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90-164

Military wife calls  
nation to prayer

By Kelly Capers

F-1413

ATLANTA (BP)--While her husband is on a mission for his country in Saudi Arabia, military wife Cassie McBride is on a mission at home.

McBride, a member of the Mountain View Baptist Church in El Paso, Texas, is asking Americans to participate in a national Pray for Peace Day. McBride hopes that on Dec. 24 at 10 p.m. Eastern Standard Time Americans will join in simultaneous prayer for a peaceful solution to the crisis in the Persian Gulf. The time will be 6 a.m. Christmas Day in Saudi Arabia.

McBride's husband, Darren, is a sergeant with the Third Armored Cavalry Forth Squadron HHT based at Fort Bliss, Texas. He has been stationed in the desert northwest of Al Jubail in Saudi Arabia since Sept. 29.

To initiate a nationwide day of prayer, McBride has contacted both religious and secular organizations for support such as the National Prayer Embassy and several media affiliates.

"The Christian agencies have been receptive," she says. "I've got people praying all over the United States that the secular agencies will be, too."

McBride started her quest by contacting the Evelyn Christenson Ministries from a number on the back of the book "When a Woman Prays," which she, and other Fort Bliss wives have been studying. From there she obtained numbers of other organizations to publicize her project.

"I really believe God's word when two or more gather together he answers prayer," says McBride. "I believe if we pray for peace, whether Saddam Hussein or President Bush knows it, God is in control and can intercede in the decisions they make."

McBride maintains regular contact with her husband through letters. She receives information about her husband's unit from the 140 other wives in the HHT unit who form a chain of concern at Fort Bliss. Recently a video was forwarded to the HHT wives showing the unit's desert camp, which displays a pole similar to one on the television show M\*A\*S\*H, pointing the way home.

Since he has been in Saudi Arabia, McBride has had one hot meal, McBride says. A barbecue with hot dogs and hamburgers was provided by American oil workers in Saudi Arabia. Regular meals consist of MREs (meals ready to eat) similar to sea rations.

According to information McBride receives, barring war, her husband should return home in nine months. Because military strategy must be planned to take advantage of optimum weather conditions in the desert, Hussein's alleged release of hostages between Dec. 25 and March 25 will be crucial in determining when military personnel will be sent home, she says. If the conflict is not settled by mid-March before the onset of dust storms and heat, military personnel could be in Saudi Arabia for another year waiting for cooler weather, says McBride.

McBride hopes that a national Pray for Peace Day will touch God's heart. "I believe God changes his mind with prayer," says McBride, recalling Sodom and Gomorrah. "I hope this nation will turn to God and come to him on our knees."

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(Capers is editorial assistant in news and information office at the Home Mission Board.)

Church conflict leads  
to pastoral termination

By Jim Lowry

F-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--In Southern Baptist churches the most common way to resolve serious conflict is to force out the pastor, according to new research released by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

In a survey conducted by the board's corporate planning and research department, more than 1,000 directors of missions were contacted for information about churches which had been involved in serious conflict within the past three years.

Leaders of the churches were then asked to respond about how they dealt with conflict, how they managed conflict and who were the primary resource people in local churches for working through problems.

Nine out of 10 pastors in churches which experience serious conflict are forced to leave, according to the survey results released by Norris Smith, forced termination consultant in the board's church administration department. He presented findings to state Baptist convention church administration consultants during their annual meeting Nov. 15-16 in Nashville.

The most common procedure for dealing with church conflict is to turn the problems over to the deacons, according to 63 percent of respondents. A distant second was committees, with 13 percent. A significant 11 percent reported they usually ignore conflict and "hope it will go away in time."

"Pastors can model conflict management," Smith advised, "but that needs to be taught early in their training in college and seminary."

When asked how pastors could improve their abilities to prevent conflict, 62 percent of the church leaders responded that a "clearer understanding of the church's people and the way they prefer to do things" is the number one need. Second was "better communication skills," with 58 percent.

"One difficulty comes with the perception of being pastor of the church instead of pastor of the people," explained Smith. "For the first few months, a pastor should spend time finding out who it is he has been called to lead, especially in the areas of economics, culture and emotions.

"When church members get the idea the pastor accepts them as they are and is not trying to reshape them into some image he got in a classroom, they start to trust him," Smith continued.

"Knowledge of the people creates understanding and ushers in tolerance and patience, out of which trust can emerge," he added.

A theme of "better understanding" of primary areas of church life emerged in the responses listing ways to help avoid serious conflict with staff members.

The top suggestion from lay church leaders to staff members on avoiding conflict was a better understanding of how to handle conflict without disaster, with 63 percent. A close second, with 60 percent, was New Testament teachings on Christian relationships.

When asked about factors which had led to the serious conflict, only one received a majority from the respondents. Personality conflicts, with 58 percent, was listed most often, followed by failure of pastor or staff to measure up to expectations of the congregation, 46 percent; who's going to run the church, 42 percent; pastoral leadership style -- too authoritarian, 41 percent; and pastoral leadership -- too weak, 34 percent.

Results of church conflicts in nine out of 10 churches included the departure of the pastor. The departure of church members ranked second, 84 percent. Two other highly ranked results were withholding tithes and offerings, with 54 percent, and resignation of some lay leaders, 42 percent.

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"There are too many divisions within church families where churches are not working through the conflict," Smith said. "Instead of working through the conflict, the resolution is just quitting.

"Pastors need to show a genuine appreciation for the leadership of the church, which has a history of sacrifice and giving," he continued. "The pastor is not in an adversarial role, but a servant role.

"Keep the pulpit free of conflict management," he advised pastors. "Discussing the conflict from the pulpit infuriates those involved and confuses those who don't know about it."

The cycle, or spiral of conflict, wherein mistakes are repeated in the methods chosen by local churches to deal with conflict, needs to be broken, Smith said. A model is needed of ways to handle conflict and train pastors, church leaders and especially new Christians in how to handle conflict and keep the church intact.

Smith presently is involved in training mediators in several state conventions who will be available upon request to go into churches and teach the model for resolving conflict redemptively.

Forced termination of ministers in the Southern Baptist Convention was dubbed "the problem that won't go away" by Smith, who hopes to train mediators in each state convention to be an extension of the model he has developed for teaching redemptive conflict resolution.

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BCNY enters relationship with  
North Carolina Baptists

By Quentin Lockwood Jr.

Baptist Press  
11/30/90

MELVILLE, N.Y. (BP)--The 21st annual meeting of the Baptist Convention of New York, Nov. 8-9, drew 224 messengers and 76 guests to the Radisson Plaza Hotel in Melville, Long Island, N.Y. The convention territory encompasses all of New York, northern New Jersey, and southwest Fairfield county Connecticut. There are 208 churches and more than 100 missions in the Baptist Convention of New York.

Larry Brown, a layman from Madison Baptist Church in Madison, N.J., and outgoing chairman of the convention's executive board, was elected president. He is only the second layman to serve as president. Alwyn Dennis, pastor of Bethel church, St. Albans, N.Y., was re-elected to a second term as first vice-president. Mary Lois Sanders, a layperson from Bridgewater church, was elected second vice president.

The theme of the meeting was "Advancing with the Vision", an update to the Vision 2000 Long Range Strategy Plan initially adopted in 1985. The plan sets priorities and directions for the rest of the 20th century for the Baptist Convention of New York, with another update scheduled in 1995. The convention unanimously endorsed the update.

During the sessions on Thursday afternoon, the Baptist Convention of New York formally ended a 13-year sister state relationship with the Georgia Baptist Convention, and then affirmed a new partnership with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

In other business, a \$2,649,691 budget was adopted, an increase of 7.3 percent over the previous year. Of that amount, \$627,828, or 23.4 percent, is expected from the churches in undesignated gifts, with 25.5 percent going to Southern Baptist causes outside the Baptist Convention of New York. This is an increase of 0.25 percent.

The Baptist Convention of New York 22nd annual meeting will be in the Niagara Falls area, Nov. 7-8, 1991.

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NBC Baptists adopt budget,  
update constitution

*N-CG Wash*

PASCO, Wash. (BP)--Registration of messengers rose to a final count of 476 for the 3-day Northwest Baptist Convention annual meeting Nov. 13-15.

A Northwest Cooperative Program budget of \$1,718,500 was adopted, an increase of 7.0 percent over the 1990 budget. Of this, 30.75 percent will be forwarded to the Cooperative Program unified budget, an increase of 0.25 percent over last year. Northwest churches have reported a resurgence in contributions, reflecting the economic upswing across much of the Pacific Northwest in 1989-90.

The state convention's constitution was updated more in form than substance, making the constitution a clear statement on convention policies, while the bylaws have become a description of convention procedures which are expected to be amended from time to time as the convention grows and faces new challenges.

James W. "Bill" Phillips, pastor of Kennewick (Wash.) Baptist Church, was elected convention president over four other candidates.

Next year's convention meeting will be Nov. 12-14 at Yakima, Wash.

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Lowry elected director of  
resource center at NOBTS

By Breena Kent Paine

*N-CG  
(NOBTS)*

Baptist Press  
11/30/90

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Trustees of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary voted unanimously to elect Charles M. Lowry as director of the Center for Evangelism and Church Growth, effective Jan. 1, 1991, during the executive committee's recent quarterly meeting.

As a resource center for pastors, professors, and students, the center is planned to be the first of its kind in the Southern Baptist Convention, holding the world's largest Southern Baptist collection of materials and books on church growth and evangelism. It will provide a customized service for churches, including evangelism strategies for use in their neighborhoods. A specialized facility with offices, a library, and meeting rooms, the center will be a base for church-growth seminars and evangelism conferences. Money presently is being raised for the equipping of this facility and the endowment of the center.

A native of Greenbrier, Ark., Lowry has served with the Louisiana Baptist Convention for 28 years -- five as director of the discipleship training department, and 23 as director of the church programs division. In addition, he has been a guest professor at New Orleans Seminary, and minister of education at churches in Louisiana, Florida, and Texas.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Ouachita Baptist University, and a master of religious education degree from New Orleans Seminary.

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Pastor's ministry takes him  
to flea market, radio station

By Sarah Zimmerman

*FHM3*

Baptist Press  
11/30/90

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (BP)--Being a Southern Baptist pastor in South Dakota means Jesse Moore has a table at a flea market, works at an auction and plays Christian music.

The Oklahoma native can't assume that simply being Southern Baptist will open doors in Sioux Falls, a city that is 70 percent Lutheran and 23 percent Catholic.

"People are probably never going to knock on my door," says the pastor of Ridgecrest Baptist Church, one of only three Southern Baptist churches in the city of 100,000. "I have to work very hard to integrate myself into the life of the community."

The first step for Moore, his wife and their two children was moving to the lower middle class community near the church. "If you can't live with the people you're serving, how in the world do you think they'll come to you with their problems?" Moore asks.

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Next, Moore scheduled a meeting with the parish priest. He decided the priest, who had served there for years, could tell him more about the neighborhood than anyone else. Three years later, Moore still is using information gathered in that visit.

Every Saturday morning, Moore can be heard hosting a two-hour program for the local Christian radio station. Moore and his partner play Christian rock music, which is foreign to the station's regular easy listening format but welcomed by the city's younger listeners.

Moore also can be found selling goods at the flea market, working during an auction or practicing with the church's band. The band plays Christian music once a month during the Sunday evening worship service. Moore uses the opportunity to present the gospel quickly and plainly to the 100 people gathered for the music.

With an average Sunday morning worship attendance of 70 -- up from 25 the first Sunday Moore preached -- Ridgecrest Baptist Church also ministers in more traditional ways. It serves hot meals to people in need twice a month and operates a food pantry and clothing closet.

Attendance at the bi-monthly meals ranges from 25 in the summer to 75 in the spring. Church members serve the meals, sit with the guests and look for opportunities to share their faith.

Though South Dakota is not close enough to the Bible belt to even be considered a belt loop, Moore never thought of it as a mission field.

"I was just called to be pastor of a church up here," he says.

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Seeds planted in United States  
yield Indonesian harvest

By Ken Camp

F-~~Texas~~ Texas

Baptist Press  
11/30/90

DALLAS (BP)--The family of the first Christian attache to the Indonesian Embassy and the woman whose influence eventually helped lead to their conversion were reunited at the recent Conference for International Ministries at First Baptist Church in Bryan, Texas.

Giri Kartono, attache for culture and education at the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, was featured speaker during the conference. His wife, Noeniek, was among the first participants in Austin Baptist Association's Friendship Program for international students in the early 1970s.

Noeniek Kartono became involved in Friendship during the three years her husband spent at the University of Texas at Austin, working toward a doctorate in education.

"When Noeniek came to Friendship, Dixie Perry was assigned to be her special friend," said Doris Edwards, former director of the Friendship Program and current coordinator of Texas Baptist ministries to internationals.

"We always tried to pair a Baptist lady with the international families, and Dixie was a vibrant, delightful Christian influence on the Kartonos."

Perry and her husband, Robert, moved to San Antonio some months before Giri Kartono completed his doctoral studies in Austin, and the two families lost touch with each other for 17 years.

Before the Kartonos went home to Indonesia, representatives of the Friendship program introduced them to Bill O'Brien, then a music missionary to Indonesia, and contacted missionary John Ingouf in Indonesia. Ingouf in turn introduced the Kartonos to Liz Corwin, who continued teaching the English lessons Noeniek had begun at Friendship.

"Giri and Noeniek were both very open to Christianity. They knew all about Christianity before they returned to Indonesia, but it was not in God's timing for them to make their commitment to Christ at that point," said Edwards.

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"But then after four years of being back in Indonesia, it was in God's plan for Noeniek to give her life to him."

Nine years later, Giri committed his life to Christ. Today, the Kartonos lead a weekly Bible study for Indonesians in Washington, and are active members of Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, Va.

When the Kartonos accepted the invitation to participate in the Texas Baptist Conference for International Ministries, Edwards decided it would be the perfect occasion for their reunion with Perry. She did a little amateur detective work, calling churches where the Perrys had been members and tracing them down using their letters of transfer. Eventually, she located them in Baton Rouge, La.

"When Dixie answered the phone and I told her who I was, we both cried for about three or four minutes," Edwards said.

Perry told her, "Just yesterday I was thinking about Giri and Noeniek, and I prayed, 'Lord, I wonder what they are doing for you today.'"

Perry was brought to the statewide conference in Bryan without the Kartonos' knowledge. After Giri completed his speech, Edwards rose to offer reflections on the Friendship program and then called Perry to the platform from the back of the banquet hall.

"The moment of recognition was positively electrifying. It was a very powerful moment," Edwards said.

Reflecting on the contributions of Perry and others in the Friendship program, together with the impact of Southern Baptist missionaries to Indonesia, she added: "It was a fitting reflection of the conference theme -- 'One plants, another waters, but God gives the increase.'" (1 Cor. 3:6)

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Without salvation, people miss the best, says former football star By Breena Kent Paine

F-60  
(NOBTS)

Baptist Press  
11/30/90

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"People are making millions of dollars in football and baseball, but if they are lost," Garry Harper said, they are missing out on the best things of life.

A former star quarterback from Miami, who is now a student in the master of divinity degree program at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Harper tells aspiring athletes, "Don't define your own personal success in life by what you do or do not do on the athletic field, or ... by what others do or do not say about you; but define success by what you feel in your heart about your relationship with God. ... We can accept God or we can reject him, and our success hinges on that question."

It took some difficult circumstances, however, for Harper to discover that for himself. Recognized in high school for his athletic skills, he was drafted by the Cincinnati Reds to play baseball. Harper turned down the offer and accepted a football scholarship to attend the University of South Carolina.

His first semester in college, however, the 18-year-old failed four out of five classes, and his parents went through a divorce. Then, as a third string quarterback, Harper fumbled the ball on an important play; by the spring semester, he was sixth string.

Harper's 265-pound, Christian roommate/teammate found him alone in his dorm room, crying in desperation.

"I told him I was ready to quit," Harper said. "He picked me up by the collar over his head, then threw me down. ... Then he told me he loved me and God loved me. He shared Jeremiah 33:3 and Romans 8:28 with me. I got on my knees and asked Jesus to come into my heart."

Using Matthew 5:16 as his theme, "I humbled myself and told God, no matter what, I'd give him the glory," Harper said.

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That spring of 1978, he moved from sixth string to second string, and by the fall of his sophomore year, he was USC's starting quarterback.

In September of that year, however, another tragedy occurred. His football team was preparing to play against the Georgia Bulldogs in Athens, when one of Harper's teammates, Scott Sinclair, dropped to the ground. The 220-pound 19-year-old died of a deteriorated heart valve there in the locker room.

Scott's brother, who also played football for USC, told his team "not to feel sorry for his brother, Scott, because he's a lot happier than we are today because he's in heaven," Harper said. "Seven of my teammates got saved that year because of that."

Harper said he learned, "Life is filled with ups and downs, and regardless of whether you're in the peaks or the valleys, you need to rely on God, and not rely on your own talents and strengths."

Harper completed his college career third in career passing and sixth in career total offense. He played in the 1979 Hall of Fame Bowl against Missouri; and in the 1980 Gator Bowl against Pittsburgh. He played against Michigan in front of 104,000 people, and against the University of Southern California in Los Angeles' coliseum.

On the football field, he met such players as Dan Marino, Hugh Green, Ricky Jackson, Herschell Walker, Ronnie Lott, and Marcus Allen. For three years, he was the quarterback for the 1980 Heisman Trophy winner, George Rogers.

"But with all of this, the greatest thing that ever happened to me was in 1978, when I asked Jesus to come into my life," Harper said.

"I thought I had arrived, that those 'great and mighty things' (Jeremiah 33:3) had already happened." However, five days after he graduated, he took a job with IBM in Greenville, S.C., and saw "the most beautiful girl I had ever seen in my whole life."

As he got to know her, however, he discovered she "hated football," and seemed disinterested that Harper had been a star quarterback. She was not a Christian, had never owned a Bible, and had never gone to church.

But Harper was determined. He shared the gospel with her, and two months later, Karen accepted Christ. In eight months, they were married.

"When we had our first son," Harper said, "my life really changed because for three years of my life, there were 200-300 kids outside a locker room looking up to me saying, 'When I grow up, I want to be just like you.'"

"Before, I had a concern about lost people," Harper said, but when his children -- Shane, 7; Daniel, 5; and Kara, 3 -- arrived, "I became more intense in evangelism (because) I thought, one day, they are going to grow up looking up to someone and saying, 'I want to be just like you.'"

In April of 1990, during a revival at his church, Harper listened to the words of Don Wilton, assistant professor of preaching at the New Orleans seminary and knew God was calling him into the gospel ministry. In July, he resigned from his job as advisory marketing representative for IBM, and moved to New Orleans for seminary. He now does supplemental work for IBM in the city; and Karen teaches aerobics, health, and fitness to nursing students at William Carey College.

Harper has had many opportunities to speak to civic clubs, athletes, and other functions. In New Orleans, he has shared his testimony with the Tulane football team, the Phoenix Cardinals, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and high school football teams in the area.

"It all boils down to obedience," Harper said. "I haven't lost anything by following God; I've gained so much more."

A child once wrote to him: "Dear Mr. Garry Harper, thank you for coming and speaking to us. When I grow up, I want to play football like you so I can preach the gospel."

Nicaragua missionaries  
settle in after rocky start

By Erich Bridges

N-FMB

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (BP)--They spent their first two months in Nicaragua sleeping on the floor at night.

They've watched an anti-American demonstration from their front gate in Managua, the capital city. They've waited for a bridge to be "disarmed" of anti-personnel mines before crossing it.

They also have felt the cold stares of people on the street who are weary of a decade of revolution, civil war and interfering foreigners of all political stripes coming to the Central American country. And they've joined with those same people in the daily search for affordable food and essentials.

All in all, you could say Jim and Viola Palmer picked an interesting moment to move to Nicaragua.

The Southern Baptist missionary couple, from Marshall and Fort Worth, Texas, arrived in Nicaragua with their two children in early August -- barely five months after a bitterly contested national election. The voters had ousted the ruling Sandinistas and installed a loose coalition government led by President Violeta Chamorro.

The election may have ended the Sandinistas' Marxist revolution and their long war with the U.S.-backed Contras, but it also plunged the nation even deeper into social and economic chaos.

The Sandinistas were defeated decisively at the polls, but the population remains divided over who should run the country. Who actually is running the country is an open question, according to observers. Chamorro's shaky and contentious coalition ranges the ideological spectrum. The Sandinistas still control the army, the labor unions and much of the civil bureaucracy.

Prices soar while Nicaragua's currency nose dives; 2 million Nicaraguan cordobas will buy one U.S. dollar. The economy -- battered by years of state controls, war and embargo -- has grown even more sickly. Some Contra forces refuse to disarm. Contra and Sandinista sympathizers brawl in the streets.

What about the Palmers?

"We're beginning to get settled in ... I guess," Palmer reported with a rueful chuckle in late November.

Their furniture finally arrived, so the family doesn't have to sleep on the floor anymore. The kids -- Jeremiah, 14, and Rebekah, 10 -- have their bicycles and are in school, so they're happy, Palmer said. The kitchen is functioning, which makes everybody happy.

"Our grocery bill is high, but the economy is in such a slump there's not a lot of other things to spend money on," said Palmer. "But I don't know how the poor folks are making it. I don't see how people -- with daily wages what they are -- can even buy beans and rice to feed their families."

Many Nicaraguans, in fact, aren't making it. One of Palmer's assignments is to assist Nicaraguan Baptists in social ministries to help people survive.

"We've just gotten approval for \$50,000 in (Southern Baptist) world hunger funds to try to get some food programs and replanting projects going next year," he explained. "On top of everything else, most rural areas of northern Nicaragua had a drought this past year and harvested very little crops.

"We've tried to assist about 30 or 40 communities in doing small food-for-work projects sponsored by local Baptist churches to get some grains into these communities, and also provide a number of small farmers' loans -- about \$200 a family -- to help buy feed and fertilizer to plant new crops," he said.

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The Palmers have experience in such ministries. They transferred to Nicaragua from neighboring Honduras -- one of the poorest nations in the Western Hemisphere -- where he coordinated Baptist social ministries.

But they also hope to assist Nicaraguan Baptists in other areas. Southern Baptists have sent volunteers to the country in recent years, but the Palmers are the first career missionaries invited to live there since 1982. Nicaraguan Baptists advised missionaries at that time to leave the country because of the explosive political situation.

Local churches have received the missionaries warmly. Palmer preaches nearly every week and has taught a seminary extension course for rural pastors. He wants to help in evangelism, church growth, leadership training and "any way Southern Baptists can assist in doing the Lord's work here."

Another key need is church buildings. "Despite all that's going on, churches seem to be filled and are growing by leaps and bounds," Palmer said. "The convention has about 20 churches on a waiting list that don't have worship places. They're meeting in homes or under a shed. We hope to help provide chapels and educational space for them."

Some visitors have claimed that a religious revival has been sweeping Nicaragua for several years and will pick up steam with the fall of the Sandinistas. However, the political divisions that still plague the country continue to divide evangelical leaders, churches and families, Palmer observed. Forgiveness must come before revival can flourish, he said.

But with the end of the Contra war, churches are beginning to build and paint and plan for the future, he added. Despite ongoing political chaos, "people feel there's going to be a future in Nicaragua rather than being hesitant to do anything because they fear maybe there's no future," he said.

Nicaraguan Baptists expressed concern after the election that the ardently Catholic Chamorro and her government might favor the dominant Roman Catholics and push Protestants, particularly Baptists -- who supported the Sandinistas and enjoyed new privileges under them -- back into second-class status.

That has happened to some extent, Palmer said. For example, the evangelical relief agency CEPAD had trouble bringing relief supplies into the country in the months following the election. But CEPAD is regaining its footing because of its human service record. Officials even sought out CEPAD when a network was needed to provide relief to areas once held by the Contras.

The Palmers want to help any way they can. They haven't had an easy beginning and admit to being homesick for Honduras and missionaries there. During a Thanksgiving visit back to Honduras, they were tempted to stay.

But after a worship service there, Mrs. Palmer told her husband, "You know, we don't really have a choice. God's called us to Nicaragua. I still have a sense of peace that that's where he wants us. So we're going back."