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91-23

FMB trustees hear Grahams,
act on site, local members

By Robert O'Brien

N-FMB

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board heard reports Feb. 13 from former hostages in Kuwait and handled actions related to a study of the board's location and the makeup of the trustee body.

In other actions, the trustees responded to a Southern Baptist Convention motion on political involvement of SBC agencies, named 31 missionaries and honored departing staff member William R. (Bill) O'Brien during a three-day meeting.

Maurice and Laurie Graham, Southern Baptist representatives formerly in Kuwait, told of their experiences in the embattled U.S. Embassy there before war broke out in the Persian Gulf.

The Grahams, Southern Baptists' first workers in Kuwait, recounted struggles they faced and convictions they now hold. When Iraq seized Kuwait Aug. 2, the couple had been in the country just three months to work with the National Evangelical Church, the only Protestant congregation there.

Graham told how the remnant of the church in Kuwait pulled together after nearly splitting over doctrine. He recounted advising the leaders by telephone from the U.S. Embassy compound where he and his family had sought refuge: "God has given us an opportunity to be a bold witness and we must be ready for the challenge before us."

"As soon as they pulled together, God started opening doors that could not be opened in any other way," Graham said. Hearing about a hospital with no staff for 43 severely handicapped children, church members became the needed manpower.

They gave as sacrificially as they could to buy food for families in need, whether Christian or Muslim, Graham said. Muslims wanting to show gratitude were encouraged to voice their thanks during the church's worship services. "For the very first time in Kuwait," Graham said, "Muslims were freely coming into our church ... and would hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and feel and know the sense of love.

"It takes that kind of commitment, that kind of love and that kind of unity to spread the gospel," he said. Anything that can divide believers in Kuwait -- or Southern Baptists -- "is a crack for the devil himself to come in and destroy us."

In trustee action, the administrative committee asked FMB Executive Vice President Don Kammerdiener to examine what factors and cost would be involved in studying a possible relocation of the board and to report back to the committee at a later date. Kammerdiener will make a progress report at the board's April meeting in Baltimore.

The action followed a vote by trustees in December that the committee study the location, facilities and utilization of the mission board.

In another matter referred from the December meeting, trustees voted to amend the board's charter and bylaws. The action will eliminate, by attrition at the end of their present terms, 12 Virginia trustees elected to the board. The 12 were elected in addition to the three Virginia Baptists elected on a population representation basis.

The action will be considered by the SBC Executive Committee Feb. 19 and, if approved by the Executive Committee, recommended to the SBC for approval in June at the convention's annual meeting in Atlanta.

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The proposal to study the board's location, which originated last October in a motion by trustee Ron Wilson of California, raised speculation at that time that it was meant to apply political pressure on Virginia's state Baptist body. Virginia Baptists were considering alternative funding for cooperative Southern Baptist causes in reaction to the SBC controversy.

Some trustees had commented that such a funding action by Virginia Baptists, later approved at their annual meeting in November, should cause the Foreign Mission Board to consider reviewing its location.

Wilson, denying the motion had any connection to the SBC controversy, said then that it was intended to help the board develop criteria to determine the merits of a move either in or out of Virginia. Major corporations do the same thing, he said, to evaluate best use of resources.

Trustee chairman Bill Hancock of Kentucky added that the board "has too much at stake to allow politics or emotion to prevail" in such deliberations.

Board president Parks said the location question has been reviewed periodically since the board moved to its current location in Richmond in 1959. Each time, he said, studies have revealed that the space for growth was adequate and that a move would not be worth the cost. The board has been in Richmond for its entire 145-year history.

About a year ago an analysis by one trustee, who reviewed a Harvard University study on moving major corporations, said the study estimated such moves could cost anywhere from \$33 million to \$150 million.

"We have adequate space, we are concerned about stewardship, and we have a strong commitment to try to increase the percentage of total budget sent overseas," Parks said. "Last year, we sent 89 percent overseas. While I'm always willing to study the situation as times change, I would not want to be part of anything so expensive it would reduce what we send our missionaries."

Like the vote on the proposal to consider the board's location, the action on local trustees had raised speculation it was aimed at Virginia Baptists.

"It's nothing against Virginia Baptists," said trustee Gary Smith of Oklahoma, who made a motion at the 1989 annual SBC meeting that SBC entities study the concept of extra local trustees for possible amendment to their charters. That motion resulted in a request from the SBC Executive Committee that SBC agencies study the concept of local trustees.

"They (Virginians) serve the board well," Smith said. "I had no object of malice. I just wanted to balance the board. I felt it was something of the past that needed to be examined."

Boards and agencies across the SBC adopted the practice of extra local trustees in earlier years when they held fewer meetings, transportation was time-consuming, quorums were hard to achieve and trustees needed to be available to conduct business between sessions.

Regarding the SBC motion on political activity, Smith, who also chaired a committee to respond to the motion referred from the SBC, said: "The committee concluded there is no evidence of the use of Foreign Mission Board personnel, facilities or assets during the year 1989-90 to engage in any political activity within the Southern Baptist Convention in supporting or opposing candidates for office, directly or indirectly, or lobbying on any controversial issues scheduled to come before this convention, or using their personnel, media outlets, mailing lists, financial resources or any other thing of value to support any element within or without our Southern Baptist fellowship in opposition to other Southern Baptists."

The 31 missionaries named by the board included reappointees John and Revonda Deal. The Deals were missionaries for more than 20 years in Malaysia and Jordan before they resigned in 1987 so he could join the board's staff in Richmond as associate area director for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. In his new post, Deal will be assigned in Switzerland to the office of Keith Parker, area director for Europe.

Board President R. Keith Parks, in his address to trustees, praised O'Brien, who will leave the board after 26 years to direct a new global strategies center at Samford University's Beeson School of Divinity in Birmingham, Ala.

O'Brien, a former missionary to Indonesia, directed denominational affairs for the board and headed its global desk. The desk seeks to stimulate Christians around the world to reach the one-fourth of the world's population that has had little or no exposure to the message of Jesus Christ.

Parks characterized O'Brien as a person with "a daring faith, spiritual courage, farsighted vision, holy restlessness and selfless love" that challenges, stimulates and encourages his co-workers.

In other matters, trustee committees reported that staff and missionaries will study theological education needs in Eastern Europe and review the board's flexibility to respond to unusual evangelistic opportunities around the world. These actions grew out of a desire in the trustee strategy committee to fund specific theological education needs in Romania.

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Former hostages share memories,
convictions from Kuwait experience

By Art Toalston

N- fms

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--They went to Kuwait for a ministry full of promise. They left the battered country with an urgency for Christian unity, sacrifice and prayer.

Maurice and Laurie Graham, Southern Baptists' first workers in Kuwait, recounted the struggles they faced and convictions they now hold in comments to Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees Feb. 13.

Their words moved trustees to interrupt the board meeting for a prayer session for members of the Kuwait church the Grahams left behind, for the Grahams as they regroup from their Kuwait experiences, for peace in the Middle East and for other missionaries in various world trouble spots.

When Iraq seized Kuwait on Aug. 2, the Grahams had been in the country just three months to work with the National Evangelical Church, the only Protestant congregation there.

After the Grahams and their 13- and 10-year-old sons took refuge in the U.S. Embassy compound, he began making phone calls to contact any members of the church still in Kuwait. The church had housed 28 congregations that worshiped in various languages. Church activities were drawing some 8,000 people each week who had come from the Philippines, India and other countries to find work in Kuwait.

Graham's calls yielded the names of just 60 church members, mostly nurses, still in Kuwait. Almost everybody else had joined the exodus from Kuwait, scattering toward their homelands.

Finding five members committed to leading the remnant, Graham began giving counsel and encouragement over the phone. Worship resumed at the church, but soon the fellowship was arguing over a doctrinal issue.

Graham said he was brokenhearted and teary, his voice cracking, as he pleaded by phone: "We must pull together. God has given us an opportunity to be a bold witness and we must be ready for the challenge before us."

Church members heeded his words and immediately "God started opening doors that could not be opened in any other way," Graham recounted. Hearing about a hospital with no remaining staff to care for 43 severely handicapped children, church members began providing the needed workers.

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They gave sacrificial offerings to buy food for families in need, whether Christian or Muslim, Graham said. Muslims wanting to show gratitude were encouraged to voice their thanks during worship services. "For the very first time in Kuwait," Graham said, "Muslims were freely coming into our church ... and would hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and feel and know the sense of love.

"It takes that kind of commitment, that kind of love and that kind of unity to spread the gospel," he said. Anything that can divide believers in Kuwait -- or Southern Baptists -- "is a crack for the devil himself to come in and destroy us."

Graham urged FMB trustees, who welcomed the couple with standing applause, to pray as fervently for the church in Kuwait as they prayed for his release. He left Kuwait the same day FMB President R. Keith Parks had set aside as a special day of prayer that Graham and other hostages would be released and that peace would come to the Middle East.

"I'm frightened for my church members and I ask that you pray with the same urgency you prayed (for me) that God's hand would shelter them and that God would put the words in their mouths to be a bold witness during this time," Graham said.

He told trustees that nurses who belong to the church work at medical facilities in Kuwait where wounded Iraqi soldiers are treated after daily bombing runs by U.S.-led forces.

Graham also urged prayer for missionaries in numerous countries "as they risk their lives daily to do one thing and one thing alone ... to make sure that every (person) God has placed on this earth can hear his word and be able to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

"God has given us all the resources, all the ability; we just need his Spirit and his love, and we will be able to do it."

Graham was associate pastor and youth worker and his wife was a pianist at the church in Kuwait. She and her sons left Kuwait during evacuations of American women and children in September; Graham left during the last exodus of Americans in December.

Mrs. Graham asked trustees to pray for her and her husband and other missionaries with children in the world's trouble spots to "know how God wants us to balance our call with the responsibility we have to provide security for our children."

"I have such an excitement about serving overseas," she said. "I can see those people in Kuwait who are still there and I want to go back and rebuild the church." At the same time, she said, her sons are afraid it will be "too dangerous" to return to Kuwait.

She said her sons saw Iraqi troops barge into their house several times the day of the invasion. The family had to dash to their bullet-riddled car to seek refuge at the U.S. Embassy compound. The boys endured three months of separation from their father.

Even before the Iraqi invasion, they were reading of massacres of Christians and others in Liberia, a place they once considered home. The Grahams were missionaries in Liberia until 1989, prior to bloody civil upheaval in the African country.

"I know they're not the only children in that situation," she said, "as we have many friends who have evacuated from Liberia and the Middle East."

The Grahams, whose plight gained wide attention through news coverage, voiced gratitude for Southern Baptists' prayers. Mrs. Graham said even a telephone operator recognized her name when she was having difficulty using her AT&T credit card to make a call last fall.

"I'm a Southern Baptist," the operator told Mrs. Graham, exclaiming, "You just came back from over there! We've been praying for you!"

Missile fragments
hit Baptist Village

By Mike Creswell

PETAH TIQVA, Israel (BP)--Fragments of Scud or Patriot missiles showered down over Baptist Village during the week of Feb. 10 but did no damage.

Some fragments struck the roof of Southern Baptist workers Ray and Suzanne Altman, from Post and Slaton, Texas, respectively. Their home is on the Baptist Village complex, a conference center facility operated by Baptists in Petah Tiqva, Israel.

Altman said the pieces of flat, twisted metal as big as tennis balls that struck their roof did no damage. They were unaware the fragments had hit until later.

Local policemen who picked up the fragments confirmed they were from an Iraqi Scud missile or from the Patriot defense missile that struck the Scud in the sky over the Baptist Village complex. The policemen did not say which missile the fragments came from.

Numerous pieces of metal that landed in fields around the village complex were the size of baseballs or footballs, Altman said. The largest piece was about 1 foot by 18 inches in size, he said. Policemen told Altman that a much larger missile fragment struck half a mile from the conference center and damaged a building.

The Baptist Village is about 20 miles away from central Tel Aviv. But the complex is only eight to 10 miles from the urban area repeatedly hit by Iraqi Scud missiles. As of Feb. 13, Iraq had fired 32 Scuds at Israel, many of which were intercepted by American-made Patriot defense missiles.

Finding missile fragments atop her roof has not made Mrs. Altman any more afraid, but has given new meaning to the drill of rushing to their room that is specially sealed against possible gas attacks.

"The fragments have made the whole thing more tangible, more real," she said. Some missile explosions have been close enough to shake the Altman home.

Preparing the sealed room, having gas masks at arm's length and turning on the television or radio is now a 6 p.m. daily ritual for his family, Altman said. He admitted the air raid siren alerts, sometimes three per night, make for long nights. When an alert sounds, they move to the sealed room within seconds, he said. An early evening alert often leaves them lying awake listening for any noises that sound like a siren.

The Altmans have four children, ages 10, 8, 6 and 3. Sarah, the youngest, now is more accustomed to wearing her gas mask and does not fight it as she originally did, Altman said.

Although the Altmans went to southern Israel for brief periods, they are content for now with their decision to stay at Baptist Village. "The chances of getting hit by a missile are small, no more than the chances of getting killed in an airplane during a flight," he said.

If Iraq starts firing poison gas in the missiles, however, "that changes everything," he said.

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1990 Brotherhood volunteerism
equalled \$42 million to missions

By Jim Burton

N-CO
(BHOOD)

Baptist Press
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MEMPHIS (BP)--The time and labor of Southern Baptist Brotherhood missions volunteers equalled an estimated \$42 million in 1990, said Brotherhood Commission President James H. Smith.

With 27 state Brotherhood directors reporting volunteer activity, Smith said there were 59,810 missions volunteers recruited through Brotherhood who participated in 4,002 national and international projects.

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"We've always known that Brotherhood was making a significant contribution to missions in the Southern Baptist Convention," Smith said. "When you put a dollar figure to volunteer participation you begin to see how great that contribution is."

An inter-agency Volunteers in Missions Task Force assigns a dollar value to volunteers. The VIM Task Force estimates that each volunteer spends an average of three days on a project and that the average missionary salary is \$88 per day. Applied to the 42,330 Brotherhood missions volunteers reported in non-construction projects, the formula values the volunteer's time and labor at about \$11.2 million.

"The \$11.2 million figure is the equivalent of 509 career missionary annual salaries," said Jim Furgerson, Brotherhood Commission Baptist Men's director. "In effect, Brotherhood volunteers matched the 1990 Annie Armstrong Offering goal with in-kind contributions."

In addition, 17,480 Brotherhood construction volunteers accomplished 612 mission construction projects, 67 outside the continental United States. Furgerson estimates that 306 of those projects were new church buildings.

Volunteer labor typically cuts the cost of new-church construction in half, said M.B. Howard, National Fellowship of Baptist Men's construction coordinator.

"The minimum cost of a new mission church with sanctuary and age-graded classroom space is between \$200,000 and \$250,000," Howard said.

"A conservative estimate is that Brotherhood volunteers saved about \$100,000 per new church-building project," said Furgerson, who compiled the report. "That would mean a savings of \$30.6 million."

Along with construction volunteers, the categories reported include disaster relief, church renewal, lay-led revivals, criminal justice ministries, nursing home ministries, mission Bible studies, mission vacation Bible schools and Royal Ambassador camps.

State Brotherhood directors also reported projects through their state Baptist Men's fellowships including sports, performing arts, agriculture, business, education and medical/dental.

Of the 4,002 projects, 134 were overseas and involved 3,155 volunteers.

"We believe that missions projects result in meaningful missions education," Smith said. "This is particularly true with adults who learn best by doing."

"Our commitment to missions is unwavering," Smith continued. "Reflected in these figures is coordination with the Home and Foreign Mission boards on many of their projects. It is that kind of cooperation that makes the Southern Baptist Convention strong."

The volunteer report comes on the heels of the highest Brotherhood Commission enrollment report in 27 years. Smith said 593,844 men and boys were reported on the annual church uniform letter as involved in missions education through Brotherhood. That is the highest since 603,696 were reported in 1963. The highest enrollment was 1962 with 634,651 reported.

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(BP) graphic mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Brotherhood Commission

RA chapter's bid to buy bikes
results in building a church

By Ken Camp

F- Texas

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DALLAS (BP)--The Royal Ambassadors at Memorial Baptist Church in Baytown, Texas, just wanted to collect enough money to buy a couple of bicycles for Baptist pastors in Kenya. Instead, they raised enough to build a church.

In early December, Memorial's RA Director Wendell Romans and Minister of Recreation and Activities Stan Sullinger were discussing how their church could join the statewide effort to provide bikes for Kenyan pastors.

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Early in 1990, missionary Ralph Bethea had told Texas Baptist Men leaders that Kenyan ministers urgently needed two-wheelers for basic transportation. Texas RAs accepted the challenge to raise money to buy bikes for 150 pastors in Kenya at \$150 each.

"We thought it was kind of late to try to raise the money by the Jan. 1 deadline, and we didn't want to do anything to take away from the Lottie Moon Offering for Foreign Missions," said Sullinger.

"So we thought, why not just take \$300 from the RA budget for 1991 and then raise the money after Christmas to replace that amount?"

The RAs parked a bicycle in the foyer at Memorial Church and posted a sign announcing a January "bike-a-thon" to raise the needed \$300, but they did nothing else to promote the cause. Even so, a full month before the scheduled fund-raising event, church members began to make contributions.

Before the end of December, RA leaders collected the \$300 and had enough money for an additional 10 bikes. That same month, the church surpassed its Lottie Moon goal, giving \$22,000 to foreign missions.

Sullinger called the Texas Baptist Men's office in Dallas to tell state leaders another check would be in the mail soon. However, he was surprised to learn that the statewide goal for the bicycle project already had been exceeded and all needs had been met.

He asked how money that his church members had given could be used in Kenya.

"I was told that money was needed to build churches there next summer," said Sullinger. "And the cost was \$1,500 each -- exactly the amount we had raised."

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Japan missionary Margaret
Perrin dies at 58 in Texas

N-Dexas

Baptist Press
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TEXARKANA, Texas (BP)--Margaret Joplin Perrin, an educator who had just completed her first term as a Southern Baptist missionary to Japan, died of cancer Feb. 14 in Texarkana, Texas. She was 58.

Perrin, of Bromide, Okla., worked with her husband, Kyle, of Ada, Okla., in Kitakyushu, where they both taught English at Seinan Jo Gakuin Junior College. They also led Bible studies in dormitories and helped in area churches and mission congregations.

The Perrins were appointed missionaries four years ago. She credited her growing missions conviction to a Sunday school project sending volunteers to Haiti and Brazil and to a discipleship training program to read the Bible in one year. During intensive Bible reading, she became impressed with how much of life is aimed at acquiring material things and not winning new believers to Christ.

She was born in Milburn, Okla., and met her husband while attending East Central State University in Ada, from which she received the bachelor of arts degree in 1959. She received the master of arts degree in 1973 from Texas A&I University in Kingsville and the doctor of education degree in 1985 from East Texas State University in Commerce. She taught in Texas and Oklahoma public schools and at East Texas State University.

Besides her husband, she is survived by a grown son, her parents, four sisters and five brothers.

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