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October 10, 1988

88-162

FMB marks \$172,500 to help
Jamaican Baptists rebuild

By Marty Croll

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Lacking adequate disaster funds, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has dipped into a contingency account to help Jamaican Baptists recover from Hurricane Gilbert.

The Foreign Mission Board has released \$172,500 to buy roofing, lumber, nails and other construction materials, said Thurmon Bryant, associate vice president for mission management. Board officials, with the Brotherhood Commission, are working to get Jamaican government clearance before shipping the materials by ocean freighter.

Hurricane Gilbert tore through the Caribbean island in late September, leaving houses, churches and schools without roofs just as the rainy season set in. Because of the demand for building materials, the few supplies available on the island have skyrocketed in cost.

At the end of August, money available to the board for helping in disasters stood at less than \$100,000. During September the board received one gift of \$150,000 and other gifts totaling about \$18,000 designated for relief to Bangladesh, where flooding inundated about two-thirds of the country for several days. Nearly \$48,000 was received during that time for other general relief purposes, including about \$5,400 for Jamaica.

Only gifts designated for general relief can be used by the Foreign Mission Board for needs not related to hunger. On average, Southern Baptists designate about 5 percent of their human needs giving for general relief. If it is not specifically marked for general relief, any world hunger donation goes into the hunger fund and is used only for needs relating to hunger.

The board plans to help coordinate reconstruction projects in Jamaica. One such project will involve 10 volunteers rebuilding a Baptist high school. Four others call for six volunteers each to rebuild churches and parsonages. Volunteer teams enlisted through the Brotherhood Commission are standing by in the United States until materials are received.

Twenty-one Baptist parsonages and 180 Baptist churches were damaged by torrential downpours and winds of more than 160 miles per hour. Eventually the board could be involved in more than 30 projects. Hundreds of volunteers in the United States, many through the Brotherhood, are awaiting rebuilding assignments over the next several months, said Boyd O'Neal, the foreign board's enlistment coordinator for volunteer projects in the area.

Because no Southern Baptist missionaries are assigned to Jamaica, the board has called on veteran volunteer John Baxley from St. Augustine, Fla., to serve as on-site coordinator for relief work.

Baxley, a retired businessman who coordinates building projects with the Florida Brotherhood as a volunteer, was to fly to Jamaica Oct. 10. He also is a trustee of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, Memphis, Tenn.

His immediate assignment will be receiving food donated through a Southern Baptist collection center in Florida, and overseeing a system to transport it to 15 distribution centers set up throughout Jamaica. Baxley knows the country well, having participated many times in an annual Vacation Bible School project there involving thousands of Southern Baptist volunteers, said Ron Boswell, who directs the Foreign Mission Board's volunteers in missions department.

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Hundreds of former volunteers to Jamaica have called the Foreign Mission Board asking how they can help, Bryant said. In response, board officials are sending a letter saying they've set up a special fund just for Jamaican Baptist disaster relief.

Relief officials at the board will continue to help supply food to Jamaicans as needed. About \$20,000 has been earmarked for Jamaica hunger needs and other funds will be released when requested.

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Brotherhood joins forces
with FMB in Jamaican relief

By Bill Bangham

Baptist Press
10/10/88

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission is joining Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board relief efforts on the hurricane-devastated Caribbean island of Jamaica.

James H. Smith, president of the Memphis, Tenn., based agency, said the commission will enlist and supply volunteers over the next 12 months for rebuilding projects on the island.

"Several teams of volunteers enlisted by our state Brotherhood directors already are on standby and ready to leave for Jamaica as soon as building materials are available on the island," said Smith.

Smith noted this cooperative effort is a graphic illustration of the way the commission and foreign board are partners in missions.

"Brotherhood Commission overseas missions opportunities come only through the Foreign Mission Board," said Smith. "And we are in a position to respond by appealing for resources -- both human and financial.

"Our purpose is to help churches involve men and boys in missions," he said. "This effort certainly qualifies."

Ron Boswell, director for FMB's department of volunteers and enlistment, said: "We depend on the availability, training, commitment and expertise of Baptist men across the United States for help in times of disaster."

Boswell noted Brotherhood volunteer relief efforts following the Mexico City earthquake in 1985 and recent efforts in Mexico following Hurricane Gilbert, the same storm that struck Jamaica. "You have been willing and able to help on short notice," he said. "This is another opportunity."

Jamaican officials estimate recovery costs for their island-nation at \$818 million. Churches, parsonages and other properties of the Jamaican Baptist Union received damage estimated in excess of \$2.8 million. Jamaican Baptists have appealed to the Foreign Mission Board for assistance.

Boyd O'Neal, associate director in FMB's volunteers and enlistment department, and Cameron Byler, national disaster relief coordinator for the Brotherhood Commission, toured the island for damage assessment only days after the hurricane swept across it. O'Neal, coordinating volunteer relief efforts for the board, reports 30 projects in need of immediate attention. Byler will supply manpower for the first five.

FMB has been supplying food to the island and will continue to do so. Another plane load of food was scheduled to depart Miami, Oct. 12. The board also announced a reallocation of funds for construction materials. Lynchburg Baptist Church in Winter Haven, Fla., is acting as the collection center for food and materials going to Jamaica.

Byler reports that several state Brotherhood directors have men enlisted and ready to leave as soon as construction materials are available. Georgia has 150 volunteers ready to go and Tennessee has 75. Florida also reports a number on standby.

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Byler also reports financial response from churches and individuals. All monies received are being forwarded to FMB and will be used for Jamaican relief.

Sam Simpson, pastor of two predominantly Jamaican churches in the New York City's South Bronx -- Bronx Baptist and Wake-Eden Baptist churches -- reports church members have 20-30 barrels ready for shipment to Jamaica. Each contains more than 100 pounds of clothing and food stuffs.

Their efforts have resulted in the borough president for the Bronx calling for a concerted community effort to aid Jamaica through contributions by Bronx-based corporations and the community at large. A local hospital already has donated sheets and blankets.

Simpson also hopes some of his church members will go to Jamaica with the relief teams. "It would be good for us Jamaicans to be a part of the groups going down," he said. "We know where all the nooks and crannies are."

Both Byler and O'Neil feel the opportunity to help in Jamaica is one Southern Baptists cannot afford to miss. Byler points out that the Jamaican Baptist Union is two years older than the Southern Baptist Convention. "It has been sending out foreign missionaries longer than we have," he said.

O'Neil tells of walking into a worship service at Gardners View Baptist Church in Bull Bay, the Sunday after the hurricane. "We walked into that church and saw those people sitting there singing, 'To God Be the Glory.' Glory to what?" he said. "Roof gone, walls gone ... it brought tears to my eyes."

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Baptist men serve 95,500
meals in Mexico relief effort

By Jim Burton

Baptist Press
10/10/88

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Baptist men from Oklahoma, Texas and Louisiana served an estimated 95,500 hot meals during 16 days of disaster relief efforts in Mexico following Hurricane Gilbert.

"The response to Hurricane Gilbert shows once again the ability of Baptist men to meet enormous challenges," said James H. Smith, Brotherhood Commission president.

Disaster relief preparedness, response and recovery by Baptist men is a ministry of the Brotherhood Commission which coordinates multistate and international responses of state Brotherhood disaster relief teams.

About 70 Texas Baptist men served about 18,000 meals from San Fernando and 32,000 meals from Carbonera, according to Bob Dixon, Texas Baptist men's executive director. Texas Baptist men have begun sending construction crews into Mexico.

Twenty-one Oklahoma Baptist men spent 10 days in Monterey, serving about 43,200 hot meals said Laddie Adams, Oklahoma Brotherhood director.

"It was far more than we served in Mexico City," said Adams. "The destruction was just incredible."

Seven Louisiana Baptist men served 2,300 hot meals in Mendez, said Cal Jones, Louisiana Baptist men's disaster relief coordinator.

Each state set up food distribution systems and temporary field kitchens where food preparation continues by Mexican Baptist volunteers.

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Court acts in religion cases
involving children's rights

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court declined Oct. 2 to review a pair of cases involving claimed religious rights that also involved children's rights.

Back on the bench after the traditional summer recess, high court justices summarily disposed of nearly 900 cases -- including the two involving children and religion -- on the first day of business in the 1988-89 term.

In the first of the cases, the court rejected an appeal by William and Linda Barnhart of Pennsylvania, who had asked the justices to reverse their involuntary manslaughter convictions in the death of a young son.

The Barnharts were convicted after an autopsy on Justin Barnhart, age 2, showed he had starved to death as a result of a Wilm's tumor that had grown to the size of a volleyball and cut off nutrients to the rest of his body. A Wilm's tumor -- consisting of a cancerous growth in the kidney area -- typically occurs in children from infancy to age 15.

William and Linda Barnhart are members of a self-described fundamentalist sect that practices faith healing and rejects medical care. The couple, who have several other children, testified at their trial that neither they nor their children ever have been to a hospital or seen a doctor for treatment.

When Justin fell ill some six months before his death, they twice called on ministers to anoint the child's abdomen with oil and offer prayers.

During the trial, a physician who specializes in Wilm's tumor research testified that Justin would have had a 90 percent chance of a cure had he been treated promptly.

Both the trial judge and two higher Pennsylvania courts rejected the Barnharts' contention that they failed to seek medical treatment in the constitutionally guaranteed exercise of religious convictions. (87-1722, Barnhart v. Pennsylvania)

In the second rejected dispute, the justices let stand lower rulings awarding custody of two Texas children to their father because their mother had become immersed in the activities of the Jehovah's Witnesses sect.

The eight-year marriage of Lawrence and Marianne Rutland ended in 1983, shortly after her conversion to the sect. Both Rutlands previously had been nominal Catholics. At the time of the divorce, both parents agreed custody of their sons should reside with their mother.

But a year later, Rutland went to court seeking to modify the custody agreement by having the boys taken away from their mother and placed with him. A trial court agreed and was upheld by a state appeals panel. The Texas Supreme Court then refused to review the case.

In her appeal for a U.S. Supreme Court review, Marianne Rutland claimed that religious prejudice had pervaded the custody trial. The trial was "no more than an inquisition-like examination of the mother's religion," her lawyer argued.

Lawrence Rutland's attorney, on the other hand, argued the state had a compelling interest in the children's welfare "that outweighs any burden thereby imposed on (Marianne Rutland's) religious freedoms." (87-1845, Chaisson v. Rutland)

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Job requires Baptist deacon
to arrest abortion protesters

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
10/10/88

ATLANTA (BP)--Even though categorically opposed to abortion, police Maj. Kenneth Burnette said he feels no need to repent for arresting more than 1,100 fellow Christians in anti-abortion protests since July 19.

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Burnette is a deacon and Sunday school teacher at First Baptist Church in Redan, Ga. He also is the police officer responsible for Atlanta's fifth precinct, which includes the central business district and the majority of the city's abortion clinics.

Burnette and his officers have spent the past 11 weeks arresting evangelical Christians participating in Operation Rescue. The inter-denominational effort has blocked entrances to Atlanta's abortion clinics in attempts to "rescue" unborn babies from abortion.

In an interview the week Atlanta police arrested more than 400 protesters, Burnette said he has no regrets for his actions.

On Tuesday of that week, Burnette led his troops to use new get-tough tactics that were soon halted because of numerous complaints about excessive force. Operation Rescue leaders accused Burnette of personally kicking one protester in the head.

Burnette denied kicking the man and said his officers did not use excessive force.

"I don't believe in abusing people. But a part of this job is that sometimes you have to use physical force. Sometimes I have to go home and straighten things out with God -- repent. On Tuesday, I didn't need to," he said in the interview.

"Even though someone has strong emotional feelings about an issue, they have no right to break the law," he told reporters after arresting 343 protesters that Tuesday.

From Burnette's perspective, the rights of the unborn are not the issue in this fight. "It is a clear issue about people who have stepped outside the law in attempts to accomplish their goals," he said.

Although he doesn't make his faith an issue in the much-publicized abortion protests, Burnette has been a Christian for 28 years and a policeman for 26. He got his start in both during the heat of the civil rights movement in the South.

Burnette wears a crisp blue police uniform with gold badge, dangling whistle and nightstick. Most officers of his rank wear business suits. Although assigned an unmarked police cruiser, he occasionally walks the beats with his officers to remember what it's like.

His office displays religious plaques and an open Bible. He said he prays often about the situations he faces at work.

Burnette determined at the start of his career that he would quit his job if ever forced to compromise his Christian beliefs, he recalled, noting, "My first commitment in life is to the Lord."

When Operation Rescue first came to town, Burnette thought such a conflict finally might have arrived.

"When I realized I was going to have to handle it, I went to the Lord in prayer," he said. "I had a dilemma and thought maybe this was that inevitable conflict I had always talked about."

Burnette said he got no answer from God. "I took that to mean I wasn't to do anything different. I felt like if the Lord wanted me to do something different, he would reveal that to me," he explained.

Burnette was content with his decision until he saw Charles Stanley observing one of the rescues. Stanley is pastor of Atlanta's First Baptist Church and one of Burnette's favorite preachers.

"I asked myself if I had made a mistake," Burnette said.

Even though television preacher Jerry Falwell called on Stanley to support Operation Rescue, Stanley decided not to. Stanley later issued a statement on civil disobedience explaining his support for the protesters' objectives but disagreement with their tactics.

"Dr. Stanley's statement was the Lord reaffirming me," Burnette said.

He said he agrees with Stanley that in some situations God's law must supercede man's law, but this is not one of them.

Burnette would break the law if it required women to have abortions, he said. However, since abortion clinics currently are legal businesses, he will fight to keep them open as diligently as he will fight to keep churches open.

"When those abortion clinics become illegal, I'll be just as zealous in enforcing the law," he said.

From Burnette's perspective, Operation Rescue's leaders have "hoodwinked" ordinary Christians into illegal activity because of the emotion of their cause.

"I consider Operation Rescue's leaders to be very dangerous," he said. "What we have here are the seeds of anarchy. If Operation Rescue is successful in closing down abortion clinics by illegal means, then they can move down to the drug store or any business they want and do the same thing."

Although Burnette and the rescuers each claim to be Christians opposed to abortion, they have different theologies, he said.

"When you begin to apply their theology and carry it to its logical conclusions, it's disastrous," Burnette said. "The Bible tells us this world is evil. We're not going to reform it. It's not going to get any better until Jesus comes back.

"We don't need to think as the church that we're going to do away with the evils of this world. My job as a Christian is not to try to change the ways of this world. My job is to allow the Lord to work through me to change people."

Burnette's own theology might be explained by the plaque placed next to the open Bible in his office -- "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference."

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

Jackson says gospel
message molds ministers

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
10/10/88

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The "out of the ordinary" message of the Christian gospel can transform ordinary people into effective ministers of Jesus Christ, stressed the pastor of one of the nation's largest Southern Baptist churches.

Richard Jackson, pastor of the 18,000-member North Phoenix (Ariz.) Baptist Church, told an audience at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., that the message of Christ's atoning death, bodily resurrection and indwelling presence changes "what the world calls ordinary men and women" into competent ministers.

Ministers must rely more on the message of the gospel than the opinions of others, Jackson emphasized to participants at the Louisville, Ky., seminary's conference on "Calling and Competence in Ministry." The meeting was the inaugural event for the seminary's new Center for the Ministry.

"Do not allow the world to press you into a mold or mold your thinking," he instructed. "Do not allow the 'P.R.' agents of the so-called Christian community to tell you that you do not have what it takes" to be a minister.

The "only hope any of us have is that we have the treasure of his life in these earthen vessels," he noted. The "vessels vary," but "with Jesus, the shepherd, living out his ministry in us we can be God honoring, effective ministers."

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Jackson also underscored the centrality of God's call in the life of a minister: "Our competence in ministry relates to the fact that we are called. He sets us apart. The called are set apart unto the purpose of God in Christ."

Another keynote speaker, Bruce Grubbs, manager of the pastoral leadership/administration section of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, called attention to particular types of ministerial competencies.

Ministers need a professional/technical competency that includes "specific and general areas of knowledge unique to ministry," he said. Such competency involves knowledge of the Bible, theology and the Christian tradition, awareness of denominational heritage and polity, familiarity with the behavioral sciences and history, and skills in particular ministerial areas such as homiletics, music or educational administration.

He cautioned, however, that ministry involves more than knowledge. There is a need to "move beyond information to performance," he added.

A relational/personal competency is crucial for ministers, Grubbs added, emphasizing that ministers offer their gifts and skills through their personhood. "The way personal incompetencies express themselves is in the inability to engage and relate to others," he noted.

Grubbs said ministers also need a creative competency. This competency involves the ability to customize ideas and the "capacity to bring freshness to that which has grown stale and ineffective."

Finally, ministers must have a spiritual/devotional competency, he said: "It is never enough to be learned, skilled and efficient. A minister must embody and live by the spiritual values he or she presents, proclaims and tries to persuade others to embrace."

Without the devotional aspect of ministry, Grubbs said, the minister's list of qualifications would not differ from a corporate executive.

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Olympics ministry
sowed many seeds

By Lounette Templeton and Erich Bridges

Baptist Press
10/10/88

SEOUL, South Korea (BP)--Tome Halsell personified the international ministry of Southern Baptists at the Olympic Games in Seoul.

A second-generation missionary who works in Macao, Halsell speaks five languages: English, Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish and French. Yet even that variety wasn't enough to take full advantage of all the people he met at the Olympics.

"In one hour of one day at the sports complex, I used all my languages and even struggled with one I didn't have, Italian," reported the Evansville, Ind., native said. "We met 'em all."

Halsell and 12 other Southern Baptist missionaries from nine countries joined numerous missionaries assigned to South Korea and a team of Korean Baptists in a wide-ranging effort to aid foreign visitors in Seoul for the games.

The missionaries and Koreans operated the Baptist Visitors' Center, which attracted some 1,500 people during the games. Thirteen Korean-speaking missionaries worked directly with the Seoul Olympic Organizing Committee as translators and assistants at five different sports venues. Other missionary/Korean teams worked on the streets or at Olympic events, helping visitors in need of language assistance, making friends, talking about Christ and distributing Christian literature in numerous languages.

"Overall our goals were accomplished," said missionary and ministry coordinator David Bishop, who spent several years preparing for the games. "Our objective was infiltrating the Olympics with a positive Christian witness and creating a positive image of Baptist work."

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On reflection, Bishop said he "probably should have called this ministry 'Operation Stone Skip.' When you stand at the edge of a pond and skip a flat stone across, each time that stone hits the water it causes ripples to go out from that spot. Our people moved across these 16 days touching down in a lot of places. I really believe their influence is going to ripple across the world."

Halsell started spreading the gospel before he even reached Seoul. On the last leg of his flight to South Korea, he received a seat assignment beside members of the U.S. Olympic swimming team. Before the plane landed he had led swimmer Lars Jorgensen, a 1,500-meter freestyle specialist, to personal faith in Christ.

"He knew the Bible, but nobody had challenged him to accept Jesus," Halsell said. "So right there in the plane he made a decision and prayed with me to accept Jesus into his life."

Halsell struck up a friendship with two Bulgarian gymnasts at the gymnastics competition. The missionary had New Testaments in Russian, a language the Bulgarians knew, and before long they were reading passages aloud to him from the the Apostle Paul's letters and the Gospel of John. He also had the chance to console a disappointed young Brazilian swimmer who was eliminated from competition.

"We as Christians were able to minister in many different ways. Very few athletes took a medal. There were many more tears out there than there were cheers," said Halsell.

Retired Middle East missionary Finlay Graham made at least 30 contacts with Arabic-speaking visitors and athletes, including the great long-distance runner Said Aouita of Morocco. Brief encounters are "not the ideal way" to communicate the gospel to Muslims, Graham admitted. "But it is a way."

Missionary T (NO PERIOD USED) Thomas from France became popular with a number of French speakers, including the French pentathlon team. One day the president of the French tennis federation "told me to be sure to come back, because I was the only supporter in the whole crowd waving the French flag," Thomas said.

But perhaps his most meaningful contact came with a young man at a baseball game. When the game was delayed by rain, the two talked about the Bible for hours. "I couldn't put down on a report that he got down on his knees and prayed with me, but I really feel like his life was changed," Thomas reflected. "When we parted he said, 'I never understood until now.' We didn't see much baseball, but we talked about the Lord."

Two Japanese men made frequent stops at the Baptist Visitors' Center and became friends with several Japanese-speaking missionaries and Korean workers. One of the men had never been inside a Christian church; the other had not entered one in 30 years. When Bishop told them their presence at the center was a highlight of the two weeks, tears came to their eyes. Both men left saying they wanted to find out "what Christianity is all about if it produces people this kind and loving."

The visitors' center will remain open through Oct. 24 for the Paralympics, which is bringing 3,000 handicapped athletes to Seoul from around the world.

Bishop expressed satisfaction with the Olympic ministry, and thankfulness to more than 29,000 Southern Baptist young people who helped make it happen. Some \$95,000 in mission offerings from 1988 Centrifuge youth camps, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, helped cover the travel expenses of the missionaries and the printing in 28 languages of evangelistic brochures.

"It caught the imagination of the kids," Bishop said. "They committed themselves to pray, and as they watched the Olympics on TV, I hope they realized that the Lord blessed this thing in a way we never imagined."

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

Retired children's editor,
writer Robbie Trent, dies

NASHVILLE (BP)--Robbie Trent, an editor of children's Sunday school materials at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board for 30 years and a prolific writer of children's books, died Oct. 9, in Nashville. She was 94.

Trent was an editor of children's Bible study materials at the Sunday School Board from 1929 until she retired in 1959.

She was a native of Wolfe Creek, Ky. She attended the University of Louisville, University of Wisconsin, Ward-Belmont College of Nashville (now Belmont College), George Peabody College (of Vanderbilt University) and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

She wrote about 30 books for children published by Broadman Press of Nashville and other publishers. Some of her children's books were translated into Korean, Chinese, Danish and other languages.

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Cothen calls Baptists
to remember our purpose

By Breena Kent Paine

Baptist Press
10/10/88

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"Unless we remember with great care and grave discrimination the purpose of the Southern Baptist Convention, we may lose it all," former denominational executive Grady Cothen told students and faculty at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He said the Southern Baptist Convention's "purpose was never to organize conformity, nor enforce doctrinal purity, nor to seek a source of authority. The purpose was the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Cothen said one of the main distinguishing characteristics of Southern Baptists is "soul competence" (a term developed by E.Y. Mullins, Southern Baptist theologian and past president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.).

"It involves the ability of the individual to know, to relate to, to respond to, and to be responsible to God for himself. This, of course, underlies the basic concept of the priesthood of the believer. It involves the right of direct access to God," said Cothen.

There must be no inhibitions by the government, the church, or other Christians in fulfilling the priesthood of every Christian, he said. "Jesus Christ is our final authority."

The Christian who is leaning on Jesus as his authority and listening to the Holy Spirit as he interprets the Bible "will not walk here with the presumptive tread of the know-it-all, but will walk here with that receptive heart to say, 'Oh, Lord, if I'm wrong, show me the way.'

"This eliminates judgment; this eliminates the authority of others over your conscience; it eliminates authority of others over your church," Cothen said.

"A resolution by the Southern Baptist Convention does not dislocate one's entire spiritual orientation. Jesus is the answer," he said. "We do not need anyone else to tell us ... how it is, ... though you teach me and I teach you, and we profit one from another. But, none of us rules over the rest of us.

"I believe every word of the Baptist Faith and Message," said Cothen, who was on the committee which drew up the statement of Southern Baptist beliefs. "But any time you substitute the Baptist Faith and Message for the word of God, you have become a first-class Baptist heretic. The Scripture is our rule of faith and practice.

"I refuse to accept some rationalistic understanding of what the Bible says in the place of what the Bible says itself. In these serious days of change, we're surrounded by confusion on many issues we have traditionally been settled on."

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Cothen called for a recommitment to the Cooperative Program, which along with soul competence is also a distinguishing characteristic of Southern Baptists. Missions can be done "more massively and economically" through cooperating together in this system of organization and funding which has made Southern Baptists who they are, said Cothen.

"I have no fear about our losing our basic theology. I have great terror at the thought we may lose our polity; we may lose our understanding of ecclesiology; we may lose our understanding of authority; we may lose our understanding of the Bible as our sole principle of faith and practice, not what somebody said about it."

Cothen said the goal of Southern Baptists today and always should remain that of cooperation and missions.

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Prestonwood pastor resigns,
admits personal impropriety

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
10/10/88

DALLAS (BP)--Billy Weber, founding pastor of the 10,000-member Prestonwood Baptist Church of Dallas, resigned Oct. 8 after admitting adultery to his church deacons.

"This is certainly the most difficult decision of my life, but one I believe is in the best interest of the church, its future and its ministry in this community," Weber said in a written statement. "I have offered no excuses for my exercise in bad judgment -- for there are none -- and have sought forgiveness from the Lord, my family, church and community."

During an Oct. 8 news conference, Prestonwood deacon Newt Hamlin confirmed that Weber had an extramarital affair, but he declined to say with whom or for how long. Weber, 45, is married and has four children.

Hamlin said Weber plans to spend time with his family and make a decision later about whether to return to the ministry.

Although church officials are not precluding the possibility of Weber's return to the Prestonwood pastorate, they reportedly are not waiting for him and are proceeding with the formation of a pastor search committee.

Deacon chairman Larry Littleton read Weber's resignation to Prestonwood Church on Oct. 9. Tim LaHaye of Washington, a minister and member of the church, delivered weekend sermons in Weber's place.

Weber began the nucleus of Prestonwood Church in 1977, holding meetings with a handful of people in homes and later at the Fretz Park Recreation Center. In 1979, the church was founded in an affluent North Dallas neighborhood.

In 11 years, the congregation became one of the fastest-growing Southern Baptist churches in the nation and gained widespread recognition for its innovative approach to reaching young professionals. Median age at the church is 35, and the congregation has been adding members at a rate of 110 a month.

In addition to sponsoring 10K runs, fitness fairs, the Discovery Broadcasting Network and country club Bible classes, Prestonwood recently attracted national attention when it began offering Saturday night services.

Weber, a native of Orange, Texas, who grew up in West Monroe, La., surrendered to the gospel ministry at age 14. He is a graduate of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. His father, the late Jaroy Weber, was president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1975-76.

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