might consider his stand heroic, Thompson said he was "just doing his job. Under Michigan law, assisted suicide is illegal, and I intended on fulfilling my oath to enforce the law."

But in recent public opinion polls, anywhere from 60 to 75 percent of Michiganders said they favor physician-assisted suicide when a patient is terminally ill and in severe pain.

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"It doesn't seem to matter, however, that the majority of the people Kevorkian has assisted were not terminally ill and did not suffer from excruciating pain," Thompson said.

"Most of the folks he has helped kill themselves were just clinically depressed, and very treatable. Studies show that people who are treated for clinical depression say they want to live, not die. But we have a very spotty record in this country of providing good, effective counseling to cure depression," Thompson said.

In his battle to convict Kevorkian, Thompson said he has been labeled a "right-wing religious nut," in an attempt by left-leaning area residents to label all Christians who support life as being nutty and unstable.

"If you're against euthanasia, you're labeled another anti-abortion weirdo, who is not to be trusted," Thompson said.

It is ironic to Thompson and Galey that the arguments made by pro-life forces some 20-plus years ago now ring true. Back then, pro-lifers warned that government-sanctioned abortion would eventually lead to euthanasia.

And euthanasia eventually leads to the wholesale killing of anyone who does not enjoy a quality of life deemed sufficiently high to warrant their continued existence by someone else in authority.

In the Netherlands, for instance, studies show hundreds of elderly, retarded and comatose patients are killed each year by doctors acting on their own or family members' decisions that the quality of life of their relative is not worth living.

"Unless we here in American wake up, we'll see the same sort of thing begin happening all over this nation in the next few years," Thompson said.

"I, for one, did not want my grandkids asking me what I did to defeat euthanasia when it is rampant across our society," he said.

If medical ethicists would do a better job of educating the public that it is depression that leads to suicide, not the disease or the pain it causes, the public would rethink their position on the euthanasia question, Thompson maintained.

Better pain management also is needed, but it is not a practice most doctors know much about, he said. "If doctors would learn how to better alleviate pain, we would also see a downturn in those who fall into depression."

Looking back, Thompson said he would still do it all over again, and lose his job, to fight for the sanctity of life.

"This is too important an issue not to fight," he said.

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### **Rural Catholic layman leading another Kevorkian prosecution**

**Baptist Press  
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IONIA, Mich. (BP)--A Catholic layman and rural country prosecutor has joined in the prosecution of suicide physician Jack Kevorkian.

Raymond Voet is the prosecutor for Ionia County, Mich., where Kevorkian is charged with assisting in the Aug. 30 suicide of a local woman, along with improperly using drugs and illegally acting as a doctor, because his license was suspended in 1991. Also charged is Kevorkian supporter Janet Good, 73-year-old founder of the Michigan chapter of the pro-suicide Hemlock Society and herself diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

It is the first prosecution of Kevorkian outside the Detroit area, where Oakland County prosecutor Richard Thompson was defeated in the August Republican primary for his unsuccessful efforts to convict Kevorkian.

"I have steeled myself to the fact that I may not have any political future, and if that is the case, so be it," Voet told The New York Times in a Nov. 25 article. "My duty is to enforce the law."

Michigan's Supreme Court ruled in 1994 that assisting in a suicide can be prosecuted as a common-law felony, Voet noted. "It is a law just as much as Roe v. Wade."

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A key question in the suicide death of Loretta Peabody, a 54-year-old homemaker with advanced multiple sclerosis, is that her body was cremated and authorities might never have learned of the involvement of Kevorkian and Good had police in Kevorkian's Detroit suburb of West Bloomfield not raided a hotel room where they were meeting with another prospective suicide victim Sept. 6. A video tape of Peabody seeking suicide help from Kevorkian and Good was among the items seized.

Voet, a father of three whose wife is a kindergarten teacher, is the son of a longtime state police officer. A Republican, he was the state's youngest prosecutor when first elected in 1992 at age 30.

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Compiled by Art Toalston.

**Scarborough to Christians:  
Come 'out of hibernation'**

**By Craig Bird**

**Baptist Press  
11/26/96**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Biblical commands for Christians to be salt and light are not confined to traditional "church activities," according to Rick Scarborough.

Nor is God's truth limited to one version of the Bible, he said.

Scarborough, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pearland, Texas, shared both perspectives -- one seriously and one lightheartedly -- when he spoke to students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, Nov. 21.

When he first headed to seminary, an older friend gave him a Scofield Bible and told him, "If they try to teach you anything that is not in here, don't you believe it." After three years he felt he had enough preparation and left without his degree to go into evangelism. Three years later, after "God showed me I didn't know anything," he returned to Southwestern to "sit at the feet of some of God's great men" and complete his master of divinity degree.

"I'm preaching from 1 Samuel in the New International Version today," he noted to laughter. "So I guess I'm making progress."

But the thrust of his message is the same one that led Americans United for Separation of Church and State to feature Scarborough on the cover of its magazine, declaring: "Bully Pulpit -- Rick Scarborough has driven the infidels from his town and wants your town to be next."

"They meant that as an insult but I take it as a compliment," Scarborough said. The Houston-area church has made "a moral difference" by entering actively into the political process.

Many Christians have put the salt in a salt shaker, "put the shaker in the kitchen cabinet and locked the cabinet," Scarborough said. "That's not how to be salt and light to the world as Jesus commanded."

Arguing that Christians have not only the right but also orders to be involved in moral issues in the political arena, the man dubbed "the rising star of the religious right" on a National Public Radio program during the election campaigns began with a series of rhetorical questions.

How, in 30 or 40 years, has the United States moved:

-- from Elsie the Cow on milk cartons to pictures of kidnapped children?

-- from double dates to date rape?

-- from a melting pot to a boiling pot of separatism?

-- from Lucille Ball to Madonna?

-- from the Ten Commandments on school walls to metal detectors at school doors?

-- from Ozzie & Harriet to Bevis and (dramatic pause) Behind-head?

Scarborough's answer: American Christians have accepted the "lie" that the separation of church and state means they must let everyone else set moral values. "We've let the world define 'church' as a building. We do it ourselves when we say our 'church' is located at a certain address and we go inside a building at 11 a.m. to 'worship.'"

Instead, "we ARE the church," Scarborough declared. "After we celebrate Jesus on Sunday and Wednesday, we have an assignment to go out into the world and make a difference as the church."

Scarborough's conversion to political activism came in 1992 when he attended, and tape recorded, an AIDS education assembly at his daughter's high school.

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"The woman speaking made numerous vulgar and crude comments and blew up a condom," he said. "Then she told the students that they could have any kind of sex they wanted -- oral sex, anal sex, homosexual sex -- and it would be OK as long as they used condoms."

Scarborough stood and challenged her, then went back to the church and had the tape transcribed. On the sign in front of the church he posted the notice: "If you want to know what our children heard Friday come to church Sunday morning."

He had been in Pearland only 18 months and "didn't know if the church or the deacons would back me or not in this fight."

The turnout was "bigger than Easter" including, unknown to Scarborough, a reporter from the Houston Chronicle. "With that many people there, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to preach an evangelistic sermon, but after the invitation I invited anyone who wanted to hear the transcript to remain," he said.

Then, "even though it made some silver-haired ladies cringe," he read the speech word for word. He next appeared at the school board -- along with 400 other people who repeatedly interrupted his presentation with applause.

Four years later, there is a new principal at Pearland High School ("a Catholic who favors abstinence sex education and served as chairman of the youth committee at a citywide Jay Strack crusade"). A prayer and meditation room has been added to the high school and 4,000 volumes of Christian-oriented books placed in the school library (paid for by First Baptist, Pearland).

Four of the seven members of the school board are members of the church; all five members of the city council have been replaced -- three of them by church members -- and the police chief, the city manager and assistant district prosecuting attorney have joined the church. Scarborough was highly visible in the successful campaign of David Stockman to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1994 and his re-election effort this year (he is in a run-off).

Since 1992, the population of Pearland has soared from 19,000 to 30,000 while crime in the city has decreased 66 percent. "Five miles to the north of us, those trends don't hold," Scarborough said.

"We don't insist that Pearland be a 'Christian' city, but we have taken up our rights to elect Christian politicians who reflect Christian values," he said. "Liberals -- religious and political -- are having heart attacks because we are standing up for God.

"John Jay, the first chief justice of the Supreme Court, said that Christians have a right to prefer Christian leaders, and I think he knew more about the intent of the founding fathers than Americans United."

Scarborough, who also is a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustee and who ran unsuccessfully this year for president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, urged the seminary students to preach and teach about God's promised blessings and punishments on nations for how they act morally.

"There is not a politician or political party that can reclaim America's soul," he said. "That will only happen when the church comes out of its hibernation and becomes again what God intended it to be."

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**Kurds in Dallas offer thanks  
for clothes, food, 'great God'**

**By Ken Camp**

**Baptist Press  
11/26/96**

DALLAS (BP)--Native-born Americans and pilgrims from a distant land gathered to feast and give thanks to God. But unlike that first Thanksgiving more than 370 years earlier, "nan" bread, "chilafry" stew and "dolma" -- spiced lamb wrapped in grape leaves -- accompanied the traditional turkey.

Kurds from Iran, Iraq and Turkey joined members of Midway Road Baptist Church in suburban Dallas for their Thanksgiving meal one week before the rest of the United States celebrated.

They had plenty to celebrate, as about 60 Kurdish women filled plastic bags with new clothing for their children, offered at no cost to them. Later than day, another group representing the 370 Kurds who had just been relocated to north Texas enjoyed the same kind of price tag-free shopping spree.

"It is a gift from our great God," Bob Dixon, a member of Midway Road Baptist Church and executive director of Texas Baptist Men, told the grateful women.

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The designer clothing became available when a store at nearby Valley View Mall closed, and the shopping center management was left with a padlocked store full of children's apparel. A Valley View executive contacted a fellow member of First Baptist Church, Plano, "Cotton" Bridges, former state director of Royal Ambassadors. Knowing about Bridges' involvement in disaster relief and benevolence ministries, he asked if TBM could use about \$200,000 worth of the brand-new children's clothes.

Bridges told Dixon, who immediately saw an opportunity for continuing ministry to a largely unchurched people group whom Texas Baptist Men first helped in the days following Desert Storm.

In 1991, TBM responded to a U.S. Department of Defense request for blankets that could be airdropped by military planes to Kurdish refugees along the Iran-Iraq border. That led to Texas Baptist volunteers offering medical relief in Kurdish refugee camps and operating field kitchens in Kurdish villages in Iran.

Mafa Barzani, a Kurd who lives in the Dallas area, was a Muslim when he accompanied one of the Texas Baptist teams into the former Kurdistan as an interpreter. He later became a Christian and a leader in Midway Road's ongoing efforts at outreach to the 2,000-plus Kurds who live in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

For nearly five years, Midway Road struggled to develop a house church with "just a handful" of Kurds, according to Debbie Rouse, who worked most of that time with ministry to the Kurdish people.

Dixon asked advice from Tillie Burgin, the former missionary to Korea who gave birth to the multifaceted Mission Arlington program at First Baptist Church, Arlington.

"She said there are just two principles," Dixon recalled. "Hang out, and hang on."

That's what volunteers from Midway Road did. They maintained a presence among the Kurdish community in north Dallas. And they waited on God.

About three months ago, the waiting ended. After completing the required period of residency in America, the first group of Kurdish immigrants became eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship. But first, they had to learn English and pass a citizenship test.

Midway Road responded by starting a citizenship class for men and a teen club for youth on Sunday evenings, and a weekday citizenship class for women, along with child care for their preschoolers. In addition to teaching English and preparing the women for a citizenship exam, volunteers also teach sewing and crafts.

"When God opened the door, they just flooded in," Rouse said.

About 70 men and at least 60 women attend the weekly classes. At least 40 youth participate in the teen club, and an equal number of preschoolers in Midway Road's child-care program learn very basic concepts about a God who loves them.

All but four of the Kurds are Muslims. But Dixon prefers to think of them as "pre-Christians."

As part of the citizenship classes, he and his wife, Jean, have begun introducing the Kurds to Christianity by "chronicling" the Bible, using a storytelling technique developed by foreign missionaries among unchurched people groups.

"We're chronicling the story of the great God who keeps his promises," Dixon said.

Each of the once-a-week storytelling sessions begins with a brief recapping of what has gone before. After laying the groundwork of God's good creation, the entry of sin into the world and God's faithful dealings with unfaithful men, on about the 20th week the chronicler introduces Jesus.

The process is slow, but it allows for time to build relationships and for the hearers to see for themselves how "the great God" of the Bible still keeps his promises, Dixon said, adding, "They'll make the connection."

The unexpected provision of children's clothing was a good example of God's faithfulness, Rouse noted.

"There's no way we could have orchestrated this," she said. "It's definitely a God thing."

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**European convention says  
farewell & welcome to execs**

**By Judith Lynn Bloomer**

**Baptist Press  
11/26/96**

HEIDELBERG, Germany (BP)--Saying goodbye to John and Elizabeth Merritt and welcoming James and Wilma Heflin were the focus of the 33rd annual meeting of the European Baptist Convention in Heidelberg, Germany.

John Merritt is the retiring general secretary of the EBC, encompassing 66 English-language churches in 21 countries in Europe. James Heflin is Merritt's successor.

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The EBC is associated with the Southern Baptist Convention and supports the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions.

Merritt is a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionary who served the EBC 24 years. Heflin formerly was professor of preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, and earlier, a faculty member at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

A highlight of the Oct. 30-31 meeting was a celebration dinner in the King's Room in the Heidelberg Castle, attended by 200 individuals from around Europe. The convention presented the Merritts with several farewell gifts, including flying their sons from the United States to attend the dinner, a check for a vacation trip and the "Columbus Discovering America" Hummel.

And, in welcoming the Heflins, EBC executive committee members presented them with several items to represent the different roles of the general secretary: keys to the office signifying leadership in the convention, the EBC directory signifying the pastoral guidance to pastors and a map of Europe signifying the proclamation of the gospel throughout Europe.

In passing his responsibilities to Heflin, Merritt read from 2 Kings 2 on the passing of the mantle from Elijah to Elisha. The term used these days, Merritt said, is "filling the shoes" of another person. In illustration of this, both Merritts pulled out a pair of their old walking shoes. They said they were going to throw these shoes away. The Heflins will not fill the Merritts' shoes. Instead they will find their own new shoes and determine their own path.

In business sessions, the convention approved a budget of \$404,072 for 1997, including \$48,000 in salary and benefits for Heflin. This will be the first time the convention will fully support a staff member.

The convention also voted to extend its partnership with Arkansas Baptist State Convention until 1999. The two conventions originally had established a three-year partnership, which was extended last year for an additional year.

The convention re-elected its president and vice president, respectively: Race Lariscy, pastor of Rhein Valley Baptist Church, Walldorf, Germany, and Scott Stearman, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Paris. Also elected were Mary Bess, clerk; Ron Coker, treasurer; Laurie Martin, EBC Women president; Herb Grover, EBC Men president; and Howard Clark, historian.

The convention also voted to change the makeup of its executive committee, which provides decision-making during times the convention is not in session. The constitution was changed so that the executive committee will consist of the president, vice president, clerk, a representative from the church support committee and the stewardship committee and two members at large.

Merritt preached the convention sermon, using Psalm 98:1 as his theme verse. He highlighted three key items he believed God had accomplished through the EBC.

First, Merritt said, God has kept the EBC united in the spirit, despite various differences which, viewed wrongly, could cause division. Yet, through it all, there has been unity, Merritt said.

Second, God has given the EBC a new vision, Merritt said, noting people from more than 100 nations participate in the convention's churches. "We are a small convention of 4,000 members, yet God has helped us focus on our possibilities and not on our problems," he said.

Third, God has brought salvation through EBC churches, Merritt said. At the end of his written general secretary's report are two tables showing statistical information for the past 24 years. One figure in particular sticks out, he said: During those years, the baptism ratio is one baptism per 9.7 members.

"God has done great things," Merritt said, "through us -- his way."

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Bloomer, who works in publications coordination with the EBC, is Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board International Service Corps volunteer.

**Adopted child from Latvia  
fulfills couple's dream**

**By Chip Alford**

**Baptist Press  
11/26/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--About 10 years ago, Phyllis Nobles had a dream.

"I was in this building with these long hallways. I thought it was a hospital. Then I saw this little girl, and I had this realization that she was supposed to be our child.

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"An angel was there with the girl, and he said, 'Look, she's been kissed by God; that's why she has rosy cheeks.'"

Phyllis shared her dream with her husband, Earl, a strategic information coordinator in the Baptist Sunday School Board's finance department.

"We knew that God sometimes speaks in mysterious ways, but we didn't really know quite what to think. We just decided to pray about it and if we were to adopt a child, we'd be open to it."

The couple, in their early 30s and living in Louisiana at the time, already had one child -- Tim, now 20. And although they considered the idea of adoption in subsequent years, the timing never seemed right.

Then about two years ago, Phyllis saw an item in her church newsletter about an adoption seminar in the area sponsored by Catholic Charities. The meeting focused on adopting orphans from other countries.

"We went and the director just zeroed in on us," Phyllis, a computer specialist in Nashville, Tenn., said. "Everything just seemed right about it."

Shortly thereafter, the Nobleses spent a day at Nashville's Centennial Park at a reunion of families who had adopted children from the Baltic states of the former Soviet Union.

"There were about 100 to 150 people there and we talked to so many nice people. They were all really encouraging," Phyllis said. "An adoption agent was there and she said they happened to have one extra slot open."

The Nobleses decided to proceed with the adoption and they requested a girl 3 years old or younger.

From that point on, the year-long process worked like "clockwork," Earl said. There were papers to fill out, visits from social workers, and, of course, the waiting.

Then it happened. March 21, 1996. A phone call.

"The adoption agency called and said, 'It's going to be a girl.' I couldn't talk," Phyllis recalled.

The couple received a fax the next morning with their daughter's name, medical information and a hard-to-make-out photo. She was a 2-year-old blonde-haired girl living at a state-run orphanage in Riga, Latvia -- a former Soviet republic.

A few days later they received a video and some more pictures of their little girl, whom they later named Kathryn Sylvia (Kasy).

Looking at the first color photo, Phyllis saw a beautiful little girl with rosy-red cheeks.

"I knew she was our daughter, the one from the dream. I was really overwhelmed," Phyllis said.

Three months later, the Nobleses were on their way to Latvia to meet their new daughter.

"We bonded immediately," Phyllis said, recalling the couple's first meeting with Kasy. "The first night we spent with her at our apartment there she just laid next to Earl and rubbed his beard. It was really sweet."

The couple found Kasy was basically in good health, though she suffered from minor medical problems and was slightly behind in her immunization schedule.

"The orphanage had few antibiotics, but we were very impressed with how much they did with what they had," Earl said. "They treated the children very well."

After a few days of getting to know Kasy and jumping through the appropriate governmental hoops, the Nobleses left their apartment in Latvia and headed home to Tennessee with their new daughter.

"She let out a blood-curdling scream when we left the apartment, but she thought we were taking her back to the orphanage. Once we got on the plane and she realized she was coming home with us, she was fine," Phyllis said.

Kasy, who turned 3 in July, is adjusting well to her new home. She's adored not only by her parents, but by her big brother, Tim, too.

"To him, she's the greatest thing since grits," Phyllis said, laughing.

"We've had virtually no problems. She hasn't really been sick at all, except for an ear infection," Earl added.

Although Kasy is not the Nobleses biological child, it's amazing how much she looks like her new parents, especially her mother.

"She is a very good and kindhearted child," Phyllis said. "She's got a great mind. She's very curious. And she's learning English very well."

Both Earl, 43, and Phyllis, 42, admit they are wiser parents the second time around.

"My mother had me when she was 47, so I really wasn't worried about being too old," Phyllis said. "At our age, we're more patient and relaxed. And we're more stable financially, too."

Keeping up with an active 3-year-old also had an unexpected benefit for Earl -- reducing his waistline. The doting father has dropped 20 pounds since the new addition to his family arrived.

The Nobleses encourage other couples considering adoption to "go for it."

"There are adoption loans out there and people who will help you along the way," Earl said. "And the folks at both of our workplaces have gone out of their way to be helpful. We really want to thank the folks at the BSSB for their support.

"It's a big undertaking, but it's well worth it."

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(BP) photo (color horizontal) posted in the BP Photos Library on SBCNet.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Colorado Baptists increase CP giving for global causes," dated 11/21/96, please correct the percentage at the end of the second paragraph to 71 percent, not 79 percent.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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