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89-163

Southern Baptist volunteers,
helicopter leaving Ethiopia

By Craig Bird

N-FMB

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (BP)--Continued fighting in Ethiopia has forced shifts in the Southern Baptist missionary personnel and property assigned to that country.

Most news reports place fighting between Ethiopian government troops and Tigre People's Liberation Front forces about 100 miles north of Addis Ababa. Southern Baptist missionaries and volunteers left their posts and gathered in the capital city Oct. 19 but apparently face no danger there.

However, Southern Baptist work is concentrated in the very areas where the two armies are fighting, and an early opportunity to return and renew the work appears unlikely.

"Basically we are looking for places to transfer volunteers to other areas where they can be productive," said Jim Houser, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board administrator for eastern and southern Africa. "In a few other cases, volunteers who are near completion of their terms are going home a little bit early."

No career missionaries are being transferred, however. Jerry and Rosie Bedsole of Foley, Ala., and Splitlog, Mo., respectively, the senior Southern Baptist missionaries in the country, are due back in Addis Ababa in December after a U.S. furlough. Another career couple, Jeff and Margie Pearson of Mora, Minn., returned to Ethiopia recently from Yemen. Mrs. Pearson was in Yemen on maternity leave when the missionaries, including her husband, were evacuated to Addis Ababa. Pearson joined her there for the birth of their second child.

Career missionaries Rob and Patricia Ackerman of Wheaton, Ill., and Albuquerque, N.M., respectively, are in Nairobi, Kenya, awaiting work permits for Ethiopia. They will go on to Addis Ababa as soon as the permits are granted "unless the situation heats up," Houser said. Ackerman will be business manager for the Southern Baptist mission organization of Ethiopia.

Four volunteers will be leaving Ethiopia soon. Nurse Barbara Steer of Santee, Calif., and Baptist guesthouse managers Jewel and Jeanne Franks of Fort Worth, Texas, will return to the United States about one month earlier than planned. Steer was to arrive in Nairobi Nov. 15 enroute home and the Frankses were to follow Dec. 1. Charles Edwards of Starkville, Miss., had just arrived in Ethiopia to work as a veterinarian for two months. But he never got to leave the capital because of the fighting. He is transferring to Tanzania to work with missionary veterinarian John Crews.

Journeyman nurse Sandy Shell of Millbrook, Ala., will transfer to Kenya to work at the Baptist clinic in Mathare Valley if her request for a Kenyan work permit is approved. She arrived in Ethiopia during the summer of 1988 for a planned two-year stay.

Journeyman Burt Rudolph of Davis, Calif., a water development engineer who was only a few months into his two-year assignment, will complete his stint in Malawi. George Tupper, a journeyman from Memphis, Tenn., has completed almost 20 months of his two-year term as an agricultural development worker. His future plans still are undecided.

Missionaries remaining in Ethiopia include Paul and Hannah Gay of Cuthbert, Ga., and Jackson, Miss., respectively; John and Mary Lou Lawrence of Jonesboro, La., and Harrisonville, Mo., respectively; and Howard and Belinda Rhoades of Friona, Texas.

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The most valuable single piece of mission property, a helicopter, will be flown from Addis Ababa to Nairobi when permission is granted from the Kenyan government. Mission officials began seeking government approval to remove the craft the day after Baptist personnel were evacuated from the highlands because of the fighting. The helicopter was used to provide quick access to feeding and development stations in the highlands, where the fighting is most intense.

The fate of other mission property -- primarily grain stores, buildings and furnishings at the Baptist relief stations in Alem Ketema, Rabel, Shil Afaf, Gundo Muskel, Mehal Meda and Meragna -- is unclear.

Both armies reportedly have seized property in the areas they control. However, both the Tigre People's Liberation Front and the the Ethiopian government have requested inventories of property at the stations from the Baptist mission officials -- apparently as a basis for restitution.

The TPLF also has invited Baptist mission personnel to return to the areas it controls and resume development work with the assurance that missionaries would be welcome. But missionaries feel the situation at this time is too unstable for them to return.

Peace talks between the TPLF and the Ethiopian government have begun in Italy, but no cease-fire has resulted. TPLF leaders said Nov. 7 they had captured the district around Mehal Meda -- the first time the rebels have claimed to control territory outside Tigre Province. Mehal Meda's population is composed of Amhara people, the ethnic group that traditionally has ruled Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government has not commented on the claim.

The TPLF declined to participate in earlier peace talks between the government and another rebel group, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, sponsored by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter. The two opposition groups formed a loose coalition several months ago, but they have maintained different objectives during more than two decades of internal strife.

The EPLF seeks independence for Eritrea as a separate country. The TPLF has said it wants to remain part of Ethiopia but is dedicated to the overthrow of the current government.

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Alcohol warning labels 'good';
need to be bigger, experts say

By Marv Knox

N-CO

Baptist Press
11/15/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--Warning labels on beer and liquor containers will save lives, but they must be larger and more conspicuous, advocates of a healthier America said during a Nov. 14 news conference in Nashville.

The Alcoholic Beverage Labeling Act of 1988, which goes into effect Nov. 18, requires that all alcoholic beverage containers sold in the United States carry warning labels.

The required message states: "Government Warning: (1) According to the surgeon general, women should not drink alcoholic beverages during pregnancy because of the risk of birth defects. (2) Consumption of alcoholic beverages impairs your ability to drive a car or operate machinery and may cause health problems."

"Pro-health advocates have won a hard-fought 20-year battle against the alcoholic beverage industry," said Robert M. Parham, associate director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission in Nashville. "A coalition of diverse groups ... has worked for years to secure health and safety warning labels on alcoholic beverage containers. ..."

"Unfortunately, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms has issued regulations which do not ensure that the warnings be located in 'a conspicuous and prominent place on each container of alcoholic beverage,'" he said, quoting the new law.

Holding a beer bottle on its side and examining the fine-print label under a magnifying glass, Parham added: "Now, we must battle to get warning labels that are readable without using a magnifying glass. Everyone should be able to see readily and to read easily the warnings. The alcohol industry and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms ought to stop playing hide-and-seek with a life-and-death matter. They ought to stop playing games with pregnant women and their unborn children. They ought to support legible labels."

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The type on the labels must be only 2 millimeters high -- about the size of newspaper type, but squeezed together. Most alcohol distributors will place the labels on the edges of their own logos and labels. One beermaker even has permission to print the label on the bottle cap, Parham said.

In a statement read at the news conference, Sen. Albert Gore Jr., D.-Tenn., wrote: "Labels are a proven, effective means for consumers to become informed about a product and any unique characteristics associated with the product. ... Alcohol beverage manufacturers are among the world's experts on advertising. They know what works and what doesn't work. They know labels are an important part of advertising."

But addressing the inconspicuous nature of the warning labels, Gore added: "I have a warning for the alcohol beverage industry: They can help design warning messages as effective as their advertisements, or they can have advertisements that must, by law, include warnings. The choice is theirs."

Parham praised Gore and Sen. Strom Thurmond, R.-S.C., for their efforts on behalf of the labeling law, noting, "Our victory results from grassroots concern and courageous bipartisan leadership on the part of Sens. Gore and Thurmond, both of whom have walked a straight line, proving convincingly that they are not under the influence of the alcohol industry."

The news conference also featured three representatives of "grassroots concern" for the warning labels.

Country music star Rudy Gatlin, a member of the Gatlin Brothers Band, spoke from his own experience: "My brothers and I know firsthand many of the problems associated with alcohol and other substance abuse. But, thank God, we were able to correct them before any further problems developed to change our health or our family's well-being."

Alcohol plays a role in 24,000 traffic fatalities and 500,000 traffic injuries every year, Gatlin said, adding: "I'm for warning everyone about the dangers of alcohol. It must be an important priority in this country. Young folks especially must be reminded constantly about how alcohol impairs their ability to think and drive, so I hope these warning labels can serve as a visible reminder to them."

Speaking of fetal alcohol syndrome, which affects babies whose pregnant mothers drank, he said: "One of the biggest concerns I have now is that too many women aren't getting the warning that alcohol consumption during pregnancy can cause serious physical and mental problems in the unborn child. When I hear that more than 50,000 babies are born in the U.S. each year with alcohol-related defects, then I want to do something to help get that warning message out."

"I had a choice and a chance to overcome my own problem with substance abuse, but an unborn child doesn't have either. ... Mothers, please don't have a drink for your child."

Karen Starr, a staff member with Vanderbilt University's Institute for Treatment of Addiction, continued Gatlin's theme of concern for babies born to women who drink.

"Fetal alcohol effects and fetal alcohol syndrome are real," she said. "This seriously impacts our nation, our families, but most importantly, those children ... who suffer medically, neurologically and psychosocially from birth."

She cited research which reveals that 10 percent to 20 percent of mental deficiencies among children are the result of the pregnant mother's alcohol use and that "maternal alcohol use is the leading known cause of mental retardation in the United States."

"Even casual use of alcohol during pregnancy cannot be considered safe," Starr said. "Even small amounts of alcohol may be injurious to the unborn child, ... with an average five-point reduction in a child's IQ by the age of 4 and deficits in attention and reaction time in a child by the age of 7."

"We must, therefore, adopt the most conservative approach and endorse the American Medical Association and the surgeon general in recommending total abstinence from alcohol during pregnancy."

Jess Hale of Gov. Ned McWherter's Alliance for Drug-Free Tennessee applauded the text of the warning labels on two counts. "We welcome the efforts to make ... babies healthier," he said, noting the labels also will "enhance the awareness of the dangers of drunk driving."

The warning labels are one part of a comprehensive plan needed to overcome the problems, Hale said. He also advocated education concerning the dangers of alcohol, substance-abuse programs, and tough drunk-driving laws and enforcement.

In a statement read at the news conference, Christian Life Commission Executive Director Richard D. Land wrote: "The Christian Life Commission believes that warning labels on alcoholic beverage containers will contribute to the nation's war against drugs. Alcohol causes more deaths, produces more suffering and costs more in economic losses than all illicit drugs combined. Warning labels will help the nation know that alcohol is a dangerous drug."

Calling alcohol "the drug that America drinks," Parham noted the commission urged President Bush and Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady to "direct the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to issue regulations which would require readily legible labels in a conspicuous and prominent place on containers."

The news conference was among 10 such conferences held across the nation the week of Nov. 13.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the SBC Christian Life Commission.

Hurricane victims still
need help in Caribbean

By Mary E. Speidel

N-FMB

Baptist Press
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PLYMOUTH, Montserrat (BP)--Two months after Hurricane Hugo devastated much of the Caribbean, residents of some islands still are struggling to recover.

Among islands where Southern Baptist foreign missionaries work, the greatest needs remain on Montserrat and Guadeloupe, said Bill Damon, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's associate area director for Brazil and the Caribbean.

Difficulty obtaining building materials on the islands has slowed reconstruction, according to reports from missionaries. The islands' rainy season also is causing soggy living conditions for many people whose houses still are without roofs.

About 70 percent of the damaged homes on Montserrat remain roofless, said Southern Baptist missionary John Hamilton, who lives on the nearby island of Antigua. "It is as if the hurricane hit a week ago," he said.

Besides difficulty in obtaining building materials, another problem is the lack of an adequate dock for receiving supply shipments. The dock at Plymouth, Montserrat, was blown away in the storm. With a temporary, makeshift pier, "it's tedious and slow getting things unloaded," said Hamilton, who is from Decatur, Ala.

Islanders have covered their roofless houses with plastic, but that won't keep the dampness out during rainy season, Hamilton explained. After living in the situation for two months, the people are getting depressed, he said: "The needs are still great here. The people have not been able to recover."

Most immediate food needs have been met, but about 80 percent of the residents still don't have electricity, Hamilton said. Candles can no longer be found in the stores.

Members of Calvary Baptist Church, the only Baptist church on Montserrat, are meeting in the church's basement. The church building was demolished by Hugo. All evening services have been canceled because of lack of electricity. The Foreign Mission Board is planning to send a generator to the island, board officials said.

About 30 percent of the homes on Antigua also do not yet have electricity, Hamilton said. Phone service still is out in some areas. Hamilton also works on the islands of Nevis and St. Kitts, which he said have recovered well.

Hurricane relief efforts in the Caribbean have been coordinated by the Foreign Mission Board and the convention's Brotherhood Commission.

Since Hugo blasted the Caribbean in late September, about \$54,000 for disaster relief and \$5,700 for hunger needs have been sent to the Caribbean, according to board officials.

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Forty-nine Southern Baptists have worked on volunteer relief teams on the islands where missionaries work. Volunteers have worked in cleanup and reconstruction on Antigua, Guadeloupe, Saba, St. Martin, St. Kitts and St. Eustatius. Three more groups were scheduled to work in November and December for one or two weeks.

On Guadeloupe in the French West Indies, many people still are staying in public shelters, said Judy Gary, a Southern Baptist missionary on the island. In some of the most heavily damaged areas, people are living in tents on the beach in "deplorable" conditions, she said.

"What you have is the poor people who have become poorer," said Mrs. Gary. "They're the ones who were hit the hardest."

In areas of Guadeloupe severely hurt by Hugo, up to half of the houses damaged still lack roofs, estimated her husband, missionary Al Gary. Getting construction materials is difficult, but that's not the only reason many homes are still unrepaired, he said. Many people are waiting for relief funds from the French government in order to begin reconstruction.

At least 80 percent of the electricity has been restored on the island, Gary said.

Southern Baptist hunger relief funds have paid for food distributed in some of Guadeloupe's hardest-hit areas and on the island of Desirade, a dependency of Guadeloupe. Food and clothing sent by Baptists on the French West Indian island of Martinique also was distributed.

Members of the Evangelical Baptist Church in Moule, Guadeloupe, used Southern Baptist donations to buy about 450 sacks of groceries to distribute to needy residents. Gary is pastor of the church. Moule, a town just outside the capital city of Pointe-a-Pitre, was one of the most heavily damaged areas of the island, according to news reports.

"We've gone into places where nobody else has come or where people have only come distributing clothes," said Mrs. Gary, who is from Clovis, N.M. Gary is from Lubbock, Texas.

Enough hunger funds remain to distribute more food, said Mrs. Gary. "But this kind of thing could go on for weeks because these people who are without homes aren't going to get one miraculously next week," she said.

The church's rented building was destroyed in the storm, but land has been purchased for a new facility. A Southern Baptist volunteer group will help with construction in early December.

Since the hurricane, many islanders have been asking questions about why Hugo happened and what God's role was in the disaster, Gary said: "There has been a real openness to the gospel. I think a lot more people are willing to listen than would have been before."

Volunteers from Kentucky, Mississippi and Virginia will travel to Guadeloupe Dec. 2. They will help construct a new building for the Evangelical Baptist Church in Moule. A former missionary to Guadeloupe, Wayne Frederick of Guntown, Miss., is group leader.

On St. Martin in the Netherland Antilles, volunteers from Indiana and Oklahoma were to arrive Nov. 17. A team from Alabama and North Carolina will also work on the island beginning Dec. 9.

In other relief efforts, the Foreign Mission Board sent an emergency air freight shipment of food and supplies to Antigua in October. That food was distributed on the Leeward Islands. A second shipment of food and supplies is expected to be sent in November.

Food and money still are needed for the Caribbean, Southern Baptist relief officials said. Items requested include rice, beans, canned meat, powdered milk, baby food and cooking oil in cans or plastic containers. The items should be shipped to KMA Enterprises, Napoleon and River Building, J-Cube 9, New Orleans, La. 70175. Donations should be designated for Foreign Mission Board/Brotherhood Disaster Relief for Antigua/Guadeloupe.

Financial contributions should be sent to the Foreign Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, Va. 23230. Checks should be designated for the general relief fund for Hurricane Hugo victims, officials said.

Telephone ministry offers
encouragement in Colombia

By Art Toalston

F - FMB

CALI, Colombia (BP)--In two of Colombia's most troubled cities, Cali and Medellin, "a voice of encouragement" named teleamigo is being called upon 2 million times a year.

The telephone ministry, sponsored by Cali-based Baptist Communications, offers 60-second taped inspirational messages as well as personal counseling. It receives up to 80,000 calls a month in Cali and up to 100,000 a month in Medellin, reported John Magyar, the Southern Baptist missionary from St. Louis, Mo., who directs Baptist Communications.

Two full-time counselors in Cali and one in Medellin handle more than 10,000 calls a year, Magyar added. In Cali a team of 20 Baptist volunteers also has been assembled and trained for contacting callers open to personal visits, and the same is planned in Medellin.

Teleamigo -- a name fusing the Spanish words for "telephone" and "friend" -- was started in Cali in 1978 and in Medellin in 1986 and is planned for Bogota and Barranquilla "when we have the funds to do it," Magyar said. Once teleamigo is in place in all four cities, the ministry expects to handle some 5 million calls a year.

Citizens in the four cities, who account for nearly half of Colombia's 32 million people, have felt under siege since August, when the government began its crackdown on the nation's drug lords. Some 200 retaliatory bombings have been perpetrated by drug gangs, killing dozens of bystanders. In the past five years, drug-related violence has claimed the lives of more than 1,500 Colombian policemen, judges and journalists.

Baptists also plan to launch teleamigo operations in Caracas, Venezuela; Santiago, Chile; and Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Magyar noted.

The 24-hour-a-day, year-round telephone ministry has come to be known by the slogan "a voice of encouragement." It seeks to provide "an uplifting, inspirational or human-interest message to all callers," said Magyar.

At the end of the taped message, another number is mentioned if callers want personal counseling. Workers staff the counseling lines from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. each weekday except holidays.

Teleamigo messages aim at reaching people at all levels of society, Magyar explained. "We seek to touch people at the point of their felt need."

A telephone-based ministry, he said, can help callers in large urban centers feel they have found a new personal friend, explaining, "It can help a person to know that he or she really is 'one in a million.'"

Local radio and television stations and newspapers have taken notice of teleamigo and voluntarily support it, Magyar reported.

One radio station in Cali and one in Medellin currently call teleamigo to put each day's message on the air live. Several other stations in Cali have done the same in the past. "Local radio personalities frequently call the counselors to interview them live in talk shows," said the missionary. And several newspapers and a Medellin TV station have done features on the ministry. It has received, at no cost, the equivalent of thousands of dollars worth of publicity, he noted.

Teleamigo also has been publicized through business-size cards that Baptists distribute and through word of mouth. The cards give the phone number and simply note that teleamigo is "a voice of encouragement -- day and night."

The counselors have dealt with an array of problems, such as family strife, alcohol abuse, abortion and suicide. "When the telephones ring," Magyar said, "the counselors never know quite what to expect."

Two teleamigo workers, Franklin and Julia Villegas, became Christians after calling the ministry in 1982. They became aware of it while painting the inside of their house, noticing a feature article about the ministry after covering the floors with newspapers. They called the number, listened to the message, then called the second number for counseling. Villegas had been struggling to overcome problems with alcohol.

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The couple made professions of faith in Christ during a session with teleamigo worker Ana Maria Plata, who had been a nun for 23 years when she heard a Baptist radio program and later became a Baptist in the mid-1970s.

Teleamigo has played a part in the baptisms of hundreds of people in Baptist or other evangelical churches in Cali and Medellin, Magyar said. Many more have visited Baptist churches or home Bible study groups. One convert, Luis Alberto Ramos, now is co-pastor of a Baptist church in Cali, while several others have risen to leadership positions in their congregations.

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D.C. Baptist convention
adopts fairness covenant

N- BJC

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WASHINGTON (BP)--The District of Columbia Baptist Convention has adopted a "fairness covenant" that provides guidelines for individuals appointed or elected to positions in the local convention, the Southern Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.

Delegates overwhelmingly approved the measure during the convention's annual meeting Nov. 9-10 at Clifton Park Baptist Church in Silver Spring, Md.

According to the fairness covenant's introduction, its guidelines express an "understanding of what seems equitable in balancing participation and in promoting goodwill and cooperation among the churches and members that constitute the D.C. Baptist Convention. The spirit of this covenant is not to provide for any means of enforcing this understanding but rather to enhance a greater sense of fairness, trust and communication in the D.C. Baptist Convention."

The covenant calls upon DCBC churches and members to comply voluntarily with the following guidelines:

-- No church should have more than two people serving on the boards or committees of either the SBC or ABC at one time. No church should have more than one person serving on any single committee of the DCBC.

-- No person should serve on more than one board or committee -- other than ad hoc committees -- of the SBC or ABC at the same time.

-- No member of an immediate family should succeed another member of that family on a national committee or board within the space of less than two terms.

-- No two members of an immediate family should serve simultaneously on the boards or committees of either the SBC or ABC.

-- Active involvement in the meetings, work and fellowship of the DCBC and/or its member churches should be a prerequisite to election or appointment to service with either the SBC or ABC.

-- A person who has served on one of the national boards should not be named to serve on another national board until a minimum of three years has elapsed. A person who has served on the SBC Committee on Committees or Committee on Nominations or the ABC Nominating Committee should not be named to serve again on any of those committees for a minimum of seven years.

-- Members named to the SBC Committee on Committees or elected to the SBC Committee on Nominations or ABC Nominating Committee and the officers of the DCBC should confer prior to the selection of nominees to serve on denominational committees and boards.

-- Members named to the SBC Committee on Committees or elected to the SBC Committee on Nominations or ABC Nominating Committee should seek to be sensitive to the diversity of the DCBC in making recommendations to their committees.

The committee that drafted the covenant was appointed to address "the crisis in the Southern Baptist Convention and the relationship between the District of Columbia Baptist Convention and the SBC." Citing the convention's dual alignment with the SBC and the ABC, the committee said it decided also to address the convention's relationship with the ABC.

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"Our goal is to produce a blueprint that will enhance the internal relationships of the D.C. Baptist Convention and its member congregations and the external relationships with the Southern Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A.," the committee said in a written statement.

The committee -- which described itself as "intentionally and deliberately made as representative and as inclusive of all segments of the DCBC as possible" -- said it recommended the fairness covenant so the DCBC "might know its representatives and establish bonds of trust and communication with them; and, secondly, that these representatives might be in a position to hear the concerns of the convention at large rather than those of a more limited constituency."

Members of the committee were chairman Donnell Harris, pastor of Montgomery Hills Baptist Church, Silver Spring; Carol Blythe, layperson from Calvary Baptist Church, Washington; Gary E. Crum, layperson from Georgetown Baptist Church, Washington; Dallas Pulliam, pastor of Greenbelt Baptist Church, Greenbelt, Md.; Howard Roberts, pastor of Broadview Baptist Church, Temple Hills, Md.; and Norman Taylor, layperson from First Baptist Church, Silver Spring. Serving as ex officio members were Jeanette Holt, DCBC president, and James Langley, DCBC executive director.

Copies of the covenant are to be sent to the presidents of the SBC and the ABC, as well as the chairmen of the SBC Committee on Committees and Committee on Nominations and the ABC Nominating Committee, Holt said.

In other business, delegates adopted a report from a task force on financial support for the DCBC. The task force recommended that each church within the convention contribute at least 1 percent of its undesignated budget to the DCBC and that churches already contributing to the convention be asked to increase that support by at least 1 percent.

Delegates granted convention membership to three churches but placed a fourth congregation -- whose pastor, Walter Tomme, is a member of the SBC Executive Committee -- on provisional status for one year.

The convention's church applications committee recommended provisional status for Tysons Community Church because "the church is very young ... its constitutional and organizational structures are just now evolving and ... it is not clear whether its organizational principles are consistent with traditional baptistic practice." In the convention's book of reports, the congregation was described as an "elder-run church with the elders appointed by the pastor."

Delegates approved a 1990 convention budget of \$1,284,720, which is an increase over the 1989 budget.

They also elected Donnell Harris as convention president and Aldon Nielsen, a layperson from Washington's Calvary Baptist Church, as vice president.

The convention's next annual meeting will be held Nov. 8-9, 1990, at Montgomery Hills Baptist Church in Silver Spring.

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Baptist spirituality born in exile,
Southern Seminary professor says

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(SWBTS)

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A radical faith stemming from "a spirituality born in exile" stands at the center of the Baptist heritage, a Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor said in a chapel address at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"Spirituality is not an end in itself; it is the means whereby human beings experience faith in Christ, unite together for worship and ministry, and relate to life in the world," Bill Leonard, professor of church history said in an address titled "Baptists and Spirituality: A Radical Faith."

The Baptists in early America understood this concept of spirituality well, Leonard said. His address was sponsored by the Theological Fellowship at Southwestern in Fort Worth, Texas, and is part of the group's annual lecture series.

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"They were exiles, those first Baptists in the New World, the scourge of Christian America," Leonard said, adding their plight was personified by one of their best known leaders, Roger Williams. Considered a religious radical and heretic by the Puritan leaders of Massachusetts, Williams was thrown out of the state in 1636 and banished to the "howling wilderness" of New England. Two years later, he had founded the city of Providence, R.I., and established the first Baptist church in America.

"It was a colony, a church, a spirituality born in exile," Leonard said, adding that Williams' belief that the civil government had no authority over religion or churches was, at the time, "a radical shift in religious and political thinking."

Still, Leonard said, early Baptist faith was "not so much a faith for radicals as it was a radical faith -- a faith so daring that even they did not fully comprehend where it would take them, a vision which we have not yet fulfilled in all its implications, a spirituality at its best in exile."

Baptist ideals of such original spirituality "began with Holy Scripture," Leonard said, adding that Baptists always have considered themselves "people of the book, bound to the authority of the Bible for their doctrine and practice." The "radical act" of conversion also had significant implications as "the foundation of Baptist understanding of spirituality for the individual, the church and the world," he said.

Despite its successes, Baptist spirituality has not been without its blind spots, said Leonard, professor of church history at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

"One of the great ironies of American history is that many of the same Virginia Baptists who went to jail over the freedom of religion also owned slaves," he said. "The same people who demanded absolute religious freedom began to qualify the freedom of human beings."

Giving a more contemporary example, Leonard cited a chapel service at Southern Seminary in 1961 led by civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

"So great was the controversy that a majority of the seminary trustees voted to express regret for the offense caused by the visit of Rev. King to the campus of the seminary," Leonard said. "Some critics said that the seminary lost a quarter of a million dollars in donations because of the visit. Today we say it was money well spent."

Baptists today can learn a lesson from these past mistakes -- beware of the majority and turn loose the gospel, Leonard said.

"Baptist spirituality has often found itself at odds with majority religion, for sometimes majority religion has come out on the backside of grace," he said.

Baptists today must take a chance and turn loose the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, he noted, adding, "Who knows where it will take us, for it is more radical than any of us will ever understand."

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Drug Czar Bennett visits
inner-city Dallas church

By Ken Camp

N-Texas

Baptist Press
11/15/89

DALLAS (BP)--"Drug Czar" William Bennett recently visited south Dallas to investigate reports that an inner-city Texas Baptist church was mobilizing its neighborhood to wage war on drugs.

Bennett, national drug control policy director for the Bush administration, visited Cornerstone Baptist Church in Dallas Nov. 8 to talk with Pastor Chris Simmons and other community leaders.

"He acknowledged that the issue (of combatting drug abuse) is a moral issue and that there are economic reasons people in our community are selling drugs. There's no way a legitimate corporation can pay what the drug dealers pay them," Simmons said.

"He also agreed it is significant that we are involving the young men of our community in the war on drugs."

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Specifically, Bennett affirmed the work of Cornerstone Men's Academy, an educational ministry of the church to help unemployed, undereducated young men earn high school equivalency diplomas. Ultimately, the church hopes to provide scholarships to community colleges for men in the academy.

Community involvement is vital to the mission and ministry of Cornerstone, an autonomous congregation that receives mission-type financial support and personal assistance by volunteers from about a dozen Dallas Baptist Association churches.

Cornerstone's involvement in neighborhood ministry was most clearly seen in the "Community Fest" it initiated in September. The weekend celebration involved the Dallas Police Department, the Department of Public Health and various other social service agencies.

"We, as a church, didn't want to sit idly by," Simmons said. "We wanted to bring together the church, the community and the various city services to demonstrate how by working in cooperation, we can overcome the problems confronting us."

"Honestly, the idea came to me while I was picking up trash on the church lawn. I just thought, 'We need to do something for this community.'"

In partnership with the Dallas Police Department, Cornerstone sought the involvement of other Texas Baptists in the community festival.

Volunteers from First Baptist Church of Richardson assisted in planning and organization, and Casa View Baptist Church in Dallas helped to provide transportation. A single-adult group from Valley Ranch Baptist Church in Irving and youth from First Baptist Church of Queen City, near Texarkana, also assisted.

Initially, Simmons and others who planned the weekend event hoped to involve 300 local residents. More than 700 participated in various phases of the anti-drug, pro-community festival.

Events included a carnival for children, performances by Christian musicians, a job fair, neighborhood clean-up efforts and opportunities for residents to talk personally with police officers.

"Foot patrol officers went around meeting residents within a 10-block area around the church," Simmons said.

Although he ministers in a neighborhood plagued with poverty and devastated by drugs, Simmons maintains hope that his congregation can make a difference to those around them.

"Our message to the community is that we are here, and we are concerned about you," he said.

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Australian professor gives
accent to world evangelization

By Chip Alford

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Tony Cupit's commitment to world evangelizations is as easy to detect as his Australian accent.

Cupit, an Australian Baptist leader and national guest professor of missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Fort Worth, Texas, will be involved in the heart of Baptist evangelism strategies during the next 10 years. He is to become director of evangelism and education for the Baptist World Alliance following the organization's World Congress next August in Seoul, South Korea.

"One missiologist has said the last decade of the century has sort of a motivation, a propulsion about it, so that initiatives taken in that last decade of the century spread their influence well into the next century," said Cupit. "And with the 1990s, we're looking at the last decade of a millenium. Initiatives taken in this last decade could have an impact on world evangelization that we just can't even begin to imagine.

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"One of my responsibilities will be to seek to encourage Baptist conventions, unions and churches around the world to see the year 2000 as a very significant date in terms of world evangelization. Like Bold Mission Thrust of the Southern Baptist Convention, so in Australia we have Cross Over Australia, an attempt to make sure every Australian has an opportunity to respond to the gospel in an authentic and meaningful way by the year 2000. I hope to bring that same motivation to Baptists around the world."

A native of Sydney, Australia's largest city, Cupit describes himself as a third-generation Australian Baptist. He accepted Christ at age 14 at a Baptist boys' club meeting at Haberfield Baptist Church in Sydney. His first pastor was John Drakeford, emeritus distinguished professor of psychology and counseling, at Southwestern.

Cupit felt the call to Christian service while working for an oil company following high school graduation. He quit his job and enrolled at Baptist Theological College of New South Wales, where he earned a diploma in 1963. He later earned a bachelor of divinity from London University and a master of theology from Melbourne College of Divinity.

During his collegiate training, Cupit felt led into overseas missions. In 1963, he married Margaret Norgate, whose parents were missionaries to China. Two years later, the couple left for Papua, New Guinea, as missionaries for the Australian Baptist Missionary Society. Cupit worked for seven years as a field linguist, teaching missionaries the language and translating the New Testament into the vernacular language of Kyaka Enga.

He returned to Australia in 1972 as the first overseas secretary of the Australian Baptist Missionary Society. Cupit assumed his current position, general superintendent of the Baptist Union of Victoria, in 1978. Victoria is the second-largest of Australia's six states and contains the country's second-largest city, Melbourne.

"Australian Baptists, along with New Zealand Baptists, send more missionaries to the foreign mission field per capita than any other country in the world," Cupit said. Australian Baptists also give the most per capita for overseas aid through Baptist channels, he said.

But success in home missions has been more difficult for Australians, Cupit said: "We've hidden behind the myth, which has some justification in fact, that Australians are the most secular people in all the world. And because of that belief, we have tended not to proclaim our faith with the aggression that Southern Baptists proclaim it.

"We didn't come with pilgrim fathers. We don't have 'In God We Trust' on our coins."

But Australian Baptists are beginning to make their presence known at home, Cupit said, adding the Aussies' recent partnership with Texas Baptists provided them with a much-needed shot in the arm.

"The partnership that we've had with Texas Baptists has been very significant, I think, in helping Australian Baptists to overcome their inhibitions about evangelism," he said. "We've learned that Australians are interested in the gospel, more than we were perhaps prepared to concede. We are praying that Cross Over Australia and other evangelistic efforts will have a great impact on our country for Christ."

Cupit is enjoying his teaching stint at Southwestern, he said, adding the seminary has had a very positive impact on his life: "The thing that has impressed me most about Southwestern is the balance between academic integrity and evangelism and devotional life. I think it is marvelous to see men who are deeply steeped in academic research who are also preaching a very positive gospel of salvation."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary