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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #75C
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President:
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420.17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30387, 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

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Somali refugees get
food, gospel in Kenya

LIBOI, Kenya (BP)--Not many people in Kenya have ever heard of Liboi, and outside of east Africa the arid spot is practically unknown.

But tens of thousands of refugees from Somalia know Liboi. It's now their home. They fled their impoverished Muslim country when it collapsed into civil war earlier this year. Somalia borders Kenya.

Southern Baptists are making a difference in this place they've never heard about. Southern Baptist hunger relief funds are feeding more than 8,000 Somalis a month.

Kenya missionary Clay Coursey of Lubbock, Texas, coordinates the project, working in conjunction with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees. Actual distribution of food is being handled by three Kenyan Baptists: Patrick Wanje, Patrick Mwaro and Benjamin Katana.

"The three church planters also offer Bibles to anyone who wants one, and they preach the gospel when they visit the camps," Coursey reported. "In spite of deadly pressure against taking the Bibles (an estimated 97 percent of the Somali people are Muslim), many Somali men return privately to accept a Bible and at least eight have made private professions of faith."

About \$50,000 in Southern Baptist hunger funds have been allocated to the Liboi project so far.

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Jimmy Carter visits
Zambia missionaries

By Franklin Kilpatrick

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LUSAKA, Zambia (BP)--Former President Jimmy Carter visited Southern Baptist missionary families in Zambia Sept. 24 during his stay in the African nation.

Carter told the missionaries about his trip to Zambia as an election monitor, the work of his organization and his own local Southern Baptist church involvement.

Carter was in Zambia at the invitation of Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda to monitor the fairness of elections to be held Oct. 31. The elections could lead the country back to multi-party politics after 17 years of one-party rule.

The former president's organization, the Atlanta-based Carter Center, is neutral in election politics, he explained. But it is interested in seeing the elections are free and fair, no voter intimidation occurs during the campaign and balloting and vote counting are accurate.

"If Zambia is successful in this election, it will send a wave of encouragement across the continent to others who want to see this type of democracy," said Carter.

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He expressed concern about the continuing state of emergency in Zambia. In a discussion with Kaunda the day before, he asked the Zambian president to lift the state of emergency before the election. Kaunda was reluctant to do so, Carter reported, but promised to review the situation at the end of September and make a decision then.

Besides monitoring the elections, the Carter Center also is involved in an agricultural project in Zambia. The project encourages 10,000 small farmers to multiply their output of essential food grains such as corn and sorghum.

Zambia, facing famine and the possibility of importing food, uses only 6 percent of its arable land for farming even though it has plenty of water and rich soil, Carter said. "The future of Zambia lies in agriculture, not in copper," he declared.

Speaking of his involvement in Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, Ga., Carter said he has an excellent opportunity to share the gospel with people through his Sunday school class because of his fame. He told of teaching "the Baptist orthodox gospel" to sometimes as many as 200 visitors. Many of these people never attend church but come to hear a former president.

In all his activities, Carter said he tries to share a positive witness for the gospel where appropriate, and where it's not appropriate, "we just share ourselves in the name of Jesus."

Asked about Christians in politics, Carter responded, "I believe a person can be just as honest in politics as you can be as a missionary." Christians should be involved in politics for the good of their people, he added.

Carter was welcomed to the mission gathering by Lonnie Turner, who administers the work of 43 Southern Baptist missionary colleagues in Zambia. Turner thanked Carter for his concern for the world's suffering people, especially in the southern Africa region. He assured the former president of the missionaries' prayers as Carter works toward bringing about a more just society in the region.

"He's such a gracious and real person," Turner said of Carter. "This has been a very memorable experience." Turner participated in a worship service with Carter and others at Lusaka's Anglican cathedral Sept. 22.

Beatrice Kamuwanga, recently elected executive secretary of the Baptist Convention of Zambia, also welcomed Carter. Kamuwanga, a lecturer in law at the University of Zambia, is the convention's first woman executive secretary.

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Kilpatrick is press representative for Southern Baptist missionaries in Zambia.

CLC's Smith named
to advisory board

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WASHINGTON (BP)--James A. Smith of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has been named to the advisory board of a major alcohol policy conference scheduled next year in Washington.

Smith, director of government relations for the CLC, accepted the invitation Sept. 19 to serve on the committee preparing for Alcohol Policy VIII to be held March 25-27, 1992. It will be the eighth time the conference has been held in the last 12 years, said Patricia Taylor, a member of the advisory board.

The meeting is an opportunity for individuals and groups involved in alcohol prevention and public policy to "come together and strategize and act," said Taylor, director of alcohol policy for Center for Science in the Public Interest.

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The advisory board will plan the agenda, arrange for speakers and publicize the conference, Taylor said.

"I'm pleased to have the opportunity to represent the CLC on the advisory board of Alcohol Policy VIII," Smith said. "This conference will provide Southern Baptists concerned about alcohol policy with a unique opportunity to meet with others who are actively involved in addressing the harmful effects of alcohol on our society."

Other members of the board include representatives from the National Parent Teacher Association, the American Public Health Association and several alcohol and drug prevention organizations.

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Group created for ministers
in resort, leisure settings

By Sarah Zimmerman

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ATLANTA (BP)--An organization has been created for people who minister in resort and leisure settings.

The purpose of the Association of Resort and Leisure Ministers is to "encourage and celebrate the revelation of God's presence in resort and leisure settings," according to a vision statement adopted by 52 people attending the organizational meeting in Atlanta.

Bill Black, home missionary and director of Smoky Mountain Resort Ministries in Gatlinburg, Tenn., is the association's president. He said resort and leisure ministries involves "communicating the gospel to people who are caught up in the leisure lifestyle.

"Whether it's a destination resort or a leisure activity, they're getting their identity from play," Black said.

The group plans to produce a newsletter and offer workshops for continuing education and fellowship. The group will be a resource for people wanting to begin resort and leisure ministries, and it will promote awareness of needs and opportunities for ministry.

In addition to Black, officers are Jeff Wagner, director of mission ministries for the Southern Nevada Baptist Association in Las Vegas, vice president for programs and services; Randal Cowling, director of Atlantic City (N.J.) Ministries, vice president for publications; Bo Simms, director of special ministries for the General Board of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, vice president for membership; and Christy Hansen, Atlanta layperson, vice president for administration.

The organization's yearly membership fees are \$35 for individuals, \$50 for couples, \$20 for students and people age 60 and over and \$200 for organizational sponsors.

For more information about the group, write the Association of Resort and Leisure Ministers, P.O. Box 2011, Columbia, SC 29202-2011 or call Black at (615) 436-4076.

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Five Baptist universities
ranked as 'best' by U.S. News

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NEW YORK (BP)--Five universities, all members of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools -- Samford in Alabama, Stetson in Florida, Mercer in Georgia, Wake Forest in North Carolina, and Richmond in Virginia -- are ranked among the 10 best regional universities in the South in the newly released 1992 edition of "America's Best Colleges," published annually by U.S. News & World Report magazine. The report was released on newsstands Sept. 23.

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The magazine surveyed 558 comprehensive regional universities which it said "provide the kinds of professional programs found at large state universities and the intimate setting of a liberal arts college." Rankings were based on statistics which measured selectivity, acceptance rate and test scores of student body, quality of faculty, financial resources, academic reputation and level of student satisfaction.

Wake Forest scored first among the 15 southern schools ranked, followed by Richmond and Stetson; Samford was seventh and Mercer, tenth. They were the only SBC-related colleges or universities to appear in the 1992 rankings.

"The national recognition of these five Baptist universities attests to the fact that the faculty, staff and administration of these schools are excelling in their task of providing educational excellence and personal attention to students while upholding high Christian standards," said Arthur L. Walker Jr., executive director of the Southern Baptist Education Commission.

"All five of these universities have been strengthened and energized by their historic relationship to Southern Baptist state conventions," Walker said. "Southern Baptists should be proud of the success and continuing efforts of these universities to integrate personal faith with academic disciplines in the pursuit of educational excellence."

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Former MBTS trustee chairman
presents preaching lectures

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--"If you knew what God wanted to do for you, you'd let him," said J. Truett Gannon during the Week of Preaching lecture series held recently at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Gannon, a Midwestern trustee from 1980-90 and chairman of the board from 1987-90, was guest speaker for the series which is sponsored annually to provide an opportunity for spiritual renewal and inspiration for seminarians and area guests. Gannon is president of the Georgia Baptist Convention and has been pastor of Smoke Rise Baptist Church in Stone Mountain since 1976.

"The strength of our relationship with God does not hinge on what knowledge we can accumulate about him, though we should accumulate all that our minds can absorb. But the strength of our relationship with God is founded on what he already knows about us, and you and I can trust God for what we don't know," said the Georgia pastor who used John 4:1-14 as his text.

"Is there any of us who has any desire deeper than that of just becoming all that we can be? God's whole personality is committed to meeting what we really need in order to live at our very best," asked Gannon. "If you knew what God wanted to give you, you'd wait on it, you'd accept no substitute and you'd bargain for nothing else."

Waiting is difficult, though, Gannon acknowledged. "We are a 'what we want, when we want it' people. ... Can you wait, or do you feel the need to bargain with God to receive his blessings? Can you trust, or do you believe that life's rewards go to the better manipulators?"

"We must realize that God is not some disinterested being who must be cajoled into our point of view," Gannon said. "God is already pre-committed to us more than we could ever convince him. ... God is committed to helping you discover your deepest wants. He knows your wants even better than you know them yourself."

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Ferguson challenges students to
'live life from center out'

By Breena Kent Paine

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Live life from the center out, not from the circumference, Milton Ferguson challenged students and faculty gathered for a recent convocation service at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Sharing insight gained from his own experience, the president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., said when he tried to do everything right for God's glory, he was like someone trying to draw a circle freehand. No matter how hard he tried, he could not make it perfect. "I had been trying to construct my life by the circumference," Ferguson explained. "There were things there that shouldn't be there, others that should."

The best way to draw a circle, however, is to begin with the central point, he said.

"The correct doctrine is essential and important. Feelings are essential and important. Behavior is essential and important. But we'll never know the joy ... without first coming to the center, and the center is Jesus Christ our Lord."

"You're not saved by your personal theological insight," Ferguson continued; "you're saved by a personal relationship with Jesus Christ."

"When we're concerned about the circumference, we become circle checkers for others," he explained. "We say, 'Aha! You're not doing this. You don't believe like you should.'"

However, if a Christian is living by the word of God as revealed in the Bible, "we can maintain our focus on the center."

"What a wonderful feeling when you can take the bits and pieces of life and fit them together so that there's meaning in life, believing that the living God is the one reality that ties all things together so that life has meaning and purpose," said the Oklahoma native. "Then our theology, our psychology, our politics, our economics, all of life is wonderful when everything fits."

"But what happens when you find some things don't fit -- when all the bits and pieces of your life are strewn on the floor?"

The Bible addresses that matter, Ferguson explained, by telling the stories of men and women whose lives "came apart." However, "in the midst of all this, they kept on betting their lives on the living God. ... Somehow they could keep on keeping on."

"Seeking the controlled outcomes in life to make sure everything comes out right in the end, (we can) become so obsessed with guaranteeing God's successes that (we do) God's work men's way."

Instead, "I challenge you this year, every day, to make sure your eyes are focused on the center -- the heart of the matter. You'll no longer stumble over the lumps and bumps of your neighbor's life," he continued. "We are brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, and are bound together by Jesus Christ."

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Faith, family, friends
bring personal happiness

By Breena Kent Paine

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"Happiness has absolutely nothing to do with external circumstances," Fred Lowery told students and faculty at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary during a recent chapel series on happiness. "It comes from inside."

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"America is a society that has never had more," said the pastor of First Baptist Church of Bossier City, La., and a member of the seminary's board of trustees. "Yet we spend more money on drugs than on food in America; one-third of our people wake up depressed; and ... only 15-20 percent of American people will ever wake up happy.

"Fame, fortune, and fooling around is our philosophy, but happiness is not there," he continued. "Faith, family, and friends is where happiness is.

"Happiness is not in success, not in power, not in people, not in money," Lowery said. "If all your 'if only's' came true, it still would not guarantee your happiness.

"Life is not acquisition. It is not what we have. It's what we are," he explained. "You don't have to have God plus a good marriage, ... or a certain income, ... or a new church to be happy. Happiness is not things; it's a personal relationship with God."

Lowery, who has experienced troubles such as arson of his church building and threats to his family, said God provides every Christian with "trouble grace," the ability to make it through whatever crisis he is facing; "tough love," unconditional love and forgiveness; close friends, a support system; and timeless principles, biblical guidelines for attitudes and actions.

"The only way you get your song back is to start singing again," Lowery said. "The church needs men who will just be God's men, (who will) stay loving regardless of what others say. With that kind of leadership, God can change the world."

Four greatest needs in life only God can meet are significance, meaning in life; sufficiency, "knowing you have the source of power in you to cope with anything"; satisfaction, contentedness not based on outward circumstances; and security, "knowing you cannot lose significance, sufficiency, or satisfaction because God is the one giving them to you, and he is the only secure thing you can attach your life to."

"When you boil down life to its simplest form, it's simply a series of choices. We are the result of the choices we make," he said. "Personal happiness is always a choice. And that means you are responsible for your own happiness. ... Nobody can ruin your life but you.

"Someone once said, 'If you could kick the person most responsible for (the bad things) in your life, you couldn't sit down for a week.' The biggest mental error we ever make is when we put our happiness in someone else, or in some circumstance or some event.

"We always say, 'I'll be happy when ...,'" Lowery said. "My friend, if you're not happy now, you're not going to be happy then."

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Communications technology
poses challenge for Christians

By Pat Cole

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Electronic communications technology is challenging the church to find ways to spread its message in a "post-literate age," a theology professor told a Southern Baptist religion and the arts conference.

Changes in communications technology historically have changed how people sort and categorize information, said Tom Boomershine, professor of theology at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. He termed such changes "paradigm shifts."

The development of literacy, the invention of the printing press and the emergence of silent reading all have caused paradigm shifts in the church, said Boomershine at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's second National Conference on Religion and the Arts. Most of these developments occupy a place of "unrecognized centrality" in church history, he noted.

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Boomershine described the present paradigm shift as the most significant "since the formation of the church and the development of writing."

"In this age, it is now possible to communicate all around the world instantly orally, via electronic communications technology," he said. Therefore, he added, the church must develop "a new paradigm for the communication of the gospel in the electronic communication of the global village."

New paradigms, he said, always demand a re-examination of sources, forms and styles of communication. The present post-literate age beckons Christianity to reclaim its roots as a storytelling religion, Boomershine stressed: "The primary form for the communication of God in Israel and Jesus Christ was storytelling. The clearest evidence of storytelling is the character of the Old and New Testaments. Over half of both Testaments is narratives."

Storytelling is the "primal art form" of Christianity, he said: "It is the most important source out of which our tradition has come."