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N-FMB

Missionaries return home
after rebels quit fighting

MANILA, Philippines (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries who fled their homes near Manila's central business district returned Dec. 7 after rebel troops in the area laid down their weapons and returned to their barracks.

Four missionary families left their subdivisions in the Makati area of Manila Dec. 5 as a precaution in response to a U.S. Embassy advisory, bringing to six the number of missionary families who took refuge in another area of Manila. The other two had left the area earlier.

Mutinous troops challenging the government of Philippine President Corazon Aquino occupied several businesses, hotels and condominiums in the Makati district for several days after their coup attempt failed.

The rebels called off the mutiny Dec. 7 and marched back to their barracks, vowing they would keep fighting Aquino's government, news reports said.

As of late Dec. 7, rebel forces still held an air force base at Cebu City, several hundred miles south of Manila, said Trudy Crittendon, chairman of the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in the Philippines. Missionary Gerald Davis was working with Cebu City Baptist Church to help distribute rice to residents who fled their homes near the air base.

Missionaries in the Philippines have been "very aware" of Southern Baptists' prayers for them during the recent instability, Crittendon said.

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N-CO
(CLC)

Pro-lifers urged to be concerned
about people from womb to tomb

By Louis Moore

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IRVING, Texas (BP)--To be biblically pro-life is to embrace a variety of issues, ranging from the womb to the tomb, a series of speakers told participants at the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's Conference on the Sanctity of Human Life Dec. 4-5 in Irving, Texas.

Texas Baptist Pastor Ralph Smith urged 232 registered participants to expand their interpretations of being pro-life by addressing such issues as nuclear arms, hunger, environment, euthanasia, racism, smoking, alcohol abuse and drug abuse as well as abortion.

But on the issue of abortion, Smith said, "The acid test of the integrity of the Christian pro-life movement in this generation will be whether we have the courage to let God, rather than competing secular ideologies, shape our agenda."

A former Dallas-area abortion clinic operator said abortion "is not a choice but a skillfully marketed product sold to women at a crisis time."

Carol Everett, now legislative liaison to the Texas Right to Life organization, said, "If abortions are so good for women, why aren't they free?" Instead, she said, abortion is a greed-driven, profit-making industry that preys on troubled women.

An abortion can cost anywhere from \$250 to \$2,500, she said, describing abortion clinics as multimillion-dollar businesses.

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Christian Life Commission Executive Director Richard Land said Christians must sound the clarion call against all attitudes and actions that assault the sacredness of human life. Action against abortion must be multilevel and include attacks against root causes, he added.

"We must denounce the unbiblical sexual double standard which has too often allowed men to behave irresponsibly and exploitively toward women in our culture," Land said. "Many women who have abortions have been abused, victimized and abandoned by selfish men who view a pregnant woman as a broken sexual toy which an abortion will fix.

"We must oppose the barbaric, lethal combination of technical expertise and spiritual ignorance which would deny that sanctity and would abort and experiment on our unborn, harvest fetal tissue, allow death into the nursery for our mentally and physically handicapped infants and encourage euthanasia in our hospitals, retirement centers and nursing homes."

If Christians "are going to insist that abortion on demand be abandoned, then they must also endorse and support alternatives for pregnant women, their babies and their families, not only before birth, but after birth as well," Land said. As examples, he cited greatly expanded counseling, job-training, day-care and adoption services.

Dorothy Patterson, professor at Criswell College in Dallas, urged Southern Baptists to make pro-life "our issue of the 1990s."

"We must guarantee life and liberty from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death," she said. "Killing the baby in the womb is the height of hypocrisy in the land of the free and the home of the brave. To destroy the child in the womb is to invite the absolute and final judgment on our nation.

"Abortion is a woman's issue, but it is far too serious and far-reaching to be only a woman's issue."

Law professor Lynn Buzzard of Campbell University in Buies Creek, N.C., warned that Christians have "no reason to rejoice in the political environment created by the Webster decision."

He called for a multilayered approach to the anti-abortion issue in which the gains made by the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the Webster case are consolidated while pro-lifers maintain long-term vigilance concerning judicial appointments and possible changes in the U.S. Constitution.

Southern Baptists need to present a "prophetic model" in dealing with abortion, Buzzard said, noting, "Spiritual, not political, calculus should be the foundation of efforts to rid the nation of this terrible problem."

Raymond Higgins, a Christian ethics professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, said expectant parents in Southern Baptist churches often are unprepared to face moral decisions when they undergo prenatal diagnosis.

Prenatal diagnosis is the medical procedure to determine the health of a baby in the uterus. Some expectant parents seek prenatal diagnosis for information about possible birth defects.

"I wonder how Christians can expect parents to welcome children with birth defects into their families and care for them 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year for their entire lives, when Christians in local churches do not minister to the parents and children several hours a week," he said.

More than 280 of the 2,800 known fetal health problems can be diagnosed prenatally, Higgins said. Some disorders can be corrected medically either before or after birth, but many are intractable.

Mississippi legislative lobbyist Paul Jones of Jackson said, "Churches have as much right to lobby as anyone else" and should do so on such issues as abortion.

Jones delineated ways to lobby in state legislatures, then asked if Christians are prepared for the results of a win: "Is the church prepared to deal with the living? Are we willing to deal with the reality of the birth of 1 million unwanted children" each year?

Texas legislative lobbyist Liz Minnick of Austin said Christians should enter the legal battle against abortion with their homework done in both political process as well as biblical theology.

"Many of our enemies are nice, friendly, professional, even charming people," she said. "But be not deceived. This is a spiritual battle. I guarantee, there are giants in our land."

Two veterans of the Southern Baptist effort in Florida in favor of anti-abortion legislation said the essence of the movement was action and conversion.

Florida Baptists called a special state convention session to adopt a statement they hoped would influence a specially called session of the Florida Legislature. Legislators did not adopt the measures.

"The world is not going to be changed by our resolutions," said John Sullivan, the Florida convention's executive director. "We did not call a special session to debate the morality of abortion or to pass a resolution. We had a recommendation. We were calling a special session of the convention to ask ourselves the question, 'How are we going to affect this state's abortion laws?'"

Bobby Welch, pastor of First Baptist Church of Daytona Beach and a leader in the Florida Baptist effort, said: "We did our best to fire a shot to signal a new start for the unborn. Abortion is the issue which I believe both history and God will judge as the supreme test of the Western church in this generation."

H. Edwin Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Houston, said Christians should use the right word when talking about abortion: "What we are talking about is murder. Abortion is the wrong word to use. Murder is the right word to use."

The "No. 1 political issue today is abortion," he added. "It has polarized the nation like nothing since the Vietnam War."

James T. Draper Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, and a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, described his own church's crisis pregnancy center then said Southern Baptists "need to stand together with everyone who is pro-life."

He called for supporters of the controversial Operation Rescue program to respect people who oppose nonviolent civil disobedience as an anti-abortion strategy, while opponents of Operation Rescue need to respect its advocates.

Sylvia Boothe, the SBC Home Mission Board's coordinator for alternatives to abortion ministries, said colleges and universities may unwittingly contribute to abortions by imposing harsh penalties relating to pregnancies involving their students.

"If she (a pregnant college student) aborts and no one finds out, she is allowed to remain on campus, in school housing and can keep her scholarship," Boothe said. "But if she chooses to carry her child, accepting responsibility for her actions, she is often expelled from school and stripped of her scholarships while the father of the same baby is allowed to remain in school and play on the team."

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This story includes reports by Christian Life Commission staff members Larry Braidfoot, Robert Parham and Jim Smith.

SBC ethnics plan to buy
radio station in Florida

By Joe Westbury

N-HMB

ATLANTA (BP)--A group of Southern Baptist ethnics may be ready to take the gospel to the airwaves if they can raise \$1.3 million to purchase a Florida radio station.

Ray Carvajal, associate director of language missions for the Miami Baptist Association, detailed the strategy to buy 5,000-watt station WOIR to participants in a three-day meeting of Hispanic pastors in Atlanta. The meeting was sponsored by the language church extension division of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Miami Hispanics, Koreans and Haitians are seeking financial help nationwide from other language groups who would like to see an ethnic radio network for the denomination, Carvajal said.

Neither Miami Baptist Association nor the Home Mission Board would be involved in the purchase, he stressed.

Currently the station has a listening audience in southern Florida's Monroe, Dade and Broward counties. More than 1 million Hispanics, 250,000 Haitians and 3 million Anglos are in the area, Carvajal said.

The asking price for the station and seven acres is \$1.1 million, but because of extensive repairs needed, Carvajal hopes to purchase the facility for \$700,000.

If the group is able to raise \$1.3 million, the station could be purchased for cash and the \$600,000 balance would cover repairs and the first year's operating costs, he explained.

Carvajal, a catalytic missionary for the Home Mission Board, said the group considering the purchase would like to make its offer in late December. Broadcasts could begin as early as April 1990.

If the sale is approved by the owners and the Federal Communications Commission, the station would blend its secular format with evangelistic programming while maintaining its for-profit status.

The station would be supervised by a non-salaried board of four Hispanics, two Haitians and two Anglos. All other employees would be paid in keeping with local market conditions, he said.

Twenty percent of profits from the station would be tithed "straight off the top to the (Southern Baptist) Cooperative Program (unified budget) and the Miami Baptist Association, with each receiving 10 percent," he noted.

Any additional profits would be directed to improving programming and co-purchase of other ethnic stations around the country. Those purchases would be coordinated with language groups who helped finance the mother station in Miami.

As stations are added, WOIR could be a source of major programming for the local outlets, Carvajal said.

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Ethnics remain untapped resource
for baptisms, finances, Romo says

By Joe Westbury

N-HMB

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ATLANTA (BP)--America's Hispanic population could provide the Southern Baptist Convention with substantial growth if as little as 3 percent of the group could be reached for Christ by the year 2000, a language missions leader said.

Oscar Romo, director of the language church extension division of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, said annual Hispanic baptisms could jump from 16,595 recorded in 1987 to 117,000 by the turn of the century if the goal were reached.

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Romo made the projections during a meeting of pastors from the denomination's fastest-growing Hispanic churches. The three-day meeting explored a variety of ways to reach the language group with the gospel.

Less than 1 percent of the nation's Hispanics currently are members of Southern Baptist churches, he added.

Basing his report on 1987 statistics, Romo said attendance at Bible study could increase from 235,379 to 1,667,000; discipleship training enrollment could jump from 45,209 to 320,000; and participation in music programs would increase from 18,081 to 128,000.

Enrollment in the denomination's missions organizations would jump from 25,366 to 179,000 for Woman's Missionary Union and from 15,643 to 110,000 for Brotherhood.

By A.D. 2000, 3 percent of that group's buying power is expected to be \$4.2 billion, which would translate into a tithe representing \$422 million to local churches, he added.

Bob Sena of Atlanta and Daniel Sotelo of Fresno, Calif., representing the Southern Baptist Hispanic Conference, challenged the pastors to reach more of their language group through a variety of evangelistic avenues.

Sena is pastor of First Spanish Baptist Church and Sotelo is pastor of Templo Bautista and president of the national conference.

Sena called for a national revival "planned, promoted and conducted by Hispanics in 1992 -- the 500th anniversary of the founding of America by Christopher Columbus."

The revivals would help Hispanics reach their goal of encouraging each congregation to start two other churches by the turn of the century, he noted.

The two pastors also called for a national convocation on evangelism and church starting to equip Hispanics to start new churches in their communities.

A national Hispanic gifts discovery conference also was discussed. It would train youth and single adults to provide the leadership necessary to staff the new churches.

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Low youth choir enrollment
prompts philosophy analysis

By Charles Willis

N-SSB

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Continuing decline in youth choir enrollments in Southern Baptist churches may soon level off.

But a national youth choir consultant said he believes even an increase in the U.S. youth population may not reverse the trend to small youth choirs. Instead, James Hawkins of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church music department is encouraging youth leaders to re-evaluate their philosophies.

Figures dropped from a high of about 335,000 in the mid-1970s to less than 241,000 in 1988, Hawkins said. The current enrollment is virtually the same as in 1967, the year "Good News" began a trend in youth musicals that continued with steadily increasing enrollments for five years. A plateau of enrollment followed, and the numbers began to plunge in 1977.

The enrollment trend has followed the youth population of the United States, he said, with fewer youth and greater numbers of adults and senior adults. But today's conditions, and those for the foreseeable future, do not provide encouragement for better times ahead even when more youth will be in the general population.

"Youth who could be available are tied up with jobs to support cars and clothes," he observed. "And Sunday isn't as sacred as it used to be to leaders of extra-curricular school activities. Parents have encouraged this by expecting excellence in school-related activities."

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Hawkins cited a positive side to what some might view as a gloomy picture: "We Baptists have opened our eyes to the broader ministry to youth. Youth choir was the youth ministry of the '60s and '70s."

"Today, we have more youth ministers, and they've gotten youth into other activities, including Bible study, discipleship and recreation programs that get them into church program organizations.

"The minister of music and the youth minister are not in competition, but they are working to meet specialized needs. We're going to have to re-learn to minister to youth where they are. Not all youth will have the time or interest to be in a choir. Laying a guilt trip on them is not the way to minister to them.

"We must be ready to minister fully to the youth that are challenged by the excellence demanded in youth choir. In choir, one learns to give oneself in service.

"Yes, we need to make it as interesting, fun and meaningful as we can. But we need to minister to their needs. We don't need to make them choose between being the best swimmer and the best choir member."

Parents of youth are a significant target audience for ministers of music and youth ministers, Hawkins said.

"Much more today than ever before, we have to communicate to the youth and their parents the benefits of church involvement in terms of stewardship of talents and of spiritual ministry," he said. "We have to minister to those who are there as though they were our own -- to help them grow into a maturity for leadership in the church in the future, not just to provide temporary excitement and euphoria."

Hawkins advocated encouraging instrumental talent as well as vocal participation.

"Youth can use all their musical skills to praise the Lord. Choosing music to meet their needs says a lot to them," he stressed. "Youth choir is a process to pass through. It is not the ultimate goal."

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