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91-88

Kurdish refugees need prayers
support, seminary student says

By Lydia Murphy

*N-CO
SUBTS*

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Kurdish refugees massed on the border between Iraq and Turkey are in a "state of shock," according to a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary who recently returned from the area where he served as a translator for a Texas Baptist medical team.

Jordanian native Shaun Shorrosh, a master's of divinity student at the Fort Worth, Texas, school said refugees need the prayers and support of Americans.

"It was sad to see the people," Shorrosh said. "They were in such a state of shock, especially those that had lost family members."

He said older refugees are dying from dehydration and malnutrition, and others have been killed by Iraqi mines planted in the area.

While Shorrosh's group concentrated primarily on meeting physical needs of the refugees they also carried a Christian witness to the camp at Zakho in northern Iraq.

"We were there as an aid organization," Shorrosh said. "We did not want to jeopardize our visit and our ability to help and so we had to focus our attentions on their physical needs. There were just too many people to care for in such a short time."

But Shorrosh said people who helped the medical team heard the gospel constantly. While in Turkey, a young Kurdish Shiite Moslem tour guide travelling with the team accepted Christ, Shorrosh said.

The seminary student said team members, "saw God at work as doors closed and others opened."

Shorrosh said on one trip, the vehicle the team rented broke down "right in front" of the tent of the man they were going to see. "God was at work because we had no idea where or how we would find the man," Shorrosh said.

And while the trip had good moments Shorrosh said it was not an easy trip physically and emotionally.

"Seeing those people suffering and what they have to go through, and seeing so many dying without knowing about Christ was very hard," Shorrosh said.

He said the refugees had a "tremendous feeling" for the United States. The Kurds had named their camp Bush, in honor of President George Bush.

"It was a great opportunity to reach out to them, just to let them know that American people care for them," Shorrosh said.

The journey for Shorrosh was a homecoming to the area of the world where he was born. A Jordanian national, he lived in Nazareth, Israel, until his family moved to the United States in 1976. His father is a Baptist pastor and the family members are now naturalized U.S. citizens.

Shorrosh's wife, Amal, is also Jordanian and a student at Southwestern.

Southwestern Seminary sending
class heavenward this fall

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Space-age technology is being used this fall to teach ancient history at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

In a new program being introduced during the fall semester, William Tolar, vice president for academic affairs and provost and distinguished professor of biblical backgrounds at the seminary will teach a class live through a satellite transmission linking eight cities in Texas and Oklahoma.

According to David Fite, Southwestern's director of continuing education, the class will be produced at the seminary and sent live to the Southern Baptist Radio/Television Commission in Fort Worth, which will uplink the transmission to a satellite.

Classrooms in Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, Lubbock, Amarillo, and Odessa, Texas, and Shawnee and Tulsa, Okla., will initially be set up to receive the instruction. Fite said more sites will be added if interest is shown in other cities.

"This is the first time that Southwestern has done anything like this," Fite said. "Even though this has been done over the years with colleges and universities, we are the first of the SBC seminaries to do this."

Fite said the satellite class will allow students enrolled in off-campus locations to participate in a class taught by a teacher who cannot travel to a particular place.

He said the course can be taken for academic credit by students admitted to Southwestern and currently enrolled. The course can also be taken for continuing education credit "by anyone who wants to increase their knowledge of the Bible including pastors, Sunday school teachers, and church leaders.

"We are trying to make theological education accessible to larger numbers of people without diminishing the integrity of the classroom," Fite said.

Because the production is live, students will have the opportunity to interact with professors by way of a telephone hookup at each location where the transmission is being received. Classes will be offered on Monday evenings from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Tolar will teach "The Graeco-Roman World" this fall beginning Sept. 9. In the spring, John Newport, retired vice president for academic affairs and provost and distinguished professor of philosophy of religion, emeritus, will teach "Satanism, Occult and the New Age Movement" beginning Jan. 13.

While the program is not available on the ACTS network or through a cable company, Fite said anyone with a satellite dish can receive the class. He said instructions are needed in order to downlink from the satellite for reception. Enrollment in the class provides study material for the course.

More information on the program is available from Fite by writing to the Office of Continuing Education, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, P. O. Box 22000, Fort Worth, Texas, or by calling (817) 923-1921 ext. 2440.

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"Read through the Bible" held
during Southern Baptist Convention By Mark Coppenger

Baptist Press
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ATLANTA (BP)--It took 262 Southern Baptists 81 hours and 6 minutes to read through the Bible at their 1991 Convention in Atlanta.

Beginning at 12:45 p.m. on June 2, and ending at 9:51 p.m. on June 5, representatives of every Southern Baptist entity and the Woman's Missionary Union took their turns at the rostrum in a downtown hotel meeting room.

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The project dramatized Southern Baptist allegiance to Scripture and blessed a procession of readers and listeners, said a convention spokesman. As each reader finished his portion, he would sign the Bible at his stopping point. He also logged in and out on a master schedule.

Convention President Morris Chapman of Wichita Falls, Texas, asked Landrum Leavell, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to organize the project.

Chapman and Leavell were the first readers on Sunday with SBC officers and former convention presidents joining Wednesday morning. New Orleans Seminary vice president for business affairs, Clay Corvin, who has coordinated such Bible reading projects on the campus, provided hour-by-hour guidance.

At times, only one person, the reader, would be present. On other occasions, there were a dozen people in the gallery.

Most readers signed on for a 10 to 15 minute segment. In many cases, this meant a few chapters in the middle of the book. But when the readers came to the minor prophets at about 2 a.m. Wednesday, some were able to finish complete books.

Executive Committee member James Jones of Campbellsville, Ky., covered Jonah, and Richard Rosenbaum, vice president for business and finance of the Executive Committee finished Joel.

Though many of the readers were weary when they stepped behind the Bible, they uniformly reported the experience brought them refreshment. Many pressed beyond their time limit.

This Bible will be on display in the New Orleans Seminary library.

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Mark Coppenger is vice president for public relations for the SBC Executive Committee.

Spiritual, numerical
breakthroughs cited

By Linda Lawson

N-SSB

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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Breakthroughs in spiritual healing and growth, baptisms and quality Bible teaching must happen if Southern Baptists play a major role in spreading the gospel around the world, Harry Piland told ministers of education at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center.

"Breakthrough is needed desperately in this country," said Piland, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday school division. "If we can have breakthrough in our churches, we can have it in our convention (Southern Baptist Convention.) If we can have it in our convention, we can have it in our world."

Speaking during a session of the first of three Glorieta Sunday School Leadership Conferences, Piland listed four stackpoles of breakthrough.

Churches must focus on their God-given mission, said Piland -- "authentic evangelism with integrity." Prayer, genuine caring and quality Bible teaching also are needed.

"Don't settle for half-baked teaching-learning in your Sunday school," he urged.

Bill Gambrell, minister of education at First Baptist Church of Jackson, Miss., said breakthrough in churches will happen only as individuals realize their accountability for winning people to Christ.

"We've got to bring our Sunday school leaders back to seeing that reaching people for Christ is their number one priority," said Gambrell, newly elected president of the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association.

At the same time, he said, "one of the greatest challenges of the 90s is going to be balancing church growth with discipleship and spiritual growth of our members."

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Breakthrough Sunday school literature improvements which will be used in churches for the first time in October were introduced during the week, along with information about the Great Commission Breakthrough Project to be launched in 1992 to provide customized growth help to individual churches.

Literature improvements focus on four areas: greater emphasis on the Bible, stronger evangelism and application, greater ease of use and improved attractiveness.

After seeing youth materials in the Life and Work Series, Ricky Brewer of First Baptist Church of Altus, Okla., praised improved organization that would make the materials easier for him to use.

"Putting the whole lesson together has been confusing to me," said Brewer, a ninth grade Sunday school teacher and department director. "Also, there are good helps for teachers meetings."

Brewer said his department definitely plans to use the new WORData notebook which includes more than 100 pages of Bible study helps and space for filing Sunday school quarterlies and Scripture cards.

Youth will be asked to help raise the funds for the notebooks, he said. "Evangelism has been strong in our church, but we have been behind in discipleship. These materials will help."

As preparation for the Great Commission Breakthrough plan which will be launched in 1992, 400 consultants have been trained and are working in 350 pilot churches. The pilot is being evaluated this summer and materials refined.

Consultants serve without honoraria. They hold a planning session with the church staff and key leaders before conducting a consultation which includes Bible study on breakthrough and setting growth goals. Then the consultant makes at least three follow-up visits.

"Our biggest change was a spiritual revitalization of our people," said Harry Watson of College Park Baptist Church in Las Vegas, Nev. "Great Commission Breakthrough has brought us back to the idea that the church is to reach the lost."

Randy Tompkins, associate in the Sunday school department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, is coordinating the Mississippi pilot test with 15 churches and 20 consultants.

Beginning in 1992, the state convention has a goal of involving 200 churches per year.

The first breakthroughs being experienced by Mississippi churches are attitudinal, said Tompkins. They overcome their fear of changes caused by growth; they begin to care for people outside the church; they become more serious about seeking spiritual growth through the church.

"The numbers will follow these kinds of breakthroughs," said Tompkins.

Customized help for individual churches and follow-up in implementing plans and evaluating progress are the two greatest strengths of the program, he added.

Joe Haynes, Sunday school growth consultant and a member of the board's Great Commission Breakthrough Task Force, said spiritual healing has been the initial breakthrough in many pilot churches.

Also, "many of our workers have become complacent, and we need to help them develop new attitudes to experience breakthrough in evangelism and growth," said Haynes.

Jerri Herring, also a member of the task force, said: "Not every church is ready to pay the price of commitment and hard work it takes to have breakthrough. Every church that is ready to allow the Holy Spirit to work in and through it will experience breakthrough."

A total of eight Sunday School Leadership Conferences are being conducted this summer at Glorieta and Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist conference centers.

Southern Baptist youth
are not crisis proof

By Terri Lackey

F-55B

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Christian youth are not crisis proof and Southern Baptist youth are just as susceptible to suicide as any American teen-ager, according to a Southern Baptist counselor.

"The question we have to ask is, 'Are our kids crisis proof?' Is there something about Christianity or Southern Baptistness that makes them crisis proof," Joe Richardson asked a group of youth leaders attending a seminar on suicide. Richardson was leading the conference during Summer Youth Celebration at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, June 8-14.

Richardson, a counselor for the Sunday School Board and staff counselor for the youth conference, said, "Christianity does not exclude anyone from crises. In reality, Southern Baptist youth have the same amount of problems that other youth do. I know I have had a full day every day counseling with them about their problems."

Richardson said suicide is an epidemic among adolescents. "Apart from accidents it is the number two cause of death to teen-agers."

About one-fifth of the nearly 50 youth leaders attending the seminar raised their hands when Richardson asked how many have had a young person from their group commit or attempt suicide. At the time of the mid-week conference, Richardson said he had already counseled over six youth who had contemplated suicide.

Richardson said adults sometimes make the mistake of stereotyping potential suicide victims as meek and mild young people who are unpopular, unathletic, shy and homely.

"You cannot stereotype those likely to commit suicide," said Richardson, who recounted a story about a friend of his in junior high school who killed himself.

"Lowell was popular; he made all A's; he was handsome; and he was captain of the football team. Looking back, I could never find one reason why he would want to do that."

Teens contemplating suicide sometimes display warning signs, Richardson said, and youth leaders should watch for those.

They might begin to give away their worldly possessions; they might display sudden behavioral changes (going from outgoing to shy or good grades to bad grades); or they might give verbal clues.

"Research shows," Richardson said, "a high percentage of those who commit suicide have given verbal clues like, 'I can't take this anymore,' or 'You won't have me to kick around anymore.'"

Potential suicide victims might become isolated or withdrawn; they might be using drugs or alcohol (which lowers their inhibitions causing them to commit acts they might not otherwise commit); or they could have tried committing suicide before.

"But if a kid commits suicide and you had no idea he was in pain you can't beat yourself up over it," Richardson told youth leaders. "Some give no signs."

Richardson made suggestions to youth leaders on how they can help a youth who they believe is seriously contemplating suicide.

"First of all, don't panic. Try not to get hysterical," he said. "You may have more time than you think. That person needs someone strong."

Richardson said if a teen tells someone he is contemplating suicide, take him seriously. "Don't call his bluff. You may challenge him that way and create a situation where he feels he has no alternative."

Never leave the teen-ager alone, Richardson said. And alert the parents.

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"Don't ever promise a youth secrecy. You can promise him confidentiality. But, let him know up front that you might have to tell someone."

Richardson told the youth leaders to refer the young person to a professional -- "one that you have investigated and feel comfortable with."

Finally, Richardson told the leaders to pray for the young person. "They need your prayers."

About 2,500 attending Summer Youth Celebration sponsored by the youth section of the SSB's discipleship training department.

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Pounders receives
research award

N-CO
S-RS

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ATLANTA (BP)--Jeff Pounders, instructor of sociology at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., is this year's recipient of the outstanding student research award from the Southern Baptist Research Fellowship.

Pounders received the \$200 award for his doctoral thesis titled "Congregational Decision Making: An Extra-rational Paradigm for Understanding Forced Pastor Terminations in Selected Southern Baptist Congregations."

Pounders received his doctorate and master's of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He graduated from Ouachita Baptist University in 1977 with a bachelor's degree in psychology.

Seminary professors were asked to recommend student researchers for the award. Their recommendations were judged by a committee of Southern Baptist Research Fellowship members. Jim Lowry of the Baptist Sunday School Board served as committee chairman.

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'We have the testimony,'
inner city pastor says

By Mark Wingfield

F-NMS

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QUEENS, N.Y. (BP)--Iglesia Bautista Canaan, a Spanish-speaking Southern Baptist church in Queens, N.Y., is a congregation full of testimonies.

In fact, says pastor Ernesto Chaparro, the congregation's very existence and growth is testimony to the power of God.

Starting with one broken family on welfare 17 years ago, home missionary Chaparro began what is now the only Spanish-speaking Southern Baptist church in Queens, a borough of New York City and home to 500,000 Spanish-speaking people.

The congregation meets on one of the borough's toughest streets, with drug deals transacted on the church's doorstep every night. Like Chaparro, many of the congregation's members have come from Colombia and know well the evils of drugs and alcohol.

"Already the mafia has killed three people in our church who came and tried to get out of drugs," Chaparro explains. "One of them I baptized before he was killed."

One woman in the church, whose name cannot be used without endangering her safety, has seen 25 family members killed by the mafia. A former drug courier herself, this woman became a Christian through the witness of her landlord, who also is a member of Iglesia Bautista Canaan.

This former drug dealer has since led 20 others to profess faith in Jesus Christ, Chaparro notes. "They are now baptized members of our church."

Her faith remains strong, even though her 25-year-old daughter was kidnapped in 1989 by the drug cartel. "My daughter knows Jesus Christ," she says with tears streaming down her face. "So if she is not with Jesus on earth, I know she's with him in heaven."

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The trials and victories experienced by individual members of Iglesia Bautista Canaan are also evident in the corporate life of the church. Recently, the congregation moved across the street from its former location to an old factory that finally provides enough space for Sunday worship.

Previously, the congregation of more than 200 people met in a building designed to hold 70 at most.

Taking on the \$4,000 per month mortgage was "a great risk," the pastor explains, but "I encouraged the people in faith to trust the Lord." The church's total budget this year is \$150,000.

"The Lord is blessing us," Chaparro says. "We have a testimony in this neighborhood. I believe our testimony speaks louder than our words."

About 95 percent of the people coming to this church have never heard the gospel clearly explained even one time before, the pastor claims. Many have never had their own Bible.

"We encourage them to pray and read the Bible. We are patient with them," he says. "Sometimes it may take six months. When they learn to pray and read the Bible, they will be more open."

Just this year, Chaparro says, he is beginning to see results with people he first starting ministering to eight years ago.

Amid its growth, the church has started two missions, Nueva Vida in Queens and El Redentor in Brooklyn. Nueva Vida began five years ago with 15 members and now averages 70 in attendance. El Redentor began three years ago with 12 members and now averages 35 in attendance.

"This has been painful because we don't have enough leaders," Chaparro says. "But when we started missions we also grew."

Like most of his church members, Chaparro has a story to tell.

Born to a poor Colombian family, his mother died at age 33 of starvation. After marrying in Colombia, Chaparro and his wife came to America with \$50 in their pockets. The friend who was supposed to meet them when they arrived in New York City didn't show, and they ran out of money after two days.

Having left behind his job as a salesman in Colombia, Chaparro worked his way up from sweeping floors to being the head assembly man in a furniture plant.

While living in Los Angeles for a brief time, Chaparro and his wife became Christians through the witness of friends. With \$10 loaned to him from another friend, Chaparro enrolled in a Bible institute. Along the way he was introduced to Southern Baptists.

Iglesia Bautista Canaan began meeting in 1974 with the Chaparrros and a single mother with three children. Until 1979, he worked bivocationally.

By 1980 the church had grown to 100 people. Since that time, Iglesia Bautista Canaan consistently has been in the top 15 churches in the state in baptisms, averaging 30 baptisms per year.

Last Easter, 270 people attend Sunday services and Chaparro baptized 11.

"I serve only by the grace of God," he says. "I confess my lack of education. I just finished high school when I started to study the Bible. When I came to the Lord I had no education. It is by the grace of God I am here."

"When you think about all that's happened, it's because the Lord is here. We have the testimony."

Church school teaches love
to children and director

By Mark Wingfield

F-AMBS

BRONX, N.Y. (BP)--Fifteen years ago, Maisie Bruce envisioned starting a preschool where city children could learn the love of Jesus.

Now preparing for retirement as a Southern Baptist home missionary, Bruce realizes she has learned more about love than the children -- even though they have learned much.

With support from the Cooperative Program mixed with years of hard work and prayer, Bruce has built the Wake Eden Academy as a ministry of Wake Eden Baptist Church in Bronx, N.Y. The academy has grown from five students to 81 students and a waiting list.

In the British tradition learned in her native Jamaica, Bruce administers the school with a firm but loving hand. She mingles among the students like a mother hen, firmly nudging her children in the right direction with a tap on the head or calling a child by name to straighten up.

When she returns from a trip, the children immediately run to her with all the news of what has happened during her absence. "If I kiss one of them, I have to kiss all," she says. "These kids teach me love.

"When they run to me and say, 'Teacher, I love you,' those are the times I feel the work of Christ is really satisfactory."

Bruce was honored this year with the Award of Excellence by Air Jamaica -- the latest of numerous recognitions for her work in education.

Wake Eden Baptist Church is located in a community with a large Jamaican population. Most of the academy's students are Jamaican.

Fifteen years ago, Bruce was a teacher and social worker with the New York City Board of Education. When she was laid off due to budget restraints, she arose from a morning devotion to look out the front window of her house.

She saw several parents taking their young children to babysitters. From that moment, she had the idea of starting a Christian academy for the preschool children in her neighborhood.

"It was like a vision," she recalls. "I had never had time to think about it before."

Those five children she saw going to a babysitter became her first students. They are now in college, preparing for careers in professions such as medicine and engineering.

"When we began, there were not many schools to respond to the ethnic groups coming into this area," Bruce says. The building used by Wake Eden church and the academy once housed an all-white Lutheran congregation that disbanded as the community changed.

"It's not easy for a black child to make it in this world," she says. "But we are preparing these children to perform in the community. They will not be school drop-outs; they will not be drug addicts.

"We believe what they learn here will set a precedent for their futures. All the kids who leave from here are always at the top of their classes."

Additionally, the academy has strengthened families in the community, Bruce explains. With about 40 percent of the students coming from unchurched families, "these children become ambassadors in their homes."

Bruce says she has many parents tell her their children insist on praying before meals at home after learning to pray at the academy. "Some parents have said their little children have put them to shame."

Through the academy, "we can reach the parents better," she adds. "We can minister to them and they'll understand. The parents will learn more about Jesus Christ."

"It gives us an opportunity to minister more effectively to the community," adds pastor Sam Simpson. "It gives us an entree. A number of the families have joined the church."

Beyond the preschool, the academy offers an after-school program and summer day camp for older children. Student summer missionaries appointed by the Home Mission Board staff the day camp.

Except for the summer missionaries, Bruce's small salary and use of the building, the academy pays its own way. "If we had to pay rent, we could not carry on," she explains. "The Cooperative Program has been a great asset to us."

Bruce would have retired last year, but no one had been found to replace her. "I will wait on the Lord," she says. "I'm sure he's going to send someone."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist papers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press