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91-190

**Romanians applaud seminary defunding;
other Europeans to react in January** By Erich Bridges

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Baptist Union of Romania's general council has taken a stand supporting the defunding of the Baptist seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, by trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Other European Baptist union leaders -- many of whom opposed the defunding action -- will meet in January to discuss how to respond to the trustees' Dec. 11 reaffirmation of the defunding originally voted in October.

The Romanian Baptist leaders met Nov. 26 and "agreed to this decision" of the FMB trustees, according to a letter dated Dec. 10 and signed by Vasile Talos and Nic Gheorghita. Talos is president and Gheorghita is general secretary of the union, the largest Baptist group in Europe with 160,000 members, according to Baptist World Alliance statistics for 1988.

The letter was addressed to Paul Thibodeaux, the Foreign Mission Board's associate director for mission work in eastern Europe.

In October, the smaller Hungarian Baptist Union of Romania issued a statement urging the Foreign Mission Board to reconsider its decision to defund Ruschlikon and join with Europeans to resolve the seminary's financial problems.

The Dec. 10 letter from Talos and Gheorghita said: "The Baptist Union of Romania had a grieving experience with (the Ruschlikon) seminary: one of our pastors, the only graduate from Ruschlikon, after his coming back to the country, had a negative influence in the Baptist Union of Bucharest and in some churches as well. Eventually the church he ministered (to) asked him to resign for immorality"

The letter also said professors from Ruschlikon who taught in a Romanian Baptist seminary and churches "some years ago ... squeezed doubts in their lectures that the Bible is entirely the Word of God. These experiences robbed the good reputation of the Ruschlikon seminary in Romania."

The Romanians subsequently decided to concentrate on developing their own two theological schools in Bucharest and Oradea and "not to send students to Ruschlikon in the future," the letter said.

The letter concluded that the Romanian union council "welcomes and appreciates" the decision by the Foreign Mission Board to "support the biblical institutes from the East European countries." The decision is "very important and more efficient for God's work in these countries."

The letter was received by Baptist Press but had not reached Thibodeaux, to whom it was addressed, or the Europe office of the Foreign Mission Board by Dec. 18. Repeated attempts by Baptist Press to reach Romanian Baptist leaders for further interpretation of the statement were unsuccessful.

Contacted for comment, Thibodeaux responded: "I don't think you can blame Ruschlikon for individual sins or immorality (of former students). ... The case that they cite I'm aware of, and I know of the problems, but in no way could one say that it was Ruschlikon's doing."

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As to professors from Ruschlikon teaching unbiblically in Romania, "We've never heard that until this day," Thibodeaux said. "It has never been expressed to us -- the representatives who have traveled there consistently over the years and who have had fraternal relationships with the Romanian union on behalf of the Foreign Mission Board and Southern Baptists -- until this issue surfaced with the defunding of Ruschlikon. ... If these had been valid arguments in years past they would have surfaced. It's strange to me that it only surfaces now."

Thibodeaux added, however, the decision could be "closely linked" to the Romanians' hopes for more financial support for their own schools. He said he had been told by Romanian Baptist leader Josif Ton that Ton hopes to raise \$2 million each for the two Romanian Baptist schools from Southern Baptists.

Ton, head of the Baptist Bible Institute in Oradea and pastor of Second Baptist Church there, indicated his own support for the defunding action in a Nov. 1 letter to FMB trustee chairman Bill Hancock. Hancock sent the letter to Baptist Press Dec. 12.

Ton congratulated the trustees for their decision to discontinue support for Ruschlikon, and recounted several instances of European students who he said had their faith shaken or destroyed at Ruschlikon by "liberal theologians."

"I know (Ruschlikon president) John David Hopper has tried to steer the school in a new direction," Ton said. "But as far as we can see the school is dominated by liberal teachers and the European Baptist Federation is still unable to get clear from this deadly disease of unbelief in the Bible."

In the wake of the FMB trustees' Dec. 11 vote of 54-27 to take no further action on Ruschlikon, other European unions indicated they would discuss reaction during an already-scheduled meeting of European Baptist Federation representatives in mid-January. Leaders of many Baptist unions throughout Europe earlier wrote letters disapproving the action.

British Baptists earlier had said the defunding -- if upheld -- would damage Southern Baptists' relations with their British counterparts. British Baptist leader David Coffey told FMB officials after the Dec. 11 vote that Southern Baptist missionaries Gary and Delores Bishop (now on furlough) would be welcomed back but that no new missionaries would be requested.

German Baptists also had warned of negative consequences if the defunding action stood. In a Dec. 18 interview with European Baptist Press Service, Hans Guderian, home missions director for the German Baptist Union, said the Germans had not had time to discuss the action as a union.

"Everyone is frightened (because of the implications)," he said. "Our fear is that there may not any more be the possibility for real relationship or partnership with the Foreign Mission Board ... I think when our union officials come together there will be strong reactions to (the decision)."

Guderian expressed hope the Southern Baptist missionary families now in Germany will stay. "We have had good experiences with these couples and we hope they can stay here," he said.

Calls and letters continued to come in to Foreign Mission Board offices about the defunding action. By Dec. 18 the board had received 665 letters on the issue; 593 opposed the defunding and 72 favored it.

One pastor who called to oppose the decision said the Foreign Mission Board would face a "Chernobyl-class meltdown of support." The FMB trustees, he said, had shot themselves in a "much more sensitive spot than the foot." His church's Woman's Missionary Union leader intended to recommend the church redirect its entire \$14,000 Lottie Moon mission offering goal to the Ruschlikon seminary, he said.

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A letter writer supporting the defunding action, however, commended the trustees, noting "nothing deadens God's work like liberalism and what you have exposed has probably been the problem all along Don't be discouraged, don't be intimidated, keep doing the job you were entrusted with."

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SBC leaders gather
to discuss missions

By Susan Todd Doyle

Baptist Press
12/18/91

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--At the invitation of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien, four Southern Baptist leaders joined her Dec. 16-17 to discuss missions support.

O'Brien invited the leaders in September 1991 to come to the WMU national headquarters in Birmingham, Ala., to discuss ways Southern Baptists can be more supportive of missions. The December dates were the first time they could all get together.

Involved in the private discussions were Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee; R. Keith Parks, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board; Larry L. Lewis, president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board; and John Hewett, moderator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and pastor of First Baptist Church of Ashville, N.C.

Also invited to join the discussion were James Williams, president of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, and Morris Chapman, president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Both had planned to attend all or portions of the meeting. Williams, who had a previously scheduled engagement on the same dates, was unable to work out travel arrangements which would allow him to attend portions of both meetings. Chapman also was unable at the last minute to attend.

O'Brien said she chose to invite this particular group to the discussion because they are the leaders who direct agencies and entities who are associated with missions giving.

The meeting represented the first time these Southern Baptist leaders have gathered to discuss missions.

The leaders did not release a statement. However, they agreed they are all concerned about lagging missions offerings and a general decline in missions interest on the part of Southern Baptists. But the group made no recommendations, is taking no action, and has no plans to meet again.

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Horton appoints 7-member committee
to pursue declaratory judgment

Baptist Press
12/18/91

COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP)--Former South Carolina convention president Gregory Horton has appointed a 7-member committee to pursue a declaratory judgment on the legality of Furman University's action in 1990 to make its board of trustees self-perpetuating. But he also held out some hope for an out-of-court settlement.

Horton, a layman, said each committee member has agreed to "do everything possible" to avert a court battle.

Accompanied by new convention president Eddie Greene of Anderson, Horton, a layman from Simpsonville, announced the committee names at a press conference Dec. 17 at the Baptist Building.

"Each one (of the committee) has told me he is not anti-Furman and has no ax to grind with anyone in this matter," Horton said.

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The committee was authorized by messengers to the Nov. 11-12 state convention in Greenville. It includes four laymen, two pastors and a retired pastor.

The committee's makeup did not please Furman University president John E. Johns, who in a prepared statement declared his disappointment "that the past president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention would appoint a committee that is composed primarily of fundamentalists who are openly hostile to Furman."

"I was certainly surprised," he continued, "to see that he had appointed the individual who made the substitute motion to sue Furman at the convention, as well as the Furman trustee who seconded the motion."

Johns was referring to committee members George Campsen III from Mt. Pleasant, who offered the motion seeking the declaratory judgment, and Guy Sanders Jr. from Bamberg, also a layman, who serves on the Furman board through 1993.

Also on the committee are Arthur Bruce, layman from Anderson; Redmond Coyle, layman from Pickens; Troy Gregg, pastor of First Baptist Church in Chesnee; Timothy Head, pastor of Cooper River Baptist Church in Charleston; and Bruce Russell, a retired minister from Charleston.

No deadline has been set for any action by the committee, which also would choose its own chairman, Horton said.

The former convention president also emphasized so far "no money" had been spent by the convention for litigation.

The prospects of using offering plate money for a court action has, however, triggered protests from many South Carolina Baptists. At least four churches -- First churches in Greenville, Laurens and Belton, along with Augusta Road Church in Greenville -- have voted to withhold Cooperative Program money to prevent its being used for the law suit.

Furman's 1991 allocation of Cooperative Program money, \$1.6 million, is being held in an interest-bearing account. The 1992 allocation to Furman of \$1.8 million also will be escrowed in that account.

Campsen's substitute motion, which passed by a vote of 2,111 to 1,973, stipulated court costs be paid with money designated for Furman.

Messengers to the state convention never voted on a covenant reached between Furman's executive board and a special convention committee allowing the convention to choose Furman trustees from a list already approved by Furman.

Horton insisted his hope for an out-of-court settlement was not a "step back" from the convention's action in November to pursue the declaratory judgment.

Greene also issued a call for reconciliation. "We need to talk," he said. The new convention president, a conservative who characterizes himself as a reconciler, said, "The rank and file South Carolina Baptists do not want a law suit, and we've heard them loud and clear."

"I'm extending a hand to Furman," Greene said, "And I'm waiting for a hand in return."

Johns restated his hope "this matter could be settled out of court."

"But," he continued, "it seems apparent that this committee is composed of people who favor legal action. Although we're disappointed in the makeup of this committee, we continue to be willing to talk with responsible groups representing the convention until a law suit is filed."

Asked whether the 7-member committee had legal authority to instigate a court action, Horton said that would have to be determined.

Greene said, "This is a new path. South Carolina Baptists have never been down this road before."

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Lotz challenges graduates
to avoid being 'peddlers'

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
12/18/91

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The world needs more proclaimers and fewer "peddlers" of the gospel. That message was delivered to graduates of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in a Dec. 13 commencement address by Denton Lotz, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance.

Peddlers of the gospel build up their own egos instead of proclaiming the message of Christ, Lotz said. "The peddler of the word is always talking about himself," he said. "How many souls he was won. How many members in his church. How many cassettes he sent out. How many T.V. broadcasts. How much money he makes... . He sings 'How Great I Am' instead of 'How Great Thou Art.'

Lotz told the 184 graduates of the Louisville, Ky., school the message of the peddler is propaganda not proclamation. "Propaganda is preaching that the individual must become like me, dress like me and act like me before he can believe," he said. "Proclamation on the other hand is so preaching the gospel in the power of the Spirit that the individual puts his faith in Jesus Christ and in the freedom of the gospel and becomes what God wants him to become."

Propagandists, Lotz added, are across the theological spectrum. "It's too easy of a cop out to try to isolate propaganda on the right or the left," he said. "It's everywhere."

The ministry is the "greatest vocation in the world," he said. The world needs ministers who are willing to "respond to God's call in Jesus Christ to give up everything for the cross."

The peddler gives up nothing but "sells the gospel" for wealth and prestige, Lotz stressed: "The sacrifice is gone, the challenge is gone, the zeal for Christ and the cross are lost, and the desire to succeed in the eyes of the world is being a famous or well-known preacher."

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Dilday says reaccreditation shows
best days ahead for Southwestern

By Scott Collins

Baptist Press
12/18/91

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Two accrediting agencies have completed their work and awarded reaccreditation for the next 10 years to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, according to officials at the Fort Worth, Texas, school.

Southwestern, which received reaccreditation from the Association of Theological Schools last spring, was notified Dec. 16 by officials from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools the seminary has received its approval.

Southwestern President Russell Dilday said he is pleased with the outcome of the reaccreditation process.

"This affirms what we already knew -- that Southwestern Seminary is in good shape, strong and ready for the best years in the history of the school," Dilday said.

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Trustee Chairman Jim Bolton of Dallas said the reaccreditation reflects the "positive leadership of the administration of the seminary. I don't expect anything but better days ahead."

Armed with reaccreditation and a four-year strategic plan, Dilday said Southwestern is "poised for the future like never before."

Countering warnings Southern Baptist seminaries have become immobilized and are headed toward the dark ages, Dilday said positive reports from the two accrediting agencies, improved relations with trustees and recent additions to the school's faculty are evidence the seminary is on solid ground.

Those factors, combined with the strategic plan called Vision For Excellence, give Dilday confidence the "best days of Southwestern Seminary are just ahead."

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Southern Baptists should explore
secular therapy methods that work

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
12/18/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists should explore non-traditional ways of ministering to hurting people, including borrowing methods from secular therapy, a pastor and church leader agreed.

Christians and non-Christians alike are experiencing confusion and pain as a result of unresolved childhoods, many suffering emotionally in ways they do not understand, said Tim Sledge, pastor of Kingsland Baptist Church of Katy, Texas, and author of a new resource for people who grew up in dysfunctional families.

"Evangelism is getting harder and harder to do," said Roy Edgemon, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship training department. "The people who are not Christians are not flocking to our churches.

"I think it's time for the church to be relevant or viable in this new century we are facing. The church must offer a ministry that speaks to the needs of these people who have realized their background and family relationships weren't as healthy as they could have been," Edgemon said.

Group therapy, counseling on family of origin issues and the 12-step recovery process for people with addictive behaviors and their family members are all secular methods that have worked to bring healing to hurting people, Sledge said.

Sledge is author of "Making Peace with Your Past," a 12-week Lay Institute for Equipping course produced by the Sunday School Board's discipleship training and family ministry departments. The resource is being field tested and will be released in the fall of 1992. Sledge presented his testimony of healing to state convention discipleship training directors in Nashville for annual planning meetings Dec. 11-13.

About 95 percent of all people, Sledge said, are dysfunctional in some way. Edgemon said about 15 million Americans are involved in support groups.

"There is a heavy involvement of alcoholism in the baby boomer generation," Edgemon said, "and now they're having children. So there is a tremendous amount of dysfunctional people, and they are trying to figure out what to do with these unsettling feelings they are having.

"These people are just flocking to churches that are offering these support ministries," he added.

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Sledge's church is one of them. Following a sermon series on alcoholism in 1987 and subsequent initiation of support groups, Sledge said attendance has doubled.

"When I started offering this church as a place where people can come and it's OK not to be OK, they started coming," he said.

Before he decided to preach a series of sermons on alcoholism, Sledge said he was "exactly where I wanted to be -- pastor of a growing church in a suburb of Houston."

But then he began experiencing panic attacks.

"I knew they were not logical, but I had this overwhelming fear like I was going to die or something very bad was about to happen," said Sledge, whose father was an alcoholic.

He said he went to a counselor, but the sessions did not help. He then started taking tranquilizers. "I was very embarrassed. As a pastor, I was telling people how to handle their lives, but I wasn't doing a very good job of it myself."

Sledge said when he decided to preach the series, he had begun reading books about children of alcoholics. He joined a group therapy session as a part of his study on the series.

"I found myself in a group of several people who were recovering from a list of addictions," Sledge said. "I began saying, 'What am I doing here,' but as I listened to those people talk about their emotional lives, I found I had a lot in common with them."

What Sledge discovered and subsequently wrote about in "Making Peace with Your Past" is a dysfunctional family life breeds co-dependent people.

"Co-dependency can be somewhat elusive as far as definitions go," said Sledge who acknowledged co-dependency "is a serious problem in our churches.

"Co-dependent people help others at their own expense," Sledge said. "On the surface they almost look like a committed Christian. But, they are interested in helping other people because they feel inadequate. They have a hard time making decisions for themselves, although they know more what you need than what they need."

He described two types of co-dependence; the achievement oriented and the almost completely immobilized.

One is addicted to achievement and the next to accomplishment, he said. "That 'at-a-boy' pat on the back feels an awful lot like love."

The other type, he said, has a hard time keeping jobs or relationships.

The result of support group therapy and exploring and resolving one's past, Sledge said, is a Christian with a healthier self-esteem.

And the result of healthier Christians, Edgemon said, is healthier churches.

"I think churches offering support groups are on the cutting edge of ministry," Edgemon said. "People will drive 20 to 30 miles to go to a church where it's OK to be hurting and seeking help."

The discipleship training and family ministry departments are in the process of contracting with Sledge on a second LIFE course, "Moving Beyond Your Hurt," to help dysfunctional people move past support groups and get on with their lives, Edgemon said.

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Discipleship training leaders also discussed plans for promoting the 1992 Baptist Doctrine Study textbook, "The Doctrine of the Bible" by David Dockery, and new LIFE courses, including "Step by Step Through the Old Testament" and "Christian Self-Esteem: Parenting by Grace," both released in October 1991.

"Step by Step Through the New Testament" will be released in April 1992. The studies of the Old and New Testaments provide an overview of understanding for both books, leaders said. In the "Christian Self-Esteem" course, parents learn the value of self-esteem in developing parenting skills that will guide them in building self-esteem in their children.

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Bivocational church planters
creating trend in California

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
12/18/91

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (BP)--If trends start in California and move east, soon Southern Baptists across the country will start churches with bivocational pastors.

Starting churches with people who work full time at another job is already standard procedure in Riverside, Calif., where Gene Wilson is director of missions for Calvary Arrowhead Baptist Association.

In 1980, the association had 1.6 million residents and 106 Southern Baptist churches and missions. Ten years later, the population reached 2.6 million, but the churches and missions had only increased to 140.

"We started 34 churches to reach one million people," Wilson laments.

Faced with the mushrooming population, Wilson says, "Addition (of churches) is not enough. We must multiply."

Knowing money is not available to fund all of the church starters needed, Wilson sought bivocational leaders for new churches. The association started 28 churches in the 30 months Wilson has been in southern California. All but one of the new churches have started with bivocational pastors.

Southern Baptists tend to view bivocationals as less effective than full-time pastors, Wilson says, but adds churches started with bivocational leaders in his association have grown as fast if not faster than churches started with full-time pastors.

A bivocational church starter has several advantages over a full-time church starter, Wilson says.

First, working in secular employment allows the bivocational church planter to identify with the people he is attempting to reach.

Southern Californians are skeptical of religious people, Wilson says. It decreases their cynicism when they realize a bivocational church planter is not starting a church for a salary.

The work place is also a great place to demonstrate the gospel. "Being bivocational gives people a forum to live out what a born-again Christian is," Wilson says.

Another advantage is the bivocational church planter understands the plight of a lay person. For example, Wilson says the average commuter in his association drives 90 minutes one way to work. The average work week is at least 50 hours.

Having a bivocational pastor also builds a lay-dependent congregation. Church members sense an obligation and responsibility to do their part when the pastor works two jobs, Wilson says.

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In addition, bivocational church planters benefit the association. Financial support from the association can be used for church expenses such as building rent and utilities rather than the pastor's salary. Plus, new churches which receive financial support from the association agree to start other churches.

"We can't afford to start nonreproducing churches," Wilson says.

The most difficult part of the bivocational church starting process, Wilson says, is finding leaders. Wilson's dream is to start churches with bivocational teams, including someone to serve as pastor, another person to be the worship leader and perhaps another person to develop the church's religious education strategy.

The association has identified 75 places where it would like to start a church. "We just have to pray for leaders," Wilson says.

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Storm destroys church,
homes on American Samoa

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
12/18/91

ATLANTA (BP)--A cyclone which ravaged Pacific Ocean islands destroyed a church and pastor's home on American Samoa but did only minor damage to another church and school there.

Cyclone Val also hit Western Samoa, but detailed reports of damage there were not available due to mechanical breakdowns, said Verl Henderson, director of missions for the Hawaii Baptist Convention. American Samoa and Western Samoa both relate to the Hawaii Baptist Convention.

Heavy rains and 150 mph winds deluged the islands for four days, Henderson said. Three storm-related deaths were reported from American Samoa.

On American Samoa, the Tongan Baptist church and the pastor's home were completely destroyed, Henderson said. Five families of the Chinese congregation meeting on American Samoa lost the roofs to their homes, he noted.

Yet the Happy Valley Baptist Church building and the Samoa Baptist Academy which meets there received only minor damage. The 14 volunteers who staff the academy were not hurt, Henderson said.

Damage estimates have reached \$65 million, Henderson said. He noted 95 percent of the islands' crops such as bananas, cocoa and coconuts were damaged. Henderson predicted it will take months for the agriculture-dependent economy to recover.

A volunteer is going to Western Samoa to assess damage, Henderson said. In the meantime, the Hawaii Baptist Convention is providing tarps for people to use for shelter while their homes are rebuilt. The Home Mission Board has contributed \$10,000 from its disaster relief fund to help relief efforts.

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Disbanding accounts for most churches
dropped from associational rolls By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
12/18/91

ATLANTA (BP)--The main reason churches are dropped from Southern Baptist associational rolls is congregations disband, a two-year study shows.

From 1988 to 1989, 225 churches were removed from associational lists, according to information from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. Results of the study are consistent with a study of churches removed from associational rolls from 1987 to 1988.

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Of the churches removed in 1989, 123 had disbanded.

Churches which disband are generally small, noted Phil Jones, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board planning and services research department who studied the material. He said 50 percent of the disbanded churches last reported fewer than 50 members, and 77 percent had fewer than 100 members.

Church membership could have dwindled substantially between the last time membership was reported and the time the church disbanded, Jones noted.

There seems to be no relationship between the age of the church and its disbanding, Jones said.

Eleven of the churches were dropped because they had become inactive or non-cooperating in their associations.

Nothing indicated churches were disfellowshipped by the association because of theological differences, he said.

"It appears that associations remove churches only after extensive inactivity or non-cooperation with the association and after repeated attempts by the association to secure cooperation," Jones said.

Of the 225 churches removed from associational rolls, 41 withdrew to become independent churches, while one church joined another denomination. Twenty-four congregations reverted to mission status, and eight merged with another congregation. Twelve churches were classified as having an unknown status, and information was not available on five churches.

Following is a list of state conventions, the number of churches disbanded from 1988 to 1989 and the total number of churches dropped from associational rolls, including those which disbanded:

Alabama: three disbanded, seven dropped; Alaska: disbanded, one dropped; Arizona: one disbanded, two dropped; Arkansas: four disbanded, five dropped; California: 11 disbanded, 16 dropped; Colorado: three disbanded, four dropped; New England: one disbanded, two dropped; Florida: seven disbanded, nine dropped; Georgia: eight disbanded, 15 dropped;

Illinois: five disbanded, six dropped; Indiana: none disbanded, six dropped; Iowa: two disbanded, four dropped; Kansas-Nebraska: three disbanded, three dropped; Kentucky: two disbanded, seven dropped; Louisiana: three disbanded, six dropped; Maryland/Delaware: three disbanded, four dropped; Michigan: four disbanded, six dropped; Minnesota-Wisconsin: two disbanded, two dropped; Mississippi: three disbanded, five dropped; Missouri: two disbanded, five dropped;

Nevada: one disbanded, one dropped; New Mexico: one disbanded, two dropped; New York: five disbanded, seven dropped; North Carolina: five disbanded, 12 dropped; Ohio: four disbanded, 10 dropped; Oklahoma: five disbanded, seven dropped; Pennsylvania-South Jersey: one disbanded, one dropped; Puerto Rico: none disbanded, two dropped; South Carolina: three disbanded, five dropped;

Tennessee: Two disbanded, eight dropped; Texas: 23 disbanded, 45 dropped; Utah-Idaho: four disbanded, four dropped; Virginia: one disbanded, one dropped;

**Baptists respond to Moscow's
plea for food**

WASHINGTON (BP)--The compassion and determination of a small Baptist church in Leesburg, Va., matched with the resources and coordination of the Baptist World Alliance and a pastor from Moscow have come together to send a DC-10 with over 100,000 pounds of canned goods, dried cereals, cake mixes and tinned meat to Moscow.

The plane will leave from New York City with the donated food, and arrive in Moscow in time for the Eastern Christmas, Jan. 5.

On arrival in Moscow, the food will be distributed by the members of the Moscow Baptist Church in an arrangement made by one of its ministers, Sergei Rebrov, who currently is staying as a guest of the Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, Va.

It was around Thanksgiving a member of the Leesburg Baptist Church offered the DC-10 if the pastor and people would work to fill it with food and arrange for the delivery of food to New York and its distribution in Moscow.

Undaunted by their size -- less than 1,000 members -- or the challenge to find the food and fuel, members of the church set to work to help Baptists and others in Moscow at this desperate time of need.

The Leesburg church learned Rebrov, from Moscow, was visiting the Columbia church and contacted him for help in distributing the food in Moscow. It also contacted the BWA, the international body of Baptists to which Leesburg belongs for help in getting this plane to go.

The BWA, through its division of Baptist World Aid immediately agreed to fill the plane with food. BWAid Director Paul Montacute negotiated an offer of food through Brothers Brother Foundation from the Larry Jones Ministries, "Feed the Children".

Through its Hunger Fund, BWAid will pay the cost of transporting the food from Oklahoma to New York. CITCO already has donated 30,000 gallons of fuel for the flight to Moscow and BWAid is seeking donors for fuel for the return flight and expenses in Moscow.

This involvement to help a local Baptist church provide food for Moscow is but a part of the overall food program of Baptist World Aid to Eastern Europe and the rest of the world.

"The BWA is very happy to be involved in a ministry like this at a time when the situation in Russia is so difficult" said BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz.