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Baptist Witness to Muslims--
Slow, Limited, but Progressing

By Ruth Fowler
for Baptist Press

Sometimes with few visible results, and often limited by government regulation, Southern Baptist witness among Muslims continues around the world.

Southern Baptist work in Muslim nations or areas follows no single pattern, according to Winston Crawley, the Foreign Mission Board's overseas division director. And it is probably some of the most sensitive work Southern Baptists do.

The kind of work is largely dependent on the government regulations ruling each area. In Muslim-governed nations Baptist work is sometimes limited to benevolent ministries such as medical and educational efforts. In some Muslim nations Baptists can only provide English-language church leadership for Americans living in those nations.

"Each country has its own history and traditions and its own policies," Crawley said. "Medical and education ministries have had special value in strongly Muslim areas such as Jordan, Gaza and Yemen. Literature and broadcasting ministries have been very useful to Senegal and Bangladesh."

A Bangladesh missionary tells of a man who waited 10 years after making a profession of faith in Christ to be baptized. Like many Muslims who become Christians, he realized that being baptized meant giving up home, family and inheritance.

Limitations to witness are common in Muslim areas. Southern Baptist missionaries in some places are not allowed to speak of Christ to a Muslim unless the Muslim has asked directly for this witness. In other countries missionaries must limit their witness to non-Muslim groups.

The two main factors affecting the relationship between more orthodox forms of Islam and Baptist work are the extent to which the government links religious faith to the social and legal system, and the influence of Western culture.

The Muslim is linked with other Muslims by religious faith, but the social tie is even stronger. This makes public profession of faith in Christ very costly. For many Muslims this decision means complete isolation from family and friends--becoming a social outcast.

Modern developments have moderated the sternness of the Muslim faith through education, new views on the place of women, and the need for Western technology, Crawley said.

To accommodate minority groups within the social system, some governments have built "fences" or distinctions between Baptist work as it applies to Muslims and as it applies to minority groups of other faiths. With the modern developments and these small accommodations has come a new measure of openness and response. This response--however limited--is encouraging to missionaries.

Often missionaries can use New Testaments, encouraging people to read for themselves about Christ. And in Lebanon, the Baptist recording studio run by missionaries and Arabs produces radio programs for the entire Arab world.

The area where the Muslim population is most open to Christian witness is Indonesia. William R. Wakefield, the board's secretary for Southeast Asia, said many Indonesian Muslims are only nominal in their belief.

"Since 1965, everyone in Indonesia has been required to have a religion; if they didn't they were considered communists and executed," Wakefield said. "Many chose Islam for lack of better ideas."

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Because these people are less orthodox, missionaries and local Baptists have been able to use more direct evangelism.

However, government edicts announced last year threaten to curtail Christian witnessing in Indonesia. If strictly enforced, the edicts would prohibit witnessing to anyone who claims a different religion. Also, the decrees specify that missionaries are expected to train Indonesians to replace them within two years.

But except for isolated incidents and delay in receiving some visas, Wakefield said, Baptist work has continued much as before the decrees.

Witnessing to the Muslim, especially the orthodox or conservative Muslim, can be extremely difficult because of existing misunderstandings, Crawley said. "The Muslim thinks he knows about Jesus already and must unlearn some of what he believes in order to see the Christ of the New Testament."

What are the future prospects for work among Muslims?

"I think the world is going to move in the direction of greater freedom for everybody," Crawley said. "This would be a move away from the customs, laws and traditions that have tended to limit personal freedom in lands where Islam dominates as well as in other lands."

The board hopes to continue work in all the Muslim areas in which it now has ministries and perhaps even move into new areas in north Africa. But plans to enter Mali in West Africa or Brunei in Southeast Asia may have to await the outcome of recent political developments in the Middle East.

Southern Baptist missionaries have already returned and begun church services in Iran, where an Islamic state is being set up. And with the recent peace treaty between Israel and Egypt the board hopes to have a more permanent presence in Egypt.

Just how much Christian witness will be allowed in these Muslim nations is not yet known. For now, the Foreign Mission Board is waiting, watching, and taking advantage of opportunities that do exist. (BP)

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

**Carroll Sees Refugee Tide
Turn Back to Ugandan Homes**

By Mary Jane Welch

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--G. Webster Carroll, returning to Uganda after a war which ousted President Idi Amin, has a new job. Instead of helping Ugandan refugees exist in nearby Kenya, he is helping them rebuild their own land.

With strong support from the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign Mission Board, he is moving ahead with a rehabilitation program that involves hundreds of thousands of dollars in aid and a number of U. S. volunteers.

Just how many volunteers is not yet certain, but the Ugandan officials have said there are opportunities for hundreds to help.

"If we're talking Bold Mission Thrust (SBC plan to proclaim Christ to the entire world), let's get bold," Carroll told James W. Cecil, the board's associate consultant on laymen overseas, during Cecil's recent visit to East Africa.

Both agreed that much help will be needed to rebuild the country recently freed from the rule of President Amin, who had banned Baptists and 26 other religious groups, killed many of his countrymen, and reduced the nation to poverty.

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As soon as the new government took power, Carroll approached its leaders to offer Baptist help in restoring physical and spiritual health to the nation. Only weeks earlier, the Southern Baptist missionary had been working with some of these same leaders while they were in exile.

When Amin was deposed, Carroll, a 52-year-old Bluefield, W. Va., native, was one of the first to reenter the country from Kenya, where he and his wife had been living since fighting stepped up in February. He returned to help distribute the first shipment of foreign aid to enter the country.

Although the Medical Assistance Program of Carol Stream, Ill., provided the medical supplies, Richard Senzig, MAP's director of resource development, says delivery would have been impossible without Carroll's help.

During a time when the new government was just beginning to function, Carroll approached government officials and got permission to fly 1,000 pounds of medical supplies into the country. Medical supplies reportedly had been unavailable to the public there for the last five years.

Carroll also received an invitation for himself, Senzig, MAP president Raymond Knighton, and fellow missionary James L. Rice of Virginia to fly into Uganda with a delegation of Ugandan officials returning from Nairobi.

"When we arrived in Uganda, he obviously enjoyed himself more than the rest of us because he had lived there before," said Senzig. "When he saw these people that he loved so much, he was moved with a great deal of emotion."

In Uganda, Senzig said, Carroll showed an amazing gift of diplomacy. He seemed to know the hometown, the children's names, or a relative of almost every person he met. If he didn't know someone, even a taxi driver, he carefully noted the new acquaintance's name in a book he carried with him.

Southern Baptists' first preaching missionary to Uganda, Carroll saw Uganda's prosperity crumble under Amin's rule until a single aspirin tablet was reportedly selling for three to five dollars on the black market.

Since he first came to Uganda from missionary service in Tanzania, Carroll has placed a priority on training Ugandans for leadership roles. To practice baptism, he and a young Ugandan pastor dunked each other a dozen times in the Nile. He also helped teach leadership training schools around the country. "We soft missionaries take tents and cots," he said, "but the Africans sleep on the church floor, which is God's good earth."

Eventually this big, extroverted man identified so closely with the Ugandan people that it became difficult for him to give what others might call a routine report in mission meetings without weeping.

Carroll's ability to make key arrangements and decisions in distributing the medical supplies from MAP stemmed from ties he maintained with Uganda, even after Amin banned Baptist churches. He and Rice registered as representatives of the Ugandan Bible Society and continued ministering there. Occasionally, he and his wife Betty, who remained with him throughout this time, went on business trips to Kenya and remained there until advised by friends that it was safe to return.

"While in Kenya, he was personally, actively involved in work among Ugandan refugees and exiles in such cities as Nairobi, Nakuru, and Kisumu," says Davis L. Saunders, the Foreign Mission Board's area secretary for Eastern and Southern Africa.

Quickly assessing the possibilities for restoration after advent of the new regime, Carroll shifted his focus back to Uganda. He made plans for using village churches to distribute aid, began restoring Uganda's Baptist churches and Bible schools, and reported government requests for hundreds of volunteers.

While those who have worked with Carroll praise his ability to visualize possibilities and make contacts, they say he might get bogged down in administrative details if he didn't turn that over to someone else. In Uganda, Rice's administrative skills have complemented Carroll's abilities. While Carroll was making government contacts for shipping aid into Uganda, Rice was clearing tons of foreign aid through customs in Kenya.

Carroll had been in Kenya since late February when fighting stepped up in the efforts of the Tanzanian army and Ugandan exiles to depose Amin. The Rices were also in Kenya for a four-month language study following an eight-month furlough in the United States.

As soon as the new government took power and restored religious freedom, Carroll was ready to return to his old home. In Jinja he found his household workers safe, although his home had been looted. He found at least 12 churches damaged or destroyed in Eastern Uganda. He found people who had been without adequate food or medicine for years.

But he also found human rights, including religious freedom, restored that had been suppressed for years. He was ready to get on with the job of rebuilding the country and preaching about God's love.

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(BP) Photos mailed to Baptist state editors by Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press

Robison Cancels Bryant, Gets
\$1,000 A Month From Criswell

Baptist Press
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DALLAS (BP)--Evangelist James Robison has withdrawn an invitation to singer Anita Bryant to appear with him at a "Freedom to Preach" rally June 5 at Dallas Convention Center.

Robison told about 800 ministers of several denominations at First Baptist Church, Euless, near Dallas that the decision was based chiefly on concern for Miss Bryant's personal safety. His attorneys also expressed concern that her appearance would "cloud" the real issue of freedom to preach and focus too much attention on the homosexual community.

"We've had a large number of threats (made against Miss Bryant and Robison) since our announcement that she would come here...The homosexuals would like to ride that--have a parade," said Robison, who will speak June 10 at the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference in Houston.

Also at the Euless meeting, W. A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, largest Southern Baptist congregation, that his church will give \$1,000 a month to Robison's legal fund in his "Freedom to Preach" battle against Dallas TV station WFAA (Channel 8).

The ministers met with Robison to discuss the ramifications of his battle with WFAA over their interpretation of the Federal Communication Commission's Fairness Doctrine. Robison's weekly television program--aired by about 90 stations was cancelled March 2 by WFAA, an ABC-TV affiliate, after he denounced homosexuality as sin and read comments from various publications about homosexuals.

Station Manager Dave Lane, a Southern Baptist layman, said the Sunday morning program was cancelled because of a "continuing problem" with the fiery Southern Baptist evangelist making statements "about other religious organizations and community groups."

The station had also cancelled but reinstated Robison's program in 1977 after the homosexuals demanded and received equal time under the Fairness Doctrine to respond to his attacks.

Lane, an active member of Wilshire Baptist Church, Dallas, has not taken the position that Robison cannot name homosexuality as a sin in the context of a biblical sermon.

"That (application of the Fairness Doctrine) doesn't mean he can't read the Bible. That doesn't mean he can't name a particular sin, whatever sin that is, or even call people's attention to it as a problem and ask them to vote against it," Lane said.

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The problem WFAA attorneys had with the Feb. 25 broadcast, Lane said, was the total picture that was painted of homosexuals, specifically Robison's reading from the National Inquirer magazine linking homosexuals with child molesting, violence and murder.

"If there was a point where it stepped over the line, that possibly was the point," Lane said.

Robison, charging his constitutional rights have been injured, hired the famed criminal attorney Richard "Racehorse" Haynes to press for a hearing with the FCC.

Haynes said at a Robison press conference at the close of the National Association of Broadcasters' annual meeting in Dallas in March, "We will take this to the mat."

"That means we're prepared to go to the Supreme Court, if necessary," said officials of the Robison Evangelistic Association.

In April Robison demanded an hour of time to respond to the "Hugh Hefner's 25th Anniversary Playboy Special" on ABC-TV on grounds it presented one side of a public issue. Robison wanted to use the time to air a documentary called "The End of Outrage--A Call to Arms."

WFAA attorney Bill Dempsey said the network special was entertainment, did not raise any public issues and was therefore not subject to the Fairness Doctrine.

Wallace E. Johnson, chief of the FCC's Broadcast Bureau, said in a letter of response to the controversy that "a licensee is free to carry or reject any programming it chooses, subject to whatever obligations it may have under the Fairness Doctrine." He also said the commission will review complaints to determine whether the licensee acted reasonably and in good faith.

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R. G. Puckett Named
To Head Americans United

Baptist Press
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SILVER SPRING, Md. (BP)--R. Gene Puckett, editor of the Maryland Baptist since Aug. 1, 1966, has been elected executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

The organization, based in Silver Spring, Md., near Washington, works for religious freedom and separation of church and state.

Puckett, 47, will resign from the news publication of the Baptist Convention of Maryland, effective July 31. He will succeed Andrew Leigh Gunn, who left the Americans United post late last year.

A native of Kentucky, Puckett will continue to live in Reisterstown, Md., about 40 miles from Silver Spring, and maintain membership in the Woodbrook Baptist Church, a Southern Baptist congregation.

He came to the Maryland Baptist from the associate editorship of the Western Recorder, Kentucky state Baptist paper, where he served, 1963-66. Previously he was a pastor in Florida, 1961-63; the first fulltime editor of the Ohio Baptist Messenger, Columbus, Ohio, 1958-61; and a pastor in Kentucky and Ohio, 1952-58.

"I am excited about the challenge and opportunity to give leadership at the national level and the vital areas of religious freedom and separation of church and state," Puckett said. "There is little question about the importance of these issues in the life of our nation and the immediate future. With the growth of government and its intrusion into the private sector, including church life, and the abuses of some in the name of religion, there will be an even greater need to preserve and protect these dimensions so precious to American life."

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Americans United President Calvin W. Didier, of St. Paul, Minn., called Puckett's appointment "an exciting development for religious liberty. Mr. Puckett is an experienced editor, journalist and religious leader whose long involvement in civic and religious affairs has demonstrated a keen interest in our most basic freedom. We know that under his leadership Americans United will make positive contributions to our nation in the field of education and litigation."

Southern Baptist Convention President Jimmy R. Allen of San Antonio is a former president of Americans United.

Active in Southern Baptist life, Puckett has been president of the Southern Baptist Press Association, chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention's Committee on Order of Business; and president of the trustees at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo. He is a graduate of Western Kentucky University, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

He and his wife, the former Robbie Lake of Kentucky, have two college-age daughters.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state editors by the Maryland Baptist.

Allen Fears Shift in SBC
Priorities from Missions

By Jim Newton

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5/17/79

SAN ANTONIO, Tex. (BP)--Jimmy R. Allen looked back over his two years as president of the Southern Baptist Convention and wept with emotion as he talked about the challenge he has faced.

"God has given Southern Baptists a unique opportunity to become the flash point in starting fires of spiritual awakening that could sweep across the nation and around the world," Allen insisted. "We've just got to do it."

"If we don't respond, God will have to raise up someone else and we (Southern Baptists) will end up on the junk pile of discarded instruments that God is unable to use," declared the pastor of the 9,404-member First Baptist Church of San Antonio, which baptized 225 persons last year.

At another point during a two-hour interview, Allen expressed quiet fears that the priorities of the denomination might be shifted from the SBC's Bold Mission Thrust plan to proclaim the gospel to every person in the world by the year 2000 to the issue of biblical infallibility and inerrancy.

"There are those who would like to change the agenda of the convention from missions to orthodoxy," he said. "Such a shift of emphasis would be tragic because it would make us miss God's initiatives at a time when we are in a unique position to become a flash point in spiritual awakening."

Allen acknowledged that ultra-conservatives within the denomination, spearheaded by Houston Judge Paul Pressler and Criswell Bible Center President Paige Patterson of Dallas, have organized efforts in at least 15 states to elect a new SBC president they feel would be committed to "biblical inerrancy," and to introduce and adopt a motion or resolution on biblical infallibility. Allen said they have not disclosed their candidate.

"My only apprehension," Allen said, "is creating an atmosphere at the convention resulting in an erosion of trust in denominational leadership, and in shifting the denomination's priorities from evangelism and missions to biblical inerrancy."

Missions and evangelism have been Allen's top priorities as convention president during the past two years. The SBC presidency is traditionally two one-year terms. He has poured his physical, emotional and spiritual energies into pushing Bold Mission Thrust.

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Missions has been his all-consuming passion. Everywhere he's gone, Allen has challenged Southern Baptists to get involved personally, especially through the SBC's new Mission Service Corps, the plan to place 5,000 volunteer missionaries alongside career home and foreign missionaries, for one or two years. He's confident the goal can be reached if Southern Baptists respond to God's call.

During the interview, Allen reflected on his experiences as president of the 13.1 million member convention, the nation's largest Protestant group, and the issues he has tried to face squarely.

One of his high moments was meeting with Israel's Prime Minister Menachem Begin to discuss peace in the Middle East and his concern over religious liberty in Israel.

Within a month after Allen's visit to Israel, Minister of Justice Shmuel Tamir issued a new official interpretation of Israel's controversial "anti-bribery law" stating that the law was never intended to limit religious freedom.

While "we did not win a major victory" by having the law repealed outright, Baptists did send a "major signal" to Israel on the subject of religious liberty, Allen said shortly after the new ruling was announced.

Allen said he was concerned about "world hunger and economic justice and the sheer survival of millions of people in the Third World." He said the national convocation on world hunger sponsored by six SBC agencies last November at Ridgecrest, N. C., was a significant step forward.

He said the SBC also made significant progress in dealing with the nuclear disarmament issue as a result of a nuclear disarmament conference at Louisville, Ky., in February. Allen was interviewed on the Walter Cronkite news show on CBS-TV concerning his views on nuclear disarmament and support for the SALT treaties.

When he met with Prime Minister Begin, Allen advised the Israeli leader to have "the patience of Job" in the pursuit of peace in the Middle East, and assured him that Southern Baptists were praying for both Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.

In addition to his meeting with the Israeli prime minister, Allen and two other SBC leaders met in March with the new U. S. ambassador from the People's Republic of China, expressing Southern Baptist interest in sharing the gospel with people in mainland China.

Allen said the group was "politely received" and that they were told Chinese officials would work on an agenda to consider the possibilities of starting English-language churches for Christian Americans in the Republic of China. At the close of the hour-long meeting, Allen led the group in a prayer.

Three experiences meant the most to him personally, Allen said: (1) meeting with Prime Minister Begin, (2) challenging young people attending student week at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center to respond to missions and watching 500 commit themselves to missions service, and (3) presiding at a banquet at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D. C., when President Jimmy Carter challenged about 200 key Southern Baptist laypeople to financially undergird Mission Service Corps. About \$900,000 was raised in pledges as a result of that banquet, Allen said.

Although he is reluctant to talk about it, Allen conceded that he has had a continuing personal relationship with President Carter, who proposed the idea of Mission Service Corps in a videotaped message to the SBC two years ago in Kansas City, when Allen was elected president.

Allen said he has been in "continuing communication" with the president but would not say how often they talk or disclose the content of their discussions. President Carter, Allen said, has been very careful to observe the concept of separation of church and state.

One of Allen's greatest disappointments as president of the convention was the criticism and misunderstanding of Carter's participation at the fund-raising banquet for Mission Service Corps. "It wasn't the president's meeting, it was our meeting, and he felt it was like going to his own local church for a fund-raising dinner," Allen said.

Although Allen told President Carter in advance of his plan to visit Prime Minister Begin in Israel, Carter told him he wanted to "stay out of Allen's visit."

Allen predicted the highlight of his entire two years as president of the SBC will probably occur during the last two days when the SBC meets in Houston June 12-14.

Allen has planned a Wednesday night convention session seeking to fill the Houston Astrodome and telecast a mission commitment service live via satellite to a potential Baptist audience of 75,000 at rallies in 11 cities.

Telecasting the service via satellite may turn out historically to be one of the most significant developments in SBC life during his term of office, Allen said. "We may be pioneering in an electronic age with something that might eventually become a new way for the convention to hold its annual sessions," he said.

During that televised service, featuring evangelist Billy Graham, an estimated 1,000 mission volunteers who have made commitments for short term or career mission service during Allen's term of office will kneel on the Astro-turf for a period of commitment. Standing beside them will be representative Southern Baptists who have pledged to support the mission volunteers with their prayers and finances.

"I pray that the next president of the convention will indeed join in Bold Mission Thrust as the priority concern of the denomination," Allen said.

The SBC may even be able to keep the momentum on Bold Mission Thrust going without the president's complete support, Allen observed, pointing out that Bold Mission Thrust has been accepted and is being pushed by the denominational agency and promotion people more than ever before.

But most of all, he said, Bold Mission Thrust will succeed because it is "of God," and because the people on the grassroots level see it as an opportunity to become personally involved in missions and God's redemptive purpose.

"God's spirit is at work among us," Allen declared. "And I believe Southern Baptists will respond to the challenge."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: William E. Hardy, has withdrawn his name as the nominee for executive director of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission at a trustees meeting in Memphis. Baptist Press will send the story Friday, May 18.