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August 17, 1990

90-108

SSB trustees consider  
numerous business matters

By Jim Lowry

N. SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--Finances, products and planning commanded the attention of trustees of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board during their semiannual meeting in Nashville Aug. 13-15.

In financial matters, the 91-member board approved a 1990-91 budget of \$190.4 million which is \$6.7 million more than the current year's budget.

During the publishing committee's report, trustees heard an update on the progress of The New American Commentary, including the announcement of the first volume for publication in the 40-volume set.

In June 1991, the board will publish a volume containing commentary on Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, written by Richard R. Melick Jr. of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn. The four volumes which likely will follow in 1992 include I, II Timothy, Titus; Mark; Acts; and Romans. All volumes of the 40-volume set are scheduled to be published by 1997, trustees were told.

The New American Commentary, first authorized by trustees in February 1987, will be written according to the doctrinal guidelines of the Baptist Faith and Message and the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy will serve as the operating definition of biblical inerrancy.

Trustees adopted several recommendations from the church programs and services committee, including a proposal to establish a special workgroup of trustees to work in consultation with Sunday School Board employees to prepare a 13-week series of Sunday school lessons for evaluation. A preliminary report will be made to the full board of trustees in August 1991 and a final report at the February 1992 meeting.

Final approval was given to an average 5.8 percent increase in church literature prices to become effective with the April 1991 issues. Also, Sunday school periodicals will be increased an additional 4.4 percent, effective October 1991, to cover additional costs related to Breakthrough Sunday school literature improvements being introduced that quarter. The combined increase during the 1991 calendar year is expected to be 7-7.5 percent.

Because of inflation, operating costs and facility maintenance, trustees approved an average 7 percent rate increase for 1991 summer conference center rates.

Trustees also authorized the deletion of five products, the addition of six new products and one title change. Items to be deleted include three foreign-language periodicals, a youth Bible study audio cassette, and a leisure-listening tape.

One of the new products is Home Life Digest, a cassette tape edition of selected, unabridged articles from each monthly issue of Home Life magazine.

Four new Spanish Bible study products also were approved and the title of the Workers Meeting Resource Kit was changed to Planning and Promotion Resource Kit.

Trustees unanimously approved the opening of a new Baptist Book Store in Charleston, S.C., on or about July 1, 1991.

Strong support and numerous requests in recent years from Southern Baptists contributed to the decision to open the 63rd store in the chain there, according to Bill Graham, director of the book store division. Charleston and surrounding cities also comprise one of the fastest growing Southern Baptist areas in the state.

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During the Tuesday morning miscellaneous business session, trustees unanimously approved a motion by Charlene Slotter, trustee from Stephenville, Texas, to request the Park Plaza Hotel to stop making "pornographic movies" available in their rooms. The hotel, located adjacent to the Sunday School Board property, is where trustees stayed while attending the meeting.

Trustees received reports on several areas of work at the board, including the Church Information Systems and BTN, which will cease operation on Oct. 1, 1990.

A review in Christian Computing magazine of the recently released TOUCH computer software from CIS was shared with trustees. The materials were very favorably recommended to churches by the trustees.

Johnnie Godwin, vice president for general publishing, told trustees about the board's involvement, along with the Foreign Mission Board and other evangelical groups in the Moscow Project, a plan to provide four million New Testaments for distribution in Moscow in the summer of 1991.

Godwin called the opportunity to participate in the project "an open door" into the Soviet Union for Southern Baptists and other Christians. He said canisters soon will be available in all Baptist Book Stores to allow contributions directly to the Moscow Project from interested book store customers. No Cooperative Program dollars are involved in the support of this project.

Contributions can be made in Baptist Book Stores and other Christian book stores, or mailed directly to The Moscow Project, Evangelical Christian Publishers Association, 950 West Southern Avenue, Suite 106-B, Tempe, Ariz. 85282. Godwin said all contributions would be matched dollar for dollar by the International Bible Society. The Moscow Project is sponsored by ECPA.

Trustees also were given information on the June 21 approval of the body's executive committee to terminate operation of the Baptist Telecommunication Network. Reasons for the termination were a total "cumulative loss of \$14.3 million in a seven-year period and an anticipated loss next year of \$1 million.

The recommendation was received and approved to name the new office/conference tower, which is under construction atop the board's operations building, the Centennial Tower, since the building will be completed and occupied during the centennial year of the board. The name of the board's personnel department was changed to the human resources department.

In an hour of celebration for the board's Centennial, trustees convened in a special plenary session with Sunday School Board employees. Trustee Chairman Bill Anderson, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of Clearwater, Fla., Vice Chairman Gene Mims, pastor of First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tenn., and board President Lloyd Elder led the celebration, along with several board employees.

Recommendations from the general administration committee dealt with several employment benefits, including an increase from 3 to 4 percent for matching compensation in the Employee Savings Plan. The retirement plan was amended, effective Oct. 1, to provide possible retirement benefits for employees over age 55 whose jobs are terminated because of business conditions.

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Sunday School Board won't  
publish centennial history

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press  
8/17/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Sunday School Board has decided not to publish a book written to commemorate its 100th anniversary.

The board stopped the publication process on "Celebrating Heritage and Hope," written by H. Leon McBeth, during its summer trustee meeting Aug. 13-15 in Nashville. The board will be 100 years old next May.

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The decision was made because "this board has not wanted to fan the flames of controversy" within the Southern Baptist Convention, said Donald Moore, chair of the board's general publishing committee. "The book was unbalanced."

"I stand by the book," responded McBeth, chair of the church history department at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. "It is a balanced interpretive history of the first 100 years of the Baptist Sunday School Board."

Trustee officers and board administrators declined to cite specific problems with the manuscript. McBeth said letters and comments he received gave him an indication of why publication was stopped. "I had the understanding the fundamentalist trustees wanted a harsh treatment of Lloyd Elder in this book," he noted.

Elder has been president of the board since 1984 and periodically has been criticized by Conservative trustees. In August 1989, trustees debated a motion to fire him for almost one hour before the motion was withdrawn.

SSB Chairman Bill Anderson said the reason for stopping publication was broader than a single person or issue.

"It's not so much the book that is a problem," said Anderson, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Clearwater, Fla. "It is that it's a history of a period which is in some tumult."

"Any history of the convention or its agencies and institutions is going to offend people on either side" of the Southern Baptist controversy, Anderson added. "We don't think that's wise."

"It's a good book, well written, by a fine author. But why risk offending?"

The components of the board that have reviewed the book have not said which side of the convention controversy they believe the book favors, Anderson said: "The committees have not stated which, in their view, of the two sides might not like the book. Conservatives might not; Moderates might not."

The book was commissioned about two years ago, and the primary draft was completed last fall. It proceeded through the board's editing channels but had not received final administrative approval when at least a dozen trustees asked to see the manuscript, said Johnnie Godwin, SSB vice president for general publishing.

Trustees' questions about the book led Moore, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Evansville, Ind., to convene a workgroup to study it. That workgroup, comprised of the officers of Moore's committee and Anderson, unanimously voted to "counsel the administration not to proceed with the publishing of the book."

The general publishing committee ratified the recommendation Aug. 14, and the full board of trustees unanimously concurred Aug. 15.

Trustees and board staff worked together throughout the process, Godwin said: "The administration is not an adversary of the board of trustees but sees itself as a partner in ministry. ... Broadman Press has a sound, standard procedure requiring publication. All of those (steps) were followed in this process, and we had not arrived at a finished product at the point which the review came into being."

Asked if the board's administration would abide by the recommendation, Godwin told trustees, "I will not publish this manuscript."

That will prove to be a bad decision, McBeth predicted: "I acknowledge that the trustees have the prerogative to do this, but it's a mistake. It's their loss."

"What the trustees did will hurt the board more than me. I feel a deep sense of disappointment. But I feel for the board if the people feel there is no freedom to express views except one set of views."

"You must not fiddle around with history. You must tell the truth as you see it; none of us is omniscient."

"The attempt ... to manage history will backfire. If they try to tell the story in a way that is not balanced, not accurate, the people in history will know and will judge them harshly. This is why I would never attempt to distort history, because the truth will come out."

The trustees who studied the issue aimed for objectivity, Moore said: "We tried to maintain a neutrality so we would not be biased as we read it. Admittedly, that's very difficult."

Rejection of a book manuscript is not precedent-setting, Anderson said, noting, "Every year, the board turns down hundreds of books."

Publication of a different history book or a major revision of McBeth's book is not planned, Anderson said: "No decision has been made. We envision no such move." A subsequent decision would be up to a later board of trustees, he added.

The manuscript belongs to the board, since it was commissioned by the board, Godwin said. McBeth has been paid \$12,000 of his \$18,000 contract for services and expenses, and the final \$6,000 payment is in process.

McBeth, who has taught at Southwestern for 30 years and spent about a year on the book, said: "The story of the Sunday School Board for 100 years is a story worth telling. As far as me telling it, ... we have not discussed it."

"In the long run of history, I believe this manuscript will come to light. Like Job in the Old Testament, I feel like -- maybe not in the flesh -- I will be vindicated."

McBeth added that he will not hold anger toward the board. "I am sorely disappointed, but I am not going to be bitter," he said. "I am a Southern Baptist. I would never intentionally hurt Southern Baptists and bring embarrassment upon the Sunday School Board and its trustees."

"There's no anger" for McBeth on the part of the trustees, Anderson said. "Most of us had him in seminary. The big problem is not that we have a problem with Dr. McBeth. It is that we have a tumult out there and don't feel it's wise to be interpreting history as it happens."

President Elder declined to comment on the situation and referred questions to Godwin. Godwin explained that Elder had removed himself from direct contact with the project from its beginning, to avoid conflict of interest regarding the historical account of his tenure.

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SSB trustees affirm  
Cooperative Program

By Linda Lawson

*N. SSB*

Baptist Press  
8/17/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--A resolution encouraging all Southern Baptist churches "to continue supporting the Cooperative Program at their present or increasing level" was adopted by trustees of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board during their Aug. 13-15 meeting.

The resolution, passed in a voice vote with no opposition, stated that "trustees in agreement with our president (SSB President Lloyd Elder) do hereby publicly declare our continued support and affirmation of the Cooperative Program," the denomination's unified budget.

"Profound disappointment in any attempt to decrease or withhold mission giving through the Cooperative Program" also was expressed in the resolution proposed by Mark Brooks, pastor of Elmdale Baptist Church in Springdale, Ark.

Sunday School Board trustees became the second body this month to affirm the Cooperative Program. Trustees of the Home Mission Board adopted a resolution of support during their Aug. 8 meeting.

Adoption of the resolution came one day after a dialogue session with Elder in which several trustees questioned him about statements he made July 22 at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center and reported in a July 23 Baptist Press story.

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During a town hall meeting with three other SBC agency heads at "Jericho: A Missions Festival," Elder responded to a question from an employee of the Home Mission Board about whether he perceived a threat to the Cooperative Program.

Elder said in part: "I do know that Southern Baptists' missionary participation and support is built on trust. We are a volunteer organization. I also know that local Southern Baptist churches have tough decisions to make. There are a vast number of ways to support missions, and broad-based participation and involvement and trust building have served us well."

Elder concluded the Glorieta meeting with a statement of support for the four other agencies sponsoring Jericho -- Home Mission Board, Foreign Mission Board, Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood Commission.

He said he and the leaders of the agencies are "working together day in and day out in support of our great missionary enterprise. We're working at this together, and I'm glad to be part of a team like that."

In a later interview at Glorieta, Elder "affirmed his belief in the Cooperative Program but said he believes SBC agencies must listen to the churches to prevent damage to the unified funding plan," according to the Baptist Press story.

Questions by trustees centered around Elder's statements that churches have "tough decisions to make" and that "there are a vast number of ways to support missions."

Trustee Joe Knott, an attorney from Raleigh, N.C., said support for the Cooperative Program is not a "tough decision. If you want to be a Southern Baptist, you support the Cooperative Program."

Bill Tisdale, a former Southern Baptist missionary who is pastor of First Baptist Church of Henderson, Texas, said: "We need to be very strong in saying to the Southern Baptist Convention that issue (Cooperative Program support) already has been resolved. This is not a time to be in discussion about whether we are going to support the Cooperative Program."

Larry Wynn, pastor of Hebron Baptist Church in Dacula, Ga., urged Elder and the trustees "to go on record challenging all churches considering negative designation (withholding of funds from certain causes) to continue full support of the Cooperative Program."

In response to trustees, Elder said: "Apparently what I thought I had done very forcefully in that setting (Glorieta) is the opposite of what some of us understood me to have done. I think whether someone is giving 3 percent to the Cooperative Program and ought to increase or someone giving 30 percent is considering cutting back, I want us to call for the broadest possible support."

After adoption of the resolution, Elder said: "I certainly feel the spirit right here needs to be conveyed. I concur with this statement."

The Sunday School Board is supported by sales of its products and services and does not receive any funding from the Cooperative Program. The board makes an annual contribution through the Cooperative Program for the operating budget of the Southern Baptist Convention. The 1988-89 contribution was \$593,000, while the contributions for 1979-89 totaled \$4.4 million.

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Southern Baptists can count  
on Sunday School Board: Elder

By Linda Lawson

*N. L. B.*

Baptist Press  
8/17/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists can count on the trustees and administration of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, working together, "to be faithful to the gospel of Christ and the management of this board," President Lloyd Elder said in a report to trustees opening their three-day semiannual meeting Aug. 13.

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"In this very room, we can demonstrate our willingness and our ability to think together, to ponder, deliberate, decide and act together as God's stewards. A new viable stability between the trustees and the administration already is being forged," said Elder.

In response, trustees adopted a resolution asking Elder to adapt the report and release it as an open letter to state Baptist newspapers.

Elder said a turbulent environment requires stability in leadership.

"You are at the helm," Elder told trustees. "You have given me the stewardship to stand in your behalf, to say to Southern Baptists, 'You can count on us. We do know what our business is. We have our convictions. We have enthusiasm. We want the largest possible number of Southern Baptist churches and others on their behalf to do business with the Baptist Sunday School Board.'"

He cited a decade of fiscal progress at the board and in the denomination.

For example, he said revenue provided from the sales of board products and services has increased 78.8 percent in the last 10 years, from \$96.2 million in 1979 to \$172 million in 1989. In comparison for the same period, the Consumer Price Index, a measure of price increases for products and services, registered a gain of 48.8 percent.

Elder said increases in board revenue and in the Cooperative Program have been in similar ranges during the decade.

Church gifts to the Cooperative Program which are forwarded to state conventions increased from \$207.3 million in 1979-80 to \$354.8 million in 1988-89, for a 71.1 percent increase.

Money sent from state conventions to the SBC Cooperative Program unified budget increased 91.4 percent, from \$71.8 million in 1979-80 to \$137.3 million in 1988-89.

"God has given us the stewardship of amazing financial resources," said Elder. "This is a large, large business. We have a solid base on which to build, and we thank God for it."

The true measure of the board's success is in its relationship to Southern Baptist churches, Elder said.

For the October-November-December 1989 quarter, he said 33,108 churches or 89.4 percent of the 37,051 churches in the SBC ordered some or all of their Sunday school literature from the board. The Sunday school enrollment of these churches equals 96.3 percent of the total SBC Sunday school enrollment.

"... Southern Baptists are doing business with us -- not all the business we want and not all we can do when we satisfy more of their wants and needs," said Elder.

He cited several major publishing ventures for 1991, including release of The Baptist Hymnal in March, release of the first volume of The New American Commentary in June and release of the first quarter of improved Sunday school curriculum in October.

Also, he said, CIS Touch software is a "ministry support tool being acclaimed now by churches all across the convention."

Elder challenged trustees to encourage their own churches to place orders for the commentary and the hymnal. He said he hopes churches will try the improved Sunday school curriculum on a money-back, satisfaction-guaranteed policy.

"It is possible Southern Baptists will have the very finest Sunday school literature ever available to them," said Elder.

"This is our work together. I believe we stand on the threshold of even better days together in serving Southern Baptists."

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NOTE: An open letter to Southern Baptists from Lloyd Elder, adapted from the report on which this story was based, is being sent to state Baptist newspapers by the SSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Family in Kuwait  
calm amid crisis

By Mary E. Speidel

N-JMB

HUTCHINSON, Kan. (BP)--Maurice Graham spent part of his 41st birthday Aug. 14 relaxing by the pool with his family in Kuwait City, Kuwait.

Outside the U.S. Embassy compound in Kuwait City, where the Southern Baptist family is staying, Iraqi soldiers patrolled the streets while American troops continued to pour into neighboring Saudi Arabia.

Graham, his wife, Laurie, and their sons, Peter, 13, and Aaron, 10, are among the approximately 3,000 Americans trapped in Kuwait following the Iraqi invasion there Aug. 2. The Grahams, Southern Baptist workers in Kuwait, have taken shelter in the U.S. Embassy compound in Kuwait City. Graham is from Shelbyville, Tenn. Mrs. Graham is from Hutchinson, Kan.

A U.S. State Department official contacted Mrs. Graham's mother, Margaret Nuzum, Aug. 14 with the first direct message from the couple since an Aug. 2 phone call. The report was that "they're eating well, they're swimming in the embassy pool and they're feeling very safe in the embassy," said Mrs. Nuzum, of Hutchinson.

Mrs. Nuzum wasn't too surprised to get such an upbeat message from her daughter and son-in-law. According to family and friends, remaining calm amid crises is something the Grahams do well.

Before his appointment by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in 1986, Graham handled plenty of crises as pastoral care director for St. Jude's Children's Hospital in Memphis, Tenn. A chaplain under the appointment of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, he regularly counseled families of children with terminal illnesses.

"He was able to be a strength for other families during crisis times with death and dying all around them," said longtime friend Michael DuVal, pastor of Thaxton (Va.) Baptist Church. "I have no question in my mind that people in the embassy compound in Kuwait are turning to Maurice Graham for strength, counseling, encouragement and hope. He is one who always has time for people."

The weekend before the Iraqi invasion, Graham took time to call his boyhood Sunday school teacher Elbert Landers at home in Shelbyville. He had just learned Landers had bone cancer.

"He called me from Kuwait and told me that he loved me and was praying for me," said Landers, who taught Graham when he was a youth at Southside Baptist Church in Shelbyville.

Landers remembers when Graham, as a teenager, told the congregation he wanted to be a Christian minister. Some, including Landers, wondered if he would make it; Graham had a speech impediment and learning disability.

"But I hadn't put God in it," said Landers. "I was just thinking about what Maurice could do."

In fact, one of Graham's teachers told him he would never graduate from high school, said DuVal. Graham, who has dyslexia, not only finished high school but went on to earn master's and doctoral degrees.

"There is in Maurice a tenacity almost like a bulldog," said DuVal.

Laurie Graham shares that same quality. "She really just doesn't give up," said her mother.

Mrs. Nuzum recalls that her daughter began teaching piano at 14 and taught herself to sew and play the guitar and banjo. After teaching herself to play a neighbor's banjo, she then taught the child who owned the instrument how to play. "She isn't stopped by anything," she said.

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Mrs. Graham grew up in Hutchinson, the daughter of a stockbroker and public schoolteacher. After she became a teacher, she worked as a Presbyterian summer missionary in an inner-city church in Jersey City, N.J. "That was enough to turn a mother's hair gray," laughed Mrs. Nuzum.

Mrs. Nuzum has had other training that's helping her wait out her daughter's crisis in Kuwait. Her son, Jack, a former Peace Corps worker in South Korea, became seriously ill while working as an English teacher in China.

After the initial report of his illness, the family heard nothing for three weeks. He later recovered.

Remembering that experience, Mrs. Graham called her mother to report her family's safety after Iraq invaded Kuwait Aug. 2.

That morning, the Grahams found themselves near intense battle when thousands of Iraqi soldiers swarmed into Kuwait City. They were living in an apartment in the church where they work, across the street from Kuwait's national assembly building.

After soldiers entered their home several times, the family decided to take refuge at the home of an American embassy official. Several days later they took shelter in the U.S. Embassy compound.

The Grahams moved to Kuwait about three months ago as the first Southern Baptist workers in the country. They work at the National Evangelical Church in Kuwait City, where he is associate pastor working in youth and music. Mrs. Graham is a church musician.

Before transferring to Kuwait, the couple had worked in Liberia. Graham was chaplain of a Baptist school in Monrovia. Mrs. Graham worked in church music.

After a furlough in Tennessee, the couple transferred to Kuwait. "Laurie was so positive and excited about going to Kuwait," recalled Theresa Jennings, of Memphis, a close friend of Mrs. Graham's.

Jennings said she received a letter from the couple several days after the invasion. In the letter, dated July 30, Mrs. Graham joked about the fact that most of their household goods were still in Liberia, now in the midst of a civil war.

"She may have the dubious honor of having household goods in two wars at the same time," joked Jennings.

But those who know the Grahams say material things don't mean much to them. "That isn't high on their agenda," said DuVal. "What's important to them is meaningful personal relationships."

Graham, who grew up in a low-income family in central Tennessee, has modeled that attitude while working in inner-city ministries in Kansas City, Mo., and Memphis. "He is very much a champion of the downtrodden," said James Hatley, retired pastor of Second Baptist Church in Memphis, where Graham was a staff member. "He has a way of relating because he himself has experienced rejection, ridicule, categorization -- all of those things we do to people who are different."

The Grahams' attitude about relationships also shows in their parenting. "They are extremely family-oriented," said Jennings.

When friends and family speak of the Grahams' son Peter, 13, they use words like quiet, serious, studious and literary. Others describe son Aaron, 10, as playful and energetic.

DuVal recalls the boys playing together as toddlers on an exercise bike. Each boy stood on one pedal and, barely big enough to hold on, grasped the handlebars. "They would just complement each other, moving up and down" on the bike's pedals, said DuVal. "Their lives have been like that ever since.

They're very close but they are very different from each other."

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Just like their parents. One friend captured that difference when she described how she pictured them at the U.S. Embassy: "If there's a piano in the embassy, Laurie is probably having a songfest. And Maurice is probably going around comforting everyone."

And back in Kansas, Graham's mother-in-law has deposited a check into his U.S. bank account for his birthday. The money is a gift for him to use to buy books, she said. "I'm confident that he's going to get back to use it."

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Missionaries leave Liberia  
as peace-keeping force waits

By Donald D. Martin

N FMB

Baptist Press  
8/27/90

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries Ed and Fran Laughridge confirmed Aug. 15 that they had evacuated Liberia two days before, after new safety concerns arose from a possible move into their area by a west African peace-keeping force.

The Laughridges and their son Edward, 20, left their mission station in Mano River early Aug. 13 and crossed the Liberian border by jeep into Sierra Leone.

The family was prepared to walk into Sierra Leone if roads proved impassable, or if rebel soldiers confiscated their vehicle, Mrs. Laughridge, of Great Falls, S.C., told a missionary in Ivory Coast via radio Aug. 12. Her husband is from Rock Hill, S.C.

Once in Sierra Leone, the Laughridges drove about 300 miles to the capital, Freetown, where they contacted mission officials in Ivory Coast by radio Aug 15.

The Laughridges did not say how long they plan to stay in Freetown, but they do not expect to return to Liberia until they talk further with mission officials, Mrs. Laughridge said.

The Laughridges had wanted to stay on in Mano River, even after rebel troops detained the family for six days. Rebels of the National Patriotic Front had refused to let the Laughridges leave the area or, for several days, to communicate by radio with missionaries in Ivory Coast. A rebel commander later told the Laughridges that the detainment had been a mistake and they were free to come and go as they pleased.

However, Mano River -- 80 miles northwest of the Liberian capital of Monrovia -- is now believed to be situated in one of the areas where west African peace-keeping troops may enter Liberia, said Bill Bullington, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's area director for west Africa.

"It is our understanding that this is the route (through Mano River) that a peace-keeping force will take into Liberia," Bullington said. "We don't know what could happen there. So there was concern for their well-being and they were encouraged to come out, at least temporarily."

Rebel leader Charles Taylor has threatened to attack the five-nation west African force. However, he agreed Aug. 13 to talk with Gambian President Dawda Jawara about a cease-fire. The talks, to be held in Banjul, the capital of Gambia, may delay the deployment of the peace-keeping force, according to press reports.

Taylor announced he would join cease-fire talks after his troops failed to deliver a final blow to President Samuel Doe Aug. 12. Doe's remaining forces, numbering about 500 troops of the Krahn tribe, control about one square mile in Monrovia.

Taylor had hoped to oust Doe before the west African force entered Liberia to impose peace. But after the failed assault, he issued a statement Aug. 13 saying he believes "a meaningful solution can be worked out."

Taylor's National Patriotic Front has sought to overthrow Doe in a civil war that has killed more than 5,000 people, mostly civilians. Taylor accuses Doe and his government of corruption, nepotism and human rights abuses.

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With the Laughridges' evacuation, Earl Williams of West Monroe, La., is the only Southern Baptist missionary remaining in Liberia. Williams has returned for a short stay at his mission station in Yekepa, where fighting forced him and his family to flee in late March.

Williams first returned to Yekepa in June, while his wife, Jane, of Knoxville, Tenn., and son, Kenneth, 9, stayed in Ivory Coast. Since then Williams has moved back and forth between Ivory Coast and Liberia several times carrying supplies of medicine and food.

About 2,000 people live in the rebel-controlled Yekepa area. Most are members of the Gio and Mano tribes. Some never left the area; others have re-entered Liberia after evacuating to refugee camps in Guinea and Ivory Coast, Williams said.

Conditions at some refugee camps are no better than in many of the looted Liberian villages, he said.

"A 6-year-old child had died the night before," Williams said in a recent letter. "The child became sick in a camp across in Guinea and his parents had brought him into Yekepa. The father begged me to take the child somewhere else for treatment, but it was too late. With no doctor and few drugs, the child did not make it."

Williams also has held worship services in Yekepa. More than 200 people, including rebel soldiers, have attended.

Reports from refugee camps in Ivory Coast indicate the number of Liberians fleeing the fighting has almost doubled in the last month, said missionary David Brown of Marietta, Ga., Aug. 14. The new refugees come from as far away as Monrovia, hundreds of miles southwest, he said.

In early July, about 75,000 refugees took shelter in camps near Danane, Ivory Coast. The latest fighting has pushed the refugee population past 120,000, Brown said.

The Foreign Mission Board recently released an additional \$150,000 to the Liberian Refugee Project in Ivory Coast. The relief project had already spent \$98,000 distributing food and medicine to more than 16,000 refugees.

Trying to meet some of the desperate needs along Liberia's borders regularly leaves mission workers exhausted, said missionary Patricia Brown, also of Marietta.

"There are also rewards," she said. "The rewards come from visiting refugees in the hospital who receive treatment because Christians have given freely. The rewards come from talking to refugees who are so grateful for any help they receive. The war and fighting are very real, but the love of Jesus is greater."

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

NOTE TO EDITORS: A map relating to this story will be released as early as possible next week.

Baptist workers in Middle East  
hope evacuation plans not needed

By Art Toalston

N-FMB

Baptist Press  
8/17/90

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--If Iraqi troops cross the line President Bush has drawn in the sand, an outbreak of hostilities quickly would spell heartbreak for Southern Baptist workers in the Middle East.

Heartbreak would come if, even temporarily, they had to abandon their ministries or, worse, if they had to evacuate the region.

"Even though it may be difficult right now, this is where we want to be," said Dale Thorne, director of Southern Baptist work in the region. "This is an area in need of the gospel. The very fact that we're having all these problems is an indication of that."

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No Southern Baptists employed by the Foreign Mission Board have been stationed in Iraq or Saudi Arabia. However, the onslaught of Iraqi troops into Kuwait Aug. 2 has stranded one Southern Baptist couple, Maurice and Laurie Graham, of Shelbyville, Tenn., and Hutchinson, Kan., and their 13- and 10-year-old sons. The Grahams, who had lived in Kuwait only three months, have taken refuge in the U.S. Embassy there.

Southern Baptist workers are stationed in other countries of the region. Those countries quickly could be swept into the fray if war erupts between Iraqi troops amassed on one side of the border with Saudi Arabia and U.S.-Arab forces digging in on the other side.

Some 160 Southern Baptist workers are assigned to the Middle East and the Muslim countries of northern Africa, Thorne said, counting those currently in the United States for furloughs, vacations or leaves of absence. Southern Baptist work in the region dates back to 1923.

In a number of countries, these workers are acutely aware of the tensions swirling around the deployment of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia -- the guardian of Islam's most sacred city, Mecca. Islam's revered apostle, Muhammad, rose to power in Mecca in the seventh century.

Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein -- until now known as a secular dictator with purely secular ambitions for power -- has issued fiery calls for "holy war" to drive the Western infidels out of the area.

"The whole region is a bit like a tinderbox," Thorne said from his office in Cyprus. "Who knows what's going to happen?"

"Being Westerners, being Americans, being Christians in this particular situation are all potential liabilities," he added. Southern Baptist workers are maintaining a low profile while, as much as possible, going ahead with their work, he said.

They also have made evacuation plans addressing such matters as transportation options to countries where they could seek refuge, which families should evacuate first and how they would arrange for living expenses in another country.

If naval skirmishes break out in the Persian Gulf, Southern Baptist workers Don and Peggy Littlejohn in Bahrain could be affected, Thorne said. Bahrain is a small island nation off the coast of Saudi Arabia. Littlejohn is a medical lab supervisor at a hospital there affiliated with the Reformed Church in America. Littlejohn is from Fort Worth, Texas; Mrs. Littlejohn is from Houston.

Bahrain has been unaffected thus far, Littlejohn said. "If we didn't read the newspapers, we wouldn't know anything bad is happening at all," he reported, except for a drop in the number of business executives from the West and Japan on the island.

The 19 Southern Baptist workers in Jordan have become accustomed to daily demonstrations in favor of Saddam Hussein.

"The anti-American, pro-Iraqi sentiment has grown," stated Arylis Milligan of Tulsa, Okla., who heads the group of Southern Baptist representatives in Jordan. "We are all staying in as much as possible." Even so, she said, "None of us feels in any immediate danger." Workers in Jordan primarily help the country's Baptists start churches or teach at one of two Baptist schools in the country.

Much of the fervor in Jordan in support of Saddam, as he is called in the Middle East, stems from his vehement anti-Israel rhetoric. More than half of Jordan's 4 million people are Palestinians. They trace their homeland back to territory now part of the state of Israel or to the West Bank, which came under Israeli control during the Six-Day War of 1967. Many of them stand ready to take up arms in any attempt to recapture Palestine.

Jordan has maintained close ties with Iraq, sharing intelligence operations and air defenses. Iraq has provided financing for Jordan's air force. And the Jordanian port of Aqaba has been a key supply line into Iraq, especially during Iraq's protracted war with Iran.

Jordan's King Hussein, no relation to Saddam Hussein, is walking a tightrope between Iraq and the United States, with which he also has ties. His difficulties are complicated by a weak economy with more than 20 percent unemployment.

Southern Baptist workers nevertheless maintain friendly relations with Jordanian co-workers, neighbors and acquaintances.

Milligan recounted a visit with one of her neighbors who is "very upset with some of the policies coming out of Washington. But he didn't direct that at me." Likewise, she said, Southern Baptist workers do not "put every Arab in the same mold" as Saddam Hussein.

What happens in Jordan could trigger Israel to take action. Israel has declared Jordanian territory to be the "Red Line" that, if entered by Iraqi troops, will provoke a military response.

Saddam reportedly would like nothing better than to draw Israel into the conflict. Speculation abounds in diplomatic circles that he might provoke hostilities with Israel to make fellow Arabs direct their energies against the Jewish state, meanwhile minimizing their opposition to his invasion of Kuwait.

Twenty-six Southern Baptist workers are stationed throughout Israel. They help Arab Baptists start churches, support congregations of Jewish believers in Jesus and assist in meetings that bring Arabs and Jews together in worship.

Sales of gas masks are soaring in Israel because of Saddam Hussein's past use of chemical weapons in his war against Iran and against the Kurdish minority within Iraq. He also has threatened to "burn" half of Israel with chemicals.

In Gaza and on the West Bank, Palestinians also vocally support Saddam Hussein. Fourteen Southern Baptist workers are stationed in Gaza and primarily are teaching nursing and English-language skills and working in an Arab church.

One Southern Baptist couple on the West Bank is helping strengthen Arab Baptist congregations in the Jerusalem area.

Recent demonstrations also have been fueled by Arab resentment at Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for not sharing more of their good fortune with poorer Arabs, and by suspicions that the oil-rich Persian Gulf kingdoms have been too cozy in their relations with the West, particularly the United States.

Twenty-three Southern Baptist workers in Yemen, at the southern tip of the Arabian peninsula, also are concerned whether pro-Iraqi demonstrations will affect their work, Thorne said. All of them work at a Baptist hospital in the town of Jibla.

Two Southern Baptist couples also are stationed in Egypt, which has become a key player in Arab efforts to protect Saudi Arabia and persuade Iraq to leave Kuwait.

For now, plans remain intact for furloughing Southern Baptist workers to return to the region and new personnel to take up assignments there, Thorne said. At the end of August, two additional Baptist workers are scheduled to head to Jordan.

"I can't even think that I may not get to go back in September," said Margaret McPherson, a Southern Baptist worker from Midland, Texas, currently on a two-month furlough from her assignment in Bahrain.

"I really had a good year last year," said McPherson, who heads the English department at a 725-student school in Bahrain affiliated with the Reformed Church in America. "I was excited about my work and with the friends I was able to make."

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Scholars discuss ways  
to move 'beyond the impasse'

By Pat Cole

N-<sup>CO</sup>  
(SBTS)

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Speakers at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Pastor's School discussed ways to move Southern Baptists "beyond the impasse" in the denomination's current theological debate.

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During sessions on "Four Views of the Bible among Southern Baptists," seven scholars spoke at the Louisville, Ky., school about the nature of biblical authority and interpretation. They also proposed ways for Southern Baptists to find common ground in the present theological controversy.

Papers presented at the Aug. 7-10 Pastor's School will be published in a book by Broadman Press co-edited by David Dockery, chief editor of academic books at Broadman, and Robison James, professor of religion at the University of Richmond.

During the conference, Dockery said Southern Baptists will have to decide if "we can hold together tensions on various views about the Bible as well as various views of interpreting the Bible." Southern Baptists must understand the Bible is truthful, authoritative and is both a divine and human book, said Dockery.

"A lot of us get quite hung up on terms like inerrant and infallible," he said.

"I think it is very possible to move the discussion forward and still talk about the nature of Scripture without using those particular red flag terms." Within the Southern Baptist Convention, the terms communicate more about political parties than the nature of Scripture, he said.

"I would prefer that we talk about the Scripture as truthful, reliable and authoritative and see it having to be the normative guide for the church, for our lives and for the Christian community."

In addition to an affirmation of biblical authority, Southern Baptists also need to develop "some type of doctrinal parameters," Dockery said. Such parameters "are not anything new," he said, noting their history is rooted in the early church.

James observed that a "fundamentalist type of inerrancy is now the presumed norm" in the denomination. Unless "people are willing to rethink their position there is certainly no way forward," he said.

"I am willing to listen and learn," he said. "But how much willingness is there on the other (conservative) side?"

James noted there are "various views" of inerrancy and he has "no problem with some of them." Yet he said the "fundamentalist" view of inerrancy "makes it impossible for the full, authentic New Testament religion to get through to us."

Another speaker, R. Albert Mohler Jr., editor of the Christian Index, newsjournal for Georgia Baptists, said Southern Baptists need to try to build a theological consensus based on Scripture and historic Christian theology.

He maintained that a Southern Baptist consensus on Scripture will have to "include an affirmation of biblical inerrancy," but he added that inerrancy will have to be "carefully defined in a way that can allow the vast majority of Southern Baptists to articulate their understanding of biblical authority."

Mohler described inerrancy as "an important issue" but it "isn't the most important word about Scripture." He urged those who cannot affirm biblical inerrancy to "articulate with specificity a model of biblical authority that makes clear it accomplishes the purposes that inerrancy was intended to accomplish." The denomination will have to deal with inerrancy because the debate about biblical authority has centered around that issue, he said.

John P. Newport, recently retired provost and vice president for academic affairs at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, stressed that the denomination's six seminaries have made efforts to build consensus in the denomination. He pointed out the seminary presidents developed the "Glorieta Statement" which pledged fidelity to biblical authority and promised conservative views would be treated fairly in seminary classrooms.

In addition, he said, the seminaries sponsored a conference on biblical inerrancy in 1987 and another on biblical interpretation in 1988. The conferences featured addresses by leading scholars from the evangelical world and responses by SBC Moderates and Conservatives. However, he said, most conservative SBC respondents "preached sermons" rather than tackling the issues raised by the evangelical scholars.

He said seminary leaders have given their "life blood" to try to bring about a theological consensus. He questioned whether Conservatives are interested in consensus building.

During a discussion about the value of the historical-critical method of biblical study, Paige Patterson, president of Criswell College in Dallas, said the historical-critical method had "shattered" the faith of many who have embraced its conclusions.

Furthermore, he said, pastors whose training involved the historical-critical approach often serve churches that "show alarming tendencies to loss in attendance and especially to decreasing evangelistic impact." He concluded "one could not resist the suspicion that there may be a substantive connection" between the historical-critical method and a lack of evangelistic zeal.

Walter Harrelson, professor emeritus of Hebrew Bible at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, said the historical-critical method is "indispensable" if the church is to pass on its tradition "faithfully and in tact." He emphasized that the historical-critical method is an ally to biblical faith rather than its enemy.

In the week's concluding address, Molly T. Marshall-Green, associate professor of Christian theology at Southern Seminary, called for a "functional view" of the Bible.

"Holy Scripture serves the church by pointing us to the story of salvation," she said. "The center of gravity in the Bible is its faithful narration of God's mighty acts, not the perfection of the text as a document itself."

Scripture's function is to "bring us to God through Jesus Christ," Marshall-Green said. "I'm simply saying we should not ask of Scripture to be other than it purports to be. I do not look at my watch to try to see how much I weigh nor do I look to Scripture to find a scientific description of all of reality."

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Baptist couple escapes  
from occupied Kuwait

By Ken Camp

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DALLAS (BP)--Acting on faith that friends and family in the United States were praying for their safety, Bill and Sharon Gilbert escaped from Iraqi-controlled Kuwait Aug. 13 in a bullet-pierced, church-owned car that had been used by fellow Southern Baptists Maurice and Laurie Graham.

With the Gilberts and their driver in the Graham's car and four other British and United States citizens in a "borrowed" rental car, the seven escapees drove 45 miles across the desert through a line of Iraqi tanks before crossing the Saudi Arabian border to safety.

The Gilberts, now members of Meadow Lake Baptist Church, in Yuma, Ariz., formerly were active members of Columbus Avenue Baptist Church, in Waco, Texas, and First Baptist Church, in Salado, Texas.

Gilbert, a retired United States Air Force officer, had moved to the Persian Gulf area in February to work with a telecommunications company under contract with the Kuwait Department of Defense. Between the Aug. 2 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and their Aug. 13 escape, the Gilberts and other foreigners were shuttled from one hotel to another in Kuwait City.

"We decided we didn't want to spend Christmas in Kuwait -- or in Iraq," Gilbert said, "so we left Monday morning at about five o'clock and made the two-hour trek to the border."

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The Gilberts' son, David, of South Main Baptist Church in Houston, said his parents "felt a lot of prayers being offered up.

"They sensed a real drawing power that said, 'Now is the time to get out.'"

Mrs. Gilbert explained that they timed their escape for sunrise Monday because she felt certain their Southern Baptist friends in the United States would be praying for them during Sunday evening worship services.

As dawn was breaking in the Persian Gulf and the Gilberts were leaving the SAS Kuwait Hotel, half a world away First Church, of Taft, Texas was holding a special prayer meeting in the front yard of Marshall and Marjorie Chrestman, Mrs. Gilbert's parents.

"After our regular Sunday evening service, we announced that we would go to the Chrestman's front yard," said Dale Pogue, pastor of First Baptist Church.

"We sang hymns and one of our deacons led in prayer. Then we tied a yellow ribbon around a tree in their front yard and gave little yellow ribbons to those who were there. We must have had 50 or 60 people who filled that yard."

"I just had a real peace about it," Mrs. Gilbert said. "I asked, 'Are you ready to go,' and Bill said, 'This Australian will drive. He's a bush driver.'"

"You've got to understand. I'm henpecked," Gilbert said in jest. "I was ready, but I wasn't going to go anywhere until my wife said go."

The Gilberts and their driver -- an Australian forester whom they knew only as "Mad Max" -- took the Mitsubishi Gallant that had been driven by the Grahams, Southern Baptist workers at the National Evangelical Church in Kuwait City.

"We stole it, really," Gilbert said, adding that Iraqi artillery had destroyed the National Evangelical Church and the car that belonged to the church. Bullets had shattered the auto's passenger side window of the auto, and at least one bullet had penetrated the driver's door.

Mrs. Gilbert said she assumed the Grahams were safe at the U.S. Embassy, but she was not certain of their whereabouts.

On Aug. 17, U.S. officials in Kuwait protested a demand from Iraqi forces that Americans in Kuwait report to a hotel across from the U.S. Embassy. The U.S. Ambassador said he had no power to force Americans to report there, but he would inform them of the Iraqi demands. Latest word from the U.S. State Department is that the Grahams still are located in the U.S. Embassy.

Knowing that all roads out of Kuwait City were blocked on Aug. 13, the Gilberts and their fellow escapees chose a desert route. Making their way across the blistering sand, Gilbert said that even in the early morning, the temperature must have reached 120 degrees in the non-air-conditioned car. But the hottest spot, he said, was when the two automobiles found themselves confronting a line of Iraqi army tanks.

"There were tanks as far as you could see from left to right," Mrs. Gilbert said. "We thought we were going to have to turn back. Instead, our driver floorboarded it and went right between two tanks."

"The driver said, 'If the tank turrets turn toward us, tell me,'" Gilbert recalled. "I said, 'What'll you do then?' He said, 'I'll just drive faster.'"

After two sweltering hours, the Gilberts and their associates saw a heavily armed soldier standing in front of a desert fort. Uncertain of his nationality, the escapees turned back.

"Then we came upon a bedouin in a car," Gilbert said. "He pointed back to the fort and yelled, 'Saudi! Saudi!'"

On his birthday, Aug. 13, David Gilbert learned that his parents were safe in Saudi Arabia and would be returning to Texas in three days. It was the first word he had received from them since the Aug. 2 invasion, he said.

As the Gilberts stepped through the doors of U.S. Customs clearance at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport at 2:50 p.m., Aug. 16, they were greeted by cheering family and friends holding "welcome home" signs and waving small U.S. and Texas flags.

"As you might imagine, it's been a tense and trying two weeks," Gilbert told reporters at the airport.

"We just thank the Good Lord for all the prayers offered up for us," Mrs. Gilbert said. "If not for the prayers of our family and friends, we couldn't have made it."

Marshall Chrestman, reflecting on the prayer service held in his front yard just four days earlier, was looking forward to the thanksgiving service First Baptist Church of Taft, could hold the following Sunday.

"It'll be wonderful," he said, choked with emotion. "It'll just be wonderful."

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Baptist leaders charge  
rights violations

By Gary W. Griffith

*N. S. M. B.*

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SEOUL, South Korea (BP)--Four Baptist leaders reported human rights violations in their countries and asked for international support during the meeting of the Baptist World Alliance's Commission on Human Rights Aug. 15.

Cited violations involved South Korea, Nicaragua, El Salvador and South Africa. The commission endorsed the reports and encouraged Baptist churches and leaders in those areas to pray and work for justice and peace, noted Thorwald Lorenzen, commission chairman.

Donald Black, secretary for social affairs in the Baptist Union of Great Britain, reported 50 Korean students were arrested the previous afternoon after participating in demonstrations demanding the reunification of the two Koreas.

The demonstrations took place in Seoul, the host city for the 16th Baptist World Congress.

Leaders and members of Baptist conventions and unions from around the world converged in Seoul for the Baptist World Congress Aug. 14-18. Congress sessions were being held at the Seoul Olympics Sports Complex.

Black said 567 students have been arrested as "prisoners of conscience" during the last decade in South Korea. Others arrested in that category include 432 workers as well as teachers, farmers, publishers and even soldiers and police.

The 10-year count on "prisoners of conscience" totaled 1,247 in South Korea, Black reported, and he noted that 147 of them have from one year to 30 years left in their prison terms.

"These are the ones we know about," Black said. "There are others; we simply don't know how many. We're asking the government to tell how many are awaiting trial. Also, persons are not told why they are arrested."

The heart of the reunification debate is the division of the Korean peninsula and resulting tensions between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north and the Republic of Korea in the south, Black said.

"The people of Korea do not want the division," Black claimed, adding that 10 million families remain divided by a demilitarized zone cutting across the peninsula.

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He urged Christians around the world to join Christians in North and South Korea in an annual day of prayer for peaceful reunification. The day of prayer is scheduled each year on the Sunday prior to Aug. 15, leading up to the Biblical Jubilee year of 1995. At that time, Koreans will celebrate the 50th anniversary of their independence from Japan.

Another Baptist leader, Tomas Tellez, executive secretary of the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua, told the commission of developments in his country since the election of Violeta Chamorro as president in the spring.

Tellez accused Chamorro and her government of showing "clear favoritism" toward the Roman Catholic Church and erasing social benefits he claimed the country had gained under the Sandinista regime. Baptists and several other Protestant groups received similar favored treatment from the Sandinista regime while Catholics were attacked, according to other observers.

Catholic churches are allowed to retain their tax exemption while Protestant churches have been denied the exemption they received for many years in Nicaragua, Tellez charged. The situation causes "serious hindrance to the programs of the churches, such as health, education, service to the elderly and orphans' housing," he said.

Under Chamorro's leadership, Tellez claimed, pensions are being decreased or canceled for retirees, people handicapped in war and "mothers of young killed in the war." Monthly allowances of grain also are being canceled or decreased, he said.

The Nicaraguan Baptist leader said low priority is given to public health; public hospitals have extreme shortages of medicine and supplies; and subsidies for public education, transportation and other services have been canceled.

In addition, the inflation in Nicaragua is crippling, with a rate of 1,000 percent after the first 100 days of the new government, Tellez stressed. The price of fuel has increased 1,500 percent and food prices have jumped by 1,200 percent during the same period, he said. But salaries have increased a modest 400 percent, he added.

The United States government has approved \$300 million in aid to Nicaragua, but only \$60 million has been given, Tellez said. He called for the U.S. government to send millions of dollars to aid the country, just as millions were spent to support the Contra rebels and defeat the Sandinistas.

Despite the disarmament of the Contras, death squads made up of former Contras and extremists have killed many people, he claimed.

Tellez urged fellow Christians to help Nicaragua by praying and giving to allow churches there to meet immense needs. "The needs are overwhelming," he said. "Now we have peace, now we have democracy, but what is that all about when we are hungry, when we are jobless, when we have no homes?"

Another leader, Carlos Sanchez, general secretary of the Baptist Association of El Salvador, sent a document on human rights violations in his country to the commission. Salvadoran Baptist leader Mary Kalil read the report on behalf of Sanchez, who was unable to attend the meeting.

"'Justice' is the word that is key to understanding what is happening in El Salvador, because the absence of real justice is the fundamental cause of the crisis that for 10 years has submerged the country in war and misery," Sanchez wrote. "At the same time, it is the struggle for justice that has resulted in the deaths of 75,000 people in 10 years. The Salvadoran people have known, in their own flesh, what martyrdom is ... for raising their clamor and expressing their hunger and thirst for justice."

Recently, 111 people have been killed for political reasons -- 76 deaths caused by the military and police and 35 others by death squads -- from July 1989 through June 1990, Sanchez reported. (Hundreds also died last year in the assault on San Salvador by leftist rebels, who used civilian areas for cover.)

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During the same time, 101 people have disappeared, including a Baptist pastor, Miguel Angel Portillo, Sanchez related. "There is no hope that they will be found alive." Kalil noted that Portillo preached a sermon on peace before he was last seen. She believes he has been murdered.

Meanwhile, 923 people were "captured for political reasons," Sanchez said. A total of 117 have disappeared, 370 have been released and the rest have been imprisoned.

El Salvador has sunk almost to the level of barbarity, where "whoever has a weapon can decide what side justice is on," Sanchez wrote. Investigations into political killings are obstructed despite clear evidence against government army personnel, he charged.

"We Salvadoran Baptists ask that the world Baptist community remain watchful of the situation of El Salvador, increase your fellowship of solidarity in prayer, express to our authorities your concern for the fragile situation of human rights and ask the parties to the dialogue and peace negotiations to manifest their willingness for reaching a peace with social justice soon in El Salvador," Sanchez concluded.

The final Baptist leader, Per Midteide, general secretary of the Baptist Union of Norway, reported advancements in the fight against apartheid in South Africa. But the white minority rulers can preclude the participation of blacks in the governing process by economic and governmental control, he said.

Two dates were crucial to the black struggle, said Midteide: African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela's prison release Feb. 11 and the Aug. 6 agreement to begin talks for a new constitution in South Africa.

However, glaring rights violations continue for blacks, such as no voting rights. And, in 77 percent of the land areas of South Africa, blacks cannot own land, Midteide said.

The BWA's Commission on Human Rights is comprised of Baptist scholars concerned with ethical demands, contemporary issues and rights among Baptist groups and others around the world. The commission issues reports and makes recommendations for consideration by BWA leadership and members.

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Griffith is a reporter for the Louisiana Baptist Message, newsjournal of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.