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Missionaries In Lebanon
Say They Pray And Stay

By Irma Duke

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--The phrase, "the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air," has a double meaning for Americans working as Southern Baptist missionaries in Lebanon.

Even in late November when Lebanon celebrated its flag and independence days, observers weren't sur whether the fireworks were in celebration or renewed fighting.

Shellings are almost daily occurrences which remind them how fragile life is and how urgent the need is to spread the gospel.

"We're looking forward to the time when we can sit down for a meal and not have to turn on the radio for the news," said Leola Ragland at the dinner table. "They're probably hitting Baptist homes now," she said as gunfire came from a certain area of the city. Mrs. Ragland and her husband, Jim, have been missionaries in Beirut since 1953.

Churches and institutions have alternate power sources for the times when fighting has damaged electrical wires. Missionaries use their car radios to get information on areas where fighting has broken out and take alternate routes if necessary.

"Being out on the road and not knowing if you're going to get home ties me in knots," Mrs. Ragland explained.

Even though they've been spared, all the missionaries in the Beirut area have had close calls during the last 10 years. LaNell Barnes was working in her back yard in the fall of 1983 when a shell landed in her front yard. She and her husband immediately went to their basement shelter where they stayed in a dark cubbyhole for more than two hours until the noise quieted. More than 30 shells had fallen within feet of their back fence during that time.

In another incident, three MKs spent the night hovering in a school hallway not knowing whether their parents were dead or alive. Other missionaries show where shells and shrapnel hit in their homes and offices. Two missionaries and an MK were scheduled to be near the American embassy when it was blown up but last-minute circumstances changed their plans.

In West Beirut, missionary presence has decreased to the Raglands and two single women, one of whom is on furlough. Until the Lebanese army moved back into the Muslim-controlled west side recently, there seemed to be much more tension and less security. There hasn't been time yet to see if the army's return will make a difference.

"Beirut is a supermarket of gangs," says Ragland, director for Beirut Baptist School. The school has bus drivers from four different groups to help insure the schoolchildren's safety. Four of the school's pupils have been killed in incidents not related to the school.

Muslim groups join together to fight against those known as Christians, who, for the most part, live on the east side. The Christians, primarily from Maronite and Catholic backgrounds, are fighting for a Christian-controlled government, fearing Muslim control above everything.

At times, Ragland says he feels like he's in a mobile home on a hill in Oklahoma waiting to get hit by a tornado but not knowing from which direction or when. From February through May, the Raglands slept in their hallway.

While missionaries on the east side have not lived under as much tension as those on the west, they, too, have worked under some difficult circumstances and have had their ministries curtailed.

The Baptist radio and television studio, one of four international Baptist ministries based in Beirut, has not missed a broadcast but many programs have had to be rerun because production schedules were at a standstill. And their follow-up, dependent upon the mail system, was impossible during certain periods because the airport and seaport were closed.

Shells were exploding overhead as missionaries Wayne and Frances Fuller completed the Arabic test edition of MasterLife, a Southern Baptist program for training in discipleship.

The Arab Baptist Theological Seminary is hurting also. Classes have been cancelled at times. The enrollment is down to seven full-time students and two part-time ones. Even though the seminary is international, only two foreign students are willing to study there under current conditions. Yet, the churches are facing pastor shortages.

And local church work has suffered the loss of members. One missionary said for a while he was going to a funeral almost every day to mourn with church family or friends.

Under such conditions, why don't Southern Baptist missionaries leave? Mrs. Ragland answered without hesitating, "And leave 800 kids? I can't." Beirut Baptist School would probably close if they left. She says at times she has wished she could say God has led her to leave or move to the other side, but He hasn't.

"We haven't borne anything compared to what a lot of the nationals have," says Mabel Summers, who will soon retire after almost 35 years in Lebanon. "It's based on a call," she added. "I think you'll stay if the Lord calls you."

"You see things happening," says Mack Sacco. "The church is alive." When he and his wife returned recently from furlough, their four children came back with them. He feels right about it, but it was a difficult decision to make.

They all believe God has unfinished work for them to do and that's why they've been spared. In spite of the situation, churches are growing and the convention president says they hope to double their membership to 1,500 between now and 1993, the 100th anniversary of Baptist work in Lebanon.

"We work together," says Pete Dunn. "We stay and we pray."

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(Irma Duke and photographer Don Rutledge have just returned from a 10-day stay in Beirut.)

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Morgan Asks Treasury
To Treat Ministers Fairly

By Ray Furr

Baptist Press
12/18/84

DALLAS (BP)--Annuity Board President Darold H. Morgan told officials from the United States Treasury Department there is no justification for applying a revenue ruling which prevents ministers with tax-free housing allowances from deducting real estate interest and taxes while allowing others with tax free housing allowances to receive those deductions.

In a meeting with Acting Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Tax Policy Ronald Pearlman, Morgan said the Internal Revenue Service has deliberately discriminated against ministers by not making Revenue Ruling 83-3 applicable to all groups with housing allowances. He requested the Treasury be "...fair by not denying clergy of income tax deductions for interest and real estate taxes between Jan. 3, 1983 and Jan. 1, 1986, even if they relocate during this period."

Morgan told Pearlman the IRS action has had a "chilling effect" on the mobility of ministers. "There are many ministers who feel the Lord calling them to other places of service, but due to tax penalties and financial hardships caused by this ruling can not move."

The IRS has issued no similar rulings affecting any other groups with housing allowances.

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The Annuity Board president said Pearlman agreed the application of Revenue Ruling 83-3 to ministers only is unfair while allowing members of the military and other organizations with tax-free housing allowances to receive the added deductions.

According to a previous source the treasury had not planned to issue a similar ruling affecting military personnel before 1986. However, Morgan noted a treasury spokesman did say action on the issue was imminent with respect to members of the military and other taxpayers receiving housing allowances.

"Ministers acted in good faith by relying on previous IRS rulings and have made long-range financial plans in purchasing homes and arranging mortgages," said Morgan.

He said representatives from the Church Alliance, a 27-membered organization acting on behalf of church pension programs, appealed to the Treasury when the IRS failed to grant their request of delaying the ruling's effective date until 1988 so clergy could make financial adjustments. The U.S. Senate has passed resolutions and bills this session which would have reversed or delayed Revenue Ruling 83-3 and similar rulings concerning house allowances.

"We believe the Treasury should at least move the effective date of the ruling to 1986 to avoid the appearance of unfairness in its treatment of taxpayers having identical issues," said Morgan.

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Record 68 Evangelists Named;
Reappointees Also Set New Mark

Baptist Press
12/18/84

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A record 68 general evangelists were appointed in 1984 as the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board sharpened its evangelistic thrust.

Twelve of the church-starters, the most sought-after category of overseas workers, were among 43 new missionaries named and two missionaries reappointed during December.

For the year, the board has added 343 to its overseas force, including 238 career and associate missionaries, a 16 percent increase, and a record 38 reappointees, a 46 percent increase. It is the seventh time the board has added more than 300 to its overseas personnel and the fifth largest year in total number. The record was 406 in 1982.

"Increases have come in areas where we are wanting and needing them," said Louis Cobbs, director of the board's personnel selection department. "I believe this is very significant."

The only figure lower than last year came in the category of journeymen, college graduates under 27 commissioned to help missionaries overseas. Though the board approved more than 100 journeymen this year, only 64 have been commissioned. Others will be commissioned in February after a winter training session.

Charles Bryan, senior vice-president for overseas operations, summarizing a panel discussion, held up an arrow to illustrate the thrust of Southern Baptist work overseas. The arrowhead, he said, is evangelism which results in churches. The shaft represents "all the other things," such as health care ministries, seminaries, development work and Bible and literature distribution, "which keep the arrow on target."

And the feathers at the end, he said, represent the prayer support which keeps the arrow going where God wants it to go.

More than 200,000 Southern Baptists have made commitments to pray daily for missions, said Catherine Walker, special assistant to the president for intercessory prayer. Demand for the prayer pins has been so great that another 100,000 have been ordered.

Eighty-seven hundred persons or groups are receiving monthly lists of special missions prayer requests, and Walker said missionaries are reporting specific things they've seen happen as the result of such prayers.

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Use of the Global Circuit "hot line" during this year's Lottie Moon Week of Prayer emphasis recorded 7,892 calls, about 1,100 more than last year, she reported.

In other actions the board heard reports on two special gifts for Ethiopian hunger relief totaling \$425,000, planned a time during its February meeting to pledge commitment to Planned Growth In Giving and approved a 10-year plan to help Canadian Baptists launch their own foreign missions effort.

Davis Saunders, director for work in Eastern and Southern Africa, said First Baptist Church, Belfry, Ky., with fewer than 300 enrolled in Sunday school, has presented a \$200,000 check to the Kentucky Baptist executive board for Ethiopian famine relief. Another \$225,000 has been pledged in January by an anonymous Georgia donor.

Southern Baptists can move swiftly to provide such relief, Saunders said, because their regular gifts through the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering have put in place a system of missionaries trained both in the language and the culture of these African countries.

More than \$3 million has been allocated this year for African needs out of a total of more than \$6.5 million allocated worldwide.

The board had special prayer God would send rain to the drought areas of Africa.

Board members in February will pledge increased giving as part of the Planned Growth In Giving program to raise the level of Southern Baptist financial support to match the denomination's Bold Mission goals.

The board also moved ahead with its plan to assist Canadian Baptists, offering to help identify personnel needed overseas, assist in screening Canadian applicants through the board's personnel selection department and train these new missionaries at the Cauthen Missionary Learning Center near Richmond. It encouraged Canadian Baptists to set up their own foreign missions committee or board and to channel their mission offering gifts and part of their Cooperative Program receipts to support the missionaries.

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Baptist College, Seminary
Degrees 'Ideal' For Ministry

By Lonnie Wilkey

Baptist Press
12/18/84

ATLANTA (BP)—Southern Baptist college and seminary degrees offer the "ideal preparation" for the ministry, according to seminary administrator Morris Ashcraft.

Ashcraft, academic dean at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., spoke during the mid-year meeting of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools.

A member of the association's articulation committee, Ashcraft discussed common issues confronting Baptist colleges and seminaries including their relationships to each other and duplication of ministerial education at both levels.

Ashcraft does not view duplication of courses as a serious problem. "I hear almost no complaints on the seminary campus about duplicating courses."

Survey courses in the Old and New Testament, he said, are the ones most often "alleged" to overlap. "These areas of study are so broad that no amount of study will exhaust the content. Professors teach in such different ways that duplication may not be as serious as we think."

Ashcraft acknowledged concerns regarding giving seminary credit for college courses. He said all seminaries give "advanced standing" but place barriers to discourage this practice. Many students, he noted, do not apply for this process either because of the barriers or because they simply want to "take over" basic courses.

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His only solution would be for the seminaries to provide a two-track program which would require graduates of non-Baptist colleges to take additional courses in order to complete a seminary degree.

One reason seminaries are reluctant to give credit for college work is that Cooperative Program allocations for the seminaries are based on a formula involving credit hours earned, according to Ashcraft. "It is obvious that if students on college campus do work which in any way replaces work usually done at seminary there is a financial gain for the college and a financial loss for the seminary," he said.

Instead of complaints about duplication of courses, he said, most students complain they do not receive enough courses to prepare them for theological studies.

Because language requirements have been dropped at most seminaries due to addition of more ministry courses, Ashcraft said, "It would be a signal achievement for pre-theological students to study Greek or Hebrew before coming to seminary. This would pose no problems in duplication in seminaries which do not use some of their hours for required language study."

Ashcraft dispelled several "myths" regarding theological education including the notion pre-theological students should not major in religion. This myth, he said, has been prevalent "since I was a college student."

"In seminaries we need more, not fewer students who have majored in pre-theological studies. We can adjust our curriculums to meet their needs if they come better prepared," he said. He noted 50 percent of seminary students currently "come from Baptist colleges."

Also incorrect, according to Ashcraft, is the belief religion taught on the college level is inferior to that taught in seminary. "Professors in Baptist college religion departments have essentially the same academic competence as those on seminary faculties. Reluctance on the part of the seminaries to grant seminary credit for college level courses is not related to college faculties."

Baptist college religion professors, he continued, know and share in the tradition of the church. They also know the needs of pre-theological education and can advise students in choosing and integrating other disciplines with a religion or other major.

The most serious issue to be addressed, Ashcraft said, is "we have superb Baptist college programs of study for ministerial students, but we are not utilizing them to their fullest." Instead of criticizing Baptist colleges for offering theological education at the undergraduate level, seminaries need to acknowledge the importance of such programs, he said.

"In my judgement, those of us in seminaries must recognize and take action to make known that the ideal preparation for the student intending to engage in ministry in a Southern Baptist setting could find no better route than a baccalaureate degree from a Baptist college or university and a graduate degree from a Baptist seminary."

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Gambling Industry Expects Expansion Of Lotteries

Baptist Press
12/18/84

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (BP)—State-operated lotteries will move into six more states before 1988, while expansion of legalized casino gambling probably will have to wait a few more years, participants at the 6th National Conference on Gambling and Risk Taking were told.

Several times during the conference speakers referred to Baptist opposition as one obstacle to widespread expansion of gambling interests in the country.

One gambling industry lobbyist boldly predicted that while proposals for a national lottery will receive little backing from the lottery industry, every state—except "a few very Baptist, conservative states"—will eventually join the ranks of lottery states.

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Lottery industry members at the meeting were euphoric about the November elections, when, as one speaker noted, "even a hardcore Baptist state like Missouri" joined three other states in adopting a lottery. Industry spokesmen were equally excited about the performance of state lotteries which are expected to end the year with more than \$7 billion in gross sales.

While the state-sponsored lottery has become the vanguard of the industry, gambling leaders have differed over the impact the rapid growth of lotteries may have on other legal forms of gambling. One casino representative claimed lotteries are "a way to educate people about gambling as a form of entertainment." People can learn how to gamble at home, "then they will look at Atlantic City as a destination for travel to enjoy this kind of entertainment."

In contrast to the optimism of lottery representatives, most casino industry spokespersons virtually ruled out casino expansion into new states in the near future, with Louisiana and Michigan considered the only possible exception.

In addition, income projections for Atlantic City indicate much less growth for casino gambling than for the state-operated lotteries. Casino industry representatives also complained frequently about "overregulation," recommending 24-hour gambling and removal of restrictions on "adult entertainment."

Thomas O'Brien of the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement, told conference participants "the large number of unrecorded transactions in casino participant gambling invites or attracts criminal elements."

Although he contended New Jersey has effectively minimized "skimming" and has controlled efforts by organized crime to penetrate casino ownership, he admitted other organized crime activities require more vigilance.

Martin Danziger, former acting chairman of the Casino Control Commission for New Jersey, was less optimistic. Infiltration by organized crime is a major weakness of the gambling industry, he said, emphasizing "it is only a matter of time" before organized crime gains greater influence in businesses which serve the casino industry.

Indeed, the conference at the Bally Hotel and Casino occurred in the midst of events which seemed to demonstrate the legitimacy of Danziger's concern.

Several weeks earlier, the former mayor of Atlantic City had pleaded guilty to extortion charges in a proposed land transaction for casino construction. The former city director of planning and development was on trial for similar charges. The president of the casino hotel employees union resigned under pressure from regulators because of close connections with organized crime figure Nicky Scarfo.

Another problem for the gambling industry's image—compulsive gambling—also received attention at the conference.

Arnie Wexler, president of the New Jersey Council on Compulsive Gambling, estimated the number of compulsive gamblers in New Jersey alone is between 350,000 and 400,000. Another speaker added that a compulsive gambler affects 6 to 12 other persons. Family members and employers suffer most frequently, he said.

Wexler, who identified himself as a recovering former compulsive gambler, said gambling initially seemed to help his low self-esteem. "The first time I went to the track I won," he explained. "I won on my first football bet. These things made me feel much better about myself. I had found something I could do well."

Sheila Wexler said her husband's spending on gambling "impressed" her at first. "It helped me feel better about my insecurity," she explained. "But when his winnings dropped off and the bills that I didn't know about started coming in, it was like a 'bomb'."

Robert Custer, Veterans Administration psychiatrist and nationally-renowned authority on the subject of compulsive gambling, pointed out that about 20 percent of compulsive gamblers have attempted suicide.

Robert Klein, executive director of the New Jersey Council on Compulsive Gambling, reported one study identified 30 percent of jail inmates as compulsive gamblers, and said perhaps as many as one-third of the state's alcoholics are dually addicted to gambling as well.

The state of New Jersey has finally begun allocating a fraction of the tax revenue from casinos for education about the dangers of compulsive gambling. A sum of \$110,000 has been designated for an educational program conducted by the Council on Compulsive Gambling and another \$70,000 for an educational program about the services available through the John F. Kennedy Treatment Center, the only major counseling program in the state for compulsive gamblers.

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Palmer Compares Mission
Strategy To Korea Defense

By Jim Newton

Baptist Press
12/18/84

ATLANTA (BP)—Southern Baptist Home Mission Board Vice-President Gerald Palmer, just returned from a mission tour visiting Baptist military chaplains in Japan, Korea, and Okinawa, compared development of the Home Mission Board's mission strategy to military strategy for the defense of Korea.

Speaking to state directors of missions in their annual meeting, Palmer said there were some interesting similarities and differences between Baptist missions strategy in the United States and American military strategy in Korea.

According to published reports, there are about 36,000 American troops in South Korea, but the military strategy does not depend completely on these limited number of troops. "The larger picture is the fact that there are 600,000 Republic of Korea soldiers on active duty throughout South Korea, and more than two million reservists," Palmer said.

"Back of this are the squadrons of U.S. planes based in Korea, Japan and Okinawa,...the naval forces in the area,...the Third Marine Division on Okinawa ready to move at a moment's notice,...(plus) the B-52 bombers on Guam and the Marines in California," Palmer said.

In case of an invasion of South Korea, the military strategy "is to respond to the situation with whatever resources are needed and available," Palmer said.

"I came away from that experience (visiting Korea) with an overwhelming sense of the complexity of the military strategy for this part of the world, and then realized this is only part of the global military strategy of the United States," Palmer said.

He compared it to "the incredible complexity of relationships involved in developing a home missions strategy" within the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Home Mission Board's strategy employs the resources of a national convention with 21 agencies, 37 state conventions, 1,200 associations and 36,000 churches with 14 million members, Palmer said.

The major difference between SBC missions strategy and U.S. military strategy in Korea, observed Palmer, is the SBC missions strategy is implemented "on purely a voluntary cooperative basis without the luxury of military discipline."

Added to this difference is the "unbelievable diversity of need," said Palmer. In developing Home Mission Board concerns for the future, the board has identified seven broad areas of need with more than 100 subheads, he said.

"The list (of needs) represents persons who are found in multiple sets of circumstances where no one approach will meet their needs," Palmer said. "Their spiritual needs cannot be met apart from concern for their physical and emotional needs."

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To help meet those needs, the Home Mission Board strategy involves providing four types of resources, Palmer said: (1) leadership to persons on national, state, associational and church levels; (2) appointment and approval of about 3,800 missions personnel, endorsement of 1,600 chaplains, and assignment of more than 40,000 short and long-term volunteers; (3) action plans developed to meet needs to be used by national, state, association and local Baptist organizations; and (4) a financial commitment of \$55 million annually.

"When a need is identified," Palmer said, "the Home Mission Board seeks to deploy those strategy components that are applicable and available to meet the needs."

Because the board's mission strategy hinges on voluntary, cooperative relationships with other Baptist bodies, there are some built-in limitations, Palmer said.

"There was a day when we (the Home Mission Board) were free to implement our strategy with the only limitations being 'as needed and available,'" Palmer said. "In the beginning, we did not have to check with anybody but the Lord," he said.

But today, the Home Mission Board's strategy must be meshed with strategies of the other SBC agencies, the 37 state conventions, 1,200 associations and 37,000 churches, Palmer said.

"Our plan is to have the resources available, and to deploy them according to the needs.... But we do not employ a missions strategy apart from the strategies of other SBC agencies, state conventions and other facets of Southern Baptist life," Palmer said.

"Our strategy is both enhanced and limited by our commitment to cooperation with state conventions and relationships to associations and churches," Palmer said.

"Today, the Home Mission Board strategy is to work in concert with state conventions, associations and churches in order to accomplish its missions objectives. All the resources of the Home Mission Board become resources to these Baptist groups as they develop and implement their own strategies, and their strategies become part of the HMB national strategies.

"It is incredibly complex," Palmer said, "and some ask if it is worth the difference.

"If, as in previous days, home missions is seen only as being the work the Home Mission Board does through its missionaries, we could conclude the old way is better," Palmer said. "But if we believe missions is the responsibility of every church, and that each cooperative agency, (national, state, and associational) are instruments of missions under God, then we would believe the present plan is worth the added energy and costs.

"The implementation of the missions section of the HMB is multiplied many, many times over by the involvement of every unit of Baptist life," Palmer said.

Palmer said his paper on missions strategy is not complete, and is being revised, but he felt it was important for state missions directors to understand the complexity of the board's strategy process.

During the four-day meeting, the state directors also heard HMB Evangelism Vice-President Bob Hamblin say it is impossible to separate the concepts of evangelism and missions. "Missions and evangelism are entangled in every way," he said.

Hamblin said if Baptists are to get really serious about evangelism, they will also have to get serious about starting new churches.

During the meeting, a new film emphasizing the relationship between evangelism and starting new churches was premiered. Entitled "A Matter of Urgency," the film was produced jointly by the Home Mission Board evangelism section and its church extension division. It will be available in 1985 for rental through Baptist Film Centers.

Shared Ministry Encourages
New Attitudes, Recognition

By Jim Lowry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Ministers and church members in Southern Baptist churches need to have the courage to blend their individuality into a shared ministry by bonding together for the common good, according to Gary Cook, director of the church and staff support division at the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Shared Ministry is a new emphasis planned by the board's church administration department to encourage Southern Baptists to develop a new attitude of ministry so churches can more effectively work toward their potential.

"The Christian faith is primarily a shared faith," Cook said to state convention church administration consultants at their annual meeting. "Shared Ministry is built on the belief the ministry of the church belongs to all of the people of God."

Cook believes "nearly every problem we face in this world today can be traced to a dividing wall of hostility which separates and alienates man from God, and pits nation against nation and person against person," but "tragically, the dividing wall of hostility prevents effective ministry on the part of the people of God."

"Solid walls of hostility are being built in Southern Baptist churches when pastors think of themselves as presidents of the corporation, or worse, as owners of the company," Cook explained. "More walls are built when pastors perceive deacons only as parking lot attendants or off ring takers and church staff members as lackeys. Other ways of building hostility are to look upon women as solely responsible for the fall and expecting the pastor to be the church's lackey.

"These dividing walls of hostility will fall only when all of us as the people of God, including pastors, church staff ministers, deacons and church members give more than lip service to the words 'we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God,'" he continued.

According to Cook, the time for Shared Ministry came 2,000 years ago, and the question now is, "Have the right people come for Shared Ministry."

To determine if Southern Baptists are prepared to share ministry, Cook said we must set aside egomania, openly admit our own sin and weakness and be willing to accept others in spite of their sin and weakness. Also, he said we must be willing to affirm all persons as ministers.

"Every person who becomes a follower of Christ shares a common commission to ministry," he continued. "Ministry is what a Christian does because of what he is. Shared Ministry begins with reconciliation among ministers and moves to reconciliation in the world.

Joe Stacker, secretary of the church administration department, added Shared Ministry is a leadership program concerning the life and fellowship of the church.

"Life situations in churches are easier to handle if we share the ministry," Stacker said. "Shared Ministry is an emphasis to encourage pastors and people to work together to change attitudes and establish a sense of trust in the work of the ministry."

Beginning in January 1985 a series of Shared Ministry interpretative meetings will be held throughout the Southern Baptist Convention to help church staff persons and church members work toward improved ministry efforts by sharing the responsibility and the challenge.

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Baptist Property Sold
To Dallas Developer

By Ray Furr and Orville Scott

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DALLAS (BP)—Officials of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board and the Baptist General Convention of Texas have sold their 511 North Akard office building and adjoining land to the Lincoln Properties Company of Dallas for about \$12 million.

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The 39,000 square foot land area--just under an acre--sold for what some developers said is the highest price ever paid for land in downtown Dallas.

Darold H. Morgan, president of the Annuity Board, and William M. Pinson, Jr., executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said the money from the sale of the property will be used to strengthen the retirement plans for Southern Baptist church and denominational staff and to provide space and other resources for the Texas Baptist Executive Board mission and support programs.

Morgan said the Annuity Board's share in the sale will be added to the retirement investments, with the proceeds securing and strengthening plans administered by the board.

This decision concerning the use of Texas Baptists' share of the proceeds will involve review of facility requirements, costs, location and overall mission needs before the Executive Board authorizes further action, said Pinson.

Pinson said current facilities do not provide parking and storage needs, and accessibility is difficult for many people who give their time to assist in the mission endeavors of Texas Baptists.

The 15-story building, which has 181,437 square feet of space, has been occupied by the Annuity Board for 25 years. Three years ago the board signed a lease-purchase contract with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, allowing the BGCT 59 percent of the land area and 43 percent of the 511 North Akard building.

The Baptist leaders said informal negotiations have occurred over the last three years with several companies, but they waited for the property value to reach what they believe is its economic peak before accepting an offer.

"The economic growth and development in Dallas has been so rapid that two major office buildings in close proximity to the Baptist property are scheduled for completion in less than two years," said Morgan.

The board and the BGCT will have the option to occupy the building for several years so they will have ample time to make the necessary arrangements for relocation.

Lincoln Properties has recently completed a 45-story office building across the street from the Baptist building, and has scheduled another development a block away. The purchase of the Baptist property allows Lincoln to develop the six blocks in the north end of downtown Dallas adjacent to First Baptist Church.

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EDITOR'S NOTE--In (BP) story, "Stanley's Church Doubles Cooperative Program Gifts," mailed 12/14/84 you may wish to insert the following sentence at the end of the fifth paragraph for clarity. The 2.1 figure was for 1983 contributions, according to figures from the Atlanta Baptist Association office.

Thanks,
Baptist Press
