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April 11, 1991

91-55

Atlanta June convention
attendance forecast made

By Herb Hollinger

N-00

NASHVILLE (BP)--Attendance at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 4-6, in Atlanta may be down from recent record registrations if the predictions by Lee Porter, SBC registration secretary, are accurate.

Registration will open in the Georgia World Congress Center Sunday at 4 p.m. and each day of the convention thereafter at 8 a.m. Porter said the registration office would close "a little after 9 p.m." each day.

Porter's forecast of 20,000 to 22,500 messengers would be larger than any previous convention prior to 1985, except Atlanta in 1978 when 22,872 registered. Dallas, in 1985, is still the record with 45,519, followed by Atlanta, 1986, with 40,987 and last year's convention in New Orleans which registered 38,403.

Porter's accuracy in predicting messengers counts has been impressive since his election in 1977. His predictions have been within 10 percent of the actual figures every year since 1978 with the exception of the record Dallas crowd.

With about 7,000 visitors expected, the June convention could still attract near 30,000, Porter said.

Some observers have speculated the diminishing controversy in the convention, a presidential incumbent apparently uncontested for re-election, a May meeting in Atlanta by a Southern Baptist moderate group, and holding the convention a week earlier in June, all may contribute to a smaller attendance.

Registration will be located on the main floor of the World Congress Center, Porter explained, right inside the major entrance. Large signs will direct messengers to rooms 313-314.

Porter had some suggestions for those wanting to register early but who will face a long line.

"Don't stand in line at 4 p.m. on Sunday or at 8 a.m. on Monday ... Come about 30 minutes later and you will register in about five minutes!"

Messengers must bring proper credentials from their churches, Porter cautioned. SBC registration cards are available from state convention offices (in some states they are available at association offices) and must be totally completed and signed. Where in Atlanta the messenger is staying should also be noted in case of emergencies, said Porter.

The credentials committee will not be available on Sunday, Porter said, for those having trouble registering. The committee will be available beginning Monday morning through the rest of the convention.

"If a church does not have a messenger card, the messenger should bring a letter from the church to the credentials committee," said Porter. "If you arrive in Atlanta without a messenger card or a letter, you will need a telegram sent from your church stating you have been elected as a messenger."

Each messenger will receive a name badge, convention program and a set of ballots. The book of reports, complete with agency reports, amendments, recommendations, etc., will be available for \$4, Porter said. Alternate messengers and visitors are not registered.

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The registration area also will serve as a convention lost and found, said Porter. A messenger locator service will operate to assist people finding friends at the convention.

Requirements for messengers are found in the SBC Constitution, Article III, and in the bylaws (8) and is printed on the messenger card itself. Mission churches must elect their messengers through the mother church, said Porter. Churches which have organized or constituted in 1991 will not be able to have messengers at this convention, he said.

"Every messenger must be elected by the church he/she represents, including pastors, directors of missions, and denominational employees," Porter said.

Churches having questions about the registration process can contact Porter at (615) 251-2181.

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Lee Porter looks at
Re-election possibility

By Herb Hollinger

N-CO

Baptist Press
4/11/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--Lee Porter has not ruled out the possibility of allowing his nomination in Atlanta for a 15th term as Southern Baptist Convention registration secretary.

Porter, in an interview with Baptist Press regarding the Atlanta registration process, was asked if he would allow his nomination in June.

"If I am still employed by the Sunday School Board, I will not allow my name to be presented to the convention for re-election. But, if the Lord should lead me to another position of service and God reveals to me and the messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention that the cause of Christ, denominational harmony, and confidence in the registration and balloting process could be extended with my serving as registration secretary, then I would allow my nomination," said Porter.

Following the convention in New Orleans last year, Porter was told by Sunday School Board officials it was be "unwise" for him to serve as registration secretary again. Porter was said to have made disparaging remarks about Southern Baptist conservatives to a seminary class visiting the convention.

Asked if he were looking at other employment possibilities, Porter said "yes."

Porter indicated he would make a full statement in May about his future as a convention officer.

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Southern trustees
scrutinize new professors

By Pat Cole

*N-CO
SBC TS*

Baptist Press
4/11/91

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The first professors elected at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary under terms of the school's new employment guidelines were closely scrutinized by trustees during their annual meeting April 8-10 in Louisville, Ky.

Prospective professors were questioned by the trustees' academic personnel committee about various theological and social issues, committee members told the full board. They reported all candidates for faculty positions and/or tenure gave satisfactory answers to specific questions from the findings section of the 1987 Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee report. Despite questions from some trustees, all applicants were elected without opposition.

Earlier in their meeting, trustees voted 49-7 to remove the Peace Committee report as an official employment guideline for faculty members. It was replaced by a "Covenant" document that previously had been approved by the school's faculty. (See April 9 Baptist Press story)

The Peace Committee report declared in its findings section that "most Southern that Baptists believe" people who say the Bible is true believe "Adam and Eve were real persons," "named authors did indeed write the biblical books attributed to them," miracles "did indeed occur as supernatural events in history" and "the historical narratives given by the biblical authors were indeed accurate and reliable."

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During discussion of personnel recommendations, David Miller, associational director of missions from Heber Springs, Ark., quizzed the academic personnel committee about two applicants' views on abortion and homosexuality. Committee members answered both were opposed to homosexuality. One candidate voiced opposition to abortion while the other was not asked about the issue, they said.

Those seeking election to the faculty should be asked about these issues in detail, said Miller. People can be personally opposed to abortion and still believe that "other folks ought to have the legal right to decide whether their unborn child lives or dies," he said.

There are also some who believe homosexual behavior is wrong but do not consider homosexual "orientation" sinful, Miller noted: "It is not enough to say they are against the act of homosexuality."

Wayne Gaunce, a Glasgow, Ky., businessman, suggested a "checklist" of "seven or eight questions that repeatedly come up" ought to be given in advance to all prospective faculty members.

But Milton Morales, a financial consultant from Independence, Mo., said he feared trustees were suspicious of every prospective faculty member who had not answered a particular question. Such an attitude is similar to the "McCarthyism" mind-set of the 1950s that demanded people prove they were not communists, he said.

John Hicks, a Louisville attorney, repeatedly raised questions about prospective professors who are members of moderate churches that are "diverting" funds from the Cooperative Program into other channels of giving: "I feel strongly if professors are in churches that are diverting funds from the Cooperative Program they (the churches) should at least be giving money to the seminary to pay professors' salaries."

Some trustees voiced concern that making congregational financial decisions an issue may infringe on the autonomy of local churches. Jerry Mahan, pastor of First Baptist Church in Cedartown, Ga., pointed out not just moderate churches withhold funds from the Cooperative Program. He said several large conservative churches in his state also choose to bypass the unified giving plan.

Later, the board passed a resolution presented by trustee Michael Harris, an Elizabethtown, Ky., orthodontist, urging trustees, faculty and administration to "actively oppose any effort in their respective churches, conventions and state to divert money from the Cooperative Program."

Trustees elected three new professors to the faculty and granted tenure to two current professors. Leigh E. Conner, a pastoral counselor from Atlanta, will be associate professor of psychology of religion with tenure. Two were elected to tenure track positions: Rebecca Straney Russell, a part-time instructor at the seminary, will be assistant professor of church music and David C. Stancil, minister of pastoral care at Louisville's St. Matthews Baptist Church, will be assistant professor of psychology of religion.

Trustees granted tenure to Jon Rainbow, assistant professor of social work and Craig A. Loscalzo, assistant professor of Christian preaching.

In addition to personnel actions, trustees voted to "restate" a motion passed last April which guaranteed students the right to tape record any class lecture. The new motion affirms "the principle of openness and disclosure in all appropriate areas of seminary activity." However, it leaves the policy decision about tape recording classroom lectures to the discretion of the administration.

The previous tape recording policy, along with adoption of the Peace Committee Report as an employment guideline, were two concerns prompting an investigation by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, one of the seminary's accrediting agencies.

In other actions, trustees:

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-- Elec Wayne Allen, pastor of Briarwood Baptist Church, Covington, Tenn., chairman. The current chairman, Sam H. McMahon Jr., a Charlotte, N.C., businessman, was not renominated for a second term. Nominating committee members said they learned the Southern Baptist Convention's committee on nominations will not recommend McMahon for a second term on the seminary's board.

Other officers elected were Larry Adams, a Baptist Retirement Center administrator from Oklahoma City, and Hicks of Louisville, first vice chairman and secretary, respectively. Adams will also chair the trustee's executive committee. Charles Carter, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jonesboro, Ga., was elected second vice chairman, defeating Miller, 32-17, who was nominated from the floor.

-- Approved a \$16.4 million budget which provides for a three percent pay increase for faculty and staff.

-- Requested the SBC to develop provisions to allow governing boards of SBC entities to remove trustees for demonstrated cause. The motion said seminary trustees will consider amending or deleting the seminary's charter provisions for trustee removal after the SBC puts such provisions in the convention constitution or bylaws. The SBC Executive Committee, which is studying the trustee removal issue, requested in February the seminary delete provisions for trustee removal from the school's charter in order to bring the charter in line with those of other SBC entities.

-- Named two current faculty members to chairs -- David L. Mueller, Joseph Emerson Brown professor of Christian theology, and G. Wade Rowatt, Lawrence and Charlotte Hoover professor of pastoral care.

-- Voted to present the 1991 E.Y. Mullins Denominational Service Award to Ralph Bethea Jr., Southern Baptist missionary to Kenya, and posthumously to his wife, Lynda, who was recently murdered in Kenya. Trustees also voted to present the 1991 George W. Norton Distinguished Service Award to seminary benefactor Charlotte (Mrs. Lawrence) Hoover of Annandale, Va.

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FMB trustees re-elect chairman,
hear Mideast response report

By Robert O'Brien

N-FMB

Baptist Press
4/11/91

BALTIMORE (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board re-elected a Kentucky pastor as chairman, appointed 31 missionaries and heard a report on efforts to aid Kurds and other refugees of the Persian Gulf war.

In other action at the April 8-10 meeting in Baltimore, trustees heard a progress report on a study of the board's facilities and location and held a memorial service in honor of Foreign Mission Board personnel who have died.

Bill Hancock, pastor of Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., was re-elected to a second one-year term as chairman of the 89-member board. John Jackson, pastor of Crescent Southern Baptist Church in Anaheim, Calif., was elected first vice chairman; Bonnie Westbrook, a physician from Beaumont, Texas, second vice chairman; and Karen Gilbert, a pastor's wife from Hampton, Va., recording secretary.

The appointments, including 25 new missionaries and six reappointees, bring the total force to 3,880 missionaries assigned to 121 countries.

About 7,600 people, mainly from churches in the host Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware, attended an April 9 appointment service in the Baltimore Arena featuring an 800-voice choir, a parade of world flags and a challenge to new missionaries by Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks.

Seventy-seven people came forward to make spiritual decisions at the end of the service, including 51 committing themselves to foreign mission service.

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Tim Br...le, the board staff member named to head up the board's response to the crisis in the Persian Gulf, told trustees in an interim report strategies already are under way to aid thousands of refugees in cooperation with Southern Baptist personnel and other Christians.

Brendle said the board already has released an initial \$130,000 for immediate needs in the Gulf region. He said "the doors of opportunity are opening" in the region and urged trustees to pray evangelicals of all persuasions will be "willing to pay the price without getting the glory for it so that God might accomplish what he wants to do in the Middle East."

Don Kammerdiener, the board's executive vice president, led the service in memory of 11 people related to foreign missions who have died in the past six months. They included Darla Lovell, a journeyman who died in her sleep March 24 in Uganda, and Lynda Bethea, a missionary murdered March 27 by highway robbers in Kenya.

Trustees viewed a video message from Ralph Bethea, Lynda's husband, in which he said his wife's last comment concerning her attackers was, "They just need to know Jesus."

Kammerdiener, whose daughter, Carol Hawkins, was among missionary appointees, also told trustees he will present a report in June suggesting alternative approaches the board can use to study its facilities.

His report, requested by trustees, grew out of a motion last October by trustee Ron Wilson of California the board develop criteria it could use if it decides to consider a change of location.

Hancock, noting that rumors around the Southern Baptist Convention indicate the board plans to move, said the study is being done to examine "facilities and resource management to maximize the stewardship of Southern Baptists."

"The word 'relocation' is not the important word," he said, noting other Southern Baptist agencies have done studies of facilities. "The important word is 'stewardship' of resources and facilities."

"If we're where God wants us to be as far as our address is concerned right now, all of us ought to feel good if God says 'Stay there' after the study is over," Hancock said. "If we're not where God wants us to be on this corner or where he would want us to be in the year 2025, then we ought to be doing something to help those who will follow us to have some direction in getting where God wants us to be."

Trustees also heard reports on the FMB public affairs office, theological education in Eastern Europe, the need for flexibility in responding to world crises and an update on the status of people who serve as local Virginia trustees of the board.

Parks announced Zeb Moss, associate area director for Eastern and Southern Africa, has been named to succeed Bill O'Brien as executive director of public affairs. O'Brien left the board March 1 to become director of a new global strategies center in the Beeson School of Divinity at Samford University, Birmingham, Ala. Moss, 61, is a 32-year mission veteran whose work has ranged from media consultation to mission administration.

Announcement of his selection came after trustee officers and committee chairmen meeting with Parks agreed to go along with Parks' desire to keep the public affairs job separate from the office of communications. Some trustees had felt public affairs and communications should be combined into one office.

The public affairs post involves relationships with other SBC entities and direction of the FMB's Global Desk, which monitors the status of global evangelization and serves as a liaison with other Christian groups sharing the same goal.

The trustee strategy committee asked a six-member committee of staff and trustees to study the flexibility the board has to respond when political changes provide unexpected opportunities around the world. The committee will review recent response to such situations in Eastern Europe and the Middle East and report back on whether any changes or improvements should be made.

On another matter, the trustee committee for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa asked staff to study overall theological needs in Eastern Europe through their normal process, including needs of the Baptist seminary in Oradea, Romania, and report back as soon as possible.

The committee asked for the study after Parks urged that response to needs in Oradea, which a number of trustees support come through normal channels of evaluation rather than separately.

Trustees amended an action from their February meeting that would have eliminated, by attrition at the end of their present terms, 12 Virginia trustees elected to the board.

The amendment, which will be sent to the Southern Baptist Executive Committee and then to the Southern Baptist Convention for approval, makes it possible for any of the 12 eligible for a second term to be re-elected if the SBC chooses to do so. After that the positions would cease to exist.

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. The extra trustees were elected in addition to those elected on a population representation basis.

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Crash survivor welcomed
back to Chinese university

By Charlie Wilson

N. G. M. B.

Baptist Press
4/11/91

MEIXIAN, China (BP)--She hears the ancient Chinese proverb everywhere she goes: "Great blessing follows one who survives a terrible tragedy."

That's the way people around southern China's Jia Ying University say there's something special about Erin Thomas.

Thomas, of Harrah, Okla., survived the crash of a hijacked Chinese jetliner last October that claimed the life of her friend and fellow English teacher, Mary Anna Gilbert. The two, who were returning to the campus from a holiday trip inside China, had been teaching in the country only one month under the sponsorship of Cooperative Services International, a Southern Baptist aid organization. Thomas recovered from several injuries.

But escaping the plane crash is not what makes Thomas special to her freshman English students. They think she's special because she came back.

When Thomas walked into her former classroom March 4, the first day of the new school term, welcoming smiles broke across every student's face as they burst into spontaneous applause.

After an introduction by the dean of the school's foreign languages department, who commended Thomas' "strength of character" and commitment to China, she got straight to work encouraging her students to introduce themselves in English. Then she taught them to sing "Every Day in China is Sweeter than the Day Before" to the tune of a familiar chorus. Mindful of what she has endured the last five months of recuperation from her injuries, her students knew she meant every word.

CSI officials say relations with Jia Ying University have become stronger through the crash and its aftermath. CSI teachers have taught there four of the five years of the school's existence. In 1989, two CSI teachers at the university were among the few foreigners who returned to China to finish the school term in the confusion that followed the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing.

At the local Christian church where Thomas worships, she remembers Mary Anna Gilbert's sacrifice, and the faithfulness of God as expressed in Philippians 1:6: "I am convinced that he who began a good work in you will see it through to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

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"God is not finished with me yet; I still have work to do," said Thomas. "I want to finish what I started."

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

Volunteers urgently needed
for Atlanta witnessing project

By Mark Wingfield

NMB

Baptist Press
4/11/91

ATLANTA (BP)--Volunteers are urgently needed for witnessing and ministry projects related to Crossover Atlanta, the evangelistic emphasis prior to this year's Southern Baptist Convention.

Local churches are willing to host more volunteers than there are volunteers committed to help with door-to-door visitation, said Bobby Sunderland, Crossover Atlanta coordinator.

"I'm afraid too many Southern Baptists think Atlanta is the heart of the Bible Belt and doesn't need help with evangelism," Sunderland said. "But the truth is that Atlanta really is a modern mission field.

"In Atlanta Baptist Association, 67 percent of the population doesn't attend any church. Our local churches need help taking the gospel to these residents."

A one-day Soul Winning Encounter is planned for Saturday, June 1. Volunteers do not have to commit to the three-day evangelism project announced earlier to participate in this event, he said.

Other projects planned as part of Crossover Atlanta include street witnessing, construction of a Habitat for Humanity home, feeding the homeless and telemarketing to start a new church.

To sign up for any of these activities, volunteers should contact Sunderland at the Home Mission Board, 1350 Spring St. NW, Atlanta 30367, (404) 898-7687.

Also, volunteers for the one-day witnessing project may sign up at the Friday night kick-off rally at Tabernacle Baptist Church in downtown Atlanta. The rally begins at 6:30 p.m.

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Crossover Atlanta to include
variety of ministries, witness

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

Baptist Press
4/11/91

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptists will take a message of hope to Atlantans this summer by foot, on the streets, on billboards, through feeding, over the phone and at youth rallies.

In all, Southern Baptists will use at least seven means of presenting the gospel to residents of the host city for their annual meeting June 4-6. A series of pre-convention events is scheduled under the banner of Crossover Atlanta.

Pre-convention ministries include door-to-door evangelism, street witnessing, feeding the homeless, youth rallies, construction projects, telemarketing to start a new church and a media campaign.

Here's a summary of pre-convention activities:

-- Door-to-door evangelism.

The evangelistic effort will begin Friday night, May 31, with a rally at Tabernacle Baptist Church in downtown Atlanta. Speakers for the 6:30 p.m. event include Richard Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix Baptist Church in Phoenix, Ariz., and Darrell Gilyard, pastor of Victory Baptist Church in Richardson, Texas.

Volunteers will go out in local neighborhoods the next day, Saturday, June 1, for door-to-door visitation. A special tract has been prepared by the Home Mission Board for this event.

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-- Street witnessing.

Several hundred people experienced in street evangelism will arrive in Atlanta early for Crossover Atlanta. An orientation rally will be held at 7 p.m., Tuesday, May 28. Evangelists Jack Stanton of Bolivar, Mo., and Leo Humphrey of New Orleans, will speak.

Fifteen downtown Atlanta sites have been selected for witnessing Wednesday, May 29, through Friday, May 31. The HMB has secured permission from local authorities for presentations in parks, on the street and in malls.

-- Youth rallies.

Five associational youth rallies will be held around the Atlanta area Saturday night, June 1. The rallies are co-sponsored by the local associations and the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists.

Associations participating in the rallies are Atlanta, Stone Mountain, Roswell, Gwinnett Metro and Middle Cherokee.

-- Feeding.

Mobile disaster relief units from at least six states will feed Atlanta's homeless at sites around the city Saturday, June 1, and Sunday, June 2. The units will be staffed by members of the Baptist Men organization from various states.

The weekend feeding is being coordinated with Atlanta's Task Force for the Homeless and will supplement the work done by other ongoing ministries on weekdays.

-- Construction.

In Gwinnett Metro Association, located in Atlanta's northeast corner, volunteers will construct a Habitat for Humanity house for a needy family during the convention.

In Noonday Association, located in Atlanta's northwest corner, volunteers will roof the homes of six families who couldn't otherwise afford to have the repairs made.

-- Telemarketing.

With a bank of phones at the Georgia World Congress Center, volunteers will use telemarketing to enlist prospects for a new church to be started in the Atlanta area. At least 300 volunteers are needed to make calls Monday, June 3, through Thursday, June 6.

In addition to starting the Atlanta congregation, the experience is designed to be a training experience for people interested in learning how to use telemarketing to start churches in other areas.

-- Media.

A billboard campaign will greet convention messengers and communicate with Atlanta residents. The Home Mission Board has secured 70 billboards in metropolitan Atlanta, including five near the convention site and one adjacent to the Home Mission Board building.

The boards will show the Crossover Atlanta logo and the words, "Southern Baptists. Celebrating hope with the international city."

The media campaign also will include exclusive use of the laser billboard inside Hartsfield International Airport on Sunday, June 2. All passengers deplaning pass by the billboard on their way to the baggage claim area.

ADDITION: In (BP) story "Agency heads to address Hispanic ministers meeting" dated 4/9/91, please add the following information following the seventh paragraph:

Abdiel Joel Silva will be given a posthumous award recognizing he was responsible for starting all the Hispanic work in the state of Georgia. The former home missionary died in 1985.

His widow, Lydia, will accept the award on his behalf.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Baptist volunteers offer relief
to South Texas flood victims

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
4/11/91

HARLINGEN, Texas (BP)--When the lower Rio Grande Valley was drenched last weekend with 17 inches of rain in 48 hours, flooding about 3,900 homes in Harlingen and San Benito, Texas, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers responded with hot meals, child care and Christian counsel for the flood victims.

Working from the Texas Baptist Disaster Relief Mobile Unit, volunteers began on April 10 cooking meals for persons forced from their homes by rising water. Baptists served 1,350 at the first meal, and demand was expected to increase, according to Bob Dixon, executive director of the Texas Baptist Men missions organization.

The mobile unit -- an 18-wheel, tractor-trailer rig equipped with self-contained field kitchen -- was set up at First Baptist Church, San Benito, across the street from the Red Cross temporary headquarters at the local community center.

The Texas Baptist Temporary Emergency Child Care unit was moved to Cameron County and made available to provide free child care to flood victims during recovery and "mud-out" operations. TECC has been approved by the Texas Department of Human Resources as a licensed childcare center in disasters.

Representatives of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Family Recovery Task Force and Church Building Recovery Task Force were scheduled to survey damage in Cameron County on April 11.

Three churches in Rio Grande Valley Baptist Association -- La Palma and Nuevo Jerusalem in San Benito and Avondale in Harlingen -- sustained serious flood damage to their facilities, according to Jerry Johnson, associational director of missions.

Johnson called together pastors from the association on April 9 to report needs and plot strategy for ministry and recovery. Nearly every pastor told of some church members whose homes were destroyed or seriously damaged by flood waters.

By far, the hardest hit congregation was Iglesia Bautista La Palma. Both the church building and parsonage were submerged in water several feet high, and pastor Tomas Beltran escaped the rising water with only the clothes on his back.

Beltran, who was housed by friends following the flood, said nearly every family in his church sustained property damage due to rising water and about half suffered a total loss. Several days after the rain ended, he visited many church members who were still in local shelters.

"They are not down-hearted. Their spirits are good. I have gone there to encourage them, and they encourage me. They are all quoting Romans 8:28," he said.

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John K. Ryan, San Benito police chief, said of the 2,000 homes in San Benito that were flooded, more than one-third were in the La Palma subdivision. Total property damage in San Benito was estimated at \$102 million, he said.

Officials in Harlingen estimated public and private property damage in their city to be more than \$25 million. Much of the damage was in the Avondale area in the northwest part of town where roughly half of the community suffered serious losses, according to Felipe Sanchez, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Avondale.

"Most of these people weren't covered by insurance because it was rising water, not falling or blowing rain," Sanchez said. "Three of our families lost everything."

Even before the upstate disaster relief volunteers arrived, local Baptists responded to emergency needs. Several area churches provided clothing and food to devastated families.

Baptist Temple in San Benito cancelled evening worship services on April 7 so that members could help their neighbors clean homes and recover possessions, according to pastor Tom Cole.

Several members of First Baptist Church, Harlingen, worked on April 8-9 at an RV park in northern Harlingen to help elderly residents remove mud-stained carpet and water-soaked personal belongings, said Jerry McKee, one of the volunteers.

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Parents desensitized
to harmful programming

By Chip Alford

F-SSB

Baptist Press
4/11/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--As society's moral values continue to decay, an increasing number of parents are becoming "desensitized" to the harmful effects of certain movies and television programs on their children, a Nashville-based marriage and family therapist said.

"Parents need to evaluate not only what they are letting their children watch, but what they are watching themselves," Rebekah Land said in an April 10 conference titled, "Helping Parents Evaluate Television and Movies." The conference was part of the Advanced Training Preschool/Children's Workers Seminar VI held April 8-11 by the discipleship training department at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. The four-day seminar drew about 185 participants from throughout the nation.

It is not unusual for Christian parents to take their children along with them to R-rated movies and consider it "normal behavior," Land said.

"They have been seduced (by the world)," she said. "They have become desensitized" to the immoral sexual behavior, violence and other anti-Christian themes which occur in many movies and TV programs.

"Parents need to evaluate where they are and think about what they are passively agreeing to," she said.

To help decide which programs their children should watch, Land suggested parents ask several questions, such as: "Who is the hero? Does the show present themes counter to Christian values? What kind of lifestyles are being portrayed? How is the family portrayed?"

Parents should be concerned not only with the overt content of entertainment programming, Land said, but with "covert" messages from programs that can invade the subconscious minds of children.

"A common covert message in many movies and television programs is that happiness is whatever feels good," she explained. "That is so contrary to what we believe as Christians, but people are just accepting it."

Discussing the impact on children of violence in TV and movies, Land said parents should remember that children's fears can be exaggerated by what they see on screen.

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"Small children can't differentiate between fantasy and reality," she explained. "And recent studies have shown that when people are in a state of arousal or excitement, such as during a scary movie, chemicals are released in their brains that lock those pictures in their minds."

Land encouraged parents to watch shows with their children and discuss any mature themes or anti-Christian values presented.

"We have too many families today that cannot put their feelings into words," she said. "As a result, families don't know how to communicate or solve problems, and that is very dangerous."

Land also suggested parents limit the amount of TV viewing by their children and provide alternative modes of entertainment such as reading, sports and family outings.

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MSC links bivocational
with ministry needs

By Mark Wingfield

F-HMB

Baptist Press
4/11/91

ATLANTA (BP)--Mission Service Corps can be the link between ministers willing to serve bivocationally and ministries needing bivocational workers, a Home Mission Board leader said.

Through a program called Tentmakers, Mission Service Corps joins ministry needs with ministry potential, said Mike Riggins, associate director of the HMB's long-term volunteer department.

Tentmakers are bivocational ministers who serve as home missionaries under appointment of Mission Service Corps. Mission Service Corps is the HMB program for adult volunteers who serve more than one-year terms. Adults serving less than one year are assigned through the Christian Service Corps program.

Mission Service Corps began as a means for volunteers to serve in missions by raising their own support through donations from others. Tentmakers is a variation whereby volunteers fund their ministries by working at least part-time at secular jobs.

"The Tentmaker program is not the only way of accomplishing bivocational ministry, but there are some benefits," Riggins said.

Those benefits include HMB resources and training, placement assistance, a supervisory support system, limited travel assistance for job interviews, emergency funds and additional prayer support, he said.

During a recent Mission Service Corps conference on tentmaker ministries, representatives from 18 states interviewed 65 seminary students as potential tentmaker candidates.

Of the more than 1,300 Mission Service Corps volunteers currently in service, 38 percent are involved in tentmaker ministries.

The HMB publishes a list of tentmaker needs quarterly. Positions listed include church planters, pastors, social workers, associational staff positions and resort ministers.

Individuals interested in becoming tentmakers or churches and associations needing tentmakers should call the HMB's toll-free volunteer hotline: 1 800 HMB-VOLS.

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