



-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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December 27, 1990

90-173

Food fund for Eastern Europe started
by Baptist World Alliance

N-CO (BWA)

McLEAN, Va. (BP)--Baptists from around the world can feed people in Eastern Europe during this time of severe food shortages through a special fund of the Baptist World Alliance.

Working through Baptist Response-Europe, Baptist World Aid, the relief and development arm of the BWA will send funds collected to the European Baptist Federation in Hamburg, Germany. These funds will be used for food packages for people in Romania, Bulgaria, the Soviet Union and wherever else needed.

These 11-pound packages will be trucked to Romania and Bulgaria, with some packages being shipped to the Baltic republics and other parts of the USSR.

Food packages will contain items such as sugar, margarine, oil, flour, rice, cheese, powdered milk, cocoa, coffee, chocolate, soap, washing powder, aspirin or aspirin substitutes, instant soups, sausages and canned meats.

Each package will cost \$25 to put together and ship, estimated Paul Montacute, director of Baptist World Aid.

"If the same package was shipped from the U.S.," said Montacute, "it would cost nearly \$50 to airmail and \$25 to send by surface mail, and then it would not arrive until winter had ended. This system will feed more people."

For the last two months, European Baptists, who first were alerted to the need by visits of EBF leaders and letters from churches, have been sending food and basic medicine packages to Romania and Bulgaria.

European Baptists responded immediately by sending packages of food through a system set up by Karl Heinz, general secretary of the EBF. However, the overwhelming response to this need called for a better, safer and cheaper system to ship the parcels.

Because of wide press coverage of Eastern European food shortages, Baptist agencies in North America especially have been flooded with offers to help.

"The beauty of this plan is that it allows Southern Baptist churches of any size or even individual families to help," said Keith Parker, area director for Europe for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

"Winter is going to be awful in these countries," said Parker. "Indications are that many people will face hunger and that shortages in medicines will cause untold suffering to families. Already many items are being rationed. Here's a chance for us to make a difference."

Both Montacute and Parker, who serve on Baptist Response-Europe, stressed the need for Baptists to work through Baptist Response-Europe and the Baptist World Alliance.

Churches are asked not to send truckloads of food and clothing because there are problems with both storing and distributing such bulky, unpackaged shipments.

The small Baptist Response-Europe packages will be distributed to the most needy through networks established by local churches in the countries.

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"We already have heard reports that the packages are getting through," said Parker. "It is essential that the packages be sent through this Baptist Response-Europe system since we've heard of others winding up for sale on the black market."

In a further hunger alert, Montacute is calling on Baptists to remember the people of Africa, especially in the Sudan. Baptists World Aid already has a fund for this hunger appeal.

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Wife of SSB president
undergoes heart surgery

N-SSB

Baptist Press
12/27/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--Sue Elder, wife of Southern Baptist Sunday School Board President Lloyd Elder, is recovering after bypass heart surgery on Dec. 24. Surgery was performed at Baptist Hospital in Nashville.

Mrs. Elder began suffering heart problems in September and subsequently underwent two angioplasty procedures. Doctors recently determined Mrs. Elder needed single bypass heart surgery.

Hospital officials said Mrs. Elder is in stable condition. She is expected to remain in the hospital for about 10 days.

Elder said his wife is responding well, and he requested continued prayer support.

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Federal judge restricts
investigation of churches

By Larry Chesser

N-10
CJC

Baptist Press
12/27/90

WASHINGTON (BP)--A federal district judge has ruled that government investigators do not have "unfettered discretion" to infiltrate church services.

The ruling by U.S. District Judge Roger Strand in a lawsuit filed by four Lutheran and Presbyterian congregations and their parent denominations imposed new restrictions on the government's ability to infiltrate religious services.

The churches filed suit in 1986 challenging the covert investigation of churches suspected of involvement in the sanctuary movement by undercover informants hired by the federal Immigration and Naturalization Service. Court records show that undercover informants attended church services and on at least one occasion, secretly tape-recorded a worship services.

The undercover investigation was made public during the trial of several sanctuary movement members who had been charged with conspiracy and smuggling Central Americans into the United States.

While Judge Strand's ruling did not prohibit investigation of church activities, it held that the government's investigation must be conducted in good faith.

"The government is constitutionally precluded from unbridled and inappropriate covert activity which has as its propose or objective the abridgment of the First Amendment freedoms of those involved," the ruling stated.

Additionally, the ruling said investigators "must adhere scrupulously to the scope and extent of the invitation to participate that may have been extended or offered to them."

Peter Baird, an attorney representing the plaintiffs, said the ruling means that when the invitation extended is for worship, anything outside that invitation, such as tape-recording the service, is not permissible.

A broad coalition of religious groups, including the Baptist Joint Committee, joined the case in support of the churches out of concern for First Amendment and other rights.

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"This case is of critical importance to all churches regardless of their views on the sanctuary movement, said Oliver Thomas, general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee, a Washington-based religious liberty agency representing 10 national Baptist groups.

"Churches have First Amendment rights that must be taken into account -- even by the Justice Department," Thomas said.

The Baptist Joint Committee, in a statement approved in 1986, condemned "the use of paid informants, undercover agents, and surreptitious tactics by any government agency investigating religious organizations as improper and illegal when less intrusive means of investigation or fact gathering are available.

"We lament the chilling effect upon worship, prayer, faith and fellowship freely exercised when worship services are invaded through the use of electronic eavesdropping equipment. We abhor government agents' fraudulent use of the name of Jesus Christ to gain access to the household of faith."

The statement further contended that for "government agents to burden the free exercise of religion by infiltration of churches is a matter of the most grave concern and, except in rare instances, is a violation of the First Amendment."

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CLC files amicus brief in
Kansas Supreme Court

By Tom Strode

N-CC
(Kan.)

Baptist Press
12/29/90

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has filed a friend-of-the-court brief with the Kansas Supreme Court in a case involving autonomy of a local Baptist church.

The brief was filed on Dec. 21 in the case of Kennedy, et al., v. Gray, et al. The case involves a membership dispute in a church in Kansas City, Kan. The CLC's brief does not take a position on the merits of the dispute between the parties. The CLC says the central issue for the Court is "whether the church will remain autonomous to resolve membership disputes which are inherently religious."

"This is the first case in Kansas to deal directly with a church dispute in a congregational-type church. We are urging the Court to apply the long-standing rule that civil courts will not interfere with the internal religious decisions of churches. We believe the rule should be the same for both congregational and hierarchical forms of government," Michael K. Whitehead, CLC general counsel, said.

The church, Pleasant Green Missionary Baptist Church, is not affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. The brief says that the CLC and the Southern Baptist Convention "have a substantial interest in the public policy and significant constitutional issues" raised by the case.

The church's internal disagreement apparently began when David L. Gray, pastor of the church for 30 years, became ill. During his absence, a minority group of deacons and other members sought to "take control" of the church, according to the defendants' brief. The minority group involved denies the allegation, according to the plaintiffs' brief.

After Gray returned to his position, the minority group requested through an attorney that the church provide the group access to and control of its financial records. The pastor and church refused. On July 24, 1989, the group filed suit in the District Court of Wyandotte County, Kan., against Gray and other church officials, seeking the naming of a temporary receiver to take over regulation of the church.

On July 30, 1989, Pleasant Green Missionary Church voted to remove the plaintiffs and those supporting them from membership. The defendants' brief says that the decision to expel was based on the church's doctrine that lawsuits against other members are opposed to the teaching of Scripture.

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On Jan. 14, 1990, the church affirmed its removal of the plaintiffs. As a result, the district court judge ruled in favor of the defendants, holding that the plaintiffs did not have "standing" to sue because they were no longer members of the church. The judge also wrote that "it is not the place of civil courts to inquire into the regularity of such an 'ecclesiastical' action by a religious body."

The plaintiffs appealed the ruling to the state supreme court.

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CLC calls for dismissal
of NEA chairman

By Tom Strode

N-CO
(CLC)

Baptist Press
12/27/90

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has reiterated its call for the dismissal of National Endowment for the Arts Chairman John Frohnmayer after he said that he would not refuse grants based on their failure to meet a standard of decency.

"There will not be a case where I will impose my own judgment (on a grant based on decency concerns)," Frohnmayer said Dec. 14. "I am not going to be the decency czar here."

Frohnmayer's remarks were made at a special meeting of the National Council on the Arts, which is the advisory council of the NEA. Prior to his statement, the council voted unanimously not to include a decency requirement in its written grant guidelines for 1991. An NEA spokesman said Frohnmayer and the council agreed that grant-review panels should be the ones to consider decency standards.

Congress included a decency provision in its October legislation reauthorizing NEA funding through 1993. It directed the chairman to make certain that grants are determined "taking into consideration general standards of decency and respect for the diverse beliefs and values of the American public."

"It is clear that Mr. Frohnmayer and the NEA's hostility toward evangelical Christians' concerns have not diminished. He believes even the minimalist 'decency' approach of Congress in dealing with the abuses of the NEA is unreasonable. Therefore, he has no intention of upholding the law, said Richard D. Land, CLC executive director.

The National Endowment for the Arts is out of control," he said.

Land was a member of a group of 18 evangelical leaders who met with President George Bush Oct. 30 and asked for the replacement of Frohnmayer.

Evangelicals have expressed concern for more than a year about NEA and such taxpayer-funded grants as a crucifix submerged in urine; homoerotic, sadomasochistic photographs and sexually explicit stage shows. The NEA operated under a requirement forbidding obscenity during the 1990 grant year. The CLC and other evangelical groups called for strict guidelines in this fall's reauthorization bill, but the resultant legislation included only the general provision, which critics said was too vague.

The endowment has \$155 million for grants and fellowships in 1991, an NEA spokesman said.

Recent actions of the NEA's general counsel were "deplorable" and "outrageous," Land said. Julianne Davis said in a speech on Oct. 24 at the University of Pennsylvania Law School that Pat Robertson, head of the Christian Broadcasting Network, and the American Family Association, directed by Don Wildmon, were both "enemies" of the NEA. She said the AFA "advocates that astrologers, adulterers, blasphemers, homosexuals and incorrigible children be executed, preferably by stoning."

The AFA filed a lawsuit for slander against Davis in U.S. District Court in Philadelphia, where her speech was made.

Davis also said she assisted lawyers in defending Cincinnati's Contemporary Arts Center against obscenity charges brought by the state of Ohio. The museum director was charged over a presentation of homoerotic photographs by the late Robert Mapplethorpe. The director was acquitted. The NEA granted \$30,000 for the traveling Mapplethorpe exhibit.

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BWA leaders express horror and dismay
at execution of Christian pastor in Iran

N-10
(BWA)

McLEAN, Va. (BP)--Leaders of the Baptist World Alliance have expressed horror and dismay at the news of the execution of an Assemblies of God pastor in Iran and have called on religious leaders of all traditions in Iran to defend the rights of the minority religious community.

In responding to the report of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board which reported the hanging of Hossein Soodmand on Dec. 3, Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary, said, "It is unbelievable in this 20th century that people are still being persecuted because of their faith."

The FMB report said the execution of Soodmand came amid "a new wave of repression against Christian believers and churches in the country." Soodmand was one of a handful of Iranian pastors serving those who had left Islam and accepted the Christian faith.

"Religious freedom is the basis of all freedoms," Lotz said. "When this freedom is denied, then all other freedoms are in jeopardy."

"We call upon Iran to follow the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and Statement of Religious Freedom, which guarantees all people freedom of religion."

BWA President Knud Wumpelmann also joined in condemning the execution.

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Surplus Bible study materials
headed for Persian Gulf area

By Frank Wm. White

N-55B

Baptist Press
12/27/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--More than 35,000 copies of surplus Southern Baptist literature are headed to Saudia Arabia for use by U.S. service members involved in Operation Desert Shield.

The Southern Baptist Sunday School Board is sending copies of five Bible study and devotional periodicals to 15 Southern Baptist chaplains serving in Operation Desert Shield, according to Marvin Nail, coordinator of the board's on-going project.

The chaplains will receive 6,300 copies of "Open Windows," a daily devotional guide; 12,000 copies of "Sunday School Adults" and 4,500 copies of "Sunday School Young Adults," both Convention Uniform Series Bible study materials; 12,000 copies of "Bible Book Study for Adults;" and 500 copies of "El Interprete," Convention Uniform Series Bible study materials in Spanish, Nail said.

Also the chief of chaplains for the Fifth Army headquarters at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, will forward additional surplus Bible study materials to any Fifth Army units assigned to Operation Desert Shield. Nail said materials will be provided for that purpose.

He said the special ministries department personnel considered shipping literature to military commands involved in Operation Desert Shield, but decided to send material directly to Southern Baptist chaplains when their names were provided by the Home Mission Board.

Surplus material was set aside for this project in early December when the material normally would have been destroyed. For more than three years, the Sunday School Board has provided outdated church literature to military, prison, hospital and institution chaplains, based on their requests.

For the mailing earlier in December, 520 chaplains on the order list received 60,000 pieces of material.

Chaplains receive an order form at the beginning of each quarter. The requested material, if available in surplus, is mailed in the third month of each quarter, Nail explained. Additional chaplains are added to the list each quarter, while those who do not order are dropped from the list, he said.

Eventually, Nail said, he hopes to offer all 1,900 Southern Baptist chaplains an opportunity to order surplus literature.

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Bivocational ministers elect officers, adopt constitution

*N-CO
SB Bivocational
ministers*

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Bivocational Ministers' Association held its organizational meeting in mid-December at Southland Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn. More than 50 participants approved a constitution and bylaws and elected their first slate of officers.

President of the association for 1990-91 is James Greer of Pineville, La. Other officers include: Charles Stewart, Ashland, Ky., first vice president; Leonard Foster, Carlsbad, N.M., second vice president; Frank Phillips, Gainesville, Fla., secretary; and Ken Cook, Jackson, Miss., treasurer.

Bivocational pastors attending the annual meeting of the National Council on Bivocational Ministries late in 1989 decided to create the organization. After discussion this year, participants voted to limit membership to persons actually engaged in bivocational ministry on an on-going basis. Those who join during 1990-91 will be designated as charter members.

Members chose "ministers" instead of "pastors" for the association's name in order to encourage participation by bivocational ministers of music and other staff members. More than 9,000 Southern Baptist pastors serve bivocationally, and at least 25,000 ministers of music are part-time, volunteer or bivocational.

Glenn Ailshie, bivocational pastor from Mullins, S.C., predicted that the new association would have a "great impact on missions and evangelism." Noting the shortage of leadership in new work areas, he told the group, "We need people like us to move into these areas to undertake new church starts."

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Four bivocational pastors honored as 'exemplary'

Baptist Press
12/27/90

*N-CO
SBBVM*

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Pastors from Texas, Louisiana, Tennessee and Kentucky were recognized as "Exemplary Bivocational Pastors of the Year" during the annual meeting of the National Council on Bivocational Ministries.

Honorees included: Domingo Ozuna, an oil company employee and pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista in Grand Prairie, Texas; James Greer, owner of a tire company and pastor of Donahue Baptist Church in Pineville, La.; James Cambron, manager of an insurance agency and pastor of Mountain View Baptist Chapel near Johnson City, Tenn., and Charles E. Stewart, retired gas company employee and pastor since 1964 of Rose Hill Baptist Church in Ashland, Ky.

Criteria for selecting those recognized included tenure at present church, development of the church under his leadership, unique features of his ministry, and his image within his community.

The national council consists of local, state and national leaders committed to strengthening bivocational ministries. Next year's meeting is planned for Raleigh, N.C.

David Bunch, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's vice president for new church extension, told the council that national mission strategy must include a plan for using lay leaders, volunteers, and bivocational ministers. "The Home Mission Board will recruit, train, and deploy volunteers and bivocational ministers," he said. "Winning the nation to Christ cannot be done without them."

Bunch pointed out that Baptist colleges and seminaries are holding up models of intentional bivocational service. At the same time, he added the agencies and Seminary Extension are responding with training at times and places where bivocational ministers can receive it.

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Ernest E. Mosley, executive vice president of the SBC Executive Committee, recalled his own experience of growing up under the ministry of a pastor who was also the local grocer. Mosley drew a strong distinction between the bivocational ministers and "moonlighting preachers." Bivocational ministers are there with the churches and the membership in good times and bad, he contended, while "moonlighting preachers" show up to deliver a sermon but never seem to be around when the going gets rough.

Mosley pointed to the SBC Annual for evidence that "today's strategy is not adequate." Noting the thousands of names listed this year as "other ordained," Mosley suggested that many of these persons could be put to work in bivocational ministries.

Re-elected council president was Glenn Ailshie of Mullins, S.C. Other officers are Claud Slate, Fort Worth, Texas, first vice president; Frank Phillips, Gainesville, Fla., second vice president; and Lee Hollaway, Nashville, recording secretary. Elected to one-year terms as directors of the council were Paul Stevens, Fort Worth; Don Beall, Wichita, Kan.; Larry Kirk, Nashville; Larry Orange, Louisville, Ky.; and Corbin Cooper, Cary, N.C.

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Leavell challenges graduates
to emulate Barnabas

By Breena Kent Paine

Baptist Press
12/27/90

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"If the church is going to make an impact on society today," Christians must be "good men, full of the Holy Spirit, and faithful," said Landrum P. Leavell II.

Challenging 114 candidates for graduation during New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's commencement exercises Dec. 21, the seminary president said Christians should strive to have a healthy self-image, be liberal in giving to those in need, and refrain from envying others.

Like the New Testament Christian Barnabas, today's Christians should have faith in their own self-judgment, being guided by the Holy Spirit and acting on what they believe to be right.

Second, they should be "known for their liberality." When Barnabas saw people in need, he sold his property and gave the proceeds to help the hurting. "He gave it willingly, sacrificially, and without any ostentation," Leavell said, not putting it in the bank to draw interest to be given at a later date, and not designating the gift to a particular recipient.

Third, Christians should follow Barnabas' example in lacking jealousy toward others in their area of service for the Lord, Leavell said. They should "help to advance the cause of Christ by helping other individuals."

Leavell warned graduates not to become someone "who has learned the vocabulary and can talk the talk," but does not intend to do God's work. These people are "hypocrites," he taking credit where credit is not due.

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