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90-82

Itinerant missionaries to cover
Indian Ocean island countries

By Craig Bird

N-AMB

ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar (BP)--Fred and Sami Sorrells may not be little fish, but they certainly are swimming in a big pond.

The only Southern Baptist missionaries on the massive island of Madagascar off the coast of east Africa, they have accepted mission responsibility for the island nations scattered around the western Indian Ocean where no Southern Baptist work is established.

"This new assignment is really an answer to prayer," said Sorrells, of Brady, Texas.

Madagascar is playing host to the Indian Ocean Island Games Aug. 24-Sept. 2, which will attract top athletes from throughout the islands. Baptists are planning a high-energy evangelistic effort at the games. They are helping stage the opening and closing ceremonies, will run the welcome center and will hold evangelistic crusades in a 7,000-seat amphitheater right beside the main athletic stadium.

Since few Christians live in many of the countries involved, Sorrells sees the games as a great evangelistic opportunity.

"But we had been concerned about how to follow up decisions athletes and spectators may make in Madagascar and then return home thousands of miles away," he added. "With this new assignment, I'll be able to contact new Christians when I visit the countries to see about starting permanent Baptist mission work."

Sorrells will identify needs and provide ministries to groups in the islands who now have little contact with evangelical Christians. He also will continue his primary assignment as an agricultural evangelist in Madagascar.

Sorrells' training in French will carry over to most of the island nations, such as the Comoro Islands, Reunion and Rodriguez Island (a part of Mauritius), where French is the official language. Additionally, his agricultural background will allow him to use development ministries in countries that might not welcome a full-time church starter.

Rather than diluting his efforts on Madagascar, Sorrells thinks his new task will challenge and involve Baptists there.

"There are settlements of Malagasy people in most of the countries," he said. "There are ties to pull Madagascar Baptists into mission relationships with their ethnic kin in different countries. I'm hopeful this will help them catch the vision of evangelizing this part of the world, using Madagascar as the base."

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Mowrey nomination
'misunderstanding'

By Wm. Fletcher Allen & Lonnie Wilkey

N-CO

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NASHVILLE (BP)--A misunderstanding caused longtime Nashville pastor Bob Mowrey to allow his nomination for registration secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention at the recent annual meeting.

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Mowrey, pastor of Park Avenue Baptist Church, told the Baptist and reflector, newsjournal of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, that a friend on the SBC Executive Committee had called him early on the morning of the election, June 13, and indicated that the incumbent registration secretary would not seek re-election.

"He asked me if I would be willing to allow my name to be placed in nomination," Mowrey explained, thinking there would be other nominations from the floor.

"It certainly wasn't a big conspiracy," Mowrey said.

Mowrey lost the election to Lee Porter, an editor with the Nashville-based Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, by a margin of 71-29 percent. Porter has held the post, which involves the registration process as well as balloting, since 1977. Traditionally, convention secretaries have been re-elected without opposition.

"If I had known my friend Lee Porter was going to be nominated, I probably would not have allowed my name to be considered," Mowrey added. He said he is committed not to ever run against Porter.

He said he learned from the experience and would get the "facts" before allowing his nomination in a similar situation. "As long as Lee is secretary, my name will not be given for nomination," he said.

Mowrey said he thinks the incident was simply a misunderstanding and that there was no organized attempt to unseat Porter as registration secretary. "I don't believe I was deliberately misled," Mowrey said, laughing. He added that if it had been an "organized" attempt it definitely didn't work. Mowrey lost the election by more than 8,000 votes. In fact, Guy Sanders of Lake Wales, Fla., who was to nominate him, was not present when nominations were given. Stan Coffey of Amarillo, Texas, made the nomination.

"We ought to be Christian and keep hatred out of our hearts and make sure we have love for each other," Mowrey said, referring to Southern Baptist Convention proceedings.

Porter noted Mowrey offered his apology the afternoon following the election. Porter verified that Mowrey said he was told Porter planned not to run again.

Porter said he believed there was a planned effort to unseat him. "I have never said I was going to retire or even implied it. I'm delighted to serve Southern Baptists in this capacity," he said.

Porter emphasized he has no hard feelings about having other nominations. "Bob Mowrey and I are friends and I feel he was misled. I appreciate his spirit and his willingness to talk with me Wednesday afternoon."

Marshall Albritton, a layman at Park Avenue Baptist Church and a member of the Tellers Committee, said he was shocked when he heard Mowrey's nomination. He talked with Mowrey prior to the SBC and the Park Avenue pastor did not mention he might be nominated, Albritton confirmed.

Albritton, a first-time member of the Tellers Committee, said he enjoyed working with Porter and affirmed "the integrity of the balloting system."

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Sunday School Board launches
centennial celebration at SBC

N-10
SSB

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The centennial celebration of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board was launched June 13 in the Louisiana Superdome in a pageant which elicited nostalgic memories of days gone by.

Dramatic presentations on Vacation Bible School, BYPU and hymns by B.B. McKinney all pointed messengers to look at their past, particularly in areas where the Sunday School Board has grown to provide leadership over the past 100 years.

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In the Wednesday morning report of the denomination's education and publishing agency, a Dixieland band led a parade of groups representing the past and looking to the future.

Mule-drawn carriages carried actors representing the early presidents of the Sunday School Board. Groups of employees and trustees of the board also marched in the parade, along with children on a hay-wagon pulled by a tractor.

James L. Sullivan and Grady C. Cothen, the only two living ex-presidents of the Sunday School Board, rode in the parade in cars typical of when they served at the agency.

Lloyd Elder, president of the board, told messengers he is reminded of the work of the Sunday School Board at every turn as he visits in local churches. From the hymnals to pew Bibles to choir music to literature in Sunday School classes to "Home Life" and other magazines in the lobby of the church, Elder said he sees many ways the Sunday School Board "touches the lives of Southern Baptists."

Some of the memories of denominational giants and familiar experiences were presented to messengers dramatically with the help of The Company, a drama group from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

At the end of the parade which started the Sunday School Board report, messengers heard the familiar stand-up chord which has been used in virtually every Vacation Bible School to signal the time to say the pledges to the American and Christian flags and to the Bible. Messengers then participated in the pledge to the Bible and were seated with the sit-down chord.

Brief vignettes then introduced messengers to board presidents from J.M. Frost, who borrowed \$5,000 from his wife when he first started to work, to Elder.

Sullivan, who headed the board for 22 years and was elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention the year after his retirement in 1975, said the greatest contribution of the board to the denomination "will not be found in buildings and size, but in commitments made to Baptists.

"Those commitments include producing Bible-based, Christ-centered, God-honoring publications," Sullivan said. "The board also has been committed to producing programs which minister to people everywhere, in every city, village and community."

And, the board has helped "develop a vocabulary so that people could communicate with each other in an understandable way," Sullivan concluded. "These are the contributions to which the board has been committed and faithful and continues to be."

Herschel H. Hobbs, former SBC president who is pastor-emeritus of First Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, was introduced to close the report with prayer. Hobbs has written almost 1,200 Sunday School lessons, more than any other writer.

Darrel Baergen, director of the Center for Christian Communications Studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, was narrator for the special report.

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Baptists asked to put Jesus
ahead of SBC controversy

By Robert O'Brien

N-CCO
follow. Baptist Press
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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The size of Southern Baptists' hearts is doing more damage than the size of their controversy, Jay Strack said at the closing session of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 14.

Applying his comments to "both sides of the aisle" in the convention controversy, Strack, an evangelist from Dallas, challenged Southern Baptists to leave New Orleans and go back home to put the message of Jesus Christ ahead of business as usual.

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"I believe a try to say when asked that the real problem in our convention is that some of us have forgotten what it is like to be lost and alone," said Strack, who based his sermon on Psalm 142, in which David laments in his time of trouble, "No one cares for my soul."

"I wonder, Southern Baptists, how many more nights we can go to bed dry-eyed when so many people cry themselves to sleep" feeling no one cares for their soul, Strack asked at the final SBC session attended by fewer than 5,000 of 38,456 registered messengers.

He said he had been asked if the controversy would keep Southern Baptists from accomplishing their goals. "I don't believe it's the size of the controversy," he said. "I don't believe it's the size of the community. I don't even believe it's the size of your church. I believe it's the size of our hearts."

Strack said many Southern Baptists have forgotten the priorities of reaching lost people in the world and that "our adversary" -- Satan -- "is at work," ensnaring some Southern Baptists with such things as pride, pettiness, poor priorities, pornography and promiscuity.

"There is a devil," Strack said. "He is at work. The great evidence of Satan in our convention is the snares so many of us are so quickly falling into."

Many Southern Baptists "go to bed dry-eyed" because they have "misunderstood the major theme of the Bible, ... misjudged the snares of our adversary, ... misinterpreted the Great Commission" to proclaim the message of Jesus, and "misconstrued the consequences of a lost soul," Strack said.

"It's one thing to discuss the Bible," he said. "It's one thing to say this is how we feel about the Bible. But I'm going to ask you, could it be that you have really misunderstood the basic theme of the word of God?"

The basic theme, he said, is redemption of lost people through Jesus Christ. That, he continued, is what Southern Baptists should emphasize rather than controversy or business as usual.

"How can we have preaching as usual?" he asked. "How can we have convention politics as usual? How can we go through the motions?"

"If some of us talked to as many people about Jesus as we have talked to about what's happening in our convention, New Orleans would have never, ever, ever been the same," he said.

Referring to words Southern Baptists utter in interviews and conversations about the controversy, Strack said: "When are we going to learn that we can never stumble as long as we are on our knees" before God, asking for his guidance in reaching a lost world?

Some Southern Baptists have become "like ecclesiastical Marthas," Strack said, referring to the biblical character who put everyday work ahead of an opportunity to be taught personally by Jesus.

"Some of us have become ... so busy putting out fires in the kitchen we don't have time to sit at the feet of Jesus," he said.

"I want my heart and soul to be filled with the passion of Jesus Christ," he said, urging Southern Baptists to "stand at the door through which people must pass if they are to find God" and "put their hand on the latch."

"I wish the day would come when we leave an area, when we leave a city, when we leave a convention or when we leave where we are and move on to another place of service that it could be said of us, 'That man, that woman left this place full of the doctrine of the blood of Jesus Christ.'"

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Strack said Jesus was motivated because he heard the cry of hell. Some Southern Baptists, he said, "have gotten over the doctrine of hell. ... Some of us have forgotten or misconstrued the consequences of a lost soul."

Noting that people on the "both sides of the aisle" always say after conventions that they want "to get back to the main thing," back to "Bold Mission Thrust," Strack thundered:

"If we could get some of the hell out of our mouths and God begins to lay the reality of hell in our hearts, you and I would be different men and women for the cause of Jesus Christ."

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Southern Baptists to boost
Eastern Europe personnel

By Mike Creswell

N-204MB

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KLAUS, Austria (BP)--Southern Baptists plan to have almost 100 workers assigned to Eastern Europe within the next several years, a tenfold increase.

New workers will be deployed as soon as personnel can be located, trained and sent. The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board plans 88 new, full-time workers to begin assignments in Eastern European countries, plus scores of short-term workers to help with construction, evangelism, teaching and other ministries.

The new plans were developed May 28-June 1 as Southern Baptist administrators met in Klaus, Austria, with the 10 Southern Baptist workers now assigned to Eastern Europe ministry. Intensive talks with Baptist union leaders in the region preceded the planning session.

Personnel requests likely will increase even more in coming months as discussions continue with leaders in several countries, said Keith Parker, the Southern Baptist Foreign Board's area director for Europe.

This major personnel increase follows a \$1 million appropriation by the Foreign Mission Board last December that is helping European Baptists with Bibles, evangelism-related programs, equipment and material. Much of the material provided is either already in use or being delivered.

Also, the board rushed 246 tons of seeds, desperately needed for spring planting, along with more than 50 tons of herbicides, a necessity to cut the traditional large crop losses caused by weeds. The allotment resulted in more than 10,000 acres of land around Bacau, Romania, being planted in corn and alfalfa. The quick effort sparked a letter of thanks from the government agricultural minister for the area. In all, hunger relief projects made possible by Southern Baptist donations may exceed \$1 million.

Plans call for career mission workers to begin ministry in several Eastern European countries as soon as possible. Three missionary couples are requested for Poland, six couples for Czechoslovakia and four additional couples for Hungary to join Errol and Mary Simmons, who are already there.

Some of the personnel requests already are being filled. Missionaries George and Veda Rae Lozuk, who formerly worked in Ecuador, are transferring to the Soviet Union to be Southern Baptists' first full-time workers there. Tim Marza has been appointed to work with the European Baptist Federation in Romanian radio programming.

Former missionaries Tom and Joyce Cleary are expected to be reappointed in July for service in Poland, where they will work with the English-language teaching ministry of Wroclaw Baptist Church and do student evangelism. Earlier they worked for 10 years in Austria. More recently he has been a Baptist Student Union minister in Florida. Two other couples also will be sought for Poland -- one to work in Krakow and another to work as church starters in a location yet to be decided.

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In Czechoslovakia, one career missionary couple would serve as "field specialists," helping to coordinate contacts between Baptists there and Southern Baptists, including many construction teams and short-term workers expected in coming years. One such team has been requested for this year.

Another Southern Baptist couple would be assigned to teach in a new seminary Czechoslovakian Baptists are hoping to start soon. Two couples would be assigned to work in general evangelism in the Czech area and two other couples would do similar work in the southern Slovakian area.

Details on places of service for eight career couples being sought for Eastern Europe cannot be publicized now, Parker said. "This decision simply illustrates the continuing tensions and, in some cases, continuing dangers in some areas," he explained. "We must realize that the dust from the fall of the Berlin Wall is still settling."

Another 10 couples will be requested to minister among specific groups in the region. Again, the board will not publicize the places or groups because of sensitivities involved, said Isam Ballenger, FMB vice president for mission work in the region, who participated in the planning session.

"There are still many uncertainties in Eastern Europe," Ballenger said. "The situation in Romania is unstable, Bulgaria is awaiting a key election and Albania remains an unknown. But we are moving ahead in faith, trying to get people, programs and priorities in place to quickly take advantage of new opportunities to share the gospel."

"This bold, tenfold increase in Southern Baptist presence here will require a similarly bold support level from Southern Baptists, both prayer support and financial support. May God lead us in that direction."

Parker stressed the cooperative nature of Southern Baptist ministry in Eastern Europe. Southern Baptist personnel will work closely with Baptist unions within the countries. Although it was usually not possible to publish the fact, the Foreign Mission Board has provided help to Eastern European Baptists often during the past 40 years, establishing good working relationships in the process. "Now we're ready to jump with them into a bold new future, setting new directions in a new Europe," Parker said.

Some of people being sought will work for a year or more under the mission board's International Service Corps program. Fifteen people will be sought to teach English in Hungary for a year. Ten of these will need to be university professors qualified to teach English at a government teachers' college; five other qualified teachers will teach in public schools. Also for Hungary, seven journeymen will be sought to work for two-year terms.

A journeyman also is being sought for Czechoslovakia, to begin work as soon as possible.

Several other requests for special personnel include:

-- a desktop publishing expert to teach Hungarian Baptists how to use new computer equipment provided by Southern Baptists to prepare evangelism materials and music for publication.

-- two physicians, two nurses and four agronomists, including specialists in animal husbandry and nutrition, for Romania.

-- someone to work for six months in Hungary, filling in for the Simmonses, who begin a six-month furlough in September.

-- construction crews for several locations in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, plus six revival teams to go to Hungary in May 1991.

Nepal's king to see
religious prisoners

By Michael Chute

KATMANDU, Nepal (BP)--Nepal's King Birendra has granted amnesty for all Nepalese prosecuted for religious activities, resolving a lingering question in Nepal's recent move toward democratic reforms.

A royal palace statement issued June 12 said all religious prisoners would be released and all charges against people awaiting trial for religious activity would be dropped.

Although not specifically mentioned in the announcement, the amnesty will mainly benefit Nepalese Christians arrested for proselytizing and people who converted to Christianity. Previously, both expressions of faith were banned by Nepalese law.

The king's amnesty will free 29 Nepalese Christians from jails throughout the country. Criminal charges against another 250 Christians will be dropped, according to a government spokesman.

After weeks of pro-democracy demonstrations forced King Birendra to enact sweeping governmental reforms in April, Nepalese Christians lobbied the new interim government for the release of religious prisoners.

Nepal Christian Fellowship leaders held two high-level discussions with government officials concerning the status of religious prisoners. An international Christian human rights delegation also petitioned Nepal's leaders in mid-May to release the Christians held in jails.

The king's statement promised religious prisoners would be released within 24 hours of the June 12 declaration, but officials of the United Mission to Nepal said June 14 they had no word yet of prisoners being released.

"There's the procedure of filing papers before prisoners are officially handed over from government custody," said Gareth Wardell, assistant to United Mission Executive Director Edgar Metzler. "(Prison) authorities are apparently wanting to cover themselves and double check the orders" before releasing their prisoners.

Families of prisoners, checking daily with prison officers about their relatives' status, have been told the prisoners will be released as soon as formal papers arrive from the palace, Wardell said.

"It's right that the people should be released and (this gesture) will create a favorable international opinion," said Metzler.

Christians worldwide support the United Mission's work in health, education and industrial development projects.

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Court remands second
equal access dispute

By Kathy Palen

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WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court has instructed a federal appeals court to reconsider its ruling in an equal access case in light of the high court's recent decision in a similar dispute.

In the wake of its ruling in *Westside Community Schools v. Mergens*, the high court remanded the second equal access case -- *Garnett v. Renton School District* -- to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

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Both cases involve the 1984 Equal Access Act, which prohibits any public secondary school that receives federal funds and has a "limited open forum" from denying equal access to or otherwise discriminating against students who wish to conduct a meeting based on the "religious, political, philosophical or other content of the speech at such meetings." A limited open forum, according to the law, exists whenever non-curriculum related student groups are provided an opportunity to meet on school grounds before or after the school day.

The 9th Circuit held that although Lindbergh High School in Renton, Wash., had at least 15 other non-academic student clubs -- including a bowling club, dance squad and ski club -- no limited forum had been created and thus a student religious club could not meet on campus.

But in Mergens, the Supreme Court ruled such non-academic clubs do constitute a limited open forum. The term "non-curriculum related" is best interpreted broadly to mean any student group that does not relate directly to the body of courses offered by the school, wrote Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

In Renton, the appeals court also ruled equal access would violate the Washington state constitution and neither the free speech clause nor the free exercise clause of the U.S. Constitution required the recognition of a religious club.

Although not addressing whether the Constitution requires the provision of equal access to such clubs, the Supreme Court did hold the Equal Access Act does not violate the First Amendment's no establishment of religion clause.

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'Keep the mystery'
seminary grads told

N-CO
66BT S) Baptist Press
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SAN FRANCISCO (BP)--"Let mystery have its proper place in ministry. Don't loose the 'oohs and ahs' of life," graduates of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary were told during commencement exercises in early June.

James L. Higgs, pastor of the dually-aligned American and Southern Baptist First Baptist Church of San Francisco, told the 76 graduates to experience the "ABCs of mystery" in their ministry: amazement, bewilderment and contentment.

Mystery is needed in ministry to keep it alive, Higgs said. "God's watch is not a Rolex; his timepiece is mysterious."

During commencement for the Mill Valley, Calif., school, 38 students received master of divinity degrees, four doctor of ministry degrees were granted and two received master of church music degrees.

Also, for the first time, 16 students received master of arts in Christian education degrees. Previously, the seminary had granted master of religious education degrees.

In addition, 12 students received diplomas from the seminary's ethnic leadership development program.

During commencement exercises, seminary President William O. Crews presented the charge to the graduates, urging them to do three things to support the Southern Baptist Convention. He asked the graduates to study Southern Baptist history, to support the denomination, and to help save it by "building New Testament churches grounded in the truths you have learned and faith in God."

"While some have given up on the convention, I for one have not joined that crowd. I don't believe God has given up on Southern Baptists," he said.

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