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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

## NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee  
460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
(615) 244-2355  
Wilmer C. Fields, Director  
Dan Martin, News Editor  
Craig Bird, Feature Editor

### BUREAUS

**ATLANTA** Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
**DALLAS** Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996  
**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300  
**RICHMOND** (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** Stan L. Hasty, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

April 7, 1983

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### Ministerial Alliance Seeks To Ease SBC Housing Shortage

PITTSBURGH, Pa. (BP)--Non-Southern Baptist ministers in Pittsburgh are helping find "homes for the homeless" who want to attend the annual SBC convention in their city.

Publicity over the shortage of rooms for the 15,000 to 20,000 Southern Baptists who are expected to attend the meeting June 14-16, especially stories of hotels refusing to honor reservations they had already accepted, has evoked Christian charity among the Pittsburgh religious community.

"American Baptists and Methodists have really taken the lead in offering assistance," said Tim Hedquist, SBC convention manager. "The local ministerial alliance has contacted the Southern Baptist Convention and is trying to find private housing among its member congregations for Southern Baptists visitors."

The Pittsburgh Baptist Association was already working with the city's 3,500 Southern Baptists to make private homes available and the ecumenical offer will also be handled through the Pittsburgh association's office.

Anyone interested should write to Private Housing, Greater Pittsburgh Baptist Association, 659 Washington Road, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15228. Include the number of people in your party and your arrival and departure times. The housing will be distributed on a first come, first served basis.

For people seeking hotel rooms, Hedquist said, "if the room application has not been confirmed" the number of the Pittsburgh Convention Bureau is 412-281-7711.

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Job Training Helps Refugees  
Secure Jobs, Not Welfare

By Susan Cahen

Baptist Press  
4/7/83

BATAAN, Philippines (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries and volunteers in the Philippines are using a \$65,000 hunger and relief appropriation to build five houses and teach Indochinese refugees construction skills.

The construction project is part of a vocational training program at the Bataan (Philippines) Refugee Processing Center, where Baptists teach courses in carpentry, electricity, cabinetmaking, plumbing, automotive repair and refrigeration.

Each class is backed up with English instruction to give the refugee a working knowledge of the language. Trade unions in the United States utilizing refugees have complained that while refugees are good craftsmen, they often lack language skills that would allow them to follow simple instructions.

But refugees Baptists have helped train are finding jobs in the United States--even during the recession, missionaries report.

Dono W. Moore, director of Baptist ministries at the refugee center, anticipates at least 3,000 refugees will receive training in building the five houses.

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That translates into \$21.66 per refugee for that phase of training. The completed residences will be used to house Southern Baptist volunteers who teach vocational courses at the center. In the past refugees fabricated mock-ups of buildings, then tore them down so the next class could repeat the procedure.

The processing center is operated by the Philippine government under contract with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Baptists petitioned the government and were granted the responsibility for vocational education.

"When visitors are shown the camp facilities, they are normally taken to the vocational center as one of the most outstanding examples of ministry to the refugee families," said a Southern Baptist relief official.

"Many agencies other than Southern Baptists are working at the center," says Max Green, a volunteer from Virginia. "All of them receive money from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, except Southern Baptists. All our buildings are Baptist built; all tools, visual aids, equipment and programs are provided with Southern Baptist funds."

Most of the teachers have been volunteers rather than career missionaries. Whether many of the classes are taught depends on the availability of volunteers with those specialties.

Missionaries and volunteers say they consider it their responsibility to "equip the refugees with every resource possible before they go to the country of their final destination (usually the United States)" so they do not end up on welfare.

Paraphrasing a well-known quotation in one of his sermons, missionary Doug Kellum, the center's evangelistic coordinator, asked some of the refugees, "Do not ask what your new country can do for you but rather ask yourself what you can do for your new country."

Later, Kellum said, "I often like to ask the refugees what they want to tell their children in 20 years about the way they got started in America. Do they want to tell them they got started on welfare? Or is there a better way?"

"The welfare mentality has plagued many refugees as they have gone to America," Kellum explains. "Their friends and relatives in the United States have previously written to them about food stamps, free medical care, monthly welfare allotments and so forth. They can easily develop the idea that they will not have to work."

Missionaries at the Philippine center said they get word regularly that their students going to the States find work almost immediately despite the high level of unemployment.

Missionary Glenn Harding said the refugees know they are at the bottom of the economic ladder and are willing to begin work at that level while Americans are often choosy about the kind of jobs they are willing to take.

"After all," one refugee remarked, "working at the most common job in America is better than working for a communist in Vietnam."

While the major emphasis of the Baptist program is on vocational education and attendant language skills, missionaries and volunteers have had opportunities to expand that function.

Working with a special appropriation from Southern Baptist relief funds and a Philippines optometrist, they have provided as many as 200 pairs of eye glasses in a week. "How can they earn a living if they cannot see?" one missionary remarked.

They have led cultural orientation programs, including slide programs depicting life in the United States, to as many as 2,000 people on Wednesday evenings. Almost every night of the week and on Sunday afternoon, Bible studies are held for the various ethnic groups.

Moore is pastor for a Cambodian group that has 150 adults and 50 children. He says 50 to 60 show up for Bible study every Friday night. Services and Bible studies are also held for Lao, Vietnamese and Chinese as well as English-speaking people.

The population of the center declined at the beginning of 1983 when countries like the United States slowed down acceptance of refugees for permanent resettlement and Thailand closed her borders to refugees seeking temporary sanctuary.

But since then refugee resettlement has stepped up and the population of the center is climbing again. Volunteer Green, now back in Virginia Beach, Va., says it was at 12,000 when he left there in mid-March, but was expected to climb to 16,000 in April or May.

Missionaries have studied refugee statistics and projections and feel the center can anticipate at least another three or four years of activity. They recently completed a building for carpentry classes to intensify training and increase the number of students.

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Minister's Wives Focus  
On 'The Work of Our Hands'

Baptist Press  
4/7/83

PITTSBURGH, Pa. (BP)--The 28th annual luncheon of the Conference of Minister's Wives will be held June 14 in Pittsburgh in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention.

The theme will be "The Work of Our Hands." Items of handwork will be displayed on various tables and each woman will receive a representation of local artwork. The keynote speaker will be Robbie Ellis, a former missionary to Brazil, and music will be presented by R.L. and Beth Sigrest from Yazoo City, Miss.

Tickets to the 12:30 p.m. meeting at the William Penn Hotel will be \$10 in advance and \$12 at the convention. Seating is limited and reservation deadline is May 31. Reservations and payment may be sent to Barbara Combs, 361 Collinsford Road, Tallahassee, Fla., 32301. Tickets may be picked up at the reservations table during the WMU Convention/Pastor's Conference.

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Administration, Educators  
Clash Over Voucher Plan

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press  
4/7/83

WASHINGTON (BP)--Secretary of Education T.H. Bell and national education groups clashed during a House Education and Labor panel hearing over President Reagan's proposal to provide tuition vouchers for educationally disadvantaged students.

At issue before the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education was the administration's plan to provide parents of low-income, low-achieving students vouchers worth approximately \$500 annually which could be used in either private or public schools.

The proposal would permit state and local school authorities to issue vouchers from funds appropriated by Congress for compensatory education--a program which provides additional instruction in reading, writing and math skills for disadvantaged students. Parents then could use vouchers for compensatory education in their local school district or for enrollment in a private school or public school outside their local school district.

Bell hailed the plan, saying it "would lead to a significant improvement in educational opportunities for educationally deprived children by offering a wider range of choices to parents and students."

His support was countered by opposition from the National Coalition for Public Education, the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Association of School Administrators.

"Vouchers represent a new government subsidy for parochial schools and therefore violate the Constitutional principle of separation of church and state," charged Grace Baisinger, head of the National Coalition for Public Education, an umbrella group of more than 50 education, civil rights, civic, labor and religious organizations, including the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

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Baisinger also said the voucher system would threaten the successful compensatory education program already in place, a program she noted has been praised by Bell.

Mary Hatwood Futrell of NEA told the panel, "It is inappropriate to establish a new federal policy that would undermine financially troubled (public) schools and entangle the federal government in the private school sector."

The voucher system is but one of several education changes pushed by Reagan this year. The administration is also asking Congress to establish college education savings incentives for middle and low-income parents, tuition tax credits for parents of children attending private religious and non-sectarian schools and a constitutional amendment to permit state-sponsored prayer in public schools.

A committee spokesman said the panel has no further action scheduled on the proposal, introduced as H.R. 2397 by Rep. John N. Erlenborn, R-Ill.

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Texas' Hance Condemns  
Reagan Tuition Tax Credits

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press  
4/7/83

WASHINGTON (BP)--U.S. Rep. Kent R. Hance, D-Texas, who helped President Reagan push a massive tax cut through Congress two years ago, has denounced the president's proposal to give tax credits to parents who send their children to private elementary and secondary schools.

In a speech on the floor of the House of Representatives April 5, Hance, an active Southern Baptist, declared: "Once again it is the duty of the Congress to reject this radical idea which would turn our nation's traditional concepts of separation of church and state and support for public education inside out."

The Lubbock Democrat, a member of First Church, Lubbock who attends Columbia Baptist Church, Falls Church, Va., while in Washington, said the principle of church-state separation would be violated because "the tuition tax credit is a proposal to inject a government role in religious institutions...."

He added if the credits were made available, it is "inevitable" the federal government would "necessarily attach strings" to the subsidy. "It would be ironic if tuition tax credits were to result in exactly what their supporters oppose--federal intervention into the activities of private and religious schools."

Hance, a fiscal conservative and key leader of the House "Boll Weevils" who gave Reagan strategic support in his 1981 battles for tax and budget cuts, also attacked the proposal on economic and educational grounds. "It is indeed unfortunate an administration, whose stated goal is to balance the budget and reduce government spending and regulation, is now proposing a program which results in increased deficits and increased government interference in local education."

Calling tuition tax credits "unfair" and "deeply disturbing to a majority of Americans," he acknowledged private schools provide a valuable service. But, he added, "no one has a right to expect the people of this nation to pay" for the right of some citizens to choose private schools.

Hance's speech came two days before Reagan renewed his pledge to fight for the credits at the annual convention of the National Catholic Education Association.

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Rural Church Finds  
Unpaved Ways To Ministry

By Tim Nicholas

Baptist Press  
4/7/83

QUINCY, Miss. (BP)--Ray Ware, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church at Quincy, can drive for a half hour picking up people for church without hitting a paved road.

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Trinity is a church that's out in the woods, but as one member put it, it's growing because "the church got out of the woods." In January of 1980 there were 45 enrolled in Sunday School. Now there are 69.

Member Joe Reeves says the way to reach people is through their children. A Vacation Bible School enrolled over 100 children. Aberdeen Baptist Church gave Trinity a bus and the church started using it and a couple of vans to pick up people for services.

The January Bible study's first night drew 17 adults, 17 pre-teens and a half dozen teenagers. In 1982 the church had 28 additions by baptism and seven by letter and "there's a whole lot we haven't reached yet," Ware said.

Organizing youth, adult, children and pre-school choirs have helped since parents come to hear them and hear the word of God in the process. A softball team has encouraged participation by teenagers and helped in the interaction with adults. Another responsive point of contact has been the school bus which member Ann Price drives. "There were 10 off my school bus saved this year," she said.

The church also has responded to the physical needs of the area.

Instead of having yard sales, members opened up a good neighbor store on Saturdays in 1982. At Christmas members took groceries to several families they knew had special needs.

On another occasion a member stopped to pick up a little girl for church who obviously was cold. She said there was no heat in the house so he took the family a load of firewood. "They started coming to church and three adults were saved as a result," he said.

When two families' homes in the community were destroyed by fire, members brought loads of household items and clothes to help them start over. "You've got to let people know you're willing to help--to love them," say Trinity members.

"It's not all roses," said one. "One man told me what he'd do to me if I witnessed to him again. Now, his kids come to church."

Reeves said his daughter got to him, insisting she, "was the onliest one that didn't go to church." He put her on the church bus for choir before deciding he needed to go with his daughter. "I haven't regretted it. We're just happier people. That comes with living for the Lord," he said.

One woman said she didn't really think Trinity would grow because, "when the children came in...they didn't know how to sit down...It amazed us the Lord would think we could take the responsibility."

Ware, who works during the week as a letter carrier for the post office, became pastor of Trinity at Easter, 1981. He is chaplain of the Toledo post office and chaplain of the Mississippi Rural Letter Carriers Association and the South Central States Rural Letter Carriers Conference.

He recently convinced a man to let his children ride the bus. Later the man made a recommitment of his life to Christ, saying, "If I could read the Bible, I'd be the happiest man on earth." Ware's school teacher wife, Charlene, taught the man reading fundamentals.

A woman testifies, in the past years, three sons and her husband were saved and baptized at Trinity. She said her husband had never been in a church before but he was reached "because people (here) took an interest in his soul."