



- - BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(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

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

85-23

March 1, 1985

'Autonomy' Spurs Formation
Of California Association

TIBURON, Calif. (BP)—Two churches who were not seated at the annual meeting of a Southern Baptist association near San Francisco because they had ordained women as deacons and/or ministers, have joined with six other churches to form a new association.

All eight of the churches which formed the Golden Hills Baptist Association Feb. 16 had been members of the Redwood Empire Association which last October refused to seat messengers from Tiburon (Calif.) Baptist Church, First Baptist Church of Sonoma, Calif., and Napa (Calif.) Baptist Church.

Tiburon, which hosted the organizational meeting, had ordained two women deacons while Sonoma had ordained women to the gospel ministry. Napa had ordained women to the ministry and has an ordained woman minister on its staff.

Last June, messengers to the national meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution opposing the ordination of women.

Under the decentralized structure of the Southern Baptist Convention, each unit (the local church, the association, the state convention and the national convention) is independent and relates to the other units voluntarily.

A church may relate—or be rejected by—any combination of association, state convention and national convention.

Tiburon and Sonoma joined the new association while Napa had visitors present for the organizational meeting. The eight member churches were represented by 46 messengers at the meeting at Tiburon.

Homer McLaughlin, pastor, Montecito Baptist of Santa Rosa, was elected moderator. He said, "The big issue (in forming another association) is autonomy of the local church. Very few of the churches in the new association have ordained women. With them the issue is not whether or not it's scriptural to ordain women, but rather the autonomy of the local church. We simply don't want an association deciding what a local church can or cannot do."

In addition to autonomy, McLaughlin listed mission fellowship and training as reasons for starting the new association.

The churches which made up the Redwood Empire Association were divided into two associations for several years and then were merged into one in 1980 and the Redwood Empire named retained. McLaughlin said due to distance, as well as other factors, in his opinion the two associations should never have merged in the first place.

After recognizing the messengers from the participating churches and adopting the name, the messengers adopted the articles of incorporation and a constitution and by-laws, a budget, calendar, and then voted to cooperate with The Southern Baptist General Convention of California and the Southern Baptist Convention. The group resolved to keep the charter open for a period of six months.

Featured speakers at the meeting included Willie Gaines, pastor, Emmanuel, San Jose and president of the state convention, and Harold K. Graves, president emeritus of Baptist Historical Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, and a member of Tiburon.

--more--

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

Participating churches include Craig Avenue, El Verano; Shell Road, Petaluma; Montecito, Santa Rosa; First, Sonoma; Tiburon, Tiburon, and Vallejo, Hillcrest.

Ron Sisk, pastor of Tiburon, was elected vice-moderator; Ann Foster, Tiburon, was elected clerk and Tom Stringfellow, pastor, Hillcrest, Vallejo, was elected treasurer.

--30--

Overseas Volunteers
Top 6,000 In 1984

By Deanie Johnson

Baptist Press
3/1/85

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Southern Baptists participating in volunteer missions overseas topped 6,000 for the first time in 1984, and many volunteers report the involvement is revolutionizing their local churches.

Nearly 6,100 long- and short-term volunteers served in 45 countries last year and helped lead more than 17,000 people to faith in Christ. The total, almost a 30 percent increase over 1983's count, takes in all types of volunteers, including Mission Service Corps personnel, medical and relief volunteers and participants in partnership evangelism projects.

More than half of the volunteers worked in evangelistic projects, and the great majority of evangelism-related volunteers were lay people. That meant about 95 percent of all requests for evangelism volunteers were filled, said Ronald Boswell, volunteer enlistment director for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Still, the mission board filled only 65 percent of total 1984 requests for volunteers from missionaries on the field, according to Boswell. Approximately 11,000 volunteers have been requested so far for 1985, he said—a dramatic turnaround from the early days of the volunteer program when many missionaries had to be persuaded of the merits of using volunteers.

Board officials project the Bold Mission Thrust goal of placing 10,000 volunteers overseas every year by the end of the century will be the first Foreign Mission Board goal met and will be reached by 1992.

One volunteer, Southern Baptist pastor Calvin Partain of New Mexico, said he knows from experience what participation in volunteer missions can mean to a church. "I am convinced God blesses churches that get involved in missions," he declared.

When Partain first arrived as pastor of First Baptist Church, Gallup, N.M., he found the church financially bankrupt and almost dead. Having just returned from an exciting volunteer mission overseas, he began working to involve the congregation in missions.

"When I went there, they had virtually stopped giving to the Cooperative Program," Partain said. "It was on the budget, but you gave only if all the other bills were paid, and the other bills were never all paid."

Two years later the church sent a team of young people to Mexico for a week. Partain went alone on two more evangelistic trips; then a team of adults from the church went to Mexico.

The pastor watched his church decide to give 10 percent of its budget to the Cooperative Program, increase the budget more than 500 percent and establish two local missions. The congregation eventually moved into new \$850,000 facilities, 80 percent paid for the day they moved in.

More than 200 people at Applewood Baptist Church, Wheatridge, Colo., have participated in volunteer missions, according to member Peggy Oxford. She and her husband, Bob, who've participated every year since 1973, went with a team that spent five days in South Korea last year. "Korea is really open to the gospel right now," she said. "You feel the warmth and the love the people have for you."

--more--

Members of the team visited non-Christians and conducted nightly church services. After one service a Korean church member asked Bob Oxford to visit her non-Christian husband and talk about Christ. He did, but as far as he knew the man didn't make any spiritual decision. On the day the team left to go home, they heard the man had just been killed in a mountain climbing accident.

"We were all just crushed," Mrs. Oxford said, "but we felt like the gospel was presented to him." His wife has since visited the United States and feels her husband made a decision to accept Christ before his death, she said.

The Oxfords have both seen an increase in church giving, particularly in the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Mrs. Oxford said when her church started participating in volunteer missions, they were giving around \$2,000 annually to Lottie Moon. But now their goal has surpassed \$85,000 per year.

"Volunteers come back better church members, they pray more effectively and give more generously," said volunteer specialist Boswell. "Lottie Moon has a face now in the form of a missionary they worked with."

Occasionally a volunteer will have problems when idealism clashes with realities overseas, said Boswell. The board has sought to prepare volunteers by beefing up orientation programs, but no amount of orientation can fully prepare a person for crossing cultures.

Weather, food shortages and poor sanitation sometimes cause culture shock which sends a volunteer home early. But Boswell has been surprised to learn most volunteers who come home early give the same glowing reports as those with happier experiences. Some even find learning the hard realities of mission work makes their time overseas more rewarding.

Other problems crop up. Although volunteers are sent only when requested by missionaries, the process is lengthy. A missionary may return home because of illness or other reasons and leave co-workers to supervise an unexpected volunteer.

Sometimes a missionary writes a job description that's too brief or too complicated. The missionary, the volunteer or both may find out they're not getting what they expected. Sometimes local Baptists and missionaries in a country may have conflicting job descriptions for a single volunteer. Some missionaries want a need filled but fail to realize the time they must give to help a volunteer adjust to a new culture.

But Boswell said the feedback he gets as he travels around the Southern Baptist Convention is overwhelmingly positive. Recently he visited two states which have sent large numbers of volunteers overseas in partnership missions. Kentucky Baptist leaders reported a new vitality in their state because of their partnership with Kenya and Tennessee Baptists said their partnership with Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) in Africa was one of the best things they've ever done.

"When I was growing up, it seemed that if you were going to be called to do something at home that was one thing, but you had to have some kind of special call to be a foreign missionary," said Treva Gibson, dean of students at Grand Canyon College, Phoenix, Ariz.

But last year a team of 39 college students, pastors, and college administrators from Arizona and other states spent two weeks in Brazil working in a Baptist Student Union project.

"Most college students are seeking what they're going to do with their lives, and many are interested in foreign missions," she commented. "They are somewhat apprehensive about missions and this just helps them to decide."

The volunteer program makes foreign missions less "foreign," she said.

—30—

(Johnson, a senior journalism student at the University of Richmond, is an intern at the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.)

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

Home Missions Teleconference
Calls For Mission Support

By Carol Sission Garrett

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—Audiences as large as 100 and as small as one gathered at more than 160 sites across the nation Feb. 9 for the second live Home Missions Teleconference.

In one Montana town, six people gathered at a local electric store to view the teleconference. Nine residents of the Baptist Convalescent Center in Newport, Ky., took part in the broadcast, as did 100 people at the Montgomery, Ala., coliseum.

Viewing sites included homes, churches, associational and state Baptist offices—and in many places, one person sat before the screen.

The teleconference, broadcast live from Birmingham, Ala., via Baptist Telecommunication Network, was viewed by an estimated 2,000 people. Five home missionaries, a church pastor, a church WMU director, a church Brotherhood director and three SBC agency heads discussed home missions with moderator Jay Durham and with telephone callers.

"Who Cares?", the 1985 Week of Prayer for Home Missions theme, was a central teleconference topic. Much of the nationwide audience was composed of WMU members "involved in missions education in their churches, studying week by week what missions is," Carolyn Weatherford, WMU, SBC executive director said.

"The approximately 1.2 million women and girls enrolled in Woman's Missionary Union care. They are praying and giving not just once a year, but every week in their churches," she said. Weatherford, Home Mission Board President William Tanner and Brotherhood President James Smith fielded questions phoned in by viewers.

Caring that leads to action was a familiar subject for home missionary Freddie Mae Bason. For me, missions is creatively fulfilling the unexpired term of Christ Jesus, using any resources that you have to do that," she said. Bason is director of Memorial Drive Baptist Center in Atlanta.

Missionaries reaching out to some of the nation's largest metropolitan cities discussed their work in much the same way that W.J. Hughes, a director of missions from Montana, discussed his. While individual problems and situations were very different, their needs appeared quite similar.

Dan Lindsey, evangelism consultant in Los Angeles County, Calif., and David Palmer, church extension director in Palm Beach County, Fla., agreed with Hughes that their greatest needs were for prayer support, monetary support and the actual physical support of more people to help with their work.

Missionaries were not the only teleconference participants whose caring led to action. Peter Rhea Jones, pastor of First Baptist Church, Decatur, Ga., and the church's missions coordinator Dorothea Gatlin told the audience specific reasons their church is one of the top five in giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

One reason—a strongly missions minded pastor—was underscored by Tanner. "It is absolutely essential the pastor be involved in leading the church in the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering," he said.

"A lot of effort is another important factor," Gatlin said. "The secret to raising a worthy goal is that many people are involved, and are involved all year long through missions education and mission action," she said.

Men involved in mission action are making layman Cecil Medder's church stronger. He said for the past three years First Baptist Church of Trussville, Ala., has sent special construction crews on home mission trips.

Medders said the men come back from these trips more committed to home missions, but also more committed to doing missions in their own community.

Through these trips, "people realize they can have an active part in missions," he said.

The teleconference precedes the March 3-10 Week of Prayer for Home Missions. The format was designed to inform and involve a live audience, and also to allow churches to tape the teleconference and use it in missions education.

—30—

(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by WMU

Missionary Couple Leaves
Sidon In South Lebanon

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
3/1/85

MEDIA, Pa. (BP)—Southern Baptist missionaries Jim and Stephanie Bethea left south Lebanon before Israeli troops ended their 32-month occupation of the area in February.

The Betheas had worked in the port city of Sidon for a year and a half until mid-January. Now living with Mrs. Bethea's parents in Media, Pa., a suburb of Philadelphia, they hope to return to Sidon with their three children after a six-month leave of absence.

"If we had stayed, I don't know what would have happened," Bethea said.

In mid-February thousands of armed Shiite Muslims staged a demonstration in Sidon for an Islamic republic in Lebanon. They tore down Lebanese flags and plastered posters of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini over those of the nation's president, Amin Gemayel, leader of the Maronite Catholic or so-called Christian faction in Lebanon. Gemayel had visited Sidon the day before.

Dozens of Lebanese and Palestinians accused of collaborating with Israeli forces have been assassinated in the region.

But it wasn't the threat of violence that compelled the Betheas to seek a leave of absence. In fact, they made their decision several days before Israel announced the departure of its forces, although rumors of the military exodus had been floating around for more than a year.

"We've been through difficult times in the past with complete assurance from the Lord that it was okay to stay," Bethea said. Leaving was "the leading of the Holy Spirit," he explained, and "we didn't understand why at the time."

He acknowledged most people "don't really understand" such supernatural talk. "They think you have to have some visible or logical reason to leave. If we had operated on that kind of mentality, we'd be dead, quite literally.

"There have been so many times that we would have been killed in Lebanon if we had not been sensitive to the leading of the Spirit, even to the point of taking a turn or stopping the car or going home or not leaving the house. There hasn't been more than a few days that we have not heard or seen some kind of shooting around us."

Often the warfare has involved Israeli forces and Muslims opposed to the Israeli occupation. Other times shooting breaks out between Muslims and Catholics.

Bethea went to Sidon along with a young Lebanese minister, Waleed Harmouche, to revive the Baptist church there, which had dwindled to seven members. Now attendance ranges from 30 to 40 each Sunday.

The church is the only Baptist congregation in territory formerly occupied by the Israelis, although believers gather in several other villages for Bible study and prayer.

"I don't think there's a direct threat against the believers themselves," Bethea said, but they've faced numerous threats and instances of harassment from both Catholics and Muslims. "They're living in a state of resistance, not of real persecution."

—more—

For many young male believers, faith has involved a decision to adopt "a love toward groups which, otherwise, they would have been fighting."

The believers are learning "where there's opposition, you really have more of an opportunity to witness," the missionary said, noting the Holy Spirit has done more than provide protection.

Traveling to various locations, the Betheas sometimes felt they were "going from one divine appointment to the next."

"Some days, we'd feel we were to stay home, and from mid-morning until 11 o'clock at night, people would come to the house to talk about the Lord and stay anywhere from 30 minutes to two hours. They would get up and leave and someone else would step in. It was almost like the Lord was ushering them in and ushering them out. We'd have enough time for lunch or supper or a quick rest, then we'd start again.

"We feel privileged to be the ones chosen to be in Lebanon in the midst of shooting, to see the Holy Spirit do this kind of thing. We were living in kind of a tension between a very intolerable living circumstance and an almost constant joy of seeing the Holy Spirit touching lives--Muslim, Christian and Jewish."

Leadership training—"to raise up leaders who can do the job better than we can in their own culture"—has been Bethea's emphasis.

The missionary said his co-worker Harmouche, a recent graduate of the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in east Beirut, is able to carry on the ministry in his absence, along with base of family men and young men who will stay in the church and help it grow. The church has sent one young man to another area in south Lebanon as a missionary, while another has enrolled at the seminary.

--30--

Religious Spokesmen Denounce
U.S. Stance On 'Sanctuary'

By Marc Mullinax

Baptist Press
3/1/85

WASHINGTON (BP)—More than 200 U.S. religious leaders, including seven Baptists, have petitioned for congressional inquiry into the government's method of investigating and arresting religious sanctuary workers and the deportation of Central American refugees.

The petition was the occasion for a news conference here sponsored by the Christic Institute, in which 10 speakers presented statements in support of religious sanctuary and seven experts answered questions.

Baptist signers included Glen Stassen, professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Robert Campbell, General Secretary of the American Baptist Churches/USA; Vernon Grounds, past president of the Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary; Larry L. Greenfield, president of Colgate Rochester Divinity School; C.J. Malloy Jr., general secretary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention; Ron Sider, professor of theology at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary; and Robert W. Tiller, director of the Office of Governmental Relations for the ABC/USA.

Contacted by Baptist Press, Stassen declared: "Christ calls Christians and churches to peacemaking, not only as a saying 'no,' but also a saying 'yes' to initiatives that he, in his grace, gives us to take, such as feeding the hungry, praying for our enemy, and readily identifying with the powerless and the needy.

"Many churches," he continued, "have found an specially meaningful experience in peacemaking as they help to meet the needs of persons in need of sanctuary to save their lives. The government has an obligation to respect religious liberty and freedom of conscience and should not, for political reasons, interfere covertly or overtly with this courageous Christian witness."

--more--

The petition Stassen signed was the largest challenge to date by religious leaders who oppose the Reagan administration's refusal to recognize Salvadorans and Guatemalans fleeing from their homelands as political refugees.

It specifically requests the House Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights to schedule hearings on the surveillance, infiltration and raids upon churches by agents of the Immigration and Nationalization Service (INS).

The raids followed government investigation of churches, electronic surveillance of private religious conversations and the infiltration of church meetings by federal agents. As a result of the surveillance, several ministers, priests, nuns and lay religious workers now face criminal charges.

The petitioners argued that the Central American refugees have the right to apply for political asylum because they flee war and political terror, and therefore have the right to remain temporarily in the U.S.

In 1984, less than one percent of the refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala who applied were granted political asylum. The rest have been either deported or detained in prison camps in the southwest United States.

Petitioners cited the Geneva Convention of 1949, the 1980 Refugee Act, and general international law, all granting refugee status to any person who is unwilling or unable to return to a country because of persecution, war, political terror, or armed conflict.

Citing these, the sanctuary petitioners charged that the Central American refugees are being denied rights granted refugees from other parts of the world.

The critics went on to say U.S. policy in Central America is largely at fault for the unsettling conditions that cause the migrations and that the U.S. government is morally responsible to help the refugees.

The oft-repeated U.S. position, particularly that of INS, is that the refugee influx is not politically, but economically motivated. Under that reasoning, Central American refugees are illegal, undocumented aliens subject to deportation or detainment.

To support its arguments, the government points to the fact most Salvadorans and Guatemalans have traveled through third countries before reaching the U.S., countries that make refuge available to those fleeing turmoil. Overpopulation and poverty in Central America are cited as other factors encouraging emigration of the populace.

Such views have angered sanctuary workers.

"This scandalous policy is now beginning to interfere directly with the rights of religious congregations to provide humanitarian aid to the refugees. Since last year...the Federal Government has investigated, intimidated, indicted and arrested religious workers for the 'crime' of sheltering refugees according to the basic standards of international law," the February 28 statement charged.

It continued, "The law is on the side of the sanctuary congregations...who are upholding the spirit of the 1980 Refugee Act and the letter of international law. Congress must stop the persecution of these religious Americans."

—30—

(Marc Mullinax is a Home Mission Board research assistant assigned to the Washington bureau of Baptist Press.)

Live Coverage Announced
Of Annual Convention

Baptist Press
3/1/85

NASHVILLE (BP)—The 1985 Southern Baptist Convention will be transmitted live from Dallas on the Baptist Telecommunication Network June 11-13.

—more—

The gavel-to-gavel coverage of the convention will begin Tuesday, June 11, at 8:30 a.m. (CDT), and conclude with adjournment Thursday, June 13, at 4:30 p.m. according to officials of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Anchor for the coverage will be Gomer Lesch, anchor of SBC NewScene and senior BTN consultant at the Sunday School Board, and Dick McCartney, editor of the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger.

"The Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas will be like a vast town hall meeting and should be of keen interest to Baptists all across the Convention," said Lloyd Elder, president of the board which operates BTN.

"We are pleased to bring this significant event to Southern Baptists via BTN. I urge informed and prayerful participation in this most significant time in Southern Baptist life."

Joe Denney, manager of the telecommunications department, said coverage will include brief previews and wrap-ups of each session as well as every action of the convention, including business, the president's address, the annual convention sermon and agency reports. Special events such as the news conference of the newly elected president also will be covered live.

Denney urged all BTN subscribers—churches, associations, state conventions and SBC agencies—to open their facilities and encourage persons in the area to watch sessions of the convention. All BTN subscribers will receive an "SBC '85 Subscriber Participation Guide," outlining ways to promote viewing of convention sessions, Denney said.

As of Jan. 31, a total of 4,433 churches have access to BTN through church or association subscriptions, Denney said.

—30—

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

Mrs. B. B. McKinney
Deat At Age 95

Baptist Press
3/1/85

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)—Leila Irene Routh McKinney, 95, widow of the famed gospel music composer and Southern Baptist music pioneer B.B. McKinney, died in her sleep March 1. The long-time Nashville, Tenn., resident moved to San Antonio in 1983.

Born near Giddings, Texas, Dec. 28, 1889, she taught at Mary Hardin-Baylor College in Belton following graduation from Baylor University in Waco. In 1916, while teaching at Mary Hardin-Baylor, she attended a Baptist state convention meeting in Belton and met McKinney.

She served for many years as training union director for Nashville's First Baptist Church. At age 93, she continued to work as receptionist in the preschool area.

The McKinney family moved to Nashville from Fort Worth, Texas, in 1935 when he became music editor for the Baptist Sunday School Board. In 1941, he became secretary of the board's newly-formed church music department. He wrote more than 700 gospel hymns, children's songs and anthems, and in 1982 was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame.

Following McKinney's death in 1985 as a result of an automobile accident, Mrs. McKinney continued a voluminous correspondence and telephone ministry, begun when she wrote to some 500 servicemen during World War II. She had more than 600 names in her address book, and would call or write to each one on their birthday.

She earned bachelor's degrees from Mary Hardin-Baylor College, Belton, Texas; Baylor University, Waco, Texas, and Texas Christian University, Fort Worth. She worked at the Sunday School Board for a brief time before retiring in 1955.

—more—

She is survived by two sons, Lt. Col. B.B. McKinney Jr. (Ret.) and Eugene McKinney, both of San Antonio, three grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and a number of nieces and nephews, including Porter Routh, retired executive secretary-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Convention executive committee.

The funeral will be conducted by James L. Sullivan, retired president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, at Nashville's First Baptist Church March 4. In lieu of flowers, the family requested contributions to the McKinney Memorial Fund at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, or to First Baptist Church, Nashville.

—30—

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

Colombia Drug Tensions
May Alter Virginia Plans

Baptist Press
3/1/85

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Continuing drug traffic tension in Colombia has prompted the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to suggest Virginia Baptists select another country for partnership missions.

The Baptist General Association of Virginia approved a partnership relationship with Baptists in the South American country last November. Such partnerships involve sending U.S. pastors and church members overseas to work with Baptists and missionaries in the country.

Foreign Mission Board officials relayed the suggestion during a Feb. 22 meeting with Richard Stephenson, Virginia Baptists' executive director, and Richmond layman Earl Scott, president of the Baptist association. The suggestion will be considered March 12 by an association committee supervising the Colombia partnership.

Colombian drug dealers have threatened to retaliate against U.S. diplomats and businessmen for the Jan. 5 extradition of four Colombians to face drug smuggling charges in the U.S. Because of the threats, the Foreign Mission Board asked its missionaries to stay at home as much as possible and placed a hold on sending new missionaries or volunteer groups to Colombia.

Missionaries have since resumed their church work and a new missionary couple went to Bogota Feb. 20. All are maintaining a low profile, and no large meetings of missionaries are scheduled, according to Bryan Brasington, Foreign Mission Board director for western South America. However, the board's hold on volunteer work in Colombia is still in effect.

"The missionaries and nationals in Colombia have recommended we do not continue the (Virginia) partnership for the time being," Brasington said. "They do not see the situation clearing up for at least six months, and there is nothing definite about the situation clearing up even after that."

Virginia Baptists, by choosing another country, will be able to plan partnership efforts sooner than the situation in Colombia will permit, he said.

Other new missionaries may be sent to Colombia when visas are granted, he added. Five couples are awaiting visas and none have requested assignments to another country.

—30—

Religious Leaders Seek New
U.S.-South Africa Policy

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press
3/1/85

WASHINGTON (BP)—More than 300 religious leaders—including a Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor—have called on Congress to establish fundamental changes in U.S. policy toward South Africa.

In an open letter to all 535 members of Congress, the interdenominational group—consisting of church executives, pastors, academics and others—described the Reagan administration policy of "constructive engagement" toward South Africa as "immoral on its face, temporizing as it does with evil."

—more—

The statement called South Africa's system of apartheid—or separation of the races—"a system of institutional racism," and declared "constructive engagement" and its methods of "quiet diplomacy" and "friendly persuasion" have been "disastrous from a moral point of view" and for "practical and political reasons" as well.

Calling South Africa "the only country in the world that constitutionally enshrines white supremacy," the religious leaders said South African blacks are denied freedom of speech, assembly and travel, access to fair trial, and the right to choose where they live or work. Further, blacks "are forced by law to carry a passbook which states where they are born, where they work and where they presently live in order to control their movement."

The lone Southern Baptist signer of the statement was E. Glenn Hinson, David T. Porter professor of church history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., who told Baptist press that unless fundamental changes in U.S.-South Africa policy are made, a "horrible revolution" may result in the southern portion of the African continent, a potential "bloodbath" Christians "should be concerned about."

Hinson said further Reagan's "hands-off" policy is "inconsistent" with his "heavy-handed" policy in Nicaragua, where the U.S. is attempting to help overthrow the ruling Sandinista government. Reagan wrongly "assumes things are getting better" in South Africa, he said.

Noting a faculty colleague and one current student at the Louisville seminary are South Africans, Hinson said Nobel peace laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu "has really awakened my sensitivity anew of the need to do something urgently" about U.S. policy in South Africa. "I would like to...raise a flag" about the need for change in that policy, he declared.

In the letter to Congress, the religious leaders cited further what they called "the intensification of mass violence and repression" against the black minority during the latter half of 1984, developments they said resulted in nearly 200 deaths and 1,000 injuries. Another 3,000 opponents of apartheid were arrested, they charged, some of whom were tortured.

Even religious leaders, the statement continued, have not been spared, as the government has formally charged Catholic Archbishop Denis Hurley with criticizing South Africa's policy toward neighboring Namibia, "a country South Africa continues to occupy illegally." Another target in the religious community, according to the letter, is Allan Boesak, president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, "for criticizing the police."

Those signing the letter said the total U.S. investment in South Africa is currently \$14.6 billion and noted the U.S. is South Africa's leading trade partner.

The statement urges Congress to pass legislation calling for disinvestment of U.S. corporations from South Africa and an end to U.S. bank loans; ending coal, uranium and steel imports and prohibiting sale in the U.S. of the South African Kruggerand; terminating military and nuclear exports; and a congressional resolution "calling on the Administration to support the independence of Namibia without pre-conditions and to use its voice and vote in the United Nations to oppose apartheid and South African intervention in neighboring countries."

Emphasizing their identity as religious figures in the U.S., the letter's signers warned that "to temporize" with South Africa's system of apartheid "is to be infected by it and to endanger the soul of our nation."

NOTE: Only a handful of Baptist state newspapers and other subscribers to Baptist Press have changed the address of Baptist Press on their mailing labels. Please pass this information to your circulation department and make a note on your mailing lists so we can avoid the cost and time spent in mailing out separate address change cards.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

**** *****

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS

901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

LYNN WAY HD
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
901 COMMERCE
NASHVILLE, TN. 37203

NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION