



BAPTIST PRESS

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Peacemaking Convocation Draws Criswell's Support

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A convocation on Peacemaking and the Nuclear Arms Race has drawn the support of a leading conservative Southern Baptist spokesman.

"It is my earnest prayer that some solution can be found for the illimitable waste spent on armaments that could be so desperately useful for the poor and the lost of the world," W. A. Criswell says in a printed statement to be read at the convocation in February.

"Southern Baptists need to begin taking the biblical call to peacemaking more seriously," adds Criswell, pastor of the 20,000-member Dallas First Baptist Church.

The convocation, to be held Feb. 16-17 at Louisville's Deer Park Baptist Church and at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, is a response to a resolution passed at the 1978 Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta.

The resolution states in part that "we confess we have not pursued peace with full Christian commitment, and we commit ourselves to pray for peace in our churches and to seek to become more committed to peacemaking." It urges national leaders "to seek mutual agreements with other nations to slow the nuclear arms race," and "to shift funds from nuclear weapons systems to basic human needs."

Prominent Christian peace activists, as well as government and church officials, will speak at the convocation. Among them will be Dale Brown, former moderator of the pacifist Church of the Brethren; C. Welton Gaddy, pastor of Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas; Phil Strickland of the Christian Life Commission for the Baptist General Convention of Texas; U.S. Sen. Wendell Ford, D-Ken.; and William Dyess, assistant deputy secretary in the U.S. State Department.

Criswell has long been regarded as a champion of political and theological conservatism, and his statement on nuclear weaponry was seen as an important boost for organizers of the Louisville meeting.

"Just because a man is fundamental and believes in the whole Bible does not mean he doesn't believe in world peace," Criswell told the Dallas Times Herald. "That is just a crazy idea of the left wing liberals.

"War is the most destructive of all realities we face in this life. And a nuclear war-- can you imagine what that would mean today?"

Workshops at the convocation will deal with how to preach peace; practical peacemaking in local Baptist churches; peacemaking, Southern Baptists and the political process; hunger, human rights, and peacemaking; how to teach peace biblically; and corporate worship, personal spirituality and peace.

Prime movers behind the convocation are Robert Parham, president of the student government at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary who proposed the Atlanta peace resolution; and Glen Stassen, associate professor of Christian Ethics at the seminary.

Volunteers, Vaccine Fight
Measles Epidemic in Ghana

NALERIGU, Ghana (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries and volunteers are inoculating 50,000 children in northern Ghana to help prevent further spread of a serious measles epidemic.

Thousands of children in Ghana have been affected. Missionary physician Frances Greenway reported that the pediatrics ward of Baptist Medical Centre in Nalerigu is full and some children are sleeping on the floor. Some 75 to 80 percent of these cases are from measles.

A three-person team of Southern Baptist medical volunteers is utilizing a \$25,000 appropriation from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's emergency relief fund in a campaign designed to help the Ghana government in its efforts to meet the country's health needs.

Measles in Africa often has much more serious effects on children than in the United States, Dr. Greenway pointed out. Even children in good condition who contract this particular strain of measles may not survive, and the survival rate among the malnourished is low.

Missionaries knew they couldn't possibly continue the heavy patient load at the hospital and also go into the surrounding area for vaccination clinics. So three volunteers from emergency disaster teams flew to Ghana to assist in the work. These teams are made up of American medical professionals who remain on standby status in case emergency health care needs arise.

Two nurses, Helen Roller of Amarillo, Texas, and Joyce Duncan of Poplar Bluff, Mo., went into the villages and surrounding areas with Dr. Walter M. Moore, missionary physician at the Nalerigu Hospital. A volunteer doctor, Joe Barnes of Claremore, Okla., took Moore's surgical and medical load at the hospital.

Transporting the measles vaccine posed a problem. The highly sensitive medication must be kept frozen until used. Not manufactured in Ghana, it must be transported from the United States.

The drug supply company agreed to pack a freshly manufactured batch of measles vaccine in dry ice to keep it frozen up to 72 hours. The company also held it in their storage area until the day before it was to be shipped to Ghana. This meant that it arrived in Ghana with 24 hours left in the ice pack--enough time to take it overland to the hospital for unpacking and storage there.

The board's general relief funds, used to finance such projects, are virtually depleted. Contributions should be marked "general relief" which would permit any excess funds to be used in projects of a similar nature.

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Broadway Plan
Head Resigns

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CARBONDALE, Ill. (BP)--Noel M. Taylor, 66, has retired as president of Broadway Plan, Inc., in Houston, Texas.

He moved back to his home state of Illinois, where he was executive secretary of the Illinois Baptist State Association from 1946-65. He headed the Broadway Plan since 1967 and will continue as a member of its board of directors.

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Convention Housing Address
Change Causing Problems

HOUSTON (BP)--A change of address by Houston's convention housing bureau and the subsequent failure of the postal service to forward some housing forms is confusing registrants for the 1979 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

That confusion, combined with the rapid filling of available hotel rooms for the June 12-14 meeting, makes quick action by those who plan to attend the convention imperative.

Tim Hedquist, SBC convention manager, says about five percent of the housing forms being sent to the old address are being returned.

"Obviously, we deeply regret the inconvenience," Hedquist explained. "But the post office has been contacted weekly by the Houston Convention Bureau about the change. It's really been a problem for the convention bureau. Other conventions scheduled in Houston are having the same difficulty."

Hotel room requests should be sent to this new address: SBC Housing Bureau, 1522 Main Street, Houston, Texas, 77002.

Hedquist indicated that as of the fourth week in January, 73 percent of the reserved rooms are assigned and more than half of the designated hotels are completely full. No rooms are available in the following hotels: Albert Pick Motor Inn, Allen Park Inn, Astro Village Hotel, Crestwood Motel, Executive Red Carpet Inn, Grant Motel, Holiday Inn-Central, Holiday Inn-Medical Center, Holiday Inn-West Loop, LaQuinta Inn-Greenway Plaza, Marriott Hotel-West Loop, Ramada Inn-Dome, Ramada Inn-Greenway Plaza, Stouffer's-Greenway Plaza, Sun Valley Motel, Tideland's Motor Inn, Tides II Motor Inn, and the Travelodge Tower.

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Anniversary Conflict Marks
Abortion Decision Struggle

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WASHINGTON (BP)--"Pro-Life" and "Pro-Choice" groups converged on Washington dramatizing the controversy begun six years ago when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that abortion in the first six months of pregnancy was a constitutional right.

The fight has become increasingly bitter and this year's activities noting the anniversary of the court's decision showed the divisions sharply.

The National Organization for Women (NOW) announced that they had invited "Pro-Life" and "Pro-Choice" groups to a meeting Feb. 15 to discuss ways "to lessen the need for abortion, to reduce the incidence of unwanted and troubled pregnancies, and to end the increasing polarization and violence that surrounds this issue," said Eleanor Smeal, president of NOW.

But Nellie Gray, president of the anti-abortion group March for Life, told a crowd at the U.S. Capitol estimated at anywhere between 10,000 to 60,000, "I do not sit down and negotiate with baby killers."

Karen Mulhauser, director of the National Abortion Rights Action League, accepted the invitation. She said that "nobody is pro-abortion" but recalled her experiences counseling pregnant women who were "desperate, anguished."

The Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (RCAR), made up of 28 religious organizations which support the right of women to choose abortion, issued a statement opposing efforts to amend the U. S. Constitution to prohibit all abortions.

"We hold in high respect the value of potential human life; we do not take the question of abortion lightly," the RCAR statement said. "There are many denominations and faith groups represented among us, and we hold varying viewpoints as to when abortion is morally justified. But it is exactly this plurality of beliefs which leads us to the conviction

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that the abortion decisions must remain with the individual, to be made on the basis of conscience and personal religious principles, and free from governmental interference."

In the week that the 96th Congress has been in session, about 20 resolutions have been introduced that would amend the Constitution, prohibiting abortions in most cases.

Elizabeth Haselden, board of national ministries of the American Baptist Churches, USA, told Baptist Press, "I have wrestled with the arguments of the pro-life groups. I am pro-life in its fulfillment for adults and children. I will go a step further and say that we must have consistency of ethical values. People who say they are pro-life often support other views which are not pro-life. The electric chair is not pro-life. We must carry this all the way through a cluster of issues--war, poverty, hunger, and capital punishment."

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Mindanao: An Island
Ripe for Witnessing

By Anita Bowden

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MANILA, Philippines (BP)--With an annual Christian growth of 16 to 20 percent, the island of Mindanao in the Philippines is one of the most promising areas for witness in the world.

And this growth seems to be getting stronger, according to James B. Slack, chairman of the Philippine Baptist Mission, the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in the Philippines. "Opportunities are great among the tribal people and in the rural areas," he said.

In 1969, Baptists on Mindanao reported 82 churches, 77 preaching points and 765 baptisms. The most recent figures available show 295 churches, 711 preaching points and 4,903 baptisms at the end of 1976.

A recent two week crusade in Mindanao sponsored and directed by the Mindanao Baptist Convention with the cooperation of the Philippine Baptist mission, resulted in 7,000 decisions made for Christ, reported Slack. A team of more than 80 pastors and lay people from the Gene Williams Evangelistic Association helped in the effort.

Mindanao, which has received an influx of settlers since World War II, has the openness which characterizes pioneer areas, Slack pointed out. Many on the island are people who pulled up their roots in other parts of the Philippines to settle on this big southern island. They are more open to forming new relationships and new religious ties than those living in the more static cities, Slack explained.

This migration has thrust tribal people into contact with technological advancement and a better standard of living. More of them are leaving their villages to go to school. They're open to learning and to the gospel. Recent typhoons and earthquakes also have made people more aware of their mortality and more interested in spiritual things.

But the multiplication of churches has outstripped the supply of trained pastors. Fifty percent of the Baptist churches in Mindanao are led by laymen. "This means we have a great need for emphasis on theological education," Slack said. "This is also where the Philippine Baptist Mission's greatest missionary personnel needs are."

As church membership doubles every three to five years, the literature demand grows heavier on the Baptist Publishing House in the Philippines, already producing church literature in five dialects and English.

With or without problems, the time for a Christian witness is now, Slack said. "We believe these opportunities we are facing are not permanent ones. Within 10 to 15 years the bulk of the tribal people will be pretty well woven into society, and they and those who have migrated, will form their own static communities, and the opportunity to reach them will wane. It's God's day for Mindanao."

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