



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

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83-192

Bodies Of Missing Baptist Couple Discovered In Bhamdoun, Lebanon

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--A Baptist couple missing in Lebanon's Shouf Mountains since early September are dead.

The bodies of Nadim and Maria Khairallah were discovered in their home in the resort town of Bhamdoun by a relative several weeks after fighting broke out there between Druse and Christian Phalangist militia, said Frances Fuller, Southern Baptist missionary press representative in Lebanon.

Three of the couple's sons (ages two, five and six) still are missing. A fourth, nine-year-old Anthony, was away at summer camp when Druse forces captured the town. He is living with relatives.

The couple apparently was killed when fighting broke out in the wake of the Sept. 3 withdrawal of Israeli forces.

Relatives and Charles Costa, pastor of Ras Beirut Baptist Church, where the Khairallahs were members, had combed several refugee camps in the hope they might still be alive. Fellow church members had "prayed constantly," Costa said.

Fierce fighting prevented even the Red Cross from getting into Bhamdoun for nearly a month. Violence along the road made it hazardous for anyone to try entering the town even after that.

Khairallah's brother died in Bhamdoun seven years ago during the Syrian invasion of Lebanon.

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Dunn: Social Security Changes
Do Not Violate First Amendment

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press
12/21/83

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Baptist church-state specialist has told a U.S. Senate committee mere inclusion of church employees and those of other non-profit organizations in mandatory Social Security coverage does not violate the First Amendment's religious liberty guarantees.

At issue is a section of the 1983 Social Security reform package scheduled to take effect Jan. 1 which requires participation in the nation's retirement system by non-profit employees. Previously, coverage for non-profit employees had been optional, although a congressional report indicated 85 percent elected to participate.

In a written statement to the Senate Finance Committee, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs Executive Director James M. Dunn said Social Security funds "cannot logically be conceived as a tax either on the employer or the employee." Some persons, mostly independent pastors and officials of Christian schools--claim mandatory Social Security participation amounts to a direct tax on churches.

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Unlike taxes which go for the support of government, the BJCPA statement said Social Security funds "go into a separat fund for the exclusive purpose of providing social protection for the elderly, the disabled and survivors. We do not see the Social Security Amendments of 1983 as a tax on churches per se."

However, Dunn's statement expressed concern that mandatory participation of non-ministerial employees of churches in Social Security could be viewed as a "potential precedent which later lawmakers will use as a stepping-stone to tax churches." He urged the Finance Committee to make clear in its report on the issue the intent of the 1983 Social Security reform package "is not to establish such a precedent.

"All not-for-profit organizations have an obligation to look after the welfare of their employees," the statement concluded. "We see no constitutional impediment to requiring that churches pay their portion of this insurance so long as ministers and religious orders retain th right to opt out of the program on the basis of religious beliefs."

The 1983 Social Security changes left in place optional participation for ministers and members of religious orders.

A BJCPA spokesman said the Washington-based agency has assisted a number of Baptists in recent days seeking basic information about the Social Security changes and clarification of the confusion generated by claims that the change represents a tax on churches.

"The fact is," Dunn said, "as a conscientious commitment by churches to care for their own people, the vast majority of church employees are already covered by Social Security. If Baptists saw Social Security participation as a government intrusion, this would not be true."

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Laity Catching BMT Vision
State Missions Directors Told

By Patti Stephenson

Baptist Press
12/21/83

ATLANTA (BP)--The most significant outcome of Bold Mission Thrust so far may be "the laity have caught the vision they can be personally involved in missions," Gerald Palmer told 34 state missions directors at their annual meeting.

The five-day meeting included a joint session with state Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood directors to discuss implementing a new cooperative mission action agreement among the Home Mission Board, WMU and Brotherhood.

In recognizing the laity's growing awareness of mission needs, Palmer, HMB vice president of missions, stressed "the church is God's primary agency for missions" and urged the missions leaders to "preach missions to the local churches." He also told participants they, as leaders, are "accountable to the churches for assisting them in their task."

WMU and Brotherhood organizations operating in local churches "are one of the most effective ways of getting the job done," Palmer observed. He described WMU and Brotherhood as the "primary channels" for missions resources flowing from the Home Mission Board.

The rising concern of Southern Baptists for missions and evangelism reflects "our realization we are to be the finger of God on earth," Palmer said. "If we fail to release the spirit of caring in our churches which crosses barriers with the good news God is mindful of every person, God will withdraw the opportunity," he warned.

In response to a request from the Baptist Sunday School Board, Palmer told the missions directors the HMB will initiate a pilot project to fund a church development worker in a MegaFocus City association.

The need for such a project arises from concern expressed by the HMB and SSB about new churches that find it difficult to sustain themselves once HMB support is withdrawn, Palmer explained. The church development worker will assist individual churches directly rather than acting as an extension of associational or state convention staff, he added.

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The project's goal is "for these churches to grow into strong, mission-minded, self-supporting congregations," Palmer noted. Though the particular association and starting date have not been decided, the project should be underway in the first half of 1984, he said. The effectiveness of the church development project will be carefully evaluated before it is expanded, he added.

Palmer also told the missions directors the HMB is seeking ways to help newer state conventions implement national missions programs. "One of the problems we face is we have a national missions strategy to accomplish, yet we find the areas of greatest need are unable financially to participate with us in funding programs," he observed.

The adequate provision of retirement benefits for field missions personnel is another priority the HMB is examining, Palmer told the missions leaders. "The HMB is deeply concerned about the quality of life of our missionaries," he stated, "and every effort is being made through our cooperative relationships with associations and state conventions to afford them financial security."

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Southern Seminary Awards 210
Degrees At 152nd Commencement

Baptist Press
12/21/83

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--North Carolina pastor William Henry Crouch challenged graduates of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., to "let God work in you and through you as his ministers" at the seminary's 152nd commencement Dec. 16.

"It is an awesome thing to be entrusted with the gospel," said Crouch, Southern Seminary alumnus and pastor of Providence Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C. "It is our task to share it."

Crouch specifically urged graduates to pledge themselves to deepening their personal devotional lives and to guard against family problems, against which "the minister's home is not immune." He warned against the "temptation...to build up egomania" and said quarreling and jealousy among pastors "reflect our faith."

Crouch, a member of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, also asked graduates to "think about" service on the mission fields. Ninety-five percent of the world's ministers minister to six percent of the world's population, he said, and there is currently one minister for every 12.5 million persons in Southeast Asia. Mission expenditures for that part of the world, he said, equal about two cents per human being.

After Crouch's address, 210 students received degrees from the deans of Southern's schools of theology, religious education and church music.

Students receiving the master of divinity, the school of theology's basic professional degree, numbered 101. Thirty-nine received the master of religious education and nine the master of divinity/religious education degree. Master of church music degrees were awarded to 22 students.

Thirty-nine students earned graduate degrees, with two receiving the master of theology, 20 the doctor of ministry, one the doctor of education, three the doctor of musical arts and 13 the doctor of philosophy, the highest degree conferred by the institution.

Roy L. Honeycutt, eighth president of the 125-year-old institution, Southern Baptists' oldest and second-largest seminary, told the graduates their degrees "symbolize more than simply a set of credentials." They are, he continued, "tangible and visible tokens which speak to the quality of commitment you have brought to this institution." He challenged the recipients of 13 different degrees or degree emphases to "always seek to bear witness to Jesus Christ" through the church and other fields of ministry.

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Ghana Hospital Gets Fuel;
Reopens Within Two Weeks

NALERIGU, Ghana (BP)--Baptist Medical Centre, Nalerigu, Ghana, reopened less than two weeks after a fuel shortage forced it to close.

John Mills, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's director for West Africa, got indirect word Dec. 21 that the hospital reopened after it received fuel the government shipped from Accra. Because of difficulty communicating with Ghana, Mills had no other details.

The hospital, in northern Ghana, closed in early December because it lacked fuel to run electrical generators to sterilize equipment, operate lights for surgery or pump water.

The closing came in the midst of the area's worst yellow fever epidemic since the 1930s, when two missionaries died from the disease. Before the hospital closed, missionaries administered most of 100,000 doses of yellow fever vaccine provided in November by the FMB.

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Baptists Aid In Relief
To Thai Flood Victims

By Maxine Stewart

Baptist Press
12/21/83

BANGKOK, Thailand (BP)--Southern Baptists are responding with manpower and money to the worst flooding Thailand has experienced in 40 years.

The Foreign Mission Board has released \$10,000 for food, agricultural assistance and medicine to aid victims of floods that started the end of August and are predicted to continue at least to late January.

More than three-fourths of the country's 72 provinces have been affected by floodwater. Monsoon rains triggered landslides and produced floods that destroyed or seriously damaged many of the country's crops and wiped out entire orchards.

Thousands of Thais have abandoned their homes. In Bangkok rising water forced Southern Baptist missionaries William and Susan Smith of Virginia and Texas, Judson and Harriett Lennon of North Carolina and Max and Betty Alexander of Arkansas to flee their homes.

The Thailand Baptist Mission has requested \$11,015 for emergency repair to six mission houses and \$6,600 for repair to 35 mission vehicles.

Several missionaries have contributed personal money for relief efforts. And missionary physician Joann Goatcher of Texas, assigned with her husband, Earl, as consultant in relief and hunger needs in Southeast Asia, has been working with a medical program for flood victims.

New foot diseases are occurring as floodwater in Bangkok has no place to drain and turns putrid. Almost a third of the city's buses are inoperable, and some people are using boats.

But they continue to accomplish their daily business--with some adjustments. Thais in Bangkok have temporarily shelved their modesty and are hiking their skirts and trouser legs inches above their knees to walk through flooded areas.

Missionary Floyd Kendall of Colorado has found his custom-made baptismal boots, with protection up to his armpits, allow him to maneuver many places others are unable to go.

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Southwestern Graduates
Admonished By Claas

Baptist Press
12/21/83

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Addressing 303 graduates of the world's largest seminary just eight weeks after speaking at a Romanian seminary with five students, Gerhard Claas urged Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's graduates not to "take for granted what is such a great gift of the Lord."

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Claas, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance said at Travis Avenue Baptist Church 90 percent of the Baptist pastors in the Soviet Union have never seen a seminary and do not own a single theological book.

Claas gave the graduates four points to remember from Jesus' teachings: Jesus is sending them out, he is with them, they have his peace and they have his Spirit.

"Jesus didn't try to be happy, but to make happy," Claas said. "He did not try to find himself, but to find others."

Claas also encouraged the graduates in their future ministry with the admonition to remember "wherever the Lord is present, something will happen. It cannot be true where the Lord is, nothing will happen."

Among the graduates was Ellen Doyen Dilday, daughter of President Russell H. Dilday Jr., who received a master of arts degree in religious education. She is minister of youth at South Main Baptist Church in Houston.

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Fire Damages
Seminary Apartment

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--A building containing four student apartments on the campus of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary was damaged by fire Dec. 11. No one was injured in the blaze.

The fire was discovered in the back bedroom of the apartment occupied by David Griffin, his wife and three sons. That room was destroyed, and there was extensive smoke and water damage to the rest of the apartment. The unit immediately above had some water and heavy smoke damage. The two remaining apartments in the building experienced some smoke damage. All occupants have been temporarily relocated in other campus housing.

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Harper Appointed
To Courier Staff

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GREENVILLE, S.C. (BP)--Sue C. Harper has been named assistant editor of the Baptist Courier, newsjournal of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

Harper succeeds Don Kirkland, who was promoted to associate editor last summer, succeeding Fletcher Allen, who became editor of the Maryland Baptist.

She will join the staff of the 127,000-circulation weekly publication Jan. 1.

Harper, a native of Lancaster, S.C., has been a staff writer for the Lancaster News since 1976. She was sports editor for a year before moving to the general assignments desk. She holds the bachelor of arts in journalism and the master of arts in mass communications degrees from the University of South Carolina School of Journalism.

She is a member of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Lancaster where she is church librarian and assistant pianist and organist.

Courier Editor John Roberts said Harper was selected from among 20 serious applicants and recommendations for the post.

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