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**Act Now, Urges Missions Leader;
No End Soon For Africa Drought**

By Mary Jane Welch

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Southern Baptists must act now if they want to help prevent the Ethiopian tragedy from spreading across Africa, says a missions leader who's seen the African drought firsthand.

"There's no end in sight," says John Mills, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board director for West Africa. "We're frustrated in not being able to do all we'd like to right now, but next year is likely to be worse." Both the United Nations disaster relief coordinator and the International Red Cross have issued similar warnings in recent weeks.

Graphic film footage of starving Ethiopian refugees has brought that nation's plight to American attention in recent weeks, but the U.N. Relief coordinator's office has warned 27 African nations urgently need food. More than 35 million people—many of them children—in 18 of the worst-hit countries desperately need help.

Southern Baptists are already helping in many of those countries but had better start thinking about next year, warns Mills. Based on news reports, missionary comments and his own travel in West Africa, Mills predicts the drought will strike even harder next year in the belt of countries bordering the southern Sahara from Senegal to Ethiopia.

Mali, where Southern Baptist missionaries distributed 5,000 tons of grain this year, faces conditions typical in those countries. While rains renewed the parched fields of coastal West Africa this year, they diminished as they moved inland. For the fifth year in Mali, the rains failed. Famine conditions usually felt during the last months before harvest have become a year-round threat.

Already, the Mali government has declared everything from Mopti north—about three-fourths of the country—a disaster area for next year. They've officially asked Southern Baptists to give the same help they gave this year.

Other West African countries where Southern Baptist missionaries work—Burkina Faso (Upper Volta), Niger and Senegal especially—also have shortages. Niger has already reported a 350,000-ton cereal deficit for the year, the country's largest ever, according to West Africa magazine. Nearby Chad and Mauritania face a critical situation.

Mills believes Southern Baptists have a responsibility to help in those countries where they can. To do the most good he urges them to start now. Waiting until a crisis develops like that in Ethiopia is not the way to do hunger relief, he says.

"By the time publicity reaches the public it's almost too late," he says. "The frantic efforts that are managed now, while they're laudable, are really too late and are tragic in that it's been obvious that this has been coming for a long time. Already we can see it's going to be there for next year because the rain hasn't come."

Because the world ignored early warnings about the coming famine, many have died who shouldn't have, he said. While that is the greatest drawback to last-minute relief efforts, there are other problems.

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**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee**

Donors are having to use planes to fly in grain and medicines that could have been shipped more cheaply by surface. Hastily thrown-together distribution plans often fail to get the grain to those in remote areas who need it most. Some falls into the hands of profiteers and some rots unused.

Much better is a distribution plan such as that used in Mali this year by Southern Baptist missionaries Norman and Beverly Coad, says Mills. They began planning months ahead so the grain could be shipped by sea. They involved almost all evangelical churches in the country to see that grain got to the most remote places. And they enlisted Muslim observers on each team to assure everyone grain was distributed fairly.

Even with careful planning, the Coads could not avoid all the pitfalls of relief work. Congress stalled the African grain bill in Congress while debating tacked-on military aid for Central America. By the time grain was released to Africa, it was almost too late. They had to move the grain more than 1,000 miles inland as soon as it arrived to beat a hoped-for rainy season.

Even without rain, getting to remote villages over poor or non-existent roads posed special problems. Regular trucks bogged down in the sand. Distribution teams needed expensive four- or five-ton four-wheel-drive vehicles to cross the desert. They were rescued by Norwegian Christian volunteers who had been provided such trucks by their government.

Although the Mali government has requested more aid for next year, Mills says he cautioned the Coads against making promises.

Money and personnel are two major factors limiting Southern Baptist response to hunger needs overseas, said Mills. The need for money is apparent, but the need for people, especially career missionaries, is just as crucial.

Southern Baptists have an advantage over many relief agencies in having missionaries already on the field with the language and cultural skills to work effectively in a country. But in many of the drought-stricken countries, their numbers are small. Right now two missionaries are in Mali; four in Niger; 10 in Senegal.

The Coads used two volunteers, other evangelical missionaries and a number of Malians in grain distribution, but they are so exhausted now they don't know whether they can undertake a similar relief program again next year, says Mills.

Relief work is some of the hardest work a person can do, he says. To make sure grain gets to the people who need it, someone has to go where it's being distributed. "So somebody's got to get out there and that means riding those big old trucks, fighting that desert sand, going through those mudholes, pushing them out, and 18-hour days." It means spending days and nights on the road--sleeping wherever you can, living off cold canned food, making do.

Volunteers can help, but there is no substitute for the missionary and his knowledge of the country, says Mills. Volunteers are only helpful in crisis programs if they can stay long enough to learn how to operate with little supervision--at least six weeks--says Mills. Volunteers Howard Mayberry of North Carolina and George Foshee of Colorado signed up for a six-month stint in Mali.

The Foreign Mission Board is not content just to keep meeting crisis needs, says Mills. People in much of West Africa always live on a fine line between life and death. Whereas a crop failure may be a temporary setback for a U.S. farmer, it may mean death for an African farmer who is able to raise only enough to get by each year.

Helping Africans raise their production so there's a little extra in good years to be saved for crisis years is an aim of Southern Baptist development programs such as that planned for the Kenieba area of Mali. And for that more career missionaries will be needed--an agriculturalist, a public health worker and a nutritionist.

Because Southern Baptists are in many places where people need help, Mills says they should look to the biblical account of Joseph dealing with an earlier African famine. "We need to be as wise as he was--to see things coming and set up warehouses, start early," says Mills.

Arkansas Baptists Hear Church
Apologize For Alien Immersion

FORT SMITH, Ark. (BP)--Arkansas Baptists, meeting in their 131st annual session, approved a Partnership Mission project with two Brazilian conventions, adopted an \$11.5 million Cooperative Program budget and heard the pastor of one congregation ask forgiveness and reconciliation for his church's practice of alien immersion.

Steven Davis, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Russellville, stood before messengers in the first moments of the annual meeting and apologized to the convention for a 1965 incident which has prevented seating of messengers from the church off and on for 19 years.

The congregation, under a previous pastor, had accepted into membership a woman not baptized in a Baptist church. The resulting controversy over "alien immersion" has kept the church from regular seating and full fellowship in their association and the state convention since 1965. This year, the church's messengers were received into both meetings.

The constitution of the state convention prohibits churches which practice alien immersion or open communion from having messengers seated at the annual meeting.

Apologizing for offending the sister churches, Davis declared, "Our church does not practice alien immersion, and does not plan to practice alien immersion." As Davis left the platform, messengers rose to give him a standing ovation.

Unified by the apology, messengers proceeded to adopt a Partnership Mission project which will pair Arkansas Baptist churches with Baptist congregations in two Brazilian conventions along the Amazon.

In addition, messengers approved the new Church Annuity Plan of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board and adopted Planned Growth in Giving, a 15-year emphasis intended to increase stewardship commitment to local churches and contributions to missions causes.

The 1985 budget of \$11.5 million represents a 5.93 percent increase over 1984. An annual 0.75 percent increase in the percentage of total receipts going to worldwide causes through the Cooperative Program brings that portion of the budget to 39.91 percent.

Jon Stubblefield, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Magnolia, was reelected by acclamation for a second term as president of the convention. Jerry Wilson, pastor of West Side Baptist Church in El Dorado, was elected first vice-president, and John McClanahan, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pine Bluff, was reelected second vice-president.

Two resolutions sparked notable discussions. One affirmed the Baptist position for separation of church and state. An effort to amend the resolution to delete statements of support for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and Americans United for Separation of Church and State was turned down by a 42-vote margin.

A second resolution affirmed "the equality of men and women before God." It declared men and women share equally in bearing God's image, in the condemnation of sin, in being subjects of God's love and in equal responsibility to carry out the Great Commission. Messengers ultimately tabled the resolution to avoid an amendment which would have eliminated the statement affirming equal responsibility regarding the Great Commission.

Other resolutions adopted commended responsible Christian citizenship, urged response to the hunger crisis, condemned physical and mental human abuse and affirmed the sacredness of human life. The official count showed 998 messengers registered for the meeting.

The 1985 annual meeting will be Nov. 19-21 on the campus of Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, which will be celebrating its centennial anniversary.

Extremists In India
Attack Church Start r

KARNATAKA, India (BP)—About 140 religious extremists surrounded an Indian Baptist pastor and held him captive for more than three hours Oct. 14, forcing him to write a statement vowing to leave the area.

The extremists, members of the militant Hindu party Rashtriya Swayam Sevadala (RSS), locked themselves and Pastor M. Ramaiah in a village hall and began mocking and abusing him, condemning his church-starting efforts in the state of Karnataka.

Despite the harassment, Ramaiah has remained in the area. After the attack, believers at his church continued to meet, spending two days in prayer and fasting. Classes for church member training, begun in September, have continued.

On the day he was attacked, Ramaiah had just finished a Sunday morning service and was talking with people who wanted to know more about Jesus Christ when two young people came to see him. They said village elders wanted to discuss the threat of area RSS groups, which have been strengthening their anti-Christian activities recently. Happy for the apparent concern, Ramaiah followed the young people to the hall.

As soon as he entered, someone bolted the door. Believers were unable to get inside to help. They, too, were threatened because they are considered low caste and are in a minority as Christians.

At first the pastor refused to write the statement they demanded, but soon he realized it was impossible to escape. "They held me strongly, saying, 'If you are not going to write, we are going to finish you,'" Ramaiah said.

The attack occurred more than two weeks before the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and apparently is not related to it.

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Bangalore Residents Spared
Much Of Indian Violence

Baptist Press
11/12/84

BANGALORE, India (BP)—Residents of Bangalore witnessed some outbreaks of rock throwing following the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi but no severe violence, according to Southern Baptist missionaries in that city.

Thirteen of the 15 Southern Baptist missionaries assigned to India work are in Bangalore, where the Baptist hospital is located. One couple teaches in Kodaikanal, about 200 miles south of Bangalore.

Most severe violence was in the northern part of the country, where members of the Sikh sect, which took credit for the assassination, are more numerous. Hundreds of Sikhs were killed as Hindus sought revenge. The Sikhs make up a small but influential part of India's population.

The Baptist hospital observed Nov. 1 and 3 as national holidays out of respect for the nation's loss and mourning. A memorial service was held Nov. 2 in the hospital chapel, with all the staff participating. Two staff members spoke about Mrs. Gandhi, and there was a time of prayer.

Rebekah Naylor, mission chairman and hospital administrator, was performing major surgery Wednesday, Oct. 31, when a nurse brought the news Gandhi had been shot by two of her bodyguards.

By mid-afternoon Oct. 31 it was confirmed Gandhi had died in a New Delhi hospital, Naylor said. The world's most populous democracy was immediately plunged into chaos, violence and mourning and, for a while, the people talked of possible civil war, Naylor added.

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"There is a pervading sense of unreality," Naylor said. "Christians are concerned about the future. Mrs. Ghandi and her party have supported religious tolerance for all. The future leaders potentially could alter this attitude."

Arizona Baptists
Emphasize Witness

Baptist Press
11/12/84

TUCSON, Ariz. (BP)—Arizona Southern Baptists, in their annual meeting, placed an emphasis on witnessing and missions, elected a new president and approved a record \$4.6 million budget.

Si Davis, pastor of East Tucson Baptist Church, Tucson, was elected president. Other officers are Gilbert Taeger, pastor of Eastside Baptist Church, Phoenix, first vice-president; Jack Cluney, pastor of Rainbow Valley Baptist Mission, Rainbow Valley, second vice-president, and Jay George, pastor of North Tucson Baptist Church, Tucson, recording secretary.

John Auvenshine, associate pastor of Twenty-second Street Baptist Church, Tucson, for less than a year, recommended those wishing to make a nomination for a convention office send a picture and information about the person to the Baptist Beacon, newsjournal of Arizona Baptists, for inclusion in pre-convention issue.

He explained many people new to the state were not familiar with those nominated. Following lengthy discussion and two substitute motions, the matter was referred to the convention's executive board.

The \$4.6 million budget increases the percentage of Cooperative Program funds sent to the SBC Executive Committee by 0.5 percent to 26.5 percent. The total sent to all SBC causes is set at \$991,700.

The 436 messengers and 258 registered visitors heard reports of how the convention is meeting its long range goals entitled "Our Divine Design," adopted at the 1983 meeting. In the first eight months of this year 25 churches were organized and 44 Bible teaching units were begun.

Each person attending the convention received and was challenged to use a Soul Winners New Testament provided by an anonymous donor. At the close of the Wednesday morning session convention goers received evangelistic "thank you" tracts published by Woman's Missionary Union which were to be left with a tip at lunch.

Other emphases on missions came through the testimony of Diana Lay, missionary from Arizona to Ghana, and through the singing of "Amazing Grace" in four languages by ethnic individuals in the state.

The contributions that Irving Childress, director of the convention's evangelism/missions division until his death Sept. 22, were recognized and an offering of more than \$700 was received for a special new work fund established in his honor. Messengers voted to dedicate the minutes of the annual meeting to his memory.

Resolutions adopted included one supporting Planned Growth in Giving and its emphasis on increased missions giving, supporting the 8.5 by '85 emphasis to increase Sunday school enrollment, urging passage of a U.S. constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget, and supporting the "Southern Baptist position against gambling and the use of alcohol and tobacco" and urging "all Christians to seek the will of God in these areas, without bias based on economics."

Other resolutions opposed the spread of legalized gambling, abortion and ministers' forced participation in social security and asked the convention staff to assist churches in meeting their new work commitments.

The 1985 meeting will be Nov. 12-13 at North Phoenix Baptist Church, Phoenix.



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