

(BP)

- - BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
801 Commerce #750
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. 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

November 5, 1992

92-185

WASHINGTON -- BWA sends congratulations to Bill Clinton, Al Gore.
WASHINGTON -- Soon-to-be jobless Bush aide linked White House, evangelicals; photo.
WASHINGTON -- ASAP activist urging new Clinton AIDS policy.
WASHINGTON -- Clinton's religion evident now and in future, Gephardt says.
MARYLAND -- Maryland voters uphold contested abortion law.
IVORY COAST -- Baptists share grief for slain nuns in Liberia.
DALLAS -- Annuity Board assets rise via \$159 million member input.
MISSOURI -- AIDS patient writes open letter to Baptists.
NASHVILLE -- National women's meet slated for March 1993.
WASHINGTON -- Argentine Baptists' witness reflects Latin American fervor.
NEW YORK -- Baptist journalist named editor of New York City Christian newspaper.
WYOMING -- Pilot project's success enlarges small SBC church; photo.
WYOMING -- 'Experiencing God' teaches how to serve, how to live; photo.
WYOMING -- Three-congregation pastor has a field of ministry; photos.

BWA sends congratulations
to Bill Clinton, Al Gore

By Wendy Ryan

Baptist Press
11/5/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist World Alliance, representing a worldwide community of 80 million Baptists, congratulated fellow Baptists Bill Clinton and Al Gore on their victory Nov. 3 and promised to pray for them.

"Congratulations," BWA President Knud Wumpelmann said in a message to Clinton. "As President of the world's leading nation and as a fellow-Baptist, you will in the years to come have the prayer support of Baptists around the world. God bless you with wisdom and courage."

BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz wrote in an open letter to Clinton and Gore: "Your Baptist brothers and sisters around the world assure you of their prayers for God's wisdom and guidance in your significant world leadership position."

Clinton is a member of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, Ark., one of the city's largest Southern Baptist churches. His wife, Hillary, is a member of the First Methodist Church of Little Rock.

Gore and his wife, Tipper, belong to Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Arlington, Va., where they were baptized in 1980.

In his letter of congratulations, Lotz cited Baptist presidents such as Harry Truman and Jimmy Carter but noted Clinton and Gore are "the first Baptist team to ever serve these leadership positions" and this has led many people to ask, "Who are the Baptists and what do they believe?"

In his open letter, Lotz listed four Baptist distinctives: the democratic principle, separation of church and state, soul freedom, and justice. Remembering these, he said, would make the newly elected leaders "strong and reliable leaders of courage and conscience."

Calling Clinton and Gore "brothers," Lotz said his use of the term "emphasizes the democratic principle of our Baptist tradition." It was also a sign of "deep respect," Lotz said, because "every person is equal before the altar of God."

--more--

"No bishop, pastor or hierarchy may tell us what to believe," Lotz wrote.

On the separation of church and state, Lotz said, "having suffered and been ostracized for religious freedom in the prisons and ghettos of European church-state hegemony, Baptists have defended the separation of church and state."

Lotz wrote that Roger Williams, the first Baptist leader in the United States, had made the conviction very clear that "religious freedom is for everyone."

"The state must remain neutral in the face of conflicting religious demands," Lotz said, "but this does not mean that the church cannot speak out on issues of justice and morality."

Citing John Bunyan, John Milton, Walter Rauschenbusch and Martin Luther King, Lotz said "there is indeed a prophetic protest within the Christian faith."

"We will pray for you," Lotz wrote, "but we will reserve our Christian right and duty to be a prophetic movement calling for government and humanity to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God."

"Every individual is free to respond to God and Scripture in the way the Spirit leads them," Lotz wrote about "soul freedom."

"In other words, everyone has the right to be a heretic," Lotz said. "Whether we agree with them or not we defend their right to so believe and our right to disagree."

"With joy we affirm the United Nation's articles on religious freedom," Lotz wrote.

Baptists "have always been a movement seeking social betterment for all humanity," Lotz wrote about the Baptist emphasis on justice "because Baptist origins go back to the 16th century radical reformation against all forms of intolerance."

"No other religious group in the U.S.A. is made up equally of as many African Americans or Europeans as the community of 50 million Baptists in the U.S.A.," Lotz wrote, "therefore your tradition represents basically a working class popular movement of justice for all."

Lotz told Clinton and Gore while there will be areas of disagreement, the letter was an assurance to them of worldwide Baptist prayer support "that you will be good examples of tolerance and at the same time faithful witness to your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior."

--30--

The full text of the Lotz letter is available in the SBCNet Newsroom.

Soon-to-be-jobless Bush aide
linked White House, evangelicals By Carey Kinsolving

Baptist Press
11/5/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--Leigh Ann Metzger sat in her office in the Old Executive Office Building, her perky manner only slightly masking the strain of non-stop campaigning and of her boss's defeat a few hours earlier.

Now and then Metzger's words revealed what she calls her "righteous indignation," an apt phrase for President Bush's liaison to the evangelical community.

"Christians don't need to be thinned-skinned," Metzger said, the day after Bush suffered his heartbreak. "You can have righteous indignation, which I have quite often."

But she admits to being frustrated over the bitterness of some moderate Republicans who charge that the Religious Right forced Bush into an "ugly, nasty, hatred" posture.

--more--

"George Bush couldn't hate a bug," Metzger said. "He hates clear evil but he doesn't hate anybody."

Metzger bluntly says some of her like-minded friends and colleagues have to share responsibility for Bush's loss. A lot of good people came to Washington with Reagan in 1980, she said, and they set up think tanks -- a worthy task, of course -- but few truly joined the battle as part of the political process.

Metzger has been Bush's tie to the evangelical community, and no one has recorded how many times Bush asked, "What does Leigh Ann think?"

Now bearing the title of deputy assistant to the president at the ripe age of 30, she also has served as his liaison to veterans, law enforcement and Catholic groups.

But it is her intimate knowledge of the evangelical community that prompts Bush to seek her counsel. She's an insider with roots in the heart of the Bible belt.

In fact, some call her home congregation, the mammoth First Baptist Church in Atlanta, the buckle on the belt. Metzger started attending the church at age 12 when Charles Stanley became its senior pastor.

Metzger's interest in politics also began in childhood. Her mother, Gwen, said that in Walden's bookstore she found a sex education book with pictures of nude children. She went to the speaker of the Georgia state legislature to see what could be done.

"It was a way to really flex our muscles about our belief system," Gwen Metzger said in a telephone interview from her Atlanta home. Metzger's mother is a nurse; her father, Robert, a pediatrician.

Gwen Metzger's daughter proved to be a good protegee. Together they learned that faith and politics can work together.

Metzger's rise to presidential adviser is nothing less than meteoric. As a senior at Samford University, a Southern Baptist institution in Birmingham, Ala., she worked with a White House advance team to coordinate a Bush speech at her school.

"I met these neat people and I got the fever," Metzger said. After graduation in 1984 while coordinating two trips by President Ronald Reagan, she met Ed Rollins, who managed Reagan's re-election campaign. Next, she received a call asking her to manage the Reagan-Bush campaign office in Atlanta. She was 22.

After stints with Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, the Pornography Commission Report Project and the National Republican Congressional Committee in Washington, Metzger accepted the White House position in 1990.

"I've always been a hard worker, and I take advantage of opportunities," she said. And she's ready to engage in the battle for her causes, declaring, "Bring your Christian sword and shield, and come ready to fight."

The animated Metzger goes into overdrive when talking about incidents in which she exercised her influence to shape national policy.

She told of being asked repeatedly while campaigning what Bush was doing to create jobs, and said, more in a statement than a question, "Since when is it the responsibility of the government to create jobs?"

One of Metzger's most cherished victories for Bush came during the Gulf War. Representatives from the National Council of Churches were calling for an end to the war on grounds it violated the principles of a "just war." Metzger consulted Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and drafted a memo to her boss.

Bush liked the idea of turning the tables on religious leaders who called the war unjust. He called Metzger for a briefing and then delivered a major speech to the National Religious Broadcasters, where he cited the arguments for a just war in defending U.S. involvement in the Gulf.

Metzger said one of the biggest issues facing the church is homosexuality, noting the issue is hating the sin and loving the sinner. Christians are portrayed as "mean, nasty and ugly on this issue" instead of compassionate and caring, she said, adding that "Hollywood" liberals are winning the battle on this one.

Furthermore, Metzger believes many pastors avoid sermons on immorality because many "people in their congregations are probably engaged in immoral relationships." This same mentality carried over to the presidential election, she said.

"I truly believe that 90 percent of the people in this country believe that for 12 years he (Bill Clinton) had an affair with another woman," Metzger said. "They clearly chose to allow that not to affect the way they were going to vote."

--30--

Kinsolving is a Washington-based free-lance writer. (BP) photo to be available from the central office of Baptist Press in Nashville.

ASAP activist urging
new Clinton AIDS policy

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
11/5/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--President-elect Bill Clinton likely will be pressured to continue an AIDS policy that is leading the nation toward crisis, according to an activist for a more aggressive national AIDS policy.

Shepherd Smith, president of Americans for a Sound AIDS/HIV Policy (ASAP), said the new administration likely will expand programs to care for AIDS patients but probably will not accept his organization's plan to stem the crisis.

ASAP encourages a policy to intervene in the chain of transmission by identifying people who are HIV positive, reporting those individuals through public health departments and notifying sexual partners, Smith said.

"That's the way we treat any other infectious disease. We don't allow infected persons to remain anonymous," he said.

Smith said the current "anti-discrimination protection policy" that assumes people will come forward for testing has failed.

"Clinton will be under great pressure to continue this failed policy," Smith said.

Smith said the Bush administration, which has followed a similar course for the past four years, could have been more likely to change within the next four years as the problem becomes a greater crisis.

He said 250,000 people have been diagnosed with AIDS in the past 11 years since it was first identified in the United States. However, 1 million to 1.5 million people are infected with the HIV virus and will become AIDS patients. "The problem will be four to six times greater in the next 11 years than it has been in the first 11 years."

Expanding programs to care for AIDS patients will become more costly as the epidemic increases, he pointed out.

"If you only try to help people who are suffering without a policy for routine testing, you will only have increasing numbers," he said.

--more--

"The AIDS community as a whole feels Clinton owes them big," Smith said. "They have a lot of demands on how they want the AIDS epidemic to be treated."

Among the expectations of the AIDS community, Smith listed no testing or restrictions for immigrants, free condoms in schools and free needles for drug users.

These expectations, he said, "focus on quick fixes but false programs" that do nothing to slow the spread of the epidemic.

Smith cited the military as an exception to the nation's failure to develop an effective AIDS policy. However, he believes Clinton's willingness to allow homosexuals in the military will lead to a relaxation of the mandatory testing for all members and entrants.

"The military has been aggressive. It will cost them much less in the long run," he said.

On the immigration issue, Smith said opening the doors of the country to immigration without testing or restrictions without counting the costs will be a mistake.

"We are compassionate but we need to be realistic. If we could pay for their care it would be OK, but we can't pay for our own," he said.

Smith said he and others in his organization will be supportive of the next administration "as all Americans should be." But, if the administration does not act in the best interest of all Americans on this issue, "we will challenge them."

--30--

Clinton's religion evident now
and in future, Gephardt says

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
11/5/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--President-elect Bill Clinton's religious convictions, embodied in a campaign for putting people first, will continue to be evident throughout his administration, predicted the majority leader for the U.S. House of Representatives.

"Those kinds of issues which are central to religion and central to the Baptist religion were intertwined throughout this whole campaign," said Richard Gephardt of Missouri, who claimed Clinton's election signals a moral reawakening throughout the country.

Both Clinton and Gephardt are Southern Baptists. Clinton is a member of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, Ark., and Gephardt is a member of Third Baptist Church of St. Louis, a dually aligned church with the Southern and American Baptist conventions.

"A basic tenet of Baptist religion is that we do have to take care of one another, that we have an obligation to one another or responsibility to one another, but that we're also individually responsible -- something else that he talked about," he said.

"My belief is that there is more and more of a sense of community, as he said last night, of sharing our problems and working together, and that to me reflects a reawakening of moral beliefs."

Religious themes are always important in elections but Clinton's emphasis of individual responsibility was particularly significant, Gephardt said.

"The Democratic Party has almost become charged with just worrying about taking care of people or redistributing income and being fair and never worrying about people's individual responsibility -- kind of the other side of rights," he said. "I think it was very important to his victory that he did stress that there is a personal citizen's responsibility in everything."

--more--

Gephardt said he doesn't expect Clinton's pro-choice view on abortion will discredit his other beliefs among conservative Christians.

"People of reasonable minds who are religious and have a lot of moral conviction can differ on abortion," Gephardt said. "While some may not agree with him, I don't think they'll question his basic religious outlook or his commitment to moral ethics."

Gephardt said Clinton has "a very strong religious background. He's very compassionate. I think he cares about people and what happens in the lives of the people he works for."

--30--

Maryland voters uphold
contested abortion law

By Bob Allen

Baptist Press
11/5/92

COLUMBIA, Md. (BP)--Maryland voters turned out in record numbers Nov. 3 to uphold a contested law written to keep abortion legal in the event the U.S. Supreme Court should reverse its 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling legalizing abortion on demand.

The referendum on Question 6 passed decisively following a hotly contested campaign. A 61-39 percent margin contradicted recent polls which had suggested a much tighter race and surprised leaders on both sides of the issue.

Connecticut, Nevada and Washington state have similar laws guaranteeing access to abortion should Roe be overturned, a prospect deemed likely with recent Supreme Court appointees during the Reagan and Bush administrations.

On the way to polls, voters sifted through a \$3 million campaign in which partisans offered vastly different portrayals of SB 162, the pro-choice bill adopted by Maryland's General Assembly in 1991 and then forced to a referendum by abortion opponents. Proponents urged voters to keep government out of a private moral decision. The opposition, rather than casting the debate in terms of life versus choice, criticized finer points of the bill, hoping to persuade both pro-life and pro-choice voters "it's a bad law."

Religious leaders were prominent in the effort to defeat Question 6. Roman Catholics passed out voter guides the Sunday before the election urging its defeat. A group of mainline clergy responded by publicly endorsing SB 162.

The Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware's general mission board asked Maryland Baptists to vote against Question 6 in a motion passed at a regular meeting in October.

The day after the election, however, found a Columbia, Md., pastor active in efforts to defeat Question 6 believing the two-state convention could have done more.

D. Walter Collett, pastor of Covenant Baptist Church and Maryland/Delaware member of the Southern Baptist Convention Home Mission Board, termed convention leadership on Question 6 "pathetic."

"In the face of one of the most critical contests in Maryland, (Baptists) were nowhere to be found," Collett said.

Collett charged the general mission board statement and an earlier open letter signed by members of the board's administrative committee lacked passion. He also pointed out resolutions "don't pay for TV commercials." He suggested there should have been an effort by Baptists to promote awareness and raise funds on the scale of a disaster relief effort for victims of Hurricane Andrew running concurrent with the Question 6 campaign.

Apart from "a dozen to two dozen active churches," Baptists were "lethargic" in their involvement against Question 6, Collett said. He blamed "bureaucracy" and its "diplomatic kind of pandering that we don't want to offend anybody."

--more--

Still, he admitted, the election of the Bill Clinton and Al Gore ticket could pose an even greater concern for pro-life efforts, because of the candidates' support for a federal law that would legalize abortion, superseding any state's laws.

For his part in the effort against Question 6, Collett chairs the steering committee of Maryland Pastors for Life, an interfaith ministerial pro-life organization with a mailing list of about 3,000 names. He sent mass mailings to Maryland Baptist pastors on the group's letterhead encouraging defeat of the referendum, at one point issuing a stinging criticism of what he perceived to be ambivalence about the issue on the part of BCM/D leaders.

General mission board members alluded to Collett's charges in discussion before adopting their Oct. 5 resolution, arguing the administrative committee's statement was purposely non-inflammatory, but did not waffle on their opposition to Question 6. Collett had criticized an admonition by the administrative committee to "vote as God would guide the individual conscience" as "weasel words."

Administrative committee Chairman Wayne Kempson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Waldorf, said he intended by that wording to respect the Baptist distinctive of soul competency, but that it is "painfully obvious" how God would guide the conscience as it relates to Question 6.

Collett also invited the SBC's Christian Life Commission executive director, Richard Land, to urge opposition of Question 6 in a meeting at his church Sept. 30 attended by about 60 Baptist pastors. Land also wrote a letter to pastors dated Sept. 24 urging defeat of the bill.

Question 6 was placed on the ballot when a pro-life group organized as the "Vote kNOw Coalition" to petition for the referendum on SB 162 after its adoption by the general assembly in February 1991. Needing only 33,000 signatures to force a referendum, the coalition secured more than 143,000, a record.

The coalition then turned its attention to campaigning against Question 6, focusing much of its educational effort at churches. Vote kNOw "fact sheets" with abortion statistics and perceived flaws in SB 162 were distributed in many Maryland/Delaware Baptist churches and reprinted in numerous church newsletters.

The margin of defeat was a setback for the coalition, leaders said, but they intend to lobby for amendments to the bill during the next legislative session.

The new abortion law will take effect Dec. 3. It replaces a 1968 law declared unconstitutional under Roe v. Wade which permitted abortions only in hospitals and in the cases of rape, health risk to the mother, or fetal deformity.

The new law allows abortion for any reason until the fetus is able to survive outside the womb. Late term abortions are permitted to protect a woman's life or health or if the fetus is deformed.

The new law adds a requirement that parents of minors seeking an abortion be notified -- a provision hailed by pro-choice groups as a "compromise" -- with a "safety valve" permitting a doctor to bypass parental notification if he or she deems it in the patient's best interest. Critics term it a loophole.

It also permits abortions to be performed outside a hospital setting and allows services to receive a fee for abortion referrals. Physicians are granted immunity from civil liability for the decision to perform an abortion. It also repeals a law requiring that women seeking abortion be given information about abortion alternatives.

Baptists share grief for
slain nuns in Liberia

By Donald D. Martin

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (BP)--Southern Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean mourned the killings of five American nuns in Liberia and attended memorial services in their honor.

In Monrovia, Liberia, Southern Baptist missionaries Bradley and Carolyn Brown attended a memorial service for the five Catholic nuns, who were shot behind rebel lines in late October and left where they died outside their convent.

The Roman Catholic archbishop of Monrovia called the killings "inhumane." The nuns, he said, "came to serve humanity, and it's inhumane to treat them like that after they have sacrificed their lives to serve God and man."

Forces of rebel leader Charles Taylor are suspected in the killings, but Taylor insisted in a radio broadcast that the area around the convent is a "no man's land, so it is anybody's guess what happened to those nuns."

Thirty-five Americans are missing and three missionaries are being detained by rebels in Taylor-held areas, according to the U.S. Embassy in Liberia. The embassy said Americans in the country are being "specifically targeted" for harassment, reported United Press International.

Southern Baptist missionaries have not been the targets of such harassment, mission officials indicated. They were not sure who the three missionaries said to be detained might be.

Southern Baptists in the United States also held memorial services for the five slain women. First Baptist Church of Waterloo, Ill., devoted its Nov. 4 evening service to prayer for the families and friends of the missionary nuns, who were all from Illinois.

Waterloo is the hometown of two of the nuns. Sisters Joelle Kolmer, 58, and her cousin Shirley Kolmer, 61, grew up there, explained Joyce Kerr, a member of the church. Church members also knew another victim, Sister Kathleen McGuire, 54, of Ridgeway, Ill., a small town near Waterloo.

"We feel we need to help minister to the Catholic community here," Kerr said. The church also prayed for the other sisters in the slain nuns' order, the Adorers of the Blood of Christ. The order's headquarters is less than 10 miles from Waterloo.

"We've been reminded how important it is to pray for the safety of our missionaries," said Kerr, whose husband, Keith, is pastor of the church. "We're praying especially for the Southern Baptist missionaries in Liberia. People here can't really grasp the trauma and destruction people in Liberia are facing."

While the slayings have shocked the Christian community in Liberia, the remaining Southern Baptist missionaries in the west African country have no plans for evacuation. The missionaries attended a special meeting at the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia Nov. 4, where government officials were expected to update the expatriate community on fighting in the area.

The day before the embassy meeting, Brown described the situation as "fluid" but said there were no definite plans to leave the country. He also reported periodic shelling of the Springs Paine Airfield, the only functioning airport in Monrovia.

Five Southern Baptist missionaries evacuated Liberia in late October. Nine other missionaries and shorter-term workers remained in the country Nov. 5. The missionaries in Monrovia have helped distribute food, clothing and bedding to war refugees while others have worked in temporary medical clinics.

--more--

The latest fighting between rebels with the National Patriotic Front of Liberia and troops with the west Africa peacekeeping force has forced about 100,000 new refugees to seek refuge in Monrovia. More than 60,000 people have died in Liberia's civil war. Fighting has forced about half of Liberia's 2.8 million citizens to leave the country as refugees.

Besides the Browns, from Marietta and East Point, Ga., respectively, the other Southern Baptist missionaries in Monrovia are John McPherson of Knoxville, Tenn.; Kenneth Nicholson of Magdalena, N.M.; and Jim and Jane Park of Paducah, Ky. Three other Southern Baptists work in Yekepa, a small mining town in northern Liberia: Earl and Jane Williams from West Monroe, La., and Knoxville; and George Senter from North Garden, Va.

--30--

Annuity Board assets rise
via \$159 million member input By Thomas E. Miller, Jr.

Baptist Press
11/5/92

DALLAS (BP)--Southern Baptist retirement plan members paid in more than \$159 million in the first nine months of 1992, a 13 percent increase over the same period in 1991.

Member contributions for eventual retirement benefits was just one of several positive notes reported to trustees of the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention at their meeting in Dallas Nov. 2-3.

Annuity Board Treasurer Harold D. Richardson reported the surge in contributions helped push total assets to \$3.77 billion on Sept. 30, up 12.9 percent over 12 months.

Trustees also were told that earnings were positive for all investment funds in the third quarter; the Church Comprehensive Medical Plan continued to show financial stability; and the property and casualty insurance program returned a modest profit.

Claims experience in the Church Comprehensive Medical Plan improved to the point that no increase in rates will occur for January through June 1993. The Group Comprehensive Medical Plan for agencies, institutions and large churches will pass along increases to less than half the participating groups.

Paul W. Powell, president of the Southern Baptist pension and insurance agency, pointed to rising contributions, even in a national recession, as an indicator of member awareness and member confidence.

"The good work of member services and fiduciary services staffs is being embraced by those who will benefit in old age," Powell said.

"Increasingly, our ministers and their churches are seeing the wisdom of starting early and contributing proportionally into a retirement plan," Powell said. "The fact that the vast majority choose the Annuity Board is both good financial planning and a mandate for us to continue excellent performance."

The Variable Fund, hit in the first half of the year by falling stock prices, rose enough in the third quarter to produce a 0.37 percent growth for the nine months. The Balanced Fund (stock and bonds) earned 3.8 percent and the Fixed Fund earned 6.2 percent in nine months. The Fixed Fund was performing near the upper end of the target range of 7.5 percent to 8.5 percent annual earnings.

Benefits paid in the third quarter totaled \$27,974,420, up more than \$4.5 million over the third quarter of 1991. Year-to-date benefits are up more than \$14 million.

Relief payments were down 4 percent in the third quarter due to a decline in Cooperative Program receipts.

--more--

While the Annuity Board receives no Cooperative Program allocation for operations, the 1992-93 convention-wide Cooperative Program budget includes \$1,074,643 for the Annuity Board. Of this total, \$400,000 has been earmarked since 1985 for reallocation to promotion and education in state conventions. All other Cooperative Program money is spent in the relief ministry.

The relief committee of the board met Nov. 2 and considered 33 requests. They approved nine two-year monthly grants, five one-time grants, one two-year expense grant and one six-month monthly grant. Seventeen requests were declined for being outside guidelines for either assets or income. Christmas checks of \$125 were approved for all monthly and expense grant recipients on roll in December. Twenty-five Hurricane Andrew victims in Florida received assistance in a special one-time relief grant.

The relief committee, which also approves Adopt An Annuitant recipients, reported that 39 were added during the third quarter to receive an extra \$50 per month beyond their regular annuity benefit.

Relief benefits totaled \$158,871 to 510 people for the quarter, and Adopt An Annuitant checks totaled \$165,810. It was the first quarter ever in which the Annuity Board's own assistance plan (Adopt An Annuitant) exceeded the relief ministry provided by the Southern Baptist Convention. As of Sept. 30, there were 1,073 on the Adopt An Annuitant roll.

Trustees approved the 1993 operating budget for the board: \$24.9 million for the retirement program and \$6.3 million for insurance program. Assets and accounting of the two programs are separate.

Treasurer Richardson said increased efficiencies resulted in a budget just 2.6 percent greater than the 1992 spending plan.

The next meeting of Annuity Board trustees is March 1-2, 1993, in Dallas.

--30--

EDITORS' NOTE: An active Missouri Baptist tells her story about a Baptist church's reaction when it learned she had tested positive for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Her name has been withheld so as not to create any additional pain.

FIRST PERSON:
AIDS patient writes
open letter to Baptists

Baptist Press
11/5/92

"That woman has AIDS." The words cut through me like a knife. I looked up with horror and saw a man I had never seen before pointing at me from the end of the pew. Suddenly it was as though I was completely paralyzed. I wanted to run out of the church before anyone realized who he was talking about, but I couldn't move.

My worst fears seemed to be coming true. The rejection and judgment I had dreaded was now a reality. But worse was realizing that someone I had trusted with my deepest secret had betrayed me. That hurt.

It had been a little over six months since I had tested positive for HIV -- the virus that causes AIDS. I had told very few people of my infection. Finally I had found the courage to tell my Sunday school class. I remember that morning as though it were only yesterday. I was so scared, but the director sat right next to me. I could feel her arm around me for emotional support.

I began by saying that what I wanted to tell them was confidential and that it was very important to me and my future that it not leave the room. I also said I had told only a few people and if I wanted anyone else to know I would be the one to tell them.

--more--

Everyone in the room agreed to honor my request for confidentiality, so I felt safe in telling them of my infection. As I talked, I watched their faces. After I finished I could tell I had caught them completely off guard and that they were full of questions. I gave them plenty of opportunity to ask whatever they wanted to, and I answered their questions as well as I could. As we left Sunday school that morning I felt good about what had just happened. It was such a relief to know I wasn't alone and that those I had just confided in supported me.

That's why the next Sunday was such a shock. I sat in my usual seat in church and a few minutes later a family started to come into the pew. Suddenly, without warning the man pulled his wife back and said in rather a loud, nervous voice, "We can't sit here!" When his wife asked why, I heard the man say in an even louder voice, "That woman has AIDS," and pointed directly at me. I could feel eyes looking at me with fear and contempt. As soon as I could move, I ran from the church in tears. My secret was out and I was terrified.

When I went to the church staff with what had happened, it seemed the minister of education was supportive. He agreed AIDS education was a good idea and planned to schedule an AIDS workshop. I was thrilled.

But nothing was done, so I once again paid the minister of education a visit. He admitted that AIDS education had dropped way down on his list of priorities. I was speechless, but not for long. I made an appointment with the pastor, but it took a long time before I even got an appointment. His secretary called two hours before our meeting and postponed it another day without explanation.

I went to the meeting prepared to meet almost any argument and took a thick file folder full of information on AIDS. He took the folder and threw it on his desk. Deep in my heart I knew it would end up in the trash once I was out the door. But I wasn't ready to give up. I told him what had happened with the family in church and how the minister of education had responded. The pastor told me I should have expected such a response when a difficult issue such as AIDS is brought up -- even with Christians. He also said he'd have to go along with the minister of education's view that AIDS education was not a priority.

I then showed him our church newsletter that I had received the day before. In it was this announcement: "Our country has a policy of denying HIV-positive individuals entrance. If you agree with this policy, please write and voice your support." Then the church listed a man's name and address. Imagine how that made me feel. I was confused and angry. After all, I am one of the people that announcement talked about. The only difference is that I was born in this country and as a citizen I can't be deported for having HIV. The pastor said he never saw the newsletter before it went to print and whatever was in it was the responsibility of the one person who put it together.

While he never had the courage to come out and say it, I knew he was hoping I would find another church. At that time I didn't feel I had any other choice. I had gone to the one place where I should have felt safe enough to share anything without fear of rejection or judgment, and I found it to be a place of people who didn't care. I posed a new problem for them -- a very uncomfortable problem, one that they didn't want to have to deal with.

So I found another church. Only this time I am once again carrying my secret inside of me. My new pastor knows of my infection. I told him before I even joined his church. His reaction was so different -- he put his arms around me and hugged me like I hadn't been hugged in a very long time. I could feel his tears and I felt safe enough to let him see mine. That's the kind of pastor I had needed. That's the kind we all need.

--more--

Why am I sharing all of this with you? Because AIDS is a Baptist issue and Baptists do get AIDS. I know I am not the only Baptist battling this disease. I feel a responsibility to do whatever I can to make sure no one else has to go through what I went through. How can we minister to those affected by AIDS? Most importantly, we need to be educated about this disease. I believe the main reason I felt forced to leave my church was because of ignorance. That I can't understand or accept.

It's crucial that we unite to combat the ignorance surrounding AIDS. Educate yourselves and your churches. Make the church a safe haven once again where people can feel the compassion that Christ calls us to share. If we can't turn to our brothers and sisters in Christ, who can we turn to? (BP)

--30--

National women's meet
slated for March 1993

Baptist Press
11/5/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Registration is under way for a 1993 national conference targeted to the needs of Christian women.

The National Christian Women's Enrichment Conference will be March 5-7, 1993, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in San Antonio, Texas. The program is being co-developed by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and Woman's Missionary Union.

Planning began in 1989 when a group was convened to identify needs of Christian women in the '90s, according to Selma Wilson, conference coordinator in the board's discipleship and family development division. "We began to shape the conference out of women's needs."

Trudy Johnson, WMU mission involvement specialist, said: "As we gather in San Antonio, I hope to recognize familiar faces of Baptist Women and Baptist Young Women as well as those of women involved in women's ministries and women who are ministry wives. This celebration for all women has the potential to be a life-changing experience. I also hope women will bring lost friends who will hear and respond to the good news of the gospel during the conference."

A wide range of conference topics will be offered including "superwoman syndrome," achieving wholeness, health issues, intimacy and communication in marriage, juggling marriage and a career, single parenting and lifestyle witnessing.

In addition, women will take an intensive look at the issue of pornography in today's society and what they can do about it. Sessions will be led by Liz Minnick, an Austin, Texas, homemaker, speaker and volunteer lobbyist. She also is a trustee of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Featured speakers include Pam Highfill of Dallas; Mamie McCullough of Richardson, Texas; Esther Burroughs of the Home Mission Board in Atlanta; and Minette Drumwright of the Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va.

The registration fee of \$65 includes, in addition to all conference sessions and materials, the welcome reception and Sunday continental breakfast.

Registrations or requests for information should go to Christian Women's Enrichment Conference, Baptist Sunday School Board, P.O. Box 24001, Nashville, TN 37203. Phone: (615) 251-2277.

--30--

Argentine Baptists' witness
reflects Latin American fervor

By Wendy Ryan

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (BP)--To see and hear Baptists in Argentina eagerly share their faith in Christ is to understand something of the reason for the rapid evangelical growth in Latin America.

Baptists in Argentina are planning to share their passion for evangelism with Baptists around the world at the 17th Baptist World Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Aug. 1-6, 1995.

"Celebrate Christ, the Hope of the World" is the theme recommended by Argentine Baptists and chosen by the Congress committee. It reflects the hope Argentines feel with the hope of Jesus, the end of military dictatorship and new attempts at democracy, privatization and controlling inflation.

In the same way the 1990 Baptist World Congress in Seoul, South Korea, was characterized by prayer, so it is hoped the 1995 Congress in Argentina will be marked by its evangelistic outreach.

Baptists in Argentina also hope the 1995 Congress will give even more impetus to their decade's goal of starting 200 new churches and adding 100,000 new members, with an annual rate of 12,000 baptisms.

"Jesus Christ is the solution for us and for the world, and Baptists who come to Argentina will share this with our people," said one member of the Argentine Committee on Local Arrangements (COLA) to a delegation of the Baptist World Alliance.

The BWA delegation which made its first official Congress visit to Baptists in Buenos Aires Oct. 22-29 was led by Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary, and Harold C. Bennett, chair of the 1995 Congress program committee and recently retired president and treasurer of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention.

While Congress planning and site selection were on the agenda of the BWA delegation, it was the evangelistic fire of Baptist leaders, the focus on evangelism in church services, programs and Congress planning that moved the hearts of delegation members.

"Ten people came to accept Jesus Christ this week," Daniel Carro, excitedly reported to the delegation. Carro is a professor at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires, director of the department of theological education for the Union of Baptists of Latin America and pastor of the Iglesia Evangelica Bautista de Ramos Mejia.

Indeed, the first of various reasons given to the BWA by Argentine Baptists for having the Congress in their country is "to share Jesus' command to every believer to evangelize the world."

To be sure, there are other reasons such as worship and fellowship.

"I remember praying with an African during the Youth Congress here in 1983," one man recalled. "I can still remember the prayer."

"I want to share ways of doing ministry with other Baptists," said another man who works with AIDS patients.

"We believe Christ has said 'yes' to Argentina," Lotz said in responding to meetings with the Argentine COLA. "It is this hope that Latin American Christians have that Baptists in North America and Europe need for the situations in their part of the world."

"You will give this theme of hope reality," Bennett, moved by the fervor of the COLA group, said. "We believe 1995 will be a great year for Baptists around the world," he added.

**Baptist journalist named editor
of New York City Christian paper**

NEW YORK (BP)--Karen Willoughby Santiago, former Southern Baptist Home Mission Board-related writer, has been named editor and co-publisher of The Beacon in New York City, a monthly Christian newsjournal.

"I am thrilled, honored and challenged by the opportunity of ministering in this way to the Christians in this secularized metropolitan area," said Santiago, 45, who moved to the New York City area with her husband, Panfilo, earlier this year.

"I went to college and to seminary with the express purpose of training for the ministry of a Christian newspaper," Santiago said. "Being chosen for this position is an affirmation to me of God's purpose for my life."

The Beacon has a circulation of 30,000 in churches and Christian businesses and educational institutions in Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan and Staten Island.

Santiago is a member of Richboro Baptist Church in Staten Island.

She was an HMB Mission Service Corps writer for 15 western states from 1989-91. At Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, she was editor of the student newspaper in the fall of 1981 and completed her journalism degree in 1982.

She earned a master's in religious education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1989.

Santiago also has done free-lance writing for Baptist Press and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif.

Her career includes work as newswires editor for a computer news service operated by Ziff Communications in Foster City, Calif., 1991-92, and reporter for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 1987-89. She was an editorial assistant at the Fort Worth paper from 1984-87.

--30--

**Pilot project's success
enlarges small SBC church**

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
11/5/92

LANDER, Wyo. (BP)--Setting a church growth goal in a small town where businesses have closed and families have left to seek work in other areas might seem a futile effort.

But the members of Lander Valley Baptist Church in the small mining town of Lander, Wyo., not only took the challenge but increased their Sunday school enrollment by almost 20 percent.

Pastor Bob Moon said the goal was not the result of any inspiration he or members of the church received, but the outcome of an invitation to participate in a Southern Baptist Sunday School Board pilot project for "Great Commission BREAKTHROUGH."

When the project was conducted in 1991, Lander Valley church was one of 302 churches nationwide that tried the customized growth help as a pilot effort and found it works.

At the time volunteer consultant Robin Gray of Buffalo, Wyo., met with Moon for a pre-consultation session, Sunday school enrollment was 74, with an average attendance of 37. Because the local economy had been affected by business closings, Sunday school enrollment had fluctuated for several years from a low in the 50s to a high in the 70s.

--more--

Gray subsequently met with Moon and 13 Sunday school teachers and key church leaders during a Sunday afternoon session in early 1991. Rather than telling the Lander Valley members what they needed to do to grow, Gray gave them a questionnaire to complete. Topics included personal involvement with Sunday school and opinions about the friendliness of Sunday school classes and worship services.

At another such meeting, Gray provided members feedback on what they had indicated the general atmosphere of the church to be.

"He let our people decide what they needed to do and what their priorities needed to be," Moon recalled.

Joyce Moon, Sunday school director and pastor's wife, said the group set what they felt was a modest Sunday school enrollment goal of a 10 percent increase, or seven persons, because of the history of membership fluctuation.

Other goals included establishing a prospect file, beginning once-a-week visitation and having a nursery coordinator.

"Our Sunday school enrollment increased immediately," Joyce Moon reported, adding two new members the first Sunday.

A May 1 deadline was established, and on the appointed day, the enrollment goal had been surpassed, with 88 enrolled and an average attendance of 52.

The momentum of the effort has continued, she said, with a current enrollment of 106 and average attendance of 55.

"They're still conscious of the need," Bob Moon added. "Goals have been met and surpassed. We just weren't organized to reach out before. Our Sunday school enrollment has continued to increase, and our attendance has increased."

During the same year, an economic concern came before the congregation.

"We had been giving 12 percent of our contributions to the Cooperative Program (Southern Baptists' unified giving program for missions) and 7 percent to associational missions.

"At a business meeting, the suggestion came that we cut our missions giving. After some discussion, we decided not to cut our Cooperative Program or associational missions giving. Instead, we instructed the treasurer to keep track of the situation and, as money became available, to catch up on our contributions. By December, we were caught up!"

Since then, Moon said, the church has not missed a month paying all the church's bills and giving to the Cooperative Program and the association. Added to that, the church sends \$100 each month to a mission at Jeffrey City some 65 miles away to help support the pastor there. In two years, monthly contributions at Lander Valley church have increased by \$800.

Another outcome of BREAKTHROUGH is that the congregation now needs to build additional education space. When the pilot project began, the church hoped to add one class. Instead, three new classes have begun.

"We can't take credit for it without the Lord's leadership," Bob Moon said of the surprising growth. "And I can't take any credit for it. The people are doing it. The people got excited and made it happen."

Joyce Moon said she believes "when people decide what they want to do, they'll do it better than if someone else tells them what to do."

--more--

Joyce and Bob Moon believe so strongly in Great Commission BREAKTHROUGH they are now involved in helping another church begin the BREAKTHROUGH process. They travel 270 miles each way to help Westside Baptist Church in Gillette, Wyo. But the distance doesn't seem to impress the Moons.

"Everything out here is that way," Joyce laughed.

For congregations anywhere that might wonder if they should try BREAKTHROUGH, Bob Moon advised, "Go for it!"

--30--

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press.

'Experiencing God' teaches
how to serve, how to live

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
11/5/92

THERMOPOLIS, Wyo. (BP)--For many Southern Baptists, the opportunity for extended time to gaze at dramatic mountain scenery would be a means to experience God.

But for those who live surrounded by mountains, the routine of life does not provide an endless meditative experience. Their lives, like those of persons in different geographic settings, include personal problems and struggles that lead to spiritual needs.

At Round Top Baptist Church in Thermopolis, Wyo., six of the church's 30 average attend rs began a study in early October to bring their lives more in touch with a personal relationship to Jesus Christ.

"Experiencing God," a discipleship study produced by the Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division, has provided renewed opportunities for a self-examination in personal relationships to the Lord.

"It's changed our outlook on ministry and how it's done," said Darrell Carnley, pastor of the small resort-town congregation. "Instead of trying to come up with imaginative and creative ways to lead a church, we have taken the attention off ourselves and placed it on God, asking him, 'How do you want this church led?'"

Carnley said a pastor friend had studied the book, "and I observed radical changes" in his life.

"I've been impressed with how God has been emphasized -- loving Jesus," he reflected. "From that relationship comes the knowledge of how to lead a church, how to be a husband, a wife, a parent. And it's scriptural to the core."

Mark Liesch and his wife, Cindy, are the newest church members to participate in the study.

Liesch, a stage technician at the Hot Springs County High School and a volunteer with the local ambulance service, said Experiencing God has "caused me to reflect on my life and how much I have done for the Lord in service because he is Lord."

On another level, Liesch said he has learned "being a parent and a husband requires you to give of yourself. You are willing to work for the benefits -- the selfish motive. I need to serve my wife and children because I love them, just as I need to serve God because I love God. The book stresses selflessness."

Liesch, the father of three children, said he has come to believe the truths in Experiencing God should affect every decision from morning until night.

--more--

"There are some misconceptions about those of us who live in the Rocky Mountains," he said. The lack of large populations and large financial bases is perceived by many persons as limiting. But Liesch declares "here you rely more on self. I can't hire out a lot of work at home, and we divide up the jobs in the church. The study has helped me to realize I have to trust God when I have been relying on myself."

Since the course involves personal study of 30 minutes to an hour each day, Liesch said "Experiencing God has been the main topic of discussion at our house. We've probably discussed spiritual matters a whole lot more than usual in the past two weeks."

Carnley has been affected by the study as a husband and father as well as church pastor.

"In my prayer time I've sensed I need to spend more time with my wife and children," he observed. As the father of two young daughters, Carnley said "that reality has been more and more on my mind during this study. I've learned how precious my children are and how important it is to find what God wants to do with my children's lives.

"I have felt more sensitivity toward Deanna, my wife," he continued. "God has been speaking to her in the past couple of weeks. I've heard her talk about personal things she's never talked about before."

The congregation, he hopes, will be influenced by testimonies so others will study the book.

"I want the congregation to seek to know the will of God and do it, to develop a love for the Savior that changes how they see their place in Thermopolis, Wyo."

Carnley hopes the study of Experiencing God, once completed, will lead the church "to seeing his plan -- not ours -- to reach Thermopolis."

Liesch said he believes door-to-door evangelism "isn't a big thing here. People are more interested in how people live and what they are like. If we have a relationship with Christ and people see what we're like, they are going to look to this church and the pastor for leadership."

And Liesch said he believes organized programs are not as important as individual lifestyle and relationship with Jesus.

Carnley agrees that "a discipleship training course will not change your life. A personal relationship with Jesus Christ will change your life."

And he urges others to give Experiencing God a try. "Don't let the fact that it's an organized program turn you off."

--30--

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Three-congregation pastor
has a field of ministry

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
11/5/92

MEDICINE BOW, Wyo. (BP)--To call Emory Lussi a bivocational pastor would be an understatement.

He is pastor to three congregations separated by miles of unpopulated, rugged Wyoming terrain, driver of two school bus routes and a substitute school teacher. In his "spare time," he volunteers as a firefighter and ambulance driver for the town of Medicine Bow, population 389.

--more--

Lussi and his wife, Beverly, native Georgians, came to this small, historic town four years ago when the economy was beginning to weaken with the closing of mines and the curtailment of many related businesses.

In fact, one of the original three congregations he came to lead folded when the entire town of Shirley Basin "went out of business." When the mines at Shirley Basin closed, virtually everyone left town. Lussi's last church member in Shirley Basin met with him for weekly worship services for a time before moving to look for work.

For a brief time he was pastor to four congregations. Six months before Shirley Basin church ceased to exist, a woman from North Albany County, Wyo., made a surprise telephone call to Lussi.

"It was the weirdest thing," he recalled. "She just called out of the blue and said, 'We want to have church out here. Will you come?' I said, 'Well, sure I will.'"

Since Lussi already had two services to preach on Sunday mornings, one on Sunday afternoon and an evening service in Medicine Bow, the North Albany Fellowship began meeting the first and third Monday nights of the month. The Lussis drive for about an hour on a rough, unlighted, dirt and gravel road to meet with 14 to 33 persons who provide a potluck meal and participate in a worship service at a community clubhouse. In months that have a fifth Monday, they have a singing. Lussi said they never fail to express their appreciation for his help.

Medicine Bow Baptist Church might be considered the "city church," relatively speaking, since Rock River tallied 197 persons in the 1990 U.S. census. The North Albany Fellowship participants live considerable distances apart on ranches.

Medicine Bow Church has 31 members, with an average Sunday school attendance of 19; First Baptist Church of Rock River has 25 members, with an average of 15 in Sunday school.

Both are small enough that Lussi's sermons might better be described as dialogues. Members feel free to respond to Lussi's statements and questions, and he said he likes that. At North Albany Fellowship, his weekly sermon is adapted for a dialogue around the supper table after two Sunday school classes for children have begun.

In all three services, Lussi's singing and guitar playing draw enthusiastic participation. He is preacher, music leader and education director.

On a recent October Sunday, Lussi led the Rock River congregation in a lengthy medley of choruses and old-time evangelistic hymns, followed by a season of prayer that covered health concerns, the need for strengthened families across the nation and petitions for national leaders.

Lussi's sermon/dialogue on koinonia brought some spirited discussion. And the fellowship time between church and Sunday school seemed reluctantly ended. But Lussi had to pack up his guitar and bring his conversations to a close for the drive to Medicine Bow's 11 a.m. service where he would repeat the service in a modified form.

The Lussis, parents of three boys, have a baby due in January. Yet they seem to thrive on what many would consider a lifestyle that pulls in too many directions.

"The pastoral role is different for me," Emory Lussi explained. "I see church people all week long -- at the post office or the local market. The one person we have in the hospital now is the first one since last May. All three of my congregations wouldn't equal most pastors'."

--more--

A few days spent following Lussi around the community might lead one to believe he is modest to a fault. Among the miscellaneous pastoral roles he performs is a five-day-a-week devotional with high school students before the school day begins. He squeezes this in between bus routes at the students' request.

Lussi's philosophy is that he is a worker in the community who also pastors churches. He is not a full-time pastoral figure who might not be so easily accepted in the often solitary and not-easily-interrupted lifestyle of a sparsely populated area.

"I've planted my life here," he reflected, "and the people have decided 'this guy's for real.'"

Lussi's tenure at Medicine Bow and Rock River is about to surpass that of two immediate predecessors, each of whom stayed four years, and a large number of earlier pastors whose tenures were from three months to a year. As an additional indication that he is not temporary, Lussi is running for city council this year. He said he is not as concerned with winning as with sending a signal that he is here for the long term.

"I could be happy here the rest of my life," he declared. "It may seem initially difficult to break in to the community, but once folks know you they accept you for what you are."

And Beverly Lussi adds, "We're where God wants us."

For the Georgia native who as a boy first read about western U.S. missions in a church bulletin, it is a career dream come true.

--30--

(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press.