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March 30, 1990

90-46

Fighting in Liberia forces
missionaries out of region

By Donald D. Martin

N-FMB

MONROVIA, Liberia (BF)--Most Southern Baptist missionaries in the Liberian cities of Yekepa and Zwedru left for Liberia's capital, Monrovia, March 30 because of an upsurge in fighting in the area.

Six Southern Baptists were in the eastern Liberian region, where fighting has intensified between government and rebel forces.

Missionary administrator Bradley Brown in Monrovia said five of the personnel were in Yekepa March 29, only a few miles from the Guinea border. Brown arranged to fly them to Monrovia March 30.

Brown arranged the evacuation after learning of heavier fighting in the area and the deaths of missionaries Tom and June Jackson of the United Liberian Inland Church. The Jacksons were reported killed when they tried to drive to safety from their home in Bahn.

The Jacksons' vehicle was found on or around March 24. Their bodies were found March 28. Jackson, an American, and his wife, who was British, had worked in Liberia for 40 years. Press reports said other missionaries in the area believe guerrillas shot the couple accidentally when they were leaving their village home in eastern Nimba County.

Southern Baptists in the area include career missionaries Earl and Jane Williams of West Monroe, La., and Knoxville, Tenn., respectively, and their 9-year-old son, Kenneth; journeyman Lynette Sneed of Liberty, Mo.; and volunteers Cecil and Ellajane Suttley of Arkadelphia, Ark.

Sneed, the Suttleys, Mrs. Williams and her son left for Monrovia March 30. Earl Williams elected to stay in Yekepa.

Missionary Margaret Fairburn of Tylertown, Miss., arrived in Monrovia by plane March 29 from her home in Zwedru.

United States authorities began urging U.S. citizens to leave Nimba County March 27 when fighting increased between the army and rebels, who are trying to overthrow Liberian President Samuel Doe.

The U.S. Embassy in Liberia had earlier said Yekepa was safe, but U.S. officials began advising Americans March 28 to leave that city also. Yekepa is where Southern Baptist missionary Libby Senter and her 10-year-old daughter Rachel were murdered in 1986 in an incident unrelated to the current fighting.

About 50 Americans live in Nimba County. Some 6,000 Americans live throughout Liberia. Fifty-four Southern Baptist workers are assigned to the country.

Liberia, founded in 1847 after being settled by freed American slaves in the 1820s, has seen sporadic fighting since rebels entered the country from Ivory Coast Dec. 24. President Doe, who has ruled since a coup in 1980, charged some of the rebels were trained in Libya.

More than 150,000 Liberians have left Nimba County since the rebel offensive started. About 60,000 refugees have fled to Ivory Coast and more than 80,000 have sought refuge in Guinea. Others have fled into the bush.

Simultaneous revivals bringing
hope to Southern Baptists

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

ATLANTA (BP)--"Here's Hope" revivals are bringing new hope to Southern Baptist churches across America, pastors and denominational workers reported at the end of the second week of the simultaneous revivals.

For the six weeks between March 18 and April 29, Southern Baptist churches nationwide are hosting revivals with the theme "Here's Hope. Jesus cares for you." The simultaneous revival emphasis is sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Members of First Baptist Church in Ramsey, Ill., have "begun to grasp some hope" for their situation as a result of the Here's Hope revival, said pastor Norman Lockwood.

The church in a town of 1,100 averages 135 in Sunday school attendance but had crowds of more than 140 during the revival. During the meeting, 20 people trusted Christ; in the week afterward, two others also made commitments.

"Our members were really down and discouraged," the pastor said, explaining that the 100-year-old church had been through several "tragic situations" in recent years, including the forced termination of a pastor.

"We had some real struggles and a lot of hurt," Lockwood said. "But it seemed like our people rallied around this revival. It pulled our church together in unity.

"It's a whole different frame of mind now. Our meeting ceased, but our revival is still going on."

In Hawaii, state evangelism director W.C. Garland said churches on the islands are having "the best revivals in the history of the convention," with about 100 professions of faith recorded already.

Mililani Baptist Church noticed a change from the first day of revival preparation. "We started having decisions almost from the first week," pastor Gene Phillips said.

The church saw 23 people accept Christ during the revival and three more make decisions on the Sunday after the meeting. In addition, several families from Buddhist backgrounds asked the pastor to dedicate their homes for Christ as a result of the revival, he said.

Back on the mainland, the revival fervor of Texas Baptists swept across the Rio Grande River into Acuna, Mexico, where 221 professions of faith were reported by Bethel Baptist Church, a congregation that previously averaged 65 in Sunday school attendance.

Isaias Cardenas, pastor of Templo South Baptist Church in Houston, and Oziel Rivas, a vocational evangelist from Dallas, preached in the revival services at Acuna. A medical missions team from First Baptist Church of Durant, Okla., also worked in the area during the revival.

Rivas said the revival was well under way by the time he arrived at Acuna on the fifth day of the meeting. "I could have preached from the concordance and there would have been decisions. Revival had already taken place."

From Mexico, Rivas went to Segunda Baptist Church, a Spanish-speaking congregation in Corpus Christi, Texas. That church recorded 62 professions of faith during the Here's Hope tent revival there.

One woman who professed Christ during the revival was drawn in while passing by the tent on foot one evening. She had left her home in an attempt to get away from frustrations with her husband and children. It was the first time she had ever stepped foot in an evangelical church service.

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A similar event happened at First Southern Baptist Church in Denair, Calif., where Steve Donaldson is pastor. On the final Sunday of the church's Here's Hope revival, an entire family trusted Christ on their first visit to the church.

"It started with the children," Donaldson said. "The first one to come forward was a 6-year-old girl." After that, another child and then the father and mother all walked the aisle to profess their faith.

The four members of that family were among 13 who committed themselves to Christ on the final day of the revival, he said. The church had set a goal of 10 baptisms for this year, which it has now surpassed with the 28 professions of faith recorded during the revival.

The key was prayer and preparation, Donaldson said. A revival task force had been at work since October, leading church members in prayer and outreach.

"It has turned our church completely around," the pastor said. "Our people now understand what commitment it takes to reach people for Christ, how much organization it requires, that it takes more than nonchalant prayer. You have to put names on a list and get down on your knees and pray for those people. That's what we did."

In San Bernadino, Calif., the Here's Hope emphasis spread beyond Southern Baptists into a citywide crusade involving 45 churches of various denominations. Attendance averaged 1,300, with more than 250 professions of faith.

Rob Zinn, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, said the Here's Hope crusade brought hope to San Bernadino just because of the unprecedented cooperation. "Our city desperately needed to see the churches come together on the central issue of Jesus Christ," he said. "Even if nothing else had come out of this, just putting 45 churches together was worth it."

"We talked about one doctrine, and that's salvation. We ran on the issue that we were going to preach Jesus. The crusade was to say to our city that there's hope in Jesus."

The Home Mission Board has established a "Here's Hope Victory Line" for churches across the nation to report similar results of their revival experiences. The number is (404) 898-7589. Calls are received between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Mondays through Fridays.

While some churches are reporting results of their revivals, others are reporting results while still in the early stages of preparation.

First Baptist Church of Weber City, Va., isn't scheduled to begin its Here's Hope meeting for two more weeks, but revival has already begun, said Richard Jones, minister of education and youth. "We've been having revival the last three weeks."

The church averages 150 in Sunday school attendance in a town of approximately 2,000 people. Yet the pastor has baptized 12 people since the church began its Here's Hope preparation.

"Revival has come to our church early," Jones said. "Definitely, God has done it."

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(Ken Camp of the Dallas bureau of Baptist Press contributed to this story.)

House approves
child-care bill

By Kathy Palen

N - BJC

Baptist Press
3/30/90

WASHINGTON (BP)--The House of Representatives has approved child-care legislation that would establish a voucher system for parents, provide tax credits for low-income families and set up school-based programs for "latchkey" children.

The bill, which would cost an estimated \$28 billion over five years, represents a compromise between proposals by House Democrats on the Education and Labor Committee and the Ways and Means Committee.

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Despite the threat of a presidential veto, the House approved the measure 265 to 145 after rejecting a White House-supported substitute.

As approved by the House, the legislation would:

-- Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit to help low-income families obtain child care. The bill would increase the amount of the EITC -- which is available only to working parents -- and adjust the credit for family size.

-- Increase funding for the Title XX Social Services Block Grant program, earmarking those increases for child care. States accepting those funds would be required to establish child-care standards and training requirements.

-- Establish a program that would use schools to provide care for pre-school children and before-school and after-school care for school-aged children. Most of these services would be targeted for children from low-income families.

-- Authorize additional funds to expand Head Start to a full-day, year-round program.

-- Provide money to states to improve the quality of child care.

-- Offer incentives to encourage private businesses to provide care for their employees' children.

The House measure also incorporates provisions for sectarian providers from the child-care legislation passed by the Senate last June.

Under the House bill, states that receive Title XX child-care funds would be required to establish a system of child-care vouchers, which could be used to purchase care from church-based centers.

Although the measure would prohibit the use of Title XX funds for "any sectarian purpose, including sectarian worship and instruction," it would exclude assistance in the form of vouchers from that prohibition.

The bill would allow sectarian programs to require their employees to adhere to the religious tenets and teachings of the organization operating the program. It also would permit such programs to require their employees not to use drugs or alcohol.

Religious child-care providers receiving less than 80 percent of their funds from federal and state governments would be allowed to give preference in hiring based on religion, as well as to admit children on the basis of religious preference for slots not directly funded by Title XX.

The House rejected an amendment that would have prohibited the use of any federal funds -- including vouchers -- under the Title XX program for any sectarian purpose, including worship or instruction. The amendment would have allowed religious organizations to receive federal funds if they operated non-sectarian programs.

Members also rejected an amendment that would have made voucher programs optional, not mandatory, for states.

In a 195 to 225 vote, the House defeated a substitute bill sponsored by Reps. Charles W. Stenholm, R-Texas, and E. Clay Shaw, R-Fla. The measure was supported by the Bush administration.

Although in some aspects similar to the House-approved bill, the Stenholm-Shaw substitute would not have authorized funds for school-based programs; would not have provided as much additional funding to Head Start and Title XX programs; and would not have required states to develop child-care standards.

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The House bill now goes to a conference committee with the Senate. Once a compromise is worked out, it will have to be approved by both the House and the Senate before being sent to the White House for President Bush's signature. Should the president veto the bill, Congress would have to muster a two-thirds vote in order to override the veto and enact the legislation.

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Elder stresses need
for church growth

N- CO
(SBTS)

Baptist Press
3/30/90

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptists must devote their energy and resources to a "biblical pattern of church growth" in order to be faithful to the gospel and their denominational heritage, Southern Baptist Sunday School Board President Lloyd Elder said.

In an address at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., Elder said church growth is "not incidental or on the parameters, but is at the central core of the gospel itself."

Elder's address was part of a Sunday School Board emphasis March 26-28 at the seminary. The event is conducted biennially to better acquaint seminarians with the board's products, services and employment opportunities.

Church growth, Elder said, "has to do with personal conversion," which he said involves "coming to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of life on the terms of the gospel set down in Holy Scripture."

Scripture also requires Christians to seek numerical additions in their churches and to share the gospel with people everywhere, he said: "In the Book of Acts and in some other places in Holy Scripture there is absolutely no apology for concern about numbers."

He also noted that first century Christians also were concerned with "geographical expansion." In the early church's proclamation of the gospel to the world, it demonstrated racial and ethnic inclusion, organizational development, financial support and behavioral and ethical transformation, he said: "All of this was inside a spiritual power that was beyond the abilities and beyond the explanation of the first century church."

The Southern Baptist identity and the heritage of the Sunday School Board and Southern Seminary mandate both institutions to work "toward a biblical pattern" of church growth, he said:

"The Southern Baptist family is counting on us to make a major contribution that is akin to the spirit of our pioneer forebears when they gave their best. They gave us a legacy we should long remember and build upon."

Elder urged seminarians to reflect on their faith journeys and their personal participation in church growth. Such examination, he said, helps create a "nurturing that leads us to a stronger relationship with Jesus Christ."

He pointed out Southern Baptists baptized fewer people in 1989 than in 1953, the year he began his preaching ministry. The decline, he pointed out, comes despite the fact that the number of Southern Baptist churches has increased from about 26,000 to almost 38,000 and Southern Baptist church membership has climbed from 7.8 million to 14.8 million.

"God must touch our hearts afresh and anew with a spiritual vitality that recognizes the central core of the gospel of Christ is that folks without the Savior are lost," he said.

In order to reach unconverted people, Elder said Christians need to be "bearers of the good news in a winsome way."

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CORRECTION: In Baptist Press story "Montoya challenges 1990 SBC nominations" dated 3/27/90, please make the following correction in graf 11:

Delete the words "and became a pastor in Arkansas" in line 3. The paragraph should read:

Montoya said he had been "a soldier in the political machine created by a group of individuals who abused the inerrancy issue for their own advantage," from 1982, when he graduated from Criswell College, until August of 1989.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Land says church faces
'appalling crisis' in culture

By Chip Alford & Scott Collins

N-CO
(SWBTS) Baptist Press
3/30/90

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Churches need a reawakening to help meet the challenge of "an appalling crisis in our culture," the executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission told students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, March 28.

That crisis exists, according to Richard Land, because churches have stopped loving people.

"Their buildings remain in tact. Their ministers minister and their congregations congregate, but their lamp stands have been removed," Land said during a visit to the school which included guest lectures in Christian ethics classes. "The church is plunged in darkness. It has no light because it has no love."

America is faced with crippling epidemics of alcohol and drug abuse, sexual immorality and pornography-fed violence, Land said. The homes and communities of the nation "are buffeted by the centrifugal forces and are racked by life diminishing philosophies," he said.

The crisis is first a philosophical one in the realm of beliefs and ideas, Land said, claiming Americans have become "disinherited spirits" and "cognitive wanderers" without any spiritual roots or sense of community.

One negative result of the philosophical crisis, he said, has been the decay of the family.

"The nuclear family as we have known it in the Judeo-Christian West is so shattered that concerted efforts are being made to redefine it to fit the new reality," Land said. "The family has all but ceased to function in a nurturing, moralizing way in major segments of American culture."

Land said the church "must reawaken among believers an understanding and a practice of the Christian family. We have got to have family practice, not just family preaching."

Next, Land said believers must reach beyond themselves to furnish the hurting with "a remedy for the hole in their hearts and an answer for the emptiness of their lives. We must be ready to tell them and to show them of a God who loves them, of a Jesus who died for them, and of an abundant life in which we are not the sum of our possessions."

The church, Land said, must share with the world the message that Jesus Christ is "the answer to their emptiness, a heal for their hurts."

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"We do not live in a good world," Land told students in an ethics class. "We live in an evil world. This is not a neutral world. It is a world that is racked by spiritual warfare."

Countering claims by pro-choice groups, Land told students abortion is not a women's issue, but is about life. "Life is an inalienable right. We are the last defense in the battle for human life," he added. "All life deserves respect, but human life demands reverence."

"When a woman has an abortion, she is imposing her morality on that baby and it is fatal."

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BP photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary

Oklahoma Brotherhood to
establish St. Croix base

By Jim Burton

N-CO
(B'hood)

Baptist Press
3/30/90

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Seven Oklahoma Baptists will establish the base of operation for Southern Baptist disaster relief efforts on St. Croix in the Virgin Islands, said Jim Furgerson, Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission disaster relief director.

M.B. Howard, St. Croix on-site coordinator, will lead the group in building a portable shower, living quarters and kitchen between March 30 and April 15. Howard, of Covington, Tenn., is the National Fellowship of Baptist Men's construction coordinator and a Tennessee Baptist Convention executive board member.

"Most of this Tulsa-based crew has been all over the world, and they are acquainted with hardship," said Laddie Adams, Oklahoma Baptist Brotherhood director. "They are glad to be the first crew to go and establish the base of operation."

In addition, the Oklahomans will model the time required to roof one home.

About 300 volunteers are needed to reroof 100 homes and rebuild two Baptist churches destroyed by Hurricane Hugo last September. Work teams are scheduled for one week each between April 16 and May 30, said Furgerson. More than 100 workers already are committed to the project.

"Through the Brotherhood Commission, each volunteer will be charged \$450 for air fare and food," said Furgerson.

The St. Croix project will operate similar to a joint Brotherhood Commission and Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board project following Hurricane Gilbert in 1989, said commission President James H. Smith. In the 1989 project, more than 800 volunteers worked in Jamaica rebuilding homes and churches.

"I am amazed at the number of men who want hands-on involvement in missions beyond the continental United States," said Furgerson. "This is one of the most economical and satisfying opportunities Baptist volunteers will have."

Volunteers interested in the St. Croix project should contact their state Brotherhood directors.

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BP photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Brotherhood Commission