

# (BP)

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September 30, 1992

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CROATIA -- Yugoslav Baptists feeding refugees; FMB sends \$225,000.

CALIFORNIA -- California Baptists protest OK of homosexual rights bill.

YEMEN -- Yemen grants hospital 70 percent fee increase.

NASHVILLE -- More than 1,100 accept Christ at Centrifuge, Crosspoint camp.

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DALLAS -- Criswell College names president.

Yugoslav Baptists feeding  
refugees; FMB sends \$225,000

By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press  
9/30/92

ZAGREB, Croatia (BP)--As war drags on in Bosnia-Herzegovina, hundreds of thousands of refugees flooding neighboring Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia face a harsh winter of hunger and homelessness.

A small band of Baptists are carrying out heroic efforts to feed and aid refugees in these fragments of shattered Yugoslavia -- and even risking their lives to deliver food into Bosnia itself on dangerous border roads.

Southern Baptist workers are helping, and they'll be able to help a lot more with a \$225,000 gift from churches at home.

The money, authorized Sept. 30 by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, will fund Baptist feeding programs in seven areas of the three republics. It will help churches feed about 33,000 hungry people, including Muslim refugees from Bosnia, for periods ranging from two to six months.

The program also will deliver the gospel message to refugees through evangelistic literature and local church follow-up.

Foreign Mission Board human needs specialist John Cheyne and Van Williams, the board's chief medical consultant, went on a week-long fact-finding mission in early September to Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia. They were accompanied by Southern Baptist representatives Bill Steele and Nela Williams. Steele, of Columbus, Ga., coordinates Southern Baptist human need efforts in the area. Nela Williams, a native Croat, has been aiding war refugees -- at times sheltering them in her own home -- since Yugoslavia began disintegrating last year.

What they saw and heard on the trip reveals some of the suffering endured by survivors of the savage Yugoslavian war, even as the killing goes on.

"We drove down near the (Croatian) border of Bosnia to see the destruction firsthand," Cheyne reported. "Pakrac, a city of 10,000 people, was virtually destroyed. About 80 percent of all buildings had been bombed into rubble. We then traveled to within two kilometers of the 'front lines,' where the U.N. border patrol stopped us. The town of Lipik, four miles south of Pakrac, looked as if an atomic bomb had fallen on it. On the return trip to Zagreb we visited a number of refugee families. In most cases they have been taken in by Christian families and were living 12 and 15 to a room.

"These were not families used to living in poverty. They had been working at good jobs, had their own homes and enjoyed a good life style," Cheyne added. "Now they are utterly destitute."

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More than 1 million refugees and displaced people now struggle for existence in Croatia alone, including about 300,000 refugees from Bosnia, according to Croatian authorities. In some areas the number of refugees equals the local population. At least 250,000 homes and apartments have been destroyed in the republic.

The war also has disrupted food production. Food supplies are barely adequate for now, but won't last the winter for the normal population and the refugees. Prices are soaring.

Some refugee families returning to the rubble that once was their homes have no fuel or bedding to keep warm in the makeshift shelters they are building. More than 10,000 women and children live in tents in one area.

Croatia is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. But the tiny Baptist Union -- with only 40 churches and five full-time pastors -- has formed a relief arm called "My Neighbor" that is so effective the government has called on it for help. In addition to Southern Baptist assistance, the union has received aid from European and Canadian Baptists, the Baptist World Alliance and other organizations. It distributed about 1,000 tons of seed for planting earlier this year.

The union has challenged its churches to feed 1,000 families each. They are delivering food packets to each family containing basic survival items about once every three weeks.

"The complete effort is coordinated with evangelistic follow-up, and each packet includes evangelistic materials," Cheyne said. "In one situation, the local church attendance increased almost 300 percent following the distribution."

In Slovenia, which so far has escaped the fighting, the Southern Baptist group met with the republic's vice president. He complimented local Baptists' relief efforts. Slovenia, with a population of 2 million, has absorbed 200,000 refugees from the war. The six Baptist churches there have aided about 1,200 Muslims, Croats and Serbs.

Serbia now has about 140,000 refugees, with more being added daily. Most are being sheltered by families, although some are living on abandoned collective farms. Serbian Baptists have been distributing food to up to 3,500 people through their own relief organization.

"It is truly amazing what they are able to do with so little," Cheyne observed.

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California Baptists protest  
OK of homosexual rights bill

By Mark A. Wyatt

Baptist Press  
9/30/92

FRESNO, Calif. (BP)--Southern Baptist leaders expressed disappointment and anger with California Gov. Pete Wilson for signing into law a measure granting homosexuals special protection against employment discrimination.

"It appears churches who voice their concerns are ignored as if they did not exist," observed C.B. Hogue, California Southern Baptist Convention executive director, in response to the governor's action. Hogue said churches also "have rights which should be considered but weren't."

"I think (Wilson) is possibly a one-term governor because the people who voted for him, the conservative Republicans, are angry as they can be about this," declared W.B. Timberlake, president of the Committee on Moral Concerns, a Sacramento-based lobbying organization.

Wilson signed AB 2601 Sept. 25, two weeks after the CSBC executive board adopted a resolution urging the governor to veto the measure. The resolution, which acknowledged Wilson's "wise decision in vetoing similar legislation" a year ago, also called on all California Southern Baptist churches to let the governor know they oppose the bill.

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AB 2601 empowers the state labor commissioner to investigate job discrimination complaints by homosexuals. The commissioner has power to restore jobs and order employers to pay back wages. But the commissioner does not have the authority to assess fines or award damages in discrimination cases.

"It's regrettable that the governor chose to allow a sexual orientation to be treated (the same) as ethnic or other minorities," Hogue said.

"For Baptists, this is not a good decision by the governor. It further erodes moral concerns in government and gives the impression government is more concerned with politics than with decency of life for the average citizen," Hogue said.

Timberlake told The California Southern Baptist newsjournal that Sept. 25 "will live in memory as the date when true minorities are forced to share their protection in employment with males and females who chose their sex partners from the same sex."

Wilson should have heeded a recent statement against homosexuality signed by leaders of 21 denominations, Timberlake said, describing the statement as representing the feelings of "thousands of churches and probably ... millions of voters."

The long-time Baptist lobbyist said, "It will be very difficult to get a recall out on this signature. He (Wilson) is vulnerable, but it takes too many millions of dollars."

Two years from now, Timberlake said, voters won't forget what Wilson did, even though "it will be late and our state will be changed radically."

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Yemen grants hospital  
70 percent fee increase

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press  
9/30/92

JIBLA, Yemen (BP)--Yemen has granted Southern Baptists' Jibla hospital the right to charge paying patients 70 percent more, offsetting losses from giving care to patients too poor to pay.

Baptists have sought the increase for more than two years. Without it, they had feared they would have to close the hospital, which represents the Middle Eastern nation's only official relationship with the Christian world.

Southern Baptist officials met with Yemen's minister of health Sept. 11 and 17. They received signed permission for the increase Sept. 23. The hospital's current operating contract, which expires next July, allowed for no fee increase without the minister's approval.

With news of the increase, hospital officials immediately raised workers' salaries by 30 percent. They had questioned how long employees would stay without a raise.

The cost of living in Yemen has soared 200 percent during the past 18 months. An ally of Iraq during the Persian Gulf war, Yemen is struggling to recover after neighboring Arab nations opposing Iraq slashed their aid to Yemen.

Workers at the hospital, including 150 Yemenis and 11 foreigners, haven't had a raise for three years. Twenty-eight Southern Baptist representatives who work at the hospital receive normal cost-of-living adjustments from home but their pay does not come out of the hospital budget.

The hospital costs nearly \$1 million a year to operate. Some support comes from Southern Baptist gifts through the Foreign Mission Board but the rest must come from patients who can afford to pay.

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Some of the hospital's financial troubles are common to developing world institutions forced to buy supplies from outside the country. The hospital must pay in dollars for most of its medicine and supplies, which it is unable to find in Yemen. But its income comes from the local economy. And as the value of Yemen's money shrinks against the dollar, it takes more to buy the same amount of supplies.

The 77-bed hospital, an outpatient clinic and residences for 61 people sit on a 22-acre hillside. Medical workers have registered about 340,000 patients during the hospital's history, treating up to 40,000 a year. They perform an average of 400 surgeries monthly.

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More than 1,100 accept Christ  
at Centrifuge, Crosspoint camps

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press  
9/30/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--More than 1,100 children and youth accepted Christ and more than \$190,000 in missions offerings were collected at Centrifuge and Crosspoint camps last summer, according to reports from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

According to Joe Palmer, a manager in the board's discipleship and family development division, 923 youth in grades seven-12 made professions of faith at Centrifuge camps held at 29 locations across the United States and in several foreign countries. Other spiritual decisions included 2,674 rededications, 388 responses to a call to church vocational work and 331 other decisions. Total attendance for all camps was 36,572.

Mission offerings collected at Centrifuge camps totaled almost \$178,000, Palmer said, adding the money will be used to help pay for evangelistic booklets and tracts used at the Summer Olympics in Barcelona, the translation of Vacation Bible School materials into Spanish and the New Testament into Arabic and a Christian radio broadcast in Afghanistan.

Crosspoint coordinator Deane Hartzell said 206 children in grades four through eight accepted Christ at camps last summer. Also reported were 282 rededications and 10 other decisions. Total attendance at the 12 different camp locations was 2,870.

Missions offerings collected at Crosspoint camps totaled \$13,074, Hartzell said. Part of the money will be used to pay for last summer's Crosspoint camp for underprivileged children in New York and part will be used by West End Baptist Chapel, also in New York, to fund children's ministries.

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Kazakhstan-American festival  
seeks Baptists for exchange

By Donald D. Martin

Baptist Press  
9/30/92

ALMA-ATA, Kazakhstan (BP)--Planners of the Kazakhstan-American Festival are poised for a third volley of cultural exchanges and hope to send hundreds of Southern Baptists to the former Soviet republic next year.

The festival is part of a partnership project between Pennsylvania-South Jersey Baptists and Kazakhstan, but organizers are encouraging volunteers from across the United States to participate. The festival allows Americans of varying denominations to make contact with Muslim people in Kazakhstan who have been isolated from the West for centuries.

Kazakhstan, one of the 15 former Soviet republics, is about the size of Alaska. It is a central point where East meets West, where Russia meets the Muslim south, and where Central Asia and Europe mix. About 40 percent of Kazakhstan's 17 million people are ethnic Russians. The next-largest group consists of native Kazakhs whose ancestors were nomadic farmers and herders descended from ancient Turks.

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The first Kazakh-American festival, in 1991, took more than 300 Americans from a wide variety of professional and creative fields to gatherings throughout Kazakhstan that attracted 100,000 Kazakhs.

"It was a diverse group of people coming to use their professions to help people here," said Brian Grim, a Southern Baptist worker who lives in Kazakhstan. "That's the goal of the festival: to get Christian lay people involved in Kazakhstan, using the resources they have."

Earlier this year more than 300 Kazakhs returned the favor and visited the United States.

In 1993 it will be America's turn to travel again. Planners seek teams of volunteers to sign on for two-week stints in Kazakhstan between May 15 and June 26. They expect to send teams into nearly 30 Kazakh cities.

"The success of the first two exchanges has increased anticipation of success for the third," Grim said.

Festival organizers need people with backgrounds in business, education, health, the arts, science, industry, governmental law and social work. They welcome individuals, but would prefer Southern Baptists to organize teams through their local churches and then contact Bill Peacock by calling toll-free (800) 999-3113, or writing P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, Va. 23230.

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed Sept. 30 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Bivocational pastor weathers  
incongruities with police job

By Mark Baggett

Baptist Press  
9/30/92

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--On the shadowy Birmingham street, the man appeared to be carrying a shotgun in one hand and a long-barreled pistol in the other. Leonard Irvin, nearly 20 years as a policeman but only a four-month seminary graduate, remembers the confrontation as a case of "shoot or get shot."

Irvin shot.

The man, who survived the shooting, was holding a cane and hammer taped up to look like guns. He confessed to Irvin as he was rolled over on the pavement that he chose to be shot. "I just wanted to die," he told Irvin, "and I didn't have the courage to kill myself."

But for Irvin, 49, the consolation of doing his duty has not stopped the dreams, which awoke him soon after the shooting four years ago. They first occurred every three weeks or so, then months and then waited almost a year before coming back once in September, still bearing the same image of Irvin's shooting someone.

As the dreams subside, Irvin still ponders the incongruities of shedding blood and saving souls.

"It may be a kind of distinction," he said. "I don't know any pastors that have ever shot a person, but I have. It's caused me problems at times. I have asked myself how I can stand here waiting, possibly to shoot someone, and then going to church to save someone. It seems too much of a contradiction at times."

By profession, Irvin was a policeman, though he has retired from the beat to work as standards and training officer at the Jefferson County youth detention center. By calling, he is bivocational, one of 1,500 in Alabama, more than half of the state's Southern Baptist pastorate.

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"Most bivocational ministers are working a job as a means of survival so they can answer their calling," he explained. "It's just that my means of survival were more violent."

Irvin, pastor of Richmond Baptist Church in Birmingham the past three years, remembers occasions when he would try to squeeze in a home visit on a "10-7" (a code for lunch) but wouldn't have time to call ahead. As he parked the police car and came up the porch in full uniform, unsuspecting family members wondered whether to rehearse the fifth commandment or the Fifth Amendment.

Other unusual circumstances also came up in his secular career. While he was in the police academy, he once stood behind James Earl Ray, unknowingly, who was buying a gun at a gun store. Because Ray used an alias last name that was also the last name of another police academy student, Irvin became a suspect when Martin Luther King Jr. was shot. Later, Irvin made a positive identification of Ray.

Irvin doesn't make his sermon a by-product of his vocation, however. He puts in his homework, usually a minimum of two nights a week doing the same thing he does at work, staring at words marching across the screen of a computer -- this time poring over sets of commentaries.

"Sometimes you just get tired," he says of his illusive free time with family. "Sometimes my mind gets fogged from looking at the word processor. Sometimes you just want to watch TV, talk to the family, look at the newspaper, and play with the puppy."

Like many bivocational pastors, however, Irvin's secular job gives him an advantage over seminary-fresh graduates in relating to parishioners. "It's one thing to sit on Friday afternoon in your office and listen to people talk about their marital problems. But I've been there on Saturday night when they're trying to kill each other," said Irvin, who has a master's degree in counseling and a bachelor's degree in business administration, along with his master's in divinity which he earned by attending New Orleans Seminary classes in Birmingham.

He would never flaunt his education, though. "I can take all three of my degrees and go into Shoney's and put them on the table, but I've still got to pay 62 cents for a cup of coffee. I like to keep things in perspective."

Irvin's tenure at the Richmond Baptist started with a supply sermon. The congregation, rarely more than 25-30, began to ask if would consider a call as pastor.

"As I prayed about it, I wasn't getting a strong 'Go' or 'Don't Go,'" Irvin recounted. "I kept wondering why God wasn't giving me an answer. Finally, it occurred to me that God had answered before I asked the question. Here were folks with a need; I was trained; by going to seminary I was saying I had received a call. I didn't need any more answer than that."

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(BP) photo available upon request from The Alabama Baptist newsjournal in Birmingham.

Criswell College  
names president

Baptist Press  
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DALLAS (BP)--Richard R. Melick Jr., professor and chairman of the New Testament and Greek departments of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn., has been elected president of Criswell College by the Dallas school's trustees.

Melick, 47, will succeed Paige Patterson, president from 1975-92. Patterson is now president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Trustees gave unanimous approval to Melick's selection Sept. 23.

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Melick has been on the faculty of Mid-America Seminary, which is not a Southern Baptist Convention-affiliated school, since 1983. He previously was a faculty member at Palm Beach Atlantic College in West Palm Beach, Fla.; Miami Christian College; and Columbia Bible College in Columbia, S.C.

He is a graduate of Columbia Bible College and received a master of divinity degree at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois and a doctor of philosophy degree at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1979.

Melick is a New Testament consulting editor for the New American Commentary, published by Broadman Press.

He was associate pastor of Tarrant Road Baptist Church in Fort Worth, 1969-72, and minister of youth and music at First Baptist Church in Wheeling, Ill., 1966-68.