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Foreign missions funding  
tops 'AnswerLine' questions

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Questions and concerns about foreign missions funding accounted for nearly half the calls received by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's special "AnswerLine" telephone service, designed to counter rumors and misinformation about missions.

AnswerLine, which operated from Nov. 14 through Dec. 16, enabled the mission board to receive "a different kind of telephone call in which people expressed concerns and feelings," said Bob Desbien, assistant vice president for public relations. It was one way the board could say it is open and accessible, he said.

Through AnswerLine, 89 callers posed 113 questions, Desbien reported.

Forty-two calls focused on concerns about cuts being made in mission operating budgets overseas for 1989, or questions about the two key channels of foreign missions funding, the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget and the annual Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Several callers, for example, asked whether missionary salaries are being cut. According to Carl Johnson, vice president of finance, missionary salaries have been frozen since 1987. And salaries of both missionaries and home office workers will be frozen in 1989. The only adjustments up or down in current support for missionaries are the ongoing cost-of-living adjustments related to fluctuations of currency and inflation in the countries where missionaries work, Johnson said.

Seven calls focused on the dismissal of missionary Michael Willett last July over doctrinal questions. Willett had been in language study in Costa Rica preparing to teach at a Venezuelan Baptist seminary.

Calls expressing concerns about the direction of Southern Baptist foreign missions have always been welcomed, Desbien said. They have been handled as part of the overall flow of calls received at the board, such as requests for information about missionaries and informational brochures. The board receives more than 700 calls a month covering a range of questions and requests.

No extra money was spent on staffing or equipment for AnswerLine, Desbien said. Board administrators worked in two-hour shifts handling calls over an existing telephone line at a vacant desk.

"The board is exploring ways to provide this kind of service on an ongoing basis," Desbien said.

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Justice Department drops  
case against Master's Inn

By Robert Dilday

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The U.S. Justice Department has dismissed a civil rights lawsuit filed against a Christian conference center in Altavista, Va.

The Justice Department previously claimed Master's Inn, which provides facilities to Christian groups holding spiritual retreats, violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964 when it denied access to a group of Mormons.

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The center's president and director, Larry Ferguson, countered that center was open to any Christian group. But he called the Mormons, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a cult and described Mormon beliefs as anti-Christ.

Ferguson, a member of Hyland Heights Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va., said that while most retreats are sponsored by Southern Baptists, members of Lutheran and Presbyterian churches use the center.

Concerning the Mormon group, he said: "To open our doors to cults would mean we'd have to propagate beliefs that are against our gospel. If we were forced to open our doors to Mormons, we'd have to open them to the Church of Satan."

The Mormons took their case to the Justice Department, which filed a suit Aug. 3 in U.S. District Court in Lynchburg. The suit maintained Master's Inn is a public accommodation and must abide by Title II of the Civil Rights Act, which forbids discrimination on the basis of religion in accepting lodgers.

Ferguson denied the center is a public accommodation and asked the Justice Department to review the case. In November, based on "new factual information," the department acknowledged Ferguson's claim and dismissed the case.

"The inn's lodging facilities are incidental to its function of providing religious instruction to interested groups, and ... those facilities are available to all groups desiring to receive the religious education provided," the department wrote in its notice of dismissal Nov. 14. "Consequently, the refusal of the inn to permit the instruction of religious principles which transgress its own beliefs does not in the circumstances constitute a violation of Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964."

Ferguson, who had promised to appeal "all the way to the (U.S.) Supreme Court" any decision made against Master's Inn, said he was satisfied with the ruling.

"Of course we're pleased," he said. "I just wish the Justice Department had listened to our explanation last August. It would have saved everyone a lot of time and money."

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2 Baptist schools  
win football crowns

By John E. Roberts

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Football teams from Baptist colleges in South Carolina and Tennessee won national championships this fall.

Furman University in Greenville, S.C., won the National Collegiate Athletic Association I-AA title Dec. 17 by defeating Georgia Southern University, located in Milledgeville.

The Furman Paladins had reached the finals with a 9-2 regular-season record and by winning three playoff games leading to the championship match. Along the way, they became co-champions of the Southern Conference.

The I-AA division is one step below major college football, which has post-season bowl games rather than playoffs for the championship.

Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., became the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Division One champions Dec. 17 by defeating Adams State College of Alamosa, Colo., on the Carson-Newman field.

The Carson-Newman Eagles claimed a regular-season 8-2 record, winning the South Atlantic Conference championship before also winning all playoff games. The victory marked Carson-Newman's fourth national football championship in six years.

Furman Head Coach Jimmy Satterfield, a Baptist deacon and son of a Baptist preacher, says he emphasizes spiritual and personal values along with the importance of winning games. Furman is known for its academic standards and for recruiting players who can compete in the classroom as well as on the playing field.

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Ken Sparks, a Baptist Sunday school teacher completing his ninth season as head coach at Carson-Newman, says he also expects his players to be good students and good citizens. "Winning becomes everything," he said, "only as the player excels also in the classroom and in his personal life."

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Southwestern Seminary graduates  
298 at December commencement

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Ministers should exemplify a Christian work ethic and "earn what you're paid," the president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary told graduates during commencement ceremonies Dec. 16 at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Southwestern Seminary President Russell Dilday conferred 298 degrees on the class, including 21 from the school of church music; 145 from the school of religious education; and 132 from the school of theology. Thirty-three received doctor's degrees, the most in Southwestern's history. Students from seven foreign countries received degrees.

"There are churches all over America today that are in trouble because they have pastors who suffer from a lack of the Christian work ethic," Landrum P. Leavell II told the graduates.

Leavell, who has been president of New Orleans Seminary since 1975 outlined three keys to successful ministry: Loving the Lord, looking for the lost and living in the light.

"We can't teach you what you really need to know -- common sense and good judgment," Leavell said, adding the most grievous problems Christian workers will face will be the result of poor judgment.

Ministers "must will to do the will of God," Leavell said, adding personal and spiritual growth comes through "simple, child-like obedience to the word of God" and "the convicting power and molding influence of the Holy Spirit."

Leavell urged graduates to develop a heart for the non-Christian world. He quoted a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board statistic that revealed more than 6,000 Southern Baptist churches did not report at least one personal salvation in 1987.

"All we really need to do is get out and witness to the lost where we are," Leavell said.

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Seminary president cites  
'3 P's' of graduation

By Breena Kent Paine

Baptist Press  
12/22/88

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The experience of graduation from seminary is providential, paradoxical and offers potential, Landrum P. Leavell II said during December commencement exercises at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Leavell, the president of New Orleans Seminary, addressed a class of 134 graduating seniors, including 25 who received doctorates.

Graduating from seminary is providential, Leavell said, in that "you have been uniquely blessed of God in coming to this point in time, and I'm simply reminding you that to whom much is given, much shall be required."

It is also paradoxical, because it marks both an end and a beginning. "For most of you in this graduating class, this marks the end of your structured, teacher-student relationship," he said. "You have achieved the training that is basic to the calling in which you intend to spend the rest of your life. But this must not be an end to your learning to your studying, and to your growth.

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"There is another sense in which this occasion today is a beginning. You're about to learn some things you could not be taught in a classroom," he said. "In the school of hard knocks, in the crucible of human life and daily experiences, you're soon going to have the equivalent of an earned doctorate in short order."

Graduating from seminary also shows potential. Graduates will be able to apply what they have learned in the classroom to their daily experiences in their ministries, and grow from these experiences, he noted.

"In 12 short years, we will be in the 21st century, if our Lord tarries. You, in this present student generation, are going to be the leaders in our denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention," Leavell said.

"I can assure you that the answers that appear to you to be so patently clear today are going to be fuzzy and out of focus when that time comes."

However, "the only hope for our crime-infested, drug-ridden, war-weary, hell-bound world is Jesus Christ" he said, noting, "The impartation of Christian values, Christian principles and Christian concerns lies in your hands and in the hands of others who are associated with us in the Christian enterprise."

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Soviets can visit churches,  
citizen tells U.S. students      By Steven Isaac & Charles Richardson

Baptist Press  
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ABILENE, Texas (BP)--Although religion has been ignored in the Soviet Union for most of this century, people there now are free to visit churches, a Soviet citizen told students at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas.

Churches always have been open, but they were ignored after the Bolshevik revolution separated church and state in 1917, Tatiana Nikitin said during a visit with her husband, Sergei, to the Texas Baptist school.

Soviets could choose their religion, but no one cared to help them, Mrs. Nikitin explained.

"Now the situation is more lucky," she added, "... because our government understands that only in connection with our church and our believers can we overcome every difficulty in our lives, especially in our spiritual lives."

"We are not believers. We are not atheists, too," her husband said. "We believe that after death, the soul of some person will live in memory of rest of people, in their souls. So if you live not only for yourself, but for other people, you will live after your death. Maybe; we'll see about it."

Addressing a student's question about religious freedom in the Soviet Union, Nikitin said: "If you read our constitution, you will find all groups' rights. The problem is to combine this constitution's words and reality."

The Nikitins visited Abilene as part of the "Soviets, Meet Middle America" program. They are research physicists and folklore singers.

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Steven Isaac is a student writer in the Hardin-Simmons University communications office, where Charles Richardson is news director.

Foreign board appoints  
first missionary to deaf

By Eric Miller

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Being first sometimes means giving up something.

Janet Mayhall gave up her determination to get married and became the first Southern Baptist career foreign missionary appointed to work with the deaf.

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She didn't plan that way, but that's the way it worked out when Mayhall was appointed by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in December to go to Colombia.

A missionary couple in Venezuela, David and Jerry Browder, now are working full time with the deaf, but when they were appointed in 1983, they were assigned to mission business services in that country. Several other missionaries participate in various deaf ministries. But Mayhall is the first career missionary appointed specifically to work with the deaf.

"All my life, I grew up thinking, 'I'll get married and have a family,'" says Mayhall, of Magee, Miss.

For years, however, God has been tugging at her heart to be a missionary, she explains. But she kept saying no to God and waiting for a husband, believing she would not find a mate on the mission field.

While attending seminary, Mayhall sometimes walked across campus intending to meet with visiting Foreign Mission Board missionary enlistment representatives. But each time she turned back. She knew she would say no when asked: "Are you satisfied with being single?"

Eventually "I met the man of my dreams," Mayhall relates. He was a pastor. "I enjoyed being with him, and I was ready to get married. But I still had missions in the back of my mind, and I really didn't see any way that that could occur if I married him." The relationship ended after a few months.

Mayhall finally committed herself to missions at a Christian singles' conference during a worship service invitation. The invitation hymn was "I Have Decided To Follow Jesus."

"I went up on the second verse, which says, 'Though none go with me, I still will follow,'" she recalls. "That meant a lot to me because I was telling God that I would follow him first and then accept whatever or whomever he brings into my life."

Mayhall is taking to the mission field an unusual capacity to understand people of another culture, says Betty Law, FMB associate director for Spanish South America. The daughter of retired missionaries David and Ollie Mayhall of Magee, she grew up in Nigeria. She also worked as a missionary journeyman in Brazil.

The deaf are "a separate cultural group," Law explains. "I think her ability to understand other cultures will be an asset to her in entering both the Spanish culture of Colombia and the deaf culture in Barranquilla and throughout Colombia."

After working as a journeyman, Mayhall earned a master's degree in speech and hearing science at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg and taught deaf students at a county school in Tifton, Ga.

Later she taught brain-damaged babies and children in Arlington, Texas. Before missionary appointment, she was a missions education consultant and minister with Deaf Opportunity Outreach in Houston, an organization that starts churches for the deaf. She also was a staff member at Woodhaven Baptist Deaf Church in Houston.

Mayhall will have to learn not only Spanish, but also Colombian sign language. "I don't think there will be any classes in sign language. It's going to have to come from deaf people themselves," she says. "I've got to get into the deaf culture and find some deaf people to learn from, which is the best thing anyway. I'm just going to have to trust the Lord."

The desire to be married has not gone away, Mayhall admits. But one doesn't have to get married "to become a complete person," she adds. "Obeying God is my primary responsibility."

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