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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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September 4, 1985

85-107

Atlanta Housing
 Forms Available

ATLANTA (BP)—Housing request forms for the 1986 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in the Georgia World Congress Center should be available in state convention offices Sept. 16, according to convention manager Tim A. Hedquist.

Hedquist said the forms, similar to those used for the past six years, were being printed in early September and will be sent to executive secretaries of the 37 state Baptist conventions by Sept. 16, and will be printed in the September issue of Baptist Program.

"The forms are for those who wish to request room reservations for the Southern Baptist Convention through the Atlanta Housing Bureau," Hedquist said, adding rates for the 10 hotels range from \$44 to \$128 per night, double occupancy.

The Housing Bureau has 5,000 rooms in the downtown area, he said.

"The block is intended for individuals, persons who are not included in a group or through a tour agency," he added. "Each request will be treated individually. Even if an envelope comes in with 10 forms, each will be treated individually."

The forms must be returned to the SBC Housing Bureau, 233 Peachtree St. NE, Suite 200, Atlanta, Ga. 30043, no earlier than Oct. 1.

"They will be considered only by the date of the postmark," Hedquist said. "They will start with all of the requests postmarked Oct. 1, and go on to Oct. 2. They will consider only the date of the postmark, not the time it was mailed, so it will be to no advantage to mail the form at 12:01 a.m. Oct. 1."

He said all 5,000 rooms probably will be filled from requests postmarked Oct. 1 and 2.

Hedquist said the forms will not be opened until about Oct. 10, in order to allow all Oct. 1 and 2 postmarks to arrive. "This way, a person in Atlanta will not get advantage over someone from Seattle," he said.

The convention manager said each year some persons or groups attempt to "shortcircuit" the system by sending "50 or more" requests in an attempt to book up rooms in the downtown hotels. "They are usually spotted, particularly since the lists are put on computer," he said.

"When an attempt at skullduggery is found, the workers in the housing bureau put the forms aside and those persons usually do not get rooms through the bureau," he said.

Hedquist said the forms are handled by employees of the housing bureau "who do not know any of the persons requesting rooms. That way it is as fair as possible, since they cannot be accused of showing favoritism to one side or the other."

He said although 5,000 rooms are blocked out through the housing bureau, there are still plenty of other rooms in Atlanta.

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"A conservative estimate is that there are 23,000 hotel rooms in the Atlanta area. It has the third highest concentration of downtown hotels of any city where we meet, surpassed only by New Orleans and Las Vegas," he said, adding persons should go directly to any hotel not listed through the Atlanta Housing Bureau.

"Atlanta has another advantage in that there is a rapid rail system (MARTA). Families or persons who cannot afford to stay in the higher priced downtown area hotels can stay in the suburbs along the rail line and ride the train right to the convention center. A one-way trip on MARTA costs only 60-cents per person," he said.

He suggested persons wishing to make their own reservations should check the 800 numbers of the larger chains, use a travel agent or go directly to the hotel.

Headquarters hotel will be the Westin Peachtree Plaza Hotel.

Other hotels included in the block include American Hotel, Atlanta Hilton and Towers, Atlanta Marriott Downtown, Atlanta Marriott Marquis, Atlantan Hotel, Best Western Midtown Plaza, Downtowner Motor Inn, Hyatt Regency Atlanta and Lanier Plaza Hotel.

A list of other hotels is available through Hedquist's office, 901 Commerce #750, Nashville, TN 37203.

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South African Turmoil Causes
Limited Impact On Baptist Work

By Mary Jane Welch

Baptist Press
9/4/85

DURBAN, South Africa (BP)—One Baptist family lost its home in mid-August riots, but racial strife in South Africa has had little other impact on 28 Southern Baptist missionaries and the people they work with.

The Baliraj family, Indian Baptists, lost their home in mid-August when blacks burned some Indian homes in the Inanda and Phoenix townships of Durban, said Dwight Reagan, Southern Baptist missionary who works with about 60 Indian churches there.

Some Indians lost their homes during the riots, but none died and most were unaffected, said Reagan. Those living near the riot area were afraid and unable to sleep for several days, they told him. Three Indian men were killed when they returned to Inanda a few days after the riots.

When blacks gathered after the riots in an open area between Inanda (primarily black) and Phoenix (Indian), threatening to do more damage, Indian men gathered nearby with boards and pipes to guard their community against further violence, he said. The men, including a number of Baptist church members, stayed until 2 or 3 a.m. and another attack never came.

Reagan said the Balirajs' family in Phoenix took them in and took care of their needs. Baptist churches, especially those with Indian members, collected food, clothing and money to help other victims.

Reagan said he has sometimes wondered when starting out for Phoenix whether anything will stop him before he reaches his destination. But because the South African apartheid system separates the races into segregated living areas, he and other missionaries have felt few effects of the rioting in black, coloured (mixed race) and Indian areas.

He compared his experiences during Durban riots with earlier experiences during riots in Chicago. He was living in Hammond, Ind., next to Chicago, when riots there made national news, but he and his church members knew about the riots only from watching television.

James Westmoreland in Johannesburg agrees. "Mostly what we know is what we read in the paper and see on TV," he said. Westmoreland, long-time missionary in southern Africa, is the Foreign Mission Board's associate to the director for eastern and southern Africa with responsibility for southern Africa.

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According to Charles Hampton, Southern Baptist missionary in Cape Town, the only major change in his routine has been eliminating house-to-house visitation at night. "I don't feel any physical danger. Of course, I'm pretty well known in that area (Mitchells Plain). But I don't go in there much after dark."

Hampton reported good attendance at a city-wide revival in the Rocklands area of Mitchells Plain (a coloured city near Cape Town where just two nights earlier there had been major rioting). "We had our meeting on Sunday night (Sept. 1) without any incident at all, with just crowds of people coming," he said.

Reagan said one of his fellow missionaries in Cape Town had been warned by coloured church members not to enter their living areas. They offered to meet him on the edge of the community when they were traveling together to a meeting. "People are very helpful like that," he said.

Besides segregated living areas, Southern Baptist missionaries' assignments and the Foreign Mission Board's nonpolitical stance have insulated missionaries from some of the strife. No Southern Baptist missionary works full-time with black Baptist churches, said Davis Saunders, the Foreign Mission Board's director for eastern and southern Africa. But it isn't by their choice.

Southern Baptist missionaries work in cooperation with the Baptist Union of South Africa and receive assignments from them. The union has personnel working with black churches, but has assigned Southern Baptist missionaries primarily to work with Indian and coloured churches or in convention-wide posts in which they relate to all races.

Two couples work primarily with coloured churches: Dexter and Gloria Greene in Johannesburg and Charles and Evelyn Hampton in Cape Town. Another couple works with Portuguese-speaking people and three work with several races in the country's two Baptist seminaries.

One of the theological teachers, William Steeger, reports that his black students who live in Soweto have coped well with the disturbances in their township. He cites David Mkwai, a third-year student who with his wife has "done a masterful job in maintaining a sense of calm in the midst of great tension."

On days when disturbances make it impossible for buses to get in and out of the township, Mkwai walks to the seminary. "It isn't always easy to concentrate on your studies when you are concerned about your children and their safety in school back in the township," said Steeger. "It is his sense of call and his commitment to Jesus that has made this possible. David is convinced that peace can only come through Christ as he changes the hearts and lives of men and women throughout the country."

Carroll Shaw, who directs evangelism for the South African union; Frank Baker, who creates radio and television programs, and Keith Blakley, a student worker, work with all races. Other missionaries, such as a business manager, hostess and dormitory parents, perform support ministries for their fellow missionaries.

"We have accepted the fact that the influence of the missionaries in personal relations to people of all races is one of the contributions we make," said Saunders. The mission tries to provide resources irrespective of race, he said.

He also pointed out the Foreign Mission Board has a policy which calls for its missionaries to be nonpolitical in the countries where they work. "We deliberately do not take a political stance," he said. Instead of trying to directly affect politics in any country, missionaries teach the Bible and count on it to influence people in making their political choices, he said.

"Certainly the unrest and the tension and the frustration will block the effectiveness of anything we do," said Saunders. "But at the same time, it perhaps will give us an opportunity to have a positive witness in the midst of a very negative situation and for this reason we stay."

"We must remember that none of our missionaries are racists," he said. "They keep quiet in a system which is not their own in order to stay and minister. They must be politically sensitive without being politically active."

That is true not just in South Africa, he said, but in many other African countries where political leaders and policies can change overnight. A nonpolitical stance has enabled missionaries to be a stable presence in the midst of the political swirl. "You can't help anybody if you go off and leave them," said Saunders.

Although no Southern Baptist missionaries work full-time with black churches in South Africa, Southern Baptists do have 27 missionaries assigned to Bophuthatswana and Transkei, two of the black homelands where South Africa has assigned most blacks citizenship. Although world debate continues over the legitimacy of the homelands, Saunders feels missionaries have a commitment to minister to people that transcends political considerations. "Whether or not Transkei is a nation or a homeland or what does not diminish our opportunity or desire to minister," said Saunders.

Both Saunders and Reagan noted that blacks are the group suffering most right now from the country's turmoil. Whites, coloureds and Indians feel relatively few effects of the turmoil, said Reagan. "But the black people are very worried in their townships, of course, until things get back under control."

Most blacks, he said, want to see change in South Africa, but few want to see their possessions and homes destroyed in the process and some are forming vigilante groups to protect their homes. Most of the more than 600 killed this year in the unrest have been blacks.

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

Workers Take To Phones
For Enrollment Emphasis

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
9/4/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Many pastors and church leaders have expressed surprise to receive a telephone call from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, but as many as 10,000 will be called by the end of September.

More than 60 Sunday school department employees and volunteers are calling churches to check progress on "From Here to Victory," the final three-month push to reach a Sunday school enrollment of 8.5 million by Sept. 29. The callers also are asking whether the board can provide any last-minute assistance for the churches' enrollment efforts.

The call list includes the 5,000 largest SBC churches and 5,000 smaller churches.

The response from pastors and church leaders has been encouraging. "I now believe even more strongly than ever before we can reach our goal," said Harry Piland, director of the Sunday school department. On Sept. 30, 1984, SBC Sunday school enrollment was 7.81 million.

Dan Watts, pastor of Raymond Road Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss., said his church has set and exceeded three Sunday school enrollment goals. The third goal was 549. Watts plans to set a goal of 649 to try to enroll 100 persons in Sunday school during September.

First Baptist Church, Cullman, Ala., has doubled its goal and will continue emphasizing enrollment during September. Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C., has enrolled three times its goal also and plans to continue enrolling more, according to pastor Joe Brown.

"We have enrolled more people in the last six months than in any six-month period in the last six years," said Frank Trotter, pastor of Third Baptist Church, Marion, Ill.

First Baptist Church, Nowata, Okla., has enrolled 67 new Sunday school members since February. Cliff Kempton, a fourth grader, has enrolled five of those.

Most of the 20 churches contacted by Joe Haynes, Sunday school program promotion consultant, are doing at least some part of the "From Here to Victory" emphasis.

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"If this is any indication, I see no reason why our goals can't be reached," Haynes said.

Sharon Roberts, assistant editor in the Sunday school department, called Fairmont Park Baptist Church, Houston, and learned 100 new Sunday school members have been enrolled so far this year. A total of 50 had been enrolled in the past two months with 11 on the Sunday before she called, Roberts said.

The telephone project was developed "to make sure everything that can be done will be done" for the enrollment campaign, said James Lackey, 8.5 by '85 project coordinator.

Some of the volunteers who are retirees and wives of employees are calling as many as 40 to 60 churches per day, said Dick Kormmeyer, a board retiree who is coordinating the volunteers. Employees are being asked to take lists of 20 churches each. Some employees have taken more than one list.

Many of the people contacted have said they appreciated someone from the Sunday School Board calling to express interest in what they are doing at their church, Kormmeyer said.

M.R. Jones, pastor of Langston Memorial Baptist Church, Conway, S.C., told Kormmeyer the call was the first personal contact he had received from the Sunday School Board in 20 years. Ronnell L. Owensby, pastor of First Baptist Church, Cowpens, S.C., told Jo Kormmeyer, a volunteer caller, the call came at a time when he needed some encouragement.

Lackey said if calls are completed to 10,000 churches before Sept. 29, more of the 36,000 Southern Baptist churches will be added to the call list.

The overwhelmingly positive responses from those contacted has developed interest in continuing to call churches even after the enrollment emphasis ends, Lackey said. "Churches need to hear from us. They appreciate us calling to say we care about what they are doing."

On Sept. 29, churches are being asked to report their Sunday school enrollment to their associations. Associational leaders in turn will call state conventions. State reports will be telecast live on the Baptist Telecommunication Network, 4 to 6 p.m. (CDT).

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HMB Commissions 35
As US-2 Missionaries

Baptist Press
9/4/85

ATLANTA (BP)--Thirty-five recent college graduates have been commissioned by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board as US-2 missionaries. US-2ers spend two years doing all kinds of assignments ranging from traditional evangelism and starting new churches, to working with the deaf in Jackson, Miss., and with students in Hilo, Hawaii.

The US-2 missionaries were appointed to work in 18 states plus Canada under the board's program which provides opportunities for college graduates under the age of 27 to devote two years to missions work. The commissioning service was held at Locust Grove Baptist Church in Smyrna, Ga., in suburban Atlanta.

The largest number of the missionaries (five) will be working in California. Four were appointed to resort missions work in South Carolina, and three each were commissioned to work in New York and Florida.

Two US-2ers were appointed for service in Vermont, Montana, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and British Columbia, Canada; and one each was commissioned to work in Michigan, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee, Louisiana, South Dakota, Utah, Iowa, Massachusetts and Hawaii.

The 35 US-2 missionaries are natives of 15 states, including Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, South Carolina, Texas, Ohio, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, Arizona, Florida, Tennessee and Alaska.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Individual stories with photos mailed to home state Baptist newspapers and secular news media by the Home Mission Board.

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NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION