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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2357
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8915
CompuServe ID# 70420,17

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 Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

August 16, 1991

91-124

Astronaut/minister dies,
saw earth 'as God must see it'

N-CO

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, Colo. (BP)--Astronaut James Irwin, remembered for his scripture quote during an Apollo moon trip and for his unsuccessful search for Noah's Ark, died Aug. 9 of an apparent heart attack.

A Southern Baptist and retired Air Force colonel, Irwin, 61, died at his home in Glenwood Springs, Colo. He suffered at least one earlier heart attack, following his trip to the moon in the Apollo 15 flight of 1971.

He was buried Aug. 15 in Washington, D.C., with full military honors.

In 1971 he had joined Nassau Bay Baptist Church, Houston, near the Johnson Space Center, where he was ordained as a minister of the gospel. He founded High Flight International, an interdenominational evangelistic organization based in Colorado Springs, Colo., in 1972.

Having a dual career, Irwin used speaking engagements after the flight of Apollo 15 in 1971 to share the religious dimensions of the trip.

"My life will never be the same because I saw earth as God must see it," Irwin explained during a prayer breakfast in 1981.

He led an expedition in 1982 to Mount Ararat in Turkey in a search for the biblical Noah's Ark but did not find any evidence of it on the 16,946-foot peak.

A native of Pittsburgh, Irwin received a bachelor of science degree in Naval Science from the United State Naval Academy. He was also awarded honorary degrees from two Southern Baptist schools: William Jewell College, Liberty, Mo., and Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

His death came one day after his 20th anniversary of his return trip from the moon.

Irwin is survived by his wife, Mary Ellen, five children, his mother and a brother.

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Student missions applications drop
while field requests increase

By Chip Alford

F-SSB

Baptist Press
8/16/91

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--A staff member of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board expressed concern during an Aug. 14 Student Conference Forum at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center over what he termed a "disturbing" drop in summer missions applications by college students.

According to Van Simmons, associate director of short-term volunteers at the Home Mission Board, the number of HMB-paid student summer missionaries has dropped by more than 200 in the last five years, from 739 in 1986 to 526 for 1991. During the same time period, however, requests for student summer missionaries from the field have increased, he said.

"We did not fill 288 positions this summer for our 8-10 week summer missions program," Simmons said. "That to me is a very disturbing figure and it concerns me."

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Simmons was part of a panel that addressed the topic, "Student Missions: Where are We Now." Other panel members included Bill Lee, director of the HMB's special ministries department; and Karen Park, consultant for the Foreign Mission Board's international services department.

Several possible reasons for the decline in student missions applications were discussed by the missions agency representatives and state student directors, Baptist campus ministers and church ministers to college students participating in the forum.

Factors included: a growing trend toward Baptist Student Unions, state conventions and local churches organizing and funding their own mission trips separate from the organized missions program; a growing number of students who cannot take summer missions positions because they need to earn more money to pay increasing tuition costs; and a lack of awareness about mission opportunities among students and student leaders.

Another factor in the decline, panel leaders said, is many students are opting for shorter-term summer mission projects offered by the HMB, FMB, BSUs and state conventions.

"Some students may have gone the 10-week route if they didn't have the two-week option," Lee said. "Our missionaries rely on these (10-week missionaries) and they are having to cut back programs because of (the smaller number of available students)."

Simmons said the HMB wants to offer as many options as possible for student missions involvement without losing the strength of the "core" 8-10 week summer program. He said he is working to make the summer missions program more "relevant" to students, as well as improving the supervision of students on the field.

Simmons said he also wants to increase communication with church ministers to college students about the summer missions program.

"A lot of people out there think that you have to be involved in BSU to be a summer missionary and that just isn't the case," he said. "We have a lot of churches out there with active ministries to college students that could be helping us recruit summer missionaries."

In her report to the group, Park said 17 of 147 foreign missionary requests for spring and summer student missionaries were unfilled in 1991. In addition, 57 of 154 requests for special project summer missionaries were unfilled. Some of those projects, she said, were canceled by state conventions.

During the forum, panel leaders also reported:

- Fewer applications for the HMB US-2 program were received in 1991 than ever before.
- Only 46 journeymen were sent out by the FMB this year, less than half the number who went for a two-year appointment the previous year.
- As many as 20 student semester missions positions may not be filled by the HMB because of a lack of applications.

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CORRECTION:

In the story released Aug. 15 headlined, "Parks urges new global thrust, offers leadership till 1995," please add the words "seminary and" to the 16th paragraph. It should read:

3. Challenge at least 10,000 seminary and college students to begin cultural and language studies no later than 1995 and spend 1999 "overseas in world evangelization or (in) becoming tentmakers" to work and witness in nations closed to missions.

World demand for English
opens doors for gospel

By Donald D. Martin

F. CMB

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The English language is big business, and it has attracted not only international investors but mission planners as well.

A British government agency estimated the market value of English-language instruction worldwide at nearly \$11 billion in 1989.

And the value of English as an international commodity has caught the attention of Christian strategists. Most view the growing demand for English training as a prime opportunity to reach new areas of the globe for Christ.

"One of the greatest opportunities we have in sharing our faith is through lay people going overseas to teach English," said James Hampton, assistant vice president of Cooperative Services International, a Southern Baptist aid organization.

"If (Southern Baptists) are seriously interested in sharing the gospel of Christ, this is a wonderful way," he said.

English teaching may play a significant part in helping Southern Baptists reach their Bold Mission Thrust goals, which center on presenting the message of Jesus Christ to all people in the world by the year 2000. At the Foreign Mission Board's August trustee meeting, President Keith Parks unveiled his vision of what steps were necessary to reach Bold Mission Thrust goals.

One of his proposals calls for at least 10,000 college and seminary students to begin foreign culture and language studies by 1995 and go overseas in 1999 to work in either direct evangelism or tentmaking. Tentmakers are Christian professionals who often work in countries closed to missions. They support themselves with skills needed in host countries while seeking ways to present the gospel.

"Going overseas to witness as an English teacher is an excellent way of fulfilling this goal," Hampton said.

English dominates international communication and commerce. And the world's embrace of English as the international language has intensified since a wave of democratic reforms swept the globe.

English has even become the common language of protest. Demonstrators from Tiananmen Square in China to Wenceslas Square in Czechoslovakia know that slogans written in English will reach a wider audience.

As political barriers have dropped in most Eastern European countries, reform-minded governments see English skills as vital to economic and democratic development. Czechoslovakia's state-run television now airs courses on how to learn -- and teach -- British and American English. A national newspaper there has begun printing installments of an English textbook. In Poland, when the Peace Corps asked what type of specialists the country needed, English instructors topped the list.

The Foreign Mission Board has its own growing list of requests for English teachers. Recently the board launched an accredited course in teaching English as a foreign language. Fifty-seven people received teaching certification at the end of an intensive three-day class held at the board's Missionary Learning Center at Rockville. By fall, this first group will have fanned out into 19 countries to teach English full time or part time.

Dawn Fondy, 26, of Los Angeles, plans to teach English to female Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The women want to learn English before they settle in Europe, Canada and the United States. Most of the women have lost hope of returning to Afghanistan and now see English as their key to a new life.

But June Garrott, one of the certification program's leaders, warns Christian teachers about developing cavalier attitudes in teaching English.

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"We in the United States are fortunate to have been born native speakers of English at a time when English is the international language. But our ability must not lead to any sense of cultural superiority," she said. Garrott has taught English in China and will begin teaching English in October at the Southwest Women's College in Kitakyushu, Japan.

"It is often not so much what you say as how you say it that matters most overseas," Garrott said. "We are known as Christian teachers, so people watch us all the time. Along with this opportunity comes the responsibility to live out a Christian life."

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Donald D. Martin and his wife, Robin, also a journalist, taught English for two years in China.

Operation Rescue battle in Wichita
stirs Southern Baptist pastors there By Louis Moore

N-CLC

Baptist Press
8/16/91

Wichita, Kan. (BP)--Three of the 36 Southern Baptist pastors here have been arrested in demonstrations since Operation Rescue began blockading abortion clinics in this city July 15.

At least one other Southern Baptist pastor says he is seriously considering joining in the protests, which would likely lead to his arrest, too. Five other Southern Baptist pastors have been spotted standing on the sidelines at the demonstrations.

The remaining Southern Baptist pastors in Wichita are divided along lines that are either for or against Operation Rescue. Operation Rescue chose Wichita as the site for its "Summer of Mercy" protests, and secular and religious leaders say the demonstrators have seized a strong emotional grip over the entire city. "From rumblings outside abortion clinics to grumblings on the school board, many Wichitans agree that hostility is the mood of the moment," said Suzanne Perez in an article in The Wichita Eagle newspaper.

Operation Rescue founder Randall Terry advocates a style of civil disobedience against abortion which is reminiscent of civil rights demonstrations of the 1960s. Operation Rescue demonstrators sometimes resort to disobeying laws concerning trespass and obstructing access to abortion clinics.

More than 1,400 people, including more than 80 clergy, have been arrested in the demonstrations against Wichita's three abortion clinics. Much of the activity has focused on Wichita physician George Tiller's Women's Health Care Services, which does late-term abortions.

The demonstrations in Wichita are heading to a crescendo on August 25 at a rally planned in the basketball arena at Wichita State University.

Tom Schaefer, religion writer of The Wichita Eagle, said in an article, "Since Operation Rescue leaders came to Wichita and started its campaign of blockading abortion clinics, (local) ministers have had to face the issue anew."

Craig Atherton, 39, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Wichita, says when the Operation Rescue demonstrations started in Wichita on July 15 he was just a spectator watching the events on television. His wife, Colleen, and their 11-year-old daughter led their family to involvement -- and eventually to be arrested -- through a decision to take drinks to the protesters. They moved from bearing drinks to carrying signs and eventually persuaded Atherton himself to join the movement in early August.

Craig and Colleen Atherton and their two daughters, ages 11 and 8, were taken into custody on August 3 outside the Tiller clinic. Despite prior assurances from the police that their daughters would neither be separated from them nor arrested, the girls were taken to a separate holding station and threatened with being sent to a juvenile court, Atherton said. The girls were eventually released without arrest but Atherton says they were severely frightened by the experience.

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David Cone, 45, pastor of County Acres Baptist Church in Wichita, and his wife Nancy were also arrested on the same day at the same site as the Athertons. Their 11-year-old daughter was also separated from them and taken to the same holding station as the Atherton's daughters. The Cones, however, were involved with Operation Rescue from the beginning of the Wichita demonstrations.

The third pastor who was arrested in the demonstration is Richard Simmons of Plainview Baptist Church in Wichita.

At the same time, John Click, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Wichita, the largest Southern Baptist congregation in Kansas, has been processing how involved he is going to be in the protests.

"These demonstrations have awakened many of us who are pro-life to do more than just be verbal," he said. Two weeks ago in a newspaper interview he advocated fighting abortion through the proper legal channels and not protests. But in an interview on August 14, Click said he is rethinking the situation. He said he is gravely concerned with not only the abortion issue but also how the protesters in Wichita have been treated.

He said he is particularly offended by U.S. District Judge Patrick Kelly's harsh treatment of the demonstrators, especially the clergy. Kelly has ordered U.S. marshals to enforce his orders stopping the protesters from blocking access to the abortion clinics. He has jailed some protesters with stiff sentences and vowed to keep the abortion clinics open. On August 4, The Wichita Eagle used the headline, "Judge has had enough of protesters" in reference to Kelly.

Click said "Until now, I have not felt in my heart free to express my convictions in this way (by demonstrating). But I affirm the priesthood of the believer at this point. Much of the New Testament was written by Paul in prison. I can't disassociate myself from men of conscience who are taking this stand (against abortion).

Said Click, "The rights of people are being trampled. The issue is much broader than just pro-life. I appeal to our Baptist brethren and our Baptist leadership to help us in this hour of crisis."

Richard D. Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission is urging Southern Baptists in Wichita to think through carefully how they feel toward Operation Rescue and then to respond with their consciences but with a nonjudgmental love toward one another.

"It is clear from a wide range of events and statements that Southern Baptists disagree about Operation Rescue," Land said. "Even among the significant majority of Southern Baptists who are adamantly opposed to abortion on demand, there is disagreement concerning either the acceptability or the advisability of Operation Rescue.

"Both those responding positively and negatively to Operation Rescue should always remember that when the point of invoking civil disobedience has been reached is a question that must always remain one of individual conscience. I would call upon those who have reached that point not to judge those who have not, and those who have not, not to judge those who have."

Land said his own position is one of "sympathetic neutrality. I am sympathetic with the concerns and goals of Operation Rescue, but neutral concerning the methodology they feel compelled by conscience to employ."

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Churches should minister
to needs of homosexuals

By Chip Alford

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F-SSB

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Homosexuality is not the "sin of sins;" rather it is one manifestation of man's rebellion against God, a conference leader told student workers attending the 1991 Student Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

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"We have to get over our homophobic reaction to homosexuals and learn to minister to them. They are hurting people," said Eddie Tubbs, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Alamogordo, N.M. Tubbs led the seminar, "Counseling With Those Struggling With Homosexuality," Aug. 12.

Tubbs, who has a background in chaplaincy and campus ministry, encouraged student workers to become informed about homosexuality so they can help students who struggle with it.

"We need to let them know that homosexuality is not an alternative lifestyle. It is sin. But it is not the sin of sins. It is not unforgivable," Tubbs said.

Homosexuality is a sin "that can only be handled by the grace of God," Tubbs said. "But the church, particularly the evangelical church, has not faced up to this issue. We've let it become so far removed from us that we don't know how to minister to people who are struggling with it."

Christians need to learn to see the homosexual as God sees him, Tubbs said. "We need to learn the difference between the behavior of an individual and the soul of an individual."

In counseling with homosexuals, Tubbs said he introduces those who are not Christians to the love and life-changing power of Christ. He also tries to help them recognize the true image of God that is within them.

"Any sexual perversion, whether it is homosexual or heterosexual, compromises that image. But if I know the image of my God, I will discover the true image of myself as an individual," he said.

While it is vital that homosexuals be introduced to God's grace and forgiveness, Tubbs said it is also important they understand they are responsible for their actions.

"They need to know they don't have to be enslaved to homosexuality," he said. "Their mode of behavior is their choice. And with the power of God we have the ability to take the difficult path and make the difficult choice."

While change from a homosexual orientation to a heterosexual lifestyle is difficult, "it can be done through the power of God," Tubbs said.

He encouraged student workers to locate Christian counselors in their areas who have experience in counseling homosexuals. He noted two umbrella organizations -- Exodus International, based in San Rafael, Calif., and Homosexuals Anonymous, based in Reading, Pa. -- that maintain a referral list of local ministries for people struggling with homosexuality, from Christian support groups to counseling agencies.

"There is nothing gay about the homosexual lifestyle," Tubbs said. "Homosexual relationships are often brutal and impersonal. The best gift we can give to them is the love of Christ."

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