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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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October 16, 1987

87-155

Roberts' 'Open Letter'  
Challenges Mercer Trustees

N-CD  
(Ga.)  
By Jack U. Harwell

ATLANTA (BP)--Mercer University trustees have been called into a special session Oct. 23 in Macon to deal with what their president has called "the most serious challenge ever brought forward to the relationship between Mercer and Georgia Baptists."

R. Kirby Godsey made that assessment at a press conference at Mercer in Atlanta Oct. 12, two days after he received a 16-page document from Lee Roberts, Georgia layman at Eastside Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga. Roberts, a mortgage banker, was chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention Committee on Boards in 1986.

The press conference was the first of six held by Godsey and other Mercer officials to state publicly their intentions to challenge Roberts' charges.

On Oct. 9 Roberts mailed a 16-page "open letter" to about 6,000 persons in Georgia. He said he mailed to every pastor in the Georgia Baptist Convention; to all Mercer trustees and president's council members; to all Georgia parents of Mercer students and to "other denominational leaders."

The document details a long list of charges against Godsey and Mercer, summarized in an introductory paragraph of Roberts' booklet:

"Many Georgia Baptists have become increasingly concerned about what has come to light at Mercer University. Matters such as heresies being printed by Mercer University Press; hard liquor being served at official Mercer functions; books containing deplorably filthy language being published and recommended to us by Mercer University Press; encouraging safe sex outside of marriage for Mercer students; the publication of lewd cartoons in the school paper; the publication of pornography in the school paper; widespread student drunkenness; the encouragement to purchase rock music albums by homosexual performers and satan worshippers; and many other critical and disturbing issues that will be discussed later in this letter."

Roberts' letter details four categories of "problems" at Mercer saying "there is a common thread that ties them all together." The four categories he itemized are spiritual convictions of R. Kirby Godsey; the spiritual climate at Mercer University; the trustees at Mercer and "possible solutions to the problems at Mercer."

In regard to Godsey's spiritual convictions, Roberts lists 18 separate statements from a group of three speeches Godsey delivered last January at Houston Baptist University on the theme of Christian understanding of salvation. He also included the complete transcript of the three lectures at the end of his letter to "prevent Dr. Godsey from denying the statements and/or claiming they are taken out of context," Roberts wrote.

The 18 quotes included such statements as these: "Accepting Jesus is not the first basis of salvation. Jesus came to say that we are saved. We are forgiven. We are loved. No conditions. No prerequisites. No plans to follow. It is not a conditional affirmation."

Also, "The hope of salvation rests not in the affirmation that you believe in God. The hope of salvation rests in the affirmation that God believes in you."

Also, "Jesus did not come to tell you and me how to be saved but to let us know that we live in the arms of God's grace."

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Roberts' letter said he had met with Godsey on Sept. 11 with "others present as witness to that meeting."

Roberts wrote in his open letter: "During the course of that meeting I asked Dr. Godsey if he could with all honesty say these words: 'Jesus died for my sins.' Dr. Godsey informed me that at that time he did not and could not use those words. Dr. Godsey also confirmed to us he had written the lectures on salvation and that was what he believes."

The Marietta layman then quoted from a document prepared by Georgia Baptist leaders in the 1960s which declared that "only Christians should be in the administrative and teaching positions" at Georgia Baptist schools. Roberts claims that "since neither Mercer trustees nor Dr. Godsey bothered to tell the GBC that at least the president did not comply with the long standing provision quoted above," Mercer trustees should "voluntarily return the \$13,296,572 of GBC Cooperative Program funds that it has received during the eight years that Dr. Godsey has been president."

To the spiritual climate at Mercer, Roberts' letter included clippings taken from Playboy Magazine showing two Mercer coeds in "total frontal nudity."

It also included a photocopy of condom ads reproduced in the Mercer student newspaper; a long list of "R" rated movies he said were shown on Mercer's campus; "lewdness and lasciviousness" printed in the Mercer Cluster (the student newspaper); charges of "widespread drunkenness on Mercer's campus; and several quotes from books published by Mercer University Press.

To the issue of trustees at Mercer, Roberts said Mercer is "the only GBC-related agency or institution that does not have its trustees freely nominated by the GBC nominating committee."

According to the Mercer charter, Mercer's trustees, alumni and administration nominate three persons for each vacancy on the board of trustees. The GBC nominating committee could choose one of those three or goes back to Mercer for more names.

Possible solutions, Roberts wrote, "I have personally heard strong rumors that five motions/resolutions might be presented to the convention in Savannah in November." The GBC meets at Savannah's Civic Center Nov. 9-11.

These five "possible" motions listed by Roberts were to require at least 50 percent, but not more than 55 percent of Mercer trustees be Baptist pastors; a motion to reduce GBC contributions to Mercer to \$1 per year until Mercer allows the GBC nominating committee to "freely nominate" trustees.

Also a motion to "break all relationships with Mercer and prohibit Mercer from calling itself a Baptist affiliated university; a resolution asking for immediate resignations of all Mercer trustees; and a motion requiring individual trustees to refund to the convention "the entire amount of money given to Mercer by the GBC during the term of the individual trustees."

Godsey held a series of six press conferences across Georgia to respond to Roberts' letter.

At the first such conference held at Mercer University Atlanta, Godsey said, "We are stunned and disappointed at the vicious assault of Lee Roberts. He has written with a hostility probably unparalleled in the history of the university."

Godsey said, "This dispute is not about theological fundamentalism. This dispute is about political fundamentalism, the attempt to enforce every person and every institution to adhere to a particular set of doctrines and nothing else. That requirement is controversy to the very essence of the established university and to the heart and soul of Baptists."

Godsey continued: "Mr. Roberts has only one goal -- control of Mercer. He wants to control election of trustees so he can control what is taught, control selection of faculty who teach, textbooks they use, and books they will publish."

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The Mercer president said: "On four issues we will not compromise. A -- We will not compromise the authority of trustees for government of the university. B -- We will not compromise academic integrity of the university. Free inquiry and academic freedom must not be abridged. C -- We will not compromise the means by which trustees are elected. D -- We will not compromise our commitment to religious freedom because the loss of that commitment would turn Mercer into something other than the genuinely Baptist university."

Godsey also said at that press conference, "We are a Baptist university and expect to continue to be, but that does not mean total control by the convention. We are engaged in cooperation and mutual respect. I hope the convention will not intervene in election of trustees or withdraw financial support. We have worked cooperatively for 155 years."

He added, "I view Mr. Roberts' effort as the most serious challenge ever brought forward to the relationship between Mercer and Georgia Baptists."

He said: "The process of trustee election cannot be changed unless the process is changed by the board of trustees ... I estimate our board will be unwilling to change this charter."

Trustee chairman Bob Steed, an Atlanta lawyer, told news reporters, "we have called a meeting of the board of trustees for Oct. 23 to contemplate and prepare for our response at the convention. I'll be surprised to find any support on the board for compromise."

On Oct. 13 Atlanta newspapers published reports that Atlanta's First Baptist Church has specified that none of its Cooperative Program funds be allowed to go to Mercer. Associate Pastor Fred Powell said the action was taken because "Dr. Godsey doesn't believe the Bible." Powell declined to say how much money is involved. Georgia Baptist Convention records, however, indicate the Atlanta congregation last year gave \$268,752 in undesignated and \$131,956 in designated contributions -- a total of \$409,708 -- through the Cooperative Program.

In two other related developments:

-- First Baptist Church of Augusta, where the SBC was organized in 1845, and whose pastor, Charles Bugg is a Mercer trustee, adopted a resolution Oct. 14 pledging full support of Godsey and full financial support of Mercer;

-- The Polk County Baptist Association, composed of 36 churches with a total membership of 12,775 near Cedartown, adopted a resolution condemning the "theological heresy" of Godsey and asking that formal heresy charges be filed against the Mercer president at the annual meeting in November.

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Crowders Appeal Case  
To U.S. Supreme Court

N-CO

Baptist Press  
10/16/87

ATLANTA (BP)--A federal lawsuit against the Southern Baptist Convention and its Executive Committee will be appealed to the United States Supreme Court, the plaintiffs say.

The suit was filed Dec. 5, 1985, by four messengers to the 1985 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, who maintained their rights had been violated by parliamentary procedures concerning the election of the SBC's 1986 Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees, which names trustees to all of the national agencies of the convention.

On May 5, 1986, Judge Robert Hall of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia ruled against Robert S. Crowder and his wife, Julia, of Birmingham, Ala., H. Allen McCartney of Vero Beach, Fla., and Henry Cooper of Windsor, Mo., saying the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prevents the intrusion of secular courts into internal church matters.

The Crowders, McCartney and Cooper appealed to the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta. The three-judge panel heard oral arguments in the case May 27, and handed down a ruling Sept. 28, saying the "First Amendment bars civil court resolution of this controversy."

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Crowder told Baptist Press:

"We are extremely disappointed in the decision. We have considered our options and we feel like for the good of the convention and the integrity of its bylaws it must be appealed to the Supreme Court. We have instructed our attorneys to proceed forthwith."

Jane Vehko, an associate with the Atlanta lawfirm of Bondurant, Mixson and Elmore, said the plaintiffs have an option to file an appeal with the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals, but "that is not the one we intend to pursue."

She said there are two ways cases are appealed to the nation's high court. "In certain categories of cases an appeal can be filed, and in others the court has the discretion about whether it will hear them, and in those a writ of certiorari is filed."

Vehko added that even if the court "grants review" of the Crowder lawsuit, it could be more than a year before it would be heard.

Asked what the appeal will be based on, Vehko said the plaintiffs' "objections will be described in the appeal in terms of what we feel the court did wrong."

During the September meeting of the SBC Executive Committee, members reaffirmed an action they took in June 1987, authorizing Executive Committee President-Treasurer Harold C. Bennett "to proceed to the U.S. Supreme Court, should it be necessary," in the Crowder lawsuit.

James P. Guenther, of the Nashville lawfirm of Guenther and Jordan, who has represented the SBC and its Executive Committee, along with the Atlanta lawfirm of King and Spaulding, told Baptist Press: "Both the district court and the court of appeals have affirmed us in our belief that the courts have no jurisdiction over this dispute. It is disappointing to hear that the plaintiffs will persist even further."

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Reynolds Resigns Post  
With Indiana Convention

N-60  
(Ind.)

Baptist Press  
10/16/87

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Following 20 years of service with the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, Lew Reynolds, director of church growth and ministries division and co-advisor in the absence of an executive director, has resigned.

Reynolds resigned immediately as co-advisor, effective on the date of his letter of resignation, Sept. 11, and from other responsibilities at the end of the year.

This was the third resignation by a key state staff employee this year. Executive Director Treasurer R.V. Haygood and missions director Glenn Ray resigned in March.

James Abernathy, director of evangelism and stewardship, was named by the SCBI executive committee to replace Reynolds as co-advisor. David Simpson, director of communications division, has been co-advisor since March 20 and administrative assistant B.J. Watts is interim treasurer.

Some progress has been made to replace the three men, but the positions remain unfilled, according to Abernathy and Simpson.

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Names From the Past Blend  
With New Thrusts At FMB

F-FMB

Baptist Press  
10/16/87

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--In a blend of past and future, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board appointed the grandsons of "Preacher" Hallock and C.L. Culpepper as missionaries Oct. 13 and the next day heard Korean and Brazilian Baptist leaders tell how their people are taking the gospel to other lands.

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Board trustee Eddy Hallock, grandson of the late Oklahoma preacher Edgar F. Hallock of Norman, and his wife, Brenda, were named missionaries to Brazil. They are returning to the same region where the younger Hallock grew up as an MK (missionary kid) and his parents, Edgar and Zelma Hallock, worked 45 years before retiring in 1986. The new appointee, pastor of Southview Baptist Church in Lincoln, Neb., has represented Kansas-Nebraska on the board since 1981.

"Preacher" Hallock inspired thousands as a speaker at the Falls Creek Baptist assembly in Oklahoma and in week-long devotional clinics in churches throughout the region. He also influenced generations of University of Oklahoma students in his 50 years as pastor of First Baptist Church in Norman and pioneered Baptist Student Union work in his state.

Bill Walker, a third-generation missionary, and his wife, Nancy, were appointed to work in Japan. His parents, William and Mary Walker, have worked there since 1949 but will be retiring next year. His maternal grandfather, C.L. Culpepper, worked 42 years in China and Taiwan.

Catherine Walker, the younger Walker's aunt and an emeritus missionary to Indonesia, recalled that Culpepper had prayed there would always be some of his descendants involved in foreign missions. Culpepper's son, Charles, also was a missionary, serving with his wife, Donal (CORRECT SPELLING-- NO FINAL D), first in China and later in Taiwan.

As the Walkers were appointed along with 52 other new missionaries at First Baptist Church of Richmond, Va., Bill Walker said many of his MK years were filled with rebellion against his parents and all authority until "God convicted me of my sin and my need for him." Recently he has been pastor of the Japanese mission of Gambrell Street Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, where he led the congregation, with the aid of volunteer teams, to construct its own building on the Gambrell property.

With the latest reinforcements, Southern Baptists now have 3,838 people working in 111 countries. About 375 new personnel have been added this year, with another appointment service scheduled for December.

But even as the board moved closer to its Bold Mission Thrust goal of 5,600 missionaries by A.D. 2000, President R. Keith Parks said, "The day of the internationalization of missions has already dawned and we need to actively and aggressively participate in this process."

He said the Sept. 17-18 Dallas meeting which he initiated with leaders of 19 other major world mission and interdenominational groups is resulting in a call for united prayer for global evangelization and forming of a data-sharing network. "This could not have happened earlier," he observed.

But he also noted the same kind of networking and cooperation has emerged with Baptists overseas. Since the 1985 global evangelization strategy consultation at Ridgecrest, N.C., he said, European Baptists have intensified their work in the Middle East and Africa, Brazilian Baptists continue to model outreach to South America and other countries, and Baptists of Asia are uniting to reach out to the world's most populous area.

"God is joining together his Baptist family in a new way in a new day," Parks said.

He then introduced Han Ki Man of South Korea, head of the newly formed Asian mission outreach, and Waldemiro Tymchak, executive secretary of Brazil's Foreign Mission Board.

"Do you really believe Asia can be reached for Christ?" Parks asked Han. The Korean leader said that as he has traveled in his area during the past two years he has "come to believe God can work through us to declare the gospel to those countries." The need for well-trained spiritual leaders is great, he added, but he said he is convinced that "as we continue in preaching the gospel and developing spiritual leadership in these countries, we can truly preach the gospel to the Asian people."

In his own land, Han said, Baptist growth has been rapid, building upon the work of missionary John A. Abernathy and many other missionaries who have followed him. In 1965, when Han graduated from seminary, there were only two other graduates. Seoul had 18 Baptist churches and the country 180.

Today, he said, Korean Baptists have 1,400 churches, with 600 in the Seoul area. The seminary in Taejon has 1,400 students and another 400 are in night school in Seoul studying for the ministry. These totals would be higher, he said, if the Korean government did not require students to pass an entrance exam to enroll.

Yoido Baptist Church in Seoul, where he is pastor, started 15 years ago with 18 people. Today its attendance averages 4,500 adults, 1,500 young people and 200 college students. Last year the church baptized 680.

Tymchak, expressing gratitude for more than 100 years of Southern Baptist work in his country, said Brazilian Baptists' foreign missionary force includes 120 missionaries. Most are in South America, but 20 are in Europe and Africa and the board has appointed its first couple to Asia, to work in Macao.

Brazil's 4,000 churches and 600,000 members have a five-year goal to increase their membership to 1 million and to plant 3,000 new churches. Tymchak said he is praying for revival "to make Christians to feel the power of the Holy Spirit so we can win the country and even South America for Christ."

As further evidence of partnership with overseas Baptists, the Malaysia Baptist Convention presented the board with a pewter clock recognizing Southern Baptists' work in "evangelizing the nation of Malaysia and development of Baptist churches."

Emeritus Malaysia missionary Charles H. "Chuck" Morris, who presented the clock to board Chairman Robert Smith of Texas, said Baptist work began when an 18-year-old girl from China started a Bible study in her home in 1938. The first missionaries arrived in 1951.

"During these past years the Baptist convention and missionaries have cooperated to bring into being over 100 churches and chapels, two seminaries, one Bible school, two retreat and training centers, and a home mission board," Morris said.

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Church Votes To Terminate  
Robertson's Ordination

*N-BJC*  
By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press  
10/16/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--During a specially called business meeting, Freemason Street Baptist Church in Norfolk, Va., voted to terminate the ordination of presidential hopeful Marion G. (Pat) Robertson.

Two days before announcing his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination, Robertson sent the congregation a letter in which he said, "I hereby resign the ordination to the Christian ministry which was so graciously and warmly bestowed upon me by the people of the Freemason Street Baptist Church."

Robertson was ordained by the Norfolk congregation while on staff as minister of education. Although his membership is still there, Robertson previously told Baptist Press he has not attended the church in a number of years.

Freemason Street pastor Donald J. Dunlap said the church's deacons met Oct. 4 to consider the action. They were read Robertson's letter and a written reply Dunlap sent Robertson explaining the church would need to vote on his request. Following discussion, the deacons passed a recommendation to terminate Robertson's ordination.

During an Oct. 11 business session that followed the morning worship service, both letters and the deacons' recommendation were presented to the church. The congregation approved the recommendation that "the ordination of Rev. M.G. Robertson be terminated as of Oct. 11, 1987" by a voice vote with only two negative votes.

The church sent Robertson a letter the following day informing him of its action.

Dunlap said he had never dealt with a request for termination of an ordination.

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"I was anxious that since it is such a rare occurrence that our congregation proceed in a manner that was theologically sound and procedurally correct," he said. He said he thought that was especially important since the church was dealing with a "celebrity personality" who attracted a great deal of media attention. He said he hopes the church's action can serve as an example should another Baptist congregation be faced with a similar situation.

"My concern was to send out the message that no one can un-ordain himself," Dunlap said, "that a person cannot be ordained by himself; he must be ordained by a local congregation. And when the time comes to consider terminating that, he cannot do it unilaterally; it must be done by the congregation which ordained at the beginning."

Although Dunlap said there was nothing in Robertson's letter to indicate the candidate might one day want to reclaim his ordination, the pastor said, "If he did that, it would give the perception that the Holy Spirit changes his mind as much as people do."

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'Promise' Highlights  
Baptists' Rope-Holding

N-FMB

Baptist Press  
10/16/87

DEVONSHIRE, Bermuda (BP)--Missionaries often take risks. That comes with the assignment.

But missionary Don Snell had no idea just how far out on the limb he was until he read his morning paper two days after Hurricane Emily hit Bermuda Sept. 25 and left 75 percent of the island without electricity. There in the Royal Gazette Snell learned of his "promise" that Baptists would be sending linemen from the United States to help restore power on the island.

It all began when Snell saw workmen trying to repair downed electrical lines near his house. Recognizing one of the men as the son-in-law of a church member, he asked if they could use some help. The men apparently conveyed that "promise" to others.

The Gazette story initially shocked, and then alarmed Snell. He was concerned that he might not be able to deliver on this misunderstood "promise" of linemen from the states.

He hurriedly contacted the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Officials there quickly began using available resources to secure linemen who could go on such short notice. Within days eight linemen were on their way, thanks to Brotherhood and disaster relief units in Texas, Oklahoma, Mississippi and Tennessee.

The team worked five days with Bermuda Electrical Light Co. personnel. They restored all the main lines bringing power to most of the island. However, Snell reported Oct. 13 that some homes are still without service. They ran out of materials before they could complete the job.

The island's response to the team's work was "tremendous," according to Snell. Their presence was widely known throughout the island by articles in the Gazette, and ongoing coverage on radio and television. He said government officials indicated letters of appreciation from the premier and U.S. Consul would be sent to the men.

A broken "promise" could have damaged Baptists' credibility on the island. Three missionary couples work with about 300 Bermuda Baptists in three churches.

Snell could only take a deep breath and acknowledge that the "rope-holders (Southern Baptists) came through again."

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Sullivan Says Revival At Seminary  
Could Spark Renewal Throughout SBC

N-CO  
(SMBTS)

By Scott Collins

Baptist Press  
10/16/87

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Revival at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary could ignite spiritual renewal among all Southern Baptists, John Sullivan told the seminary family during fall revival services in early October on the Fort Worth, Texas, campus.

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Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., preached at the six meetings. Michael Wierick, Broadmoor's music minister, led the music. Students, faculty and staff filled Truett Auditorium for each service.

The Southern Baptist Convention has never needed revival more than it does today, said Sullivan, a member of the SBC Peace Committee and Executive Committee. "In my own estimation, in my very humble, but quite accurate opinion, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary gives us the greatest hope of revival and renewal.

"It is here in this place. It is here among this faculty. It is here in this administration that I sense a hunger for the things of God. It is here in this student assembly that I sense a hunger for the things of God," Sullivan said.

Sullivan challenged the seminarians to become "God's uncommon people" by modeling the early church. Speaking from Acts 4:31-33, Sullivan pointed out three traits 20th century Christians must embrace.

The first trait, Sullivan said, is an uncommon prayer life. "How long has it been since you were shaken in the place where you pray?" he asked.

The second trait is an uncommon fellowship, Sullivan said. The fellowship of first century Christians was "so uncommon that they had all things in common."

"As we gather and as we scatter, we are still the church responsible for fellowship with each other and fellowship with God," Sullivan said. "One of the great problems among the people of God is that fellowship is tied together at the mouth much more than at the heart."

The third trait of the early church was an uncommon reliance upon the work of the Holy Spirit of God, Sullivan said. "It may well be that the scandal of the 20th century church is trying to do the work of God without the power of God's Spirit."

Sullivan told the preachers-in-training that he stands most assuredly before his congregation when he has not only spent time with the written word of God but also with the living word of God.

Sullivan said he must spend time in "agonizing prayer" over the word of God. "And then having preached that word of God, I stand back to watch the work of the Holy Spirit of God as he comes to hover over our congregation and begin to do that which he wants done."

During invitation times, students often crowded before the altar to pray and seek counsel. The overwhelming spirit of renewal felt in the services carried into many classrooms, where professors allowed students to give testimonies to God's current work in their own lives.

After the revival, Sullivan said he had "never sensed any better spirit" at Southwestern than he did during revival week.

Sullivan said he had preached many places -- from small churches to the two Southern Baptist conference centers. "I don't believe in the 30 years I've been preaching I've ever experienced revival like that at Southwestern," he said.

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Fire Guts Kitchen, Bathrooms  
Of Mission House In Nairobi

N-FMB

Baptist Press  
10/16/87

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--Fire destroyed several rooms of a home where Southern Baptist missionaries Nathan and Vickie Corbitt live the afternoon of Oct. 13.

Neither the Corbitts nor their three children were in the stone house on Nairobi's north side when fire consumed the kitchen, a pantry and two bathrooms. The couple arrived on the scene as Nairobi firemen were bringing the blaze under control.

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It was the Corbitts' second encounter with a fire. Less than two years after their marriage in 1970, the house they were renting in Montezuma, Ga., burned to the ground.

Corbitt is music consultant and director of communications for the Southern Baptist mission in Kenya. His musical equipment, a computer, tape recorders and books were in another room and not damaged, according to Roy Brent Jr., the mission's business manager. The couple is from North Carolina, he from Ridgecrest and she from Black Mountain. They were appointed as missionaries in 1981.

Clothes and curtains throughout the house sustained smoke damage, and Brent said the Corbitts were making arrangements for replacement clothing and kitchen items. An architect will examine the house to determine what renovations will be needed. The mission organization has owned the house about 15 years.

The cause of the fire hasn't been determined, Brent said. Firemen initially speculated it had been electrical in origin, but power company inspectors later discounted that possibility.

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Retiree Church Builders  
Bridge Racial Barriers

*F. Texas*  
By Ken Camp and Orville Scott

Baptist Press  
10/16/87

WACO, Texas (BP)--When an overabundance of retiree builders showed up for work at Downsville Baptist Church, near Waco, Texas, supervisor George Crews of Colleyville, Texas, used them to build bridges across racial boundaries.

In mid-September, about 40 couples with Texas Baptist Men Retiree Builders arrived in Central Texas to help build a new education building for Downsville Baptist Church.

According to pastor Bob Stokes, the volunteers enabled his church to build a \$60,000 building for about half that cost.

"Our church averages about 75 in Sunday school, but most of them are children and young people," said Stokes. "We had saved about \$15,000 over a period of years and were able to borrow additional funds to buy materials, but we couldn't afford to build without the volunteers' help."

Even though many retiree couples had been away from home for several weeks due to the Labor Day rebuilding project in Saragosa, more workers came to Downsville than could be used on that single project.

"We couldn't figure out why, then we discovered that members of Mt. Olive, a black Baptist church a short distance away, had poured a slab for a new education building," Crews said. "The black Baptists said, 'We're going to build, but we don't have the know-how.'"

Crews contacted Tom Malone, pastor of Mt. Olive Baptist Church, and offered the services of about 20 retiree builders. On Sept. 24, the retirees began building the frame, roof and decking of Mount Olive's new educational building, working shoulder to shoulder with volunteers from the Black Baptist church.

"It was through the grace of God that we were able to receive the help of the retiree builders," said Edward West, associate pastor at Mt. Olive Baptist Church. "We wanted to get it under cover before bad weather comes, and we prayed the Lord would help us to get that done. He sent these men who came to our rescue."

Originally, Mount Olive members planned to assist subcontractors in the framing and finishing work on the building to reduce construction costs. Due to the efforts of the retiree builders, the cost of the project was cut in half.

The retirees left Downsville Sept. 28 to move to another job. Subcontractors are expected to complete the interior of the new educational building, which should be finished in about a month.

"They (the retirees) did such a beautiful job, but the really beautiful thing was seeing them work together and hearing them talk," said West. "It was such a blessing to hear people who talk about the Lord all the time they're working. They give all the glory to God."

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Training Priority Urged  
Against Baptist Illiteracy

By Terri Lackey

N-SSB

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--The rising generation of Southern Baptists who are unfamiliar with their denomination's heritage and polity could legitimately blame that illiteracy on churches with misplaced priorities, said D.L. Lowrie, director of the state missions commission for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

"We can attribute that failure to the less-than-adequate priorities of churches. They have poured a lot more energy into some things of less importance than discipleship and new member training," Lowrie told a group of 12 San Antonio Baptist Association pastors and various consultants appointed to work with them during a mid-October discipleship growth campaign jointly sponsored by the association and the Sunday School Board's church training department.

"The crisis in this convention is that we have churches with a generation of Baptists who don't know who they are," Lowrie said at a preliminary gathering. "And the scandal is for a body of Christ to receive into their fellowship newborn believers and then not provide ways for them to grow."

The decline in participation in church training has resulted from churches taking the "easy way out," Lowrie told the pastors who are seeking to re-establish or strengthen their church training programs.

"Church training never went anyplace without someone giving it a priority and investing time in it," he said.

The San Antonio associational discipleship growth campaign was conducted at the request of the association, according to Luell Smith, consultant in the SSB church training department growth section. Consultants from Texas, Louisiana and Alabama helped area churches learn more about products and procedures available to build a strong church training program.

Consultants spent their evenings visiting appointed churches, making the congregation aware of the importance of church training and listing ways a training program would help equip church members for ministry, leadership and understanding and contributing to their denomination.

The participating churches ranged in size from an average Sunday school attendance of 75 to 200 and included Hispanic, Oriental, Black and Anglo congregations. Church training enrollment in the participating churches ranged from six to 88, with five of the 12 churches having no training program.

The churches were among about 15 chosen to participate in the campaign, said Bill King, the association's religious education director. He said the 140-church association plans to conduct discipleship campaigns in stages, with 15 churches being the maximum number to participate at any one time.

Meanwhile, Lowrie praised the pastors and participating staff and laypersons for seeing the importance of the priority of church training.

"If you take this week seriously into the churches where you serve, you will be starting something that will give hope across the state of Texas," he said.

Smith said consultants worked closely with pastors and their staffs to analyze their surrounding communities and the corresponding growth potential of the churches. They then made recommendations on an individual basis as to what each church needed to start or build a church training program.

Lowrie commended the Sunday School Board for providing the "best (discipleship) tools for us that they ever have."

Smith said the church training department would consider conducting other associational growth campaigns.