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Hastey elected
Alliance exec

By Marv Knox

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Alliance elected Stan Hastey as its first executive director during the SBA board meeting Nov. 28-29 in Charlotte, N.C.

Hastey, 44, is chief of the Washington bureau of Baptist Press and associate executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. He will assume the SBA post Jan. 1.

The SBA is a coalition of about 40,000 moderate Southern Baptists who have banded together to support ministries and principles they believe are being ignored by current Southern Baptist leaders.

Hastey grew up in Mexico, the son of retired Southern Baptist missionaries Ervin and Ruth Hastey. They recently concluded a two-year term in Mexico as mission volunteers.

He is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee and of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., where he earned a doctorate in American church history and church/state relations.

Hastey's entire professional career has been with the Baptist Joint Committee, a Washington-based religious liberty organization comprised of nine Baptist denominations. He joined the staff in January 1974, immediately following graduation from Southern Seminary. He became Baptist Press bureau chief and director of information services in 1978 and was named associate executive director in 1985.

He has won awards for his news reporting from both Religious News Service and the Baptist Public Relations Association. He has taught at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's Washington Center; and the University of Richmond's School of Christian Studies.

Prior to his election, Hastey spoke to the SBA board. "What most attracts me to the Alliance is the watchword of 'freedom,'" he said. "Everything we Baptists believe hinges on the central biblical ideal of a free conscience -- what Roger Williams called 'soul liberty.'"

He also affirmed what he described as the SBA's "commitment to the larger church." Growing up on the mission field, he said, made him realize Southern Baptists "are not indispensable to the kingdom of God" but are called to work with fellow Christians in missions, ministry and evangelism.

And he affirmed the SBA's "concept of servant leadership," as opposed to the authoritarianism of the pastor, he added, stressing laypeople and clergy all must minister together.

Prior to his election, Hastey had not been a member of the SBA. He told the board: "I have thought about joining it, but the principal reason I have not is that I have functioned as a journalist in the SBC and felt I would be well-advised not to be a dues-paying, card-carrying member of the Southern Baptist Alliance."

As an outside observer of the SBA, he said: "I always felt the organization lacked some focus, that it is struggling for a sense of identity. I do not intend to be critical; an organization in formation cannot help but be somewhat unclear and unfocused."

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SBA critics have charged the organization is an embryonic denomination, designed to lead churches out of the Southern Baptist Convention. Hastey denied that claim, noting, "I see it as a haven" for disenfranchised Southern Baptists who are seeking ministries and relationships they can affirm.

The SBA also is not a machine to recapture the convention, he added: "The SBA does not want to be part of a get-out-the-vote faction. I'm not interested in that. I have not been involved in that. ... The direction has to be one of openness (although) there may be considerable disagreement over what path to take."

Hastey's election does not signal the beginning of a new denomination, SBA leaders said.

"This means we are finally serious about addressing the tasks before us," said Anne Neil, SBA acting president and a former foreign missionary from Wake Forest, N.C. "We are serious about embracing, embodying and living out our covenant. We are writing history as we are making it. This helps define who we are."

Added Bill Puckett, chairman of the search committee and pastor of Millbrook Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C.: "We're in this. We are not a temporary organization. We're not sure where we'll go, but we intend to grow, to be a significant part of Southern Baptist life."

In addition to hiring Hastey, the SBA board voted to move its offices from Charlotte to Washington.

Hastey's wife, Bettie, is on the staff of Sen. David L. Boren, D-Okla. Their daughter, Lisa, is on the staff of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and their son, Steve, is a junior in high school.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Baptist Press

Indiana Baptists install
exec; hear budget concerns

Baptist Press
11/30/88

EVANSVILLE, Ind. (BP)--Installation of a new executive director-treasurer, introduction of a new state missions director and concerns over budget problems highlighted the 30th annual meeting of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana.

The 319 messengers meeting in Grace Baptist Church in Evansville, Ind., Nov. 15-17, installed Mark Coppenger as the third executive in the history of the state convention.

Coppenger, 40, former pastor of First Baptist Church of El Dorado, Ark., and professor at Wheaton College, became executive Sept. 1, succeeding R.V. Haygood, who resigned in March of 1987 after a controversy over use of designated funds.

Messengers also welcomed F. Jackson Redford, director of associational missions in Cisco, Texas, and former director of church extension with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, as the new state missions director. Redford was secretary of the state missions department in Indiana from 1962-67.

In other business, messengers elected state convention officers, adopted 10 resolutions, approved changes in the convention's constitution and bylaws to streamline the executive board structure and discussed financial concerns.

The messengers adopted a 1989 budget of \$2,600,441, despite an anticipated income shortfall of about \$235,000. Of the budget, \$1,841,197, is projected to come from the congregations affiliated with SCBI. Of that, \$589,183, will be sent to support the worldwide ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention. The 68-32 percent division is the same as last year.

Don Moore, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Evansville, and chairman of the convention's executive board, warned messengers the SCBI "is facing some very crucial situations. ... Major adjustments may have to be made as we go through the year."

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David Wood, convention president and pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Floyds Knobs, told messengers: "We have some very real financial problems. ... For several years we have cut program money. There is no more fat to cut."

Further cuts, he said, are going to affect people and "it's going to hurt."

Coppenger said there has been no significant drop in Cooperative Program giving. "We just took on more than we could handle financially. Several years of aggressive budgeting have caught up with us," he said.

He told Baptist Press budgeted expenditures have grown by 24 percent across the past 5 years while undesignated giving by the churches has risen only 18 percent."

Ernest Mosley, executive vice president of the SBC Executive Committee, and former executive director for Illinois Baptists, led the installation ceremony for Coppenger.

"A leader who leads effectively helps people recognize the power of almighty God," Mosley said. "My prayer is that Mark Coppenger will be among you in a way that will help you recognize the power of the presence of almighty God.

"Bold leadership calls for bold response from the people of the state convention. The emphasis is on the willingness of people to cooperate with and work with the leadership God has brought to them."

Messengers re-elected Woods president by acclamation. Other officers are John Greever, pastor of Pleasant Heights Baptist Church, Indianapolis, first vice president; and Lofton Delgado, pastor of Elston Heights Baptist Church, Lafayette, second vice president.

Messengers adopted changes in the constitution and bylaws designed to streamline operation of the convention's executive board.

Resolutions adopted included ones opposing abortion, homosexuality, pornography and gambling. Others commended the trustees of the SBC Christian Life Commission and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary for their choice of new leaders.

The CLC recently elected Richard Land executive director-treasurer; the seminary named Lewis Drummond as president.

Another resolution encouraged Christians to give blood on a regular basis.

Apart from discussion on the constitutional revision and some floor amendments to resolutions, the only exchange in a business session came when two messengers questioned a new column in the Indiana Baptist written by James C. Hefley of Hannibal, Mo.

Tom Evitts, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Clarksville, urged that the column be dropped because he claimed it is "divisive," and "is written editorially and not objectively."

Coppenger defended the column as a supplement to Baptist Press coverage of convention matters and said "information should come from more than one source."

Layman Michael Moore of Carmel Baptist Church in Carmel, objected not to the writer but to the amount of space devoted to the column.

During the convention, messengers were told by John Greever, pastor of Pleasant Heights Church of Indianapolis, that arrangements have been made for a chartered plane to take Indiana Baptists to the 1989 Southern Baptist Convention in Las Vegas.

Greever said the plane will leave early Tuesday, June 13, and return late that night. Cost would be about \$300 per person.

The 1989 annual meeting will be Nov. 14-16 in Indian Heights Baptist Church in Kokomo.

Indiana cuts staff,
slashes 1989 budget

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Seven staff members were laid off, another was offered a transfer until retirement and \$235,000 was cut from the 1989 budget as the executive board of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana struggled to match income to outgo.

The executive board met a week after the annual meeting of SCBI, which had heard reports of financial problems, both in the current year and in the year to come. Despite predictions of a \$200,000-plus shortfall, messengers adopted a 1989 budget of \$2,600,441.

The adopted budget projects \$1,841,197, will be contributed by the congregations affiliated with the Indiana convention, a figure newly elected Executive Director-Treasurer Mark Coppenger thinks is too high. He said a more realistic figure for receipts would be about \$1.6 million.

"For the last 10 years the convention has budgeted on the budget rather than on the receipts. There has been a 24 percent increase in the budget, but the total receipts have risen only 18 percent," he said.

He explained the convention will end the 1988 budget year "about \$90,000 in the red" and that occurred with four major staff vacancies. The executive director and state missions director resigned in March of 1987 in a dispute over use of designated funds; the editor and director of Christian ministries -- who were "co-advisors" in administering the state staff -- subsequently resigned.

Predictions for 1989 were that by following the budget, the convention would be outspending receipts by an average of \$20,000 per month, resulting in a shortfall of about \$235,000. "We estimated -- with the reserves we had available -- that we would be out of money by the summer," Coppenger said.

In order to balance the budget, Coppenger said, the executive committee eliminated five staff, one maintenance and two clerical positions to reduce the budget to the amount "realistically projected" for contributions.

Four professional staffers were told they would be laid off by Jan. 31, 1989, a fifth staffer was offered reassignment until retirement in 1990, one secretarial position will not be filled and a secretary and maintenance man were told their employment had been terminated.

"We will keep them on the payroll until the end of January, but they will not be expected to come to the office so they will have free time to seek other employment," Coppenger said.

One staff vacancy has been filled. F. Jack Redford, director of associational missions in Cisco, Texas, and former director of church extension for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, will return to Indiana as state missions director. Redford was secretary of the state missions department 1962-67.

Redford replaces Glen Ray, who resigned in March 1987, in a dispute over the use of designated funds. The then executive director, R.V. Haygood, also resigned.

Subsequently, two other staffers, Indiana Baptist editor David Simpson, and Church Growth and Ministries Director Lew Reynolds, also resigned.

One staff member, James Abernathy, who has been evangelism/stewardship director, was offered reassignment as head of a slimmed down Sunday school, church training department. Coppenger said Abernathy has not yet indicated whether he will assume the new responsibilities.

Abernathy will be 65 in June 1990.

Evangelism/stewardship responsibilities will be assumed by Coppenger.

Four other staffers were told their jobs would be eliminated. They are:

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--James Erlich, language missions director. His duties will be assumed by Redford.

--W.J. Davis, church music/church training. His duties will be absorbed by the new Sunday school/church training office.

--B.J. Watts, administrative assistant to the executive director. His duties will be absorbed by Coppenger and the bookkeeping office.

--Bill Harrison, family ministries/Brotherhood. The family ministries responsibilities will go to the Sunday school/church training office and the Brotherhood work will be assigned to the missions department.

One staff vacancy remains to be filled, that of editor of the state Baptist newspaper, the Indiana Baptist, Coppenger said. The duties of the editor will be combined with responsibility for oversight of Baptist Student Union work.

Under the reorganization, the staff will include Coppenger, Redford, a Sunday school/church training director, an editor/BSU director, and the director of Woman's Missionary Union work, Margaret Gillaspie.

Other staffers are James Brewer, director of the Boyce Bible School campus, and Reathell Miller, director of the state Baptist camp.

Also on the staff are nine clerical workers.

"We knew we must balance the budget, live within our income and keep from exhausting the reserves," Coppenger said.

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Missouri Baptists
hit by tornadoes

By Trennis Henderson

Baptist Press
11/30/88

ST. ROBERT, Mo. (BP)--Tornadoes that ripped through the Midwest in mid-November cut a ragged path of destruction. As many as 49 tornadoes were sighted in five states, according to reports from the National Weather Bureau.

The widespread storms exacted a high toll on Missouri Baptists, including one death in southwestern Missouri, extensive damage to a church building in the south central part of the state, and homeless church members on the state's east side.

Edna Henson, a member of First Baptist Church of Cassville, was killed when a tornado hit her mobile home in Butterfield. Pastor John Duncan reported, "The mobile home was flipped up in the air and then landed on its top about 50 feet to the side, and she was killed instantly."

Her husband, Paul, a deacon and Sunday school teacher at First Baptist Church, received minor injuries.

Mrs. Henson, 69, had been active as a Sunday school teacher and Woman's Missionary Union president at the Cassville church.

Duncan told Word & Way, Missouri Baptists' weekly newsjournal, the situation "has made us really aware of how quickly tragedy can strike and how quickly death can come." Recalling missions was a key focus of Mrs. Henson's life, he emphasized that her unexpected death is a reminder of the urgency of witnessing to people "who put off a response to the gospel."

Mrs. Henson's death, one of seven caused by the tornadoes, was the only tornado-related death reported in Missouri. The other six victims were killed by storms in Arkansas.

Butterfield was one of the hardest hit areas in the state. Pat Cahill, a Red Cross casework supervisor, said an estimated 90 houses were destroyed or damaged in southwestern Missouri, including "probably 85 percent totally destroyed or beyond the repairable stage."

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Red Cross officials set up a temporary emergency shelter at First Baptist Church of Butterfield following the storm. Members of the Missouri Baptist disaster relief team were involved in clean-up efforts in the area.

Although the Red Cross determined Missouri Baptists did not need to respond with their disaster relief unit and related equipment, Cahill noted: "We appreciated the fact it was available if we needed it. It's just another example of many organizations working together for the common good."

In south central Missouri, First Baptist Church of St. Robert suffered up to \$400,000 in damages. A tornado that hit about 6:40 p.m. destroyed the church foyer, tore a hole in the roof of the sanctuary, ripped part of the roof off the church's educational building, demolished its bus garage and severely damaged the church's six buses and vans.

"It's kind of an empty feeling," Pastor Melvin Watson said, estimating, "It will be about six months before we're back in our sanctuary."

Following the Tuesday night storm, the St. Robert congregation held Wednesday night services in a new location. Bill Walters, a member of nearby First Baptist Church of Waynesville, provided a former funeral home building in Waynesville as a temporary facility for the congregation.

The day following the storm, deacon Chairman Randy King helped coordinate salvage and clean-up efforts. King, a general contractor, provided a crew of workers who moved furniture from the church to the funeral home.

Noting that the majority of construction work on the church building in recent years has been done by church members, King said, "Seeing the building brings tears to your eyes."

He affirmed, however: "I think it will draw us closer together. We're a pretty close family anyway."

Both Watson and King said they are optimistic that insurance will cover the bulk of the needed repairs. Watson said a key priority for the church is to "lay plans to start building back." Glancing toward the damaged sanctuary, he added: "We don't have that anymore. We have to move on with what we do have."

In addition to Butterfield and St. Robert, another hard-hit area of the state was O'Fallon. Renabell Adams, church secretary at First Baptist Church of O'Fallon, said she was unaware of any churches damaged in the area.

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Raleigh tornado kills two
children with Baptist ties

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RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--Two children with North Carolina Baptist ties were killed when devastating tornadoes struck Raleigh, N.C., without warning in the early morning hours Nov. 28.

The children were among at least six people killed and 150 injured as an estimated 17 tornadoes touched down north and east of Raleigh. Damage -- which included at least two Baptist church buildings -- is expected to surpass \$100 million.

Janet L. Barnes, 9, and Edwin M. "Pete" Fulghum III, 12, apparently never awoke as the tornadoes ripped their homes apart about 1:15 a.m. The children lived about a mile from one another. No other member of the Barnes family was injured and members of the Fulghum family suffered only minor injuries.

Janet, a third grade student, was pronounced dead at Rex Hospital after rescuers failed in their attempts to resuscitate her. She suffered massive head injuries when a chimney collapsed into her second-floor bedroom.

Pete, a seventh-grader, was found dead under the remains of what had been his bedroom. Friends of the family dug through the rubble for an hour before finding Pete's body.

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Janet, a member of Raleigh's First Baptist Church, sang in a church choir and was actively involved in the congregation's youth program. Her parents, Walt and Elizabeth, also are members of First Baptist.

William F. Morris Jr., Pete's maternal grandfather, a member of the Raleigh congregation, told a local newspaper: "The tornado came through and the mother was trying to go up, when she heard all the noise and wind, to get the kids. The daughter was trying to come down, and they met on the stairway. They were hanging on to the stair rail as the house was blown away ... Pete was upstairs in his bed. He never woke up."

The sanctuary and educational area of Harris Chapel Baptist Church in Youngsville, about 25 miles east of Raleigh, were destroyed and the parsonage damaged in the storms.

Pastor Richard Mills and his family escaped injury as a large portion of the parsonage roof over their bedrooms was ripped away.

"We're shocked and saddened right now, but grateful to God that no one was hurt," said Mills, who has been pastor of the church about three months.

"I am convinced the Lord will work good from this storm," he added. "We are looking toward the future and ready to get about the task of beginning again."

The church's facilities were destroyed as the education and fellowship wing collapsed on to the sanctuary. "The sanctuary walls are about to cave in at any time. The area has already been roped off so no one can go in the sanctuary," Mills said.

Mills told the Biblical Recorder, newsjournal of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, the congregation will have to come to grips with financial realities of the present.

"We only have \$400,000 worth of combined insurance coverage on the church building and the parsonage," he said, adding while he is not certain about the amount of the damage, "I am sure that \$400,000 will not cover it. We'll have to begin at ground zero in replacing the sanctuary."

Apparently, only one other Southern Baptist congregation in the state sustained damage. Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Raleigh lost a steeple and suffered roof damage.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Wake Forest, N.C., also to the east of Raleigh, was not damaged in the storm.

Roy Smith, associate director of associational missions in Raleigh, said, "A number of Southern Baptists have suffered damage."

The home of Randall Lolley, pastor of Raleigh's First Baptist Church and former president of Southeastern seminary, was damaged. A deck was blown off by high winds and the roof was damaged by falling trees.

Greystone Baptist Church in Raleigh, in the midst of much of the damage, served soup and sandwiches to disaster relief volunteers and victims.

According to Janet Pender, secretary at Greystone, church vans were used to take food to victims in the community who could not leave their homes. In addition, church members are assisting with neighborhood cleanup.

Smith said that plans were in progress to begin clothing and food distribution. "We will work with churches that already have food pantries and clothing closets instead of creating new ones," said Smith.

David Langford, North Carolina Baptist Men's director, said his organization had offered relief assistance to state officials.

"The damage is certainly severe but the actual number of people affected is relatively small. Because of that, Red Cross and state government officials have told us they have the situation in control and our emergency assistance is not needed at this time," Langford said.

Langford added, "We will be working through the Baptist associations in the affected areas to provide assistance."

Richard Brunson, state disaster relief coordinator for North Carolina Baptist Men, said the state's tractor-trailer feeding unit was enroute to Raleigh Monday morning from Forest City, N.C., where it had been used in a training exercise.

The unit, however, will not be used in the Raleigh effort.

Persons wishing to make financial gifts for relief assistance can contact associational offices or "Tornado Relief," Baptist Men, P.O. Box 1107, Cary, N.C. 27511.

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(Contributing to this story were Jim Burton of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission; Larry E. High of the Biblical Recorder; Bill Boatwright, director of communications for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina; and Dan Martin, news editor of Baptist Press.)

Europeans accept seminary;
discuss statement of faith

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
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RUSCHLIKON, Switzerland (BP)--Leaders of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, have approved a transfer of ownership of the seminary's property to European Baptists and have begun discussion of a possible statement of religious principles the continent's Baptists hold in common.

In accepting the seminary property, Knud Wumpelmann, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation and chairman of the seminary board, said the decision to transfer ownership "has been met with gratitude and enthusiasm all over Europe."

Trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board voted Oct. 12 to transfer ownership of the seminary to European Baptists and made several recommendations, including the possibility of a statement of religious principles.

FMB trustees urged the seminary to draft a statement to "give expression to the seminary's biblical commitment and to which seminary teachers would subscribe."

During a Nov. 25-26 meeting, the seminary's executive board approved the property transfer, as well as the FMB recommendations. Members also adopted a recommendation of its own, calling on the European Baptist Federation to form a study commission "to produce a concentrated statement of Baptist principles which are common to European Baptists."

Initial deliberations on the seminary board's request likely will come next April when the European Baptist Federation's six-member executive committee meets. The federation encompasses 26 Baptist bodies, or unions, in Western and Eastern Europe.

The seminary board's discussion of advantages and possible pitfalls in drafting a statement of principles lasted more than an hour.

"European Baptists cherish their unity," said Isam Ballenger, Foreign Mission Board vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. He said they are "fearful of anything which would bring division into a Baptist constituency which has been termed the most united regional Baptist constituency in the world."

Four of the seminary board's seven members are European Baptists. Three, including Ballenger, are representatives of the Foreign Mission Board.

Although no statement of European Baptist principles has ever been formulated, Baptists in various European countries adopted confessions of faith as long ago as the mid-1600s.

Discussions between the Foreign Mission Board and European Baptists concerning the transfer of seminary ownership date back more than a decade. The European Baptist Federation renewed the discussions with a request for ownership when a five-member Foreign Mission Board trustee team visited Europe Sept. 29-Oct. 4.

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Transfers of property are a common Foreign Mission Board practice, based on its missions philosophy of "indigenization" which gives mature Baptist bodies throughout the world control of institutions in their countries.

The seminary board, acting on other Foreign Mission Board recommendations, scheduled a consultation of European Baptists for next May. General secretaries of European Baptist bodies, professors from other Baptist seminaries in Europe and lay people with business backgrounds will be invited.

The consultation will address Foreign Mission Board recommendations for efforts to broaden the involvement of Baptists throughout Europe in giving direction and financial support to the seminary.

Wumpelmann said the European Baptist Federation has "already sent out an appeal to each national union that it should live up to the challenge of owning this valuable property."

The property transaction is consistent with "sound and progressive missions principles," Ballenger said in an interview. It involves "the principle of indigenization, the principle of partnership, the principle of servanthood and the principle of love."

"By this action, the Foreign Mission Board is no less engaged in missionary activity in Europe," Ballenger noted. "On the contrary, we have demonstrated our desire to serve and not to control. The European Baptist Federation, meanwhile, has accepted a tremendous challenge that will demand the best combined efforts of its 26 member unions."

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Baptists sense despair
among Palestinians

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
11/30/88

JERUSALEM (BP)--A new Palestinian state has been declared, but nothing has yet eased the despair among Palestinians on the West Bank, said two Southern Baptists who minister in Arab communities within Israel and the occupied territories.

"People are hopeless, depressed, hurting. They're looking for some sign of hope, for friends, for love, and they just don't know where to look," said Ray Hicks, a Southern Baptist representative in Israel. Hicks lives in a former Jordanian village that was annexed to Jerusalem after the Six-Day War of 1967.

Jarrell Peach, another Southern Baptist representative in Israel, said he senses a wait-and-see attitude among Palestinians in East Jerusalem, where he lives and works.

Peach noted the Israeli Army intensified security measures in and around Arab neighborhoods after the new Palestinian state was declared Nov. 15 during a meeting of the Palestine Liberation Organization's 450-member Palestine National Council in Algiers, Algeria. Some 1.5 million Palestinians live in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Both Baptist workers recounted hardships their Palestinian friends and acquaintances have weathered during the "intifada," the Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule. More than 310 Palestinians and 11 Israelis have been killed in the conflict, which has lasted more than a year.

"My barber's son was shot," Hicks said. "The gas station man's son was shot."

Hicks, who often visits a Palestinian refugee camp near Bethlehem, added that nearly "every family in the camp has had a family member either wounded, killed or arrested, and that's in a camp of 6,000 to 7,000 people."

People are frightened, Peach said. Palestinians continually face the possibility of detention, imprisonment, beatings or damage to property as the Israeli Army strives to control the intifada.

Hicks urged Christians in the United States to exercise care in their opinions about the Arab-Jewish strife.

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"It's so easy for us as Westerners to get only one side of a situation and then draw conclusions, whether it's the Arab perspective or the Jewish perspective," he said. Christians, he emphasized, are called to be peacemakers and reconcilers, "and we cannot do that with a one-sided perspective."

He urged Christians to "at least try to find out how the other side feels, how they're hurting. Then we can be reconcilers and perhaps be a part of the process of bringing the two together."

Opportunities for ministry abound, but at times Peach cannot reach people in need because of military restrictions isolating their neighborhoods.

Hicks told of joining a Muslim family at the hospital bedside of their son, who had been hit by a fragmenting-style bullet that perforated his intestines and lower abdomen in 18 places.

The 16-year-old was not expected to live beyond 24 hours, but he survived three operations. Hicks gave the youth a New Testament for his birthday a few months later. In a subsequent visit, the father said he had been reading it to his son each evening and they already had covered more than half its pages.

The day Hicks first visited that family in the hospital, he stood with another family at the bedside of their 14-year-old son, who was dying of a gunshot wound to the head. He also talked with an Arab friend who had just learned he faced deportation by Israeli authorities.

Hicks returned home in tears. "It was just too much. It broke my heart," he said. He believes he would fall into ongoing despair "if I didn't have my faith, my hope in the Lord Jesus and a loving family that prays for these situations and encourages me. I don't know how these people make it."

Beyond the battles between stone-throwing young Palestinians and Israeli troops, Peach pointed to the deeper "spiritual warfare" in the land involving Jews, Muslims and Christians.

Staunchly religious Jews are in conflict with secular-minded Jews, he said. Minority Arab Christians in different churches do not see eye-to-eye. They also fear the rise in religious fervency among the Muslim majority. Many Christians are leaving the country at "any opportunity they can get."

The atmosphere, he said, "affects everything."