



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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79-196

Baptists Pledge Support
For 25,000 Cambodians

By Anita Bowden

BANGKOK, Thailand (BP)--In the face of a continuing refugee flow from Cambodia, the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in Thailand has accepted responsibility for 25,000 refugees in two holding camps for the next six months.

Baptists will deliver and distribute food supplied by international relief agencies and foreign governments to a maximum of 25,000 people in the Kam Put and Mai Root camps.

Kam Put, located near Chanthaburi in the southeast corner of Thailand, is already established and shelters now about 8,000 Cambodians, according to John R. Cheyne of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, who recently returned from a visit to the camps.

Mai Root, which will be established further down the thin strip of Thailand between the Gulf of Siam and Cambodia, is expected to hold 20,000 Cambodians.

Besides delivering and distributing food, Baptists will take responsibility for a supplementary diet consisting of milk and/or "Vita-Soy," fish meal, beans and/or other vegetables. "Vita-Soy" is a high-protein, milk-like product without lactogen, a substance which malnourished people find difficult to digest.

In anticipation of having to limit assistance when the two camps go over the 25,000 mark, missionaries have established five levels of priorities. As the camps enlarge, the lower priorities will be taken over by other groups. The priority levels are hospital cases, orphans, children under five and nursing mothers, all children under 12, and a special supplement for everyone in the camp.

All five levels are being covered now, Cheyne says, but as more and more people reach the camps, Baptists will concentrate on hospital cases, orphans, and children under five and nursing mothers.

Missionaries estimate the cost of supplying supplementary foods, plus delivery and distribution of basic foods, will total about 10 cents per person per day. That money will come from the \$500,000 appropriated in November by the Foreign Mission Board.

Cheyne said about 10,000 Cambodians per day are entering Thailand and that between 250,000 and 300,000 are expected soon in the Kam Put area. Dr. Julius Richmond, U.S. surgeon general, reports a "striking absence of children ages one to four, the toddlers," in the camps. Other reports indicate the mortality rate of this age group is 24 times higher than normal.

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

Missionary Child
Recuperates in Texas

WICHITA FALLS, Texas (BP)--Mae Elizabeth Land, one-year-old daughter of Southern Baptist missionaries, has been released after a six-day stay in a Dallas hospital. She is recuperating at her grandparents' home in Wichita Falls, Texas.

The child, accompanied by her mother, Mrs. F. Mitchell Land, was flown to the United States Nov. 8 from her home in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, after being run over by a car.

Mae Elizabeth had no internal injuries as first suspected and required no surgery. But she suffered a broken pelvis and could not walk when she arrived in the U.S.

Now, says Mrs. Land, she is walking, but with a limp. Doctors say it will be three months before they will know if she will walk normally. But they say they want to avoid surgery now to give muscles and ligaments time to heal on their own. Mrs. Land, encouraged about her daughter's condition, says she has seen improvements each day.

Mae Elizabeth's father and the Lands' three sons will come to the States Dec. 15 for regular furlough.

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Wood, BJC Ask Ratification
Of Human Rights Treaties

Baptist Press
11/21/79

WASHINGTON (BP)--Declaring that "no theme is more central to Baptist faith and practice than the inviolability of the human conscience and the sanctity of human rights," the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs urged the U.S. Senate to ratify four pending international treaties on human rights.

James E. Wood Jr., executive director of the Baptist agency, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that while the Baptist Joint Committee does not "purport to speak for all Baptists," it is confident that its position on the treaties reflects the sentiments of "the overwhelming majority of Baptists in this country."

Wood asked the committee to report favorably for ratification by the full Senate of all four treaties--the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the American Convention on Human Rights. He noted that while the treaties were all signed on behalf of the United States when originally drafted in 1966 and 1977, the Senate has failed to ratify them formally.

His testimony specifically affirmed the role of religious liberty outlined in the treaties, saying that his agency "has long maintained that religious liberty is, in fact, the cornerstone of all human rights."

Wood noted that the Baptist agency "has long called for the elevation of human rights in U.S. foreign policy" and that it commended President Carter's emphasis on the subject just two months after his inauguration in January 1977.

"A look at the list of our western allies...and the states of the Communist bloc which have...ratified the treaties leads logically to the embarrassing question of why we are not included among the party states," Wood said.

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Members of the Baptist Joint Committee, composed of officially elected representatives from eight U.S. Baptist bodies and the Baptist Federation of Canada, voted unanimously in October to push for ratification.

Other religious groups testifying on behalf of the treaties on the final of four days of intensive hearings included the National Council of Churches, the U.S. Catholic Conference, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, and the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A.

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Angolan Baptists Prosper
Despite Mission's Absence

Baptist Press
11/21/79

LISBON, Portugal (BP)--The number of Baptist churches has almost doubled since last report and Baptist Bookstore stock sells almost as fast as it comes in, according to recent reports from Angola.

Minutes of the 1979 meeting of the Baptist Convention of Angola report about 72 churches active in Angola, said Curtis Dixon, Southern Baptist missionary to Angola living in Portugal.

Although information has been scarce since Baptist missionaries evacuated in 1975 because of civil war, earlier reports indicated 37 churches in the country.

The Dixons, the only missionaries still assigned to Angola, produce Sunday School literature and Theological Education by Extension (TEE) texts for Angola while actively seeking return to the country.

The Angolan convention admitted seven new churches in 1979, all in the Uige Province, where growth is greatest, said Dixon. When convention president, Daniel S. Correia, and secretary, Joao David Antonio, visited many of the churches during the year, they found 500 or more in attendance at all meetings in the Uige area.

The Baptist Bookstore in Luanda is still open, Dixon said, but has almost exhausted its stock. All but 300 of the 11,000 Bibles sent there in late 1977 by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board have been sold. The remaining Bibles are not in a popular dialect, he said.

A supply of books sent by the Portuguese Baptist Convention sold out in less than 24 hours and Sunday School literature which arrived too late for distribution to churches was sold in a few days.

In addition, the convention ordained seven new ministers at the 1979 meeting, and TEE has 160 students enrolled in five centers, Dixon said. Seven new church buildings were completed in the last year and two more are under construction.

Pastors at a retreat this fall at Quibala requested that new churches be organized in Maquela do Zombo and in the Province of 31st of January.

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Wrapup

States Face Some
Houston Reverberations

By Robert O'Brien

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists have emerged from the frenzied activity of 37 annual meetings with a renewed zeal for combatting the world's physical and spiritual problems--and some definite reverberations from the June meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston.

Meeting in 34 state conventions and three fellowships pointing toward convention status, Southern Baptists sounded loud support for escalation of the SBC's Bold Mission Thrust goal to proclaim the message of Christ to the entire world by the year 2000.

In at least 18 conventions, they passed resolutions aimed at some combination of combatting world hunger and increasing assistance to refugees, while about 10 others expressed concern for and support of U.S. efforts to settle the conflict with Iran over U.S. hostages.

But a blend of problems concerning theology, doctrine and polity held the spotlight as Southern Baptists continue to deal with the so-called "conservative" vs. "liberal" debate which came to a head in Houston when forces committed to the issue of biblical inerrancy (errorlessness) politicked successfully to elect a president.

Many Southern Baptists collectively held their breath awaiting the state conventions in October and November to see what effect, if any, Houston would have. Reverberations of Houston--which one advocate of the inerrancy issue said put "new fire in my bones"--appear to have surfaced either directly or indirectly in 10 or more states.

Some bones burned but the only clearcut result was predictable--Baptists took their historical stance of affirming the Bible.

In Georgia, forces led by William Powell, editor of the controversial Southern Baptist Journal, established in 1973 to seek out SBC "liberals," failed in a head-on attempt to generate support to fire Jack Harwell, editor of The Christian Index, state Baptist paper in Georgia. At issue was a letter Harwell wrote five years ago, answering specific questions, which interpreted the Adam and Eve account in Genesis in manner unacceptable to Powell's group.

While supporting Harwell by a vote of over four to one, Georgia Baptists once again affirmed the SBC's 1963 statement of Baptist Faith and Message, a statement Harwell has also personally affirmed. In other related action, messengers defeated several attempts to pass more specific statements on the Bible. The Georgia Baptist Executive Committee will meet with The Christian Index's board on Dec. 11 to further discuss the charges against Harwell.

In at least two states efforts were made to interpret the phrase "truth without any mixture of error" in the Baptist Faith and Message statement to mean that the Bible in its original autographs (manuscripts) is errorless "doctrinally, philosophically, historically and scientifically." Similar wording was used by Wayne Dehoney of Louisville, Ky., at the SBC in Houston in discussion preceding the SBC's vote to reaffirm the Baptist Faith and Message statement. The SBC reaffirmed the statement as it was written in 1963.

According to reports received from state conventions, the Northwest Convention, made up of Oregon and Washington, passed a statement identical to Dehoney's, while Texas overwhelmingly rejected it. Both, however, affirmed the Baptist Faith and Message statement.

In Oklahoma, messengers passed a motion, after lengthy debate, for a study committee to review textbooks, teaching assignments and doctrinal stance of teachers at Oklahoma Baptist University, even though they were told OBU trustees had already asked their academic affairs committee to look into charges of "neo-orthodoxy" at the school. Another resolution urged trustees and administrators of all institutions to insure the integrity of their institutions with the Baptist Faith and Message statement.

In Texas, Baylor University apparently defused a move to fire H. Jack Flanders, chairman-elect of its religion department, by asking its academic affairs committee to review all textbooks and matters pertinent to the department of religion. But while no move to dismiss Flanders surfaced at the convention, messengers did vote to reaffirm their expectation that trustees and administrators "fulfill their responsibilities in line with historic Baptist beliefs."

The motion grew out of a controversy over the textbook, "People of the Covenant," co-authored by Flanders, which Euless, Texas, pastor James T. Draper has called "liberal." Draper formerly chaired the Baylor academic affairs committee and is president of the SBC Pastors' Conference.

Texas Baptists also elected Carlos McLeod, a Plainview, Texas, pastor, as president. Reports before the convention linked McLeod's candidacy with a group pushing the issue of biblical inerrancy. McLeod, after his election, told a news conference that he believes in the inerrancy of the Bible but that he belongs to no group.

Persons whose names have been previously identified publicly with the inerrancy issue were involved in presidential elections in three states, although reports indicate the inerrancy issue played no overt role in their candidacy. Oklahoma Baptists elected Bailey Smith, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla. Jerry Vines, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, lost in Alabama. LaVerne Butler, pastor of Ninth & O Baptist Church, Louisville, and a past president of the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship, was defeated in Kentucky.

In Missouri, where a shoot-out had been predicted over William Jewell College, calm prevailed. Elton Johnson, a former dean of religious life at the college, who was fired in 1977, attempted to present charges against a William Jewell faculty member whom he claimed does not believe in a personal devil. But he was ruled out of order on grounds that his charges were not appropriate to the issue before the body. Also, Missouri messengers, by a five to one margin, commended trustees of their institutions, despite a year-long effort by some in the state to discredit their doctrinal integrity.

Actions in several state conventions, apparently indirectly related to Houston, led to resolutions in the District of Columbia and Kentucky conventions supporting Southern Baptist seminaries, and resolutions in Indiana, Arkansas and Colorado supporting biblical inerrancy.

But biblical inerrancy wasn't the only issue dealt with by state conventions.

South Carolina and Northwest set in motion actions to be considered next year which would require seating only of messengers from churches "in good standing" with associations. Indiana has a similar requirement already in its constitution, although two churches disfellowshipped by an Indiana association failed to send messengers to the state meeting.

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Asked by Baptist Press for an historical analysis of that trend, Walter Shurden, church history professor at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., called it a "semi-Presbyterian form of church government" and a "dangerous trend toward centralization of church government and loss of autonomy." He said that the local church "has typically been the only unit in Southern Baptist life which determines membership in any of the other three units"--association, state convention and national convention.

Arkansas warned three churches they might be disfellowshipped next year if they continue to practice "open communion" and "alien immersion" (acceptance of baptisms by immersion from non-Southern Baptist churches). One of the churches, Vanderbilt Avenue in West Memphis, Ark., said it accepted other immersions because the church of Adrian Rogers, elected in June in Houston as SBC president, does so.

Rogers confirmed that but declared that he does so only rarely and only after careful examination of the person's beliefs. "I sometimes wonder that this is an issue among Southern Baptist churches, because of the autonomy of every Baptist church and because it is a subtlety of theological interpretation," said Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis.

South Carolina and Georgia refused to take a position on the ordination of women, declaring that is a matter for the local church. Georgia refused to prevent denominational employees from participating in such ordinations.

Northwest disfellowshipped a church for "deviating from accepted Baptist practices" and for having "Pentecostal tendencies," while California refused seating to messengers from a church creating "fellowship problems," believed to include charismatic practices.

North Carolina, which has had years of disagreement with Wake Forest University, agreed after much debate to let the school elect some non-Baptist trustees, who are evangelical Christians, and will stop Cooperative Program contributions to the school on Jan. 1, 1981.

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Neurosurgery Set For Son Of African Missionaries

Baptist Press
11/21/79

DALLAS, Texas (BP)--Wayne Martin, 16-year-old son of Southern Baptist missionaries brought to Baylor University Medical Center for treatment of head injuries, is scheduled to undergo neurosurgery Nov. 21.

Doctors at Baylor diagnosed Martin as having a subdural hematoma, a blood-filled swelling, which may have resulted from accidents in East Africa in recent months, and said his chances of recovery are good.

In August, he was involved in a swimming pool accident in Rwanda, where his parents are stationed, and in October, he was injured in a soccer game at Rift Valley Academy, Kijabe, Kenya, where he is a student. His parents, Earl and Jane Martin, from Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C., traveled with him to Texas.

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