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N-FMB

Baptists to coordinate
Eastern Europe aid

By Art Toalston

DORFWEIL, West Germany (BP)--With numerous Baptist groups launching relief and evangelism efforts in Eastern Europe, a clearinghouse committee has been formed to channel Baptist resources to the most urgent needs.

"The key word is stewardship," said Keith Parker, director of Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board work in Europe.

Baptist Response-Europe is the name of the committee, created during a Jan. 22-23 consultation of representatives from Baptist unions in seven Eastern European countries, the Baptist World Alliance, European Baptist Federation and Southern Baptist Convention. The 33 participants met in Dorfweil, West Germany.

It was the first meeting of representatives of Eastern European Baptist unions in the wake of monumental political changes that have jolted the region in recent months. Parker described it as "a significant historical occasion" for Baptists.

But the participants spent little time celebrating. Rather, they grappled with the challenges at hand in Eastern Europe.

"Many mission groups, Baptist groups and individual churches are responding to the needs and opportunities in Eastern Europe but usually without reference to each other," Parker said. "Food and medicine are oversupplied in some areas, while other areas go lacking. Some churches and evangelism projects get much help, while others get no help."

The result so far is "poor stewardship" of relief aid and of efforts to evangelize people and strengthen the region's churches, Parker said. He quoted one of the Eastern European representatives as saying, "You can't have food rotting in one place while people starve in another place."

Baptist Response-Europe will seek "to gain more accurate information and develop more appropriate means of meeting needs without some of the chaos that has existed," Parker said. He will be one of three members of its coordinating committee, along with Karl-Heinz Walter, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation, who will be the chairman, and Archie Goldie, director of the Baptist World Alliance's relief department.

"It's frightening to see literally thousands of individuals, groups and churches that are trying to rush in and help," Parker said. "Most of the (Eastern European) folks are overwhelmed by all the offers and need help in sorting them out."

Baptist Response-Europe will help Southern Baptists make the best possible use of a \$100,000 Foreign Mission Board allocation of hunger and relief funds for Romania and \$1 million in funds earmarked in December for evangelism, Bible printing and church-growth projects throughout Eastern Europe.

In Romania, for example, cities and towns in the western part of the country, particularly near the border with Hungary, have received great amounts of aid. But 500 miles to the east, little or no assistance has come. "People aren't getting over there to help," Parker said.

Two Foreign Mission Board officials, John Cheyne, who coordinates human needs ministries, and Van Williams, formerly a physician in India, will travel to Romania in early February to consult with Baptist leaders about key needs throughout the country.

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Europeans themselves, including their governments, are taking a leading role in relief efforts throughout the crumbling Eastern bloc, Parker noted. Even representatives of Bulgarian Baptists, who number less than 700 in 10 churches, loaded six small cars with relief supplies and drove them to Romania during the Christmas season.

Europeans are experiencing something akin to a family reunion after 40 years of separation, Parker said. "Many of the scars of World War II were never really healed; they were plastered over with the wall dividing east and west.

"There are longstanding cultural divisions," Parker acknowledged, but also generations of families "divided by fences that were set up by politicians" before and after World War II.

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Stanley Crabb, director of European Baptist Press Service in Switzerland, contributed to this report.

European Baptist leader says
God has granted a 'new day'

By Ken Camp

N-TEXAS

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DALLAS (BP)--God has opened a door of opportunity for Baptists to start English-language churches in the economic crossroads of a rapidly changing Europe, according to John W. Merritt, executive director of the European Baptist Convention.

Merritt spoke at a partnership missions reception in Fort Worth, Texas, Jan. 22. The Baptist General Convention of Texas currently is involved in a partnership with the English-language churches that constitute the European Baptist Convention.

"God has given us a new day of opportunity," he said, holding up a piece of stone chipped from the Berlin Wall and pointing to the opening of previously closed Eastern European countries.

The months ahead will be an important period of transition for English-speaking European Baptist churches, which originally were created to reach U.S. military personnel and other transplanted Americans, Merritt noted.

"As political and economic changes continue to occur, we are likely to see a reduction of United States military forces in Europe," he said.

In the future, English-speaking Baptist churches in Europe increasingly will become international and geared more toward reaching business people, Merritt predicted. The European Baptist Convention's goal is to start three new English-language churches annually for the next five years.

"It will take enormous resources, but we believe God has opened a door for us," he said. "English is such a common language of commerce, many people are attracted to churches because they are English-speaking.

"We want to plant English-language churches in the crossroads of Europe and thereby reach people with the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Terry Carter, chairman of the European Baptist Convention partnership missions committee, joined Merritt in noting that English-language European Baptist churches urgently need both pastors and interim pastors.

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Volunteers to go
to Soviet Union

By Mike Creswell

N-FMB

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LENINGRAD, U.S.S.R. (BP)--Forty-eight Southern Baptist students have been invited to help renovate a Soviet Baptist church in Leningrad during the summer -- the first time Southern Baptists have been allowed to send short-term workers into the Soviet Union.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has earmarked \$150,000 to provide materials and help pay for the renovation, which is expected to boost Baptist work in the Leningrad area, said Keith Parker, the board's director for Europe.

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Soviet Baptists say the project will be the first time outsiders have been permitted to work with them on such a basis. "This will be looked at as a precedent in the history of the Soviet Union," said Sergei Nikolaev, pastor of the Baptist church known as the Temple of the Gospel in Leningrad.

Nikolaev said he has secured necessary permits for the students to come, but acknowledged the project would not have been possible until recently. "The general democratization of the society and the laws and acceptance of another point of view are, of course, factors in this project," he said.

The project is drawing attention from Baptists throughout Europe because of the church building's historic nature and the ministries Baptists foresee basing there to reach the northwest region of the Soviet Union.

The refurbished building is expected to house a school and a range of mission-related ministries in addition to providing worship and educational space for the congregation. The \$150,000 Foreign Mission Board grant was approved last fall and is not part of the board's December appropriation of \$1 million to bolster Baptist work in Eastern Europe, Parker said.

The sending of students will be coordinated by the mission board and the national student ministries section of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. Four 12-member teams will work about two weeks each on the renovation from May through August, staying with Baptist families in the Leningrad area.

Although the students may have some time to preach or teach, Nikolaev stressed he is looking for competent craftsmen, not general helpers. "We don't want just volunteers. We want skilled workers who can do woodwork, stonework, any type of work, not just for fun but professionally," he said.

Quality work is vital because of the nature of the building, Nikolaev said. The historic structure, built around the turn of the century, once belonged to the Old Believers Church, one of the oldest branches of the Russian Orthodox Church. Only 25 members of the Old Believers Church, most of them elderly, are left in Leningrad today, according to Nikolaev. They were happy Baptists took over the building, he said.

Closed as a church in 1933, the building was used periodically as a factory until last year. "Its condition is very bad. But the general construction is good. That's why we decided to take it," said Nikolaev. "It is not just a building, but a renewal of our national heritage."

Equally historic for Baptists is the fact that they own the property. When they applied to the government for a building in the city center, several properties were offered. The Baptists decided on the Old Believers Church and were given the building with a clear title.

"Usually, buildings are given rent-free for 25 years maximum, but this one is unlimited by time. This is the first," said Nikolaev.

Because the church building is seen as historically valuable, Leningrad residents have a keen interest in seeing it restored and used again, Nikolaev said. Even non-believers have come to lend a hand in the renovation. After three months of work, the ground floor is near completion. But much work remains and the project is expected to cost more than \$1 million, he said.

The renovated building will seat about 500 people in the main sanctuary with space for an equal number to stand. A separate conference hall with video transmission of services will seat another 400 to 500 people, he said.

Organized as a congregation just three months ago, the new Baptist church already has some 400 members and is attracting between 800 and 1,000 people to Sunday services. Some come from other Baptist churches, Nikolaev acknowledged, but about 60 percent of the newcomers are from a non-Christian background.

"Every Sunday morning 25 to 30 people come forward (to declare their faith in Christ). We baptized 20 new members recently and have another group of 60 preparing for baptism in March. Many of them are young people," he said.

Students are a fact of life in Leningrad, where a large university and scores of colleges and technical schools are located. The city may be home to as many as 300,000 students, Nikolaev estimated.

Nikolaev and other area Baptist leaders plan to make the church a center for outreach and ministry throughout the sprawling northwest region of the Soviet Union.

The new church is being supported by the 2,500-member Leningrad Baptist Church and the Northwest District Baptist Association, which Nikolaev was superintendent from 1979 to 1989. During that time the association grew from 33 to 76 churches and mission congregations. The region is the fastest-growing area for Soviet Baptists, according to Parker.

At least a dozen sites for church planting already are targeted by the new church, Nikolaev said. Seminars will begin next fall which eventually will develop into a school of evangelism and mission. The program will be aided by the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, and the Institute of Mission and Evangelism based there. Southern Baptist representative Earl Martin, the institute's director, has been helping Nikolaev with school plans. Other ministries planned by the new church include a prayer effort, work in hospitals and prisons and a printing operation.

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Congress to resume debate
on child-care legislation

By Kathy Palen

N-BJC

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WASHINGTON (BP)--As members return for the second session of the 101st Congress, child care promises to remain on the legislative priority list.

Since the Senate already has passed a comprehensive child-care bill, action now must be taken by the House of Representatives -- where Democrats are divided over how to provide federal funding for child-care services.

Last fall, the House attached two versions of a child-care bill -- one designed by the Education and Labor Committee and the other by the Ways and Means Committee -- to the fiscal 1990 budget-reconciliation bill. But when the measure went to conference with the Senate, House participants were unable to work out a compromise between the competing versions of H.R. 3 and finally stripped both from the reconciliation bill.

During the new session, the House Democratic leadership is faced with either forcing a compromise between supporters of the two approaches to federal child-care funding or allowing the dispute to be fought out on the House floor.

The conflict centers on whether the government should establish a new grant program or use the existing Social Services Block Grant to distribute federal funds for child-care services.

The Education and Labor Committee advocated establishing a new grant program that would provide funds for day-care programs for children under age 13. The funds would be distributed through the states, which in turn would give the money to eligible child-care providers.

In contrast, the Ways and Means Committee approved a proposal to increase the Social Security Act's Title XX block grant program. The increase would be earmarked for child care and could not be used to take the place of federal and state funds already being used for that purpose.

But even after the House works out a compromise on the child-care issue, that legislation must be reconciled with the bill already passed by the Senate.

The Senate child-care package would authorize \$1.75 billion in direct grants for payments to parents and child-care providers, as well as almost \$2 billion in tax credits to assist low-income parents with young children.

The final hurdle to enactment of child-care legislation will be the approval of President Bush, who has expressed concerns about the approaches being taken in the Senate and House.

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Evangelism impossible without ministry
says Southern Baptist home missionary

By Ken Camp

N-Texas

DALLAS (BP)--Meeting human needs is an essential part of evangelism, according to Nathan Porter of Waco, Texas, assistant director of church and community ministries, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Porter led a workshop in late January on "Sharing Jesus in Weekday Ministries" in Fort Worth, Texas, prior to the 1990 Texas Baptist Evangelism Conference.

"I personally believe that 99.99 percent of the people who come to Christ were ministered to first. Evangelism is impossible unless we minister to people at their point of need," he said.

Both a verbal witness for Christ and a non-verbal witness through ministry are necessary parts of a complete presentation of the gospel, he said. Persons wishing to share the gospel of Jesus through day-to-day ministries must learn to listen and to model their ministries on Jesus' encounters with hurting people.

Christians also must be willing to confront modern-day issues with a truly prophetic voice, not just "saying a sweet word for Jesus," according to Porter.

"The sad thing is that the church often is silent where a voice is needed," he said.

Christians need to share personal testimonies not only of their conversion experiences, but of other life situations in which God has intervened, Porter said. Finally, Christian witnesses must share enough of the gospel for people to make an intelligent decision and then must call for a response.

"Always call for response. Challenge the person to take a stand, take a risk and get honest," Porter said.

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Missionary's mother dies
after Namibia car crash

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WINDHOEK, Namibia (BP)--Imogene Martz of Birmingham, Ala., the mother of Southern Baptist missionary John Martz, died Jan. 21 in Namibia, one day before scheduled surgery for a broken leg she sustained in an auto accident.

Doctors said the death may have resulted from a blood clot.

Mrs. Martz, 70, arrived in Windhoek, Namibia, Dec. 29 to visit her son, his wife, Sarah, and their daughter, Mary Beth. The Martzes, also of Birmingham, have been missionaries to the southwest African country since December 1986. Other arriving visitors included two of Mrs. Martz's daughters, Billy Jean Long of Birmingham and Bobby Turner of Knoxville, Tenn., and John Martz's grown son, John Martz Jr., of Birmingham.

As the group left the Windhoek airport in two vehicles, the car driven by Sarah Martz collided with another vehicle. Imogene Martz suffered a broken arm and compound fracture of the left femur. Sarah Martz sustained two cracked ribs and a hairline crack in a vertebrae. Mary Beth Martz and Long suffered cuts and lacerations.

Doctors in a Windhoek hospital set Mrs. Martz's arm and put her broken leg in traction. They could not put a pin in the leg immediately since the bone had pierced the skin and the danger of infection existed. Surgery was scheduled for Jan. 22, but Mrs. Martz's condition began deteriorating Jan. 20.

Long and John Martz Jr. returned to the United States Jan. 1. Turner remained behind, planning to accompany her mother home as soon as she was able to travel.

Following a memorial service for Mrs. Martz in Windhoek, John, Sarah and Mary Beth Martz accompanied Mrs. Turner's body from Namibia Jan. 24 and were scheduled to arrive in Birmingham Jan. 26. The funeral tentatively was scheduled for Jan. 29 in Birmingham.

A widow, Mrs. Martz is survived by two sons, four daughters, two sisters, three brothers and 12 grandchildren. She was a member of Edgewater Baptist Church in Birmingham.

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