

(BP)

-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committ-
901 Commerce #7:
Nashville, Tennessee 372
(615) 244-237
Herb Hollinger, Vice Preside
Fax (615) 742-89
CompuServe ID# 70420

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

October 6, 1992

92-165

MIAMI -- Andrew forces ethnics to start over again.
WASHINGTON -- Religious freedom bill dies in Senate committee.
ATLANTA -- Summer missionaries report increased professions of faith.
NASHVILLE -- Incorrect church architecture can lie about members' beliefs.
GEORGIA -- James Jordan resigns from Shorter College.
TEXAS -- Strong people make strong families, Pinson tells Southwestern students; with photo.
TEXAS -- Seminary students give attention to detention; with photo.
DALLAS -- Addition to 10-5 Criswell story.

Andrew forces ethnics
to start over again

By Jack Brymer & Barbara Denman

Baptist Press
10/6/92

MIAMI (BP)--They came to the United States in search of an opportunity to be free, to earn a living and offer their children a brighter future. They left Castro's tyrannical dictatorship and the poverty and political unrest in Central America to pursue the American dream.

But on their way to making a better life, their world was turned upside down on that fateful August day.

Hurricane Andrew wreaked havoc on almost every community in south Dade County, but the area's ethnics are among the hardest hit and find, once again, they must start all over.

It takes time for ethnics coming to south Florida to overcome language and cultural differences which prevent them from entering the mainstream of American life. This puts the majority of ethnics at the bottom of the economic ladder and limits opportunities for advancement.

The most labor-intensive market in south Dade County is agriculture. Not only did Hurricane Andrew devastate the crops, it also destroyed processing and storage facilities. There is no work available. The future is bleak in that the industry must be cultivated and marketed.

"It was just a storm," said Lydia Garcia, "but now everything's gone."

Garcia is a member of the Christianos Unidos Church, one of 15 Southern Baptist ethnic churches -- 10 Hispanic and five Haitian -- that bore the brunt of Andrew's destruction. These congregations are small in number, struggle financially and are filled with immigrants who eked out a living in low-paying and sometimes unskilled jobs. They settled in south Dade because it offered affordable housing and a lower cost of living. But few of their homes escaped the storm.

Many of the members of Christianos Unidos Church are Mexicans who had escaped from the migrant stream to put down roots in south Florida. Several church members have made a home in the education building behind the church.

Many of the churches, whose pastors serve bivocationally, are under-insured, if insured at all. Some church leaders may be forced to leave the area in search of new jobs and homes. Many like Lydia Garcia have lost everything.

--more--

The day before the storm struck, Garcia had worked all day at a state correctional facility. She had heard advance warnings to leave the area but after work was too tired to heed the advice.

As they waited out the storm, Garcia recalled that at first she was not scared. Her family gathered in one of their homes, sang hymns while her brother pressed a mattress against the door. She became more frightened when her brother said he was too exhausted to hold the mattress any longer. He summoned the strength to hold on and the family escaped unharmed. But Garcia, her brother and sister lost their homes and most of their possessions.

"It wasn't bad until you got out into the car and found you couldn't go anywhere," Garcia recalled. "I told my brother we were lucky we could still drive our cars, those without cars really had lost everything. It's bad for us but can you imagine what its like for them?"

For the first two weeks after the storm, six families lived in Garcia's home. "You're in shock. You don't know what day it is." Four weeks after the storm, "we're just now picking up," she said.

Across the street from La Hermosa Baptist Church in Leisure City, a huge mobile home park now lies in twisted metal and steel. Steps grotesquely leading no where marks the spot where a home once stood. The park housed many of La Hermosa's members. Many of them sought refuge from the storm in the church.

Nearly 90 percent of the church's 25 families lost their homes. Many lost their jobs. Pastor Guillermo Piche said he fears many of the church's leaders will have to move to find work.

A total of \$4,000 a month is needed to operate the church. On Sept. 13, the offerings totaled \$328, less than a third of what they need.

Piche, whose home was severely damaged in the storm, predicts it will take at least two years before the church can return to any semblance of normalcy. A new roof is needed and the insurance money is coming slow.

But, the pastor said, he is "very, very optimistic about the future." Piche, who came to the United States from Cuba in 1980, said the storm did not damage his dreams or visions. He wants to rebuild the church, start a day-care center and continue to be a witness in this area.

Iglesia Bautista Betania, whose meeting site was destroyed by the storm, now holds services at the La Hermosa building on Sunday afternoons. The Sunday before the hurricane, 140 members attended services at Betania. A month later, 89 Hispanics came to worship.

Pastor Diosdado Abella has his work cut out for him. After the storm, members of the church now homeless, without jobs and with few ties to the area scattered across the nation -- West Palm Beach, Hialeah, Orlando and even Arizona. The first thing Abella said he must do is find his people and motivate them to stay in south Dade.

But he said he will not leave the area. "In any place you're going to have storms and problems. ... I see the future as very good and that the people will invest their lives in this community."

The pastor asked that Baptists pray that "the people of God will release their testimony and help us motivate and change lives in the community."

Religious freedom bill
dies in Senate committee

By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Religious Freedom Restoration Act failed to clear the Senate Judiciary Committee, killing any hopes of passage in the final days of the 1992 congressional session.

RFRA, S. 2969 in the Senate and H.R. 2797 in the House, is designed to return the free exercise of religion to its status before the Supreme Court's much-criticized 1990 Employment Division v. Smith opinion.

In Smith, the court ruled government no longer was required to show it had a "compelling interest" outranking religious liberty before restricting the First Amendment right. Therefore, it became easier for government to limit the religious expression of citizens.

Sen Alan Simpson, R.-Wyo., put a hold on RFRA Oct. 2 in the Judiciary Committee, ending any chance of the bill being voted on by the committee or the full Senate until the next session of Congress. At the time, Congress was scheduled to adjourn Oct. 6.

The House Judiciary Committee approved RFRA Oct. 1. The vote was the first one by a full committee since RFRA's introduction in July 1990.

Because of the lateness in this session, Simpson's action dealt a death blow to RFRA for this year. His action was a surprise to the bill's supporters.

"He didn't indicate those concerns" about RFRA before, said Judy Golub of the American Jewish Committee and a spokesperson for the coalition supporting RFRA. "Realistically, time ran out" on the bill, Golub said.

Simpson, in a statement, said he did not want to rush through a bill as important as RFRA. The Senate committee's hearing on RFRA was Sept. 18. Citizens and religious organizations had expressed reservations about the bill to him, and he wanted "to take more time to be certain that we are accomplishing exactly what we intend." Concerns about RFRA have been expressed by pro-life members of Congress, but Simpson has a pro-choice voting record.

"We're very disappointed in Sen. Simpson's actions at the markup," said Brent Walker, Baptist Joint Committee associate general counsel. "We had hoped to have the bill reported out and get it to the floor ... but we're still very optimistic that next Congress we can rally our effort" and get the bill passed.

"In spite of what happened in this Congress or, for that matter, what will happen in the presidential election, we are confident that RFRA will be law in the near future," said James A. Smith, director of government relations for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "Having said that, Southern Baptists should redouble their efforts to make this so."

Although other concerns have been expressed, a question about RFRA's impact on abortion rights has been the main reason for opposition to the bill. It also has divided the pro-life movement.

The National Right to Life Committee, the United States Catholic Conference, Americans United for Life and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod oppose RFRA because they fear it will give new legal standing for women to claim abortion as a free exercise of religion. An amendment preventing women from making abortion claims is necessary, they say.

--more--

Among pro-life organizations denying the bill will result in a new right to abortion are the Christian Life Commission, Christian Action Council, Christian Legal Society, Coalitions for America, Concerned Women for America, Traditional Values Coalition and National Association of Evangelicals. Such groups have said they intend to fight any claims abortion is a religious right while endorsing the principle of religious liberty by supporting RFRA.

The House committee reported out RFRA on a voice vote. Rep. Henry Hyde, Rep.-Ill., offered an amendment excluding abortion rights claims, but it was defeated by voice vote. Also defeated by voice vote were an amendment from Hyde barring claims challenging the tax status of religious organizations and one excluding claims challenging participation in government-funded programs.

President George Bush has not taken a public position on the legislation. Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton has expressed support for the concept of a legislative remedy to the Smith decision without specifically endorsing RFRA.

--30--

Summer missionaries report
increased professions of faith

By Kelly Capers

Baptist Press
10/6/92

ATLANTA (BP)--The number of professions of faith reported by Southern Baptist summer missionaries has exceeded last year's total by more than 480.

Home Mission Board statistics will not be final until Jan. 1. However, summer missionaries reported 3,528 professions of faith before Sept. 15. That compares to 3,044 in 1991.

Summer missionaries are college students who work as home missionaries for 10 weeks during the summer. They are funded by the Home Mission Board and Baptist Student Unions. This year, 1,496 students served in summer missions programs.

The increase of summer missionaries, 100 more than in 1991, is responsible for at least half the number of professions of faith, said Van Simmons, HMB director of student missions. According to statistics, summer missionaries average three to four professions of faith per term.

"Student missions is definitely healthy," Simmons added.

The 1992 statistics reveal an upswing in student missions participation over the last five years.

Simmons attributes the growth partly to an overall trend toward volunteerism, both Christian and secular. "Students reflect general issues," he said. "I believe students want to serve."

A significant challenge, Simmons said, is getting information to students eligible for service. In spite of the increased participation, more than 90 requests from the field were left unfilled due to lack of applicants.

In a society driven by change, "Students are likely to take the lead, Simmons said. "Students have always been the leaders in change. Their ideas come of age in time."

For information about summer missions opportunities, call 1-800-HMB-VOLS.

--30--

Capers is an editorial assistant in the HMB news and information office.

Incorrect church architecture
can lie about members' beliefs

By Charles Willis

NASHVILLE (BP)--An incorrectly designed church can constitute lying about the congregation's convictions, a Christian educator told church architects from across the United States during a workshop at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

"Our architecture should symbolize our theological perspective," said John Newport, a special consultant for academic research at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. "We must not organize space falsely or tell a lie about our convictions."

Newport maintains the architecture of a church tells the world about its theology and mission, a fact which calls for informed architects, clergy and lay leadership to work together to achieve accurate theological identity for church facilities.

"An architect cannot be expected to design a satisfactory church building -- a building which embodies the theological vision of the church -- unless he is furnished with an adequate brief."

And to provide the architect with needed information, the pastor and the congregation must discover the church's reason for being, Newport declared.

"The architect cannot be the theologian of the church," he said, "just as the minister and congregation cannot be the architect."

Memorable architecture is made when the church members understand the meaning of worship and service to their particular congregation, Newport said.

"The best churches are designed by a team; not by architects alone but by architects and the owners. The architect understands the structural and artistic problems involved. The church committee understands the theology and needs of their particular congregation," he said. "The project cannot be dominated by the architect, or by the wealthiest person on the committee, or by the most stubborn representative of the music committee, or by a pastor who is trying to build a cathedral of the West."

Newport acknowledged "everyone cannot be satisfied. What uplifts one may be depressing to another.

"The most potent difficulty," Newport said he believes, "is not in individual differences of opinion but in custom, negatively expressed in dislike of the unfamiliar. Custom determines our likes and dislikes even in small matters quite apart from logical grounds. Such difficulties can only be overcome by patience, perseverance, prayer and a major portion of re-education."

And Newport said people outside the church cannot be blamed if they conclude that a church building of outdated architectural style must belong to a group whose message is equally irrelevant to their needs.

"The clergy may preach continually about the relevance of our faith to modern society, but our church buildings assert the contrary far more eloquently," he said.

"Christianity is more than art," Newport told the architects. "It is redemptive, ethical and practical, as well as aesthetic.

"We need the arts, including appropriate architecture, in the 1990s, but we also need the resources of an ancient, but always contemporary, prophetic religion for the exciting journey of the creative and worthwhile life."

The 1992 Architects' Workshop was sponsored by the Sunday School Board's church architecture services section.

EDITORS' NOTE: Please substitute the following story for the (BP) story 10-5 with the same headline.

James Jordan resigns
from Shorter College

ROME, Ga. (BP)--James D. Jordan, president of Shorter College since 1987, resigned Oct. 2 during the regular October meeting of the school's board of trustees.

A statement released by the college cited "differences in administrative philosophy and style and other personal reasons" as the cause of the resignation.

Jordan's resignation was announced by trustee chairman Austin Moses of Rome, who listed the "significant accomplishments" of Jordan's tenure. "We are grateful," he stated, "for these five good years, and wish for Dr. Jordan the very best in the future."

Moses cited the construction of a new residence hall, a \$4 million activities complex now under construction, a new graduate program, and other marks of Jordan's leadership.

Carol Collins, a spokesperson for the college, said that growing tensions between Jordan and faculty had prompted the resignation, related to faculty concerns over Jordan's "philosophy and style." Faculty were nearly unanimous Sept. 22 in adopting a statement expressing a lack of confidence in Jordan's continued leadership, according to one faculty member.

Collins said three members of the trustee executive committee "will act as supervisors" until a transition plan is in effect. The trustee board is expected eventually to name an interim president.

Prior to his election at Shorter, Jordan had served as president of North Greenville Junior College (now a four-year institution) in Tigerville, S.C.. He also had taught at Mars Hill College, Oxford College of Emory University and Georgia Southern College. He is an ordained Baptist minister.

--30--

Strong people make strong families,
Pinson tells Southwestern students

Baptist Press
10/6/92

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Bill Pinson examined families and how to improve them during Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's annual revival Sept. 29-Oct. 2.

Pinson, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said strong families begin with strong individuals.

The former professor at Southwestern and past president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary listed three points vital in the development of a person: maturity, discipline and contentment.

"One of the most destructive things to a family is a baby adult," Pinson said. Children are good examples of faith but bad examples of maturity, he added. Baby adults, like children, are self-centered and "throwers of tantrums."

Pinson said the mature adult is a healthy, growing person "who draws strength and life from God himself."

Coupled with maturity is discipline.

"Some of us would like a short cut" he said. "There is no joy without the discipline that leads to maturity."

--more--

Contentment is another key to strong individuals and strong family life -- contentment with who you are, where you are, what you are.

Pinson said contentment does not come with external circumstances but with an "internal commitment to the will of God."

The problems which break apart ministers' marriages often begin during seminary, he warned the ministerial students.

"You have to pay attention to your family if you want it to succeed," he said. "You reserve time for registration. You reserve time for revival. You reserve time for Wednesday evening services. Reserve time for family. No church is more important than your family. No one else will guard time for your family except you."

Enemies of the family include busyness, worldliness and doubt. Ministers can become busy out of ambition, a sinful sense of their own importance or a false sense of devotion, he said.

"It will be a constant pressure to be overbusy," he said. "He (God) simply wants service -- the longest kind possible."

Worldliness will destroy families as well, Pinson said, adding that he sees materialism every week in church-related work. Pinson said many people seek prestige, setting their sail where they feel the wind is strongest rather than setting it in the will of God.

Do God's will, he said, "even if it's contrary to every pressure of political and denominational life."

Doubt also tears apart the family. Pinson said the Christian family is promised challenge, not ease.

"I think sometimes we expect the Lord to encase us in a protective bubble if we are in his will," he said. But like the disciples who crossed the Sea of Galilee, Christians who obey Jesus probably will find themselves in the midst of a storm, he said.

The miracle is that Jesus is always there with you, he said.

--30--

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary.

Seminary students give
attention to detention

By Matthew Brady

Baptist Press
10/6/92

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The smell of soap filled the air as 30 youngsters emerged fresh from the shower. One by one they entered a stark, cream-colored room whose windows are framed in black. All the doors are locked tightly. The young eyes are filled with anger and fear.

More than 1,500 kids, mostly boys, pass through the Tarrant County (Texas) Juvenile Detention Center every year. No more than 56 are at the center at any one time. Their ages range from 10 to 16. Some stole cars, others murdered, robbed and raped. The average stay is one week -- long enough for a judge to put them elsewhere or for family members to take them home.

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary students and Georgia natives Ira Thomas and Ellen O'Brien have one, maybe two chances to make an impression on these kids.

"If you see them more than one week," said Thomas, from Cordele, Ga., "it's either a serious crime or the parents don't want them."

--more--

Every Tuesday night and Sunday afternoon Thomas and O'Brien talk with the young offenders about sin and God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Their approach is casual. On Tuesday night they do what the kids are doing -- watch a movie or play ping pong, foosball, dominoes or cards. Gradually the youngsters break away from the activity and approach them. On Sunday afternoons Thomas and O'Brien participate in a worship service led by a local church. On the fifth Sunday of the month they lead the worship service.

The kids often want someone to pray for them to get out or "they are just seeking ears," Thomas said.

"A lot of the kids," O'Brien said, "view God as Santa Claus, characterized by an attitude of 'Oh, if I just ask him, he'll say it's OK and get me out of here.'"

Many of them won't admit to doing anything wrong.

Thomas, a former U.S. Army captain and veteran of the Persian Gulf war, said the kids don't have any positive male role models. "They haven't seen a positive male role model, outside of TV," he said.

O'Brien, a native of Mountain, Ga., began the ministry last October. She met Thomas one month later and they've been a team ever since. O'Brien and her husband, Craig, are both in the master of divinity program. Although she doesn't think she will work with troubled youth on a full-time basis, O'Brien said this type of ministry will always be a part of her life.

Thomas sees his ministry at the center as good training for his calling. He hopes to enter Southwestern's doctor of education program after completing his master of arts in religious education. His goal is to start a school, primarily for poor children, near his hometown of Cordele, Ga.

"It's hard to convince me you don't need it (education)," he said. "If I don't reach that age group, it's hard to reach them at 17, 18 or as adults."

At the detention center, some of the young people decide to follow Christ. A few have even felt a call to the ministry. But all too quickly they leave the center never to be seen again by Thomas or O'Brien.

Thomas said sometimes it hurts to share the gospel with them because he never has an opportunity to teach them more about walking with Christ.

"It stops here for us," he said.

But they continue to go each week, sharing God's grace.

"We don't always see a lot of growth," O'Brien said, "but the Holy Spirit is faithful to make any planted seed grow."

--30--

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary.

ADDITION: Please add the following paragraph to (BP) story titled "Criswell sermon sparks confusion; deacons seek meeting with Gregory," dated 10/5/92. This will become paragraph 9.

Harris confirmed Oct. 5 that Criswell will move his office from First Baptist Church to the college bearing his name. Harris said the move is part of the senior pastor's commitment to devote his full attention to Criswell College, the east Dallas institution that trains ministers, teachers and counselors.

Thanks,
Baptist Press