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81-80

Southern Baptists Join Prayers for John Paul II

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists, grieved and distressed by the assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II, have joined in worldwide prayer for the recovery of the spiritual leader of the world's Roman Catholics.

John Paul II, reported to be in guarded condition in a Rome hospital, was shot in the abdomen, right arm and left hand as he greeted worshippers near Vatican City Wednesday, May 13.

Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, urged the 35,600 affiliated churches of the SBC to join in prayer for the recovery of the pontiff.

Foy D. Valentine, executive director of the denomination's moral concerns agency, the Christian Life Commission, said: "I deplore this tragic and senseless shooting of the pope following as it does hard on the heels of the tragic and senseless shooting of our own president.

"But the utter gravity of the situation calls for more than individual handwringing and personal sorrow. Christians must work far more faithfully to win the lost to Christ and Christian citizens must work far more responsibly to deal with such social ills as political terrorism, religious and racial prejudice, widespread denial of human rights, handgun abuse, television violence, unemployment, poverty, injustice and war.

"To fail to do so will doom us either to go back to the Dark Ages or to rush toward Armageddon. God has shown us a better way, a way in which we both preach and practice the gospel."

Bailey E. Smith, president of the 13.6 million-member SBC, called the assassination attempt "tragic and regrettable. I appreciate this man's attempts for world peace and he has always impressed me with his warm, gracious and personable manner."

"I believe he has a genuine love for his ministry and for all people of the earth. We should all pray earnestly for the recovery of this good man and pray for a soon end to violence everywhere."

Two groups, the Baptist World Alliance and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, stopped meetings to hold prayer for the recovery of the pope.

Duke K. McCall, president of the Washington, D.C.-based BWA, said those present for the meeting were "shocked and horrified" by the shooting and called on all Christians "to make it clear that we stand together against the use of violence, particularly against those innocent of any wrongdoing."

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At the HMB in Atlanta, C. Brownlow Hastings, an expert on Catholic-Baptist relations, voiced a concern that the shooting "will not further aggravate tensions between peoples of differing world religions."

William G. Tanner, HMB president, called the attempt "a symptom of the sickness that plagues the world today," and said: "We at the Home Mission Board are praying that God in his ultimate power will intervene in human life and bring an end to the sickness of violence that is eating away at the world like a cancer from within."

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Nonprofit Postage
Increase Is Likely

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press
5/15/81

WASHINGTON (BP)--Baptist state newspapers and agency publications, and other nonprofit mailers, appear headed for severe postage increases in October.

It is apparently now a question of how severe the hikes will be.

A spokesman for the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service told Baptist Press some cuts are "likely" in the subsidy which allows nonprofit organizations to move gradually from partial to full postage rates.

The proposed cut, already recommended by the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, would eliminate the final six years of a 16-year plan implemented by Congress to cushion the impact of requiring nonprofit mailers to pay full rates for mailing their publications.

The House Committee recently held two days of hearings to examine what Chairman William B. Ford, D-Mich., described as "the implications of President Reagan's proposal to make major spending reductions in postal appropriations."

Both the House and the Senate already have approved the president's overall budget spending limits for fiscal year 1982, but individual committees are now in the process of recommending ways in which the specific cuts will be made.

Ford's committee is required by the House Budget Resolution to cut \$5.5 billion in 1982 spending and could choose to accept or reject the administration recommendation to cut the nonprofit mailing subsidy.

In the hearings, Edgar R. Trexler, representing Associated Church Press, American Jewish Press, Catholic Press Association and Evangelical Press Association, told the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service that elimination of the phasing process "may well be a disaster."

Trexler, speaking for more than 750 publications with total circulation of approximately 70 million, said eliminating the phasing process would more than double postage costs of these nonprofit organizations.

Trexler's example of a 137 percent hike in the cost of mailing his own publication, The Lutheran, parallels the estimates made by editors of Southern Baptist state newspapers and agency publications.

"The religious press is willing to pay fair postal rates," Trexler asserted. But he feels "Congress is on the verge of breaking faith with the religious press by suddenly forcing religious publishers to assume an exhorbantly heavy postal increase."

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Trexler cited a survey showing that 10 percent of religious publications would die if postage rates more than doubled and more than half would be forced to mail fewer copies.

Trexler further challenged the notion that the postal service should be self-supporting, saying that such a goal "is not as important as service to the general welfare."

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California Evangelistic
Efforts Slated for SBC

By Don Hepburn

Baptist Press
5/15/81

FRESNO, Calif. (BP)--Two California evangelistic efforts preceding and during the 1981 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention have been planned in response to a convention mandate to provide an evangelistic opportunity for messengers.

A simultaneous revival effort involving nearly 500 California churches and an estimated 1,000 Southern Baptists from across the nation will be held the week prior to the convention.

Leading the revivals will be out-of-state pastors, evangelists, denominational workers and church musicians. The volunteers will travel to California churches at their own expense and local churches will provide housing, meals and a love offering.

In addition to the local church revivals, several foreign language crusades have been scheduled. Los Angeles area Chinese Southern Baptists will host a Chinese language crusade. Guest speaker will be Princeton Hsu, professor at Hong Kong Baptist Seminary.

In San Francisco, a crusade for Italian-speaking persons will feature Stanley Crabb, Southern Baptist foreign missionary assigned to Rome, Italy.

Similar crusades for Korean language and Spanish language persons have been scheduled for later in the summer.

A special four-color evangelistic tract for use by messengers during the convention will contain the greeting "Happy Birthday LA." Printed in five languages—English, Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Spanish—the greeting salutes Los Angeles' bicentennial.

The inside of the tract highlights the four steps to becoming a Christian. The reverse side lists the phone numbers of the five area Southern Baptist association offices where a person may call for further assistance in making a profession of faith.

"We suggest messengers secure a supply of these tracts for distribution in motels, restaurants, taxicabs, phone booths, on the streets, at tourist attractions and other places where they will meet Angeleans," said Harry Williams, evangelism director for the Southern Baptist General Convention of California.

To promote the revival efforts, the California state convention has purchased radio commercials to run in selected markets of the state. The radio campaign, produced by the Home Mission Board, uses the theme "Listen Now, Hear Forever."

The two evangelistic projects, an outgrowth of a request made at an earlier SBC meeting, call attention to the great missions challenge of California.

The resulting revivals and tracts were coordinated by the state convention's evangelism department and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

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"We hope to win people to Christ," explained Williams, but added he believes the revivals and witnessing effort will have a greater impact upon the participants. "It will give them the experience of working in a state where we have such a tremendous number of lost people. It will give them an opportunity to work on the cutting edge of evangelism in a place where Christians are in such a great minority."

"I think it will help them to see that they have made a contribution to winning people in the nation's most populous state," he added. "I think they will go back with California on their hearts."

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Changes At Gaza Hospital
Not An End To Medical Work

Baptist Press
5/15/81

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Transfer of administrative responsibility for Gaza Baptist Hospital to another missions agency does not signal the withdrawal of Southern Baptists from the hospital business, said Franklin T. Fowler, Foreign Mission Board medical consultant.

But unless many of the board's 20 hospitals overseas become more self-supporting, they may have to find alternatives to full Southern Baptist sponsorship, Fowler believes.

Future responsibility for the financially troubled Gaza Hospital was returned to the Church Missionary Society of England (Anglican) in the Foreign Mission Board's May meeting.

Beginning Jan. 1, 1982, the Anglican Church's Jerusalem Diocese will administer the hospital, which for 27 years has been the primary Baptist witness in Gaza. Baptists will retain control of the School of Health Sciences adjacent to the hospital.

Southern Baptist-operated hospitals have been turned over to national Baptist bodies when it was feasible, as in Mexico, Hong Kong and Japan, Fowler said. In other places the best solution may be to turn hospitals over to a government which would be friendly and not oppose a Christian witness.

Often these changes in hospital status have come after strong national Baptist bodies emerged or the country developed adequate health care systems. Southern Baptist missionaries often can continue to work in these hospitals and effect a positive Christian witness.

In Gaza, as in many other countries, closing the hospital would be "a tremendous defeat to the Christian witness," Fowler said. It could mean closing the door to a Baptist witness for a long time to come in that particular area with a possible rippling effect in other areas.

"The fact that we have found a solution to keeping the hospital going in Gaza will be a plus as far as our Baptist witness is concerned. We have shown the people that we really care for them," he said. "I really feel that our witness will be even stronger in the years ahead."

Changes in Gaza may herald the end to some types of medical ministries. But, Fowler stressed, the Gaza decision does not signal the end to medical work.

"Health care ministry and all of its involvement, its compassion and care and concern is very much part of the total mandate of our Lord and, I feel, of Southern Baptists," he said.

"The concept in the past among Southern Baptists has been that we are big enough, rich enough and strong enough to do anything we want and do it by ourselves," Fowler said. He suggested that in the future Baptists might engage in more partnership ventures for the larger and more expensive projects.

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"This will have to be done very carefully to guard our identity and our freedom of witness," he said.

Baptists have cooperated this way before. Dr. and Mrs. Jasper McPhail were appointed in 1961 to work at the medical school in Vellore, India, which is served by many different boards.

"I feel that because of the largeness, the expense and the complexities involved, we may have to move more and more toward this type of partnership in missions beyond the borders of our own denomination," Fowler said.

Changes in administration in Gaza will mean that the work there will be strengthened. It should not be viewed as a "defeat or even a retreat," he said.

Although the Anglicans are taking over the hospital management, Southern Baptist missionaries have said they wish to stay on, a decision heartily approved by the new sponsors.

The Foreign Mission Board will continue to pay their missionaries' salaries, no small contribution, Fowler said. "After all, if you don't have doctors and nurses, it's pretty hard to have a hospital."

The Anglican Church, which will solicit funds from other sources, will cope with the financial crisis in Gaza more easily, Fowler surmised.

The future of Southern Baptist health care ministry overseas "truly will not be going into all the world and building a hospital at every crossroad," he said. But medical work will remain a vital part of what Southern Baptists do.

It is more than a "tool of evangelism that can be used until its effectiveness is worn out and then discarded." It is part of the total concept of missions, a part of evangelism, he added.

In some areas where the gospel cannot be proclaimed openly, he said, medical work "can show the gospel of love and to me this is very much a part of witness."

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Ducklings Flap Way
Onto Prime-Time TV

Baptist Press
5/15/81

DACCA, Bangladesh (BP)--They caused quite a flap when they landed at the airport. But how else could a flock of baby ducks arrive?

Shipped from Thailand, the 19,500 ducklings are part of a hunger relief project of Southern Baptist missionaries in Bangladesh. The missionaries and government officials will distribute the ducks to farms all over this south Asian country as part of a food-producing project for the farm families.

Both the ducks and the missionaries who came to receive them were featured on prime time national television in English and Bengali newscasts.

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CORRECTION: In Baptist Press mailed 5/13/81, "Auchmuty Challenging Committee on Boards," paragraph 9, Fred Wolfe was to have served on the 1980-81 committee on committees from Texas, not committee on boards.

Thanks,
Baptist Press