

(BP)**-- BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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April 6, 1979

79-57

**Turlingtons Back in Iran;
Plan Church Services Again**

TEHRAN, Iran (BP)--The Henry E. Turlingtons have returned to Iran and will begin church services immediately.

The last Southern Baptist missionaries to leave the troubled country during the change of government, the Turlingtons plan to stay from six to eight weeks before returning to Bangalore, India, where he will lecture at the United Theological College from June through September.

Turlington told SBC Foreign Mission Board officials April 5 from his Iran apartment that all his family's personal effects were in good order. He had already been in contact with three families and a single woman about church services.

All of the American members of the church have left Tehran, but several families of other nationalities are still present. Among them are Mexicans, Nigerians, and Pakistanis.

When the Turlingtons, from Florida and Virginia, leave for the Bangalore lecture assignment, they intend to leave their personal belongings in their apartment in Tehran and return at the end of September.

"It is most encouraging to know that the church in Tehran is still alive," said J. D. Hughey, the board's secretary for Europe, the Middle East and South Asia.

James F. Kirkendall, field representative for South Asia, also returned to Tehran. He is packing furniture and belongings in crates for shipment at a later time. He will attend meetings in his area during the next month and will return to the United States in May. A final decision will be made then about where he and his family will live.

Mrs. Kirkendall, from Oklahoma, is already in the United States. She left Tehran with their son during the fighting earlier this year.

No word has been received about the C. Kenneth Glenn home in Ahwaz, Iran, but the Turlingtons did report conditions there now were "not so bad." The Glens, from Georgia and South Carolina, were among the first missionaries forced to evacuate because fighting became intense much quicker in the remote areas such as Ahwaz. They are currently on a short term assignment in Norway with an English-language congregation.

Two other Southern Baptist mission personnel were in the country when the fighting began. Journeyman Michael Joe Sowder, from Texas, and volunteer Hubert E. Williams, from Arkansas, do not plan to return to Iran. Sowder is in Scotland.

Trouble in Iran between pro-shah and anti-shah forces had been apparent for many months. Armed conflict broke out in scattered areas and increased until the shah left the country and most of Iran was in turmoil. Americans were evacuated in February. Recent elections have affirmed the people's desire for rule by the anti-shah forces.

Actress to Address
Ministers Wives

HOUSTON (BP)--Actress Jeannette Clift George, star of "The Hiding Place," will address the annual meeting of ministers' wives at their luncheon June 12 in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Appearing with Miss George will be the After Dinner Players, a Christian drama group she organized.

In "The Hiding Place," Miss George portrayed Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch lady who saved the lives of scores of Jews in her native Holland during the Nazi occupation. For her work in the film, Mrs. George was nominated for a Golden Apple Award by the Hollywood Women's Press Club. She is equally well known as a Bible teacher, speaker, monologist and playwright.

Bus transportation will leave from and return to the Summit, site of the SBC sessions June 12-14, for the 12:45 p.m. luncheon at the Marriott Hotel, Astrodome, 2100 S. Braeswood.

Tickets are \$8 and requests should be mailed to Mrs. Julia McMillan, Union Baptist Association, 3910 Travis St., Houston, Texas, 77002.

Current ministers' wives officers are Mrs. John J. Hamilton, president; Mrs. Ralph Langley, vice president; Mrs. Jon Meek, recording secretary-treasurer; Mrs. Linwood Peterson, corresponding secretary.

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Church, Politics Go Together
Says Mississippi Politician

By Jerilynn Wood

Baptist Press
4/6/79

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Christians have a responsibility to influence the direction of politics, according to Mississippi state representative and Baptist pastor Horace Buckley.

"Many people tell me that politics is not the church's business," the Hinds County democrat told more than 1,400 college students at the 34th National Baptist Student Union retreat. "But my reply is that mankind is the church's business.

"As a preacher, I view my ministry as a way to seek economic, social and political salvation as well as spiritual salvation for my members."

Buckley, pastor of Cade Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, said he "strongly believes that every church should realize its responsibility as an institution in the community and strive to promote truth and liberty."

"The church should be the voice that helps identify the problems of the community it serves and then helps organize strategies to eliminate these problems," he said.

Buckley told the student representatives from 90 colleges and 20 states that throughout the history of blacks in America, the church has been the traditional meeting place and speaking forum for them in the community.

"Through the church, individuals have the opportunity to view politics close up and participate in parliamentary procedure. It can provide good educational helps," he said.

Regarding the question of church involvement in political affairs, Buckley said, "Personally, I trust the judgment of Christian, church-going laymen more than many politicians who are presently involved in the problems now confronting us."

He encouraged the college students to lend a hand in their communities and local churches and provide new enthusiasm and energy.

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"I would hope that each church you represent would take an active part in helping to eliminate the present problems surrounding them, and you can be a participant by knowing your community, understanding its needs, responding to those needs and then providing future hope and knowledge," he said.

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

Christian School
Workers To Meet

Baptist Press
4/6/79

HOUSTON (BP)-- W. A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist, Dallas, the largest Southern Baptist church, and singer Cynthia Clawson will be featured at a Southern Baptist Christian School rally June 13 at the Second Baptist Church in Houston.

The meeting, for persons interested in Christian schools, is one of several meetings planned around the annual sessions of the Southern Baptist Convention June 12-14. No SBC session is scheduled during the Wednesday afternoon meeting.

Charles Freeman, chairman of the planning committee for the SBC Christian School Association which is sponsoring the event, hopes the meeting will alert persons of the activities of Christian school workers. He said there will be an organizational meeting of a National Association of Southern Baptist Christian schools in conjunction with a 1980 Christian School management seminar in Nashville.

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Myers Resolution
Committee Head

Baptist Press
4/6/79

HOUSTON (BP)--Charles Myers, pastor of the Alta Woods Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss., has been appointed chairman of the resolutions committee for the Southern Baptist Convention annual sessions in Houston June 12-14.

SBC President Jimmy Allen appointed Myers and nine others to the committee which will screen resolutions to be heard during miscellaneous business sessions at the convention.

Persons submitting resolutions should send them to Myers at Alta Woods Baptist Church, 168 Colonial Dr., Jackson, Miss., 39204.

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Ethnic Church Important
In World Evangelization

By Donald S. Hepburn

FRESNO, Calif. (BP)--"There is no way in the world that we can win the world to Christ if we do not win the ethnic population of California," says Jack Combs, director of language missions for the Southern Baptist General Convention of California.

Combs feels that Southern Baptists have only two alternatives in their response to reaching out to the non-Christian ethnic. "We can either evangelize these folks or they will paganize us."

The ethnic population in California is growing at a phenomenal rate, both in native born and from their immigration from all corners of the earth. Recent census estimates show non-Anglo minorities comprising 40 percent of California's 22 million people.

Collectively, these minorities make up a new majority. In Los Angeles County, as an example, 51 percent of the total population is ethnic.

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"We think we are a majority people," Combs says with the wave of a hand. "We white people on this earth are a minority people. We Baptists who speak English are a minority in the world and we have got to learn to live with that."

The challenge of the non-Christian ethnic now confronting California Southern Baptists is a challenge which will soon be confronting mainstream Southern Baptists nationwide, Combs points out.

The philosophy for developing a program of language ministries in California was quite simple, according to Combs, who was first director of the department. "Try to find language workers who know the custom, culture and language of their people and help them reach people for Christ. This has to be done through building New Testament churches using an effective Bible teaching program."

The philosophy may have been simple, but the practice continues to prove to be a bit more difficult.

"We were quite awhile in even seeing that they (ethnics) were here," Combs points out. "For a time this office would have to go out and generate interest." It meant finding the ethnics in a given community, then finding a church to underwrite a ministry for the group.

Times have changed says Combs. "Now area missionaries just call all of the time," as they discover pockets of non-churched ethnics in their area.

Although some 30 language groups now form 210 congregations, Combs is concerned over the nearly 50 other language groups in the state who are not yet being reached. The longtime missions leader forecasts the race against time to share the gospel with these ethnics may be lost unless something is done.

"Our attempt to share the gospel with the non-Christian ethnics will be lost because the non-Christian population is growing much faster than we are evangelizing them," he says.

To turn the tide, Combs says our "churches are going to have to face up to the existence of ethnics and devise ways to reach these people. It is not enough to put a sign on the front of the church, 'Everybody Welcomed'. We have got to actively go out and get acquainted with them, make friends with them, cultivate them."

"We have been effective where we have had adequately trained ethnic pastors," Combs notes. He says: "Some of our ethnic churches are our strongest. Some of our fastest growing churches are ethnic churches. And by the same token, some of our hardest working pastors are ethnic pastors."

The state convention and SBC Home Mission Board send many ethnic students through California Baptist College and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. The missions director says the success of these pastors has proved the investment to be well spent.

But that's history to Combs. He contends Baptists are going to have to ask themselves what are they going to do tomorrow. He says the Anglo-American churches must be willing to share their facilities with ethnics.

"Frankly, I think we stand a much better chance of doing successful work with ethnics where we have strong Anglo churches," Combs says. "I think it would be very difficult to try to build a Baptist fellowship starting with the ethnic churches."

The former mission pastor also believes that the Anglo's cultivation of ethnics must be done without being offensive to the ethnic's cultural heritage. "The challenge is to help our people be aware that folks do not have to speak English, eat with a knife, fork and spoon, and wear American styled clothes, in order to be saved," he says.

Members of the California convention staff, to improve their awareness of ethnics, have begun to hold a series of seminars with ethnic leaders. These leaders have attempted to help the staff better understand the needs, attitudes and concerns of their people.

This in turn is expected to result in programming which will speak to the special needs of the ethnic congregations. It is also expected to help Anglo pastors and churches become more cognizant of the non-Christian ethnics.

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Adapted from Royal Service, February 1979.

Tennessee Baptists Vote
To Unload Belmont Plaza

By Norman Jameson

Baptist Press
4/6/79

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Tennessee Baptists voted April 5 to unload Belmont Plaza, a financially troubled high rise for senior adults.

In the first specially called session of the Tennessee Baptist Convention in 104 years, messengers overwhelmingly adopted the seven-part recommendation of a special study committee to sell or transfer ownership of the 123-unit building as soon as possible.

They also instructed the Tennessee Baptist Service Corporation, an agency of the state convention which built Belmont Plaza, to continue its responsibility for the maintenance and security of the facility.

A committee appointed by W. Fred Kendall II, president of the state convention, will negotiate terms of the sale or transfer and the state executive board will pay all expenses incurred in the disposition. Trustees of the service corporation were instructed to execute all necessary documents for sale or transfer upon request of the committee.

Messengers rejected the option of pumping more money into the facility to keep it under control of the convention. The Tennessee Baptist Service Corporation had asked the convention to increase its debt ceiling from \$5 million to \$6.5 million and to designate \$100,000 per year to the corporation from the state Cooperative Program budget.

The possibility--raised from the floor of the convention--of keeping Belmont Plaza as a rental apartment building was rejected.

Belmont Plaza has been in trouble since November 1978 when it was discovered that excess funds from a bond sale could be used only for construction and not for operating expenses as originally intended. So when the facility was completed Feb. 1, it could not open.

Tennessee State securities laws allow the interest collected on the bond amount to be used for operating expenses, but the Belmont Plaza bonds were sold as high risk and written to require the interest, which amounted to \$457,000, to be placed in reserve--unreachable for operating expense.

William H. Coles Jr., Nashville banker and chairman of the study committee that brought the recommendation, tried to explain to the 1,400 messengers what went wrong. He told them the Tennessee Baptist Service Corporation was asked to do an impossible job without the resources or collateral; that non-expert people were dealing with very technical financial and construction problems; and that the project's legal documents, bond indentures and prospectus were not in agreement.

Those instruments were apparently not in agreement because the Tennessee Baptist Service Corporation's directors did not seek adequate legal counsel for their protection.

The committee's seven-point recommendation was amended to include an eighth point--that the committee to dispose of Belmont Plaza try to maintain, if possible, a

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relationship between the facility and the Tennessee Baptist Convention. That move was seen as an attempt to give Belmont College, a Southern Baptist school whose land borders Belmont Plaza, a good opportunity to somehow utilize the facility.

One of the options which was to have been presented to the special convention would have tried to shift control of the building to Belmont College. But college president Herbert C. Gabhart withdrew the option just prior to the convention's convening.

A significant point in the recommendation says that any gain or loss realized from the sale or transfer of Belmont Plaza will be a gain or loss of the state convention. The convention thus assumes complete liability with the understanding that no bond holder will lose on his investment.

Earlier reports maintained the service corporation was a separate entity from the state Baptist convention.

Wade Darby, executive director of the Tennessee Baptist Service Corporation, told the messengers, "I want to do the very best I know and the very best I can to sell Tennessee Baptists on the idea of a loving, effective, business-like, Christian ministry to the elderly." Darby became executive director of the corporation Jan. 1, 1978, after the Belmont project was underway. The corporation also operates a nursing home in Lenoir City, Tenn.

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Baptist Pastors Find
Ministry in Middletown

By Norman Jameson

Baptist Press
4/6/79

MIDDLETOWN, Pa. (BP)--Fear crept up the backs of Southern Baptist pastors who lingered in the shadow of the power plant on Three Mile Island, but they stayed through the nuclear nightmare to help others who refused to leave.

Pennsylvania Governor Richard Thornburgh advised all pregnant women and preschool children within five miles of the plant to evacuate. That order decimated attendance at all churches near the plant.

Bill Reese, whose Valley Baptist Church is just three and a half miles from the crippled Metropolitan Edison Unit 2, sent his wife Sheila and two daughters to Sheila's parents in Ohio. They were still gone a week later and Reese hovered over his radio and police scanner, keeping up with developments by the minute.

He said no one in the fated five-mile circle would talk of anything but the potential holocaust that lurked inside the four-foot thick cement belly of the plant.

For worship, just 41 people sat in the pews normally occupied by 125-145 at Valley. In Sunday School, only 27 students came when average attendance is 110-115. The offering was \$208, nearly \$700 below the average. "One more Sunday like the last one and we're in real financial trouble," Reese said.

Tension eased farther from Middletown where pastors found their faith a stark contrast to the confusion and clamor that gripped those around them.

Terry Douglas, pastor of the East Shore Baptist Church in Harrisburg, 14 miles from the plant, said his members told him, "This will give us great opportunities to share Jesus Christ with people who are running scared and climbing the walls. It's great witness tool to give people something to hang onto."

Douglas said that in his members, few of which evacuated, there was an underlying faith that God would take care of the situation. "Something like this tests a man's faith in God," Douglas said. "Though we realize we can't be foolish and say God will protect us so the radioactivity won't affect us. We've still got to proceed with caution."

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Douglas said he and his wife decided what they would take with them should the order come to evacuate. After they chose a few important legal documents, everything else was "just material" he said.

Willis E. Dewberry, interim pastor at Country and Town Baptist Church in Camp Hill, 15 miles from the plant, said his church hadn't missed a service during the incident. Twelve to 15 families left town, he said, but they are returning.

None of the pastors reached by phone had become nuclear opponents. Speaking for themselves and the great numbers of people they've talked with during the week of tension, they said most of them, if assured the plant had been repaired and was safe, would not fear its reactivation.

"I'm a futurist," said Dewberry, a retired pastor of First Baptist Church, Hanover. "We have to turn to nuclear energy. I think in the long run this (incident) will result in good. We'll solve the problem. We'll make it as safe as anything else."

Douglas said the 10 mile per hour breakneck speed of the first automobile was considered dangerous too, and probably was responsible for several deaths. "We've just had the worst nuclear accident in history," he said. "But it was controlled and as far as we know, no one was hurt."

Perhaps the strongest voice, rising from the tumult of conflicting reports, is from the reactor itself.

"The reactor is saying 'mistreat me and I'll blow you all to kingdom come. Treat me carefully and prayerfully and I'll serve you faithfully the rest of your lives,'" said Dewberry.

The whole incident will be grist for the sermon mills for months to come. Dewberry preached the next Sunday on "The voice that wakes the dead."

"We better listen," he said. "We have problems facing us in the future. We better get our hearts and hands and heads together and prepare to do the job."

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Rings, Service Pins Given For Peruvian Church Building

LIMA, Peru (BP)--Like an Old Testament response to a call for jewels to build the temple, members of First Baptist Church, Lima, Peru, gave wedding bands, earrings, service pins and other valuables toward construction of a new church building in the city of 5 million.

Members gave 241 items of gold, valued at \$5,000. One elderly man gave a gold fountain pen that had been given to him when he was a little boy. A bank employee gave his diamond studded 41-year service pin. Another gave a pin representing 25 years of service.

The building will cost considerably more than the \$5,000, according to Southern Baptist missionary L. Steve Diltmore of Texas. The church, because of its strategic downtown location, is required by government regulations to construct a more expensive building than is really needed at this time.

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