



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
480 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355

W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
Norman Jamason, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041

DALLAS _____, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996

MEMPHIS Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461

NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) _____, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2798

RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151

WASHINGTON Stan L. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

April 14, 1980

80-61

Liberian President Killed;
Missionaries Take Precautions

MONROVIA, Liberia (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries in Liberia are remaining in their homes to await developments following the assassination of Liberian President William R. Tolbert Jr.

Tolbert, president of the Liberia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention since 1958, and president of Baptist World Alliance, 1965-1970, was killed April 12 in a military coup led by national guard Master Sergeant Samuel Doe. His death came one day before Baptists in Liberia were scheduled to break ground for a new Baptist convention building as part of a three-week centennial celebration of Baptist work in the country.

Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks and John E. Mills, board secretary for West Africa, were to have participated in the centennial celebration, with Parks speaking during the groundbreaking.

Ironically, a telex message from Tolbert to Adrian Rogers, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, arrived at the Baptist Press office April 11. The message asked Rogers to delay his trip to Liberia to participate in the centennial because Tolbert planned to be in Zimbabwe for independence festivities April 16.

Parks and Mills left Dakar, Senegal, their first overseas stop on a two-week survey trip, early April 12, minutes before missionaries in Dakar learned of the coup in Liberia. The plane, not allowed to land in Monrovia, was diverted to Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Mills plans to remain in Abidjan for a few days to monitor the situation. Parks continued with his survey trip schedule.

Southern Baptist missionary Jane Park reported April 12 that most of the 46 missionaries currently in Liberia had gathered in Monrovia for the groundbreaking ceremony before the coup. Those whose homes are located outside the city are staying at the seminary until further notice.

Through a ham radio operator, it was learned that the situation was calm enough on Sunday, April 13, for at least some of the missionaries to attend church services.

According to news reports, Richard A. Henries, who was House speaker in Tolbert's government, was scheduled to be tried for treason April 14. Henries, a Baptist layman, has served as chairman of deacons at Providence Baptist Church in Monrovia.

Mrs. Tolbert, who was president of the Woman's Missionary Union in Liberia, was reported to have been arrested. Their son A.B. Tolbert, considered earlier to be a possible successor to his father as president, was beheaded and Burleigh Holder, a son-in-law, was shot to death, according to early news reports.

-more-

Tolbert, who had been president of Liberia since 1971, also was pastor of Zion Praise Baptist Church in Bentol City, his hometown about 30 miles from Monrovia.

Southern Baptists entered Liberia in 1960 to undergird Baptist work in the country.

-30-

(BP) list of Southern Baptist missionaries stationed in Liberia mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Hollis Sees Good Signs For
Families, 1980 Conference

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press
4/14/80

WASHINGTON (BP)--The controversial White House Conference on Families is showing signs of moving past charges of domination by extreme left and right wing interests, according to a Baptist family life specialist.

Harry N. Hollis Jr., director of family and special moral concerns for the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, sounded a healthy note for the future of both the White House conference and the institution of the family during a taping of ABC's "Directions" and at a national research forum panel sponsored by the conference.

"I sense an increasing amount of support from people throughout the country for this conference and for its goal of looking for ways institutions of this country can strengthen family life," said Hollis, one of 40 members of the conference advisory committee.

Hollis predicted failure for single-issue groups attempting to make a battleground out of the conference.

Much of the controversy has centered in the delegate selection process as both left and right wing groups have sought to gain a majority in some states. The 1,800 delegates who will participate in three summer conferences in Baltimore, Minneapolis and Los Angeles, are chosen on the basis of a state's population by a combination of peer selection, gubernatorial appointment and state planning committees.

Though groups representing extremist positions have had some success at influencing the peer selection process in some states, the conference is not in danger of being dominated by an extremist perspective, according to Hollis.

"I haven't seen a list of delegates, but the preliminary word is that the delegates do reflect a broad range of interests," he said. "There has been attention to the extremes because they have made a lot of noise. But in the hearings and conferences that I've been a part of, this has not been a conference dominated by extremists."

Hollis, along with Monsignor Francis Lally of the U.S. Catholic Conference and Charlotte G. Holstein, of the American Jewish Committee, voiced a positive outlook for the institution of the family in taping the "Directions" segment that was to have been aired April 20.

The three religious leaders insisted that statistics reflecting increases in the divorce rate, the teen-age suicide rate, and the number of children living in one-parent families are only part of the picture.

-more-

"There are serious problems that ought not be overlooked," Hollis said, "but there is much health in the family. Families are getting stronger."

"The obituary for the institution of the family is premature," he added. "The family is not dying and it is not going to die because the family is a God-ordained institution. I think the question is not, 'Will the family survive?' but 'Will the family thrive?' and 'How can we help families to thrive?'"

-30-

MK Richard T. Abell
Dies in Fall in Italy

Baptist Press
4/14/80

NAPLES, Italy (BP)--Petty Officer 2nd Class Richard Thomas Abell, 27-year-old son of Southern Baptist missionaries to Nigeria, died here April 11 from injuries received in a fall. His parents are Dr. and Mrs. John C. Abell Jr., of Houston, Texas, medical missionaries at the Baptist Hospital in Eku, Nigeria, since 1953.

Abell, a crew member on a helicopter detachment aboard the USS Donald B. Beary, had telephoned his wife Susan in Norfolk, Va., where she is expecting their second child, and apparently was returning to his ship when he fell down a flight of stairs and died from head injuries received in the fall.

In addition to his wife and parents, survivors include a 1-year-old daughter, Kathleen.

-30-

Centurian Sings
Birthday Wishes

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
4/14/80

MINERAL WELLS, Texas (BP)--J.M. Denson has passed his 100th birthday, but he's still carrying out a Christian ministry on the telephone.

Denson has been a church member for 78 years. He stopped driving his car when he was 97, so he can't visit sick people regularly anymore, but he calls people on the telephone and sings to them on their birthdays.

"A lot of people turned it around on me when I had my 100th birthday," said Denson. "They called up and sang happy birthday to me."

His pastor, Bobby Moore, said "J.M. Denson is one of the greatest men I've ever known because his whole life has been characterized by the words of Jesus: "He that would be great among you, let him be servant of all."

Among the spiritual highlights of his life, Denson recalls helping lead music in revivals conducted by such historical figures as George Truett, J.B. Gambrell, editor of the Baptist Standard in the early 1900s, and R.C. Buckner, founder of Buckner Baptist Benevolences of Texas.

Denson says his favorite motto for life is, "I shall pass through this world but once. If, therefore, there is any kindness I can show or any good thing I can do, let me do it now. For I shall not pass this way again."

-30-

Foreign Board Does Not
Favor SBC Budget Motion

ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)--"Neither I nor the Foreign Mission Board is sponsoring or supporting action from the floor" of the Southern Baptist Convention to alter the 1980-81 Cooperative Program budget recommendation of the SBC Executive Committee, R. Keith Parks said here.

The response of the board's executive director came after at least one pastor had stated publicly that he would go to the annual meeting in St. Louis to make a motion to increase the percentage of the Cooperative Program receipts to the Foreign Mission Board.

In February, the Foreign Mission Board went on record to oppose strongly what it feels is an inadequate 8.11 percent increase in its share of the 1980-81 budget. The Foreign Mission Board will receive 48.40 percent of the 1980-81 total operating budget compared to 48.69 percent of the 1979-80 budget. Although a percentage decrease, it represents a \$2.7 million increase.

"I don't think this matter can be properly handled from the convention floor," Parks said in an interview with Louisiana's Baptist Message when the board held its April meeting in Alexandria, La.

"It's too complicated. It ought to come out as a recommendation of the Executive Committee," added Parks, who told the board there is a good chance of a motion in St. Louis to amend the budget. "I am afraid such a motion will come" if it is not headed off, he said later.

Parks addressed the subject at the Alexandria meeting in response to a request from board President John Patterson for clarification.

He said he had no desire for dissension. He said the Foreign Mission Board was simply trying to express its frustration to the Executive Committee on a peer group level.

"It was not the board's intention to make a public issue of this," Parks told Baptist Press, "but an honest effort to ask the Executive Committee to examine needs. Public comment has distorted our original intention. It was not our purpose to precipitate fragmentation or dissension with this action."

Asked if he would speak to any floor motion which might arise in St. Louis, Parks said he would have to wait to see the circumstances of such a motion, although his preference is not to say anything publicly.

"My only motivation for speaking in St. Louis would be to promote unity and harmony and encourage a spirit of oneness," Parks told Baptist Press.

Parks earlier elected not to make a public comment during the Executive Committee's February meeting which followed the Foreign Mission Board protest.

In February, Parks and Patterson sent letters to members of the Executive Committee at the board's request expressing "extreme frustration and disappointment in the distribution of funds."

Parks said the action of the board came because of a 10-year trend of decreasing the percentage of new Cooperative Program funds to the Foreign Mission Board and because the board's increase was less than at least nine other SBC agencies and less than the 8.7 percent average increase.

Memphis Chinese Church
Observes 20th Anniversary

By Connie Davis

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Leaders in language work from across the Southern Baptist Convention and the mid-south joined some 300 guests and members of the Memphis Chinese Baptist Church in celebrating its 20th anniversary in a bilingual service April 13.

Speakers included the church's founder, R. Paul Caudill, retired pastor of First Baptist Church, Memphis, where the Chinese church still meets, and Peter Kung, director of Chinese church growth with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. President Jimmy Carter sent a letter.

Carter's letter said the anniversary paid "tribute to founders and other leaders whose hopes, sacrifices and dedication extend from the past to inspire generations of the present and future."

Caudill, a past president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, recalled his first work with Chinese in Augusta, Ga., in 1937. "Your church really began with the first knock at the door of a Chinese family in Augusta," he said. "We grew to love the Chinese people."

In 1944 Caudill became pastor of First Baptist Church, Memphis, and began visiting grocery store owners and baptizing families. He started a Sunday school for the Chinese. "In 1960 I recall that small group of Chinese people that joined together for our first service right here in this church," said Caudill.

Caudill is one of the pioneers of Chinese work in America. Although Chinese work was first started in 1854 in San Francisco, only four other men started Chinese work before Caudill in 1937. Caudill also started the First Chinese Baptist Church in Houston, Texas.

"Among the Chinese work established in those early years, Memphis Chinese Baptist Church stands out in the south as a successful story," said Kung.

"This church is the fruit of the local church, not any other agency," said Paul Wong, pastor. "It is a direct language mission of this church," he said, referring to First Baptist Church.

The church has 170 resident members and has Mandarin services and Cantonese/English bilingual services each Sunday. Wong also directs a Bible school which meets on Wednesday nights in homes. Wong came to Memphis in 1976 from the 2,000-member Hong Kong Baptist Church. He was also formerly president of the Hong Kong Baptist Convention.

The outreach ministry of the Memphis Chinese Baptist Church reaches about 250 Chinese each Sunday from a community of about 1,000 Chinese in Memphis.

Other guests in the service working to reach the growing language groups in Memphis were Elias D. Pantoja, director of Spanish work for the Shelby Baptist Association; James Kellum, director of Vietnamese work for the association; and George Jue, chairman of the mid-south Chinese Association.