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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Comm. #
901 Commerce #
Nashville, Tennessee 3720
(615) 244-2335
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-897
CompuServe ID# 70420.1

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
NASHVILLE Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Tom Strade, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

May 9, 1991

91-71

Baptists release \$345,000
for relief in Bangladesh

By Marty Croll

N-FMB

DHAKA, Bangladesh (BP)--Southern Baptists will spend \$345,000 to buy food for Bangladeshis and help them rebuild their villages after the April 30 cyclone that killed at least 125,000 people.

In their first relief request, Southern Baptist missionaries in Bangladesh outlined plans for a \$120,000 food-for-work program. They also sought \$225,000 for rebuilding about 400 houses not related to the food-for-work program.

Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board administrators have agreed to dip into a portion of the special contingency funds originally set aside for an extensive relief response to the Persian Gulf War aftermath. Funds generally used for relief needs not related to hunger have been depleted.

To help meet needs not related to hunger in Bangladesh, the mission board has set up a Bangladesh relief fund. People who want to contribute should address their gifts to Bangladesh Relief, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, Va. 23230.

"Our response is going to be centered around helping people who have lost their farms and their homes, to help them rebuild and get started with their farms again," said John Ingouf, associate area director for Southern Baptist mission work in southern Asia. Officials estimate about 80 percent of the mud-and-straw homes in the affected region were blown away.

Securing food to meet the immediate needs of 10 million homeless people has been less of a problem for relief groups than reaching people with the food, said Clyde Meador, a mission administrator based in Bangkok, Thailand.

Meador has spoken by telephone to missionary James Young of Thomastown, Miss., in Bangladesh. Communications to and from Bangladesh and anywhere except Bangkok were cut off during the cyclone when a satellite transmission station was damaged.

Bangladesh owns only a tiny fleet of 12 helicopters. Those helicopters, plus a handful of others borrowed from India and Pakistan, are being used to drop rice and drinking water in the remote areas. The most immediate threat to survivors is disease resulting from contamination and lack of food and water.

Although government officials put the death count by May 7 at 125,730 people, missionary Jim McKinley of Albany, Ky., reported some people claim as many as 400,000 Bangladeshis might have died. Officials have no way to estimate how many people simply washed out to sea as winds churned up the Bay of Bengal, causing sea water to rise by 20 feet and sweep over the land. Many offshore islands were under 12 feet of water.

"Ocean-going ships were tossed about like toys," McKinley said. "Airplanes at the Chittagong Airport were piled against other planes. Roads were washed away and even large boats were left lying across roads. Thousands of fishing boats, the means for a living for thousands of people, were beaten to pieces."

Bloated human corpses and rotting water buffalo and cattle carcasses were strewn in the fields as water receded from low-lying delta plains.

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Bangladesh, a low-lying country about the size of Wisconsin, is one of the poorest nations in the world. Its 115 million people earn an average of \$170 a year per capita. It is frequently buffeted by cyclones, droughts and floods.

"A few miles west of where this storm struck are the open plains or delta of Bangladesh," McKinley reported. "This time, the (strongest) force of the storm struck a hill area. This undoubtedly saved thousands of lives. One can only imagine what would have happened had this force struck the open delta."

The 16 Southern Baptist missionaries in Bangladesh were unharmed. Only one missionary couple, R T and Fran Buckley of Picayune, Miss., live in the area of devastation, an arc of several districts about 125 miles from Dhaka, the capital city.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The name of R T Buckley in the last paragraph of the above article should be used as shown, with no punctuation after R and T.

Gospel seed blooms brightly
inside dark prison walls

By Jim Houser

JH FMB

Baptist Press
5/9/91

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--Yusufu wished his friend had never come back from Zanzibar. He had left the Comoro Islands a Muslim and a good companion, but returned full of talk about Jesus.

The friend had become a Christian through a Bible correspondence course during his absence from home. Now he witnessed to Yusufu so relentlessly Yusufu began avoiding him completely. But the seed had been planted.

Later, after five months without being paid, Yusufu joined other teachers in a strike against the government of the Indian Ocean island nation. Soon he was imprisoned without charges.

In his cell, the friend's words about Jesus continually came back to him, even though he tried to push them from his mind. For eight months, with little to do but brood, Yusufu fought the gospel seed as well as despondency over the lack of satisfaction he found in Islam.

Finally, his thoughts allowed the seed to spark a mental light. He recalled the Koran, Islam's holy book, said Jesus had ascended to heaven and was alive. "It's much better," the light seemed to say, "to follow one who is alive than one who is dead!" Yusufu asked Christ to come into his life and show him a better way.

A few days later two lawyers came to the prison to attempt to gain freedom for political prisoners. Yusufu sought the lawyers out. But once he was face-to-face with them, he told them he was not who they were looking for; he declined to be classified as a political prisoner.

That night Yusufu dreamed he was at the prison's location, but that it was no longer there. The next day he was freed. He learned he was the sole beneficiary of the lawyers' efforts, despite his assertions he wasn't a political prisoner. He left prison twice freed -- physically and spiritually.

That was in 1983. For eight years Yusufu prayed daily for help in Bible study. Recently doors opened for seminary study in Madagascar. But he discovered formal study, although useful, doesn't help his spiritual development as much as the MasterLife discipleship class he takes with Southern Baptist missionary Fred Sorrells. He even told his seminary professors his MasterLife studies must be done before class assignments.

Now he prays about the day he will return home and, like his friend, share his faith with people who don't know Jesus as Savior.

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"God is going to raise up someone who will stand in boldness to proclaim the freeing power of Christ among the Muslims," he declared. "I am praying that, upon my return, I will be that man."

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Jim Houser, a veteran East Africa missionary and administrator, will become associate area director for Southern Baptist work in eastern and southern Africa in June.

Christians in Soviet Union
still praying for Gorbachev

By Art Toalston

N. CMB

Baptist Press
5/9/91

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Despite the Soviet Union's woeful economy, Christians there are praying Mikhail Gorbachev will stay in power, according to a Baptist leader from the Soviet republic of Kirgizia.

Christians in the Soviet Union remain grateful for Gorbachev, said Alexander Sipko, pastor of a 1,500-member church in Frunze, capital of Kirgizia, and superintendent of Baptist churches in the Frunze area. The Soviet president has given religious groups so much freedom "it's unbelievable," Sipko said in a May 6 interview at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va.

Why has Gorbachev -- currently the target of both hard-line and reform-minded critics in the Soviet Union -- been so friendly to religion? Sipko replied by citing a biblical passage: "The heart of the king is in God's hands" (Proverbs 21:1).

"If he (Gorbachev) is really a human being," Sipko added, "he must be a friend of all human beings."

Religious freedom in the Soviet Union continues to grow, Sipko said, citing recent permission given by authorities in Frunze to conduct an evangelistic campaign in the city's main soccer stadium in August.

Previously barred from ministry in government social institutions, churches now help meet a range of human needs, he said. The church he leads, for example, is active in seven children's and three senior citizens' homes.

Kirgizia is one of the Soviet Union's predominantly Muslim republics, but Russians, Ukrainians and others also live there. Sharing the gospel with Muslims is "very hard," Sipko said. But Christians and Muslims have long accepted each other as "persecuted friends" facing Soviet atheism as their common enemy, the pastor said.

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New Orleans Seminary announces
Distinguished Alumnus

N-CO
NOBTS

Baptist Press
5/9/91

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Jerry L. Breazeale will be honored as New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's Distinguished Alumnus during this year's alumni meeting and luncheon to be held in Atlanta next month.

The award, given annually by the seminary's faculty, will be presented during the alumni luncheon in the Thomas B. Murphy Ballroom of the Georgia World Congress Center immediately following the conclusion of the morning session of the SBC Wednesday, June 5.

From Brandon, Miss., Breazeale retired last year as director of the seminary's School of Christian Training. He holds a bachelor's degree from Mississippi College, as well as the bachelor of divinity, master of theology and doctor of theology degrees from New Orleans Seminary.

Breazeale has been pastor of churches in Mississippi and Louisiana, and was a member of the Louisiana Baptist Convention executive board. In 1989, he received the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's Mosaic Award for significant contribution in the area of ethnic leadership, having directed the seminary's various ethnic branches.

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The meeting will include special music, as well as a report by Seminary President Landrum P. Leavell II.

Tickets for the luncheon are \$12 per person, and are available by mail from The Office of Alumni, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 3939 Gentilly Blvd., New Orleans, La., 70126-4895.

Tickets purchased from the office after May 17 may be picked up at the seminary's booth at the Southern Baptist Convention. Tickets purchased at the seminary's booth will be \$15 each.

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(BP) photo of Breazeale is available upon request from New Orleans Seminary

Two small church pastors
honored for leadership

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
5/9/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--Earl Midkiff of Petersburg, Alaska, and Doug Benningfield of Sparta, Tenn., have been named outstanding small church pastors in the Southern Baptist Convention for 1991.

The pastors were selected for "noteworthy and meritorious achievement in pastoral ministry and denominational service," according to Charles Belt, consultant in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church administration department. The honorees were chosen by a special committee of pastors and SBC program leaders who received nominations from each state convention, Belt said. Only pastors serving churches of fewer than 300 members are eligible for the award.

Small Church Pastor of the Year for the western region of the United States, Midkiff has been pastor of First Baptist Church of Petersburg for 19 years. A small town of about 3,000 people, Petersburg is located on an island that can only be accessed by plane or boat.

During Midkiff's tenure, First Baptist Church has secured its own building, grown steadily in membership and Sunday school attendance and given consistently to the Cooperative Program, associational missions and special mission offerings. Midkiff and his wife, Shannon, actively work with the town's young people, and their church has produced several state winners of Bible drills and youth speakers tournaments.

Midkiff also spent many years making weekly or bi-weekly flights from Petersburg to hold church services in logging camps and villages in the area. He led the church in starting missions in Throne Bay and Coffman Cove and in offering support to two bivocational pastors living on Prince of Wales Island.

Named Small Church Pastor of the Year for the eastern region, Benningfield has been pastor of Hickory Valley Baptist Church in Sparta for nine years.

Though the population in the rural farming community of Sparta remains stable, the church has baptized 27 people, added 35 new members and grown from a Sunday school average attendance of eight to 50 under Benningfield's leadership.

During his entire ministry Benningfield has been a bivocational pastor. He has worked as a car salesman and furniture salesman and recently became retail supervisor for Agee Oil Company in Sparta.

He also is active in the Union Baptist Association where he has been clerk, moderator, missions development director, trustee and has held other positions of leadership.

As part of their recognition, Midkiff and Benningfield will be honored at Glorieta (N.M.) and Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist conference centers respectively. Both will receive expense-paid trips to the conference centers this summer during Bible-Preaching-Administration Weeks.

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Seminary kids following
in fathers' footsteps

By Tim McKeown

F-10
(SWBTS)

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--When Steve Dominy and Sharon Kirkpatrick talk about being a part of the family at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary they mean more than fellow students and alumni.

As children of Southwestern professors Bert Dominy and David Kirkpatrick, the two students have a special place in their hearts for the seminary and their teachers.

"I fought it as long as possible but finally decided to come here," the younger Dominy said, adding when he was growing up, his peers expected him to go into the ministry and attend Southwestern Seminary. So instead, "I was an agriculture major. I wanted to punch cows and didn't want to have anything to do with the ministry."

Sharon Kirkpatrick, who felt the call into the ministry for some time, also experienced some reservations about heading into her dad's turf.

"While I was at Baylor (University), I felt God calling me into the ministry. My first thought was, of course, Southwestern, but then I wanted to go somewhere else," Kirkpatrick, a 22-year-old divinity student, said.

Though children of professors are not unheard of, historically it has been more of a rarity than what people often expect. Dominy said he did not necessarily like the expectation of going into the ministry, but while attending Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas, God finally got Dominy's attention. "I tend to be real obstinate. If I don't want to do something, I won't do it."

Like Dominy, Kirkpatrick wanted to make sure the calling was from the Lord and not just pressure to follow her father. "Through God's calling, I decided to come to Southwestern."

A first-semester seminarian, Kirkpatrick says she is looking forward to having her father as a teacher. "He cares about his students. All the professors here train students to be the vessels that God can use in their ministry and dad does it well."

Dominy also has high praise for his father. "He's a good teacher because he's kept his feet on the ground and kept rooted with real people."

And do they plan to continue following in their fathers' footsteps. Said Kirkpatrick: "I'm open to the call of being a teacher. I like people and helping them find direction in their life." Dominy also echoes that sentiment. "I enjoy academics, even the studying and learning. It's a possibility."

Though not a son of a professor, student Russell Dilday has also received his fair share of raised eyebrows when answering roll call. The nephew of the seminary's president said he struggled with the decision to come to where his name would be so recognizable.

In addition to his nephew, all three of President Russell Dilday's children, Robert Dilday, Nancy Duck and Ellen Garrett, attended Southwestern, as did their spouses.

Through the years, parent/child, teacher/student relationships have included T.B. Maston and his son, Gene, who was one of the first children of a professor to graduate with a bachelor of divinity.

In 1976, professor of pastoral ministry C.W. Brister's son, Mark, was the first professor's son to graduate with a master of divinity degree and the only professor's son to earn his doctor of philosophy from Southwestern. Brister also was an adjunct teacher in preaching and evangelism from 1978-1980 and is now pastor at Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, La.

Leon McBeth, professor of church history recalls having his son, David. "Neither one of us knew what to expect. We had a very formal relationship in class. I would call him David and he would call me 'Pop,'" the elder McBeth said.