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November 17, 1987

87-174

Half Million Refugees
Among Lebanon's Woes

By Art Toalston

F-FMB

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. (BP)--If Lebanon's civil war ended today, it could take 100 years to reunite the nation, a Lebanese Baptist says.

"Maybe a hundred years is too long," says Jean Boucheble, "but it would take a long time, because there has been so much bloodshed." Boucheble is associate pastor of Bikfaya Baptist Church, 20 miles northeast of Beirut.

Well over 100,000 people have been killed, many of them innocent civilians, during nearly 13 years of civil war among so-called Christian, Muslim and Palestinian political factions.

"We need God's intervention to pull us out of where we are," Boucheble says, adding, Baptists and other evangelicals in Lebanon need the support of fellow believers around the world.

Unfortunately, few people in the West know the depth of Lebanon's crisis, he says, citing newspapers and newscasts he monitored during an October visit to the United States. "There is nothing, absolutely nothing about Lebanon," he notes.

"It is a duty of Christians worldwide to protect and assist the church in Lebanon. If the church worldwide does not feel the pain of the church in Lebanon, I think something is wrong. We need to stand before God about how we are going to support brothers and sisters in Christ wherever they are suffering."

Heartache abounds in Lebanon, says Boucheble, who also directs relief work in Lebanon for World Vision International. One-sixth of Lebanon's 3 million people have become refugees. When civil war broke out in 1975, Maronite Catholics, Greek Orthodox and evangelicals lived throughout the country. Now they are confined to 15 to 20 percent of the land, essentially in the East Beirut area.

"For most of them, there is no hope of returning to their homes anytime soon," Boucheble says. "Other political factions now control those regions. Many had to suddenly leave where they were living and run for their lives. Many are still in a state of shock, unable to believe what has happened to them or adjust to it.

"Many live in one room -- parents and two or three children with husbands or wives and children of their own, 16 or 17 people in one room. I have seen it myself."

The government is in disarray. "The people are living under the law of the jungle," Boucheble says. The economy has collapsed, bringing poverty to many who once were in the middle class. There is no redress for losses due to war or social chaos. There are no social services.

"Every political party is supported from outside, by a different country, so it's not left entirely to the Lebanese people to decide their future," he notes.

One out of three youth in Lebanon have become drug addicts, he says, and other young adults are pulling any strings they can to leave the country.

Somehow, the church is alive and well -- and ministering, Boucheble says.

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Bikfaya Baptist Church, for example, is helping nearly 400 families from four villages return to homes they abandoned in the midst of heavy shelling. With two-thirds funding from Southern Baptist human needs donations and one-third funding from World Vision, the church is helping repair battle-damaged doors and windows. World Vision also is assisting two other small Baptist congregations with projects to help their communities.

Spiritually, he says, "The Lord is doing a fantastic work. As we learn from the book of Acts, the church grows better under afflictions and difficulties, and that's what is happening in Lebanon. Our churches are full or almost full." Sid Al-Bourshariyeh Baptist Church near Beirut is building a new facility for worship and Bikfaya may do the same.

"Humanly speaking, everybody is emotionally drained," Boucheble says, "but many of us believe this is where we belong at this time. God is using us.

"Not all Lebanese are turning to the Lord, but we have more people trusting God than in the good days. People who trusted material things and lost them overnight have discovered that they only have God to trust at this difficult time. We have seen people come to the Lord who later couldn't understand why they had been fighting."

Boucheble believes Lebanon's civil war has taught the church a sobering lesson. "This is my personal opinion: I don't think the church in the past was really involved in getting beyond its circle, in carrying the gospel beyond Lebanon. Maybe they had the vision, but not much was done about it, not on the scale with the freedom we had then. I think, now, we realize that we missed an opportunity. We are praying for another opportunity. And I think God is giving us a part of it back, at least within the country."

Ministering in the midst of war -- one in which two first cousins have been killed by stray artillery shells -- has not sent Boucheble into depression but, he confides, "The least thing has broken me into tears, and many times a day."

Still, "God has given special grace. I'm a person who has learned over the years to get up every morning at 4 or 4:30 to spend time with the Lord. I get my strength from God's promises for me. I know I'm starting a day when I might not come back home -- I could be kidnapped or killed in a car accident -- or many difficulties might arise. If I had to avoid all the risks, I would stick at home, because just getting out of your home is a risk.

"Even sitting in your home is a risk."

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Former Lebanon Missionaries
Continue Middle East Work

F-FMB

Baptist Press
11/17/87

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Several Southern Baptist missionaries formerly assigned to work in Lebanon have transferred to new assignments.

Various others remain determined to return to Lebanon, says Dale Thorne, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board director of work in the Middle East and North Africa.

Two dozen Southern Baptist missionaries left Lebanon in late February and early March after the U.S. government ended passport privileges for Americans in the war-torn country. The group temporarily relocated in Cyprus.

Thorne believes missionaries may someday get their wish to reside in Lebanon again "unless there are fundamental changes in the nature of the country," such as an ongoing chaotic environment.

The U.S. State Department will decide next February whether to extend its passport restrictions affecting Lebanon.

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Karl and Thelma Weathers and Nancie Wingo have transferred to Gaza. Weathers now directs the Baptist School of Allied Health Sciences and Wingo teaches English there. Mrs. Weathers teaches English at the Baptist Center of Culture and Light. Also, retiree Mabel Summers teaches children of missionaries in Gaza. Both the Weatherses are from Earle, Ark.; Wingo is from Santa Anna, Texas; and Summers is from Bardstown, Ky.

Jim and Leola Ragland are living in Cyprus. He will develop evangelistic materials for the Middle East and, through telephone calls and correspondence, continue to advise Beirut Baptist School, where he was the longtime director. Both the Raglands are Oklahoma natives, he from Ada, she from Duncan.

Russ and Deb Futrell are on furlough, taking further study at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. They plan to return to Cyprus and assist in the Middle East Baptist Evangelism Ministry. He is from Pineville, La., and she is from Agency, Mo.

Gary and Jerree White and David and Joyce Swenson have explored other teaching opportunities in the Middle East. White is from Pineville, La., and Mrs. White is the daughter of longtime Lebanon missionaries Bill and Vivian Trimble, who continue working on Cyprus in theological education. Swenson is a Beirut native, the son of independent U.S. missionaries, and Mrs. Swenson is from Newport News, Va.

Pete and Pat Dunn currently are on furlough in Mobile, Ala., their hometown, and will return to Cyprus, where he directs Baptist broadcasting in the Middle East.

Other missionaries in Cyprus are handling the responsibilities they had while in Lebanon.

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Arizona Baptists
Re-elect President

N-CO
(ARIZ.)

Baptist Press
11/17/87

PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)--Arizona Southern Baptists adopted a \$5.54 million budget and re-elected George Webb, pastor of Brown Road Baptist Church in Mesa, as president during their annual meeting Nov. 10-11 at North Phoenix Baptist Church.

The 1988 convention budget is a 7.4 percent increase over the previous year. A total of \$2.8 million is expected to come from the 351 Arizona Southern Baptist churches and missions through the Cooperative Program unified budget. Other major revenue sources include \$1.34 million from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and \$44,000 from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Of the Cooperative Program funds received in the state, 28.5 percent will be forwarded to the Southern Baptist Convention to support the national and worldwide work of Southern Baptists. That percentage is an increase of 0.5 percent over the 1987 budget.

Messengers adopted a slate of six resolutions without discussion. In a resolution on new work, they pledged "our prayers, financial support and participation to 'Reach People and Start Churches'" and urged the state convention staff to continue its leadership in promoting new work and strengthening missions.

Messengers also addressed the growth and discipleship of church members, challenging church leaders to provide nurturing of new members and to provide a "doctrinal, ethical and theological basis for the Christian lifestyle to both new and established members." Another resolution urged Arizona Southern Baptists to devote themselves to prayer both in regular midweek prayer services in their churches and "in the privacy of devotion."

Three other resolutions voiced messengers' appreciation for Grand Canyon College, the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union and the people involved in the 1987 ASBC annual meeting.

Appreciation and support were expressed for Grand Canyon President Bill Williams and for the school's founding professors, as well as for the faculty, staff, administration and trustees. Arizona churches were encouraged to support the college's programs and to encourage young people to consider attending Grand Canyon.

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The resolution on WMU noted that the organization will be celebrating its centennial during 1987-88, affirmed appreciation for the heritage of WMU and resolved to "enthusiastically join in accepting the challenge of the future -- making Christ known around the world."

The only discussion generated during business times concerned the location of future annual meetings. Some messengers supported always holding the meetings in the Phoenix metropolitan area because it is centrally located within the state. Others wanted the meeting site to alternate between Phoenix and Tucson.

The last three annual meetings have been held at North Phoenix Baptist Church. At present, no Tucson church is large enough to host the evening sessions of the convention, and other facilities would need to be rented.

Messengers requested the time, place, preacher committee study the location of the annual meeting and bring a recommendation to the 1988 convention.

Besides Webb, who was unopposed, other officers elected were first vice president Harvey Kimbler, pastor of Foothills Baptist Church in Yuma, and retired Sunday school director for the Arizona convention; second vice president Roger Bayes, minister of music for First Baptist Church at Sierra Vista; and recording secretary Jay George, interim pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Willcox.

The 1988 annual meeting of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention will be Nov. 1-2 in Tucson.

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New England's Currin
Collapses In Arizona

N-CO
(Ariz)

Baptist Press
11/17/87

PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)--James H. Currin, executive director of the Baptist Convention of New England, was hospitalized after collapsing during a speaking engagement in Phoenix Nov. 10.

Currin was speaking at a Christian social ministries dinner held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention when he was stricken.

He was taken to Phoenix Baptist Hospital, where doctors determined he had not had a heart attack but did have heart trouble. Following a heart catheterization Nov. 13, doctors reported the condition could be treated with medication.

He was released from the hospital Nov. 14. His wife, Margery, who accompanied him on the trip to Phoenix, said they will remain in Phoenix for at least several days.

Doctors have not told yet Currin when he may return to work.

Currin may be addressed through his office, P.O. Box 688, Northboro, Mass. 01532-0688.

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Hawaii Baptists
Meet On New Site

N-CO
(Hawaii)

Baptist Press
11/17/87

HONOLULU (BP)--The Hawaii Baptist Convention met Nov. 5-7 at the newly acquired six-and-a-half-acre property recently bought from the Sisters of the Sacred Heart Convent in the heart of Honolulu.

The property now houses the elementary classes of the Hawaii Baptist Academy, which following relocation in August, jumped more than 100 in enrollment to 948.

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Hawaii Baptists adopted a general budget of \$1,754,967, of which \$625,043 is anticipated to come from the 49 churches, 34 church-type missions and 11 preaching stations affiliated with the convention. In the budget, Hawaii Baptists increased their share with the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program unified budget from 27.5 percent to 27.75 percent. A \$62,693 increase in cooperative giving is anticipated in the 1988 budget and an additional \$210,000 from missions offerings.

Participating were 138 visitors and 281 messengers.

The convention voted to commend Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, and Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, for their recent attempt to secure a relationship of cooperation and mutual respect between Baptists and Catholics on the national and world-wide levels.

Both Bennett and Weatherford drew criticism after they met with Pope John Paul II in early September during the pontiff's visit to the United States.

Messengers adopted a resolution on acquired immune deficiency syndrome, (AIDS), which expressed opposition to sex outside of marriage and illegal intravenous use of drugs, also called on Hawaii Baptists to express a Christ-like compassion to victims of AIDS and their families.

Messengers also overwhelmingly turned down a suggestion Hawaii Baptists have a full discussion on the causes of the controversy going on in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Cliff Hoff, pastor of Olivet Baptist Church in Honolulu, was re-elected president. Ken Newman, pastor of Hawaii Kai Baptist Church in Honolulu, was re-elected first vice president. Donna Farr, a member of Kailua Baptist Church of Kailua, was re-elected second vice president.

Next year's convention will be Nov. 10-12 at Olivet Baptist Church in Honolulu.

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California Baptists
Defeat Name Change

-- N-CO
(Calif.) --

Baptist Press
11/17/87

OXNARD, Calif. (BP)--California Baptists defeated a second attempt to change their convention's name and voted to study the doctrinal position and escrow the state convention budget offerings of a controversial San Francisco church during the 47th annual meeting of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California in Oxnard Nov. 10-12.

Convention President John Swartz, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Escondido, was re-elected without opposition. Other officers are Max Kell, pastor of El Camino Baptist Church in Sacramento, first vice president; Bobby Cain, pastor of Brister Memorial Baptist Church in Compton, second vice president; and Bill Risinger, music minister at Temple Baptist Church in Redlands, music director.

The proposed name change -- to California Baptist Convention -- received a majority of votes, 501 to 442, but the constitutional change needed a two-thirds percentage. At the 1986 annual meeting in Stockton, where the proposal first was debated, it failed just short at 63.5 percent, 626 to 360.

Jack Long, pastor of First Baptist Church of Carlsbad, notified the convention he would present a motion at the 1988 meeting to change the name to California Southern Baptist Convention.

Dolores Street Baptist Church in San Francisco, the center of a controversy the past two years over remarks made by its pastor, James Lowder, in allegedly affirming a homosexual lifestyle, will be studied in a motion which originally asked the convention not to accept its Cooperative Program unified budget gifts to the state convention. The convention's executive board will study the church and bring a recommendation at next year's meeting.

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However, two San Francisco area pastors, unhappy with the referral, successfully urged the convention to escrow the \$2,367 that Dolores Street has given in Cooperative Program funds this year while the study is made.

Richard Neely, pastor of Grand Avenue Baptist Church in South San Francisco, and Stephen Cosgrove, pastor of First Baptist Church in Pacifica, said the local Baptist association withdrew fellowship from Dolores Street in 1986. Neely said the association found "ample reason" and Bill Gray, a layman from First Southern Baptist Church of Anaheim, told messengers the convention needs to "quit passing the buck" on the matter.

James Morton, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Livermore, warned of setting precedents in escrowing Cooperative Program funds, and John Jackson, pastor of Crescent Baptist Church in Anaheim, urged messengers to trust the executive board and "not deal with it on this (annual meeting) level."

The motion to escrow the funds was approved 410 to 278.

Messengers approved a 1988 convention budget of \$12,088,000. The budget includes \$5,701,000 to be contributed by California Southern Baptist churches, the same amount as in the 1987 budget. The budget also includes contributions of \$2,467,952 from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and \$90,145 from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Of the \$5.7 million contributed by California churches, 28.75 percent -- the same percentage as in the 1987 budget -- will be channeled to the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program for national and worldwide mission causes.

The unofficial count of 1,362 messengers is second only to the record 1,458 recorded at last year's annual meeting, both reflecting interest in the name-change proposal.

Next year's meeting will be Nov. 15-16 in Anaheim.

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Ohio Messengers
OK Record Budget

N-CD
(Ohio)

Baptist Press
11/17/87

TOLEDO, Oh. (BP)--The State Convention of Baptists in Ohio adopted a record budget, re-elected its president and approved a long range plan for growth, all without dissenting vote during its annual meeting Nov. 3-5.

The overall budget for 1988 is \$5,285,508, with \$3,158,675 anticipated to come from the 585 congregations of the SCBO. Cooperative Program gifts will be divided with 58 percent remaining in Ohio and 42 percent going to support Southern Baptist Convention causes. The 58-42 division represents a 0.5 percent increase for SBC causes.

Glenn Davidson, pastor of Pisgah Heights Baptist Church in Cincinnati, was re-elected president. Darrel Gabbard, pastor of First Baptist Church of Perrysburg, was re-elected first vice president, and Dale Smith, pastor of Sherwood Park Baptist Church in Akron was elected second vice president.

The long-range planning report covers objectives and goals for the convention from 1990-1995. One major objective is developing resources to purchase 15 priority sites on which to plant new congregations in Ohio. Another goal is to start 30 missions and organize 15 churches per year, resulting in a net increase of 95 churches by 1995.

Messengers also adopted, without opposition, a resolution which expresses appreciation to the SBC Christian Life Commission for "assigning priority to the promotion of pro-life issues" and for its "long awaited and more aggressive leadership for Southern Baptists to become better informed and involved in standing against abortion."

Another section had the convention "express strong conviction the widespread practice of aborting pregnancies is not only morally repugnant but should be legally repealed."

The 1988 annual meeting will be Nov. 8-10 in Dayton.

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