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January 17, 1990

91-8

Baptist workers in Middle East
expect rough days after attack

By Mike Creswell

N-CMB

LARNACA, Cyprus (BP)--Southern Baptist personnel throughout the Middle East stayed glued to radios and televisions early Jan. 17 as U.S. and allied forces pounded Iraq and Iraqi-occupied Kuwait with a withering array of fire power.

Some Southern Baptist representatives who chose to remain at their posts in Bahrain, Israel and the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza listened with the knowledge that they could be swept into the conflict at any moment. By noon Jan. 17, following the attack that began at 2 a.m., they breathed easier after hearing reports that Iraq's missile bases were out of commission.

More than 20 Southern Baptists who remained in Israel and the occupied territories had feared a missile-borne chemical attack from Iraq.

"Everyone is staying inside, listening to the TV and radio, with gas masks out of the box and ready to put on," said Thomas Hocutt, administrator for Southern Baptists representatives in Israel, on the morning of Jan. 17. Hocutt talked to most personnel in the country by phone early that day.

"Once we got over the initial shock of 'It's starting,' I think it's been a relief to know that it has the potential for being over with. I think all of us really expected Saddam Hussein to try to get missiles or chemical bombs here. So far that hasn't happened," he said.

In Jerusalem, streets were almost deserted and the day was quieter than even Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of atonement that is supposed to be quiet, he said.

In Israeli-occupied Gaza, Southern Baptist worker Jack Hodges said he was called about 3 a.m. by government civil defense workers and told of the attack. "They said it looked good from their standpoint, and that assessment was echoed by news reports later," said Hodges, who remained in Gaza City with his wife, Shawn, and their three children. That news also meant Israel probably would not be drawn into the conflict, at least in the early stages.

Hodges said the family had sealed off a room in case of gas attack, but had been more concerned about how Arabs in the area might react to an American. He talked with neighbors in recent days, but "we never sensed any difference with our neighbors or in the shops we use. That helped us to be more comfortable with staying," he said.

Southern Baptist worker Sonny Rogerson, who remained in the West Bank, also was reported safe.

Gaza and the West Bank were under a 24-hour Israeli-imposed curfew Jan. 17. All residents were being required to stay indoors and off the streets, Hodges said. There had been much speculation that Palestinians in the two areas, who are vocally pro-Saddam Hussein, might launch an all-out attack against Israel if war started.

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Dale Thorne, director of Southern Baptist work in the region, and Bob Fields, associate director, alerted personnel to the attack in the early morning hours, advising them to take precautions. Almost half the Southern Baptist personnel in the Middle East and North Africa region already had evacuated to Egypt, Cyprus, the United States or Europe. The evacuees included all workers remaining in Jordan, most in Gaza and the West Bank and a number of families in Israel.

Some had close calls. Representatives Roger and Trudie Wall and their four children originally had been scheduled to leave Jordan Jan. 17. That could have left them stranded in the country had war broken out there. But through a contact with an airline they managed to obtain tickets to Egypt Jan. 15. "It was by the grace of God we got out," said Mrs. Wall.

Several Southern Baptist workers evacuated earlier in the week from Morocco. Although Morocco was not directly involved in the conflict, governments had issued warnings about possible reprisals against Americans. Two families who remained in Tangier and Rabat, Morocco, were staying mostly indoors. Severe riots broke out in Tangier before the war erupted, but a worker said the unrest was more related to economic matters.

In Cairo, Egypt, a number of lay Southern Baptists living in the city as expatriates opened their homes to 26 Southern Baptist workers who went there from Jordan and Gaza.

"These fellow Southern Baptist people have just been super," said Egypt-based Southern Baptist representative Mike Edens. "It's made a real difference to people coming out of these places, many of them upset at leaving. It's a real support, an extension of the people back home and a real expression of the cooperative nature of our ministry."

In Yemen, a country bordering Saudi Arabia, 18 Southern Baptist workers remained on their jobs at the hospital they operate there. A director of regional security with the government visited the hospital Jan. 17 to assure them they were wanted and needed. The government sent additional troops to guard the hospital compound before the war began.

In Cyprus, area director Thorne and his wife, Anita, have worked long hours to keep abreast of travel plans of personnel throughout the region and to find housing for personnel who evacuated to Cyprus. Joining them in that work were associate Bob Fields and his wife, Eddie.

Mrs. Fields was working with Southern Baptist evacuees to develop school programs for their children while in Cyprus. Many of the children living in the region are taught at home using directed-study programs.

"Even though we had been praying for peace and are disappointed that war has begun, we're thankful that our people who remain in the countries are safe until now," said Thorne. "Some of the most frightening danger seems to have passed. Some of the horrendous scenarios in Israel about gas attacks or warfare in Jordan have not materialized. "Our prayer now is that the loss in human life will be minimized and that, at the end of the crisis, the spread of the gospel throughout the Middle East will be greater than before."

But as workers anxiously eye the ongoing conflict, they look ahead to wonder what the future might hold in a Middle East that seems to be rapidly reshaping itself before them. Many fear the hard feelings many Muslims already hold towards Christians in general and Americans in particular might make ministry even harder in the future.

A peace conference or other negotiations that could defuse the explosive Palestinian question could be a big boost, one worker observed.

Hocutt said little difference is expected in work in Jewish areas in Israel. "But for those who work with Arabs, they'll have to wait and see," he said.

"It's a fragile time for us and our presence," said Hodges in Gaza. There, Christians have told him they fear if there is nobody else to attack, Muslims may decide to attack Christians in the area.

"Certainly, I think Baptist work, if there's any among Muslims, will be weakened, because Baptists are identified with America," said Ibrahim Sim'an, an Arab Christian in Haifa, Israel.

"Baptist missionaries all come from America and Americans are thought to be those who started the war. It's not important who started the action last August -- the bombardment was started by the Americans. People are upset because of the bloodshed, the torn loyalties," he said.

"I think as Christians we're to pray for the safety of the whole human race. We should continue to pray for peace and do all we can for peace. If we get to be known as peacemakers and as peace propagators, that's our main guarantee of survival," Sim'an concluded.

Two Arab Baptist pastors in the region declined to comment on the Gulf crisis at all. "Now is not the time to discuss this matter," one said.

That response could mean that Baptists and other Christians throughout the region face rough days ahead.

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RTVC installs president
and acquires network

By Richard T. McCartney

N-60
(RTVC)

Baptist Press
1/17/91

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, Jan. 14-15, heard reports of the financial health of the agency, installed its fourth president and voted to acquire a second television network.

Under terms of a contract approved at the meeting, the RTVC would acquire FamilyNet, a television network owned by The Old Time Gospel Hour, Inc. and Liberty Broadcasting Network, Inc. both of Lynchburg, Va. Terms of the purchase were not disclosed pending completion of audits, but RTVC officials said it would involve cash and program time on ACTS and FamilyNet. The cash would be from current operating funds according to RTVC President Jack Johnson.

Acquisition of FamilyNet would greatly enhance the RTVC's outreach by adding a new dimension to its ministry, Johnson said. The ACTS television network, launched by the RTVC in 1984, is primarily a cable network, reaching about three-fourths of its ten million households through local cable channels. FamilyNet is primarily carried by television stations.

About 740,000 cable households will be added through the acquisition and 13.2 million households will be able to receive the television stations which carry FamilyNet. Cable systems serving 2.8 million homes also transmit the programming of some of the television stations. "We believe that this combination of ACTS and FamilyNet will make it possible for almost one-fourth of the television households in America to receive the gospel messages carried by the two networks," Johnson said.

The 1989-90 audit of the RTVC was received from Price Waterhouse reflecting improvements in both cash position and debt reduction. The audit reported that indebtedness had been reduced by \$846,000 during the year and contingency reserves were increased from \$199,000 at the end of 1988-89 to \$500,000 on Sept. 30, 1990, the end of the RTVC's fiscal year. RTVC officials said the reserve amount has reached the goal previously set by trustees.

A service of installation for Jack Johnson as the fourth president of the RTVC was conducted Monday night, Jan. 14, in Fort Worth's Travis Avenue Baptist Church. Johnson, former executive director-treasurer for the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention, took office last July. Two former presidents, Paul M. Stevens and Jimmy R. Allen, participated in the installation.

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Stevens, president from 1953-1979, described the transition from the Radio Commission to the Radio and Television Commission, and acceptance by the communications industry. Allen, president from 1980-1989, challenged the new president to reach forward to take advantage of the new technology for spreading the gospel. He reminded the new president that "there is an ongoing battle for the minds and souls of men." He challenged the RTVC to share the light of life, to remain centered in the local church and to claim God's power.

In his inaugural message, Johnson said the RTVC is a mission agency because it follows the Great Commission and fulfills Christ's great commandment to "let your light shine." He promised to help the RTVC to maintain its focus on its stated purpose, "to support the Southern Baptist Convention in its task of bringing men to God through Christ."

Quoting Alfred C. Sikes, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, Johnson said, "The 1990s will be a historic period in which developments in communications will revolutionize our way of life." He added, "We feel great accountability to shine the light of the gospel so that men may know Jesus Christ and be saved."

The service, which underscored the missionary assignment of the RTVC, also featured Ernest E. Mosley, executive vice president of the SBC Executive Committee; Larry Lewis, president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board; James Currin, executive director of the Baptist Convention of New England; Ernest Myers, executive director of the Nevada Baptist Convention; and Joel Gregory, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas. They related the missionary task of the RTVC to that of the SBC, its agencies, state conventions and local churches.

A kick-off dinner for a Fort Worth-area capital fund drive concluded trustee activities. The dinner, for trustees and staff of the RTVC, was the first official event of the campaign which will be launched in the Fort Worth-Tarrant County area. A base goal of \$1 million has been established for the campaign to be used for equipment and upgrading of the RTVC's communication center. An advance goal of \$1.5 million was set.

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Bush proclaims Jan. 20
national sanctity day

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
1/17/91

WASHINGTON (BP)--President George Bush proclaimed Jan. 20 as National Sanctity of Human Life Day. He signed the proclamation privately on Jan. 11.

The Southern Baptist Convention observes Sanctity of Human Life Sunday on Jan. 20 as well. Jan. 22 is the anniversary of the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, which legalized abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy.

"We appreciate that, once again, the President has affirmed his pro-life position," said James A. Smith, director of government relations for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission will continue to work with the Bush Administration and Congress to secure through public policy the inalienable right to life for all human beings."

The President said in the proclamation, "The tragedy of abortion in America affects two persons, mother and child. While sincere persons may disagree, my position is that the lives of both must be cherished and protected. We must recognize the dignity and worth of every human being in our laws, as well as in our hearts. Abortion robs America of a portion of its future and denies preborn children the chance to grow, to contribute and to enjoy a full life with all its challenges and opportunities.

"We must turn from abortion to loving alternatives such as adoption," Bush said. "All levels of government and all sectors of society should promote policies that encourage alternatives such as adoption and make adopting easier for families who want children and will give them loving homes, particularly children with special needs.

"We hope and pray for the day when the principle of life's sanctity will guide both private thought and public policy on this question throughout our nation."

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Housing benefits considered
income for IRS tax credit

By Larry Chesser

N-CO
Washington

WASHINGTON (BP)--While members of the clergy are not required to pay federal income tax on housing benefits they receive, those benefits are considered earned income in determining a taxpayer's eligibility for an Earned Income Credit.

The Earned Income Credit is credit of up to \$953 allowed taxpayers with one or more children whose earned income is at least \$1 but less than \$20,264.

An IRS spokesman said a number of ministers in recent years have mistakenly applied for the credit because they failed to count their non-taxable housing allowance or the rental value of a parsonage as earned income.

In determining their eligibility for the credit, taxpayers must include the total of their taxable and non-taxable earned income.

The IRS has no specific figures on the number of ministers who mistakenly have calculated their qualification for the Earned Income Credit by failing to count their non-taxable housing benefits as earned income, an agency spokesman said. She further stated that the IRS has no information that ministers deliberately had eligibility for the credit, which is deducted from taxes owed or refunded in cases in which no taxes are owed.

When all U.S. taxpayers are considered, errors in calculating the Earned Income Credit rank in the top 10 most frequently made mistakes each year, often in the top five, according to the IRS.

Beginning with 1991 tax returns to be filed in 1992, the IRS hopes to reduce some of the apparent confusion regarding the Earned Income Credit by requiring taxpayers to complete a form, schedule or worksheet to be attached to their tax return. Currently taxpayers use a worksheet provided by IRS to compute the credit, but keep the worksheet with their records rather than including it as part of their tax return.

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FMB area director
asked to resign

N-FMB

Baptist Press
1/17/91

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--William L.C. Richardson has been asked to resign as area director for work in Brazil and the Caribbean by administrators of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Richardson, 56, is being asked to consider reappointment for missionary service.

Board officials cited the need for stronger administrative skills to fulfill the responsibilities of an area director. They believe Richardson could use his skills more effectively in teaching, evangelism and personal witnessing.

In a letter to mission chairmen and administrators of the 470-missionary area, Richardson indicated that while he does not agree with the decision, he would step down because he does not want to "hinder the work of missions."

Before being named as an area administrator, he was president of the Baptist Theological Seminary of Minas Gerais, Brazil, and professor of New Testament for 14 years. Earlier he led evangelism and mission work for the Minas Gerais State Baptist Convention.

Richardson and his wife, Kathy, were missionaries to Brazil for 23 years before he was elected area director in May 1987. He is a native of Tulsa, Okla., and was pastor of churches in Vinson and Granite, Okla., before their appointment as missionaries.

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Missionaries to return
to Liberian capital

By Donald D. Martin

N.F.M.B.

BOUAKE, Ivory Coast (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries plan to reopen mission work in Liberia's battle-scarred capital, Monrovia, by early February.

Civil war and the chaos, terror and hunger it caused in Liberia claimed thousands of lives last year. It also drove most missionaries out of the country. But the two main Liberian rebel factions and the west African peacekeeping force sent to Liberia several months ago have staked out separate territories in Liberia and a cease-fire now is in effect.

"I'm optimistic about this new beginning," said missionary Bradley Brown, executive director of the Liberia mission organization, who has made several short trips to Monrovia from the neighboring country of Sierra Leone. "My great hope for our continuing Southern Baptist mission work in Liberia is that we will have unprecedented evangelistic and church-planting opportunities."

Brown, of Marietta, Ga., and his wife, Carol, of East Point, Ga., plan to begin the rebuilding by opening church-based medical clinics in Monrovia. Jim and Jane Park of Paducah, Ky., will join the Browns within weeks.

"We're going to have to start small and grow gradually, working through a holistic ministry," he said. The Browns and the Parks will dispense medical care and distribute food through the church clinics and help local pastors hold church services and Bible studies.

When the Browns return, four Southern Baptist missionary couples will be working in Liberia. Earl and Jane Williams of West Monroe, La., and Knoxville, Tenn., have worked for several months with Lawrence and Alice Hardy of Savannah, Ga., in Yekepa, a small town in northern Liberia. The Hardys hope to join the Browns in Monrovia in late February. In the northwest at Mano River, Ed and Fran Laughridge of Rock Hill, S.C., and Great Fall, S.C., have set up a food distribution center and are conducting worship services.

All Liberian Baptist pastors and convention leaders, many of whom were feared dead, have been accounted for in the last few months, Brown said. Angelique Jones, president of the Woman's Missionary Union of the Liberia Baptist Missionary and Education Convention, was thought dead when others found her home destroyed. However, Brown learned that she is well and living in northern Liberia.

Jeremiah Walker, pastor of Zion Grove Baptist Church in Brewerville and superintendent of Lott Cary Baptist Mission School, also was believed dead. But Brown learned that Walker recently spoke at a church in Monrovia.

Other denominational leaders whose safety was once questioned but who now have been heard from include: Henry Hoff, former president, Liberia Baptist Missionary and Education Convention; Moses Rhoulac, pastor of Zion Praise Baptist Church; Theo Allen, pastor of Effort Baptist Church in Paynesville; Joseph and Beatrice Hall, Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary teachers; Victoria Dukuly, former president of the WMU of the Liberia Baptist Missionary and Education Convention; and Johnetta Minor, president of Ricks Institute. Ricks Institute is a private Baptist school that was started by Southern Baptist missionaries and now is administered by Liberian Baptists.

Although Liberian Baptist leaders escaped death in the months of fighting, many lost family members and friends. Others witnessed horrible killings that will never be forgotten, Brown said.

When Brown met with Ezekiel Bambolo, vice president for Ricks Institute, he found Bambolo a changed man. "You could see the terror in his eyes," Brown said. "He has been through horrible experiences and it has changed his visage from a very bright, smiling man to one with terror written all over his face."

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Several Baptist churches in the Monrovia area have begun ministering to the needs of the community. Providence Baptist Church, the oldest Baptist church in Liberia, began holding church services in early December. The church held a Christmas service attended by more than 700 people. Effort Baptist Church in Paynesville has reopened and Oldest Baptist Church in Congotown is holding services.

At first the missionaries will have to make frequent trips to Freetown, Sierra Leone, to resupply the clinic and their homes. Food and clean drinking water are still scarce in Monrovia. Electrical and water service have returned to only a few parts of the capital.

"We will have to bring in everything -- food, water, even a bed to sleep on," Brown said. The mission compound, where they will live, is in fair condition. There are some holes in the roof and the compound was completely looted, but it is in better shape than they had expected, he said.

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Chaplains on front
lines in battle

By Sarah Zimmerman

F-AMBS

Baptist Press
1/17/91

ATLANTA (BP)--As Operation Desert Shield became Operation Desert Storm, chaplains moved to the front lines of conflict and comfort.

Chaplains do not carry weapons, but they are "going to be right where the fighting is," says Charles T. Clanton, Army Forces Command Staff chaplain at Georgia's Fort McPherson.

Southern Baptists account for 155 of the about 550 chaplains serving in the Middle East.

"Sometimes chaplains go into combat," says Clanton, a colonel who spent two years in Vietnam as an Army chaplain. "I went with one troop wherever it went.

"When they were attacked, I was with them. What you do then is keep your head down."

Clanton, who has been an Army chaplain for 25 years, points out that military chaplains "are not Casper Milktoasts." He says chaplains have to pass the same physical tests required of their troops.

An armed assistant is assigned to each chaplain as a body guard. Yet Clanton says the percentage of chaplains killed in previous wars is second only to the percentage of infantrymen killed. He noted that 13 chaplains were killed in Vietnam.

Chaplains go into combat zones "because the soldiers need us," Clanton says. The problem is "you can only be in one place at one time."

"If soldiers are wounded, you comfort them and help the medics. It's good to know some first aid. I've seen six to eight wounded and only two medics."

During lulls in the fighting, chaplains are involved intensely in counseling troops.

"If they've seen their buddies killed, they're looking for a chaplain. Some of them are torn to pieces about killing the enemy."

After the battle, Clanton says chaplains conduct memorial services and visit the wounded in hospitals.

Before the battle began in the Persian Gulf, Southern Baptist chaplains reported between 800 to 1,200 professions of faith and multiple Bible studies. In conflict, Clanton says chaplains will continue to conduct religious services, but the groups will have to be kept small. He says he held 14 or 15 services a week with smaller units in Vietnam.

Military chaplains must be endorsed by their religious group, but they're employed and assigned by the armed forces. The Chaplains Commission of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board endorses about 1,100 military chaplains.

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Jackson delivers plea
for peace to Baptists

By Larry Chesser

NCO
(Washington)

WASHINGTON (BP)--A large group of North American Baptists added their voices Tuesday to a growing chorus of U.S. citizens calling for peace rather than war in the Persian Gulf.

An estimated 700 people gathered for a noon service of prayer for peace in the Middle East at Washington's First Baptist Church -- 12 hours before the United Nations Security Council deadline for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait.

In the featured address, long-time civil rights leader and ordained Baptist minister Jesse Jackson challenged the notion that peace in the Persian Gulf region lies solely in the hands of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

"Peace is not in his hands, it must be in our minds, in our hearts," Jackson said. "We don't have to bomb. We don't have to use misguided missiles, we can use guided minds."

Jackson was one of more than 15 participants in the midday program, which was sponsored by the Memphis, Tenn.-based Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. Representatives of at least six national Baptist bodies participated in the service, which also commemorated the life and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. on the anniversary of his birth.

Jackson's presentation, marked by the thundering oratory for which he is well-known, began with a quiet prayer. "And through it all make us a better people," he said, "not a bitter people, and lead us forward by hope and not backward by fear."

"Touch the hearts of Presidents Bush and Hussein today," he said. "Steer them away from the tragic night of war and terror. There is a way. There is a balm in Gilead."

In recalling his mentor, Jackson said King "did not live and die at a ripe old age. He was killed because he preached a gospel with a double-edged sword. It healed and hurt. It was his mission to comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable."

King, Jackson said, knew that peace and justice were indivisible.

"We can't speak about peace in the Middle East and not speak of justice at home," he said.

Jackson said King pushed his followers to move beyond racial justice and address social justice as well.

"Red, yellow, brown, black and white, they're all precious in God's sight. And somebody must love all the children," he said. "Whether white, black or brown, hunger hurts."

The former presidential candidate who is the newly installed non-voting senator from the District of Columbia, criticized some past U.S. policies.

"We told the Japanese, ... 'We make the big stuff,' the MX missile and the B-1 bomber. 'You make the little stuff,' like chips and Sonys and VCRs and things the world needs. Now we have weapons we can't use and they have money they can't spend. So they buy our army to fight their war."

Jackson lamented what he called an artificial cutoff date of Jan. 15.

"This must be the goal of getting Iraq out, not the date," he said. "There is no cutoff date for ending apartheid in South Africa."

"Are we afraid we'll be attacked today?" he asked. "Are we afraid oil will be cut off today? Are we afraid the fragile coalition will not last?"

Noting that only 26 nations voted for the U.N. resolution, Jackson questioned the support for the use of force in the Persian Gulf.

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"The whole U.N. did not vote on it," he said. "The world did not vote. The Chinese are one-fourth of the human race and they didn't vote for it."

Jackson said some nations supporting the U.S.-backed resolution had debts forgiven or received military supplies, while others were intimidated.

He also criticized the level of involvement of U.S. allies. The Germans, he said, offered some marks but not soldiers. "The Japanese offered some yen, no women, no men. It's more like a business coalition than an alliance driven by interest to save the world from being threatened or overthrown."

If war breaks out, Jackson warned, "there will be chaos without end, as opposed to community."

Recounting his recent trip to the Middle East, Jackson said "military deterrence is working. He (Saddam) can't go beyond Kuwait. Sanctions are working. He has hotels but not customers. He has oil fields but no markets."

Through its "Call to Prayer and Fasting," the Baptist Peace Fellowship is asking Baptists and others to commit themselves to daily prayer and weekly fasting "until military confrontation gives way to earnest negotiation toward a just and peaceful settlement of the dispute."

Reading from the Call to Prayer, BPFNA Executive Director Ken Sehested said, "We reject the notion that war is inevitable or that it has the power to bring about a just settlement of this confrontation and its underlying causes."

Welcoming participants to the gathering, Everett C. Goodwin, pastor of the host church, said that "In the 100 years First Baptist Church has been located here on this corner, men and women have sought the presence of God here. Among them have been persons who, in times of war or threat of war, have prayed for peace."

Baptist groups represented in the service included the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A., the National Baptist Convention of America, the Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc., the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., the Southern Baptist Alliance and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Founded in 1984, the Baptist Peace Fellowship is a network linking Baptists involved in justice and peace issues throughout North America. Its board is composed of members affiliated with 13 different Baptist conventions, five racial/ethnic groups and two inter-Baptist agencies, the Baptist World Alliance and the Baptist Joint Committee.

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Success based on sincerity,
Dilday tells Southwestern students

By Matthew Brady

Baptist Press
1/17/91

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Sincerity, earnestness, courage and faithfulness are the keys to ministerial success, the president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, told students during the first chapel service of the spring semester Jan. 16.

Encouraging students to "leave behind any excuses they might have, Southwestern President Russell Dilday told the ministers-in-training to "trust God for success in ministry."

Using John 10:27-42 as his text, Dilday said the story of John the Baptist teaches that great achievements can be made in the kingdom of God without fanfare; great accomplishments can be made without genius; and great acclaim can be won without self-assertion.

"It was the success that came out of his sincerity, his earnestness, his disciplined courage, his humble faithfulness that led him (John the Baptist) to success in what God called him to do," Dilday said.

Dilday said when the people talked about John, they said, "John never worked a miracle, but everything he told us about Jesus was true.

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"If John the Baptist can do it, so can you. You can work without fanfare to achieve great things in God's kingdom through faithfulness," Dilday said.

God uses Christians in spite of "our ordinariness and helplessness and disqualifying infirmities, and precisely because of them," Dilday told the students, adding, the disciples were ordinary, common people by earthly standards, but extraordinary and uncommon because of their one possession -- the truth about Jesus.

"No matter how bleak and unimposing your mediocrity may be, if you know Jesus Christ, then you've been given an earth-shaking revelation and you are to live that truth and share it and sing it and teach it and preach it with the confidence that, just like John, you may never work any miracles, but you can accomplish great things in the kingdom through the truth God has given us."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary

Number of adult volunteers
increases 36 percent

By Sarah Zimmerman

F-dms

Baptist Press
1/17/91

ATLANTA (BP)--The number of adult volunteers serving through the Home Mission Board's Christian Service Corps increased 36 percent in 1990. That growth contributes to a 7.9 percent overall increase in the number of volunteers serving in short-term and long-term home mission projects.

Christian Service Corps is a program for adults who serve one year or less. In 1990, a total of 25,469 people served in CSC, compared to 18,635 in 1989. The number of people serving in CSC has increased by at least 28 percent annually since 1986.

The total home missions volunteer force reached 52,545 in 1990, up from 48,681 in 1989. The 1990 figures do not include 1,200 volunteers who served in language church extension and 9,897 volunteers who served in evangelism. Those categories of volunteers were not recorded in the past, but will be in the future.

Don Hammonds, HMB volunteer division director, attributes the increase in adult volunteers to a better reporting system and to increased awareness of the need for volunteers. "Given the opportunity, adults want to serve and make a difference," Hammonds said.

Several states now have a volunteer coordinator on their convention staff. The coordinators' work in recruiting and placing volunteers has impacted the number of people serving in missions, Hammonds said.

Elmer Goble, director of Christian Service Corps, said that even with the increase in volunteers, some needs are still not met. He said there is a demand for construction work throughout the country and for teams to do Vacation Bible Schools in pioneer mission areas.

Mike Robertson, director of the short-term volunteer department, added volunteers are needed for door-to-door visitation to start churches and work in inner city mission centers.

There is a constant need, Robertson said, for college students to serve as summer or student missionaries. He said students do not have to be part of a Baptist Student Union to be a missions volunteer.

Mission Service Corps, the program for volunteers who serve more than one year, grew from 1,230 in 1989 to 1,301 in 1990.

Bob Mills, MSC director, said "the sky's the limit" for the type of volunteers needed. He said he continuously looks for volunteer secretaries to work in state convention and associational offices, for bivocational pastors and for volunteers to work as support staff in churches and associations. There is a continual need for teachers in American Samoa.

Information about home missions volunteer needs is available through a toll-free number, 1 800 HMB-VOLS.

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Fuzzy thinking undermines
freedom, Dunn tells Baptists

By Larry Chesser

N-CO (NY)

ROCHESTER, N.Y. (BP)--Fuzzy thinking about freedom can lead to its undermining, a Baptist church-state specialist warned at the annual conference of the Roger Williams Fellowship.

Citing the French philosopher Voltaire's observation that "If we believe absurdities, we shall commit atrocities," Baptist Joint Committee Executive Director James M. Dunn warned that First Amendment freedoms are being jeopardized by those who act to limit freedom because of what they believe about it.

"There's a linkage between fuzzy thinking about freedom and dangerous deeds that deny our most precious treasure," Dunn said.

In remarks to the religious liberty organization of American Baptist Churches U.S.A., Dunn identified three areas in which he said fuzzy thinking about freedom has produced atrocities.

He criticized the notion held by some "that we should all pay taxes which would support distinctly religious institutions.

Today the push for government support for church-related schools constitutes an atrocity."

Dunn said proposals to aid church schools are disguised under appealing banners like "choice," "competition" and "commitment to excellence." The consequences, he said, would be "a weakened public school system, a costly and inflationary new entitlement, a demographically discriminatory funneling of federal funds into the few Northeastern cities with almost all of the church school students, an unconstitutional batch of laws 'respecting an establishment of religion' and using the mechanism of government to favor existing religious institutions, a removal of many schools from the realm of citizen control and input and the inevitable imposition of rules, regulations and government guidelines that would challenge the very commitments that brought the church schools into being."

An even more frightening absurdity, Dunn said, "is the notion that we are or can be a Christian nation, that 'godly men' can 'rule in righteousness' and enforce God's laws.

"Christian Reconstructionism may not take over the country in the 1992 elections but its rapid growth, sympathetic audiences, inroads into the churches and contributions to the language of the national debate represent an absurdity not to be ignored."

Dunn said Christian Reconstructionists seek to establish a theocracy and ignore the views of the nation's founders, such as George Washington's declaration in his treaty with Tripoli that "this is in no sense a Christian nation."

"A tangled network of Religious Right organizations rip II Chronicles 7:14 out of context, apply it to the United States of America as God's chosen people and proceed to commit the ethical and political atrocities that come from thinking one has a corner on God," Dunn said.

A third atrocity, he said, is seen in U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia's majority opinion in an Oregon case that changed the high court's long-held standard for judging free exercise cases.

"For decades the standard set by the high court for the evaluation of religion's free exercise cases has been that the court or government must demonstrate 'a compelling state interest' before meddling in religion. And when the law has to impinge upon faith practices it should do so only 'by the least burdensome means.' Mr. Scalia dismissed these long-held tests as a 'legal luxury' in his words."

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Dunn said that Justice Scalia's ruling "downgraded the right of free exercise of religion to the laundry list of other rights held by Americans. He held that 'all generally applicable' laws apply to religion as if the first freedoms mentioned in the First Amendment to the Constitution did not have special status."

He said the decision "opened Pandora's box for government meddling, ignoring and intervening in the life of church and synagogue."

Dunn lamented the "very idea that the free exercise of religion guaranteed in the Bill of Rights is a 'legal luxury' that could be denied by majority votes in some state legislature.

Dunn said the organization's namesake, Roger Williams, "knew that toleration is not liberty. That concessions are not rights, that coercion is not persuasion, that the state is not the church, that the majority has no claim on the conscience of the minority. He knew for certain that he did not know the 'mind of God.' He was always a seeker. Not a bad posture. Certainly better than believing absurdities."

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Approve new religious law,
BWA urges Romanian government

By Wendy Ryan

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McLEAN, Va. (BP)--Concerned about the delay of the Romanian government to pass a promised law on religious freedom and forces in Romania who are resisting such a law, the Baptist World Alliance has written Romanian president Ion Iliescu, encouraging him and his government to "approve the new law on religious freedom."

In the letter to Iliescu, BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz and President Knud Wumpelman praised the Romanian leader for the progress already made toward a democratic government in Romania, but said that "the lack of a law guaranteeing religious freedom is a glaring weakness in the progress toward democratic reform.

"With all our hearts," the Baptist leaders said, "we implore you and your government to pass the new law so that all Romanian people will enjoy the new fruits of freedom so recently won in your country."

The BWA letter told Iliescu that it is their understanding that the new law on religious freedom "will guarantee religious freedom as defined by the United Nations and accepted within European and other democratic countries."

Lotz and Wumpelman also wrote United States President George Bush asking him to encourage the Romanian government to pass the law for religious freedom. The BWA leaders also urged Bush to seek peace in these times and assured him of the prayers of Baptists during these difficult days of the Gulf crisis.

A further appeal for religious freedom laws in Romania was made to two congressmen who have defended freedom in Eastern Europe.

In a letter to Steny Honey, D-Md., and Frank Wolfe, R.-Va., the BWA leaders shared the concern of Romanian Christians about the delay of the law and asked for their strong support.

It was last July that a delegation of Baptist leaders visited Bucharest and met with Romanian officials who assured them that human rights and religious freedom would be protected.

In separate meetings with the Baptist leaders, Romania's Minister of Justice Teofil Pop and Minister of Religious Affairs Nicolae Stoicesu affirmed the principles of religious liberty.

Since then, there has been a growing concern among Romanian Baptists and other Christians because of some elements in Romanian society that want to prevent full religious freedom and deny Baptists and other groups the normal freedom guaranteed in democratic countries.

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