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May 18, 1990

90-69

President Bush declines
invitation to speak at SBC

By Greg Warner

N- CO
(f12)

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--President George Bush has declined an invitation to speak to the Southern Baptist Convention next month after some Baptist leaders disapproved that he hosted gay and lesbian leaders at an April White House ceremony.

SBC President Jerry Vines and a handful of Southern Baptist leaders reportedly discussed "disinviting" the president in a conference call May 10. But the SBC Committee on Order of Business, which is responsible for arranging the program for the annual convention, was not involved in the discussion nor immediately informed of Bush's decision.

Conservative leaders have been upset since Bush invited representatives of the Gay and Lesbian Task Force to join other minority activists at a White House ceremony April 24 to witness Bush's signing of new federal legislation requiring records on hate crimes.

Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., raised the gay issue with the White House and asked that Bush consider those objections in his decision whether or not to speak at the Southern Baptist Convention June 12-14 in New Orleans, a Bush spokesman said.

"He wanted us to be aware of the fact ... that some conservatives might raise the (gay) issue," said Doug Wead, Bush's liaison to religious organizations. "He didn't want to see the president embarrassed or the meeting disrupted."

According to Wead, Vines also pointed out "some moderate and liberal Southern Baptists" were opposed to the president speaking at the convention under any circumstances. Wead said the president declined the invitation -- which the White House had sought -- because of a schedule conflict.

But Wead acknowledged the gay dispute was part of the discussion. He said he sympathized with Southern Baptists upset about the presence of gays at the signing ceremony. "The concern was not just these homosexual leaders being invited to the White House, but some of these are anti-religious bigots," he explained.

Richard Land, executive director of the SBC Christian Life Commission, complained in a letter to Bush April 30. "The White House should not be giving its sanction and implicit approval to such groups," Land wrote.

Land and a handful of other Baptist leaders reportedly discussed "disinviting" the president in a conference call with Vines May 10. Land would not say who took part in the discussion other than Vines.

But Land, who said he took part in the conference call at the invitation of Vines, said he told the SBC leaders he did not object to the president addressing the SBC. "I made it clear to Jerry that I would not perceive an invitation to the president as in any way undercutting the CLC or our letter objecting to the presence of the Gay and Lesbian Task Force at the bill signing," Land told the Florida Baptist Witness, newsjournal of the Florida Baptist Convention.

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Vines, who was in Memphis, Tenn., for a conference hosted by Bellevue Baptist Church where former SBC president Adrian Rogers is pastor, did not return telephone calls to inquire about the matter.

Ike Reighard, chairman of the Committee on Order of Business, told the Witness May 14 he was unaware of the conference call, the gay-rights dispute or the president's decision to decline.

Initially Reighard said May 14 the committee was still awaiting an answer from the White House. However, after checking with Vines, who was making the arrangements, Reighard said later in the day that Bush had declined a few days earlier.

Reighard, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Ga., said he was not sure why the president would cancel after Bush himself initiated the idea of speaking at the SBC, but he denied reports that Bush actually was "disinvited" by SBC leaders. "I have not talked to anyone in our group (committee) about that situation," he said. "I'm relying on information I received from the president of the convention. I would be very much surprised if that's what happened."

The invitation to Bush was issued by Reighard's committee several weeks ago after Wead informed Reighard and Vines, an ex officio member of the committee, of the president's desire to address Southern Baptists.

"I informally encouraged them to have the president in this year," Wead told the Witness. He said the president had schedule conflicts on two days of the three-day SBC meeting -- Tuesday, June 12, and Thursday, June 14. The committee's preference, according to Reighard and Wead, was June 14, but Bush "has a meeting with a head of state that very day," Wead said.

However, the president could have addressed Southern Baptists on Wednesday, June 13, Wead said. Although the Committee on Order of Business was not aware of the Wednesday possibility, Reighard said, it wouldn't have worked out. "Thursday really was the only option," he said May 17. "We didn't feel like it would be fair to move business sessions and things to Thursday to make room for the president."

Wead said Vines was informed that Bush had declined the invitation "probably Friday," May 11. "President Vines would have welcomed the president and wanted him there," Wead said. But given the schedule conflicts and the gay dispute, Wead added, Vines considered the president's decision "for the best."

"I'm disappointed that it didn't work out," the Bush aide said. "Some felt it was controversial (for the president to speak at the SBC), but I feel it was more controversial to invite gay leaders to the White House."

The decision to host gay activists at the bill-signing ceremony was not unanimous among the White House staff, Wead said.

The decision "very poorly served the president," he said.

Land, in his April 30 letter Bush, said his opposition to the presence of gays at the ceremony had nothing to do with the legislation, which was aimed at curbing hate crimes. "Such acts of violence against people are wrong," Land wrote. "It is quite another matter, however, for the president of the United States to invite leaders of homosexual and lesbian groups to be invited guests at an official White House ceremony precisely because they represent such groups.

"Such an action provides an implicit White House approbation of their lifestyle and it is something no previous administration has done."

Land told the Witness he is not concerned that his criticism of Bush, and his call for Baptists to write letters of protest, might alienate Southern Baptists from the political mainstream.

"Baptist conviction and beliefs are that the president made a grave mistake," he said. "My job was to make sure that the policymakers ... were aware of how upset Southern Baptists were going to be at this kind of quasi-recognition. My main concern was to make sure the president didn't do it again, and the way to make sure the president doesn't do it again is for him to get buckets of letters from Southern Baptists that are upset. And I think he will."

Still, Land said, Bush's invitation to speak at the SBC is a separate issue. "If the president wants to come and share his heart and mind with Southern Baptists, he ought to be able to do it," he said.

Reighard said his committee had heard "some positive and some negative" from Southern Baptists about the initial invitation to Bush. "The main concern is he's not a Southern Baptist," Reighard said. "But if we get to that point, where only Southern Baptists can speak to us, even Jesus couldn't speak."

Reighard said the White House asked that a videotaped message from the president be shown in place of the speech. But Reighard said problems with the video projection system at the Louisiana Superdome will prevent that. "There probably will just be a letter (from Bush) now," he said.

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Ingraham to challenge
church-state proposal

By Dan Martin & Marv Knox

N-10

Baptist Press
5/18/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--A proposal to shift responsibility for and funding of religious liberty concerns from the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs to the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission will be challenged at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Frank Ingraham, a Nashville attorney and former member of the SBC Executive Committee, sent a letter May 8 to SBC President Jerry Vines announcing he will challenge an Executive Committee recommendation which would assign responsibilities for religious liberty to the CLC.

Although the letter was addressed to Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., Ingraham noted it is an "open letter concerning separation of church and state issues," and sent copies to Baptist Press and state Baptist newspapers.

Ingraham said he will challenge the actions during the annual meeting of the SBC, scheduled June 12-14 at the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans.

In its February meeting, the Executive Committee adopted a recommendation to add religious liberty concerns to the program statement of the CLC, the moral and social concerns agency of the 14.9-million-member denomination.

The Executive Committee also recommended cutting the allocation to the BJCPA by 87.24 percent, from \$391,796 in 1989-90 to \$50,000 in 1990-91. The budget also increases the allocation to the CLC by 40.70 percent, from \$897,508 in 1989-90 to \$1,262,836 in 1990-91.

Ingraham's announcement of his intention to challenge the changes in the program statement and budget was one of four matters relating to the issue to arise recently. Others are:

-- Oliver S. Thomas, general counsel of the BJC, wrote to Sam Pace, chairman of the Executive Committee, asking for an opportunity to appear before the Executive Committee in its June 11 pre-convention meeting in New Orleans, in order to present "full, fair and accurate information" on the BJC.

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-- Fifteen Southern Baptist church historians signed an open letter to Southern Baptists urging them to "continue funding the Baptist Joint Committee at its present level."

-- Richard D. Land, executive director of the CLC, continued his pledge of "strict neutrality" on the issue but described its implications for a group of Maryland/Delaware Baptists.

Ingraham told Vines he will make a motion that the "program statement of the CLC remain as previously assigned by the SBC and that the CLC be congratulated for its work and its trustees directed to emphasize the presentation of Southern Baptist insights on morality and social ethics to our government in Washington, D.C."

He also said he will make a motion to amend the proposed budget to reflect a 1.89 percent budget increase for the BJC and CLC, "which is in line with the increase granted the other SBC entities."

In the budget proposal, the other entities of the SBC received a 1.89 percent increase.

Ingraham said what he proposes to do supports "the traditional Baptist position on the separation of church and state rather than flowing with the present attempt to shift our emphasis from separation to accommodation on religious liberty issues such as school vouchers, religious entanglement in government and governmental control of church affairs."

Presentation in the open letter is being done, Ingraham said, "in order to provide the messengers the opportunity to study and prayerfully consider the contemplated departure from our traditional position on separation of church and state."

In his letter to Pace, the BJC's Thomas took exception to a report of the Executive Committee, titled "Some Reasons for the Southern Baptist Convention 1990-91 Budget Allocation to Support Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State."

He asked for time during the preconvention meeting to "provide ... the opportunity to review the document in order to correct its factual errors before it is presented to the SBC."

"Correcting all of the factual errors contained in the ... document requires a more lengthy and detailed response than this letter will reasonably allow," said Thomas in his three page-letter.

Pace, director of Baptist associational missions in Lawton, Okla., told Baptist Press his intention is to put the request on the agenda for a meeting of the officers of the Executive Committee June 10.

"I will ask the officers to give serious consideration to this. What we do will be determined by the officers," he said.

The church historians' letter cites the late George W. Truett, former SBC president and pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, who said Baptists' "contention was won in these United States and written in our country's Constitution, that church and state must, in this land, be forever separate and free, and that neither must ever trespass upon the distinctive functions of the other."

"For over 50 years, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs has aided Baptists in their continuing efforts to maintain that vision," the letter states. "During that time, the Joint Committee has presented a united Baptist voice in response to issues of religious liberty and the separation of church and state."

"Through its work, the representatives of numerous Baptist traditions have been able to work together to uphold the principles for which many of our forebears experienced persecution, imprisonment and even death."

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"In its untiring work in the halls of national government, the Baptist Joint Committee has developed a reputation for integrity and conviction in articulating the Baptist cause. It represents the best of the Baptist tradition of dissent and conviction in matters of religious liberty."

Signers of the letter described themselves as "persons charged with providing instruction in the history of the people called Baptists." In that role, they urged messengers to the SBC annual meeting in New Orleans "to continue funding the Baptist Joint Committee at the present level."

"We also affirm our belief that the Baptist Joint Committee represents the best organization for representing Southern Baptist ideals regarding religious liberty and that it offers opportunity to work with other Baptist groups throughout America in addressing those issues of separation of church and state which we hold dear," their letter says. "It is our prayer that Southern Baptists will continue their participation in the work of the Joint Committee in order that the historic Baptist witness of freedom and liberty may not be deterred, divided or compromised in any way."

The letter was circulated informally among church history professors at Southern Baptist seminaries and some colleges, said Bill J. Leonard, professor of American Christianity at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., who drafted the letter.

Signers are Bill Pitts, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Earl Joiner, Stetson University, DeLand, Fla.; G. Thomas Halbrooks, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.; Hugh Wamble, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo.; Carolyn Blevins, Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn.

Also Claude L. Howe Jr., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary; C. Douglas Weaver, Brewton-Parker College, Mount Vernon, Ga.; Andrew Manis, Averett College, Danville, Va.; Leon McBeth and William R. Estep, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; W. Lloyd Allen, E. Glenn Hinson, Leonard and Karen E. Smith, Southern Seminary; and Penrose St. Amant, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif.

The Christian Life Commission's Land, told a Frederick, Md., audience his agency took a "minimalist's" approach to the proposed changes facing the commission and the Baptist Joint Committee.

"We were doing this in direct response to the (SBC) Executive Committee," Land said. "We did not ask for this assignment; we were not campaigning for this assignment."

The proposed changes would give the commission "'a' religious liberty assignment and not 'the' religious liberty assignment" for the convention, he added. However, the commission has been under "a lot of pressure" to rewrite its program statement, he noted.

Some Southern Baptists want the moral concerns agency to take on the full range of religious liberty issues, he explained. Instead, the proposed changes would only allow the commission to address religious liberty issues as they relate to its current moral concerns assignments, he said.

Of the proposal to be presented in New Orleans, Land said, "I do not perceive it as a question of whether or not the Joint Committee is going to exist or not exist, but what is the funding level of Southern Baptists."

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Pam Parry, associate editor of the Baptist True Union in Maryland/Delaware, also contributed to this article.

Authority, not interpretation,
is real SBC issue: Chapman

By James H. Cox

N- (O)
(KY)

LEXINGTON, Ky. (BP)-Underscoring that scriptural interpretation and politics are not at the heart of the 11-year struggle raging within the Southern Baptist Convention, Morris Chapman cited a different reason for the controversy.

Authority of the Bible is the "real issue" the conservative SBC presidential candidate said May 15 in Lexington, Ky.

Recounting his pilgrimage to the forefront of the battle, Chapman told 177 people, mostly pastors, at a noon luncheon at Porter Memorial Baptist Church that his "simple faith" of his childhood in Mississippi is "as real to me now as it was then."

"I believe in the same inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God today that I did then," he said.

Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, observed that Southern Baptists presently have in process a "course correction." His experience has indicated that "when the rule of 'live and let live' is applied," everything naturally drifts "to the left," he said.

"But in order for the course correction to be completed," Chapman admonished, "it was necessary to turn upstream." A lot of tension became a "necessary byproduct," he added.

Chapman suggested that Southern Baptists are "well on their way" to finishing that "directional shift." He prays for completion of it, "so we may get on with our mission" and that the word of God "might explode in our hearts in order that the world might know Jesus," he noted.

In a question-and-answer period following a 45-minute address, Chapman gave his personal stance on several issues:

-- Priesthood of the believer. "I believe with all my heart that every person has direct access to the Lord Jesus Christ. I can pray to him (Jesus), and he will answer the question in my heart. This does not mean you can believe anything you want to and still be free to be called a Southern Baptist."

-- Prayer in public schools. "While resolutions adopted by the SBC are not binding, the last word we have on this matter is contained in a resolution adopted in 1982 favoring a return to public prayer in the classroom. That is my position."

-- Abortion. "I believe life begins at conception. I am grateful Southern Baptists have an annual observance for sanctity of human life and that we are in a day when adoptions exceed abortions."

Calling his appearance at Lexington and later that day at Crescent Springs, Ky., a "divine assignment," Chapman emphasized, "This (meeting) is not a political rally."

He has not joined any political coalition but has been doing "what the Lord convicted me to do," he said.

It is "imperative" that Southern Baptists "pledge our allegiance to a perfect word from a perfect God," Chapman insisted.

"People of every persuasion" suggest that 85 to 90 percent of all Southern Baptists believe in the "infallibility and inerrancy of God's word," he added.

At the conclusion of the two-hour Lexington meeting, William L. Hancock, who presided, emphasized, "We're not telling anyone how to vote" for SBC president.

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Hancock, pastor of Highview Baptist Church in Louisville and newly elected chairman of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, said: "If you're convinced, convicted and committed enough, it can be done. The Superdome (in New Orleans, where Southern Baptists meet in annual session June 12-14) will hold 70,000 people. I trust Baptists will set the attendance record.

"We are turning the ship of zion called Southern Baptists."

Chapman's Kentucky appearances came on the day after the death of his mother-in-law. She had endured a malignancy of several years. Chapman testified to her bravery and spirit.

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Honeycutt refutes attack,
cites issues at rallies

By James H. Cox & Lonnie Wilkey

N-CO
Baptist Press
5/18/90

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Defending himself and the institution he represents before largely partisan audiences, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt has decried widely circulated accusations of a 25-year-old seminary trustee.

The president of the Louisville, Ky., seminary spoke May 15 at a moderate rally in Louisville, attended by about 450-500 people. He addressed about 50 alumni the morning of May 16 in Nashville and 525 alumni and supporters May 17 in Atlanta. He is to speak to similar audiences May 22 in Birmingham and Montgomery, Ala.

Honeycutt's appearance before the Louisville rally marked his first public forum dealing with the Southern Baptist Convention controversy since the SBC annual meeting in St. Louis three years ago, he said.

Noting that he had tried to be consistent with the SBC Peace Committee's recommendations adopted by the convention, Honeycutt said he had remained silent. Yet he told about 50 people in Nashville that the Bible says there is a time to speak.

"Recent events at Southern Seminary have created a new context in which it is now wrong to be silent," he said. "This is not time for silence. As president, it is time to speak frankly as an advocate for Southern Baptists' senior seminary."

Honeycutt told the alumni that he intends to go and "tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere" that Southern Seminary and its faculty "are committed to the Lordship of Christ and the authority of the Bible."

He also assured the alumni he intends to spread the word that "Roy Honeycutt functions with integrity as president of Southern Seminary and that he believes the Bible is God's inspired Word."

In prepared remarks Honeycutt dealt exclusively with recent charges by seminary trustee Jerry Johnson, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Aurora, Colo. Johnson wrote a document called "The Cover-up at Southern Seminary" that calls into question scriptural beliefs and practices of the seminary president and several faculty members.

Decrying all of what was written, Honeycutt said Johnson makes his most "unreasonable accusation" in stating, "One would have to be as blind as a mole not to see that Dr. Honeycutt just does not believe the Bible."

Honeycutt replied that since the age of 9, when he made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, his commitment to the Bible as the Word of God has been "a dynamic and integrating focus of my life."

"Since I learned to read, I cannot recall a time when I didn't read the Bible, treasure its divine truths and seek to live out of its revelation," Honeycutt said.

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Honeycutt noted that he began study of the Bible in an academic setting in 1947, "about 18 years before the author (Johnson) of the coverup article was born." Honeycutt concluded that Johnson's accusation that Honeycutt does not believe the Bible "remains beyond my comprehension." It was the Bible, he said, that "brought me the good news of Jesus, voiced my call to the ministry and still sustains me daily through circumstances such as these accusations."

Following Honeycutt's presentation in Nashville, James Sullivan, retired president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, asked to speak to the group.

Sullivan said he was heartbroken about the rumors spreading across the convention regarding Honeycutt's belief in the Bible. He then related an experience when he preached at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center shortly following World War II.

"When I gave the invitation, a number of people came forward," Sullivan recalled. "One of those who came forward with an open Bible in hand, seeking God's will for his life, was Roy Honeycutt."

Sullivan reported that he later talked with Honeycutt, who again had his Bible open. After much prayer, Honeycutt surrendered his life to the ministry, Sullivan noted.

"I would trust my life to him and his commitment to God's Word," Sullivan insisted.

Honeycutt was followed on the platform by Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler of Cincinnati, a candidate for the office for first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

A pastor's wife and former executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention, Crumpler recounted her background and preparation for the office she seeks.

"Nobody is paying me to run," she said. "Nobody selected me in a college of cardinals or on a Caribbean cruise." The remark was a reference to an annual winter trip by SBC conservative leaders in which convention political strategies reportedly have been discussed.

Crumpler said she is a candidate because "we are losing missions as our No. 1 priority" in the SBC. She cited figures showing decreases in missionary personnel, volunteers and financial support since the struggle to "control the convention" began 11 years ago.

She also is concerned that "we have silenced or muzzled" many of the "most experienced" voices in the SBC, she added.

"We have lost the true function of the SBC," she said. "At each convention, we add to a kind of checklist of what we agree is acceptable and what we disagree with."

Attendance at the Louisville rally was estimated at 450-500 people.

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Van Gauthe won't allow nomination by Montoya

N-00

Baptist Press
5/18/90

DOTHAN, Ala. (BP)--Van Gauthe, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of Dothan, Ala., will not allow his name to be included in a list of alternate nominations proposed by David Montoya of Gravette, Ark.

Montoya, pastor of First Baptist Church of Gravette and an Arkansas member of the 1990 Southern Baptist Convention Committee on Nominations, announced March 23 he would challenge some of the people nominated by the Committee on Nominations.

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The Committee on Nominations annually nominates people to serve on the boards of trust of the 24 entities associated with the SBC.

On May 3, Montoya announced a list of 32 "alternate nominations" to those proposed by the Committee on Nomination. Gauthé was listed as being an alternate nomination for the board of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

Gauthé told Baptist Press he had not been contacted by Montoya for permission to include his name on the list.

"He (Montoya) never talked to me. I am neither attacking nor supporting him. I simply was not contacted. You cannot say no until you have been asked to say yes," he said.

Montoya told Baptist Press he thought he had contacted every one of the 32 names on his list. "I made a mistake in my paper work and marked that I had talked with him when I had not," Montoya said.

He added, "I nominated him because he is not political. He is a good man, a conservative man. He seemed to me someone who the convention should consider."

Montoya said he had written to Gauthé apologizing for the error.

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New musical to premiere at
Jericho mission festivals

N- FMB

Baptist Press
5/18/90

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A new musical will be premiered at the Jericho '90 Southern Baptist mission festivals this summer at the Ridgecrest (N.C.) and Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist conference centers.

The festivals, which began last year as an experiment in home and foreign missions education, also will feature for the first time an open forum of the chief executives of five Southern Baptist agencies sponsoring the events and services for commissioning and appointing new missionaries.

The musical, called "Jericho," emphasizes that God has worked throughout history to bring down barriers that isolate people from each other and from God, said Dennis Allen, who wrote the musical with his wife, Nan. Both are Southern Baptist composers. He is employed by the church music department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. "Jericho" is produced under the Sunday School Board's Genevox label.

The theme of walls tumbling down is one of the main points stressed during the week-long festivals, which are designed to confront participants of all ages with the sights, sounds and challenges of home and foreign missions.

Jericho '90, scheduled June 30-July 6 at Ridgecrest and July 21-27 at Glorieta, also is designed to make participants ask probing questions about missions and their role in it as Southern Baptists point toward their Bold Mission Thrust evangelistic/missions campaign goals for the year 2000 and beyond.

Last year's Jericho '89 was the first time the five Southern Baptist agencies co-sponsored a mission conference. The sponsors -- the Woman's Missionary Union, Brotherhood Commission, Sunday School Board, Home Mission Board and Foreign Mission Board -- developed Jericho to teach missions in new ways to new audiences.

Originally planned as a two-year pilot project, Jericho is expected to continue into the 1990s while planners evaluate its effectiveness.

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This year's program features some of last year's popular events. "Air Jericho," a room-sized board game, illustrates obstacles facing Christians as they share their faith in a new culture. Exhibits at a missions fair display what Southern Baptists are doing in missions, including meals served from disaster relief vans operated by Brotherhood organizations. A "Global Walkaround" presents sights and sounds of missions as home and foreign missionaries answer questions about their lives.

Jericho '90 will highlight opportunities to meet missionaries. The Home Mission Board will hold a commissioning service for new missionaries at Ridgecrest, and the Foreign Mission Board will hold a missionary appointment service at Glorieta. Both are among several additions to the Jericho events.

Charles Page, pastor of First Baptist Church of Nashville, will lead Bible study during the week at Ridgecrest. Larry Ellis, a Southern Baptist chaplain in the U.S. Navy in Memphis, Tenn., will lead Glorieta Bible study.

The open forum, with the five agency heads at both conference centers, will be styled after a town meeting and allow the audience to talk to them about Southern Baptist life.

People interested in participating in Jericho '90 may register at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center by calling (704) 669-8022 or at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center by calling (505) 757-6161.

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Texas Baptists offer relief
to flood victims statewide

By Terry Barone

N- Texas

Baptist Press
5/18/90

DALLAS (BP)--Texas Baptist disaster relief volunteers have spent much of the month of May providing hot meals and clean-up crews to victims of flooding throughout much of the state.

Two Texas Baptist disaster relief teams are providing meals for southeast Texas flood victims and volunteers in Liberty County as the lower Trinity River floods due to the release of millions of gallons of water from Lake Livingston.

The Texas Baptist disaster relief unit, an 18-wheel, tractor-trailer rig equipped with a field kitchen and communications capabilities, set up May 15 at the volunteer fire station in Hardin, just north of Liberty.

Members of the Baptist Men organization also set up the regional Texas Baptist disaster relief mini-unit from First Baptist Church of Beaumont in Kenefick just north of Dayton May 15.

With both units in place, Texas Baptists have food service units on both the east and west banks of the river.

Bill Ming, a member of Woodway First Baptist Church in Waco and on-site director of the unit at Hardin, said almost 400 meals were prepared on May 16, the first day of the serving operation.

Red Cross mobile units distributed about 300 of those meals to people in the Hardin area.

"Since it was inevitable that flooding was to occur, we decided to answer the request of the Red Cross and begin feeding operations. Our operation is developing as the flood develops," Ming said.

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Bill Fabriguze, pastor of Hardin Baptist Church in Hardin, arranged for other Texas Baptist churches in Trinity River Baptist Association to assist with the food-service operation.

"We are just trying to coordinate with and assist Texas Baptist Men in any way we can with their feeding operation," Fabriguze said.

He added that members of his congregation were assisting the Red Cross with surveying the area.

Duane Kelley, director of missions for Trinity River Association, said he had arranged for volunteers from local congregations to help with the food service in Kenefick.

Kelley said mobile units being used for a mission at Dayton Lake Estates were moved when it became apparent that the area would flood. Other than that, he said, none of the Texas Baptist churches in the association have been flooded, nor does he expect any.

John LaNoue, off-site director for disaster relief emergency response for Texas Baptists, said, "This is the slow beginning of the horrendous damage caused by flooding."

Texas Baptists are committed to the food-service operations now and would look at other avenues of ministry after flood waters begin to subside, he said.

LaNoue predicted that Texas Baptists would be involved in different types of ministries related to the flood through the middle of the summer.

"As people return to their homes with family and friends to begin the clean-up process, we will have a tremendous opportunity in providing food, mud-out crews, building crews and the like," he said.

Hundreds of Texas Baptists in several associations will be affected by the flooding in southeast Texas alone, he said.

Glyde Somers, pastor of First Baptist Church of Romayor, in Tryon-Evergreen Baptist Association, said between 150 and 175 of the 380 members of his congregation had "evacuated to higher ground."

In late April and earlier this month, rains flooded much of north and central Texas. The rains which flooded these areas are contributing to the flood currently underway in southeast Texas.

Some of the most extensive damage occurred in Parker and Palo Pinto Baptist Association just west of Fort Worth in north Texas and in Brownwood in central Texas.

Three meals a day were served to about 150 flood victims at First Baptist Church of Horseshoe Bend, in Parker Baptist Association. More than 140 homes in the Horseshoe Bend area were evacuated, and at least seven homes belonging to members of Horseshoe Bend First Baptist Church were flooded.

Flooding swamped the Heart of Texas Baptist Encampment on Lake Brownwood, causing extensive damage to its facilities.

Garner Altom, a volunteer at the encampment, said more than two feet of water had swept through the camp, extensively damaging the motel unit, the home of the encampment's maintenance manager and a fishing shed.

Volunteer crews already are working on reconstruction and restoration of the encampment. And "mud-out" crews are on the scene just west of Fort Worth helping to clean up homes and belongings of those flood victims.

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Also contributing to this report were Ken Camp and Orville Scott, both of the Dallas bureau of Baptist Press.

Affiliates from 6 states
honored with ACTS awards

By Ken Camp

N-Texas

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Local ACTS affiliates from six states were recognized at the fifth annual American Christian Television System Awards ceremony at Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, May 17.

ACTS of Laurel, Miss., took top honors as affiliate of the year and was recognized for best events coverage series for "Football '89."

The Lebanon ACTS Board of Hattiesburg, Miss., was honored in the commercial public service announcement category for "The Nutcracker."

Little Rock, Ark., ACTS posted best in the short feature category for "Power Source Promo," in the religious series area for "Just Kids," and in the promotional announcement and spot of the year categories for "TV-27 Promo."

Texarkana, Ark., ACTS received the promotion and public relations award, and it won top honors in the human interest series category for "Positive Alternatives."

Jonesboro, Ark., ACTS received the award for best events coverage special for "Shearson Lehman Hutton Games."

Fort Smith, Ark., ACTS was recognized for best religious special for "Brazil Mission '89."

Cullman, Ala., ACTS received honors in the educational/information program category for "Hospice: A Special Kind of Caring."

K39-BI, Channel 39 of Phoenix, Ariz., took top honors in the program of the year and human interest special categories for "No More Night: A Conversation with Glen Campbell."

Thomasville, Ga., ACTS was recognized for the best musical/theatrical special category for "Friends Forever."

Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, took top honors in the Christmas special category for "Travis Pageant."

K40-AN of Lubbock, Texas, received recognition for best Christmas message for "Riches" and best musical/theatrical series for "Saltracks."

"Day of Discovery," a Radio Bible class presentation featuring Bible teaching and inspirational music, was named best network program by an associate producer.

The nationally televised awards ceremony recognized ACTS affiliates -- including cable television stations and churches -- for innovative and creative methods of community outreach. Awards were presented in areas of local television production, promotion, community service and channel management.

ACTS is a satellite-delivered, 24-hour-a-day television network owned and operated by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission in Fort Worth. The network offers religious and family-oriented programming accessible to 7 million cable television households and 2.2 million households via full- and low-power television stations.

Lebanese woman injured;
seminary endures shelling

By Mike Creswell

N-FMB

MANSOURIEH, Lebanon (BP)--Artillery shells injured a Lebanese Baptist woman and damaged the Baptist seminary complex in mid-May in Mansourieh, Lebanon, a village east of Beirut.

Iskander Kusta suffered a broken arm and bruises when hit by flying debris as an exploding shell tore through the bedroom wall of her home in Mansourieh. Her husband and son were uninjured.

A shell also exploded in the seminary complex, narrowly missing Wissam Hadda, 11, who was running across an open area toward a bomb shelter. Hadda's sister works for Baptist Publications, located in the complex.

The blast sprayed razor-sharp shrapnel against several buildings in the complex, breaking windows in the chapel, kitchen, administration offices and a house. It also severed electrical wires and water pipes.

Another shell exploded just outside the seminary complex but did no damage, reported Southern Baptist representative Emmett Barnes. Barnes continues to administer many of the seminary's programs from his base on the island of Cyprus.

Occurring without warning, the shelling ended a period of relative calm that had prevailed in the area since the last period of intense fighting in January and February.

Seminary classes have continued despite the latest shelling. A new student recently enrolled, bringing the number of students to nine. Nidal and Wissam Arnouk, a Syrian couple, are expected to graduate in June.

All students and some of the seminary teachers now live on the seminary complex. Transportation has become too difficult for commuting to class, Barnes said, and the seminary is considered safer than the homes of some students. In recent days many Baptists have been sleeping in a bomb shelter beneath one of the seminary buildings or in an underground recording studio.

A radio station operated at least six hours a day by Lebanese Baptists has expanded its programs of Christian preaching in recent days. The station's signal extends throughout Beirut and the surrounding hills, reaching a potential audience of about 1 million people.

A key concern of the Baptists is the need to get a new diesel generator to provide electrical current for the seminary, publishing house, media studio and a Baptist church that meets on the complex. The existing generator also supplies current for heavy-duty pumps that bring water from deep wells for use in homes on the complex.

Such heavy use each day taxes the unit's capacity, Barnes said. Beirut's electrical system has been left in shambles by years of fighting.

Along with physical needs, Lebanese Baptists feel depressed and alone amid the constant turmoil, Barnes said. "They feel that somehow people have forgotten them. But our Baptist people want to feel they're not forgotten, that people are praying for them," he said.