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**Vietnam Missionary Relates
Uncertainty Facing Refugees**By William T. Roberson
Evacuated Southern Baptist Missionary to Vietnam

GUAM (BP) --South Vietnamese refugees, who fled their homeland for a variety of reasons, face an uncertain and difficult future. Most are yet unprepared for the plight that lies ahead.

Days before the surrender, most South Vietnamese believed Saigon would stand firm against the murderous communist advance. However, constant talk about escape from Saigon filled the shops and streets even before Southern Baptist missionaries sought a safer haven outside of Vietnam.

Hardly anyone would dare believe so many people would succeed in their flight from communist occupation as have actually been evacuated.

Even before the collapse of Saigon, Southern Baptist missionaries and Foreign Mission Board area secretary R. Keith Parks began mapping strategy to assist the hordes of evacuees who were already beginning to reach Guam. How many refugees would arrive and how long they would stay were unknown.

It was agreed that a small core of the Vietnam missionaries, along with Parks, would go to Guam on April 30 to explore opportunities for further service to Vietnamese people.

Missionary Parkes Marler, who serves on Guam, urged the men to come as soon as possible. The opportunity to serve the Vietnamese people was dramatically opened before the missionaries.

Within a week, 10 of the missionary men had flown from various parts of the orient to minister to the Vietnamese refugees who had crowded on to the small Pacific island.

It soon appeared that the number of refugees in flight would be unparalleled by any other event in modern history--so many people moving so far and in such a great variety of ways.

Almost instantly these missionary men found more Vietnamese to minister to than they had touched in any given month while in South Vietnam.

The missionaries, knowing the language of the people and understanding their culture, were uniquely equipped to help deal with many of the problems that arose from the hurried exodus.

The experience of Guam became a wise and necessary respite for most of the Vietnamese people. Many fled their country because of their gross fear of communism and of war itself.

The seared images of terror and flight, which drove them like waves upon the shores of Guam from their native soil, were real and deep.

The strife, insurgency, upheaval and slaughter that had marked the previous three decades of South Vietnamese history suddenly burst forth in one great volcanic eruption.

Few of these desperate people had taken time to calculate what their flight would mean. Only a handful had any hope of a secure future. They thought only of flight and safety.

The American image of freedom and splendor had become a relished but unrealistic dream in the mind of many Vietnamese people throughout the war years.

Some of them thought America was a veritable land of milk and honey where no problems exist. Yet they had no time to consider in-depth the consequence of their flight.

They boarded planes, ships, helicopters, rafts or anything that was moving away from the shore of their homeland, with an unspoken belief that the United States or some free world force would ultimately save them. Most of them were right.

Their gamble to escape communist rule was more compelling than the uncertainty of their slim hope for security in some distant land.

The traumatic crisis into which the refugees have been hurled was furthest from their thought. A few had been planning and hoping for escape from Vietnam--communist or not--for years.

A small fraction had managed to deposit money in foreign bank accounts.

Still others had been able to send out members of their families to prepare for the day of exit whenever and under whatever conditions.

Most of them simply fled, but few indeed were prepared for the cataclysmic events that suddenly blossomed in April, 1975.

The missionaries appointed by the Foreign Mission Board to serve in Vietnam are now serving, in exile, these people they have come to appreciate and love. They mill among the masses housed in tents and barracks to extend whatever ministry of compassion that may offer itself.

They serve as translators and interpreters for the doctors, nurses and corpsmen in permanent and auxiliary hospitals where the injured, sick and emotionally ill are bedded down.

The missionaries are an extra silent party serving alongside the impressive, capable and well prepared U.S. military force now working in Guam.

Though far removed from their beloved and adopted country, they find the opportunity to serve in exile a unique experience. Their communication of Christian love and compassion will go a long way to help the thousands of uprooted Vietnamese to bridge the vast cultural chasm that exists between America and Vietnam.

The missionaries on furlough stand ready in America, along with many other groups, to help these 1975 refugees survive.

No knowledgeable person believes that every one of the Vietnamese refugees are coming to America truly because of their love for freedom. They are no purer than any other pilgrim or refugee group that has ever reached the shores of the United States.

They represent a large segment of a nation and are drawn to the United States by the same kinds of concepts and dreams that brought the first pilgrims to the western hemisphere.

As history would have it, like an impromptu prelude to America's bicentennial celebration of her independence, the United States of America opens her arms again to embrace those people in flight from fear and tyranny.

Not unlike the past, men and women of God mysteriously stand in the gap and play their part in meeting the crisis of modern man.



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Baptists in North America
Approach 30 Million Mark

WASHINGTON (BP)--Baptists in North America now number 29,681,927--up 82,884 over the previous year--according to 1974 statistics released here by the Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

The statistics, covering both BWA affiliates and non-BWA bodies, represent only baptized believers. Baptists do not practice infant baptism and the data is not comparable to statistics for denominational groups which do.

If the Baptist data embraced all members of Baptist families and unaffiliated Baptist-preference church goers, the total Baptist community would number about 80 million in North America, according to Carl Tiller of the BWA staff.

Baptist churches in North America number 101,088, according to the BWA.

"Most of the growth is accounted for by the Southern Baptist Convention, which is the largest Baptist body in the world," the BWA said. The SBC, the USA's largest Protestant-evangelical denomination, numbers 12,515,842, according to 1974 statistics, up 218,496 over the previous year.

The BWA said seven other Baptist bodies also showed increases--American Baptist Churches in the USA, Baptist General Conference, General Association of General Baptists, General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, National Association of Free Will Baptists, North American Baptist General Conference and Convencion Nacional Bautista de Mexico.

Four Baptist bodies declined, probably indicating a correction of previously reported figures, the BWA said. They are National Baptist Convention USA, Inc., Seventh-Day Baptist General Conference, Baptist Bible Fellowship and Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

The United States has 17 conventions, conferences and fellowships with more than 100,000 Baptists each. In addition, numerous smaller bodies exist, some of them with names which attract attention in the press though they are nearly extinct, Tiller points out.

Canadian statistics disclose one large Baptist body--the Baptist Federation of Canada, with 132,864 members--and eight smaller groups of Baptists, one of them all-Canadian, three of them portions of USA-based conventions, and four of them missions of the USA-based bodies.

In Mexico, besides the Convencion Nacional Bautista de Mexico, which has 21,410 members, 14 other groups of Baptists may be identified, most of them clusters of churches of USA-based missions, rather than autonomous Mexican conventions, the BWA said.

Bermuda is also included in the Baptist statistics for North America, in keeping with the geographers' tradition of classifying it with the continent, whereas other insular areas east and south of the United States are treated as part of the Caribbean Islands, the BWA pointed out.

Four USA-based bodies have missions or churches in Bermuda, but the figures for Bermuda are at best only estimates, Tiller said.

Two portions of North America are not known to have any Baptist churches. Both are European possessions. They are the Danish territory of Greenland and the French territory of St. Pierre and Miquelon.

The breakdown by country is:

	Churches	Members
Canada	1,477	189,506
Mexico	314	25,786
United States	99,272	29,462,482
Bermuda	<u>25</u>	<u>4,153</u>
TOTAL	101,088	29,681,927

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Baptists of Africa Continue
Upward Numerical Growth

Baptist Press
5/21/75

WASHINGTON (BP)--Baptists of Africa now number 787,692, according to completed 1974 statistics released here by the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), compared with 716,032 reported for 1973. They are in 6,811 churches.

Zaire, which has the largest number of Baptists on the continent, showed a slight decline in membership in its 1,015 churches; church members there now number 246,469. Nigeria, second largest Baptist field, increased its baptized believers from 134,550 to 146,339. Cameroon, number three country on the Baptist list, stayed steady at about 89,000 members.

"One of the most exciting Baptist fields in Africa," according to BWA officials, "is Angola, where a church was opened this past year with more than 5,000 charter members, moving the colony's total up to 9,518 Baptists."

Large increases were also posted for Malawi and Rhodesia, but these mainly represent discoveries of hitherto unreported numbers, rather than genuine increases, the BWA explained.

One country entered the Baptist list of church membership for the first time--Swaziland, with 197 reported. The smallest figure now listed for Africa is in Senegal where two baptized believers are noted, but no church.

The breakdown by country is:

	Churches 1974	Church Members 1974	1973
Algeria	3	210	210
Angola	35	9,518	2,406
Botswana	2	48	48
Burundi	5	3,561	3,307
Cameroon	1,416	89,108	89,000
Cape Verde Islands	4	200	200
Central African Republic	600	40,000	40,000
Chad	50	3,000	3,750
Congo	100	6,000	6,000
Dahomey	14	450	450
Egypt	8	427	427
Ethiopia	12	821	871
Ghana	66	2,587	2,350
Ivory Coast	46	3,565	3,040
Kenya	415	19,621	12,478
Lesotho	20	701	600
Liberia	224	32,694	32,700
Libya	1	325	430
Malagasy Republic	10	292	217
Malawi	828	55,218	15,373
Mali	1	25	25
Morocco	--	--	---

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	Churches 1974	Church Members 1974	Church Members 1973
Mozambique	42	2,967	2,943
Namibia (Southwest Africa)	3	191	191
Niger	8	250	250
Nigeria	115	146,339	134,550
Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)	144	19,868	8,603
Rwanda	122	18,431	19,315
St. Helena	2	80	80
Senegal	-----	2	35
Sierra Leone	8	1,206	1,105
South Africa	896	53,444	52,223
Swaziland	4	197	-----
Tanzania	330	14,712	14,307
Togo	12	1,011	720
Uganda	148	7,831	7,435
Upper Volta	1	162	162
Zaire	1,015	246,469	252,550
Zambia	<u>101</u>	<u>6,161</u>	<u>7,701</u>
TOTAL	6,811	787,692	716,032

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No Baptist President
For Us, If You Please

Baptist Press
5/21/75

DALLAS (BP)--Dallas Baptist College sits nestled among some hills away from the main stream of traffic near Dallas.

In fact, when the college's new president arrived to take over, he found it wasn't the best known spot in the city.

W. E. (Bill) Thorn, who is coming to the presidency from the pastorate at Metropolitan Baptist Church, Wichita, Kan., told a Dallas cab driver to take him from downtown to the 1,200-student school on his first visit.

Apparently the cabbie hadn't driven to the school very frequently.

He took Thorn, instead, to a destination nine miles from the Dallas Baptist College campus. It was the site of the University of Dallas--a Catholic institution.

Thorn marched in ready to assume his new post as school president.

"I was told not to take it personally but the administration there said they weren't sure they are ready for a Baptist president," says Thorn.

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