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August 31, 1990

90-115

Middle East concerns
inspire Call to Prayer

N-006

WITCHITA FALLS, Texas (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention President Morris Chapman has issued a Call to Prayer concerning the crisis in the Persian Gulf region. Calling for a cooperative prayer effort in Southern Baptist congregations, Chapman stated that "the tension in the Middle East has the potential of exploding into a war of unparalleled proportions. The consequences would be devastating to every nation on earth."

Chapman has asked every Southern Baptist church to set aside time in morning worship for a period of prayer beginning 11:11 a.m. on Sunday, September 9. The churches are asked to pray specifically for "our President, his cabinet, the Congress, our diplomatic corps, the men and women of our armed forces and their families as well as those civilians held in the area against their will and their families."

Chapman also asked for prayer for the "innocent men, women and children in the area who are being subjected to the daily threat of violence."

"We must seek," Chapman added, "the intervention of God on behalf of His people throughout the world. As Baptists we know not only our personal experiences with the power of prayer but also the Bible's promises concerning God's hearing of His people when they ask for wisdom, guidance and protection."

In this critical hour of monumental decisions "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

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First dependents arrive in Jordan;
Mrs. Graham, sons still detained

Baptist Press
8/31/90

By Erich Bridges and Art Toalston

N-EMB

AMMAN, Jordan (BP)--The first jet to carry women or children foreigners out of Iraq arrived in Amman, Jordan, Aug. 31, but neither Southern Baptist missionary Laurie Graham nor her two sons were among the passengers.

The Grahams were among some 1,000 American women and children still being detained Aug. 31 despite Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's promise to free the American dependents.

Mrs. Graham of Hutchinson, Kansas, and her husband, Maurice, of Shelbyville, Tenn., had been working at a Kuwait church less than three months when Iraqi troops stormed the country in the early morning hours of Aug. 2.

A spokesman at the U.S. State Department said Aug. 31 that Hussein's stated willingness to let foreign women and children leave Iraq and Kuwait so far has been nullified by "so many obstacles and procedures that have been laid down that it has been impossible for anybody to actually succeed in doing so."

For example, the Iraqis are insisting that American women in particular must show proof of having paid all local taxes, the spokesman said, which could be difficult for hostages in war-torn Kuwait.

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One reported roadblock, however, may have been invalidated Aug. 30 when Iraq's ambassador to the United States denied reports that Iraq had demanded that airplanes arriving for hostages must bring in food and medicine.

Women and children comprise about one-third of the estimated 500 American hostages in Iraq and 2,500 in Kuwait, according to the State Department. By its count in Kuwait, there are some 500 women, about 25 of whom are pregnant; 350 children ages 3 to 18, including the Grahams' 13- and 10-year-old sons; and 60 infants.

The Graham family took refuge in the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait after the invasion, along with an undisclosed number of other Americans. The State Department acknowledged Aug. 29 that food and water supplies at the embassy compound were sufficient for only "several days."

"For security reasons, we don't give estimates as to how long they can hold out," the State Department spokesman said Aug. 31.

Josephine Howell of Portsmouth, Va., mother of U.S. Ambassador W. Nathaniel "Nat" Howell in Kuwait, said in an interview she believes the embassy situation has not yet deteriorated into the worst of scenarios. She noted that the State Department usually has informed her "if there was any vast change" in past difficult circumstances that her son has weathered during his 25-year career in foreign service.

Mrs. Howell has been a member of Court Street Baptist Church in Portsmouth for 65 years. Her son attended the church until he began undergraduate studies at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, where he was active in the Baptist Student Union.

When civil war in Lebanon broke out in 1975, her son weathered shelling for 11 months in the basement of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Mrs. Howell said. In the heat of the 1967 Six-Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbors, he was one of the last Americans to evacuate Cairo, Egypt. He left on a Greek freighter.

"I feel that he's doing what he chose to do and ... what he would want to do," Mrs. Howell said. "They ask me, 'If you could bring him out, would you?' I said, 'No, he has to make the decision. He's in a position to know.'"

"I'm bearing up," she said. "It's nerve-racking, but I'm fine." She said her faith "has carried me through many a thing."

She said her son "has a strong faith," although much of his career has been spent in the Middle East or in diplomatic capacities where churchgoing has been difficult. His involvement in Baptist Student Union as a college student "made a very positive influence on his life," she said.

Mrs. Howell said her son also has "a very strong sense of humor that does not desert him. He seemed to have been born with it."

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Baptist hostage in Kuwait
helping others at embassy

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
8/31/90

N-FMB

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist worker Maurice Graham has become an unofficial chaplain at the embattled U.S. Embassy in Kuwait, according to an American woman who was permitted to leave the country Aug. 23.

Graham was leading nightly prayer services at the embassy and was scheduling appointments for anyone wanting advice or a listening ear, said Deanna Darden of Dallas in a telephone interview Aug. 31.

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Darden was in a 33-car convoy of embassy-related officials and dependents that left Kuwait Aug. 23. She and 51 other women and children finally crossed into Turkey Aug. 26 after three nights of uncertainty in Baghdad, Iraq's capital. Her husband, Monte, was among approximately 50 U.S. men in the convoy who were detained in Baghdad as hostages.

Monte Darden is a highway engineer with the Federal Highway Administration who had been involved in road-building projects for the Kuwaiti government. The Dardens had been scheduled to be on an 11 a.m. flight Aug. 2 that would have concluded their four-year stint in Kuwait. Iraqi troops, however, invaded the country in the early morning hours that day.

Graham, of Shelbyville, Tenn., his wife, Laurie, and their 13- and 10-year-old sons took refuge in the U.S. Embassy compound several days after the Iraqi invasion.

Darden, who stayed in a hotel across the street from the embassy, recounted that as Americans came to the embassy compound for refuge, they would take note of anyone who knew something about plumbing or carpentry or other matters that may need attention there.

"One of the ladies said, 'The only thing we need is someone now who can fix peoples' heads.' And the next day Maurice came," Darden said.

Graham's counseling extended to a group of 68 women and children dependents of British military advisers to the Kuwait government. The men had been taken to Baghdad while the dependents were confined for several days at the hotel where Darden was staying.

The Baptist representative's visits to the British women and children prompted Iraqi guards at the hotel to begin surveillance of him as he came and went, Darden said. Even so, Graham told the group, "I'll keep coming until they won't let me in the door."

"Laurie (Graham's wife) was just a model person in how a Christian should behave in times of stressful circumstances," Darden said. "She was always very upbeat, seeing the best of things, smiling, reaching over and giving people hugs, just being a very positive person."

Graham encouraged Americans at the embassy to keep Ambassador W. Nathaniel Howell in their prayers. Darden quoted Graham as saying, "He (Howell) has got to do some things that are difficult and we've got to keep praying for him and encouraging him and understanding his situation."

Darden said Graham had been able to venture back to the National Evangelical Church where he and his wife had worked less than three months after arriving in Kuwait. Graham said the building had been ransacked by Iraqi troops and was a total loss.

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South African Baptists offer hope
after weeks of violence and death By Donald D. Martin

N-FMB

Baptist Press
8/31/90

ROODEPOORT, South Africa (BP)--Baptist churches in black South African townships south of Johannesburg have begun programs to defuse tension after weeks of political and tribal violence that killed more than 500 people.

Local Baptists have joined other Christians in sponsoring reconciliation sessions, bringing together opposing sides of recent fighting. Opposing factions, sometimes in groups of 50 people or more, sit face to face and air grievances, said Southern Baptist missionary Carroll Shaw of Vernon, Texas.

"The issues they face when they come together are about living peacefully, living as one people," said Shaw, who works as a church growth consultant with the 145 churches of the Baptist Convention of Southern Africa.

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"They talk about ways of stopping the fighting and helping each other instead of destroying each other," he said. "They're trying to leave the political side out of the talks and look at the situation from the standpoint of humanity." The church-mediated session, lasting about an hour, takes place when needed. In some townships sessions occur daily.

Also, Baptist churches in seven townships have met for special evening services, offered Christian counseling in riot-torn neighborhoods and distributed relief to people who lost homes and belongings in fires and looting during factional fighting, Shaw said.

Some of the worst fighting in this recent outbreak between supporters of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Movement occurred in mid-August.

Reasons for the fighting are knotted into a complicated web of political and tribal grievances. Inkatha supporters most often claim that black nationalist leader Nelson Mandela and the ANC have systematically shunned the Inkatha leader, Zulu Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, in an attempt to cut him out of possible power-sharing in post-apartheid South Africa, according to news reports.

Buthelezi claims to represent a majority of South Africa's Zulus, numbering about 7 million, or one-quarter of the nation's 28 million blacks. The ANC's political power is anchored in the country's 6.2 million Xhosa-speaking people. Though open to all races, most of its executive leaders are Xhosa. Mandela comes from a royal Xhosa-speaking family.

Inkatha's political strength is centered in South Africa's Natal province, while the ANC draws its strength from a wider circle of support. In widely reported opinion polls, only 2 percent of the nationwide population supports Inkatha, while the ANC enjoys support from 84 percent.

Baptist churches realize this is a critical time for their Christian witness, as communities look to local churches for healing. The churches that minister openly, crossing racial and political lines, will see the greatest impact, Shaw said.

Shaw and his wife, Jackie, of Whitesboro, Texas, have also begun distributing blankets, clothing and simple cooking utensils bought with a \$5,000 appropriation from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

The most effective part of the Shaws' relief ministry, however, is simply visiting and praying with people in the townships, he said.

"Just our presence shows a love that people are so grateful for," he said. "Today at a home I visited, they said, 'There's no way to express our thanks for your concern.'"

Baptist churches are using these efforts to express a Christ-filled concern that bridges racial lines, he said. They want to help people mend their lives spiritually and emotionally in the aftermath of seemingly indiscriminate mob violence and killings, he said.

The political struggle of the country's two largest black movements is steeped in violence. More than 3,000 people have died in clashes over the last four years. Political analysts say the latest wave of violence began soon after Inkatha leaders launched recruitment drives outside Inkatha's traditional power base of Natal province.

Recruitment drives targeted the overcrowded migrant-workers' hostels in the Johannesburg area. Area mines and factories own the packed hostels, some filled with row after row of bunk beds in warehouse-like buildings each the size of a city block.

The majority of the all-male migrant communities are Zulus from Natal. They come to the area on short-term, low-wage contracts, which include free housing. Others come from South Africa's homelands. Most live in makeshift shelters of cardboard and plastic in sprawling shantytowns. The influx has made the Johannesburg area one of the world's fastest growing urban centers.

Some Baptist churches have housed men who were living in hostels that burned during the rioting. Church members also started feeding workers on church grounds. Without the churches' assistance many workers would be forced to give up their current jobs, creating hardship for themselves and their families who survive almost totally on money the workers send home, Shaw said.

Shaw asks that Southern Baptists pray for local church members to witness effectively to these men.

"Pray for the witnessing to these people. Pray that they will turn to the Lord and find the church as the haven and comfort they are looking for every day in their lives, and not just when troubles come," Shaw said.

Local Baptists also plan to broadcast several radio messages calling for peace, he said. The multi-language broadcasts will highlight Baptists' relief work and community service and then end with the statement, "We are Baptist people that care and want peace; what are you doing for peace?"

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Christian soldiers
face unfamiliar religion

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
8/31/90

ATLANTA (BP)--While adjusting to desert heat and sand, Southern Baptists in the Middle East are likely to face an equally unfamiliar religion.

Encounters with Muslims may cause Christians to limit their evangelistic message and adjust their schedules said Maurice Smith, a specialist on world religions for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

For example, Smith says most Muslim-dominated countries prohibit non-Muslims from expressing their religious views publicly. He said even if evangelization were legal, "street preaching would be counter-productive because of their unwritten laws."

However, Smith said chaplains should be free to conduct religious services on military compounds. He said Muslims might want to attend such services to observe Christians at worship.

Bob Vickers, chaplain at Georgia's Fort McPherson, said a chaplain's main responsibility is with his troop. Chaplains spend much of their time listening and being a friend, and they may not have much contact with people outside the military, he said.

While working with Muslims, it will be necessary to adjust schedules, Smith said. Muslims typically pray five times a day -- at dawn, morning, afternoon, before sundown and after sundown. Each prayer time may take about 15 minutes.

Other differences are obvious between Islamic and Christian worship styles. Smith said Muslims do not sing during their worship services, they remove their shoes, and men and women do not worship together.

"Their worship has more rituals, but it is usually very genuine and sincere," Smith said.

When Christians have contact with people of Arab nations, whether in the Middle East or in the United States, Smith said to "listen a lot and be very sensitive to the interests of people. Clarify any misconceptions rather than argue."

About 300,000 Americans are of Iraqi ancestry, Smith said. In addition, about 1,400 Iraqi students and about 2,700 Iraqi nationals are in the United States temporarily.

"Remember this is not a conflict between America and Islam or the United States and Arabs or Muslims, but with Iraq," Smith said.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Please substitute these three paragraphs for the third, fourth and fifth paragraphs of the BP story released Aug. 29 titled:

Prayer services held in Kuwait;
water, food run low in embassy

Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's promise Aug. 28 to free captive American women and children in Iraq and Kuwait was confirmed by the State Department. But news reports said Iraq is demanding that foreign airplanes landing there to pick up captives must bring in food and medicine.

Also according to news reports, the Iraqi government had not issued any exit permits for the women and children by Aug. 30, and government offices were to be closed Friday, Aug. 31, for the weekly Muslim holy day.

Graham, of Shelbyville, Tenn.; his wife, Laurie, of Hutchinson, Kan.; and their 13- and 10-year-old sons are among an undisclosed number of Americans who took refuge at the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait after Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait. In all, some 3,000 Americans are stranded in Iraq and Kuwait, a third of whom are women and children, the State Department said.

Seminary opens year
with appeal for freedom

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
8/31/90

LOUISVILLE, Ky. -- The fall semester at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary opened with an appeal for faculty and students not to plow paths that "may usurp the freedom of those who follow."

Seminary Pastor J. Estill Jones said at the Louisville, Ky., school's Aug. 28 convocation that the spirit of Southern Seminary has been characterized by free exploration and expression.

Jones built his plea for individuality around the message on a campus sign which exhorts pedestrians to "Please Walk on Grass But Don't Make Paths." He likened the sign's invitation to walk on the grass to permission to develop creative ideas and original thinking. He compared the admonition not to make paths to a warning which guards against "religiously following another's steps" and insisting that "another follow you."

The seminary should seek diversity rather than conformity, he stressed: "The seminary is not a sausage mill insuring the uniformity of every skin-encompassed bunch of bologna. Creative thinking is the foundation of progress. It thrives on conversation under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."

Jones also stressed the importance of seeking truth within the context of freedom. Both freedom and truth are God's gifts and must be "treasured and cultivated," he said:

"Both freedom and truth are necessary in the fellowship. Relationships among us depend on our respect for freedom. Relationships among us depend on our loyalty to the truth. And both loyalty and freedom in this place depend on relationships. Yet neither is relative; both are absolute."

Jones substituted for seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt, who is recuperating from open heart surgery performed in late July.

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During the convocation, Doris Borchert, associate professor of Christian education, signed the original copy of the Abstract of Principles, the seminary's confessional statement. The document has been signed by every tenured member of the seminary faculty since the school's founding in 1859. Borchert was granted tenure by seminary trustees at their April meeting.

Other faculty recognitions during the convocation included the installation of four professors to endowed chairs -- Gerald L. Borchert, T. Rupert and Lucille Coleman chair of New Testament; Diana Garland, C. Edwin Gheens chair of Christian family ministry; and Bill J. Leonard, William Walker Brookes chair of American Christianity. In addition, Bob I. Johnson was installed as dean of Boyce Bible School, a division of Southern Seminary that provides ministerial training to persons without college degrees.

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CORRECTION NOTE: The third paragraph of the story by Scott Collins regarding the BSSB trustee action on Leon McBeth's manuscript should read:

McBeth's book, written for the centennial of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, became an issue of controversy when trustees at the board voted to counsel the administration not to proceed with the publishing of the book." Johnny Godwin, vice-president of the office of general publishing, announced that the book would not be published.

Arizona newly elected
exec--Stringer

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8/31/90

PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)--Dan C. Stringer was approved as executive director treasurer of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention at a special called convention Aug. 28.

Stringer, 62, has been living in Scottsdale, Ariz., since shortly after he took early retirement as executive director treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention in 1989. He succeeds Jack B. Johnson, who became president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission July 1.

Stringer was both unanimously recommended by the search committee and approved by the state convention's executive board Aug. 7. However, according to the state convention's constitution his employment was subject to approval "by a two-thirds favorable vote of the messengers in an annual or special convention session."

With 676 messengers registered for the convention at Trinity Baptist Church, Casa Grande, Ariz., no more than 30 stood in opposition when the vote was taken.

Stringer is not new to the Arizona convention staff, having served in a variety of roles from 1966-71. Prior to joining the Arizona staff, he served as pastor of churches in the state convention and was president of the Arizona convention in 1965.

He left Arizona in 1971 to become executive director of the Northwest Baptist Convention and then moved to the Florida post in 1979.

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Ministry to deaf
began as a child

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
8/31/90

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP) -- Joyce Smith found a whole new world at age 11 when she first attended Arial Baptist Church in Easley, S.C.

She found the world of church for the hearing. "Oh, the wonderful singing, the beautiful worship center, the children -- I just loved it," recalled Smith, a hearing child of deaf parents.

Before a friend invited Smith to visit Arial Church, she had attended a Sunday school for the deaf along with her parents in the dingy, noisy basement of a Greenville church. Because they were all deaf, the adults did not notice the roar of the furnace that, to Smith, seemed to drown out all other sound.

As one of three hearing children of deaf parents, Smith had never attended worship services at the Greenville church because there was no interpreter for the deaf. The deaf Sunday school class members and their children left after Sunday school.

Smith was drawn by what she had discovered at the Arial Church and began attending there while her parents continued with the deaf ministry in Greenville. She thrilled in the Bible study, teaching, sword drills, Girls Auxiliary (now Girls in Action) and other activities she never knew existed before. During a revival in 1950, she accepted Christ as her personal savior.

Although Smith immersed herself in the world of the hearing, she never forgot her parent's world -- the world of the deaf. Much of her life has been spent bridging the two worlds.

Wherever she has been, Smith has found ways to develop deaf ministry. Through writing for the Sunday School Board, working as a missions volunteer for the Home Mission Board and serving on the Global Strategy Team at the Foreign Mission Board, her ministry has reached virtually every area of Southern Baptist life.

"In 1963, I felt God calling me to ministry to the deaf," Smith said. "I had two little girls and was busy with my family. I remember saying, 'Lord, I don't understand this.'"

At her pastor's urging, Smith started a deaf ministry at Arial Baptist Church. Although she had grown up using sign language, as the deaf ministry grew, Smith realized she needed more training.

Her first training came at a Southern Baptist Conference for the Deaf at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center in 1963. She has attended that conference every year since then. In 1972, she began leading sessions at the conference and in 1987 began writing lessons for Southern Baptist curriculum for the deaf.

As a pioneer in South Carolina, Smith has helped establish deaf ministries in more than 25 South Carolina churches.

When Smith's husband, Olen, took a job at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center in 1984, she was not sure how she would continue her ministry to the deaf.

She quickly found a need for workers at the conference center to know sign language. Smith has trained at least 12 conference center employees. She also works part time at Ridgecrest and is available to assist deaf guests.

At the Ridgecrest Girl's Camp, sign language has become one of the most popular sessions since Smith trained the camp counselors.

Smith believes strongly that the local church should be the focal point of her ministry, but she was unsure how that would happen when she moved to Ridgecrest. The answer came, she said, in the post office one day when a man tapped her on the shoulder and asked her to interpret worship services for him at Ridgecrest Baptist Church.

Smith realized that surely this man, Lyndon Carr, was not the only deaf person in the mountain community. Smith and Carr found six deaf persons to attend church. Three later received Christ and joined the church.

From the deaf ministry, the church has reached 12 additional family members. As many as 50 persons in the church have been trained in sign language.

8/31/90

Page 9

Baptist Press

Smith has an endless list of opportunities she has found through her deaf ministry and a seemingly boundless energy to pursue them.

"The aspects of deaf ministry are so varied," she said. "It's like being on mission. We are all on mission to reconcile man to God. God has given me a good handle on mission involvement through deaf ministry."

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BP photo will be mailed separately to Baptist state paper editors.