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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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May 7, 1991

91-70

Prayer conference slated
prior to SBC in Atlanta

N-CO

ATLANTA (BP)--The second annual National Prayer Conference will be held at Baptist Tabernacle prior to this year's meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The conference, called and directed by prayer leaders of SBC agencies, will include sessions at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 30; 9 a.m. Friday, May 31; and 7 p.m. Saturday, June 1.

Participants will be encouraged to join in the SBC evangelistic rally held at the same location that Friday night and in the Soul Winning Encounter planned for Saturday, June 1.

"In addition to preaching and worship, much time will be given to prayer for our nation, convention, churches and individual needs, as well as for the Crossover Atlanta witnessing effort," said Henry Blackaby, director of prayer and spiritual awakening for the Home Mission Board.

In addition to Blackaby, other personalities on the program include Douglas Beggs, Brotherhood Commission; Minette Drumwright, Foreign Mission Board; Avery Willis, Sunday School Board; John Sullivan, Florida Baptist Convention; T.W. Hunt, Sunday School Board; Ron and Patricia Owens, Home Mission Board.

Anyone may attend the conference. A set of materials will be available at the door for \$30. The church is located at 152 Luckie St., within walking distance of the Georgia World Congress Center.

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More missionaries leave
Ethiopia as war worsens

By Craig Bird

N-CMB

Baptist Press
5/7/91

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--The TV news images of war haven't hit the streets of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital -- yet.

No running gun battles between fatigue-clad soldiers are seen. Burned-out cars don't stud the streets. But the noose of civil war is tightening around the city, and more Southern Baptist missionaries have left the country.

Three missionary couples remain: Jerry and Rosie Bedsole of Foley, Ala.; Rob and Patricia Ackerman of Wheaton, Ill., and Albuquerque, N.M.; and Sam and Ginny Cannata of Houston, and Hollandale, Miss. Exit visas in hand, they weigh the factors of going or staying.

Rebel forces are closing in on the capital and its embattled government. Dire rumors are plentiful, gasoline scarce. But instead of air raid sirens, quiet desperation permeates the atmosphere. Instead of bursts of machine gun fire, the steady pounding of wartime inflation beats on. Live chickens sell for \$12 each; ground beef is pushing \$3 a pound. Eggs are unavailable.

For the typical person in one of the poorest countries in the world, the growing scarcity and spiraling cost of food are just as deadly as artillery strikes, only not as quick. The missionaries won't starve, but they struggle with what is best for their Christian witness in the country.

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"I'm convinced we must accept as valid any individual decision to stay as well as any choice to come out," said John Lawrence, a missionary veterinarian from Jonesboro, La., who left Addis Ababa April 30 with his wife, Mary Lou.

"Mary Lou and I had been praying hard for the past month -- since the United States Embassy advised Americans to evacuate the country -- seeking God's will. We determined certain 'lines in the sand' (such as geographic progress of rebel troops) would be indicators it was time to leave."

On April 26 their prayer-based indicators said "go." But between then and their flight four days later, "we changed our minds at least every 30 minutes," Lawrence admitted. "It was like leaving a loved one who's dying of cancer when you know there's nothing more you can do. But it hurts to admit it."

Mrs. Lawrence, of Amsterdam, Mo., said the surface calm of Addis Ababa didn't help them emotionally. "If we would have flown out immediately after hearing the latest reports of the war, or if we had driven to the airport surrounded by the sounds and sights of fighting, it would have been easier," she explained. "The day we left things seemed normal and very peaceful."

But rebel troops are within 25 miles of the capital. Missionaries commuting to the last functioning Baptist-operated feeding stations and to a medical clinic under construction can hear gunfire. Rebel forces also threaten to cut the city's electricity if government troops don't stop shelling them.

Another opposition army is reported to be less than 15 miles from Assab, the last seaport under government control. Travel along the road connecting Assab with Addis Ababa without rebel permission is a high-risk venture. The rail line between the Ethiopian capital and the Red Sea country of Djibouti is the only dependable ground supply route.

At least nine different, mostly ethnic-based armies battle the government. A Lebanon-type chaos could result if Ethiopian President Mengistu Haile Mariam refuses to resign before the various armies enter the city.

Surprisingly, most Southern Baptist work continues, according to Mrs. Lawrence, although it is "limping along rather than running." The main exception came in April when the university where Lawrence taught veterinary science closed so all students could be sent to military training camps.

In Addis Ababa, Baptist literature publication and veterinary clinics still operate. Feeding programs for war refugees still function in northern Shoa province and Eahware, staffed by Ethiopians who live at the stations on the fringe of the war's front lines. Work also continues on construction of a Baptist medical clinic at Minji, about 100 miles from the capital. Missionaries drive to the outlying work almost daily.

Mrs. Bedsole, Mrs. Ackerman and the Ackermans' three daughters (the only Southern Baptist dependents left in the country), were scheduled to leave Ethiopia March 27 but decided not to go.

"It's hard to leave with no physical signs of danger and the rebels not walking the streets of Addis Ababa yet," said Jim Houser, associate administrator for Southern Baptist mission work in eastern Africa. "Each family has to decide if leaving would be more traumatic than staying -- and of course the likely answer to that is what will happen in Addis Ababa."

Houser and area director John Faulkner are working to provide alternate assignments for the Ethiopia missionaries. Nurse Betty Barham of Sontag, Miss., has accepted a transfer to a Baptist hospital in Zimbabwe and is in the United States awaiting a work permit from that country. Howard and Belinda Rhodes of Friona, Texas, due for a U.S. furlough in July, are in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, filling in for the Southern Baptist mission treasurer there.

"We would like to keep all Ethiopia missionaries in east Africa so if the situation permits we could put them back into Ethiopia," Houser said. "We have spots each of them have been asked to pray about, including the three couples currently in the United States."

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David and Debbie Brownfield of Bozeman, Mont., and Columbus, Ohio, are in the United States on personal leave following the death of Brownfield's mother. Jeff and Margie Pearson of Mora, Minn., and Paul and Hannah Gay of Cuthbert, Ga., and Jackson., Miss., are on furlough. Options for some include a permanent or temporary transfer to another country.

"We're really grateful the decision to leave is up to us and what we feel God wants us to do -- that way we can't blame anyone else," Mrs. Lawrence said. "But we know one thing: if we accept another assignment we want it to be temporary. We want to be on the first plane back to Ethiopia when we can."

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Cholera strikes
Ecuador missionary

By Mary E. Speidel

N E M B

Baptist Press
5/7/91

QUITO, Ecuador (BP)--A Southern Baptist missionary in Ecuador has contracted cholera in an epidemic that has killed at least 1,350 people in South America.

Allen McWhite, 32, of Greenville, S.C., is the first Southern Baptist missionary diagnosed with cholera since the epidemic broke out in Peru in January. The disease has since spread to Ecuador, Colombia, Chile and Brazil.

McWhite has been treated at home with antibiotics and intravenous fluids and is improving, said fellow missionary Dennis Herman. "It looks like the cholera is leaving his system," Herman said.

McWhite and his wife, Ruth, of Greer, S.C., are the only Southern Baptist missionaries in Riobamba, a city of about 100,000 people south of Quito, Ecuador's capital. They and their two children arrived in December.

A few months later the first cholera cases were reported in Ecuador. Since March the country has seen 5,000 cases and 400 deaths from cholera, according to government estimates. Among the deaths: the infant daughter of Rafael Padilla, a member of Eternal Life Baptist Church near Quito.

Cholera, a bacterial infection of the intestines, can cause violent diarrhea, vomiting and rapid dehydration. If untreated, it can bring death within hours or days. Cholera treatment involves rehydrating patients and fighting the bacteria with antibiotics.

McWhite was fortunate proper medicine was available in Riobamba when he needed it, Herman said. Ecuadorian health officials have warned of a possible shortage of medical supplies, so "there was a chance that the i.v. solutions might not have been available in that area," Herman said.

But even if supplies had been unavailable there, McWhite probably still would have been treated in time, Herman said.

On April 29, the day McWhite was diagnosed with cholera, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board administrator Bryan Brasington brought an emergency supply of cholera medicine from Peru for use by missionaries in Ecuador. The drugs were part of a shipment sent to Peru by Texas Baptists in cooperation with the mission board.

Brasington, area director for Spanish-speaking South America, didn't know about McWhite's illness until he arrived in Quito with the supplies. "Prayers were being answered all along the way for Allen," said Herman.

But some cholera patients haven't been so fortunate. About 50 deaths have been reported in Riobamba. In the mountainous areas around the city cholera has spread quickly among the Quichua people because of poor hygiene and lack of sanitation. Also, many of the Quichua are illiterate, so they can't understand printed materials on cholera prevention.

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To address these problems, Southern Baptist missionaries are working with MAP (Medical Assistance Program) International of Brunswick, Ga., to produce prevention materials for Ecuadorians who can't read. So far, about \$5,000 in Southern Baptist relief funds have helped pay for posters and pamphlets with pictures and for Quichua-language broadcasts to explain cholera prevention.

The Foreign Mission Board, in cooperation with Texas Baptist Men, will send more aid to cholera victims in Ecuador, but details are still being worked out, said FMB human needs coordinator John Cheyne. Cheyne expected a shipment of medicines and supplies to be airlifted to Ecuador by May 10.

Missionaries in Ecuador also have requested funds for medicines, printed materials, health promotion and construction of cholera beds and latrines. A team of Southern Baptist volunteers also will be recruited to build about 200 cholera beds for use in hospitals and clinics in Ecuador.

Meanwhile, in Peru the cholera epidemic has stabilized on the coast and in the mountains, said missionary Hayward Armstrong there. But the epidemic is spreading into the Amazon jungle, where about 400 cases have been reported in Iquitos, a city on the Amazon River.

Some cholera victims in Peru are being treated with drugs from a Baptist shipment that arrived April 28 in the Peruvian port of Paíta. The shipment included 216 tons of medicine and supplies sent by Texas Baptist Men in cooperation with the Foreign Mission Board.

Since cholera hit Peru, about 160,000 cases have been reported. As the epidemic spreads, World Health Organization officials have said up to 120 million people in South America -- one-fourth of Latin America's population -- is at risk from cholera.

Foreign Mission Board officials are urging missionaries in the region to start teaching people early about cholera prevention. "We're hoping to educate people in advance so that some of the sharpness of the need won't be felt in other countries like it has been in Peru," said Tom Vassar, associate area director for Spanish-speaking South America.

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Baptist medical aid
crosses into Iraq

By Terry McMahon

N-FMB

Baptist Press
5/7/91

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (BP)--Despite a change in airports, elusive landing sights and delayed clearances, a glistening white C-130 cargo plane landed in the Turkish city of Diyarbakir May 5 loaded with medical supplies for Kurds provided by Southern Baptists and MAP International.

The medicines and two teams of volunteer doctors and interpreters were bound for the town of Zakho inside Iraq, where U.S. troops have secured a neutral area for Iraqi Kurds who fled Saddam Hussein's forces into the mountains separating Iraq and Turkey.

With the promise of safety, the Kurdish refugees are beginning to return to their homeland to rebuild lives shattered by war and civil strife.

The relief effort, organized by Global Partners of London utilizing resources from Southern Baptists and others, began in late April. The volunteer teams flew to Diyarbakir and drove overland to the city of Van, near the southeastern tip of Turkey. From there they traveled by Land-Rover to Uzumlu, Turkey, where the first medical site was planned.

They soon saw, however, that the Kurdish refugees already were leaving. Some were returning to their homes in northern Iraq, but more were moving to the areas now under control of the U.S. military, the so-called "safe havens."

But the huge influx of refugees coming into Zakho has only made a difficult situation more critical. They bring with them the effects of weeks of scarce food, bitter cold and deplorable sanitary conditions. Refugees are reporting more and more cases of cholera.

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U.S. officials have been requiring each refugee to undergo a physical examination before entering Zakho. But with only two doctors giving exams, the process threatened to stretch into weeks. Many refugees can't survive even one week. It became clear the greatest need for the Baptist teams was in northern Iraq, and planners decided to move the relief operation there.

The decision to move the operation came just hours after the Turkish government had clamped down on what it termed "unfair and biased" reporting by some Western journalists and stories of incidents between British military and Turkish government officials. In an effort to restore control, Turkey had delayed permissions for both military and non-military aid shipments bound for the camps in northern Iraq.

The C-130 cargo plane loaded with the team's medical supplies sat for two days on a runway in Larnaca, Cyprus, while frantic efforts were under way in Turkey to secure permission to land in Diyarbakir rather than in Van.

Around noon May 5, the necessary permits were granted and the plane (provided by LeSEA Global Feed the Hungry ministry in South Bend, Ind.) was cleared to fly from Larnaca to Diyarbakir.

Little more than four hours later it touched down in Turkey, and volunteers began unloading its precious cargo of vaccines, rehydration fluids, medicines, supplies, and tents to be used as examination rooms.

Under jurisdiction of the Red Crescent (the Middle East equivalent of the Red Cross), the supplies and volunteers were to travel May 6 by truck to the border town of Salopi and then cross with a military escort into Iraqi territory for the final 15 miles to Zakho.

Tens of thousands of Kurdish refugees eventually will make their way to Zakho, where they will find desperately needed medicines and attention provided by concerned Christians living half a world away.

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Terry McMahon is covering Southern Baptist relief efforts in Iraq and Iran.

Retired missionary to Tanzania
Charles Bedenbaugh dies of cancer

N-FMB

Baptist Press
5/7/91

GREENVILLE, S.C. (BP)--Charles Bedenbaugh, recently retired Southern Baptist missionary to Tanzania, died of cancer May 4 at his home in Greenville, S.C. He was 62.

In Tanzania, Bedenbaugh was a church development adviser in the Tanga area, a port city on the Indian Ocean. He and his wife, the former Betty Marshall of Mt. Vernon, Ill., were appointed in 1959. They began their missionary careers working with Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists in the Tanzanian capital, Dar es Salaam. At times they had nearly 80 people in their home for Sunday school.

They later transferred north to Arusha, where he taught at the Baptist Theological Seminary of East Africa from 1967 to 1982.

The Bedenbaughs moved to Tanga in 1983 and planned to finish the last nine years of their missionary career there. But in 1988 doctors discovered Bedenbaugh's cancer. He underwent chemotherapy and the cancer appeared to go into remission, allowing the Bedenbaughs to return to Tanzania in 1989. The cancer reappeared, however, forcing them to return to the United States and eventually take medical retirement in March of this year.

Bedenbaugh, one of 11 children, was born in Greenville. He received a bachelor of arts degree for Furman University in Greenville and a bachelor of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He also received a doctor of ministry degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Before missionary appointment he was associate pastor and youth director for Connell Baptist Church and pastor of the former Sun Valley Church, both in Fort Worth.

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Besides his wife, Bedenbaugh is survived by three grown sons.

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

Metro New York Association hopes
to purchase mission house

By Mark Wingfield

N-KMB

Baptist Press
5/7/91

NEW YORK (BP)--Metropolitan New York Baptist Association -- located amid some of the nation's highest housing costs -- has announced plans to purchase a house or several apartments to facilitate volunteer mission work in the association.

Executive Director David Dean reported messengers to the association's April meeting gave approval to this concept. The association will provide up to \$350,000 toward the project but anticipates securing the remainder through donations.

Dean said he hopes the project might be completed within the next year.

If the mission house becomes a reality in New York City, it will be the second major metropolitan area in the United States with a house for volunteer Baptist missionaries. Greater Boston Baptist Association purchased a seven-bedroom, three-story house in Waltham, Mass., in 1989.

Housing is a critical concern for volunteers in New York City, Dean said. For example, efficiency apartments in the neighborhood where Metropolitan New York Baptist Association's offices are located rent for more than \$700 per month. One-bedroom apartment rents start at \$1,000 per month.

"Volunteers can't raise enough support to live here," Dean explained.

"We could use more volunteers yesterday, but before we can get the people committed to come, we have to get some place where they can stay at less than astronomical prices," he said.

Both short-term and long-term volunteers are needed to train congregations, start new churches, do student work, perform ministry tasks and do evangelism, Dean said.

"If we had the funding, we could put on a dozen staff members in the association right now." Since funding is not available for such positions, he said he hopes to add qualified volunteer staff.

In the proposed mission house or mission apartments, volunteers would pay a deeply discounted rent each month to help cover expenses.

Also, if adequate housing were available, Dean said the association could host furloughing foreign missionaries or missionaries who have fled countries due to political turmoil. Such missionaries could learn from New York City and provide excellent help in ministry there, he said, noting the city's culture offers a mixture of home and foreign missions.

In dollars alone, Southern Baptists have seen some of the best returns on their Cooperative Program investments through property owned in the New York City area, Dean suggested. For example, the associational office building, a six-story structure with about 10,000 square feet of space, was purchased in 1973 for \$350,000. The building now is valued at more than \$2 million.

One of the association's best-known ministries has thrived because of the availability of volunteer housing, Dean said.

Graffiti Baptist Center, located on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, is housed in three units of a apartment building cooperative. The Baptist Center and church use a unit on the lower level, and there are two apartments for volunteers on the second level.

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Currently, two long-term volunteers live there, and the facility also houses some summer student missionaries. Dean said this housing for volunteers is a major factor in Graffiti's ongoing success.

Prior to becoming associational executive director in New York City, Dean was pastor of Sudbury Baptist Church in Greater Boston Baptist Association. Having seen the impact of volunteerism within that association, he declared, "I know it will work."

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Oliver to join HMB
public relations staff

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HMB

Baptist Press
5/7/91

ATLANTA (BP)--Eddy Oliver, director of communications and alumni relations at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., will become assistant director of promotion at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board June 1.

Oliver will work with HMB promotion director Dan Euliss, with a major emphasis on promoting support of the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and the Cooperative Program.

Before joining the seminary staff in 1985, Oliver was director of public relations for Rushmore National Health System in Rapid City, S.D. He previously was assistant director of community relations at Foote Memorial Hospital in his hometown of Jackson, Mich.

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McDonald identifies sources
of drain in urban ministry

By Mark Wingfield

F-HMB

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5/7/91

NEWARK, N.J. (BP)--Urban ministry can become a "high casualty war area" unless ministers learn to overcome sources of energy drain, an American Baptist pastor and author said.

Gordon McDonald, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in New York City, spoke to pastors and missionaries attending an urban ministries conference in Newark, N.J. The conference was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

"Ministry in the city is like swimming through thick molasses," he said. "The city has a ... plan for your life. You have to hourly make decisions about which way you will go."

McDonald said there are sources of energy drain urban ministers can work to avoid.

First is an unidentified mission.

"Ministry offers so many opportunities to do good that it is necessary to choose the best things," he said, relating even Jesus said no when requests were not in line with his mission.

On the contrary, most ministers "find ourselves living by default" due to lack of a plan, he said.

Another energy drain is unresolved wounds, McDonald continued. Too often ministers live with denial and a need for repentance that constantly hinders their work, he explained.

Draining relationships can also be a problem, McDonald said. "Many of us allow ourselves to be surrounded with people who constantly pull from us to cover their own insecurities."

He encouraged pastors to devote their energies toward training less emotionally needy laity, who will in turn minister to others with greater needs.

Other energy draining factors McDonald listed include unmanaged time, working against spiritual gifts, unmanaged fears and being too busy.

He urged urban ministers not to neglect developing their own spiritual lives.

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"Every day life in the city is like being hit by a cue ball" and scattered all over the table, he explained. "We have to deliberately recollect ourselves."

This can be done by living a life of design rather than a life of happenstance, McDonald said.

He encouraged ministers to develop a personal statement of faith, a list of key values, a summary of personal policies, to search their motives and develop an inventory of obstacles. Further, he advised an evaluation of key relationships, a plan of personal discipline and a process of personal evaluation.

"The man or woman who is not budgeting up to 90 minutes a day for personal development is on the edge of danger," McDonald warned.

He compared personal development for ministers to the time a lumberjack spends sharpening his saw to work more effectively. "In the same way we need to sharpen our spirits."

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Attitude can transform
job, McDonald claims

By Mark Wingfield

F-14MB

Baptist Press
5/7/91

NEWARK, N.J. (BP)--Got a boring job in a city full of nameless people?

Attitude can transform a boring urban job into a Christian ministry, an American Baptist pastor and author said during an urban ministries conference in Newark, N.J.

Gordon McDonald, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in New York City, related the story of a bus driver he sees almost daily in his commute to work. One day the man complained to McDonald: "You've got it a lot better than me. You have an interesting job and travel different places. I just drive this bus up and down the same streets every day."

McDonald told the bus driver his job could be a Christian ministry too. "Every day, when you first get on this bus, before anyone else gets on, dedicate that bus to God for that day. Declare it to be a sanctuary for God for that day. Consecrate it to God's glory, and then act like it is a place where God dwells."

Several weeks later McDonald returned from a trip and saw the bus driver. "You've transformed my life," the man exclaimed. "I've been doing what you said every day, and it has made me see my job in an entirely new perspective."

The same transformation could happen to other people in their work if they would take the time to prayerfully adjust their attitudes each day, McDonald claimed.

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Seminary couple's adoption makes
Romanian girl no longer foreign

By Tim McKeown

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Baptist Press
5/7/91

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--For months pictures of deprived and malnourished children in Romania have filled the newspapers and televisions of America.

And while one child out of a 100,000 in Romanian orphanages may not seem like a lot, 4-year-old Andrea is more than enough for Hal and Carla Ostrander. She is an answer to prayer.

Although Hal is still a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and with two children of their own already, the Ostrandersons knew God wanted them to adopt a child likely destined for a life of poverty.

During his five-and-a-half week stay in Romania, Hal said he felt God's presence throughout the red tape of the adoption process.

"People who were working as translators for me kept saying 'You are so lucky.' They couldn't believe how everything worked out," Hal said.

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Andrea has lived most of her life in the orphanage and does not speak English. But it was her overwhelming, contagious affection that sealed the decision for Hal. "She was the first one through the door, and she had a shyness that appealed to me."

When Carla received the call from Romania, she was surprised Hal had selected a 4-year-old rather than an infant. "When Hal called and told me about Andrea, I trusted in God and trusted Hal, so I said go ahead. I knew God was in control."

The adoption process was not without a hitch. The day the adoption was finalized, Hal was involved in a head-on collision as his vehicle, driven by one of the Romanian nationals, was struck by a drunk driver.

No one was injured seriously in the accident, but the hospital delay was the first of several delays. Hal had to meet with the parents of the girl and ask their permission to adopt her. Many of the children are placed in orphanages because their parents cannot afford to take care of them.

"I was so nervous, scared to death," Hal recalls about meeting with the parents. After 20 minutes of showing pictures of their home, of their two children, Alison, 10, and Mark, 8, and telling how much Andrea would be loved and cared for in the United States, the parents agreed to let their daughter go.

Since their return, Andrea has been a joy to her family as she learns about her new country. "It was so funny to watch her eat ice cream for the first time," Carla said. "She took a little tiny bit on her tongue at first, then tasted it, then took another bite. She was amazed with escalators and loves to try anything new."

"She's a big hit at church," Carla said, "We are committed in bringing her up in the discipline of the Lord. After all, she's an answer to prayer."

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