



**BAPTIST PRESS**  
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE  
SBC Executive Committee  
901 Commerce #7E  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203  
(615) 244-2300  
Alvin C. Shackelford, Director  
Dan Martin, News Editor  
Marv Knox, Feature Editor

**BUREAUS**

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367  
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201  
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300  
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151  
WASHINGTON 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

March 19, 1990

90-40

HMB enlisting witnesses  
for New Orleans project

By Mark Wingfield

*N-HMB*

ATLANTA (BP)--Organizers of the "Sharing Hope with Greater New Orleans" project now are recruiting 3,000 people willing to share their Christian faith with residents of the host city for the 1990 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

More than 600 pastor-teachers already have responded to a request for 250 people to lead training sessions for the door-to-door witnessing effort in New Orleans June 8-9, according to officials of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Southern Baptists will gather in New Orleans June 12-14 to conduct business and hear reports from their agencies and institutions. As a precursor to that event, the Home Mission Board and Louisiana Baptist Convention are planning an evangelistic blitz in the city, similar to the door-to-door witnessing done during last year's Las Vegas, Nev., convention.

Through last year's effort, nearly 1,000 people made professions of faith in Jesus Christ.

This year, the emphasis is on both training and sending witnesses, said Howard Ramsey, HMB personal evangelism director.

Ramsey had issued a request for 250 pastor-teachers to lead evangelism training sessions in Louisiana churches the weekend before the convention. More than 600 pastors responded to his request.

From those 600, workers at the Louisiana Baptist Convention will select volunteers to lead the training sessions in participating churches, Ramsey said. Those selected will be notified by letter and given details about where to report.

Those not assigned as teachers still are needed to participate in the door-to-door witnessing blitz, Ramsey said: "We are encouraging everyone to join us in knocking on doors, whether they are selected as teachers or not. Obviously, there are only so many positions for pastor-teachers, but we hope that won't keep any pastor from being a witness in New Orleans."

The 600 pastors have committed to bring another 1,800 people with them. But more volunteers still are needed, he said.

Southern Baptists' experience in Las Vegas last year taught the importance of door-to-door evangelism in the convention's host city, Ramsey reported.

In November, after the SBC had met in Las Vegas in June, Ramsey received a letter from a woman who lives in the one area of Las Vegas Southern Baptists did not visit.

Jody Gilbert said she found one of the Home Mission Board tracts that had been thrown on the ground in another area of town that caters to tourists. "Your tract was so dirty, I had to give it a bath," she said.

Gilbert, who is a Christian, explained that she lives away from the glitzy tourist attractions, in "an impoverished ghetto filled with broken spirits."

--more--

"The people in my neighborhood are much more ready to receive Christ than the well-off tourists," she wrote. "Please, next time you come to Las Vegas, come to my neighborhood. Even though the people here are financially poor, this neighborhood has a wealth of souls ready to receive Jesus as their personal savior."

This letter moved Ramsey to make certain that as many volunteers as possible were enlisted to canvass all of New Orleans. "We need everyone who can come to New Orleans early to participate in saturating the city with the gospel of Jesus Christ," he said.

The evangelistic event will begin with an orientation for pastor-teachers Friday, June 8, at 3 p.m., followed by a rally for all participants at 4:30 p.m. Both events will take place at Victory Assembly Baptist Church, 5708 Airline Drive, in Metairie.

The pastor-teachers will lead training sessions in local churches beginning at 8 a.m. Saturday morning. Then all participants will go out for door-to-door witnessing from 10:15 to 12:15 a.m. and from 1:15 to 3:15 p.m. The witnesses will gather back in the churches for a report time at 3:30 p.m.

Youth rallies will be held in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Homma, Hammond and Slidell Saturday night. Churches throughout the New Orleans area will host joint Sunday school for youth and adults and "Harvest" services Sunday morning to conclude the project.

Anyone willing to participate in the evangelistic blitz should register by writing the Home Mission Board's personal evangelism department at 1350 Spring St. NW, Atlanta, Ga. 30367.

--30--

Variety of topics addressed  
during Washington briefing

By Kathy Palen

*N-BJC*

Baptist Press  
3/19/90

WASHINGTON (BP)--Sessions on the U.S. Supreme Court, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, churches and taxation, ethics in Congress, clergy malpractice and urban ministries, as well as visits to the White House and the embassy of the U.S.S.R., highlighted a Washington briefing for Baptist editors.

The March 14-15 briefing, sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, attracted editors of Baptist state newspapers and writers from Baptist Press bureaus.

During a two-hour briefing in the White House's Roosevelt Room, President George Bush dropped by to greet the editors and answer questions. Bush commented on a variety of topics, ranging from drugs to Central America to the Soviet Union to China.

"For the first time, I think we're making progress in this war" against drugs, the president said. He told the editors his administration needs their input, help and advice as it continues to fight the nation's drug problem.

Shifting to developments in Nicaragua, Bush pledged American support. "We have an emergency," he said. "We need to help them guarantee their democracy."

In discussing changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Bush called Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev a "different kind of leader." Gorbachev may or may not prevail, Bush said, explaining that the Soviet leader has so many problems at home. "I salute him for staying with the concept of peaceful change," he added.

Bush said he is not as encouraged by the situation in China. He specifically cited the human rights issue in that country.

At the invitation of the Bush administration, five other Southern Baptists attended the White House session. They were Paul Pressler, SBC Executive Committee vice chairman; Robert Tenery, Southern Baptist Advocate editor; and Albert Lee Smith, Rob Showers and Norris Sydnor, Public Affairs Committee members.

--more--

Participants in the editors' briefing also met with Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmun. During the off-the-record session, Blackmun spoke about such issues as the high court's future, church-state separation, abortion and the death penalty.

Several speakers provided perspectives on changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

John Finerty, a staff member for the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, reported on religious liberty advances being made in the Soviet Union, including the release of all Baptist religious prisoners and increased evangelical activity outside the church.

Baptists in that country are involved in prison ministry, charitable volunteer work, open-air libraries, newspaper publishing, and Bible and literature distribution, said Finerty, a Southern Baptist who travels frequently in the Soviet Union.

Although progress is being made, Finerty said, he received reports of police breaking up prayer meetings as late as last year. "Some government officials still have the attitude that if you don't have a piece of paper you can't do it," he said.

Another CSCE staff member, Judy Ingram, reported on human rights developments in Eastern Europe. Up to a year ago, she said, a general pattern existed in that region, but now seven models can be found.

Commenting on religious rights, she said: "Initially, I think the situation in Eastern Europe looks good. But in some places, you still do have to register your church, and the government may say, 'No.'"

Eastern Europe has had a long drought of religious literature, and people there are starved for relationships with co-religionists abroad, said Ingram, who encouraged the editors to travel in Eastern Europe.

Speaking of her own experiences with Baptists in Romania, Ingram said: "I am not a Baptist. But if I were a Romanian, I would have converted. They are the most courageous group of people I've met. They open up their homes to you and their hearts to you."

During the White House briefing, Robert Gates, National Security Council deputy director, discussed U.S. policy toward Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Eastern Europeans have a strong foundation on which to build and should be able to do so with "wise leadership and real sacrifice and help from the rest of us," Gates said. The speed of change there will depend upon how quickly the countries decide they cannot straddle economic systems, he added.

The United States is committed to providing direct financial assistance, recruiting aid from other countries and supplying "know-how" to countries in Eastern Europe.

In regard to the Soviet Union, Gates said a revolution is under way.

U.S. policy toward the U.S.S.R. includes support for the reform process; recognition that it is a "top-down change," with Gorbachev as the engine of revolution; dealing with the present reality, as well as the future promise, of U.S.-Soviet relations; recognition that while U.S. influence over changes there is quite marginal, the government should be prepared to assist; and an emphasis on the importance of maintaining the unity of the Western alliance.

The editors' briefing also featured a question-and-answer session with Joe Schlesinger, a native of Eastern Europe who has covered recent developments there as a news correspondent for the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. Wayne Angell, a Federal Reserve Board governor, also spoke about his work with the U.S.S.R. on that government's monetary system.

In addition, the editors visited the embassy of the U.S.S.R, where they were briefed by Vladimir Belgakov, first secretary of the embassy, and Boris Malakhov, press secretary for the embassy.

The Washington briefing also featured:

-- A presentation on ethics in Congress by Wilson Abney, chief counsel for the Senate Select Committee on Ethics.

-- A discussion of churches and taxation by two top-ranking Internal Revenue Service officials.

-- A presentation on clergy malpractice by J. Brent Walker, BJC associate general counsel.

-- A panel discussion of ministry opportunities and challenges faced by Washington churches led by three local Baptist ministers.

--30--

South Africa missionary  
caught in homeland violence

By Craig Bird

N- FMB

Baptist Press  
3/19/90

GA RANKUWA, Bophuthatswana (BP)--The crowd of angry youths couldn't believe Ron Lomax refused to let them commandeer his van when they surged around it.

Soldiers from the South African Defense Force couldn't believe he insisted on going back into an area where mobs were burning buildings, overturning cars and hurling gasoline bombs at police.

Lomax couldn't believe he got tear-gassed.

A Southern Baptist missionary from Fredericktown, Mo., Lomax was caught in the wrong place March 7 when residents of the South African "homeland" of Bophuthatswana took to the streets to demand their country be reincorporated into South Africa. Bophuthatswana's independence is recognized only by South Africa.

About 50,000 people marched, mirroring similar protests in the other homelands of Ciskei, Venda and Gazankulu. Lomax, his wife, Karen, and their children Braden, age 4, Kaylan, 3, and Kelsey, six months, are the only white family living in their Ga Rankuwa neighborhood.

Aware of the possible historical significance of the protest, Lomax decided to videotape some of the action. But the demonstration turned violent and trapped him.

"Six or seven 'comrades' (youths aligned with the African National Congress in its fight against apartheid) surrounded my van and demanded I give it to them because a baby needed to be taken to the hospital," said Lomax.

"I refused to get out of the van or let them in, but I offered to drive the baby myself. There weren't enough of them to block the van, so they finally agreed to show me the way."

Two women with two babies who had been caught in a cloud of tear gas got into the van, and Lomax asked a man from the crowd to ride with him to show the way to the hospital. Every time they were stopped by other rioters or barricades of burning tires or overturned cars, the man explained the situation, assuring everyone that Lomax also was a "comrade."

After taking the women and babies to a clinic, Lomax declined to drive the man all the way home, but agreed to take him as close as he could en route to his own home. That detour led to a firsthand experience with tear gas.

--more--

A woman ran up to the van, begging Lomax to take a 10-year-old boy out of the violence. No one in the neighborhood knew the boy, and he couldn't find his way home. Lomax agreed, but before the woman could return with the boy, more tear gas canisters were fired into the area. A cloud enveloped Lomax and the van as he argued with another group of comrades who insisted he go buy gasoline for them so they could make more bombs to battle the police.

"I'll think about it," Lomax said as the woman and boy crawled into the van and he drove off, squinting to see through the tear gas. He didn't think long, though, and returned home after getting the boy to safety.

The next problem facing Lomax: getting his son, Braden, home from school in Rosslyn, South Africa. He drove there on back roads but returned on the main highway, where South African troops informed him no one was allowed in or out of Bophuthatswana. "But I have a wife and baby in there," Lomax argued. The soldiers replied: "We aren't responsible then. It's your choice."

The route home was littered with more burning tires, wrecked automobiles and telephone poles piled across the road, but Lomax made it home safely.

Later in the evening, when he learned from news reports that seven people had died in the rioting, the seriousness of it all finally hit Lomax. "I really got scared then," he admitted. "I don't think I'll be so anxious to video something like that again."

--30--

Southeast Texan credits  
Acteens for her success

By Ken Camp

F- Texds

Baptist Press  
3/19/90

DALLAS (BP)--If it hadn't been for Acteens, Dorothy Syzdek of Northside Baptist Church in Baytown, Texas, thinks she probably would be on drugs, pregnant or dead.

Instead, she is a college-bound high school senior who was recognized at the recent Texas Acteens Impact meeting at Baylor University as a special Acteen.

Syzdek grew up in a rough, low-income neighborhood on the north side of Houston. As a 12-year-old, she frequented the nearby mission center directed by Southern Baptist home missionary Mildred McWhorter.

"I liked to go to Club Day at the center on Fridays. I went there for the singing. But one week I got sick and had to go home," she recalled. "I was really surprised later in the day when this lady named Sharon Alexander came to see me."

Alexander explained that she had brought a group of Acteens -- participants in the Southern Baptist missions program for teen girls -- from her church in Baytown to the center as a missions action project. She told Syzdek about herself and her two daughters, and she invited the young girl to spend a weekend at her home sometime.

To Alexander's surprise, Syzdek asked to go home with her that weekend. Soon, the weekend visits became a regular routine, and she also spent two weeks that summer at the Alexanders' home.

Just before Syzdek entered the eighth grade, the Alexanders invited her to come live with them permanently.

At first the offer was declined, but because of a worsening situation in their neighborhood and due to financial pressures, the Syzdeks agreed to let their daughter accept the Alexanders' invitation a year later.

"All of the kids in my neighborhood were getting pregnant or they were on drugs or worse. I wanted to get out of that," Syzdek said.

The move came at a time when Syzdek was feeling tremendous conflict spiritually, she recalled.

--more--

"My mother is a Baptist, and my father is a Catholic, so I went to two churches," she said.

Although she made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ at age 6 in a Baptist church, she also was completing confirmation classes in the Catholic Church.

"I knew I was saved, but things were just not right," she said.

The same year that she came to live with the Alexanders in Baytown, Syzdek attended an Acteens convention where she rededicated her life to Christ.

Several months later, she was baptized at Northside Baptist Church.

She then became actively involved in missions actions training and projects. After completing all of the necessary steps, she was singled out by San Jacinto Baptist Association for recognition as a Special Acteen.

"And just think: It was all because of Acteens. It's like a big circle. Sharon brought an Acteens group to the mission center where Miss McWhorter told her about me. And now I'm an Acteen," she said.

"I've gone back to the mission center to take supplies. One day -- maybe one summer while I'm in college -- I want to go back there to spend some time helping.

"Sometimes I wonder what would have happened to me if I hadn't been willing to listen to the Lord. I'd probably be where the friends I grew up with are. Every time I go home to visit, I have to ask: 'Who's on drugs? Who's pregnant? Who's dead now?' I'm so thankful I followed the Lord."