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NOTE TO EDITORS: This story is a replacement for the story on Maurice Graham mailed 12/7/90.

Baptist worker Graham  
joins exodus from Kuwait

By Art Toalston

N-FMB

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist worker Maurice Graham was heading home from Kuwait Dec. 10 to spend Christmas with his family.

"There's been a bunch of prayers and a big answer to them," said Dwight Graham of Winchester, Tenn., after receiving news that his younger brother's four-month ordeal in Iraqi-occupied Kuwait had ended. Maurice Graham's wife, Laurie, talked with him soon after his post-midnight arrival Dec. 10 in Frankfurt, Germany.

"He's tired, he's worn out," Dwight Graham said. "He's been under a tremendous strain." And he was recovering from the flu when he left Kuwait. "We know he's safe now. We're just waiting to see him."

After reunions with his wife and sons Peter, 13, and Aaron, 10, in Nashville, Maurice Graham likely will "pick the phone up and call Mom and Dad," J.V. and Ruby Graham in Shelbyville, Tenn., then get some rest, his brother speculated.

Officials hoped to arrange for Graham to finish his journey home Dec. 10, in time for his wife's birthday that day.

Graham joined some 175 Americans and 150 other westerners on an Iraqi airliner that left Kuwait and Iraq Dec. 9 bound for Frankfurt.

Their exodus from Kuwait and Iraq came three days after Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's announcement that all foreign "guests" should be freed. Iraq's National Assembly added its formal approval Dec. 7 in a meeting on the Muslim Friday sabbath.

For most of the freed American hostages, the journey home resumed Dec. 10, aboard a flight scheduled to arrive around 5 p.m. at Andrews Air Force Base in Washington. Two representatives of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board were to meet Graham there and help with arrangements for the final flight in his return home to Tennessee.

According to board officials, Graham has expressed a desire for a time of privacy with his family after returning to Tennessee. If and when Graham is ready to talk about his experiences after Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait, he will contact the media, officials said.

R. Keith Parks, Foreign Mission Board president, issued a special call to prayer Dec. 3 for the release of Graham and other foreign hostages, coupled with a letter-writing campaign to Saddam Hussein via the Iraqi Embassy in Washington. In November Parks urged Southern Baptist churches to make Dec. 9 a day of prayer for resolution of the Mideast crisis.

Graham, a Shelbyville native, and his wife, of Hutchinson, Kan., were Southern Baptists' first full-time workers in Kuwait. They and their sons had been in Kuwait less than three months when Iraqi troops stormed the country in the early morning hours of Aug. 2.

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The family took refuge with U.S. Embassy personnel after Iraqi troops entered their apartment several times the day Kuwait was seized. The Grahams began holding nightly prayer services at the U.S. Embassy compound and Graham became the unofficial embassy chaplain, providing counsel or a listening ear to anyone who asked.

Iraqi troops cut off water and electricity to the embassy after the United States defied an Iraqi order to close the embassy by Aug. 24. A skeletal crew of some 10 diplomats remained there along with Graham and an undisclosed number of other Americans who had taken refuge there.

Mrs. Graham and her sons left Kuwait Sept. 12 as part of the evacuation permitted for American and other Western women and children. They have resettled in a home provided by a Nashville church.

The Grahams were in Kuwait to do youth and music work with the National Evangelical Church, where 28 ethnic groups worshiped each week. The English-language church is affiliated with the Reformed Church in America. A remnant of the church remains active and has embarked on various humanitarian ministries in Iraqi-devastated Kuwait.

According to the U.S. State Department, Ambassador W. Nathaniel "Nat" Howell and several other staff members at the beleaguered U.S. Embassy in Kuwait will remain there until all Americans who want to leave Kuwait have done so. An estimated 725 Americans remained in Iraq and Kuwait Dec. 10 and another evacuation flight was scheduled for Dec. 11.

However, a number of Americans may elect to remain in Kuwait, such as those married to Kuwaitis or longtime residents there, a State Department spokesman said.

Howell attended Court Street Baptist Church in Portsmouth, Va., as a youth. His mother, Josephine, has been a member of the congregation 65 years. Howell also was active in the Baptist Student Union during his studies at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

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

Sunday school growth  
tied to evangelism

By Frank Wm. White

F-55B

Baptist Press  
12/10/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--Throughout the more than 200 years of Sunday school work in America, numerical growth has been tied directly to a focus on evangelism, and Southern Baptists must regain that focus to experience growth in the denomination, Harry Piland, the director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday school division told state convention leaders.

Piland recounted the history of the Sunday school movement in America, saying it was successful only when it became an evangelistic, volunteer effort in the mid 1800s.

As Southern Baptists face their second century of Sunday school work, a continued commitment to the priority of evangelism must be at the base of the work, he told the state convention Sunday school leaders meeting in annual planning sessions Dec. 5-7 in Nashville.

"If we are going to experience breakthrough for the 90s, it has got to be with an emphasis on evangelism," he said.

Breakthrough is the Sunday school theme for 1990-95 and includes annual goals in enrollment and other key areas.

When Southern Baptists launched a denominational Sunday school program with the establishment of the Sunday School Board in 1891, evangelism was at the heart of the work, Piland said.

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Most Protestant denominations shifted from Sunday school with an evangelistic flavor to training only for children, and enrollment began to decline, he pointed out.

Southern Baptists used Sunday school as a tool for outreach and enrollment totals doubled or tripled every twenty years until 1960 when, Piland said, the board pulled back from a focus on evangelism.

Piland said between 1980 and 1990, Southern Baptists returned to a priority on evangelism, and Sunday school enrollment has increased by half a million from 7.4 million to 7.9 million people.

Enrollment for Sunday schools of all denominations has dropped from 41 million to 28 million in the past 12 years, he said.

Continuing to reach people through Bible study is going to require innovations in the face of a radically changing world, Piland cautioned.

But, as changes in techniques and literature develop, the Bible must remain the textbook of Sunday school, he said. "Southern Baptists almost stand alone in saying that in our Sunday school, the Bible is our textbook.

"Never let the Bible be taken out of our Sunday school. It has got to be the heart of Bible study," he said.

Innovation will require churches to build on the base of traditional Sunday morning Bible study and get outside the church to reach those who will not come in, Piland said.

"Legitimate Bible study ought to be going on seven days a week at different locations," he said.

Piland encouraged state Sunday school leaders to work with churches in understanding and using Southern Baptist literature produced by the board. He also pledged Sunday School Board efforts to respond more quickly to meet the needs of churches in reaching people.

In addition to literature improvements to be introduced in October 1991, Piland said the board will continue to use developing technology to help produce material to help churches.

He said the Sunday school division is working with other programs and agencies to find ways to better serve churches.

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Rearing children is  
couple's ministry

By Breena Kent Paine

F-55B

Baptist Press  
12/10/90

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Not many people can say they have reared 87 children. But as parents for 81 foster children, four of their own, one grandchild, and one nephew, Frank and Pat Fell feel parenting is their ministry.

When Fell's nephews were abused, placed in foster care, and then molested by their foster family, the Fell family felt a calling to provide a stable, loving, Christian home for children through foster care.

Although they could not help his nephews, one of which is now in jail for murder, they hoped they could have an influence on the lives of others in foster care.

The Fells took in their first foster children in 1975, while Fell was a student at Florida Baptist Theological College. A woman had abandoned her two babies, 9 months and 18 months old, and the Fells were assigned to care for them. When the mother came back for her children at Christmas, the Fells asked her to live with them for two weeks first.

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Mrs. Fell taught Kim the children's routines -- when they ate, when they took naps, how to make them feel loved. Then one day, as the Fells were putting on a family puppet show for Christmas, "she sat transfixed" as she watched the story of Jesus, Mrs. Fell said.

Afterwards, Kim asked why people who follow God have been persecuted so much in the past. Mrs. Fell hesitated, knowing she had the opportunity to share Christ but not knowing quite how to answer.

Then the Fells's 8-year-old son, Frankie, blurted out, "The bad people would come in and tell you if you say you love the devil and hate Jesus, you can live; but if you say you love Jesus and hate the devil, you have to die."

The young mother looked at him seriously. "What if the bad people came in and told you that you had to love the devil or they'd chop off your parents' heads?" she asked.

Frankie glanced down as if thinking, then looked her in the eye and said, "I'd say, 'Chop 'em off!'"

"But why would you want your parents to be killed?" Kim persisted.

"'Cause then they would be in heaven with Jesus, and that's more better than anything," he answered.

The next day, as Mrs. Fell talked with an FBTC professor and attended a chapel service at the college, she felt compelled to tell the young mother about God.

"I ran into the house with my Bible in one hand and a Four Spiritual Laws tract in the other, ready for battle," Mrs. Fell said. She grabbed Kim and said, "Let's talk."

"I opened my Bible to the Roman Road (a series of verses showing the plan of salvation) and started on page one," Mrs. Fell said. "I had barely gotten to page two when the kids started fussing. I shoved some food across the table to them and went on through the end."

Then she asked, "Kim, would you like to ask Jesus to be your Savior and Lord?"

"Yes," Kim answered. "I always wanted to know what it was you had, but I didn't think it was for me because I didn't think I deserved it."

"She bowed her head and (prayed) after me; and when she lifted her head, she was glowing," Mrs. Fell said.

From that moment, sharing Christ with foster children and their family members became a natural part of the Fells's life, as they strove not to let a child leave their home without having heard the gospel message.

When the Fells were married 25 years ago, however, they were not yet Christians. They met in a bar in Denver, and were married 10 days later in a jail, the only place they could find a qualified person to do the job.

Mrs. Fell urged her husband to go to church with her somewhere, but he refused. Then one day, as they were attending a relative's funeral, Fell was impressed with the preacher. "If you can find out who that preacher was," he told Mrs. Fell, "then I'll go to his church." But no one could remember his name; they had randomly chosen him from a telephone book.

The Fells were living in Greenville, Miss., at the time, and when a neighborhood church, Greenfield Baptist, provided what the Fells saw as "free babysitting" by taking their kids to Sunday school, they jumped at the chance to have a morning alone.

About three weeks later, Fell and Mrs. Fell attended a special church program for the children. When the pastor, Paul Brooks -- an New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary alumnus who now serves at First Baptist Church of Raytown, Mo. -- stood up to speak, Fell exclaimed, "That's him!"

That night, Mrs. Fell gave her life to Christ. Their daughter, Kelly, became a Christian the next day. Then on Tuesday, the family attended a revival service at the church.

During the invitation after the sermon, "Kelly was standing next to us praying earnestly for Frank, and Fell was holding my hand so tightly I thought it was going to break," Mrs. Fell said. "Then our daughter Kim stepped out, and Kelly said out loud, 'God, that's the wrong one!'"

"All of a sudden, first thing I knew, the pressure was off my hand and Frank was gone," Mrs. Fell continued. "I looked, and he was running down the aisle. He grabbed that preacher and jerked him to his knees."

While Brooks asked him if he wanted to accept Jesus as his personal Savior, "the whole church was shouting 'Praise the Lord!'" Mrs. Fell said. "The four of us were baptized the next Sunday."

Fell, a native of Trenton, N.J., felt called to the gospel ministry soon after his conversion. Later, he was the director of Moonlake Baptist Assembly, New Port Richey, Fla.; and a bivocational pastor for Calvary Baptist Church, Holiday, Fla., and First Baptist Church, Inglis, Fla. As his second job, he worked as a mechanic and a building contractor and painter, foster parenting all the while.

As the pastor's family, they were an example. "Some people would say they couldn't come to church because their kids were too much trouble," Mrs. Fell said. "But they couldn't tell us that. We've had as many as nine at one time, gotten them all to church, and I've cooked the lunch meal as well."

Through their home have passed children who were retarded, rebellious, ridden with abuse, rejected; but each one has experienced at least once the consistent love of a stable, Christian family through the Fells, who have leaned on "the ability of God to intercede where man cannot" in the lives of hurting children and their families.

"The best compliment we ever received from being foster parents was by Kelly," Fell said. "She is unable to have kids of her own, but because of the love she saw us give unconditionally to any child, no matter what race, she and her husband have been able to open up their home to a biracial child. We taught her there is no difference in the eyes of God. Children are there to be loved."

There were trying times in dealing with children, parents, and the foster system, "but we're not sorry we did it," Mrs. Fell said.

Now that their children have grown up and moved away, the Fells are finding a "place of rest" at New Orleans Seminary, where Fell is studying for his master of divinity degree.

"Here we are, having left the pastorate ministry after 19 years. It's the first time in our lives we've been alone, and we're having a ball!" Mrs. Fell said.

Fell hopes to seek a doctorate degree and wants to teach one day. Meanwhile, Mrs. Fell is writing a book on their experiences she hopes to name "To Lose a Life."