



BAPTIST PRESS

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

August 10, 1983

83-118

Lowders To Serve Jail Time In Nuclear Protest, Arrest

SAN FRANCISCO (BP)--Jim and Rose Ann Lowder will return to Alameda County Jail in late August to serve six days assessed after their arrest during a nuclear protest outside the Livermore Research Laboratory.

The Lowders, missionaries jointly appointed by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and the Southern Baptist General Convention of California, were arrested June 20 along with nine other members of Delores Street Baptist Church in San Francisco, where Lowder is pastor.

More than 1,000 protesters were arrested and charged with obstructing traffic after they sat down on a county road leading to the Livermore plant, site of much of the United States' nuclear weapons research. When arrested, the 11 Delores Street church members gave their individual names as "Southern Baptist Convention" to emphasize that their Southern Baptist heritage of peace and justice influenced them to participate in the civil disobedience.

Lowder said the civil disobedience was not taken without "thinking about it a long time. It reflects the seriousness of our commitment to this (anti-nuclear) issue," and with a realization it could jeopardize his continued employment with the Home Mission Board, which pays 43 percent of his salary.

HMB administrators say they have received some negative response calling for the Lowders' resignation. Criticism has focused on the fact the couple broke the law.

As employees of a national agency, the Lowders' actions reflect on that agency, administrators explained, adding that the couple's action in no way represents the position of the HMB on the nuclear issue. The board has taken no position, they explain.

Despite the calls for resignation, HMB Vice President of Missions Gerald Palmer indicated the Lowders have not been dismissed. He said the "persons responsible for administration at the HMB have taken action appropriate to the situation but such personnel matters are privileged information."

Palmer declined to elaborate on what "action appropriate to the situation" might mean.

Lowder told Baptist Press that "as far as I know nothing has changed. I have not received any kind of reprimand. I am still employed by the HMB, still pastor of Delores Street Baptist Church."

He said he has received no negative response from his action, but in fact has received supportive letters from churches in six states, and an offer of bail money from an individual.

He added he is aware "some of the people at the board are very concerned about my action. I am not sure they understand or are in agreement with this. However, I have tried to emphasize all along that this is an individual action, which in no way represents the Home Mission Board, the Southern Baptist Convention or Delores Street Baptist Church."

He said he felt he "needed to do this as an act of conscience. It was an individual action, but I see it as much a part of my ministry as anything I do. It is working toward the same end as working in an emergency shelter or providing emergency food. If I do not speak out against the arms race, I will not be dealing with the whole problem."

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Lowder said the decision to participate in civil disobedience was "very difficult," particularly since he has never been arrested for anything. He read about civil disobedience, talked with those who participated in such efforts as the civil rights movement and the peace movement, and did "a lot of praying about it."

"Civil disobedience is a way of social change and an expression of conscience. I have been involved in other (anti-nuclear) efforts, but out of my conviction and my frustrations, I felt I would have to do something which would say symbolically how strongly I feel. I would have to allow my life to be disrupted...put my life on the line," he said.

He said he was aware he was risking his continued employment, but "not how great a risk it was," and added: "Anytime you take a stand that is going to be controversial when you are employed by a denomination, it is a risk."

The protest and subsequent actions by Alameda County Judge John Lewis drew national media attention. Lewis took a hard line against the protestors, offering only two-year probationary sentences and \$300 to \$500 fines if demonstrators pleaded no contest to the charges. He also declined to reduce bail figures (which ranged from \$500 to \$1,000 per person) and denied them release on their own recognizance.

The California Supreme Court overruled Lewis and toned down the harsh sentences.

Lowder told Baptist Press that an offer was made July 29 "which we felt was acceptable. It was for time served plus eight more days, which in California would be six actual days in jail, or for time served plus a fine of \$240.

The pastor served 11 days in a tent city jail after his arrest, an action he said he took because "we felt as many as possible should stay in jail to give us a stronger position of negotiating a reduction of the sentences, which we felt were unduly harsh."

While some of the demonstrators will pay the \$240 fine, the Lowders have opted to return to jail to serve out the time rather than pay the fine.

"We felt it was an awful lot of money for us to pay. For the two of us it would have been \$480. That is one reason we decided to serve the time," Lowder told Baptist Press. "Also, from the beginning we decided not to pay a fine. We felt we had committed civil disobedience and were prepared to pay for the consequences by giving our time.

"We are prepared to serve the time. The jail time also is symbolic. We want to say to our government, 'You can continue to build nuclear weapons, but you cannot do so without putting American citizens in jail.'"

Because they have two small foster children--ages 2 and 1--the Lowders will "take turns" in going to jail. She will report Aug. 15, and he will return Aug. 21.

After the jail term, Lowder said he will continue his anti-nuclear work. As to whether they will include civil disobedience, the pastor said: "I don't know. I would have to weigh the consequences of each action. At this point there are no plans, but that does not mean I would not do it again. Perhaps the risk is greater now, but I am not giving up the struggle."

He said plans include holding monthly worship services on the public thoroughfares at the Livermore plant, which will not include disobeying the law.

Delores Street Baptist Church member Jane Medema, wife of singer Ken Medema, also was arrested in the protest. She told Baptist Press the "affinity group" at Delores Street church is "looking for different--and hopefully better--ways to make a statement opposing arms production and research. As for the blockade, I would rather do something else. It is not fun and it is uncomfortable.

"Blockading is only a part of the total effort, but it is a way to call attention to an issue. Civil disobedience is the lesser of evils. Doing nothing is the greater evil. Anyway, the law we broke did not destroy property or hurt people. The law we broke at its very worst only delayed people from reaching work," she added.

Tonga Give Sacrificially
For Burned Relief Truck

By Robert O'Brien

NENYUNGA, Zimbabwe (BP)--Tonga people in Zimbabwe's drought-stricken Gokwe region dug into their meager resources to show Southern Baptist "People Who Care" that they are people who care, too.

Drought victims around the Nenyunga area raised \$78.45, while others around Simchembu raised \$30 to help replace a 10-ton Southern Baptist relief truck burned by anti-government dissidents, May 28.

The Zimbabwe Baptist mission had run two 10-ton trucks twice weekly to the drought area as a first step "band-aid approach" to stave off starvation among the Tonga until Southern Baptists' massive "People Who Care" project can develop long-term assistance. Louisiana Baptists, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and the Zimbabwe mission jointly sponsored the project.

The \$108.45 raised by the drought victims won't come near replacing the truck, which will cost up to \$35,000, but their gift touched and impressed Southern Baptist missionaries who know how little they have.

Since the incident, Zimbabweans have expressed their dismay over the truck burning and the robbery of its driver, Kilian Sibanda, a Baptist layman who has vowed to continue his role in the relief effort.

Five dissidents, wielding Russian-made AK47 rifles, attacked Kilian at his home in Sessami, where he had stopped briefly while transporting corn meal to the starving Tonga. In addition to burning the truck, the gunmen took \$100 of Kilian's own money and about \$1,300 in funds people paid for the meal. Those with some money buy their grain at cost, and others receive the grain free.

Four days after the incident, missionaries to Zimbabwe voted to continue the massive hunger and relief effort which began in 1982. They asked the Foreign Mission Board for \$455,000 in hunger and relief funds to develop the project and up to \$35,000 to replace the burned truck. The board had already appropriated more than \$1 million for work in the area which includes relief and evangelism.

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CORRECTION:

In BP mailed 8/9/83, please use the following new lead on story "Coups Topple Governments On Two Mission Fields" to insert new material. The SBC missionaries will not leave Ouagadougou, Upper Volta, as reported.

Coups Topple Governments
On Two Mission Fields

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--U.S. State Department officials and Southern Baptist missionaries report d calm in the wake of coups that toppled governments in Upper Volta and Guatemala.

Two missionary couples and a volunteer couple in Ouagadougou, Upper Volta, planned to leave the capital after hearing sporadic gunfire for three days following the Aug. 5 overthrow but decided to stay after things calmed down. All 14 missionaries and four volunteers in the country are safe.

U.S. embassy personnel believe the shots were fired into the air near the airport to discourage Voltaiques from cutting through that area to get from the city to their villages. The airport and the nation's borders remained closed Aug. 10 and a 7 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. curfew remained in effect.

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Former prime minister Capt. Thomas Sankara overthrew head of state Maj. Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo in an overnight coup in which 13 people were reported killed and 15 wounded.

State Department spokesman Nancy Morgan said that while Sankara is known to be an admirer of Libya and has visited Tripoli, information thus far fails to indicate direct Libyan involvement in the coup.

PICKUP 8/9/83 story at eighth paragraph which starts with the words "Meanwhile , missionary Joe Bruce ..." and ends with "refurbish a local church."

Thanks, BP

WMU Conference Speakers
Underlin Partnership

By Carol Sisson

Baptist Press
8/10/83

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Some 2,500 people attending Woman's Missionary Union Week at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center took the theme "Partnership in Prayer and Ministry" to heart, giving \$3,264.88 to the Cooperative Program, the highest offering given this year at Ridgecrest.

"It takes money to undergird any kind of partnership," said Bobbie Sorrells, WMU associate director, describing the offering as a tangible outlet for partnership in prayer and ministry.

Speakers, missionaries and Bible teacher Monte Clendinning emphasized the importance of sincere commitment to such partnerships in the week of missions meetings at WMU leadership conferences.

Gerhard Claas, Baptist World Alliance general secretary, who brought the Sunday morning and evening messages, said the bottom line in any partnership is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. "Only this partnership leads to true partnership in prayer and ministry."

Claas said no Baptist can live for himself and neither can the church live for herself. "We must serve the world. As church members we are committed to go and serve," he said.

Clendinning forced conferees to examine their own personal commitment when he quoted a figure given by a speaker the day before: "Only 22.2 percent of the world is Christian. Has it bothered any of you? Did anyone stay awake last night? Did anyone weep?"

Clendinning reminding conferees they are living in the days of Bold Mission Thrust with only 17 years left in which to accomplish its goal, which is to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world by AD 2000.

Clendinning is adjunct professor in missions education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Ft. Worth.

Each day partnerships between states and between states and countries were featured. Volunteers, missionaries and WMU leaders told individual stories of the difference these partnerships had made in their lives and work. The common theme of all these individuals was the strengths gained from shared ministries.

"Southern Baptists are recognizing the need for togetherness as well as individuality," Dennis McEntire, foreign missionary to Paraguay, said.

Daniel Sanchez, associate professor of missions at Southwestern Seminary, said, "WMU is at the cutting edge because it has a Biblical purpose--commitment to missions. It's not just an organization."

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The partnerships between agencies in Southern Baptist life are one reason "Southern Baptists are able to add new missionaries and enter new countries every year at times when other missionary groups are cutting back," Sanchez said.

Fourteen home and foreign missionaries were featured speakers and conference leaders. Home missionaries were: Helen Begaye, Arlington Texas; Patricia Ervin, Savannah, Ga.; Randy Foster, Jackson Hole, Wyo.; Fairy Harte, Cornwall On Hudson, N.Y. and Ada Young, Northborough, Mass.

Foreign missionaries were: Sandy Cole, Taiwan; Geneva and Wiley Faw, Nigeria; Gail Hill, India; Dennis and Jean McIntire, Paraguay; Elizabeth Oates, Brazil; Sandra Scales, Tanzania and Nancy Strickland, Upper Volta.

WMU national President Dorothy Sample asked conferees to return home with new commitments to partnerships of their own personal choice. She called them to symbolize this partnership by leaving the final session two-by-two.

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Pilot Project
Launched In Indiana

By Charlene Shucker

Baptist Press
8/10/83

ATLANTA (BP)--A Home Mission Board-supported pilot project for a "partnership church" will be launched in Warren Township in Indianapolis, Ind., this summer.

The five-year plan will couple one of the strongest churches in the city, Northside Baptist Church, with fledgling Eastgate Community Baptist Chapel, in an effort to develop a strong evangelistic church in a primarily unchurched area.

"We are excited about the potential that a strong church of several hundred in attendance can be developed in Warren Township," HMB president William G. Tanner said.

Primarily middle-class, Warren Township is home to 89,000 people. While predominantly an anglo community, blacks, Hispanics and other ethnics live in the township. "It is a very stable community," said Kenneth W. Neibel, director of missions for the Central Indiana Baptist Association.

"There is a good mix of children, youth, young adults, adults and senior adults in the community," he said. Neibel and church planter apprentice Robert D. Cochran have worked for more than 18 months to get the project started. Presently, there are nine on-going Bible clubs in Warren Township ministering to 100 families.

"Eastgate is meeting in the YMCA across the street from Eastgate mall, but we are negotiating to meet in the shopping center. It would be the ideal place," Neibel said.

According to Neibel, the community sees its past and future reflected in the shopping mall. A brief feasibility study indicates the chapel would minister not only to township residents but to people from nearby Richmond, Kokomo and Fort Wayne. Market analysts predict 40 percent of the shoppers at the mall live outside of the Indianapolis area.

During the next five years the Northside Baptist Church will support the chapel until it reaches a yet undetermined membership in Sunday school and worship service; will recruit Mission Service Corps volunteers; recruit a pastor and guarantee his salary for three years; purchase property and help provide resources for constructing the first building.

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