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January 11, 1991

90-4

WMU leaders issue blunt messages,
level straight talk during board sessions

By Karen Benson

N-CC (NMB)

TALLADEGA, Ala. (BP)--The two national executives of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union delivered some straight talk to WMU's leaders and directed some blunt messages to the denomination's decision-makers during separate addresses to the WMU executive board meeting Jan. 7-9.

Dellanna O'Brien, executive director, and Marjorie McCullough, president, spoke to about 200 people, including state WMU presidents, executive directors and staffs, and other guests, at Shocco Springs Baptist Assembly, about 60 miles from WMU's Birmingham headquarters.

"Needless to say, being a woman's organization in a male-dominated -- or at least controlled -- denomination hasn't been easy," McCullough said.

She called upon the WMU leaders to exert a "prowess" akin to that of the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah. Describing prowess as "superior strength, skill, courage, heroism and valor," McCullough said these traits are not solely masculine. "Women have these, too," she said.

WMU will need superior strength to handle outside pressures, McCullough said. It will need sharpened skills to "eradicate missions illiteracy" and renew an excitement for missions in the churches.

The organization will need courage to exercise "risk tolerance" as it launches new ventures, develops new relationships and confronts change -- in short, as it "crosses over from the old to the new," she said.

God has entrusted WMU with such prowess, McCullough said. But she urged caution in how WMU leaders should exercise those traits. "We pray for the power to be gentle, the strength to be forgiving, the patience to be understanding, and the endurance to accept consequences of holding to what we believe," she said.

Such traits will also come in handy in combatting apathy toward WMU, according to O'Brien's remarks. It has been reported, O'Brien said, "that our detractors, whoever they are, have said they will do nothing to us, but will simply 'let us die.'"

She was interrupted with applause when she said, "I am here to tell you we have no intention of dying! To the (New Testament) church in Philadelphia, God spoke a promise we are claiming for ourselves: 'See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.'"

WMU stands before an open door, O'Brien said. "The future is ours to possess in his power."

"But, is the organization willing to acknowledge the requirements for that possession?" she asked. "Can we be equally open in our hearts and minds to the changes necessary for keeping WMU a viable, vital organization?"

If WMU is serious about its intention to survive in a new milieu, O'Brien said, "We must be aware of the factors affecting the life of today's woman."

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More women now are working than ever before -- just over one-half of the female, adult population, she said. Not only must WMU be "flexible in our planning and programming for them," it is also obligated to help local churches provide missions involvement in a way that fits their members' needs, she said.

"Because women have less discretionary time, our demands must be reasonable and worthwhile," O'Brien said. "Every meeting must pulsate with interesting and challenging material. Every woman must leave with a sense of urgency for sharing the Good News."

WMU no longer has the luxury of "blind commitment to an organization" as a motivation for membership, she cautioned.

"Women come to our meetings not to hear parts read. They are interested only if the organization can offer something significant to them as individuals, or give them the opportunity to do something which can make a difference." WMU can deliver on both demands "if we so desire," O'Brien said.

The organization is struggling to service a diverse group of women, she said -- high school drop-outs to Ph.D.'s; the very young to the elderly; new Christians to "saints"; new Baptists to "the backbone of the church"; members of very small churches to those in mega-churches.

"Our materials and methods must match the differences we find in our groups. The situation may require our doing some things never done before -- even some things we may not particularly want to do," she said.

WMU also has need for a "21st century image" which will reflect the same purpose for which it was formed, but will project the image "to a different world," O'Brien said.

As part of that task, "we have some fence-building to do," she said. "I dare say that there are some pastors and (associational) directors of missions in your state who, through the years, for various reasons, have rejected WMU as a program for their churches or have decided not to give it their personal support.

"Do you know why?" she asked the state leaders. "Do you dare ask them why? I challenge you this year to begin to reach out to those leaders in a spirit of compassion and cooperation to reclaim them as supporters of WMU."

WMU is faced, too, with pleas from churches for coeducational missions options, she said. "If we are truly committed to be the missions conscience of the church, we cannot keep our heads in the sand, and we must acknowledge that we cannot go it alone.

"It is imperative that we discuss together with our (Southern Baptist) Brotherhood (Commission) counterparts the potential ways we can cooperate. ..."

In the midst of these issues confronting WMU, the organization is struggling with "great pain, both individually and collectively," from the convention's controversy, O'Brien said.

"We must remain ever vigilant that the missions cause does not suffer at the hand of single-agenda issues which detract from the dominant and ultimate command to share Christ with the world," she said.

"Regardless of events or developments in the future, all churches need what WMU can offer," she said. "We must, therefore, remain at our posts, analyzing the developments, challenging when mid-course corrections are required, and holding high the banner of 'Laborers Together with God' (WMU's motto)."

She outlined one such "mid-course correction" that is needed now: "I have been very concerned that our Home Mission Board report will not be given to our convention (in June) in order to make room for another part on the program.

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"I have spoken with the president of the Southern Baptist Convention with a plea that we are approaching the end of the century, A.D. 2000, at which point we have made so many goals for ourselves through Bold Mission Thrust. We are not where we want to be in that effort.

"If at any time in the world we needed to provide a pep rally, if you will, for missions efforts in Bold Missions Thrust, it is now. We should be increasing our time given to Home and Foreign Mission Boards, instead of decreasing it.

For this reason, WMU is giving the Home Mission Board an opportunity to give their report at the WMU annual meeting (which precedes the SBC), O'Brien announced. "I hope you will spread that word wherever you go."

Despite the issues and challenges and "uncharted times" facing WMU, there is cause for excitement and encouragement, O'Brien said.

"There is no doubt that God still wants to do amazing things among us. We must resist the paralyzing fear that would keep us immobilized, and step out in faith through the open door he has prepared for us."

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WMU Board meeting focuses on
prayer and coed missions options

By Susan Todd

*N-CO
(WMU)*

Baptist Press
1/11/91

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--The surprise appearance of Southern Baptist missionary Maurice Graham, who was released last month from the Embassy in Kuwait, was described as an "electrifying moment" of the Jan. 7-9 Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union executive board meeting by the almost 200 people in attendance.

Meeting at Shocco Springs Baptist Assembly in Talladega, Ala., the group heard the announcement of a joint WMU and Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board call to prayer for the Middle East; confronted probing questions about WMU's future; struggled with issues about coeducational missions opportunities; and clarified its promotional stance on channels of cooperative missions giving.

During the annual FMB presentation to the WMU leaders, President Keith Parks said that WMU members throughout the nation had been praying fervently for Graham's release from Kuwait.

"We felt it would be appropriate for you to be the first to hear from him and for you to see the answer to your prayers," Parks said as he introduced Graham. It was Graham's first public appearance since his release Dec. 9.

Both Graham and members of the audience cried as he stepped to the platform.

"This is not easy for me," Graham said. "I am still dealing with my grief."

Graham described the people he left behind in Kuwait as the "real heroes." Members of the National Evangelical Church in Kuwait who are still there are ministering to the needs of others at great personal sacrifice, he said.

He pled with the group to pray for the fellow Christians he left behind.

Graham also urged Baptists to pray for missionaries in other parts of the world where violence is a normal part of daily life. He especially asked them to pray for peace on Sunday, Jan. 13, a day designated as a special day of prayer for peace in the Middle East.

The call to prayer for the Persian Gulf Crisis was issued jointly by Dellanna O'Brien, WMU national executive director, and Parks. The appeal was faxed to state convention offices on Jan. 9 with the request that executive directors immediately distribute it by FAX, special delivery or some other fast means to associational directors of missions, who in turn were asked to get the message to pastors within their associations.

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The document begins: "The magnitude of the Persian Gulf Crisis and the potential for devastating consequences upon the entire globe lead us to urgently plead with every Southern Baptist congregation to bow before the Lord, praying fervently for a peaceful solution to this enormous crisis.

"This is a call we know Southern Baptists will not take lightly. You responded to a call to pray for the release of Southern Baptist missionary Maurice Graham by praying diligently and earnestly. His Dec. 9 release, along with the other 23 hostages at the American Embassy compound in Kuwait, came on the very day Southern Baptists had been asked to pray specifically for his release! The world might look at those circumstances and call it coincidental. We know it was a divine miracle. God does answer prayer."

Board members also heard addresses from both WMU national leaders.

Marjorie McCullough, national WMU president, called WMU leaders to exert a "prowess" which she described as "superior strength, skill, courage, heroism and valor."

But she urged caution in how WMU leaders should exercise these traits. "We pray for the power to be gentle, the strength to be forgiving, the patience to be understanding, and the endurance to accept consequences of holding to what we believe," she said.

Dellanna O'Brien, national WMU executive director, spoke to reports she had heard of detractors who "will do nothing to us, but will simply 'let us die.'"

She was interrupted with applause when she said, "I am here to tell you we have no intention of dying!"

A discussion about coeducational missions opportunities which was scheduled to last one hour stretched into lengthy dialogue spanning three sessions over two days.

After a quickly-appointed committee meshed suggestions from the discussions, the leaders approved a recommendation:

1. That affirms the concept of coed missions education options for youth;
2. That invites the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission to consider with WMU options for coed missions education for youth, including:
 - a consultation with national and state Acteens and High School Baptist Young Men leadership, April 1-2, 1991;
 - the participation of elected officers of the group of state WMU presidents and the group of state WMU executive directors in the consultation;
 - and the development of an agenda for the consultation by the executive director of national WMU.
3. That the national WMU executive director present a full report to the June 1991 meeting of the WMU executive board.
4. And that in the interim, WMU produce and offer materials suitable for coed missions education to state WMU offices to distribute as deemed appropriate.

The board also approved a recommendation to initiate research and dialogue to consider coed missions education for all age levels, from children through adults. Coed missions education for youth has been the topic of discussion for some time between WMU and Brotherhood.

The executive board also approved a "white paper" defining WMU's stance on promoting cooperative missions giving.

Questions were raised about how to promote cooperative missions giving in WMU materials after the WMU executive board voted in September to "affirm the right of individuals, churches and state conventions to choose other plans for cooperative missions giving."

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The paper states: "WMU, SBC, will refer only to the primary SBC channels for cooperative missions giving (Cooperative Program, Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions, and world hunger and disaster relief response through the mission boards), state missions giving, and associational missions giving without reference to alternative plans.

"However, careful attention will be given to the tone and spirit of communication about these channels. The intent is to affirm the traditional channels of financial mission support without being negative about other plans for cooperative missions giving chosen by individuals, churches or state conventions."

In his annual address to the group, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis told the group that they probably knew what to expect from his presentation.

"You've heard me talk a great deal about starting new churches, of reaching our goal of 50,000 churches and church-type missions by the year 2000 and of the challenge of evangelizing the 172 million lost people in America," he said.

"I want to emphasize to you today that leading our churches to minister is just as high on HMB's priorities as starting new churches or as winning the lost to Christ. Ministry is just as important to me, and to the Home Mission Board, as church starting, church growth or evangelism," he said.

Lewis stressed ministry to a "hurting humanity" is a priority for the HMB.

"There is a perception -- an erroneous perception -- that the Home Mission Board is devoting major priority to church starting or evangelism to the lack of ministry," he said. "I" would simply say that that is not borne out with the facts."

The HMB ministry section has had the highest budget increase -- 8.48 percent -- of any other section, Lewis said.

In other business, the WMU executive board:

1. Approved \$47,666 in grants from WMU's endowment fund, the Second Century Fund.

Second Century Fund grants are used to support missions work among women abroad and in the United States, and to support missions education among women in seminaries.

Grants awarded this year will fund the following requests from overseas: construction of a WMU building in Nigeria; a Chinese intern to study in the U.S.; a writers conference in Indonesia; a Baptist Women's convention in the Philippines; leadership training conferences in Argentina, Bolivia and Peru; and children's work in Peru and Chile.

Grants were also given to provide leadership training in Colorado, New England, New York, West Virginia and Wyoming; a nursing workshop in North Carolina; children's work in Iowa; new work area literature; and a language think tank at national WMU.

2. Approved funds for two national WMU staff members to lead in Bible distribution by Baptist Young Women Enterprisers Abroad in the Soviet Union in September. Baptist Young Women is the missions organization for women ages 18-34.

3. Approved funds for a national WMU staff member to offer leadership training in Cuba and Peru.

4. Approved a recommendation that a national experience for Acteens be scheduled in the summer of 1994, to be held east of the Mississippi River.

5. Adopted the 1993-94 Dated Plan, which outlines the activities, curriculum and products for WMU organizations in the churches for that year.

6. Heard the announcement of the 1991 Acteens National Advisory Panel. They are: Adria Brendle, Richmond, Va.; Sarah Louisa Kellar, Brinkley, Ark.; Emily Dossett, Jackson, Miss.; Rachel Celeste Morgan, Glencoe, Ala.; Darcie Pittman, Dallas, Texas; and Ellen Richardson, Memphis, Tenn.

Advisory panel members serve as pages at the WMU Annual Meeting and the Southern Baptist Convention. They also write and speak on behalf of Acteens, the missions organization for girls in grades seven through 12.

The next meeting of the WMU executive board will be June 1 in Atlanta, Ga.

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WMU awards \$47,666 in grants to women's mission work around world

By Susan Todd

N-CO
(WMU)

Baptist Press
1/11/90

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Second Century Fund grants were awarded to fund women's missions work in 10 foreign countries and nine states by Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary during its Jan. 7-9 executive board meeting. Awards totaled \$47,666.

A total of 27 requests were considered by the Second Century Fund committee of the WMU executive board. The requests totaled \$196,104.

"We were overwhelmed with requests this time," said Marjorie J. McCullough, national WMU president. "We've never gotten as many as this year. Even though we gave over \$47,000, we could have given more if the money had been available."

The Second Century Fund is a permanent endowment which was created by WMU as a gift to future generations of women in missions. All contributions are invested permanently. Only the interest earned on the principal is given each year in grants.

The grants are given to develop women's missions organizations abroad; to enhance WMU leadership development in the United States; and to foster education about missions and WMU among Southern Baptist seminary students and faculty.

Grants awarded this year will fund the following requests from overseas: construction of a WMU building in Nigeria; a Chinese intern to study in the U.S.; a writers conference in Indonesia; a Baptist Women's convention in the Philippines; leadership training conferences in Argentina, Bolivia and Peru; and children's work in Peru and Chile.

Grants were also given to provide leadership training in Colorado, New England, New York, West Virginia and Wyoming; a nursing workshop in North Carolina; children's work in Iowa; new work area literature; and a language think tank at national WMU.

The increase in requests this year shows that people are aware of what WMU is doing through endowments, McCullough said.

The addition of Mary Helen Dixon as a full-time national WMU staff member to lead in the development of the endowment program will help to continue awareness of the program, she said.

This year is the fourth year in which Second Century Fund grants have been awarded. The first awards were announced during WMU's Centennial Celebration in Richmond, Va., in May 1988.

For information concerning gifts to the Second Century Fund or award applications, write Second Century Fund, Woman's Missionary Union, P.O. Box 830010, Birmingham, AL 35283-0010.

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Graham thanks WMU for prayer, says real heroes still in Kuwait

By Jim Newton

N-CO
(WMU)

Baptist Press
1/11/90

TALLADEGA, Ala. (BP)--Southern Baptist missionary Maurice Graham, after 130 days as a hostage in Kuwait, thanked Southern Baptists for praying for his release, but emphasized he is not a hero.

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"The real heroes are the 60 members of the National Evangelical Church in Kuwait who are still there, ministering to the needs of the people," Graham said Jan. 8 in his first public appearance following his release.

Graham spoke to the executive board of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union in a surprise appearance as part of the SBC Foreign Mission Board's annual report to WMU.

There was an audible gasp, followed by a standing ovation, from the 150 WMU board members, staff and guests present when Graham entered the room at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center.

Foreign Mission Board President Keith Parks pointed out that women throughout the nation had been praying fervently for Graham's release from the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait. "We felt it would be appropriate for you to be the first to hear from him and for you to see the answer to your prayers," Parks said.

Throughout his presentation, both Graham and his audience wept as they praised God for answering their prayers.

"This is not easy for me," Graham said in the emotion-packed service. "I am still dealing with my grief."

He thanked Baptists who prayed for him and his family, but said he felt inadequate in expressing his appreciation.

Graham said the WMU prayer chain is more extensive than most people can imagine. After his wife, Laurie, returned to the USA from Kuwait in mid-September, she called the American Telephone and Telegraph Co. (AT&T) to see if their credit card was still valid.

The AT&T operator asked for the exact name on the card, and Laurie responded, "Maurice Graham." Graham said the operator exclaimed with amazement: "Is that the same Maurice Graham our church has been praying for?" The operator is a WMU member who reported that the church had prayed for him for months.

Graham said he felt his release was a direct answer to prayer. He was released on the final day of the Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions -- which was the same day Parks had called Southern Baptists to pray for several things, including specific prayer for his release.

Graham arrived in the states the next day, on his wife's birthday, when thousands of Baptists were praying for her on the missionary prayer calendar.

He urged Baptists to continue to pray for other missionaries who are serving in even more dangerous situations than what he experienced in Kuwait. "I was relatively safe in the embassy compound. But some of our missionaries -- and some of the members of my church in Kuwait -- are risking their lives every day in even more difficult circumstances."

Graham said he felt humbled and uncomfortable by the way he has been treated as a hero and celebrity following his return to the USA on Dec. 10.

"I haven't done very much," he said. "I was safe in the embassy." Graham said he did feel very much that he was a hostage, and that his life could be taken at any moment.

There were many mornings he awoke around 2:30, wondering if that would be the day the helicopters would come to the embassy compound on a rescue attempt. Other mornings, he heard the distinct sound of executions by firing squads as he served his guard duty at the back gate of the compound.

As one of the last 24 persons to leave the U.S. Embassy compound on Dec. 9, Graham said he and the other hostages did not know how long they would be able to stay at the embassy, or if they might be taken as long-term hostages like those in Lebanon or Iran.

At the embassy, he led daily prayer groups, a weekly worship service, and did counseling both by telephone to church members and to other Americans hiding in Kuwait or staying at the embassy.

He told of counseling by telephone one American who was hiding in air conditioning ducts, and others who were hiding in very small rooms.

On a daily basis, Graham sat at the back gate to the U.S. Embassy where there was a telephone. He both received incoming phone calls and made outgoing calls to church members every day during his guard shift from 6-9 a.m.

He praised the heroic work that is continuing by the approximately 60 members of the National Evangelical Church in Kuwait City. Many of them gave everything they owned to the church to feed and clothe needy victims of the war-torn city, he said.

Most of the church members who remain in Kuwait are Asians, primarily Indians and Filipinos. Before the invasion on Aug. 2, the church included almost 8,000 members representing about 30 national and ethnic groups. About 1,600, most of them Asians, were part of the English-language congregation. Only 3 percent of the congregation were white. Most were Christians from other countries of the world.

"The church is still alive and well in Kuwait," Graham said. The members are still taking food from their own tables to give to those who are without food. They also are taking care of crippled children at a hospital left severely short-handed when many of the staff fled the country, Graham said.

At least 60 people were awaiting baptism at the time of the invasion, and many of them are still in Kuwait, Graham said.

He urged Baptists to continue praying for missionaries in other parts of the world where there is daily violence and shooting, and to pray especially for peace on Sunday, Jan. 13, a day that has been designated as a special day of prayer for peace in the Middle East.

Graham said he hopes and prays for a peaceful solution to a very complex and delicate situation. He said if war does erupt, thousands of innocent people will be killed. "There are no winners in a war," he said.

Isam Ballenger, vice president for Europe and the Middle East at the Foreign Mission Board, said there are 143 missionaries assigned to the Middle East, including 115 who are currently serving, plus 28 others who are on furlough in the USA or who have been redeployed temporarily to other assignments.

Ballenger said the most powerful force that can be sent to the Middle East is not bombs or missiles, but missionaries who will say to the people, "God is love."

Graham said he knows from experience how hard it is to love your enemies. As a former missionary to Liberia, he told of his grief in learning that some of his students at Ricks Institute have been executed following the recent coup in that country. Graham served as a missionary in Liberia for four years before going to Kuwait in June, two months before the invasion, as the first Southern Baptist missionary to that country.

After his appearance to the WMU board, Graham met with the news media for his first press conference since returning to the USA last month. He said he waited a month before granting any interviews in order to devote priority to his family. He and Laurie have two sons, Peter, 13, and Aaron, 10. He is a native of Shelbyville, Tenn. His family is living temporarily in Nashville.

Graham said he does not have definite plans, but would go back to Kuwait as a missionary "in a minute" if he could. He said he and his family are open to continued service as foreign missionaries in some other country.

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Despite obstructions,
souls are being won in Saudi Arabia By Toby Druin

N-CO
Texas

Baptist Press
1/11/91

KILLEEN, Texas (BP)--Admittedly there are obstructions to sharing the gospel in Saudi Arabia, but it is happening and souls are being won to Jesus Christ even in the desert.

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And thanks to a special kind of Army "cooperative program," some are being baptized.

Joda A. Weston, pastor of Pershing Park Baptist Church in Killeen, Texas said one of his laymen, Warrant Officer Judd Maxwell had been asked by Chaplain Glenn Hendrickson to baptize two new Christians on Christmas eve.

"The chaplain wanted to give them a solid link with a church," said Weston. "He knew Judd was a deacon in our church, and at first asked him to help lead the service and then asked him to baptize the two men."

The men were David W. Long and Marc G. Campbell, both deployed with the First Cavalry Division from Fort Hood. They were among a group of 12 baptized in the desert.

"Judd told me the Lord worked in a miraculous way" to pull off the baptism, said Weston, whose church is almost within shouting distance of the main gate of the sprawling military complex in Central Texas.

"One group of engineers dug a hole in the sand, another group provided and installed a liner to hold the water, a chemical unit heated the water and a support unit set up a tarp they used for dressing rooms," Weston said Maxwell reported.

Maxwell, who is involved in the deacon family ministry program at Pershing Park, asked that the two men be placed on his team for further ministry. He asked Weston to send him two baptismal certificates and Bibles and Survival Kits for New Christians so he can begin discipling them.

"They are already showing signs of spiritual growth," Maxwell said.

"The Lord has intervened in the affairs of men again. The hardness of Pharaoh's heart caused God to perform great miracles and here the haughtiness of Saddam Hussein has brought at least 12 to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ."

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Chaplains to Middle East;
"excited about what God can do"

By Toby Druin

*N-CO
TEXAS*

Baptist Press
1/11/91

DALLAS, Texas (BP)--Tensions in the Persian Gulf and preparations for war came home to two Texas Baptist chaplains in Dallas last week when the 94th General Hospital, an Army Reserve unit based in Mesquite and San Antonio, was mobilized in support of Operation Desert Shield.

Gil Stricklin, former longtime member of the Texas Baptist Evangelism Division staff and since 1984 president of Marketplace Ministries, and Evangelist Jay Breland were called up with the hospital group.

Stricklin is a colonel and a 33-year veteran with the Reserve; Breland, a lieutenant colonel, who served with the First Marine Division in Vietnam, has been in the Reserve for 13 years.

The 94th General Hospital is the largest unit of the 807th Medical Brigade with more than 800 soldiers, including doctors, nurses and support personnel. They were to move to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio last week and then were expected to be deployed to Germany where they are capable of operating a 1,000-bed hospital for casualties if fighting breaks out in the Persian Gulf.

About 600 of the troops and many of their spouses and children were briefed on the deployment Dec. 8 at First Church, Mesquite, which provided its auditorium for the event. The church's Woman's Missionary Union decorated the auditorium with yellow ribbons and provided refreshments.

Pastor Jack Nivens assured the soldiers and their families of the church's prayer support while they are away. He noted that a large yellow ribbon around the pulpit stand symbolizing the church's concern will not be removed until Stricklin personally returns to preach for the church and removes it himself.

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Stricklin and Breland, though concerned about the possibility of war and the potential for death and destruction inherent in it, said they were enthusiastic about serving with the hospital unit and doing what they can to meet the spiritual needs of the troops.

"I have been preparing for this for 33 years," Stricklin said. "I have told them for three and a half decades to call me and I would be ready."

Stricklin was commissioned as an officer after graduation from Baylor University and was a chaplain for 17 years before entering the Army Reserve in 1973. He has been a full colonel since 1983 and was the first Texas National Guard chaplain to graduate from the resident course at the Command General Staff College and the eighth reserve chaplain to graduate from the U.S. Army War College out of 12,000 officers.

He was in the Reserve during the Vietnam war, but the unit was not called into action.

When Iraq invaded Kuwait on Aug. 2 and the threat of war began to grow, Stricklin said his daughter-in-law remarked one day, "We don't have to worry about Gil (having to go); he's too old." But Stricklin, 56, got a two-year extension to his duty on Dec. 14.

Stricklin served with the Texas Baptist Evangelism Division for 14 years and was director of the Super Summer program when he left in 1984 to begin Marketplace Ministries, a foundation to provide chaplaincy ministries and other ministerial services for private businesses.

"God has blessed us," Stricklin said last week, and the foundation now has five offices and operates in 16 states and works with 85 companies with more than 80,000 employees. Last year the chaplains, including 21 Southern Baptist pastors, registered more than 500 professions of faith, conducted more than 400 funerals and 300 weddings.

Stricklin said he had often wondered what would happen to the ministry if he should die. He and his wife, Ann, talked about it after word came of the call-up, he said, and decided they will now have six months or a year--the expected length of the call-up--to see what happens to it.

"I am excited about what God will do," he said, "both with the ministry here and with the unit. It is just a great time for God to do unique things. I am not brave; I just believe God is in control."

The Stricklins are active in First Church, Dallas. They have two sons, Cliff, who is graduating from Washington and Lee Law School and Art, who is sports editor for the Pine Bluff, Ark., Commercial.

Stricklin was to have spoken last Sunday evening at Art's church in Pine Bluff where he was being ordained as a deacon.

Breland said he knew the call-up was coming, that rumors had them going for weeks. "The only place I know rumors are worse than in a Baptist church is here in the Army," he said.

He viewed it philosophically last week and welcomed the opportunity for ministry to the troops. "There are a lot of men over there, including a cousin of mine, and a lot of them need the Lord," he said. "It's just a part of life. We have to go and represent the Lord and Southern Baptists in a good way."

Breland left Dallas Baptist University in 1966 and joined the Marines. He served 13 months as a corporal with the First Marine Division in Vietnam and one of his evangelism tracts tells of his experiences there. He has said he would go back if he had to.

He has had to cancel revivals he had scheduled over the next several months, but said he feels he will be able to reschedule them when he returns, and the experience may even enhance his ministry, he added.

Breland, 45, and his wife, Kay, have a son, Michael, 17, and a daughter, Sereniah, 13. Both are honor students. The family are members of First Church, Garland. Pastor Roger McDonald has assured him the church will look after his family, Breland said.

One of his biggest regrets, he said, will be having to miss the Texas Baptist Evangelism Conference in Fort Worth, Jan. 21- 23. He hasn't missed an evangelism conference in 20 years, he said.

Breland is vice president of the Texas Conference of Evangelists and was to be installed as president next week.

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NOTE TO EDITORS

A number of Southern Baptist workers and their families in the Middle East are leaving the region, and others are considering doing so or preparing for departure before Jan.15.

Baptist Press Foreign bureau in Richmond is monitoring the situation and plans to file a story Jan. 14 updating the one released Jan. 9.

Thank you,
Baptist Press

Mission leaders urge churches
to pray for Middle East peace

*N-CO
WMU*

Baptist Press
1/11/91

TALLADEGA, Ala. (BP)--Leaders of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union and the Foreign Mission Board issued an urgent call to prayer, asking Southern Baptists to petition God for peace in the Persian Gulf.

WMU Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien and FMB President R. Keith Parks asked Southern Baptist congregations in a Jan. 9 letter to set aside time during worship services Jan. 13 and beyond to pray for peace. The letter was sent to state convention executive directors who were to contact local churches through each state's directors of missions.

"This is a call we know Southern Baptist will not take lightly," the mission leaders said in their letter. "The magnitude of the Persian Gulf crisis and the potential for devastating consequences upon the entire globe lead us to urgently plead with every Southern Baptist congregation to bow before the Lord, praying fervently for a peaceful solution to this enormous crisis."

God answered Southern Baptists' prayers for the release of foreign missionary Maurice Graham, who was a hostage for four months in the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait, the mission leaders said. Graham's Dec. 9 release came on the day Southern Baptists had been asked to pray specifically for his release.

"The world might look at those circumstance and call it coincidental. We know it was a divine miracle. God does answer prayer," they said.

The letter listed seven specific areas for prayer. The mission leaders asked Southern Baptists to pray:

- For a just peace without bloodshed in the Persian Gulf crisis.
- For divine wisdom and sensitivity on the part of government leaders, especially Presidents George Bush and Saddam Hussein.
- For safety for Americans and all other internationals remaining in the Middle East countries.
- For safety for the national Christians in Kuwait and Iraq.
- For Southern Baptist missionaries in the Middle East and for their stateside families as they make decisions about staying or leaving.

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-- For safety of military personnel stationed in the Persian Gulf and for their stateside families as they wait and pray at home.

-- That no precipitous incident would unintentionally set off violence and bloodshed.
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Enlistment underway for
pre-convention projects

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

Baptist Press
1/11/91

ATLANTA (BP)--Volunteer enlistment is underway for several evangelism, church starting and ministry projects slated to be done in Atlanta prior to the June 4-6 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The projects are all part of Crossover Atlanta, a convention-wide effort initiated by SBC President Morris Chapman. This was first introduced in New Orleans last year as a one-day Soul Winning Encounter but has been expanded.

The basic element of Crossover Atlanta is three days of door-to-door witnessing in eight metropolitan Atlanta associations. Additional projects include a one-day Soul Winning Encounter, construction of four to seven church buildings during a three-week period and a telemarketing project the week of the convention to start a new church.

For the main evangelistic blitz, churches from outside the Atlanta area will team up with churches inside the Atlanta area.

Teams from 1,000 churches nationwide are expected to join teams from 100 Atlanta-area churches in door-to-door witnessing. The Home Mission Board has designed a evangelistic tract especially for the Atlanta project.

The three-day project will begin Wednesday night, May 29, with launch services in Atlanta-area churches and conclude with Sunday morning services June 2. New converts will be referred to local churches for these Sunday services.

Additionally, a Crossover Atlanta rally will be held at Baptist Tabernacle in downtown Atlanta Friday night, May 31. Speakers will be Richard Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix Baptist Church in Phoenix, Ariz., and Darrell Gilyard, pastor of Victory Baptist Church in Richardson, Texas.

The one-day Soul Winning Encounter is scheduled for Saturday, June 1, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. It will also include door-to-door witnessing and will be similar to pre-convention projects in Las Vegas, Nev., and New Orleans.

Construction projects will begin the week before the convention and conclude the week after the convention. As many as seven church buildings will be constructed across the metropolitan Atlanta area.

The telemarketing project will be done from a specially equipped room at the convention site. Three hundred volunteers are needed to give one hour each making phone calls to prospects for the new church.

Churches desiring to participate in the three-day evangelistic partnership should send a letter of commitment to Bobby Sunderland, Crossover Atlanta coordinator, Home Mission Board, 1350 Spring St. NW, Atlanta, GA 30367-5601. Deadline is April 30.

Individuals desiring to participate in the one-day Soul Winning Encounter should contact Howard Ramsey, HMB director of personal evangelism, at the same address or call (404) 898-7180.

Individuals or churches desiring to participate in construction projects should contact Elmer Goble, HMB associate director of short-term volunteers, at the same address or call 1 800 HMB-VOLS.

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Volunteers for the telemarketing project should write Sid Hopkins, Gwinnett Metro Baptist Association, 1648 Highway 29, Lawrenceville, GA 30244.

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Haiti coup attempt pushes Texas
volunteers out of comfort zone

By Ken Camp

N. Z. Camp

Baptist Press
1/11/91

DALLAS (BP)--A failed coup in Haiti and its aftermath caused some anxious moments for a volunteer missions team led by Jeff Walter of Lake Arlington Baptist Church, Arlington, Texas.

Walter, a member of the contemporary Christian music group "Gabriel," led 19 volunteers on a mission trip to Haiti in early January.

David George, pastor of Lake Arlington Baptist Church, and other volunteers from his congregation and First Baptist Church, Houston, were among the mission team members who worked in medical clinics and helped build a church near Port-au-Prince.

Walter said the volunteers "laid low" at the home of a local pastor for several hours on Jan. 7 after learning Roger Lafontant, an associate of former dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier, and members of his Tonton Macoute militia had staged an attempted coup and kidnapped interim president Ertha Pascal-Trouillot.

The uprising occurred one month before the scheduled inauguration of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a priest who will be the country's first freely elected president. Loyalist troops crushed Lafontant's rebellion quickly.

"Within a little over nine hours, it was all over. Lafontant was in custody," Walter said. "It was only then that we went out to call home, so the people at home wouldn't be worried about us."

The first two telephones the mission team members tried to use were dead, so Walter and a few others set out in a pickup truck for another community on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince.

"There were obstacles all along the way--burned out cars, smoldering tires and all kinds of debris. The people were still angry about what Lafontant tried to do, and they were trying to restrict travel (by the Tonton Macoute rebels)," Walters said.

"At one roadblock, we were surrounded by 100 to maybe 150 Haitians with clubs and machetes--and at least one with a ball peen hammer."

Initially, the mission team's driver tried to continue forward through the crowd, but he decided to turn back after one of the local people began pounding on the hood of his truck with a hammer.

"I don't mind telling you I was scared," Walter said.

The next morning, the mission volunteers set out at 5 a.m. on a long trek to the airport, uncertain if they would be stopped and turned back again. Although the roads were still blocked by debris, the roadblocks were no longer crowded with people.

"We drove around countless barricades, and we had to get out to move some of the obstacles. We passed 20 to 30 burned out cars and old tires that had been smoking all night. But we made it to the airport and boarded the plane. As far as we know, it was the only flight that has made it out of the country all week," Walter said.

"We've been taking teams to Haiti each year since 1984, and this is the first time there's ever been any problem. In our concerts, we talk about our friends in Haiti and invite volunteers to join us. There's nothing particularly special about Haiti, but ministering there is a good way of helping people to see how two-thirds of the world lives.

"The idea is to get Christians out of their comfort zones. We did that this time--to say the least."

Baptists, others watching
Gulf situation closely

By Louis Moore

N-CCO
(CLC)

NASHVILLE - U.S. religious leaders, including many Southern Baptists, are watching with keen interest developments in the Persian Gulf.

Many of these leaders, including SBC President Morris Chapman, have called on Christians to pray for peace in the Middle East. SBC Foreign Mission Board President Keith Parks has urged Southern Baptists to write directly to Saddam Hussein, telling him they are praying for peace.

In their Christmas message, Baptist World Alliance leaders issued a call for prayer and peace. "Too many are suffering from hunger and poverty for governments to be wasting their funds on armaments of war and destruction," the BWA statement said. The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America has issued a "Call to Prayer & Fasting" to try to avert what it calls "an unparalleled opportunity to forestall the gruesome prospect of rivers of blood flowing in the desert."

In recent commentaries on the Persian Gulf crisis, Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission staff members have focused their attention on what is termed just-war theory.

CLC Executive Director Richard Land and CLC staffer Robert Parham have both said in separate commentaries the possibility of war must be measured against the historically accepted criteria of the just-war theory.

"This theory was adapted by early church leaders, particularly St. Augustine, to deal with the reality of war in a fallen, sinful world," Land wrote. "It must always be remembered that just-war theory is not, and never was, intended to justify war. Instead, it tries to bring war under the sway of justice as understood by Christians and to ensure that war, when it does occur, is hedged about by limits which reduce its barbarity."

Land said Americans do not have information yet to answer all the questions about whether war in the Persian Gulf would be moral, but he said that should not keep the questions from being asked.

"We have the responsibility to ask them, however, and to demand that our elected leaders assess the crisis in light of them, and to provide affirmative answers before resorting to armed force -- always a last resort," he said.

Land concluded by cautioning, "If it is worth American soldiers dying, it is worth winning. And unless our survival or liberty is at stake, it must be winnable. If it is not worth winning (including the just-war criteria), it is not worth the shedding of our citizens' blood."

Parham said, "We would all do well to visit the house of God to discern the moral rightness of a war in the sands of Arabia before the fuse is lit."

Land, in an interview on CNN's Newsmaker Sunday telecast Dec. 30, likened the situation in Iraq today to 1935 when Mussolini's conquest of Ethiopia, which the League of Nations boycott failed to thwart, led to a chain of events that unleashed World War II. He also described the turmoil and controversy in the United States over the Vietnam War and said those in the generation that suffered most from the war deeply believe "American troops should not be put into combat at the uncertain end of a long tether without the support and resolve of the nation to make certain that those troops are able to achieve their objective and to do so with minimal casualties."

Outside the SBC among various other U.S. denominations, specific stands on the Gulf situation vary from church leader to church leader, religious group to religious group.

Roman Catholics, too, have focused their attentions on the just-war theory. Archbishop Roger Mahony of Los Angeles sent a letter to Secretary of State James Baker detailing Roman Catholic criteria for the war to be considered just. U.S. Catholic bishops collectively have expressed grave reservations about the United States exercising its "military option" in the Persian Gulf until all diplomatic and other means of peaceful resolution are fully pursued.

According to the Catholic News Service, Pope John Paul II in his Christmas message pleaded for peace in the Persian Gulf. "May leaders be convinced that war is an adventure with no return," he said. Episcopal Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning traveled with 19 Protestant and Orthodox church leaders to the Middle East to work in behalf of peace. According to the Episcopal News Service, most in that group signed a letter to President George Bush pleading for a "negotiated political solution to the crisis." They said they are "convinced that war as a means of settling international disputes is in conflict with the teachings of our faith."

The National Council of Churches, whose membership includes Presbyterians, United Methodists and Evangelical Lutherans, has called for "an immediate halt to the buildup and the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the (Persian) Gulf region." According to the NCC news service, the organization, which represents 32 U.S. denominations, also called for Iraq to release all hostages and to withdraw from Kuwait.

The NCC statement also called the U.S. buildup in Saudi Arabia "morally irresponsible" On the other hand, many U.S. Jewish groups, such as the Council of Jewish Federations, have endorsed President Bush's policy in the Persian Gulf. "We support the maintenance of a firm posture of opposition to Saddam Hussein's belligerence," the Council of Jewish Federations said.