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March 2, 1989

89-35

Worship services affected
by violence in Venezuela

By Art Toalston

CARACAS, Venezuela (BP)--Evening worship services were among the casualties of an outbreak of violence in Caracas and other parts of Venezuela.

Southern Baptist missionary Patsy Davis, leader of the Venezuelan Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, said a 6 p.m. curfew imposed by the government Feb. 28 forced churches to cancel their Wednesday evening services March 1.

With the government banning meetings of four or more people, Sunday services and home Bible studies also may be affected, Davis said March 1 in a telephone interview from Caracas.

Protests of big pay boosts for government officials and increases in public transportation fares became the springboard for violence, Southern Baptist missionary Don Hart said Feb. 28.

Hart said the Caracas neighborhood where he works was "very calm, yet we hear gunshots. Not too far from here, something is going on."

Hart, measurer and business manager for Southern Baptist missionaries in Venezuela, added, "As far as we know, no (Southern Baptist worker) is in danger." There were 55 Southern Baptist missionaries in the country when protests began Feb. 27, including 15 in Caracas. Also, a team of 12 volunteers from the Knox County Baptist Association in Knoxville, Tenn., was doing construction work at a Baptist camp near Valencia, about 80 miles west of Caracas.

According to Davis' later report, a battle between policemen and rioters took place in front of the home of missionaries Gene and Eva Nell Kimler in the city of Trujillo. Several windows were broken during the encounter and tear gas floated into the Kimler house, but the missionaries were not injured and were reported safe. The Kimlers are from Pasadena and Wills Point, Texas, respectively.

Davis also told of a group of Baptist church members who gathered for prayer at the home of their pastor the night of Feb. 27. Among them were families who own a small grocery store, a fruit stand and a dress shop. Each of the businesses had been looted that day.

Otherwise, Davis said, telephone service had been so disrupted that "we have not been able to get in touch with anybody to find out what kind of damage" has been inflicted upon Baptist churches or homes and businesses of individual Baptists.

The worst of the violence, looting and vandalism was occurring in low-income areas of Caracas, Hart said.

"This is the first time in over 30 years, since democracy was established in Venezuela," for such violence, Hart said. Part of the reason for the violence is that, apart from government workers, no automatic pay raises were awarded to other Venezuelans, he said.

Davis noted that people were waiting from two to six hours to get into grocery stores March 1. The price of bread had more than quadrupled since Feb. 26, she said.

The violence had subsided by March 1, but "we hear gunshots every once in a while," Hart's wife, Pat, said.

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According to news reports, up to 50 people were killed during the first two days of violence and 500 others were injured. Buses and taxis in Caracas and many other parts of the country had come to a halt. Schools and universities also were closed.

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Court to review limits
on 'adult businesses'

By Kathy Palen

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WASHINGTON (BP)--The Supreme Court has accepted a trio of challenges to a Dallas ordinance that restricts sexually oriented businesses.

The ordinance imposes strict licensing and zoning regulations on "adult businesses," including bookstores, movie theaters, topless bars and motels.

Under the city ordinance, anyone who has been convicted of certain crimes -- including obscenity, prostitution and public lewdness -- or whose spouse has been convicted of such crimes may not be licensed to operate a sexually oriented business.

In addition, such businesses must be at least 1,000 feet apart and 1,000 feet from any church or school. Adult motels also are prohibited from renting rooms for periods of less than 10 hours.

An appeals court panel upheld the ordinance as a legitimate means for controlling criminal activity associated with adult businesses, protecting property values from the adverse effects of such businesses, and preventing individuals from relapsing into criminal activity.

But in their appeals to the Supreme Court, the businesses challenging the ordinance contended it unconstitutionally violates their freedom of expression and association.

The court is expected to hear the cases next fall. (87-2012, FW/PBS Inc. v. Dallas; 87-2051, M.J.R. Inc. v. Dallas; 88-49, Berry v. Dallas)

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Deaf Baptists plan 272 new churches,
interpreted services by A.D. 2000

Baptist Press
3/2/89

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Deaf Southern Baptists plan to start 272 new churches and interpreted services by the turn of the century.

Bob Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Conference for the Deaf, detailed plans for the fellowship's growth during the annual language church extension conference in Oklahoma City. Moore, a deaf home missionary serving in Charlotte, N.C., has been instrumental in starting a new deaf church in that city.

Theme for the four-day Home Mission Board meeting, which spotlighted deaf ministry, was "Silent Americans." Much of the program featured presentations by deaf people, which were given in sign language and interpreted for the predominantly hearing audience.

The growth strategy calls for new deaf churches as well as the addition of interpreted services in existing hearing congregations in each state except Illinois, which is still under study. Moore reported the conference has targeted 10 deaf congregations to sponsor 10 new deaf works (churches or interpreted services) per year until A.D. 2000.

The projections include plans to begin three new works among deaf blacks and three among deaf Hispanics, each year between 1989 and A.D. 2000. This coincides with the Bold Mission Thrust goal of 50,000 Southern Baptist churches and church-type missions by the turn of the century.

Deaf leaders also plan to add four deaf trainers each year in Brotherhood and WMU programs to further missions education, Moore said. Long-range plans call for the fellowship to sponsor mission trips to foreign countries to help or begin new deaf units.

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Southern Baptists deaf currently worship in 59 deaf churches and church-type missions each Sunday, Moore reported. An additional 771 hearing congregations interpret their services for the deaf. Texas leads the nation with 100 interpreted services and 17 churches and church-type missions.

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Don't reduce ethnic missions,
Romo cautions SBC churches

By Joe Westbury

Baptist Press
3/2/89

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Future Southern Baptist growth may be undermined if ethnic congregations are forced to bear the brunt of a new denominational austerity program, a missions leader cautioned.

Oscar Romo, director of the language church extension division of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, made the observation during the division's national meeting in Oklahoma City.

Since Southern Baptist missions giving is not keeping pace with inflation, denominational agencies are faced with cost-cutting measures to bring budgets in line with contributions, Romo observed. But such measures could backfire on growth projections if ethnic missions receive the brunt of the cuts, he warned.

"Austerity is a frightening word. To some it means doom; to others scarcity, limitation and even the decline of mission work," he said. "But innovative approaches -- such as consolidating or eliminating staff positions as vacancies occur -- will release more funds for mission work and assure the growth of the denomination through its lean years."

After outlining a plan to accomplish more with less within his own division, Romo challenged denominational leaders and pastors to become "innovative entrepreneurs" to allow the continued spread of the gospel among ethnics in spite of a decline in missions giving.

Language congregations have posted the greatest gains in baptisms and Cooperative Program giving of any SBC group in the past decade, Romo reported.

Between 1981 and 1987, ethnic churches and missions grew 84 percent, from 2,354 to 4,341 congregations, he said. The average annual increase in ethnic congregations was 10.75 percent, more than double the denominational rate as a whole.

Baptisms in ethnic churches and missions during the same period grew 53 percent, up to 27,564 from 17,985, a 7 percent annual increase.

Ethnic gifts to the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptist's unified plan for worldwide missions, posted a 169 percent gain, he continued. The congregations gave \$3.6 million, up from \$1.3 million, for an annual average increase of 18 percent.

Romo drew the figures from a study of ethnic church growth patterns recently updated by Delbert Fann, a national ethnic missionary assigned to special studies. The study, which originally covered the years 1981-84, was based on information provided in the church growth assistance request and from state missions leaders.

Romo warned the greatest threat to SBC growth could be cost-cutting measures that streamline the gospel presentation through programs and printed materials that do not allow for cultural diversity. Such measures would result in a bland Anglo presentation of the gospel that would not be accepted by the nation's unchurched ethnic populations, he said.

"Uniformity of policies and procedures, in order to treat everyone equally, may reduce costs and make it easier to administer but it would not be embraced outside the nation's Anglo population centers," Romo added.

Southern Baptists are currently America's most ethnically diverse denomination, worshipping in 88 languages nationwide. This is due to presenting the gospel in the language and cultural context of various target groups, he said, adding that any departure from this strategy would prove unfruitful.

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"Southern Baptists are to be commended for their sensitivity, vision and success in sharing the gospel in the ethno-linguistic context of the American people," Romo said. "But they must continue to visualize the nation not as 'an Anglo-Saxon Christian nation' but as a mosaic of peoples with diverse cultural heritages and linguistic abilities.

"We must remember that the spiritual heritage of the ethnics will be determined by our commitment to share the gospel with all the people that make up the greatest mission field in the world -- the United States of America."

During an evening banquet, board president Larry Lewis acknowledged the expanding role ethnics are playing in the future of the denomination.

"Your churches are already growing five times faster than traditional Southern Baptist churches because you are where the people are--in the cities. You continue to grow in the places of greatest opportunity, where the fields are white unto harvest and which have been long abandoned by other Southern Baptist congregations.

"And, most importantly, your growth is not coming by transfers of letters but by an evangelism strategy that meets people's needs," he said.

Lewis said if the Home Mission Board reaches its Bold Mission Thrust goals of church starting and evangelism, "it will be because the ethnic congregations are on the cutting edge in missions and ministry."

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Here's Hope revival materials
now available in 6 languages

By Joe Westbury

Baptist Press
3/2/89

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Materials to help pastors prepare for 1990 "Here's Hope" simultaneous revivals are now available in six languages from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

The diversity of free materials was announced during the annual language church extension conference in Oklahoma City. Nationwide revivals are scheduled for March 18 through April 29, 1990.

Thad Hamilton, associate director of the HMB's mass evangelism department, said revival aids have been prepared in Spanish, Korean, French/Haitian, Vietnamese, and basic English.

The materials will be mailed to the denomination's 4,600 ethnic congregations in mid-April, he said. Ethnic churches not receiving a packet or Anglo congregations desiring the materials may call the board's toll-free "Here's Hope" telephone number, 1 800 346-1990.

Production of the multi-lingual materials and increased training signal the denomination's recognition of the growth potential of ethnic groups, Hamilton said. During the 1986 simultaneous revivals, materials were produced in only two languages.

This year's free materials include a pastor's awareness guide, evangelistic people search booklet and information on how to prepare for a revival, he said. Additional ethnic materials available for a small fee include booklets on presenting evangelistic invitations, how to prepare spiritually for revival, and the plan of salvation.

New Testaments are also available in the six basic languages as well as in Chinese and Polish. Gospels of John are being produced in Arabic, Cambodian, Japanese, Vietnamese, Laotian, Tagalog, Romanian, and German.

During the four-day Oklahoma City meeting, Hamilton trained six ethnic pastors and two evangelists who will serve as national revival consultants for their language groups. "Evangelism is more caught than taught, and we're using these consultants to spread the spirit of revival among their language congregations," he said.

Hamilton said he hopes the simultaneous revivals will result in 175,000 baptisms -- a projected increase of 72,000 from the 1986 national revivals. Much of that increase should come from ethnic participation, which was lacking in the previous evangelistic thrust, he added.

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Communications fellowship
holds organizational meeting

CLINTON, Miss. (BP)--An organization designed to give Southern Baptist communications students, hobbyists and professionals opportunities to use their skills for volunteer missions has been formed by the National Fellowship of Baptist Men.

The National Fellowship of Baptist Communicators, one of 14 fellowships sponsored by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, in Memphis, Tenn., will respond to missionary requests for assistance with communications challenges.

"The expertise of Southern Baptist lay people who are communications professionals is very much needed," said James H. Smith, Brotherhood Commission president. "Everyone needs to be a better communicator of the gospel."

According to Mike Richardson, volunteer coordinator for the fellowship, NFBC includes a wide range of communications skills.

Richardson, executive assistant to the president of St. Petersburg (Fla.) Junior College, said: "The fellowship will include men and women with expertise in such fields as print and broadcast journalism, ham radio, audio-visual and video media, computer programming and database management, telecommunications, radio and television station technologies and management, radio-television engineering, communications education, motion picture production, writers and artists."

Jim West, former news director of WTVT in Tampa, Fla., was elected president. Billy Lytal, communications professor at Mississippi College, which hosted the organizational meeting, was elected secretary.

"I believe God has blessed us with opportunities in secular media to obtain certain skills and develop our talents," West said. "It is only fitting as good stewards to return and utilize these opportunities when given a chance on the mission field."

Bob Salley, NFBM director, said communications professionals who register with the NFBM office at the Brotherhood Commission will be listed in a computer database. Requests from the Home and Foreign Mission boards will be matched with communicators' skills.

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