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SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Alvin C. Shackelford, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Marv Knox, Feature Editor

Southern Baptist budget follows see-saw pattern

N-CO

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists' combined ministry budget continued its see-saw pattern in July -- a month in which receipts were down following a month in which they were up.

The Cooperative Program unified budget received \$11,521,923 on the national level in July, according to figures compiled by the Southern Baptist Executive Committee.

That amount was \$128,354, or 1.1 percent below receipts for July 1988.

The Cooperative Program began its fiscal year last October with receipts below the total for the preceding October. The same thing happened in November and was followed by a gain in December. Since that time, losses and gains have rotated on a month-by-month basis.

At the end of 10 months of the current fiscal year, the national Cooperative Program has received \$115,223,033.

The year to date total is an increase of \$3.3 million over receipts for the first 10 months of 1987-88.

That represents a gain of 2.96 percent. The annual U.S. inflation rate is 5.2 percent, according to most-recent government figures.

To reach its \$145.6 million goal, the budget must take in an average of \$15,188,484 per month for the remaining two months of the fiscal year. To reach its \$137.61 million basic operating goal, it must average \$11,193,484 per month.

The Cooperative Program supports Southern Baptist missionary, evangelistic, educational and church-starting efforts worldwide. It is funded by contributions from individual Southern Baptists who give to their churches. A portion of church budgets are forwarded to state Baptist conventions, and a portion of their budgets are sent to national and international causes.

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Beirut student killed, church hit in shelling

By Mike Creswell

N-FMB

Baptist Press
8/4/89

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--A Beirut Baptist School student has been killed and several Baptist buildings have been damaged during the latest round of shelling in Beirut.

Danny Melki, 10, died in a Beirut hospital four days after being injured when a shell struck his home three blocks from Beirut Baptist School in West Beirut, where he was a student. Lower grades of the school have been unable to meet for some time.

Melki was the school's first student killed since fighting associated with the Israeli invasion in 1982, said Southern Baptist representative Jim Ragland, who closely monitors the Beirut situation from Cyprus.

Edgar Traboulsi, pastor of a new Baptist congregation at Archrifieh, narrowly escaped death when a rocket hit his apartment building in East Beirut, near Arab Baptist Seminary. Traboulsi had just gone downstairs moments before a rocket hit the building, exploded and

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severely damaged two rooms of his apartment.

A 1986 graduate of the Baptist seminary, he has been leading a new congregation at Archrifieh, a city of some 10,000 people in the highlands of East Beirut.

Mouseitbeh Baptist Church in Beirut also was damaged severely when a shell scored a direct hit on its roof.

Shells also exploded on the seminary property, although buildings have been hit only by shell fragments. Windows were blown out, including about half the windows in the seminary president's home.

Several Lebanese army factions, the Syrian army and a number of militias are involved in the complex and ever-changing warfare, Ragland said.

Mobile rocket launchers and artillery units often are placed near schools, hospitals, churches and other buildings before they are fired, and they tend to draw fire to surrounding structures, he said. Some shells are fired randomly, increasing the number of civilian casualties.

Despite death raining down in all directions, Lebanese Baptists have continued to report to work at Baptist institutions when conditions allow.

Grades 9 through 12 of Beirut Baptist School have continued classes and managed to finish the 1988-89 school year except for final exams, which will be taken later, said school Director Elijah Bitar. About 95 percent of the 150 students have been present.

Ragland said he is amazed at the high numbers of students attending classes.

"Just imagine those students sitting in rooms whose windows were all broken out and a few rooms had some of the plaster broken by shell fragments," he said. "And on some days they could hear the sound of machine guns and exploding rockets as two rival militias slugged it out a mile or so away."

Classes for all grades are scheduled to resume the first week in September.

Seminary classes also have continued, with a graduation ceremony for four students held on a day when shelling was lighter. A correspondence ministry also continues, with mail routed to and from Lebanon via Cyprus.

"We're very pleased with our people there, with their fortitude and their courage," Ragland said of the Beirut workers. He and other Southern Baptist missionaries, along with most other Americans were forced to leave Lebanon in 1988 at the direction of the U.S. government.

Southern Baptist personnel in Cyprus also are ministering to the flood of refugees from Lebanon. Reports indicate as many as half of Beirut's 1.5 million residents have fled, many of them to or through Cyprus.

Southern Baptist representative David Swenson has been meeting and sharing the gospel with Lebanese on the streets, often at telephone booths where they line up to call home to Lebanon. Evangelistic meetings are planned in Cyprus during August with Ghassan Khalaf, acting president of the Beirut-based seminary, as speaker.

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The Lebanese have become increasingly discouraged as the intense fighting continues and Arab leaders have been unable to reach a solution for peace, Ragland said. "I feel we really need to hold up this little country in prayer," he added.

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Mike Creswell is overseas correspondent for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

2 Profs join SEBTS;
1 declines job offer

N-CO

Baptist Press
8/4/89

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Two professors have accepted teaching posts at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., but a third has declined to accept the job offer.

L. Russ Bush III, academic vice president and faculty dean, told Baptist Press Wayne McDill and Marvin L. Reid will join the faculty for the fall term, but Paul R. House has declined to accept a job offer to become associate professor of Old Testament.

The seminary sent out a news release following a July 11 called board meeting announcing the three men had been hired. It noted starting dates for the three would be announced later.

Bush, however, told Baptist Press in early August the trustee action constituted a "job offer."

"Until the trustees act, a prospective professor is not offered a contract," he explained. "Only the trustees can offer a contract (to teach); the president is not able to make a job offer."

Bush said McDill, of Portland, Ore., accepted "within a few hours" the trustee's offer to teach preaching. Reid, of West Palm Beach, Fla., accepted a post as professor of New Testament "within a few days."

House, however, is under contract at Taylor University in Upland, Ind., and will continue to teach there for the 1989-90 school year.

"I was asked to come (to Southeastern) to interview. I went, but they understood I am under contract, and we (at Taylor) take contracts seriously," House said.

He said he told Southeastern he would let them know by Aug. 1 his decision.

"When the (Baptist Press) story came out the way it did, I did not feel I could continue the discussion with them with any integrity," House said.

He added he did not want it to appear to friends and colleagues that he "had acted in bad faith, either by accepting a job and backing out or by trying to get out of a contract."

"I did not act in bad faith with either party," he said.

Bush said the misunderstanding was caused by the "rushed up" process of the called board meeting.

"I assumed if he (House) came for the interview, he had worked out the contract," Bush said. "He came to interview and was tentative about whether he could or would accept. He never misled us about this.

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"With the rushed up process (the interviews by the trustee instruction committee the night before the called board meeting), there simply was not time for a clear understanding."

The process was rushed because Southeastern has seven faculty vacancies and needed to fill at least some of them before the beginning of the fall term, he added.

"I am disappointed Paul (House) is not going to come. He is very good and will be good wherever he is," Bush said.

In addition to McDill and Reid, two other people will join the faculty and staff of the school this fall.

James P. Cogdill Jr., an itinerant evangelist from Jeffersonville, Ind., received a presidential appointment as visiting professor of church leadership and development. He will teach in the fall semester.

Southeastern also announced the selection of J. Michael Scarborough as dean of students, replacing Woody Catoe, who resigned earlier this year.

Scarborough, 39, has been pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Thomasville, Ga. He also has been pastor of churches in North Carolina and Virginia.

He is a 1984 graduate of Southeastern. He also is a graduate of Mercer University in Macon, Ga.

Scarborough was to begin his duties Aug. 7, according to a Southeastern news release.

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Senate panel OKs anti-bias
protection for disabled

By Kathy Palen

N-BJC

Baptist Press
8/8/89

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Senate committee has approved legislation that would extend anti-discrimination protections to individuals with physical and mental disabilities.

The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee unanimously passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, which would ban discrimination based on disability in employment, public accommodations, public service, transportation and telecommunications.

Although the bill would apply both to public and private sectors, it would include exemptions for religious organizations.

In the area of employment, the legislation would allow religious organizations to exercise religious preference in hiring. It also would allow a religious organization to require all applicants and employees to conform to the organization's religious tenets.

The bill also excludes religious institutions or entities controlled by religious institutions from a list of categories of establishments that are considered public accommodations. The list includes restaurants, hotels, doctors' offices, pharmacies, grocery stores, museums and homeless shelters.

In broad terms, the bill would:

-- Prohibit any employer -- except those with fewer than 15 employees -- from discriminating against any qualified individual with a disability. Employers would be required

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to make "reasonable accommodations" to the needs of a qualified individual with a disability unless such accommodations would impose an "undue hardship on the operation of the business."

-- Bar discrimination against individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, such as stores, restaurants, theaters and office buildings. The bill would not require that existing facilities be modified but would apply to new facilities or existing facilities that undergo renovation.

-- Prohibit such discrimination in the provision of public services, including public transportation and telephone services.

The bill now goes for consideration by the full Senate. If approved there and in the House of Representatives, it must be signed by President Bush -- who has indicated his support for the measure -- before becoming law.

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Atlanta HMB employees volunteer
to build house for needy family

By Mark Wingfield

A-HMB
Baptist Press
8/4/89

ATLANTA (BP)--Employees who administer the behind-the-scenes paperwork at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board have announced plans to take to the front lines of missions by building a house for a needy Atlanta family.

More than half of the agency's 380 Atlanta-based employees have already pledged financial support and volunteered personal time to the project, said Beverly Hammack, director of the missions ministries division and chairwoman of the HMB Employees on Mission steering committee.

As of Aug. 1, employees had pledged \$14,000 toward a \$15,000 goal. All money has come from personal donations rather than fund-raising events.

Construction is slated for Sept. 16-23 as part of a larger project of Habitat for Humanity, a non-profit Christian organization dedicated to providing affordable housing for the poor. Habitat for Humanity will match the \$15,000 donation of HMB employees.

Habitat will select the family to receive the house. The family will help with construction and will purchase the house from Habitat with an interest-free loan.

The house will be erected in Atlanta's Cabbagetown, a community built in the late 1800s for employees of a large textile mill. Although the mill has since closed, the poverty of the working-class community remains.

Each day during the week of construction, about 25 employees will take turns building the house, Hammack said. Others will perform community ministries through Immanuel Baptist Church, a Southern Baptist congregation located in Cabbagetown.

The HMB project is administered by a steering committee that includes a mixture of support staff and program leaders. All work is done on a volunteer basis with personal time and resources.

No Home Mission Board funds will be expended for the project, Hammack said. The seven planning committees meet during lunch, before work and after

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work. Employees who help build the house will take vacation leave.

Ironically, the mission outreach comes at a time of stress on HMB employees due to budget cuts and an impending staff reduction, Hammack noted: "At a difficult time like this, the Habitat project has become a unifying force. HMB employees are excited about working together to help someone else.

"I think the enthusiasm employees are showing about this project reveals their strong commitment to missions. These are people who write the checks, type the letters and balance the books to keep our missionaries on the field but seldom have a chance to become so directly involved in ministry."

"It's the personal involvement in missions that interests me," explained Candy Elliott, a 13-year employee whose normal job is to handle insurance claims. "Working here, you're involved with missions, but you don't usually have the hands-on experience."

"I see this as a team-building project," said Patches Roe, a 23-year employee who directs the employee credit union and is the project treasurer. "There's more support in this than just money."

A large percentage of employees already have participated in lunchtime tours of Cabbagetown, in a nail-driving contest and in watching videos presented at breaks, Roe noted.

Employees heading the housing project say they want residents of Atlanta to become aware that HMB employees are compassionate. "We'd like for Atlanta to be aware that we care about this city and that we realize there are many homeless people here with needs," Hammack said.

Elliott added: "We're just another office building to most of the people in the community. They need to know that there's another Christian organization here, even though we don't have a steeple on top of the building."

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Beware of Whisenant's rapture
theology, interfaith leader says

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

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ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptists should not be deceived by the theology of rapture predictor Edgar Whisenant, an interfaith witness leader warned.

Bill Gordon, associate director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department, said he is not surprised that Whisenant was wrong about his prediction that Jesus would return last September.

"The amazing thing is that so many Christians took him seriously," Gordon said.

Whisenant, a 56-year-old retired NASA engineer from Little Rock, Ark., has produced a second book that admits the error but claims Jesus actually will return Sept. 1, 1989. The book is titled "The Final Shout -- Rapture Report 1989."

"The Lord Jesus will come again when the Father chooses and not according to Mr. Whisenant's time table," said Gordon, whose speciality is American Christianity. "If Jesus comes again in 1989, it will be a result of his sovereign decision and not because of Mr. Whisenant's arguments."

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Whisenant's first book, "88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988," produced more inquiries to the Home Mission Board than any single interfaith issue in the past, Gordon said. The publisher, World Bible Society, attracted national media attention by giving away at least 1.2 million copies of the book last year.

World Bible Society reportedly has mailed out thousands of copies of Whisenant's newest book to pastors and religious organizations across the country. One copy arrived at the Home Mission Board mailroom addressed to "Baptist Home Mission."

An informal poll revealed that 90 percent of Southern Baptist pastors attending a recent evangelism conference had received an unsolicited copy of the book in the mail, Gordon said.

World Bible Society will not discuss its distribution of the book. When contacted by telephone, leader Norville Olive said he had no idea how many copies had been distributed, and then hung up the phone.

Whisenant said his prediction that the rapture would occur last year was wrong because of a simple miscalculation -- the Gregorian calendar has no year zero.

"Since all centuries should begin with a zero year, the first century A.D. was a year short, consisting of only 99 years," he said. "The Gregorian calendar (the calendar used today) is always one year in advance of the true year."

However, Whisenant said his mistake might have been God's will. Last year's prediction was the shout, "the bridegroom cometh," to give the world a one-year period to repent, he noted.

A "note from the publisher" at the front of the new book claims that Whisenant's writings are harmless even if the rapture does not occur this year. "There is not one single doctrine in this book that would hurt one single person if they kept every jot and tittle and the rapture didn't occur this year," the unnamed publisher wrote.

However, Gordon has written a paper titled "The Strange Theology of Edgar Whisenant," in which he warns that Whisenant's theology is harmful and radically different than Baptist beliefs.

"Whisenant builds his predictions upon misinterpretation, misapplication and conjecture," Gordon said. "He constantly takes scriptural passages out of context and gives them meanings which the biblical writers would find strange."

Whisenant's book reads more like an "Indiana Jones" movie than good theology, Gordon said, citing this passage as an example: "Listen to the news and watch for the discovery of the Ark of the Covenant. If you see this, you will only be days away from your rapture."

While Southern Baptists traditionally hold to the scriptural admonition that "no man knows the day or hour" of Christ's return, Whisenant believes Christians should know the time, Gordon noted.

In the book, Whisenant wrote: "God's plan is that we, the faithful church, will know when the rapture will happen ahead of time. ... Don't let people talk you out of proclaiming this message by saying you shouldn't set dates. That's the same mistake the religious leaders made when Jesus came the first time."

Furthermore Whisenant teaches an odd form of apostasy, the doctrine that a Christian can lose salvation, Gordon said. Whisenant states in the book that all Christians will be taken in the rapture but will be separated into the "faithful" and "unfaithful" for different destinies.

"Southern Baptists need to realize that Whisenant's theology is not baptistic," Gordon concluded. "If you're going to accept his theology of the Second Coming of Christ, then you've got to deal with the rest of his strange theology."

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Baptist church in Jerusalem
finally rises from ashes

By Mike Creswell & Art Toalston

F-FMB

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8/4/89

JERUSALEM (BP)--After destruction by arson and a five-year legal battle to rebuild, Narkis Street Baptist Church in Jerusalem finally is rising from the ashes.

The original chapel, built in 1933, burned in 1982 in a fire authorities attribute to extremists wanting to banish Christianity from Israel. No arrests were made.

The new building, still a shell of concrete and brick, stands a few yards from the site of the charred remains. The congregation weathered more than five years of delays, court hearings and negotiations before an official building permit was issued last year.

Also on the grounds are the "tent" -- a structure with walls of tin topped by fencing and a plywood roof that has been the congregation's temporary place of worship -- and Baptist House, a ministry center and bookstore.

The building program still faces an uphill financial struggle before it will be completed, said Pat Hoaldrige, the congregation's pastor and a Southern Baptist representative in Israel.

In giving approval for the building, the government set requirements not generally placed on public buildings, lest the congregation's spirited services offend Jewish neighbors. "Construction must guarantee soundproofing -- thick walls, insulation and a specially designed ceiling, all of which raise the costs," Hoaldrige said.

The original construction estimate of \$800,000 has risen to more than \$1.1 million.

Costs already are high in Jerusalem, Hoaldrige said, because of inflation and other factors, a situation that has affected metropolitan churches in various parts of the world. Also, all buildings in Jerusalem are required to have bomb shelters. And on the church site, the bomb shelter, pipelines and foundations had to be set into solid stone, an expensive proposition.

The church has raised about \$750,000 so far, of which \$100,000 came from Southern Baptists through their Foreign Mission Board. Members and visitors have raised the rest.

Getting the building permit became "a political football" between Orthodox Jewish leaders who wanted to derail the project and secular Jewish officials who thought the church should be allowed to rebuild, Hoaldrige said.

Joseph Shulam, leader of a nearby congregation of Messianic Jews, attributed the delay to "political pressure by the religious parties" made up of ultra-Orthodox Jews. They

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represent 5 percent to 7 percent of Israelis, but they had enough clout to tie up the church's permit in various government committees, Shulam said.

The building permit was delayed until the church asked for court intervention. Negotiations with the court, and later with a district planning commission, stretched into months before the permit was granted. The permit's wording prompted one official on a review panel to observe, "Never in all of my years in this committee have I seen so many stipulations placed on a project to cause the applicant to spend so much useless money."

Through it all, the congregation has maintained its spiritual bearings, its members and leaders said.

"I sometimes say we prayed for fire and we got it, but not the kind we prayed for," observed Robert Lindsey, the church's longtime pastor who retired in 1987.

Samuel Osei, a Baptist from Ghana and member of a U.N. peace-keeping force, said the church "gives us a glimpse of what it will be (like) when the Lord comes. No matter what country one comes from, we shall all stand before the Lord."

Osei's wife, Joanna, "felt bad and became bitter" when she heard about the fire. "But afterwards, I said, 'Why should I be bitter?' It seemed that the church started growing so fast." Attendance climbed from 200 to more than 300.

Extremists "cannot get rid of the kingdom of God by burning down churches," said Ragna von Porat, a Norwegian. Added Josa Biven, a Californian who has lived in Israel more than 20 years, "When people do things against the Lord's people, it's sort of another step toward them having a confrontation with the Lord."

One first-time visitor hails from the Bronx. Others are from New Jersey, Oklahoma, from England and Ireland and other European countries. No regulars at the church seem too surprised. Most of them are expatriates, too. A few have been in Israel for decades, some for mere days or weeks. Australia, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Switzerland and Canada are among their homelands. The rest are local Jews and Arabs who enjoy such an unusual congregation.

Prayer "in Yeshua's name" -- Jesus' name in Hebrew -- is among the starting points when the congregation meets each Saturday Sabbath, the weekly day off in Israel. Members focus on God's attributes and seek spiritual refreshment.

The congregation recently added an all-Hebrew worship service on Saturday evenings. Hoaldrige wants even more of a Hebrew orientation at the church and more involvement by Jewish believers in Christ. He hopes the church someday will have "an Israeli heart" so "an Israeli believer would feel comfortable saying this is his congregation and not one that's transplanted from America."

Evangelicals of all stripes who lack a church home have found a place of refuge in the church. A half-dozen home fellowships during the week help strengthen bonds within the church. Evangelicals are such a tiny minority in Jerusalem that "everybody who loves Jesus is your friend," said John Anthony, a Southern Baptist representative who has worked with the church since 1974. Members hardly have time for theological wrangling, he added. "We are dealing with Jesus ... just looking for opportunities to present Jesus."

The church also has been a place of refuge for Messianic Jewish congregations. One group moved to the chapel after ultra-Orthodox harassment

in the early 1970s. It met there for 11 years until moving to its own quarters in 1982.

Baptist House, which operates a bookstore and counseling service, was the target of a late-night firebomb attack in the mid-1970s. On perhaps a dozen occasions, bricks and stones have been thrown through its windows.

"I don't think it's by chance that we have a congregation like this, and that it's where it is in the world," said David Biven, director of Jerusalem School for the Study of the Synoptic Gospels, an organization of scholars exploring Christianity's Jewish roots. "We're in a very unique situation ... back in Jerusalem ... back among the Jewish people out of which Christianity came," he explained.

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Photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Former homosexual facing AIDS finds
love, acceptance at Missouri church

By Trennis Henderson

F- (O)
(Mo.)

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ST. LOUIS (BP)--July marked a grim milestone in the AIDS nightmare. By the end of the month, the number of AIDS cases reported to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control topped 100,000 -- and more than half of those victims already are dead.

In practical terms, the growing epidemic means more and more churches must address the reality of AIDS, observers report. Congregations must determine how they will respond when they are confronted with the opportunity to minister to AIDS victims.

Harmony Baptist Church in St. Louis already has faced that issue head-on. Its church organist, Randy Hill, a former homosexual, has been diagnosed with AIDS.

Pastor Rick Lay talked with Word & Way, Missouri Baptists' newsjournal, about the time Hill shared that staggering news with him. Hill began visiting Harmony Church in the summer of 1987, just a few weeks after finding out he had AIDS. He joined the church that September and confided in his new pastor a few weeks later.

"I was shocked," Lay recalled. "I was excited about Randy being here -- good leadership, a wonderful relationship with the Lord. When he told me he had AIDS, some of the thrill wore off.

"I went from shock to concern over how the church would respond. My personal shock faded quickly as I began to focus on my pastoral role. I was a little scared because I wanted the church to be the church. I wanted them to be loving, but I couldn't force them to be that way."

The two men shared the news with a few of the church's key leaders, who agreed the church needed to be educated about AIDS before Hill further disclosed his illness.

Gathering information from a variety of sources, Lay compiled a six-page church newsletter that focused exclusively on AIDS and the church.

The church's educational efforts primarily emphasized "how you can contract AIDS and how you can't contract it," he said. "That was the biggest issue."

Lay affirmed the pamphlet "Understanding AIDS," prepared by former U.S. Surgeon General

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C. Everett Koop and the Centers for Disease Control, as "the most accurate, clear and concise document presenting the facts about AIDS."

The brochure, mailed last year to homes throughout the nation, explains: "There are two main ways you can get AIDS. First, you can become infected by having sex -- oral, anal or vaginal -- with someone who is infected with the AIDS virus. Second, you can be infected by sharing drug needles and syringes with an infected person." It also points out that babies of women who have been infected with the AIDS virus as well as some people with hemophilia and other blood recipients have been infected.

Another brochure, "AIDS, Sex and You," emphasizes: "The AIDS virus is not spread by casual contact. ... Scientists have not found a single instance in which the AIDS virus has been transmitted through ordinary nonsexual contact in a family, work or social setting."

In the material from Koop, "safe behavior" is described as: "Not having sex. Sex with one mutually faithful, uninfected partner. Not shooting drugs."

Once that type of information was clearly understood by church members, Lay asked Hill to share his personal testimony during a Sunday worship service.

Reflecting on that testimony, Hill recalled, "I think I just blurted it out. No matter how you say it, you're going to get to the same point."

One of the keys to Hill's persuasive Christian testimony is his stand against homosexuality. Describing himself as a "redeemed homosexual," he emphasized that homosexuality "is from the devil. I don't know what instigates it; I just know God's word says it is sin."

Adopting the philosophy of "hate the sin but love the sinner," Hill noted that churches "need to be a place for people to turn, a haven of rest so to speak."

Following Hill's testimony, Lay told the congregation: "This is one of the times we'll find out what the church is really like. Will the church be Christian? We will show our true colors in a situation like this."

During the months before Hill's public disclosure, "People became acquainted with Randy because he became involved with the church and was very likable," Lay pointed out. That fact, combined with the education, "caused a very loving and caring reaction."

Like Hill, Lay doesn't mince words when it comes to describing homosexuality as sin. "I don't think Randy would have been accepted if he had been a practicing homosexual," he acknowledged.

Noting that more than two-thirds of all AIDS cases occur among homosexual or bisexual men, Lay added: "To pacify and pat someone on the back who has AIDS is not OK. Just because there is a disease and imminent death doesn't mean we should condone sin."

Harmony Church doesn't have a formal policy or detailed long-range plans related to ministry among AIDS patients, Lay explained: "We have formed a ministry to AIDS patients out of necessity, because it is here. We don't feel like any of this has been forced upon us. We feel God led us to it."

But Lay voiced frustration over congregations that seem to respond: "That's great that you're doing it. I'm glad somebody is doing something but I'm glad it's not us."

"The truth is there are a lot of pastors who don't even want to think about it," he said. "And AIDS may be in their congregations."

Challenging churches to study the issue before a specific need arises, Lay pointed out that AIDS victims "are going to have to die, but don't let them die spiritually."

Noting that the members of Harmony Church already have agreed "whatever we can do, we want to do it," Lay added: "We're not sure what will be expected of us in the future, but we're open enough to follow God's leadership. We already do provide a loving, caring fellowship where AIDS patients can worship."

One additional ministry that will begin at the church is a support group for Christians suffering from AIDS. Lay described the support group as "an alternative to other organizations because it is an entirely Christian support group with a Christian perspective."

Explaining that he and Hill expect six to eight AIDS patients to attend the first meeting, Lay said the goal of the group is to provide opportunities "for sharing and interaction and support in their Christian experience as well as their AIDS experience."

As Harmony Church expands its ministry to Hill and others with AIDS, it realizes "there are risks involved," Lay said. "We're stepping out on faith."

Pausing for a moment, he added, "Risks and faith are somewhat synonymous."

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Hill rejects homosexual lifestyle,
affirms ministry to AIDS victims

F- (O)
By Trennis Henderson (Mo.)

Baptist Press
8/4/89

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Randy Hill's struggle with homosexuality began at age 6 when he was sexually molested by a relative. The problem was compounded as a teenager when he was molested again -- this time by a guest living at his grandmother's boarding house.

By age 16, Hill began to believe he was meant to be homosexual. He managed to "keep things under control" for several years, even getting married at age 21 and eventually having two children.

But as his marriage failed, Hill recalled, "I was believing what Satan was saying, that I was homosexual." He finally reached the point of deciding, "If God is creating me as homosexual, I'm going to go out there" and live a homosexual lifestyle.

Following that rationale, Hill left his family and later got divorced. He moved to Houston in 1980 and began practicing homosexuality "openly, actively, any way, all ways."

"At first I was afraid," he said. "When you decide not to acknowledge God, he lets you go and allows you to do so."

Hill wrestled with his lifestyle from 1980 until 1985. "I always felt that it was sin, always, always," he pointed out. "I couldn't understand why I felt that way, but I knew some of the verses in the Bible that say homosexuality is sin.

"I knew it was a sin, but I knew that was the way I was. There was a

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struggle for me to figure out which way to go."

Working as a telephone repairman/installer, Hill was transferred to St. Louis in 1985. During a service visit one afternoon, a young woman shared her Christian testimony with him. "I used to be a lesbian," she told him.

"God delivered me from that lifestyle. Jesus set me free."

Realizing that "God set it up for me to be there for her to witness to me," Hill kept in contact with his newfound friend. He began to pray, "God, if this is definitely sin, let someone at a church tell me I am homosexual."

Although he was attending church at the time, no one ever brought up the topic of homosexuality. Several weeks later, his car was stolen, leaving him unable to drive to church. He called his friend and asked if she would take him to church with her.

During the service, the pastor approached Hill and remarked, "God told me you're a homosexual and you want to be delivered from that lifestyle."

"That was the beginning of the end," Hill affirmed. Although he had made a profession of faith in Christ as a youngster, he said Oct. 27, 1985, was the day "I got everything straightened out."

Renouncing his homosexuality, Hill explained, "Since that time, I've lived as righteously as I could."

He admitted, however, that "even once you know it's a sin, it's a hard thing to get out of." He made a conscious decision to sever social ties with his homosexual friends.

"Once you get away from that lifestyle, you have to stay away from it," he pointed out. "God wants me to rely on his strength to keep me from doing something he says is sin."

Looking back on his former lifestyle, he explained: "Homosexuality is more for sex than it is for relationships. There's a lot of torment involved in that lifestyle."

Hill said he now knows that homosexuality is a choice. "I do know you're not born that way. You can change because it's a sin, not a lifestyle. People make it a lifestyle."

A year and a half after rejecting homosexuality, Hill found out that he had AIDS. As an active Christian, he recalled: "I was not a bit afraid when the test came back positive. I was more excited than I was afraid. I really just wanted to go to heaven."

During the two years since his AIDS diagnosis, Hill has readjusted his priorities. "I'll stay here as long as I'm supposed to and do whatever God wants me to," he said. "Heaven is just going to have to wait."

His primary goals for the immediate future include ministering to AIDS patients who are Christians as well as witnessing to homosexuals in an effort to help them find Christ as the answer for their lives.

Throughout his life, Hill has been active in a number of churches, ranging from Nazarene to Mormon and Catholic to interdenominational. He even attended a church for practicing homosexuals in Houston.

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When he joined Harmony Baptist Church in St. Louis, Hill said, he found a church family who readily accepts and loves him. "A lot of churches won't respond well" to a former homosexual who now has AIDS, he acknowledged. "The people here are real loving which may be why God put me here."

Hill expressed concern over churches that fail to minister to homosexuals and AIDS victims. "Even though it's in God's word, some pastors are uncomfortable talking about homosexuality," he observed.

"It needs to be discussed. Perhaps a seed can be planted for young people to know homosexuality is not what God wants them to do."

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Small-church musicians
learn to live with limits

By Ken Camp

N- Texas

Baptist Press
8/4/89

WACO, Texas (BP)--Limited resources, limited formal training and limited time are among the challenges that "small church" and bivocational church musicians often must overcome, according to participants at the Texas Baptist Church Music Conference.

Of more than 1,100 church musicians who attended the statewide event, July 31-Aug. 2 at Baylor University in Waco, about 40 participated in a workshop for bivocational music directors and 80 attended classes for small-church pianists and organists.

Since most Texas Baptist churches fall into the "small church" category and the majority of churches have bivocational music ministers, small-church musicians must learn about resources available to them, said Sam Prestidge, director of the Texas Baptist church music department.

Nearly six out of 10 Texas Baptist churches have an average Sunday school attendance of less than 100. The number of full-time, paid music ministers is between 800 and 1,000, meaning that the music ministry in more than 4,000 churches and missions is led by volunteer song leaders, part-time student music ministers or "true" bivocational ministers of music.

Flexibility is the key to help bivocational music ministers cope, said workshop leader Tommy Keown, consultant in small church/associational music for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville.

"If the music ministry is to be truly a ministry, you need to take people as they are, warts and all," Keown said. "Learn to be sensitive to your situation."

That might mean allowing a parent to leave the choir loft after the special music in order to sit with an unattended child, he said. It might mean meeting individually to practice with a choir member who could not attend rehearsals. Or it might mean allowing one section to go without choir robes if enough are not available for everyone.

"You do what you have to do," he said. "That may include doing things that aren't your preference, but you'll find out you can live with a lot of things."

"That may be a lot of extra work for you, shifting your schedule and changing your plans. You have to ask the bottom-line questions: Is it worth it? How far am I willing to go to extend myself and my ministry?"

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Whether serving in a tradition-entrenched rural church or a new inner-city mission, the music minister must be sensitive to the personality of the congregation, he said. Rather than making abrupt changes, Keown suggested putting a "spark" into worship by trying "new ways of doing old things."

In his workshop, Keown dealt with the basics of planning a worship service and organizing a music ministry, as well as topics of concern to individual participants, such as relationships with pastors, motivating and training choir members, scheduling rehearsals and managing time effectively.

"One thing I've tried to emphasize is the importance of planning ahead, not operating on a week-to-week basis," Keown said. "That's hard for the bivocational minister of music who is trying to juggle the demands of home, job and church."

One challenge facing small-church organists and pianists is recognizing their role as ministers, said workshop leader Martha Kirkland, consultant in keyboard/older children's music for the Sunday School Board.

"We are calling them keyboard ministers, and I hope they are learning to think of themselves in that way," Kirkland said. "I hope they will leave here with a greater sense of ministry."

She emphasized the Bible and the hymnal as the primary resources for instrumentalists, noting that those two books need to become an integral part of the lives of the pianist and organist before musicians can communicate their message to others in worship.

Noting the need for more formal training, Kirkland's workshop included instruction in keyboard techniques and basic music theory, as well as an introduction to available music designed especially for small-church instrumentalists.

Participants in the bivocational music ministers' workshop who came seeking new, practical ideas said they did not go home empty-handed.

"I have no training and very little musical background. I came to find out about the resources that are available and to get a little training," said Mickey Redus of First Baptist Church of Bloomington, Texas.

Redus, who works in an oil field for Exxon, said he particularly was interested in tips about planning and organization.

"I've got about a dozen pages of notes now. It's really been beneficial to me," he said.

Doug Saylor, a central Texas farmer, said that since he was a little bit more proficient in music than his fellow church members, he became "music minister by default" at First Baptist Church of Blanket. However, he lacked any formal musical training.

"I came wanting the nuts and bolts," he said. "I wanted to find out how to conduct a choir rehearsal, how to direct congregational singing, things like that. And I'm not disappointed at all."

Randy Bigbee, music minister at First Baptist Church of Somerville, Texas, took time away from his landscaping business to attend the music conference, hoping to pick up new ideas.

"I wanted to learn how to use music to enhance the total worship experience," he said. "I've picked up a lot of fresh ideas on how changes can be made -- at least on a gradual basis.

"The thing stands out to me is the way it has refreshed my spirit. It's encouraging to see other guys with the same situation as mine. It's inspiring to see the dedication of so many of them. It's good to see I'm not alone in being called to be a bivocational minister of music."

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Namibia seeking
2 kinds of freedom

By Craig Bird

F-FMB

Baptist Press
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WINDHOEK, Namibia (BP)--"Namibia should be free."

That sentiment has fueled an armed revolution against South Africa's control of the southwest African country for more than two decades. Now, if the diplomatic balancing act stays on course, elections in November might produce political freedom for "Africa's last colony."

Among people celebrating the milestone will be eight Southern Baptist missionaries who are in the country as "freedom fighters" -- in a spiritual sense.

Missionaries Charles and Betty Whitson and John and Sara Martz work in Windhoek; Carlos and Myrtice Owens are in Tsumeb; Adney and Vel Cross are in Oshakati -- spreading the gospel, starting churches and training leaders.

They live in towns very much in the news in recent months -- and in towns with thriving evangelical Baptist churches.

Windhoek, the capital, is headquarters for the United Nations peace-keeping forces that are to ensure fair elections in November. In recent history, it has been the scene of bombings of cars and banks. On the outskirts of Windhoek in the black township of Katutura, SWAPO -- the Southwest Africa People's Organization -- organized massive public rallies under the guns of South African soldiers.

Tsumeb sits atop diamond mines where part of the country's wealth is pulled from the earth. It was close enough to the Angolan border for SWAPO troops to launch raids in the years before the ceasefire. Strikes by unions against the mining companies have produced violence.

Oshakati was home to one of South Africa's largest military bases. Now it is home to one of the largest resettlement centers as refugees, mostly SWAPO fighters and their families, return from bases in Angola to resume their lives in Namibia. Among the war's victims were two American diplomats killed by a car bomb in 1984, children who stepped on land mines while playing and hundreds of SWAPO and South African soldiers who died in battles in the area.

But in the cities and in scores of other towns and villages, new Christians are forming Baptist churches and reaching out to people around them.

The Baptist part in the fight for spiritual freedom was unfocused for decades, as English Baptists moved into and out of the country but never coal sced.

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But in 1959, a South African Baptist woman started a Sunday school for neighborhood children in her garage in the port city of Walvis Bay. In 1961, three couples, all Baptists, met in Windhoek, formed a Bible study class and began looking for a pastor.

From that double beginning, Baptist work took root in the arid, sparsely settled country. The Whitsons arrived in 1968 to work in Windhoek and Walvis Bay. For many years they were the only Southern Baptist missionaries in the country.

They launched Bible Way correspondence courses, a media ministry and organized two congregations in Windhoek and others in Walvis Bay, Swakopmund, Khomasdal and Rehoboth -- commuting thousands of miles in the central region of the country.

But the bulk of the population is in the northern third of Namibia. After years of praying for co-workers, they were joined by missionaries Carlos and Myrtice Owens, who transferred to Tsumeb from Tanzania. They started work as church developers in early 1983. By the summer of 1988, 28 new Baptist churches had been organized.

The churches are scattered along the border 1,000 miles east to west -- and worship in four African ethnic languages in addition to English and Afrikaans. The responsiveness is so great that the only apparent limit to growth is the hours and miles the Owens are capable of working and traveling.

Another door opened in late 1984, when the language of instruction at Ongwediva Teacher Training College was switched from Afrikaans to English. The Crosses, both teachers, walked through it.

The school trains all the teachers for the Owambo schools, and the Owambo people make up 60 to 70 percent of Namibia's population. The contact with so many future leaders offers the Crosses numerous opportunities to model their faith.

A home Bible study has produced two congregations -- an English-language fellowship in Oshakati and an Owambo-language church 10 miles outside the city -- and they work with several other new congregations in the area.

The Martzes began work in Windhoek and Katutura, focusing on the Owambo population, in late 1988.

Independence brings uncertainty along with jubilation, missionaries have reported. No one knows what the stance of any new government will be toward mission work. Several African countries have ordered all or many missionaries to leave after changes in government. Others have invited them to stay and help build the country; still others have allowed mission groups already in place to remain but restricted access to others.

Whatever happens, the years of work have gained Baptists in Namibia a strong position from which to preach the gospel, they have noted. Thousands of people -- black, mixed-race and white, African and European -- have accepted the freedom of Jesus Christ.

And even when the last South African soldier crosses the Orange River, when the last plane load of U.N. troops takes off, when an independent and sovereign Namibia is in control of its own affairs -- even then the Baptist Christians of the country will be insisting: Namibia should be free, spiritually as well as politically.

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Photos mailed to state Baptist papers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Baptist outreach touches
Namibians of all types

By Craig Bird

F - FMB

WINDHOEK, Namibia (BP)--Petrus Mombongu, a 10-year-old orphan, had his right leg blown off below the knee while playing where Southwest Africa People's Organization troops had buried land mines.

American Bill Lockett was a decorated Vietnam veteran who later fought as a mercenary for Rhodesia and South Africa. He quit the army when he fell in love with an Afrikaaner widow and settled in Namibia.

Paulina Aureliu's husband fled ethnic massacres in Angola in 1975, leaving her to rear nine children.

Richard Beukes' first child was born with heart problems. He stopped medical treatment when a faith healer pronounced the infant cured. But the baby died.

Mombongu, Lockett, Aureliu, Beukes -- these are some of the people whose lives have been changed by the Christian ministry of Baptists in Namibia.

Namibia has suffered from 25 years of internal warfare as well as the "regular" problems of developing African countries. Many people there have struggled for survival, often powerless to resist the social, economic and political forces swirling around them.

But some of those people are finding power and hope and love through the ministry of Namibian Baptists and Southern Baptist missionaries:

-- Mombongu, the 10-year-old orphan, was living in the hospital in Oshakati, Namibia, when he was attracted to the English-speaking Baptist fellowship that meets in a thatch-roofed building just outside the hospital entrance.

His English was limited to two or three words, and Southern Baptist missionaries Adney and Vel Cross were struggling to master Ndonga, the predominant language around Oshakati. But Mombongu could smile, despite the crutches and wooden leg that accompany him everywhere.

He tells confusing stories, perhaps because of language barriers, perhaps because he has seen and felt too much terror for a young boy. One day he said his parents were killed in fighting in Angola; another time he said they were among 27 people who died when the Oshakati bank was bombed two years ago.

Hospital social workers say the boy has grandparents but runs away from them and comes back to the hospital.

But he responds to the friendship of the Crosses and other members of the English Baptist Fellowship -- including the Philippine doctor who amputated his leg.

When the Crosses hug him or buy him a soft drink, he relaxes in the security of their love.

-- Bill Lockett never let himself relax.

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Reared in a series of foster homes in Tennessee, he joined the U.S. Army at the first opportunity. Seven years and numerous battlefield citations for heroism in Vietnam later, the war was over. Unable to be comfortable as a civilian, he became a mercenary -- fighting first for Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), then for the South African army in Angola and Namibia.

But a chance meeting with an Afrikaan widow led him into marriage -- and life as a rancher. The two argued about God and religion, and one Sunday they showed up at a Baptist church in Tsumeb.

They met Southern Baptist missionary Carlos Owens, who convinced Lockett that his wife, Martie, was right: he didn't have to be perfect to become a Christian. God wanted everyone to be saved through Christ's perfection.

Now, homeless pregnant women show up at the Locketts' farm because they know they'll be cared for. A church on the property attracts 60 to 70 people each Sunday, many from neighboring ranches. The pastor, one of Lockett's employees, is illiterate, but the Locketts teach him Bible stories using a record player, cassette recorder and picture books.

-- Angolan Paulina Aureliu didn't blame her husband when he fled in 1975. All the men of their tribe were being killed for having supported the wrong side in Angola's civil war. Besides, she had never understood his religion; she was not a Christian.

But as the years passed and her husband, Eriku Aureliu, became a home missionary for the Baptist Association of Namibia/Southwest Africa, he worried about what was happening to his family. Communication was almost impossible, and he did not know that his wife had become a Christian.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Aureliu prayed to be reunited with her husband. Finally she made her way to a Red Cross refugee camp in Zambia. Camp officials forwarded her letters to South Africa and Namibia.

Just months earlier, Aureliu had accepted an evangelism assignment in the Katima Mulilo area of Namibia -- the only area of the country that shares a border with Zambia. When the Red Cross tracked him down, he was able to get to the refugee camp almost immediately and bring his wife home.

She breathed new life into his ministry, organizing choirs in the churches, growing the lushest garden in their neighborhood and adding spark to Baptist outreach.

-- Richard Beukes speaks softly when he addresses missionary Charles Whitson. "Pastor" is what he calls Whitson as they survey the community of Rehoboth and make plans for a new church among the Baster people.

Beukes met Whitson after Beukes' then-fiancee, who now is his wife, was led to faith in Christ by the missionary. She wanted Beukes to become a Christian, too.

As newlyweds, the couple became active in Windhoek Baptist Church. When their first baby was born with heart problems, the Whitsons helped arrange for treatment in South Africa. Doctors set a time for a return checkup. But while the Whitsons were on furlough, a "healer" came to the church, prayed for the infant and told the Beukeses there was no need to return to the doctors because the child was healed.

Within months the baby was dead from a condition that probably could have been treated.

"It took a long, long time for Richard to come back to church after that," Whitson said. "But he is involved now and understands he can't blame all of Christianity for how a few people abuse the word of God.

"He and Sylvia are the sweetest, most dedicated Christians you'll find, and they are committed to sharing the gospel with their family and neighbors in Rehoboth."

Mombongu, Lockett, Aureliu, Beukes -- they are represented by numbers on mission reports as baptisms and churches increase in Namibia.

But the missionaries who are their friends see beyond the numbers.

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Photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

No easy answer for personal tragedy,
theology honors student discovers

By Ken Camp

F - Texas

Baptist Press
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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Last spring, Dennis Hester graduated from Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas, with the highest theology grade point average at the school.

But when his daughter was born two months later with multiple life-threatening birth defects, he found out some theological questions are not easily answered.

After a textbook-perfect pregnancy, Susan Hester gave birth July 29 at Hendrick Medical Center in Abilene, Texas, to a seemingly healthy daughter, Katherine Marie.

"The sonogram at 20 weeks looked fine. There was no indication anything was deformed," Mrs. Hester said.

"In fact, she had been a very active baby with a strong, steady heartbeat all along. When she was born, the nurses said she was a healthy baby girl. They held her up for me, and she looked perfect.

"Then the nurses took her to the nursery to clean her up. They never came back."

Upon closer examination, doctors determined Katie had an imperforated anus and a collapsed lung. Furthermore, her heart, while functioning well, was on the wrong side of her body. Within four hours, the infant and her father were flown from Abilene to Cook-Fort Worth Children's Medical Center.

The next day, surgeons prepared Katie for a colostomy. While conducting an exploratory ultra-sound, they discovered her kidneys also were deformed.

"If her kidneys hold up, the doctors are confident that her other problems can be corrected through reconstructive surgery once she weighs 20 pounds," said Hester, pastor of Locker Baptist Church in Richland Springs, Texas. "They say she could live a healthy, normal life after her first year -- if the kidneys hold up."

Currently, Katie's parents are waiting to find out what the medical specialists will advise. Renal dialysis is one possibility, but it is a far-from-ideal solution. A kidney transplant is another option, but that involves finding a donor and a doctor willing to perform the operation on a newborn infant.

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"God has given us a lot of grace to carry us through all this," Hester said. "We know there are a lot of people praying for us. Susan and I have talked about it, and we're prepared for whatever happens. But the hardest part now is just not knowing."

Many things about the future are uncertain now. Hester had planned to attend Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, this fall on a President's Scholarship. He wanted to commute three days a week from Brownwood while his wife completed her studies at Howard Payne. But for the time being, the couple is living in the Ronald McDonald House near the children's hospital.

Finances are uncertain, too. Hester makes his living working at a pizza parlor in Brownwood, and his family has no insurance. Friends have established funds for Katie Hester at two savings institutions.

Although some questions go unanswered, the Hesters have found strength in their family, in their church, in the faculty and staff at Howard Payne, but above all, in God.

"It's tough to stand here and say we understand that God is still with us," Hester said. "But he is teaching us to trust him even when things don't seem fair."

Ironically, the last sermon Hester preached at Locker Church before Katie was born was from 1 Peter, chapter one, on the testing of faith.

"The Lord didn't leave us unprepared for this," he said. "He's given us the strength and grace we need to go through it."

In recent days, the Hesters have found special strength reading together from the Old Testament book of Job.

"I never really understood Job before all this," Hester said. "I do now."

The Hesters are praying for two things: for a solution to Katie's kidney problems and for God's purpose in their lives to be accomplished.

"We've talked a lot, and we are praying that the Lord's work will be accomplished through us. If Katy lives, we know God will be glorified by that. If she dies and God is not glorified, it will have all been worthless.

"But if she dies and through it God has strengthened our faith and character and touched the lives of others through us, we'll know her life was worthwhile."

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Chinese woman prays
for her native country

By Pat Cole

F-10
(SBTS)

Baptist Press
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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--While her native China reels from political unrest, Sharon Ho prays for her homeland with a faith she learned from Southern Baptist missionaries more than 50 years ago.

"I pray for the Christians in China," said Ho, 63. "I pray for my son who is not a Christian. I pray for the students."

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Ho, who grew up in the home of a missionary, has been in the United States since November, visiting with missionary acquaintances from China and other friends. She plans to enter Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., in January to study church music.

The faith Ho learned in her childhood has endured both her personal struggles and a government averse to Christianity. Ho's mother died when Ho was 12, and Southern Baptist missionary Ruth Pettigrew, who had been instrumental in the mother's conversion, took the girl into her home.

Pettigrew, who died several years ago, sent Ho to high school and encouraged her to take music lessons. After Ho finished college in 1949, she worked for the Baptist mission, doing student work in Kwelin.

Just prior to the invasion of Communist forces, Ho fled to Hong Kong with Baptist missionaries. She continued working with Baptists, translating Sunday school lessons.

Her stint in Hong Kong was short-lived, however. Homesick and intrigued by the new government's promise of reform, she returned to China in the summer of 1950.

"The Communists did some good things in the beginning. (Government) officials and (military) officers lived very simply and took little salary," she recalled. "The soldiers behaved well."

The new government also clamped down on gambling, prostitution and other types of vice, she added.

Yet Ho was not greeted cordially by the new government. "Since I had a close relationship with the missionaries and with the church, they thought I was a spy," she said. "For 25 years, I was suspected, watched and examined. They (government leaders), said they could not understand why I would go back."

During the Cultural Revolution of Mao Tse-Tung, Ho had to hand over to the government her collection of classical musical scores and other items that contained "old ideas." Rather than relinquish her Bible to the government, Ho removed the gospels of Matthew and Luke from it, hid the gospels in her home and burned the remainder of her Bible.

She was interned in a concentration camp on two occasions between 1966 and 1969. She spent more than two years doing hard labor during the day and reading the works of Mao at night. While in the concentration camp, she began to yearn for the faith she learned from the Baptist missionaries.

"I began to pray that God would forgive my sin, and from then on I continued to pray," she said. Ho also began to read and reflect on the gospels she had hidden.

She spent most of her career teaching high school English until reaching 55, the retirement age for Chinese women. She then began to teach English to people engaged in Chinese tourism industry and later taught Mandarin Chinese to foreign business executives. She was married for 23 years until her husband's death in 1980.

Ho became active in China's Three-Self Church in Canton when it was sanctioned by the government in 1979. There she met a Southern Baptist physician who was visiting China and told him she would like to locate some of her missionary acquaintances. He suggested that she

write the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. She did, and her letter was answered by Baker James Cauthen, president of the board at that time.

She became interested in visiting with the missionaries she had known and dreamed of seeing the country she had heard so much about as a child. Since coming to America, she also has begun pursuing another dream -- studying church music.

Ho was introduced to the church music program at Southern Seminary while staying with Thomas Halsell, a professor at Southern's Boyce Bible School, and his wife, Mary Elizabeth. She met the Halsells through their son, Tome, a Southern Baptist missionary to Macao who met Ho while visiting mainland China.

"I can use what I learn here to serve the Lord in the churches in China," she said. "That's what I want to commit myself to. I really think I owe the churches and the Lord so much."

Ho, however, has little hope for reform in China. "The Chinese people will have to suffer for a long time, " she said. "I can't believe there will be a basic change in just a few years."

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Photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southern Seminary