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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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May 30, 1996

96-94

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KENTUCKY--Five hours after tornado, Kentucky volunteers arrive.

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'Pastor, we don't
have a house anymore'

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
5/30/96

BROOKS, Ky. (BP)--The day after a tornado blew through Brooks Baptist Church, Pastor Eddy Maynard stood amid the rubble greeting church members and other well-wishers.

A family of four piled out of their car, stepped across the fallen bricks and twisted lumber pieces and embraced Maynard. "Pastor, we don't have a house anymore," the father of the family announced matter-of-factly.

If ever a pastor could relate to the needs of his congregation, Brooks could. His home, the parsonage located behind the church, also was a total loss.

Maynard's wife, Elaine, and their three children rode out the May 28 storm in the hallway of the modest parsonage. After the storm, the small area where they huddled was among the few sections of the house with plaster remaining on the ceiling. The entire roof had been blown off, and several walls caved in.

In a newly added front bedroom, a comforter had been ripped off a bed and pulled through a wall like thread through a needle.

Maynard remembered that only a few days earlier his family held an open house to show off the parsonage's new bedroom. "Now we really do have an open house," he quipped.

The pastor and deacon Charles Montgomery rode out the storm inside the church building. They had been doing construction work on a new addition to the church when they saw the twister coming over a nearby hill.

That new addition, a 300-seat sanctuary that was nearly complete on the outside, sustained heavy damage, as did the second level of the older educational wing.

Brooks Baptist Church, located in northern Bullitt County near I-65 and the Brooks exit, sits next to a field where cows were grazing before the storm. When Maynard and Montgomery walked out of the church after the storm, the cows from the field were standing at the church door. The fence they would have had to penetrate to get there was still standing.

Similarly, after the storm passed, Maynard's family discovered a dog in the ruins of their house. "We don't have a dog," Maynard explained.

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Throughout the day after the storm, the Maynards and other church members began picking up some of the scattered pieces of their church and parsonage. They often stopped to talk to reporters and others.

"Some people have asked if this has shaken my faith in God," the pastor said. "I told them it has not."

Given the extent of the damage in his area, it is miraculous that no one was killed or injured, he said.

And when asked by one TV reporter why God would allow a church to be damaged so severely, Maynard turned to Scripture for an answer. "The Lord causes his rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike," he said.

As of May 30, two other Baptist churches in northern Bullitt County were known to be damaged by the tornadoes that swept across North Central Kentucky May 28:

-- Summit Hills Baptist Church, located near the heavily damaged Pioneer Village community, lost its steeple, front porch and a portion of its roof over the kitchen, fellowship hall and choir room. The church van was thrown against a telephone pole. Every tree on the property was blown down.

-- Little Flock Baptist Church, located on Preston Highway just north of Shepherdsville, sustained damage to one large section of glass. The church sign, built of brick and marble, also was laid flat. Just across the four-lane highway, however, homes were destroyed.

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Five hours after tornado,
Kentucky volunteers arrive

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
5/30/96

MOUNT WASHINGTON, Ky. (BP)--Less than five hours after tornadoes devastated much of northern Bullitt County May 28, Kentucky Baptist disaster relief volunteers were on the scene at First Baptist Church of Mount Washington.

By the crack of dawn May 29, the volunteers had established a command post and begun preparations for sending out hot meals and chain-saw crews.

The command center was staffed by 45 volunteers by mid-morning. The volunteers prepared meals for about 2,500 people that day and helped 27 residents clear their yards and homes of fallen trees.

The clean-up and feeding operation gained steam the next day and was projected to continue for two weeks to a month. On May 30, the number of Baptist relief volunteers had grown to 83, "and they're all busy," reported John Lott, Kentucky Baptist Convention Brotherhood associate.

Kentucky Baptists' disaster relief operation is a ministry of the state Brotherhood department, done in conjunction with the American Red Cross. Nationwide, Baptist disaster relief units affiliated with the SBC Brotherhood Commission provide 90 percent of the hot meals distributed by the Red Cross during disasters, according to Red Cross statistics.

In Bullitt County, Baptist volunteers used the mobile kitchen set up at First Baptist Church of Mount Washington to prepare meals that were distributed by the Red Cross all over the devastated area, which stretched about 20 miles west to east.

More than 1,000 homes were destroyed by the twisters that touched down around 7 p.m. May 28. Hundreds of families were left homeless by the storm, but no one was killed or sustained life-threatening injuries.

Just hours after the storm hit, Billy Compton, pastor at First Baptist Church of Mount Washington, rounded up church volunteers to get the church building ready to serve as base camp for the disaster relief crews. The church's basement, which includes kitchen facilities, was flooded with several inches of water.

Across Bullitt county to the west, Little Flock Baptist Church near Shepherdsville became a temporary shelter for about 60 people the night of the storm. The church building sits near the Zoneton community and Meadowbrook subdivision, both among the hardest-hit residential areas.

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The day after the storm, those devastated neighborhoods were strictly secured by police and National Guard units. Ken Lupton, minister of education at Little Flock, said he could not even enter the areas to check on the welfare of church members.

Volunteers serving through the KBC disaster relief unit came from across the state, many called out in the middle of the night Tuesday to begin the journey to Bullitt County. Mike Klein of Lexington served as on-site coordinator for the Baptist crew.

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Louisiana pastor is nominee
for SBC first vice president

Baptist Press
5/30/96

BATON ROUGE, La. (BP)--Baton Rouge, La., pastor Bob Anderson will be nominated for first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, according to the Baptist Message, newsjournal of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

In a May 30 story, the paper said the pastor would be nominated by Ron Herrod, director of R.H.E.M.A. Ministries and a former pastor in Louisiana.

Anderson's nomination for first vice president would be the second person publicly announced for that post. Fred Powell, president of Communicators Ministries in Richmond, Mo., will also be nominated for that position.

Election of officers at the SBC annual meeting, set for the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans June 11-13, will come the first day. The only announced nominee for president is Tom Elliff, Tulsa, Okla., pastor.

Anderson, who has served as pastor of Parkview Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, for the past 22 years, told the Baptist Message he will allow himself to be nominated.

"I have a great deal of love and respect for Bro. Bob," Herrod said of his intentions to nominate Anderson. "He is certainly worthy and capable of this position."

He pointed in particular to Anderson's efforts in assisting pastors and other staff members who have been forced out of churches for one reason or another.

Anderson said he will allow himself to be nominated in the hope that it would "open up some doors" for the program. "I think it would expose this ministry throughout the SBC," he told the Baptist Message.

A Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary trustee, Anderson has proposed a plan to assist church staffers who have been terminated or resigned from their place of service. The plan, known as "The Antioch Affection" was adopted by the seminary's trustees at their spring meeting.

Anderson told the newspaper he intends to step down as pastor at Parkview at the end of 1996 to devote himself full-time to directing the Antioch ministry.

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FIRST PERSON:

Tennessee pastor returns
to pray where battle raged

By Sam Creed

Baptist Press
5/30/96

ASHLAND CITY, Tenn. (BP)--Early in the morning, the first week of July 1968, together with 150 other GIs, I stepped off a chartered airplane onto the concrete apron in front of the Cam Ranh Bay Air Base Terminal building. I was in Vietnam.

An Air Force staff sergeant met us at the door of the huge terminal building and said, "Good morning gentlemen, welcome to Vietnam. We're glad you're here, and you'll be glad when you leave."

He then gave us instructions regarding what we were to do as new arrivals in the ongoing war in Vietnam. I noticed how hot it was and thought, with some discouragement, how long the next 12 months were going to be.

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After completing some paper work and exchanging money for military payment certificates I found a cool place to rest before catching a plane to Phu Cat Air Base, Republic of South Vietnam, my final destination. That air base was to be my home for one year.

As I sat there I could see fighter jets moving in and out of the area, and another large civilian aircraft parked nearby which was being boarded by a long line of khaki-clad servicemen. Those departing GIs were a reality moment when I knew just how many men and women, nameless to me, had done exactly what I was doing. Vietnam was intruding into my life and the lives of thousands of other men and women who served there during the 10 years of American involvement. In fact, for me at least, Vietnam still looms as one of the defining moments of my adult experiences.

Several weeks ago I returned to Vietnam, again very early in the morning. This time I traveled with a group of Baptist pastors and their wives, and several lay couples, some of whom were Vietnam veterans. I was the only Tennessean among the group from Texas and Virginia. We were glad to have Lewis and Tony Meyers from the Foreign Mission Board with us because they could speak fluent Vietnamese, having served as missionaries in Vietnam until the communist victory in April 1975.

For me, this return trip was an answer to a 10-year prayer that someday I would be able to return to Vietnam, not for war, but as a welcome guest. Because missionaries and/or any kind of evangelism aren't allowed by the communist government of Vietnam, I had almost given up on returning, except perhaps as a tourist.

A Prayerwalk was the answer. Jim and Mary Humphries, former missionaries to Vietnam, last November put together a Prayerwalk Tour of Vietnam. This was the answer to my prayer. Nothing can stop prayer, not even a communist government.

We landed at Noi Bai Airport, Hanoi, Vietnam, on April 1. We were cautioned not to take pictures of the airport because the government was sensitive about security and the airport also was a military air base.

Through the window of the aircraft I saw rows of Chinese-made MiG jets parked in front of a fence behind which people were working in rice paddies. I was once again in Vietnam after 27 years.

For the next two weeks Vietnam unfolded for the Prayerwalk group as we traveled through numerous provinces, towns, and villages that were hauntingly familiar to us veterans of the war.

The very difficult days and events of the war seemed to have occurred just yesterday as I stood in the front gate of the Hoa Lo Prison in Hanoi (dubbed the Hanoi Hilton by American POWs), the Perfume River in Hue, the Hai Van Pass where U.S. Marines fought hard battles, Marble Mountain, China Beach in Danang, the Cholon District, and the abandoned American Embassy building in Saigon (now called Ho Chi Minh City).

Evangelism is against the law, no new churches can be built, and the government until recent years interrupted church services and harassed the pastors and people. Nevertheless, the spirit of God cannot be contained. The Easter Sunday service at Grace Baptist Church in Ho Chi Minh City was filled with resurrection hope and about 200 people. I wept as the worshipers sang "Because he lives I can face tomorrow, because he lives all fear is gone ..." in Vietnamese.

Our tour group traveled almost the length of Vietnam to visit remaining churches to pray for them, to visit old Christian friends and pray with them, to visit cities and pray for God to use and strengthen the Christians meeting in homes, and to walk up and down the streets and pray for the people with our eyes open and looking into the faces of people for whom Christ died. The group prayed for the abandoned, very sick babies in the "intensive care room" of an orphanage, a scene I will not forget. There is no adequate substitute for being on location to pray for the myriad of needs of the Vietnamese.

My reasons for returning to Vietnam were not altogether altruistic. I also returned to remember my experience in Vietnam in 1968-69 and to recall what God taught me from my tour of duty in the war. In 1968 I volunteered to go to Vietnam to take the place of my younger brother who, with his unit of the 198th Light Infantry Brigade, arrived in the country the day the 1968 Tet Offensive started. I did take his place and he was sent from combat in Vietnam to another duty station. In a very personal way I learned the meaning of Jesus' words, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." Jesus died for the Vietnamese as much as for me.

To relive the memories and pray for the Vietnamese people today was a miracle of healing for my heart.

Twenty-seven years ago my job was to support aircraft dropping high explosive bombs on the enemy. This year I returned to pray for the grace of God to save the people.

Both stints in Vietnam made an astonishing difference in my life. The first time was to make war -- that will fade into history. The second was to pray for people to be saved by God's grace -- that will last forever.

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Sam Creed is pastor of First Baptist Church, Ashland City, Tenn.

Challenger widow finds 'silver lining' from shuttle disaster

Baptist Press
5/30/96

PIKEVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--It's been 10 years since that fateful January morning in 1986 when the space shuttle Challenger took off.

As a nation watched, pride turned into horror as the shuttle exploded, killing everyone on board.

June Scobee Rodgers, widow of the Challenger space shuttle commander, Dick Scobee, recently brought her story of faith and overcoming tragedy to Pikeville, Tenn.

The author of *Silver Linings: The Triumph of the Challenger Seven*, Rodgers spoke at First Southern Baptist Church and later appeared at a book signing at the Bledsoe County Public Library.

The book tells Rodgers' personal story surrounding the space shuttle tragedy.

"The book chronicles the account of events leading up to, during, and after the tragic explosion, but is perhaps more significantly, a personal attestation of the faithfulness of God's sustaining grace that lifts us up above the storms of our lives to restore joy, hope, and purpose even in the midst of the darkest hours of our life experiences," said Michael Brown, pastor of First Southern.

"In her work, Dr. Rodgers bares her soul to her readers with honesty and transparency, a message that reverberates to those who hurt the joyous truth that with a personal faith in the person and power of Jesus, our tragedies can be turned to triumphs; and that behind every darkened cloud there is a silver lining," Brown added.

Rodgers, who was featured speaker at the church's annual Baptist Women's Day, told the church congregation how the book came about.

"When I was on Robert Schuller's 'Hour of Power' last year, he asked me the question about the Challenger accident, and I said, 'Oh, I can't talk about that day.' He looked at me, this larger than life man, and said, 'June, if you can't talk about it, then perhaps you can write about it. It can help you and it can help others, too.'"

Rodgers was on Schuller's program again earlier this year and was able to share how writing the book helped her, her family, and many others.

Rodgers, who has since married Lt. General Don Rodgers (in 1989) and moved to Signal Mountain, Tenn., where she is a member of First Baptist Church, discussed her life with the congregation.

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"We were among the poorest family among poor neighbors" in a tiny Alabama town, she related.

She married Dick Scobee and they eventually went to college. She received her degree from Baptist College at Charleston (S.C), now Charleston Southern University.

"I'd left the dirty, dusty road and we were on a super highway. Dick Scobee was an astronaut flying in space. We had two wonderful children, a great career.

"Then all of a sudden ... you were there with us 10 years ago, you know what happened -- the loss of the Challenger, the beloved crew, a school teacher aboard who was looking forward to teaching lessons to children waiting around the world."

Rodgers noted "all of a sudden, my road hit a dead end. It was the end of the road, the end of the life that I had known, all that I had looked forward to."

Rodgers told how she had used a "roadmap" of being a pioneer, being a positive thinker, being a passionate thinker, having a plan, praying, persevering, and surrounding herself with people who believe in reaching for the stars.

Everyone encounters adversity in life, Rodgers said. She encouraged others to use their own personal roadmap to guide them through it.

"You have your roadmap. It was given to you the day you accepted Christ as Savior. Follow it to the stars, to your streets above lined with gold.

"As you journey along life's path helping others, look for the road signs and don't forget that the love of our Savior, Jesus Christ, leads us along that path."

In the years since the Challenger tragedy, the families of those killed came together to form the Challenger Center, teaching children about space through 30 centers nationwide, with help from then-Vice President George Bush. Rodgers serves as the founding chairman.

"Does the Challenger mission continue? Yes," she replied. "It continues every time a yellow school bus drives up to the front, opens the door to youngsters who fly simulated missions, children who work together as a team, solve problems, make responsible decisions, gain self-esteem, learn about science and math, and have hope and vision for themselves and their future."

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Adapted from an article in Pikeville's The Bledsonian Banner.

Refugees in Lebanon
rediscover Baptists

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
5/30/96

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--When little Waseem grows old enough to attend school, his parents will be able to send him to one of the best.

Waseem was born at Beirut Baptist School while his parents took shelter there in April. They fled their home in southern Lebanon as part of a mass exodus of a half million people during a 17-day exchange of rocket fire between Israel to the south and Hezbollah guerrillas operating out of Lebanon.

School Principal Elias Bitar told Waseem's parents he could attend the school for free through graduation when he grew older. But that was only one contribution the school made to refugees.

Parents of students helped provide food for the 350 refugees, about 40 families, stranded there. And students themselves took to the streets to collect money to support the refugees during their stay. Also, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board appropriated \$10,000 from its hunger and relief funds to help refugees.

The Beirut Baptist School -- for nursery school through grade 12 -- is one of the most highly respected schools in the city. About 90 percent of its 1,200 students are Muslims. Muslim families send their kids there to get an education, but often they graduate with something more: eternal life. Since relative peace settled into Beirut in 1992, enrollment has soared.

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The school, located in predominately Muslim East Beirut, is a lighthouse for the gospel. Muslim parents see changes in their children as they attend the required Bible studies and worship services to which the parents agree when they register.

For many refugees at the school, it was not the first brush with Baptist Christianity. They first heard the gospel more than a year ago when a Baptist representative shared the gospel in southern Lebanon.

"Many people pray for things like this to happen. It's the work of the Holy Spirit," said the representative about his ministry among the majority population.

"Christ is claiming people in these places. That's why they give us this access."

Before the shelling, the Southern Baptist representatives had just spent three days in another area of southern Lebanon working with Baptist believers there to reach the majority population for Jesus Christ. They passed out 800 Bibles and led 30 people to accept Jesus as their savior. That area, like Beirut, also became a refuge for people fleeing their homes during the recent artillery war.

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Southern to honor four
1996 distinguished alumni

Baptist Press
5/30/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Four graduates of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary will be honored as distinguished alumni at the 1996 Alumni and Friends Luncheon in New Orleans. The luncheon will take place Wednesday, June 12 at 1:00 p.m. in the Hyatt Regency Hotel, next to the Superdome.

The honorees include: Glenn D. Armstrong, pastor of Beaver Dam Baptist Church, Beaver Dam, Kentucky; William W. Causey, executive director-treasurer, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board; Barclay M. Newman, American Bible Society senior translation officer, Springfield, Mo.; and Norman L. Townsel, pastor, Pilgrim Baptist Church, Hamilton, Ohio.

Armstrong has been pastor of Beaver Dam Baptist Church for 29 years. He was also pastor of Spring Street Baptist Church in Mt. Sterling, Ky. Armstrong earned three degrees from Southern Seminary: the bachelor of divinity in 1966, the master of religious education in 1967 and a doctor of ministry degree in 1977. He also holds a bachelor of arts degree from Georgetown College in Kentucky.

Under his leadership, the Beaver Dam Baptist Church has grown to a membership of 1,320 in a town with a population of only 2,700. Besides faithful service to the local church, Armstrong has been active in denominational and community activities for many years. In 1991, Cumberland College awarded him the honorary doctor of divinity degree. He currently is on the Kentucky/Russia Partnership Mission Team and is chairman of the ethics board of Ohio County Fiscal Court.

Causey has been executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board since 1989. He was also a pastor for over 30 years serving at Parkway Baptist Church in Jackson and Poplar Springs Drive Baptist Church in Meridian. Causey earned the master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary in 1955. He also holds the bachelor of arts and doctor of divinity degrees from Mississippi College.

Causey's ministry has been diverse. He has served as a trustee of the Mississippi Baptist Medical Center and Southern Seminary. He has also served the community as state chaplain for both Civitan and the Junior Chamber of Commerce. In Jackson, Causey has been on the Mayor's Council and the Health Care Economic Development Forum. His sermons have been published in the Zondervan Pastor's Annual.

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Newman has been senior translations officer for the American Bible Society since 1989. In this position, he was head of the translation team that produced the Contemporary English Version of the Bible in 1995. He was also a translations consultant with the United Bible Societies, where he assisted with the production of the Today's English Version of the Bible. Newman has served overseas as a translator living in the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia. Prior to this, he was chairman of the department of ancient languages and a professor at William Jewell College in Missouri.

Newman earned two degrees at Southern: the bachelor of divinity in 1956 and doctor of philosophy in 1960. He also holds an A.B. from Union University in Tennessee. His extensive publications include numerous articles and four New Testament translation handbooks.

Townsel has been an Ohio pastor for four decades, most of that time as a bivocational pastor. He also has been a teacher and assistant principal at Princeton High School in Cincinnati. After 26 years, he took an early retirement to serve his church fulltime. His pastorates included First Baptist Church in Paulding and Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Glendale. From 1965 to the present, he has been pastor of the Pilgrim Baptist Church in Hamilton.

Townsel earned the master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary in 1956, when he was one of three African-Americans on campus. He also holds a bachelor of science degree from Bethune-Cookman College in Florida, master of education degree from Miami University in Ohio and doctor of ministry degree from United Theological Seminary in Ohio.

Among other honors, Townsel is included in Who's Who Among Black Americans and Who's Who in Religion. He has served on many local boards and commissions including the city planning commission and the board of directors of the United Way. He has also had consultantships with Miami University, University of Cincinnati and Payne Theological Seminary.

Townsel has led his church to challenge, minister and uplift their community. Despite a location amidst gang violence and other social problems, Pilgrim Baptist Church has erected a new sanctuary, bought eight lots for expansion and parking, purchased an 84 room facility, established a scholarship fund and a professional counseling service.

The Alumni and Friends Luncheon is held annually in connection with the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. Tickets for the event are still available and may be purchased for \$19 at the Southern Seminary exhibit at the convention.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The commentary titled "Communism II: Return of the living dead," contained in the 5/29/96 issue of Baptist Press, was adapted from the June 1996 issue of The Commission, the Foreign Mission Board magazine.

It should have contained a tag line reading:

"-- Adapted from the June 1996 issue of The Commission, Foreign Mission Board magazine"

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "His vision built bridges to take Baptists overseas," dated 5/16/96, please change the phone number in the 10th paragraph to (915) 677-2500.

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Baptist Press

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