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January 9, 1991

91-3

Baptist workers in Mideast:
some staying, some leaving

By Mike Creswell

N-FMB

BRUSSELS, Belgium (BP)--Most Southern Baptist workers in the Middle East were still at their posts Jan. 9, but they were keeping suitcases packed and some were preparing to leave as the Jan. 15 United Nations deadline for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait neared.

The world has watched as more than half a million troops have assembled in Saudi Arabia, poised to launch an offensive against Iraq if its troops do not withdraw from Kuwait. Meanwhile, the verbal war of threats and diplomatic dickering have taken a toll on Southern Baptists stationed in the region.

In some areas workers face the awful choice of whether to risk staying and ministering during a war that might or might not come. In other areas of the Middle East, life goes on much as usual.

Many Southern Baptist representatives in the region would find it difficult to leave even if they wanted to, since planes out of some strategic areas are booked solid for weeks. Only two airlines serve Jordan now, and they are booked up until after Jan. 15, a representative there said.

Jordan is perilously wedged between Iraq and Israel. Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein has vowed to attack Israel if Iraq is attacked by the United States and other forces in Saudi Arabia.

"People here are pretty stressed out," said Southern Baptist worker Arylis Milligan in Amman, Jordan. "Everyone is at their limit, simply because of the constant tension of not knowing what's going to happen."

Some workers assigned to Jordan are in the United States for medical leave or furlough. But eight career workers and five children intend to stay on for now, although one couple scheduled a London vacation to begin Jan. 14.

The workers have secured entry visas for Syria as a last-ditch evacuation outlet, Milligan said, and have stockpiled food and water. Families have been advised to stay indoors for at least four or five days if war breaks out to allow security forces time to regain control, she said.

Little anti-American sentiment has been expressed in Jordan so far, and articles in a local English-language newspaper assured foreigners they would continue to be protected. "We personally have had no threats," said Milligan, of Tulsa, Okla.

Baptist personnel in the West Bank and Gaza have faced a much tenser situation as Palestinians supporting Iraq have stepped up their fight -- called the Intifada -- against Israeli occupation. Violent clashes and random attacks have increased in recent weeks, leading Southern Baptist workers assigned there to stay mostly indoors.

The 21 Southern Baptist personnel in Gaza are assigned to work with a nursing school that now has 14 nursing students. After graduating a class of 26 students in September, a shortage of teachers kept the school from having any more students, said Southern Baptist teacher Karl Weathers.

Scrawled on the side of the hospital, part of the compound where the workers live, are the Arabic words "Death to America." Weathers and his wife, Thelma, both of Earle, Ark., can see the sign from their front porch.

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"That means your government, not you personally," one student told Mrs. Weathers. But she and others worry about whether many of the young Palestinians could confuse "America" with Americans.

In one incident, a man spat at a Baptist representative's feet and yelled, "Death to foreigners!" But the workers have been assured by Palestinians that they are considered friends and will be safe.

The Southern Baptist workers are virtually the only Westerners left in Gaza. Most others have left the area. The workers say their suitcases are packed for an overland departure if war breaks out. In Gaza, rioting by war-crazed mobs may be a bigger threat than Iraqi missiles, one worker said.

On the West Bank, also the scene of frequent clashes between Palestinians and Israeli troops in recent weeks, Baptist workers have been threatened and had a vehicle vandalized.

In Israel itself, preparations include stockpiling food and water and keeping gas masks and tape for sealing off rooms close at hand in case of an Iraqi poison gas attack, said Martha Hocutt in Ra'anana. The governments of Sweden and Germany have ordered their citizens out of the country, and the U.S. government has warned its citizens of the dangers of remaining.

"The tension and the anxiety are such that you can cut them with a knife, yet people are going on with routine responsibilities. You try to go on and function anyway," said representative Norm Lytle of Gadsden, Ala.

Southern Baptist personnel are monitoring the situation daily, but a declining number of flights and a mass exodus of people from the country mean it would be hard for them to get airline seats out at this point.

Some representatives are getting "lots of pressure" from relatives in the United States to get out of the country, said Hocutt, of Cedartown, Ga. "That's adding another dimension to the pressure."

In Israel, as in other countries, the choice to go or stay is up to the individual or family involved.

Dale Thorne, who directs Southern Baptist work in the Middle East and north Africa from a base in Cyprus, said he is "leaving the final decision with them but keeping in close contact by telephone ... trying to assess the situation in helping them make their decision."

Thorne learned Jan. 9 that several Baptist workers and families will leave Israel by boat Jan. 13 from Haifa and arrive in Cyprus the next day. Several others are considering or preparing to leave Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.

In Bahrain, on the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia, Baptist worker Margaret McPherson of Midland, Texas, was planning to return to the United States as soon as a flight could be arranged. Worker Peggy Littlejohn, of Houston, and her two children returned to their U.S. home earlier. For now her husband, Don Littlejohn of Fort Worth, Texas, will remain in Bahrain.

In Egypt, Southern Baptist representative Mike Edens of Guthrie, Okla., said a very conservative mood exists among Muslims, but he has seen no big outpouring of anti-American sentiment. His main extra duty has been making preparations for Southern Baptist personnel who might have to evacuate.

In Yemen, work continues at the hospital at Ibb. It is staffed by 27 Southern Baptist representatives who intend to remain at their work, although about 90 percent of Westerners have left Yemen, said pharmacist Hugh Provost of West Memphis, Ark.

"We all have exit visas and always have stuff ready for a quick exit, but you can't just go off and leave a hospital. You can't leave sick people."

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Creswell, Baptist Press correspondent for Europe and the Middle East, is based in Brussels.

HMB sending Survival Kits
to Persian Gulf chaplains

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist chaplains serving in the Persian Gulf will receive 1,000 copies of the "Survival Kit for New Christians," courtesy of the Home Mission Board's chaplaincy division.

HMB President Larry Lewis authorized the purchase Jan. 9 after receiving numerous requests from chaplains for the popular discipleship book produced by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship training department.

Survival Kit is the most-requested item from chaplains in the Persian Gulf, said Lew Burnett, HMB director of military chaplaincy.

He estimates Southern Baptist chaplains already have led between 800 and 1,200 soldiers to profess faith in Jesus Christ. That figure is based on reports from chaplains through letters, phone calls and communications passed on through family members.

As many as one-third of that number have been baptized using baptismal pools as diverse as decontamination tanks and the waters of the Persian Gulf.

About 142 Southern Baptist chaplains currently are serving in the region.

"It's important to help our Southern Baptist chaplains further receive the message that Southern Baptists as a convention are with them," said HMB chaplaincy division director Huey Perry. "We also want to communicate to soldiers and sailors and Marines and airmen and airwomen that Southern Baptists are interested in the spiritual growth of those who come into the family of God through conversion."

Burnett suggests churches or individuals desiring to send religious literature to troops contact the HMB chaplaincy division for information on what chaplains need most. Calls should be directed to (404) 898-7433, while correspondence should be addressed to Chaplaincy Division, Home Mission Board, 1350 Spring St. NW, Atlanta, GA 30367-5601.

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SSB reporter called
to active military duty

Baptist Press
1/9/91

N-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP) (BP)--Frank White, editor of "Facts and Trends" and a reporter in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's office of communications, has been called to active duty with the 118th Public Affairs Detachment of the Tennessee National Guard.

The unit was activated Jan. 7, reports to Fort Campbell, Ky., Jan. 9, and is expected to arrive in Saudi Arabia in about a week.

White becomes the first employee of the board to be deployed to Saudi Arabia and the third called to active duty.

Dale Currin, stock clerk in the Raleigh (N.C.) Baptist Book Store, reported to Camp Lejeune, N.C., in early September for active duty in the U.S. Naval Reserve. Bill Banks, director of the special ministries department, is commander of the 678th Personnel Services Company now serving at Fort Bragg, N.C.

White's unit will provide general public affairs support including a weekly news magazine for the U.S. Army VII Corps, which includes more than 80,000 combat troops in Saudi Arabia.

"Frank is an experienced and competent journalist, an active church member and dedicated family man," said Lloyd Householder, assistant vice president for communications. "We shall miss him and pray that he will be returned safely to his strategic role among Southern Baptists." White, 37, is a six-year employee of the board.

In addition to White, Banks and Currin, about 20 immediate family members of board employees are serving in Operation Desert Shield or have been called to active duty in the United States.

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African missions pioneer
retires after 39 years

By Donald D. Martin

N-FMB

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--When Southern Baptist missionary Davis Saunders launched Southern Baptist work in Kenya in 1956, he prayed for "wisdom and patience to follow the right paths."

By the end of 1990, when the Walterboro, S.C., native retired as vice president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's work in Africa, his path had crisscrossed the continent for nearly 40 years.

In that time Southern Baptist work in Africa has grown from 152 missionaries working in three countries to almost 1,000 missionaries in 33 countries, with work planned to open soon in three more.

Early steps by Saunders and his wife, Mary, to establish the Kenya mission were small, but firmly planted. By 1959, they were charter members of one of the first Baptist churches organized in Kenya. Five of the eight members of the congregation were baptized that first day.

Today, in Kenya alone, more than 150,000 Kenyan Baptists worship in more than 1,400 churches throughout the east African country.

"From five to 150,000 in one man's lifetime -- it's remarkable to see," Saunders, 65, said.

Saunders and his wife, the former Mary Hogg of Charleston, S.C., where the couple now lives, first journeyed to Africa on a freighter that took on a few passengers in 1951. They went as missionaries to Nigeria.

But their most significant contribution came as pioneer missionaries to east Africa, said Cornell Goerner, director of work in Africa from 1957 to 1977. In 1956 the Saunderses joined two other couples, Wimpy and Juanita Harper and Jack and Sally Walker, to survey possibilities in east Africa.

Within a few months the Harpers and Walkers became the first Southern Baptist missionaries in Tanzania; the Saunderses were the first in Kenya. During the next eight years, as other missionaries joined them, the Saunderses worked in Kenya to plant churches and develop an outreach center, among other ministries.

"They did a magnificent job in getting the work started," Goerner said. "I've never seen a mission that was as wellborn as this one was. It was a remarkable achievement."

Goerner attributes part of the Saunderses' success to how swiftly they identified with the African people and how well they shared responsibility with lay and church leaders.

"That's why we're there. We don't go in with pockets full of money looking to be overseers pulling strings. We're there to help churches become independent as quickly as possible. The missionary is actually out there to work himself out of a job."

For the next few years, Saunders worked himself out of several jobs. In 1964, he became principal of the Baptist Theological Seminary of East Africa in Arusha, Tanzania. Mrs. Saunders, a nurse, worked with a weekly mobile medical clinic in a neighboring community. She also taught religious education and domestic science and operated a clinic at the seminary.

In 1969, Saunders became the Foreign Mission Board's first field representative for eastern and southern Africa. He worked with all the missionaries there until 1973, when he became area director for the region. In February 1987 he became vice president for Africa.

Leaving Africa to work at the mission board in Richmond was a difficult step for the couple, Mrs. Saunders said. "At times, I was overwhelmed with a sense of loss after returning to the United States.

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"My roots have gone deep into African soil," she said. "I would ask God, 'Why am I back here? Why am I in Richmond?' Then early one morning God told me I could return to Africa anytime I wanted. I heard the Lord say deep in my soul that I could be back in Africa as I prayed."

God began quietly opening a new world to her through prayer, she said. "When God takes over he does such wonderful things with such ordinary people."

Others recognized her intimacy with God and began asking her to speak about her prayer life. She often is sought by church groups throughout the Southern Baptist Convention to lead prayer retreats.

Since returning to the United States, she also has worked as a volunteer missionary in Ethiopia. On four separate trips in the late 1980s, Mrs. Saunders spent from one to five months working as a nurse in feeding camps in drought-stricken Ethiopia.

James Hampton, a former missionary to Tanzania and Kenya who worked with the Saunderses in Africa and later in Richmond, visited Mrs. Saunders at a camp in Rabel, Ethiopia. "To them she was a healing angel of mercy," he said.

"Mary took me around to the various buildings which housed the sick," Hampton said. "In one metal building on a straw-covered floor lay about 20 elderly people wrapped in blankets. Every one of them stood up and rushed toward us. A number of them knelt before Mary and tried to kiss her feet. It was one of the most moving and emotional experiences I've ever known."

Last July, as Saunders began preparations for his retirement, reports of thousands of Christian conversions poured out of Kenya during a four-week evangelistic crusade by U.S. volunteers, Kenyan Baptists and missionaries. Many people marveled at how responsive to the gospel the Kenyans were. Peering back through his years of work in Africa, however, Saunders saw the response from a different perspective.

"What's often overlooked is that this (crusade) is the culmination of a growing momentum," he said. "What we've seen in the crusade was the result of many lives quietly invested, year after year. And then when the Spirit leads and the time is right, you have a response like this."

Saunders said his retirement is simply the next redeployment, another branch in the couple's path. He plans to begin teaching Feb. 5 at Charleston Southern University (formerly Baptist College at Charleston).

His first course is one on the history of missions -- a subject he has researched for more than half his life.

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

Home missions count
reached 4,573 in 1990

By Mark Wingfield

N-dmb

Baptist Press
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ATLANTA (BP)--The number of home missions personnel serving through the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board reached an all-time high of 4,573 at the end of 1990.

That compares to 3,808 home missionaries serving at the end of the previous year.

The increase is due to the addition of Mission Service Corps volunteers to the count. Last December, HMB trustees voted to include in the missionary count all Mission Service Corps volunteers who have made a commitment to serve at least two years.

Mission Service Corps is one of several programs for home missions volunteers. Missions Service Corps personnel raise their own support to serve in places where funding is not available for career missionaries.

The final 1990 count included 833 Mission Service Corps volunteers and 3,740 appointed and approved personnel as counted under the old system.

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The HMB now counts missionaries in four categories: appointed, approved, Mission Service Corps and state administrative personnel.

Unlike foreign missionaries, almost all home missionaries are jointly appointed by the HMB and state conventions. The typical process of becoming a missionary begins with a local church or association, moves through review and approval by the state convention and then comes to the HMB for approval.

Only 2.4 percent of all home missionaries are paid directly by the HMB. The majority, 97.6 percent, are recruited jointly, placed and funded by state conventions and the HMB.

Appointed missionaries are typically those considered career or long-term missionaries. The category includes those with the titles missionary, missionary associate, apprentice and US-2er. These missionaries are interviewed by the HMB staff and appointed by HMB trustees.

At the end of 1990, there were 1,665 individuals counted as appointed missionaries. That represented 36.4 percent of the total home missions force.

Approved missions personnel are individuals approved for a limited amount of time. They usually receive a salary supplement from the HMB while they start churches and bring them to self-support or while they are involved in certain projects.

The category includes those called mission pastors or language pastors and others receiving what the HMB calls Field Pastoral Assistance. Approved personnel are interviewed by associational and state convention representatives and do not go through a formal interview, orientation or commissioning with the HMB.

The 1,976 approved personnel accounted for 43.2 percent of the 1990 missionary count.

State administrative personnel is the smallest category, including 99 individuals, or 2.2 percent of the total missions count. These missionaries direct the work of HMB programs in state conventions and fellowships which could not otherwise provide leadership for those programs.

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Poll: Americans look to church
to answer community problems

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
1/9/91

N-HMB

ATLANTA (BP)--Americans place more confidence in churches than any other institution to deal with community problems, the George H. Gallup International Institute reports.

Nearly six people in 10 (57 percent) say they have a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in churches to deal with community problems.

In comparison, 54 percent say they place that much confidence in volunteer groups such as the YMCA, while 47 percent claim to have similar confidence in public schools.

All other institutions listed -- local media, local businesses, local government, state government, federal government, national business and political parties -- inspire confidence in less than 30 percent of the population, the poll found.

These opinions were expressed almost uniformly across different segments of American society, with two exceptions. Women (65 percent) are more likely than men (48 percent) to express confidence in churches to solve community problems. Adults 30 years of age or older express greater confidence in churches than young people ages 18 to 29.

The economy, drugs, crime and gangs top the list of concerns Americans have about their communities, the poll reports.

These findings are based on a nationwide sample of 1,025 adults interviewed by telephone Nov. 6-9, 1990. Results were reported in *Emerging Trends*, published by the Princeton Religion Research Center.

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The questions asked in interviews were: "Thinking about the problems facing your city or local community, how much confidence do you have in the following institutions to deal with those problems?" and "Specifically, what do you think is the most important problem facing your city or local community today?"

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McGlothlin promoted
at Southern Seminary

Baptist Press
1/9/91

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Thomas J. McGlothlin Jr. has been named vice president for business services at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

McGlothlin, a member of the staff at the Louisville, Ky. school since 1965, has been the seminary treasurer for the past seven years. In his new role, he will oversee all fiscal and accounting services, administrative services, personnel services, facilities management and management information systems.

McGlothlin, a native of Bluefield, W.Va., earned the A.A. degree from Bluefield (Va.) College, the B.S. degree from Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., and the M.B.A. degree from the University of Louisville.

His professional affiliations include membership in the Administrative Management Society, National Association of University Business Officers, Kentucky Council of Independent Colleges and Schools and The Academy of Certified Administrative Managers.

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