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90-118

Mrs. Graham, sons named on list
to exit Kuwait -- but not on jet

By Erich Bridges & Art Toalston

N-FMB

AMMAN, Jordan (BP)--The names of Southern Baptist worker Laurie Graham and her two sons were on the passenger list of a flight carrying Americans out of Kuwait Sept. 8. But they were not on the jet when it arrived in Amman, Jordan, at midnight.

The next evacuation flights now are scheduled for Sept. 12 and 15, a U.S. State Department spokesman said.

Explanations of why they were not on the Sept. 8 flight were sketchy. In Washington, a State Department spokesman said there were a number of "glitches" on the lists of American women and children flown out of Iraq-controlled Kuwait Sept. 7 and 8.

In Amman, U.S. officials also offered bare-bones comments about the listing of the Grahams on the Sept. 8 evacuation flight from Kuwait. "I imagine they will be getting on other charter flights," a U.S. Embassy spokesman said.

Delays in the flights, confused information about passengers and reported threats to stop the evacuations apparently are part of a "cat-and-mouse game" Iraq is playing with westerners trying to leave Iraq and Kuwait, a U.S. official said.

Passenger lists for both flights contained the names of numerous Americans who were not aboard the jets when they arrived in Jordan, according to U.S. officials in Amman. About 200 Americans were listed on the Sept. 7 flight, for example, but only 171 actually were counted after the jet arrived in Amman.

As late as mid-afternoon Sept. 9, State Department personnel in Washington were confirming that Mrs. Graham and her sons had been on the Sept. 8 flight from Kuwait to Jordan and later had boarded a flight with 310 Americans bound for Charleston, S.C. Then the confirmations ceased.

Mrs. Graham and her husband, Maurice, and their 10- and 13-year-old sons took refuge in the U.S. Embassy compound in Kuwait several days after Iraqi troops stormed the country Aug. 2.

Mrs. Graham and her sons apparently remain among an estimated 500 or more American women and children waiting to leave Kuwait via Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's Aug. 28 decree that foreign women and children may leave Iraq and Kuwait. To date, more than 500 American women and children and a few men have been permitted to leave Kuwait.

Nine diplomatic personnel and five civilians are staying inside the U.S. Embassy compound, a State Department spokesman said Sept. 10. For several weeks after the invasion, the State Department had refused to disclose the number of Americans sheltered at the embassy, citing security reasons. By one estimate, it had been as high as 160, counting dependents of diplomatic personnel.

The Iraqis cut off water and electricity to the embassy after the U.S. refused to close it by Aug. 24. "I suspect there are some difficulties" at the embassy, a State Department spokesman said Sept. 10. "But we feel we can maintain the embassy on its current status."

According to news accounts, people at the embassy are drinking water from the swimming pool boiled over fires built from chopped-up pieces of furniture.

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At the helm of the embassy is Ambassador W. Nathaniel "Nat" Howell, a Portsmouth, Va., native who grew up in Court Street Baptist Church there and was active in Baptist Student Union activities during undergraduate studies at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

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Kuwait church now said
to be used by military

By Erich Bridges

N-FMB

Baptist Press
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AMMAN, Jordan (BP)--The evangelical church in Kuwait City has been turned into an Iraqi military compound, according to at least one refugee who reached Jordan from Kuwait.

Flora Labuguen, a Philippine nurse who worked at a Kuwait hospital for nearly six years before fleeing the country Aug. 26, arrived with about 250 other Philippine refugees at the Amman Baptist school early Sept. 9. She attended the Kuwait church, and said she was told of its fate by several other Christian nurses who also attended.

"Since the Iraqi invasion, the church has become a military compound of the Iraqis," Labuguen said. Anything of value inside the church was looted, and everything else was destroyed, she was told. On the church property, residences of the pastor and the assistant pastor, Southern Baptist worker Maurice Graham, also were looted.

Graham took refuge in the U.S. Embassy compound with his wife, Laurie, and their two sons soon after the invasion. Before the family left the church residence, Iraqi troops entered the Grahams' home four times Aug. 2 and "got kind of rough" once, Graham reported in his only telephone contact with Southern Baptist officials after the invasion.

Labuguen said she enjoyed the Kuwait church fellowship and liked the Grahams. "We were all in the congregation as one family," she recalled. "Laurie has a very good voice and sang in the church. And Pastor Maurice was growing well in the church and getting along with the members. They were a nice family. Also, the children were well behaved in the church, and we loved them."

The hospital where Labuguen worked also became a military camp, and she received no salary after the invasion. "So we decided to go out from the hospital because we were all afraid," she said.

She joined 22 other Philippine nurses in a 20-hour bus trip from Kuwait to Baghdad, Iraq. There they had to sell clothes, jewelry, and other valuables to raise 100 Iraqi dinars a piece -- the fee they were charged by the Iraqi government for the privilege of going on to Jordan.

Foreign nurses still in Kuwait have been forced to sign a one-year contract to work without pay, she added.

Labuguen and her party joined 3,000 other Filipinos for a scorching 10-day stay in the so-called neutral zone between the Iraqi-Jordan border in the big camps at Al Ruweished, and finally made it to Amman early Sept. 9 after an all-day journey.

She arrived at the Baptist school with 250 other exhausted and hungry Filipinos loaded into six school buses. They quickly streamed into the school gymnasium to find a square of floor on which to sleep, and even more quickly swarmed around food tables to receive bowls of rice and vegetables with bits of meat.

This group replaced another band of Philippine refugees, who left for home aboard planes sent by the Philippine government. Many more Filipinos remain in Kuwait and Iraq.

Thousands of refugees, primarily Asian contract workers in Kuwait and Iraq, continue to cross the border into refugee camps in Jordan. Searing heat, inadequate food and water and fears of a cholera epidemic have created explosive conditions at the Al Ruweished camps.

"It's like hell," said one Filipino. "Not enough water. People are dehydrated. And there is a lot of fighting between different nationals. We have to restrain."

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But it's better than Kuwait, where civilians huddled inside buildings and lived in fear that Saddam Hussein will "make it like Hiroshima" and that they would die sandwiched between opposing forces, the refugee said.

Meanwhile, at the Amman airport at midnight Sept. 8, many hundreds of refugees hoping for a plane out covered the entire open area between two airline terminals. They sat beside their duffel bags and suitcases, wearily watching as Boeing 747s roared into the sky bound for India, Pakistan, and other homelands. Inside, two Indians were seen struggling to carry a heavy trunk to the end of a line of departing passengers at least 100 yards long.

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Baptists still await exit

of Graham family from Kuwait By Erich Bridges & Art Toalston *N-SMB*

Baptist Press
9/10/90

AMMAN, Jordan (BP)--The U.S. Embassy in Kuwait, even with its water and power cut off, may be a comparative haven in a country marred by Iraqi troops and full of frightened Kuwaitis and foreigners.

Kuwait has ceased to be a nation and has become a hell on earth, according to American women who consented to interviews after evacuees landed in Amman, Jordan, Sept. 7. They were among 171 women, children and a few men to leave Kuwait as a major evacuation from the invaded country began.

Relatives of Southern Baptist workers Maurice and Laurie Graham -- and countless Southern Baptists -- had been praying that Laurie and their two young sons would be on board.

But they were not.

The Grahams took refuge in the U.S. Embassy compound in Kuwait several days after Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion. Southern Baptists' first workers in Kuwait, the Grahams had been in the country less than three months.

The next evacuation flight from Kuwait was scheduled for Sept. 8, according to a State Department spokesman in Washington. Relations with the Iraqi government remain intact for further flights for an estimated 1,000 women and children still in Kuwait, he said. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein decreed Aug. 28 that foreign women and children could leave Iraq and Kuwait. But foreign men continue to be pawns in the ongoing international crisis.

Although the U.S. Embassy may be a comparative haven, conditions there are bad, a State Department spokesman conceded Sept. 7. But, he said, "They still have water and food on hand. They're holding up and holding out."

Asked how long Americans can survive at the embassy, he said, "I don't know. Their demise is not imminent, let's put it that way."

The American women, however, described an Iraqi-controlled Kuwait where people are shot by Iraqi soldiers for no reason, where babies are taken from incubators so the incubators can be stolen, where Iraqi jets scream overhead at building height and supersonic speed.

One woman said Iraqi troops shot two American men through both hands, and that their legs had been broken. They are in a Kuwaiti hospital, she said.

"People are very terrified. They're beating people; they're shooting," said one of the women.

"Total destruction everywhere. Cars wrecked, burned," another said. "I don't want to say my last name," she added. "My husband is still in Kuwait ... as far as I know."

The women said they had to hide from house to house to avoid capture and that their husbands still were doing so, fearful of being used by the Iraqis as human shields against possible American military attacks.

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"You just get in the car and go until you find a friend that will hide you," one woman said.

"My friends have an underground network helping each other," including obtaining food, another woman said. "We all pooled our food and just laid low and tried to communicate with other Americans to find out what the situation really was."

At one point, she said, "The Iraqis came to our building. We hid up in the air conditioning ducts for five and a half hours."

At the U.S. Embassy, Maurice Graham was continuing to lead nightly services, said Lloyd Culbertson, an American who took refuge at the compound and was permitted to leave on a medical evacuation Sept. 1.

Graham gave "a message of hope and faith" every night, said Culbertson, a member of an independent Baptist congregation in El Paso, Texas. "His strong point was, 'We should trust in the Lord.'"

During the services, Mrs. Graham played the embassy's grand piano and led in singing hymns, Culbertson said.

The Grahams and their 13- and 10-year-old sons were well physically, he said.

Graham was "always around during the day trying to make people feel better," working alongside whoever was chopping up furniture for cooking and counseling with anyone battling depression, Culbertson said.

"I believe I'm a better man," he said, "for having known Maurice Graham and his family."

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Erich Bridges, Foreign Mission Board news editor, is reporting from Amman, Jordan. Art Toalston, staff writer, is reporting from Richmond, Va.
BP photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Ambassador's wife helps families
cope with Middle East crisis

By Art Toalston

N-SMB

Baptist Press
9/10/90

WASHINGTON (BP)--Margie Howell, wife of the U.S. ambassador to Kuwait, has been coping with her own stress by helping families traumatized by the crisis in the Middle East.

She last saw her husband, W. Nathaniel "Nat" Howell, when she left Kuwait July 24. At the time, his term of service in Kuwait was scheduled to end in two or three weeks. But when Iraq invaded Kuwait Aug. 2, Howell found himself in the weightiest challenge of his 25-year diplomatic career.

His challenges have included defying Iraqi orders to close the embassy, keeping it operating after Iraqi forces cut off water and electricity Aug. 24 and, now, coordinating the evacuation of women and children from Kuwait.

The Howells met when they were students at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville during the late 1950s. Both were active in the Baptist Student Union there.

When the invasion burst onto newscasts, Mrs. Howell said she went through stages of disbelief and denial, anger and then depression for several days.

"And then I figured out what I could do to help," she said. She became a volunteer at the State Department in Washington.

"I'm talking to daughters and sons and mothers and fathers and wives, all the relatives of people as they call in." She also calls them to say hello. "I think it makes a difference to them. They know I'm in the same boat."

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By helping families in crisis, she also is using skills gained in earning a master's degree in psychiatric nursing and in subsequent clinical work and university teaching.

Some families most impacted by the danger surrounding loved ones in Kuwait or Iraq "have calmed down now," Mrs. Howell said. "They're getting support from family and friends. They're geared up to wait a while. That's how I also see it -- we need to be geared up for the long haul."

Mrs. Howell said she is looking forward to a Baptist Student Union reunion at the University of Virginia in early November, even if her husband still is held hostage by Iraq. "I need the support. I need to touch base with these dear friends," she said.

Even so, she said, "I am absolutely convinced that Nat is the best person in the world to be in charge of that embassy at this time. It's as if all the experiences we have had ... led up to this moment for us. I feel that both Nat and I are ready for this particular experience."

She and her husband and two sons, now in their 20s, have weathered a number of difficult times in foreign service, she said. In 1976, for example, after civil war had erupted in Lebanon, her husband was on the U.S. Embassy staff in Beirut when the American ambassador and an aide were assassinated. It had been a "toss-up" as to whether Howell or the aide who was killed would accompany the ambassador that day, she said.

"And for eight months, the kids and I were in Greece waiting for him to finish his tour of duty (in Lebanon)," Mrs. Howell said. "He could come visit us occasionally, but we knew he was in a war zone. We did a lot of praying then, believe me. He was fired at by snipers many times. He was almost picked up (by abductors) many times."

Howell became ambassador to Kuwait in 1987, when the United States was placing its flag on Kuwaiti oil tankers to protect them from the strife of the Iran-Iraq war.

"We could hear firing across the water because we were right on the bay," Mrs. Howell said. "Occasionally missiles would hit in Kuwait but no one was hurt, thank goodness."

Mrs. Howell said her husband has an inward, personal kind of faith. "He lives it out in actions that he feels are for the good of people."

During their Baptist Student Union days, Mrs. Howell said, they both experienced "a community of caring people. We were all growing up together and learning and questioning things and agreeing and disagreeing and all the things that college students do as they test their faith and grow.

"We were trying to make our faith our own, not just what we had been taught through the years. We had to enlarge that and make it a vital, more growing faith."

In Kuwait, she said, "I think Nat would take the attitude that he must use his talents, his experience, his knowledge and any influence he has to the utmost to make the situation turn out for good for the people he feels very responsible for. He's doing what he can behind the scenes ... to help them get to safety."

If her husband had known that an Iraqi attack was imminent, Mrs. Howell added, he "would not have let everybody just sit there. He would have had people get out of there."

Mrs. Howell said she is in periodic but brief contact with her husband via the State Department's communications link with the embassy in Kuwait.

"They're all very tired, of course, and they're struggling under bad conditions," she said. Temperatures still soar, but "the worst is probably over" because Kuwait is entering a time of the year when humidity begins to decrease, she said.

"We both appreciate very much peoples' concern and their prayers," Mrs. Howell said, "and I hope they'll continue praying for us and for all the people in Kuwait, all the people caught in this mess."

McGregor announces retirement,
Henderson elected as replacement

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Don McGregor, 66, editor of the Baptist Record, newsjournal of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, has announced his retirement, effective Dec. 31.

Guy Henderson, 62, has been elected to succeed McGregor. Henderson has been director of evangelism for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board since 1981. Earlier, he and his wife, Lois, were career missionaries for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to Korea and the Philippines.

McGregor has been editor of the Baptist Record for 14 years, replacing Joe Odle in 1976. During McGregor's term as editor, the newsjournal's circulation has grown to 118,000 subscribers.

Bill Causey, executive director of the Mississippi convention, praised McGregor for his years of service to Mississippi Baptists and said he counted the editor as a friend. "He's been a marvelous editor. He's just done a superior job. He's a person of integrity, insight and dedication. He's a sweet-spirited individual, extremely cooperative. He's made a real contribution and lived through a difficult era to be a newspaperman in Southern Baptist life."

After Dec. 31, McGregor will continue work on a biography of Owen Cooper, a Baptist layman from Yazoo City, Miss., and past SBC president, and explore other possibilities of involvement in Baptist life. In recent years, he has been president of the Southern Baptist Press Association and chairman of the public relations advisory committee that related to the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

"Don McGregor has been a stalwart among state editors. He represents the best among us. His absence among editors is a very personal loss to me," said Lynn Clayton, editor of the Louisiana Baptist Message.

Henderson was elected unanimously by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's executive committee on recommendation of Causey.

Causey said Henderson will begin working with McGregor in October and will begin duties officially as editor in November. McGregor will begin a vacation period in November that will take him through the end of the year.

Prior to becoming director of the evangelism department, Henderson was a consultant in the department of stewardship and Cooperative Program promotion from 1978 to 1981.

From 1971 to 1978, Henderson was missionary to the Philippines where he was pastor of the International Baptist Church. From 1958 to 1971, he was a field evangelist in Korea.

Henderson, a Mississippi native, is a graduate of Mississippi College. He earned the master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

A U.S. Navy veteran, Henderson also was a Reserve Army chaplain. He is author of the Broadman Press book Passport to Missions.

The Hendersons have four children, Rex, Melinda, Pat, and Angela. Melinda is a missionary in Costa Rica with her husband, Russell Kyzar, and their children.

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New company and moderate fellowship
only 'indirectly' related, Self says By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
9/10/90

ATLANTA (BP)--The formation of a new annuity and trust company by former Atlanta pastor William Self is only "indirectly" related to the formation of a new fellowship of moderate Southern Baptists 10 days earlier, Self says.

Self, who resigned as pastor of Wieuca Road Baptist Church in Atlanta in August, announced Sept. 4 he will head Stoneworth Annuity and Trust in Atlanta. The company will specialize in individual retirement funds and charitable remainder trusts, a form of donating large sums of money to charitable causes.

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Less than two weeks earlier, more than 3,000 Southern Baptists gathered in Atlanta to form a new fellowship for churches and individuals who consider themselves cut off by current denominational leadership. The group approved a new funding mechanism for missions but stopped short of creating a new convention.

"I think it is only coincidental," Self said of the comparison between his organization and the new Baptist fellowship. "I was in Europe and did not even know about the meeting in Atlanta being scheduled before I returned."

However, Self did return in time to attend the meeting.

He does not anticipate the new fellowship creating a formal connection with Stoneworth Annuity and Trust, although that is "not unrealistic" for the future, he said. "I think they're a long way from adopting an annuity group exclusively."

Self's interest in the annuity business pre-dates the controversy that has divided Southern Baptists, he said. "I have letters on file that I wrote back in the mid-1980s about these issues."

Regardless, Self's announcement puts a new twist on a joke told across the SBC through the decade of controversy. Pastors have frequently quipped, "If the convention splits, I'm going with the Annuity Board."

The Annuity Board, based in Dallas, handles retirement funds for 20,028 Southern Baptist churches in its church annuity plan and 288 agencies and institutions in its convention annuity plan. About 35,000 people are enrolled in the church plan, while another 31,000 are enrolled in the convention plan.

Annuity Board assets at end of the second quarter totaled \$2.9 billion, including \$2.8 billion related to pension funds and about \$97 million related to insurance funds.

The Annuity Board serves Southern Baptists exclusively. And that could pose a problem if churches or state convention institutions move away from alignment with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Any church that withdraws from the Southern Baptist Convention would no longer be eligible to participate in Annuity Board programs, said Thomas Miller, spokesman for the Annuity Board. "The Annuity Board receives only Southern Baptist money," he said.

However, the determination of what is "Southern Baptist money" is left to the state conventions, Miller explained. "The state convention office determines when a church is a Southern Baptist church for participation in the annuity program. From our perspective we simply ask the state convention if this is a Southern Baptist church."

Self said his new enterprise offers an alternative that is "untouched by the winds of political change within denominations." He claims to know of no other annuity program for ministers that is not related to some denomination.

"There is a lot of anxiety about all programs across denominational levels because of the unstable nature of most denominational structures," he said. "That relates to more than just the Baptist issues."

Self claims he is filling a void in the market that has existed for years and transcends denominational lines. But he plans to concentrate on the group he knows best -- Southern Baptists.

"There seems to be a market here," Self said. "Only 50 percent of our churches and staff are in the Annuity Board."

Those not with the Annuity Board "find themselves exploited by all kinds of vendors," he said. "They need someone to help them negotiate who has been on the church side."

Miller disputed Self's statistics, saying the Annuity Board has penetrated 73 percent of the Southern Baptist market.

Of the more than 37,000 Southern Baptist churches nationwide, about 20 percent are "so small and so limited financially that retirement contributions are unlikely," he said. Further, at any time another 10 percent of churches are without pastors and are therefore not participating.

The Annuity Board is not threatened by Stoneworth Annuity and Trust, Miller said. He offered a prepared statement to address the competition issue, which says in part: "I see little difference in this new entity and any other for-profit financial service that targets a specific audience. The Annuity Board serves more than 70,000 members with integrity and good earnings."

Other Southern Baptists are involved with Stoneworth's launch, Self said. Harry Farmer, chairman and chief executive of Stoneworth's parent company, is a layman at Wieuca Road Baptist Church.

Additionally, Self is currently enlisting a board of advisors that will include some Southern Baptists. "I have talked to a wide range of Baptists across the nation," he said, adding that he plans to announce the names of board members after Oct. 11.

Self's company will not handle medical insurance, which is the other major component of the Annuity Board's work.

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CLC opposes cap
on charitable deductions

By Louis Moore

Baptist Press
9/10/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission is urging members of the Budget Summit, who are negotiating an agreement on the federal budget, not to place a cap on the deductibility of charitable contributions.

News reports have indicated the negotiators are considering such a proposal in order to raise more tax money.

In letters to Budget Summit participants, Christian Life Commission Executive Director Richard D. Land called the proposal "extremely short-sighted" and "an unwise tax policy."

The Christian Life Commission is the moral concerns and public policy agency of the 15-million-member Southern Baptist Convention.

"It is a well-proven axiom of government that activities which you exempt you encourage and activities which you tax you discourage," Land said. "A cap on the deductibility of charitable contributions will increase government's burden at all levels since it will be forced to replace many of the services which will be lost as a result of declines in charitable activities."

Land said, "Nonprofit, charitable activities have served our nation well. Charitable activities represent part of the unique character of America.

"The continuation of current tax law regarding this matter is essential if the nonprofit sector and the religious community are to assume more responsibility for assisting those in need in our society," Land said.

"We welcome the increasing recognition that helping others is a biblical mandate to which Christians must respond," Land said. "However, Congress should not now penalize organizations which have taken on these increased responsibilities by taxing the charitable giving of individuals who wish to help meet the physical, spiritual, mental, intellectual and financial needs of our citizenry."

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CLC joins Right To Life Committee
in filing friend-of-court brief

By Louis Moore

Baptist Press
9/10/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has joined the National Right to Life Committee in filing with the U.S. Supreme Court a friend-of-the-court brief which calls for overturning of the historic Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion.

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The brief was filed Friday, Sept. 7, 1990, in the case of Rust v. Sullivan. That case involves the constitutionality of regulations barring abortion counseling or referrals by federally funded family planning clinics. At issue are regulations issued by the Reagan administration in 1988 and continued by the Bush administration, that apply to clinics which receive funds under Title X of the Public Health Services Act of 1970.

The Reagan and Bush administrations have argued that it never was the intent of Congress to allow abortion counseling in the Title X family-planning clinics. However, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, among others, argues that it is unconstitutional and unethical not to provide women and minors with information concerning every family-planning option available, including abortion.

The matter before the Court is the decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit which upheld the regulations. The Court will decide whether the secretary of Health and Human Services has the statutory authority to issue the regulations barring abortion counseling and referrals and if he does, are the regulations in question constitutional.

The Commission-sponsored brief argues that the case provides an opportunity for the Court to revisit and overturn Roe v Wade, the case that in 1973 made abortion legal in the United States since the constitutionality of the regulations hinge to some degree on the constitutionality of Roe. "Roe v. Wade should be overruled, for there is no fundamental right to abortion under the tests established by this Court for determining fundamental rights," the brief says.

In their brief the CLC and NRLC say the Court already has de facto overturned Roe v. Wade but now must do so in more precise language. "The lower courts do not know what standard to apply in reviewing legislation touching on abortion," the brief says.

The Christian Life Commission is the social concerns, ethics and public policy agency of the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest protestant denomination with nearly 15 million members in more than 38,000 churches nationwide. The National Right to Life Committee is America's largest pro-life organization with affiliates in all 50 states and more than 3,000 local chapters.

Richard D. Land, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, said the filing of the brief "is part of the CLC's continuing effort to restore constitutional protections, including the right to life, to unborn children. That cannot be done until the Roe decision is rescinded."

James A. Smith, of the CLC's Washington office said, "This brief is fully consistent with numerous resolutions adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention over the last decade. Many Southern Baptists have repeatedly called for the overturning of the Roe decision. We believe this case provides the Supreme Court with the opportunity to do just that."

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HMB Atlanta staff pilots
one-day evangelism workshop

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
9/10/90

F. HMB

ATLANTA (BP)--Staff members of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board recorded 20 professions of faith and 129 visits while trying out a new one-day evangelism workshop.

In three separate sessions this summer, 137 HMB staff members participated in the "One-day Soul Winning Workshop" which the board's personal evangelism department recently developed.

The workshop is designed for use in churches and associations as a means of getting more people involved in personal evangelism quickly, said Howard Ramsey, director of personal evangelism. It is a complement to more in-depth programs such as Continuing Witness Training.

Ramsey led the HMB staffers through the entire presentation which has been packaged for church leaders to teach. The workshop trains participants to use the "Eternal Life" tract to present the gospel through door-to-door visitation.

Three Atlanta-area churches hosted the HMB staff: First Baptist Church of Jonesboro; First Baptist Church of Woodstock; and Hebron Baptist Church in Dacula.

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Solemn assembly in Florida
prompts confession, reconciliation By Greg Warner

F-10
(2/10)

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--Kneeling, praying and weeping, 604 Florida Baptists sought the forgiveness of God for their sins, as well as the sins of their nation and denomination, during a solemn assembly Aug. 30 in Orlando.

The gathering, called by state convention president J. C. Mitchell, was based on the Old Testament practice of prolonged and solemn prayer for personal and corporate sin.

The Florida Baptist Convention became the ninth state convention to hold a solemn assembly since last September, when six prayer leaders from SBC agencies issued a call for Southern Baptists to organize such meetings.

The eight-hour event at First Church of Orlando mixed sermons and music with private and public prayers from participants, many of them pastors. Small-group sessions were held for pastors, laymen, women and denominational employees.

They prayed for many things--themselves, their sins, non-Christian relatives and friends, spiritual awakening in America, disrupted churches and their own troubled denomination.

"Forgive us for dividing ourselves into two camps," prayed Mitchell, pastor of First Church of Winter Park. "Before you can heal our land you must heal our churches and denomination."

Mitchell prayed for forgiveness for the "prejudice, gossip and slander" that have characterized Southern Baptists and for his own actions which have "deepened the division." And later: "Lord Jesus, bring us as a Southern Baptist family back together."

In a call to confession and repentance, participants walked reverently to the front, where they tacked handwritten confessions to a nail-covered, wooden cross. Later they placed their signatures on a "solemn commitment" card, which detailed which disobedient behaviors they would "put to death" and which Christlike behaviors they would "put on."

John Sullivan, executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention, led the call to commitment, admonishing Florida Baptists to be reconciled and to accept each other's differences.

Christians are called to share each others' burdens, Sullivan said. "But the tragedy of Southern Baptists is not only do we not bear each other's burdens, but we become burdens to one another."

Sullivan said Christians have little trouble with their relationship to God but "our struggle is with each other. In the stresses and strains of life, we forget that we are brothers."

Sullivan said Christians must seek tenaciously to love members of the family of Christ despite their differences: "It's easy to say. It's tough to do." Describing the cruelty of the crucifixion, he pleaded, "If God would do that to accept you, why can't you accept one another?"

Two of the six SBC prayer leaders who called Southern Baptists to solemn assemblies last September addressed the Orlando gathering.

Henry Blackaby, director of prayer and spiritual awakening for the SBC Home Mission Board, said Southern Baptists nationwide are feeling the effects of solemn assemblies. "I have wept more in the last eight months than I have in my entire ministry," he said.

Blackaby said the sacrifice of Christ on the cross demonstrates the seriousness of sin. When a Christian sins, the sacrifice of Christ is "trampled underfoot," he said. "It is as if you look on as unholy the blood of Christ that sanctifies you."

Avery Willis, manager of the leadership development section of the SBC Sunday School Board, said Christians must "make the connection between our sin and the condition of our land."

Willis defined seven stages of God's dealing with a nation's sin: 1) "He convicts us when we sin"; 2) "If we don't respond, he warns us"; 3) If we still don't repent, "he allows the consequences of our sin to come down on us so we understand the seriousness of our sin"; 4) "He withdraws the consciousness of his presence"; 5) "He withdraws his protective hedge from around us"; 6) "He gives us up" to our disobedience; and, finally, 7) "He destroys the nation."

While God has not yet "given us up," Willis said "I believe God has taken away the hedge of protection from around America." Willis said that process began in about 1963, "with the rebellion that began to arise against the norms."

America since has seen dramatic increases in divorce, promiscuity, crime, sexually transmitted diseases, child abuse, governmental corruption, drug abuse and abortion, he said. High school SAT scores have dropped and America has become the largest debtor nation in the world, he said.

Hurricane Hugo, which devastated the southeastern U.S. coast last year, was God's "remedial discipline," Willis said. And last October in San Francisco, "while the whole world was watching the World Series, God sent an earthquake."

"Do we not realize God can bring disaster on us?" he asked.

Referring to the current crisis in the Persian Gulf, Willis reminded the gathering that King Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed the ancient city of Jerusalem, came from the land that is modern Iraq. "The only way to get out of that mess is for us to repent," he warned.

"Disaster and punishment come to bring us to repentance," he said. "If just the Christians would repent, God would begin to heal our land."

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Wake Forest, Samford ranked
in fund-raising survey

F-co
(Ala.)

Baptist Press
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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Two Southern Baptist universities were ranked in the top four out of 195 private comprehensive institutions in a recent report by the Council for Aid to Education.

The report, Voluntary Support of Education 1988-1989, provides data on gifts and grants to 1,132 colleges and universities in the United States. Schools are ranked according to type of institution, such as "private research/doctoral institutions" or "private liberal arts institutions."

Wake Forest and Samford universities reported total gift support of \$25,519,851 and \$14,581,846 respectively. Those totals ranked Wake Forest second and Samford fourth among schools in the "private comprehensive institutions" category.

Baylor University reported total gifts of \$25,710,283, the highest total among Baptist-related colleges and universities. Baylor was included in the category of "private research/doctoral institutions." The top-ranked schools in that category were Stanford and Harvard universities.

The top ten Baptist-related schools included in the CFAE report were: Baylor University -- \$25,710,283; Wake Forest University -- \$25,519,851; Samford University -- \$14,581,627; Stetson University -- \$9,871,139; Hardin-Simmons University -- \$9,221,897; University of Richmond -- \$8,407,040; Furman University -- \$7,516,966; Mars Hill College -- \$6,027,811; Carson-Newman College -- \$5,196,254; and Belmont College -- \$4,806,063.

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