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Christ Brings Peace, Hope
To Parts of Middle East

By Ruth Fowler

Arabic graffiti cries for the people of Palestine. Flowers decorate the charred skeleton of the bus in which more than 30 Israeli civilians died. A Beirut cab driver mourns his lost friends and lost city.

Throughout civilization the Middle East has been the center of conflict, but this time the war has lasted 30 years. Arab fights Arab in Lebanon. Arab and Jew battle in Israel. Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Gaza--no area or people remains untouched.

The Arab culture, by centuries of tradition, demands that every wrong be avenged. Whatever the cost, the honor of the people must be preserved. And the ancient Hebrew law is eye for eye, tooth for tooth.

Offensive after offensive, retaliation after retaliation, the Middle East seems destined to fight forever. The people are suffering. Fear haunts their eyes and faces every time a news-cast warns of approaching trouble. But the same ones who fear war fight the war. Time after time hope for peace changes to new fighting.

There is an answer. It isn't seen in politics, but in the small groups of believers meeting throughout the Middle East. Southern Baptist missionaries and representatives see it. The hope is in forgiveness and the forgiveness is in Christ.

In Beirut, Lebanon, two years of civil war, 1974-76, have given way to a shaky peace kept by United Nations forces from Syria. At the Beirut Baptist School, open throughout the war, students from both sides of the civil war play, worship and study together.

Any other time, in any other situation, such students would be fighting. But the young men who would be enemies are friends from childhood and weep to see each other leave as holidays begin.

People from opposing sides gather as believers in Israel, too. In Jerusalem the West Jerusalem Baptist Church had special guests for Easter services. This Hebrew congregation welcomed a choir from an Arab congregation near Bethlehem. They sang and worshiped together--Christian forgiveness overcoming the memories of the Arab terrorists' attack on the busload of Israeli citizens and the Israelis' retaliation drive into Lebanon.

The pastor of the Arab congregation is Jordanian. His ministry began more than 20 years ago when he decided to stay and help a Southern Baptist missionary for just a year. He ministers with an associate to several congregations in the West Bank area.

Other Arab churches meeting in the villages of Galilee have members who are refugees--some from 1948, when Israel fought for independence, others from the wars of 1967 and 1973.

These Christians remember lost land and loved ones, but speak of Christ and his love for all. They have found hope, and forgiveness.

"If there was some way," sighs one missionary, "that people could understand how important Christ is in the midst of this kind of war. If we can just communicate Christ's love and forgiveness."

The Middle East is at war. It may be at war for many years to come. But for Christians the hate that causes war has ended. --(BP)

(BP) Photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press.

Ruth Fowler, staff writer-consultant for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, wrote these impressions following her recent visit to the Middle East.



Author Will Address
Ministers' Wives

ATLANTA (BP)--Marge Caldwell of Houston will be the featured speaker at the Southern Baptist Ministers' Wives Conference in Atlanta's Omni Hotel at 12:30 p.m., June 13.

The Southern Baptist Convention holds its annual meeting June 13-15, at the Georgia World Congress Center, next door to the Omni.

Mrs. Caldwell, an author, lecturer and teacher of professional charm and modeling, has a Houston radio show and is a marriage counselor. She teaches Sunday School at Houston's First Baptist Church.

Clint Nichols, chairman of church music at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary will bring special music and Mrs. George Busbee, wife of the Georgia governor, will greet guests at the luncheon according to Mrs. Landrum P. Leavell III, Ministers' Wives Conference president.

Advance reservations (\$7.50 each) may be made before June 1 by sending a check to The Ministers' Wives Conference SBC, % Druid Hills Baptist Church, Atlanta 30306. Tickets may be picked up at the ministers' wives booth at the SBC on Monday, June 12.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state newspaper editors by the Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press.

SBC Ushers Trained
In First Aid Technique

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ATLANTA (BP)--Messengers attending the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta, June 13-15, will have medical care geared to just about any need.

Georgia Baptist Medical Center will handle medical care for convention sessions as well as other related meetings.

Since last December, Dr. James Maughon, director of graduate and continuing medical education at the hospital, has chaired a committee setting up medical care facilities for the SBC which meets at the Georgia World Congress Center.

Plans include two separate medical care areas; one for minor medical attention and the other for more serious needs. Emergency transportation will also be standing by at the Congress Center to transport anyone to a hospital if the need arises.

Judy Suidan, RN, director of nursing staff development at the medical center, set up a training session for volunteers who will serve as usher captains during SBC sessions.

Captains were given special training in coronary pulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

"By having CPR trained ushers on the scene, medical attention can start at once and continue until other medical personnel can reach the victim," said Dr. Maughon.

The usher captains, under direction of usher committee chairman Jim Cook, will be stationed throughout the main convention area during all SBC sessions.

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Indiana Baptists Seek
Arkansas Mission Help

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. (BP)--Indiana Southern Baptists have asked Baptists from Arkansas to join them in a missions outreach in Indiana.

A resolution passed during the regular session of the executive board of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana asked that 100-125 "choice pastors" from Arkansas ask their churches to co-sponsor a mission with a church in Indiana and that those pastors participate in an Indiana church during the statewide simultaneous revival effort April 1-8, 1979.

The Arkansas churches would pay their expenses during these visits and the churches would be invited to send mission groups, volunteers, their pastor and lay people to help establish new work in Indiana.

An official reply is expected from Arkansas Baptists in August.

Indiana's executive board also voted to buy a 15-passenger van to transport students from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., to mission points in Indiana on weekends. Michigan Baptists have a similar program with two vans that is working well.

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Wood Supports Israel
At Anniversary Rally

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5/2/78

WASHINGTON (BP)--Israel's right to exist without harassment or terrorist attacks was upheld at a rally celebrating the 30th anniversary of the founding of that nation by a Baptist spokesperson.

James E. Wood Jr., executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, told a crowd of about 500, "We must view with grave alarm any continued terrorist attacks on Israel and any efforts to harass the government of Israel or to deny Israel's right to defensible borders so essential to its nationhood and national survival."

Wood also attacked proposals to create a Palestinian state within the present borders of Israel.

U. S. Rep. Robert F. Drinan, D.-Mass., who also addressed the group made up predominantly of rabbis, pledged his opposition in Congress to arms sales to Saudi Arabia. The Carter administration has proposed to Congress the sale of fighter-bombers to Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia as a package for the Middle East.

A representative of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops joined speakers from several Jewish organizations to affirm continued American support of Israel. The rally, held at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, was sponsored by the Synagogue Council of America, the coordinating organization for the Conservative, Orthodox, and Reform branches of American Judaism.

Participants in the rally later attended a reception at the White House to meet Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel, who is on a speaking tour of the United States in connection with Israel's 30th anniversary.

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Palau Rally Records
Thousands of Decisions

By Wally Poor

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5/2/78

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay (BP)--More than 5,500 persons made decisions for Christ in a nine-day series of evangelistic rallies which may result in doubling the size of some churches if follow-up efforts succeed.

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The crusade, conducted by evangelist Luis Palau, resulted in 2,786 decisions over nine nights at Placio Penarol in Montevideo and another 2,800 in "satellite" crusades in five interior cities.

Throughout the months of campaign preparation, Palau's team members stressed conservation of the results. Most churches visited the persons making decisions within 48 hours. Many planned a "Welcome Sunday," the Sunday following the close of the crusade with a five-night orientation set after that.

Some churches may double in size if successful in adding the new believers to their membership. The 14-year-old Bethesda Baptist Church, currently with 82 members, received 85 names. Historic First Baptist Church, founded by Southern Baptist missionary J. C. Quarles in 1911, with a current membership of about 165, received 150 names.

"I've been encouraged by the visits I've made so far," reports Southern Baptist missionary James W. Bartley Jr., pastor of Bethesda Church. Bartley also trained counselors who guided those making decisions each night.

Intensive use of television and radio in the weeks before the Palacio Penarol meeting helped make Palau known, paving the way for acceptance of invitations to hear him in person. "The crusade enhanced the evangelical image and opened doors for future media use," said Jose M. Varela, campaign publicity director and Director of the Baptist Communications Center, headquarters for Baptist work in Uruguay.

Besides nightly messages at Palacio Penarol, Palau had a half-hour phone-in television program. Consultation centers were set up in three areas of the city, including the Baptist Communications Center. A network of 31 radio stations carried the crusade live in all of Uruguay and Argentina and parts of Paraguay and Brazil.

More than 8,500 jammed Palacio Penarol the last night, reportedly the largest evangelistic gathering ever assembled in Paraguay. One satellite city, Paysandu, also reported the largest gathering of persons for any religious function ever held there.

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