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92-23

**Baptists to send flour shipment
to help Albania survive winter**

By Mike Creswell

BRUSSELS, Belgium (BP)--A united Baptist effort will send \$100,000 worth of flour to Albania during February to help the troubled country meet an urgent food shortage this winter as it struggles to recover from years of isolation under communism.

A team of Baptist leaders who visited Albania in January also won government permission to establish an office in Tirana, the capital, to coordinate future aid and ministry in the country of 3.2 million people. They will assemble a list of needs and seek personnel and funds to meet them.

Baptist cooperation will be a key element of the plan. The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board will give \$50,000, and \$25,000 each will come from the Canadian Baptist Federation and the Baptist World Alliance.

Currently emergency shipments of flour are helping the impoverished country stay just a few days ahead of running completely out of bread, a staple food in Albania. Still locked into communist-style centralized production, the country needs 2,700 tons of wheat daily to produce bread.

Both decades of communist mismanagement and the revolution to regain democracy have wrecked Albania's economy. "Our country is worse than many, if not most, African countries in terms of the economy," one government official told the Baptist team.

Baptist agencies will send missionaries and volunteers to have a continuing presence in what was one of the most closed countries in Europe. The Foreign Mission Board has sought missionaries for Albania for more than two years, anticipating they could eventually serve there.

Until recently, Albanian leaders bragged they had "the world's most atheistic state." But anti-communist riots broke out in 1990, when the last statues of Lenin still standing in Eastern Europe were pulled down by mobs.

The Baptist aid package will be coordinated through Baptist Response Europe, a team representing the European Baptist Federation, the Baptist World Alliance and the secretaries of mission organizations serving in Europe. This team has helped smooth the way for world Baptist aid to Eastern Europe.

The three-member response team that visited Albania in January returned with graphic reports of dire needs in every area of society. They also have government assurances of cooperation in coordinating future aid programs and in getting Baptist workers established in the country for ministry.

"The meetings were excellent at all levels, and they (government leaders) feel Baptists play an important role in understanding democracy and religious freedom," said one of the team members, Keith Parker, who represented both the FMB and Baptist missions secretaries serving in Europe. The other two team members are Southern Baptist missionary administrator Paul Thibodeaux and John Keith of the Canadian Baptist Convention.

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"We were warmly received, and they're willing to accept not only our assistance but help us set up a Baptist office in Tirana," said Parker, who served as FMB area director for Europe before taking early retirement. "They said they would help us work with a minimum of government interference."

Government officials urged Baptists to develop long- and short-term plans, coordinate with the government and have built-in accountability. The new Baptist office, to be coordinated through the European Baptist Federation and the response team, will be an integral part of that coordination, Parker said.

Government leaders are concerned about parachurch groups entering the country for one-shot giveaway programs intended more for publicity in the West than with meeting Albania's needs.

"If people come without guidance, you create problems and inequities," a government official warned. "Much of the help winds up in the hands of charlatans. It wouldn't be good for people from the West to see goods for which they have sacrificed sitting in the market for sale at big prices."

Critical needs are present at every turn in Albania, team members said.

Food, electricity and fuel are in short supply. Albanians stand in long lines for kerosene, used for cooking and heating. Hundreds of street children and unemployed people walk the streets with little hope for a bright future. About 130,000 Albanians are out of work because of a lack of raw materials.

Farmers have received small plots of land but have no seeds, fertilizer, tools or tractors. Even the inefficient collective farming inspired by Stalin has collapsed. "Worse still," one official said, "most have forgotten how to farm privately." A major need is for help with planting spring crops.

Albania has the highest infant mortality rate in Europe. Pharmacies have almost no drugs. Ox carts and donkeys greatly outnumber automobiles. Even owning an automobile was outlawed until about a year ago. People travel on foot, on bicycles or on small animal-drawn carts. International telephone calls became possible only in 1990.

In schools, students sit huddled in unheated classrooms in which windows were broken during rioting associated with the overthrow of communism. Schools were targeted because that's where communist ideology was taught. In some schools there are no books to study because textbooks that presented school subjects from a Marxist ideology are having to be reprinted.

One government minister urged Baptists to help Albania recover its manufacturing ability.

"Don't send us shoes," he urged, "but send us leather so we can make our own shoes. We have factories; people are idle. We try to pay them 80 percent of their wages but we have no raw products, wool or cotton for textiles. If someone could help us start again we could put our people back to work and make blankets or shoes to sell or even give away. Then we would give people the pride of being able to work rather than just get a handout."

"Besides," the minister continued, "wouldn't it be better to have shoes going out with 'Baptist' written on the side rather than 'Bally'?" Bally is the name of a line of shoes well known in Europe.

One government official told the visiting Baptists Albania is like a two-horse wagon. "We're moving as best we can and in a dedicated way towards democracy. Democracy is side by side with our economy. But one horse (democracy) is alive and one horse is dead," he said.

**Churches, mosques reopening
in Albania atheistic stronghold**

By Mike Creswell

BRUSSELS, Belgium (BP)--Churches and mosques are reopening in Albania, a country well known as a stronghold of atheism during years of communist domination.

Communist rule not only left natural resource-rich Albania as one of the poorest countries in Europe, but also set out to destroy religious observance. The government closed 2,169 mosques, churches and convents in 1967 and ordered them destroyed or converted to secular use.

Now, as they try to recover economically, Albanians, starved for spiritual nourishment, are flocking back to churches and mosques as they reopen. Albania's first Protestant church was established in Tirana last July after a week-long evangelistic campaign.

It's likely Southern Baptists, who have just joined with other Baptist bodies in a relief effort to help relieve physical hardships, have had a part in some of that spiritual response. Although for decades it has been impossible to send missionaries to Albania, Southern Baptists have provided \$30,000 annually for 15-minute Albanian language radio broadcasts aired seven days a week. They are aimed at the more than half a million radios estimated to exist inside the country.

Historically about 80 percent of Albanians were Muslims. Most of the rest were members of Roman Catholic or Orthodox churches. Some believe many Albanians are still underground followers of Islam or Christianity. But 46 years of atheistic teachings have left many Albanians with no practicing faith.

"The openness to spiritual things is all but overwhelming," said Keith Parker, one of three Baptist team members who have returned from a January survey trip of the country.

"Everywhere we went people wanted Bibles and asked for Bibles. Even Muslims wanted to talk about Christ," said Parker, who served as the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's area director for Europe until he announced early retirement.

Now, as they seek ways to aid the country's economy, Baptist agencies will send missionaries and volunteers to have a continuing presence in what was one of the most closed countries in Europe. The Foreign Mission Board has sought missionaries for Albania for more than two years, anticipating they could eventually serve there.

They will find many people open to receive them.

"The greatest crime was that they (the communist rulers) tried to suppress the human soul," one Albanian government minister told Parker.

"Our souls are also troubled," another said, "not just our bodies."

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

**Great Commission churches
outperform national average**

By Frank Wm. White

**Baptist Press
2/7/92**

NASHVILLE (BP)--While churches throughout the Southern Baptist Convention averaged 2.2 percent growth in Sunday school enrollment, 302 churches that participated in the Great Commission Breakthrough pilot project showed significant gains with an average 6.6 percent growth in Sunday school enrollment.

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Based on the statistics from the recently reported 1991 Uniform Church Letter, the average increase for Southern Baptist churches was 4.5 members in Sunday school. The 302 Great Commission churches reported increases averaging 27 new members.

The Great Commission Breakthrough project was piloted in 1991 by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board as an effort to provide customized growth help to each of the 42,000 Southern Baptist churches and missions.

Training for additional consultants to lead Great Commission Breakthrough projects began in Arkansas in early February and will continue in state conventions through September with a goal of training 2,000 consultants this year, according to Gary Insko, project coordinator in the Sunday school division.

Planners hope to train 7,000 volunteer consultants and involve as many as 14,000 churches in Great Commission Breakthrough projects by September 1995 with as many additional churches as are willing to participate by the year 2000.

Consultants who volunteer to participate in the training and lead churches in the process meet with church leaders several times during the year to help plan, organize and train workers to reach people through Sunday school.

Earl Waldrup, a contract consultant with the Sunday school division, has led 11 churches through the Great Commission Breakthrough process during the pilot project.

The process is different for each church, Waldrup said.

"A church may experience breakthrough during the project or they may start down the road toward breakthrough. Some may complete the process and be right where they were."

While the statistical information is physical evidence of breakthrough, Waldrup contends there must first be spiritual, attitudinal and relational breakthrough before a church will begin to have significant numerical breakthrough.

"When a church has a renewed commitment to Christ ... changes from a maintenance mindset to an attitude to reach people ... then they will be interested and open to program changes," he explained.

Waldrup, who wrote the consultant's manual and pastor's guide for the Great Commission Breakthrough project, said churches must have a sense of mission and agree they are under the mandate of Christ's Great Commission. "Otherwise there is not going to be much readiness to do the practical program changes," he said.

Waldrup said he has been impressed with the spiritual change that precedes breakthrough as he has worked with churches.

"Until something happens to change their attitude, they are going to be without power. They are not going to be knocking on doors and winning people," he said.

Although Waldrup said he initially believed that going through the process would be enough to lead a church to a breakthrough in growth, he now realizes that not every church will reach that point.

He said he is unable to explain the difference in churches that conduct the project and grow and those that don't. But, he said, because of attitudes and relationships, "God has been able to accomplish in one church things that he hasn't been able to accomplish through another."

His experience with 11 churches leads Waldrup to believe resources and skills alone will not produce a breakthrough.

"That's why we focus on prayer and the spiritual aspects of breakthrough. There must be an openness in the church to a divine initiative. God wants breakthrough in every church but there must be openness to it."

Waldrup, who retired from the Sunday School Board seven years ago, said Great Commission Breakthrough has a different perspective than any other field service project conducted by the board.

"This begins with a biblical goal and creates openness for people to consider practical aspects to reach the goal," he said. He noted that most projects present the programs and materials first rather than the biblical goal.

"This is the most exciting platform we've come up with to get at the needs of the churches," he said.

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Senate approves blocking
cable 'access' indecency

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
2/7/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--The United States Senate recently voted to empower cable television companies to prohibit sexually explicit programming on leased-access and public-access channels.

The action came on The Cable Television Consumer Protection Act (Senate bill 12). Amendments by Sen. Jesse Helms, R.-N.C., and Sen. Wyche Fowler, D.-Ga., corrected a 1984 cable television law which left local operators powerless to prevent the telecast of all forms of indecent material on their leased- and public-access channels, respectively. The bill, with these and other amendments, passed by a 73-18 vote.

Helms' amendment concerning leased-access channels permits a local cable company to ban a program it "reasonably believes describes or depicts sexual or excretory activities or organs in a patently offensive manner as measured by contemporary community standards." This is the definition used by the Federal Communications Commission and upheld by the Supreme Court twice, Helms said.

If cable operators choose to telecast such material, the amendment requires them to place such programs on a channel separate from other leased-access channels and to block access to such a channel unless the cable subscriber requests it in writing. Under the amendment, programmers must inform cable companies if the material they submit will be indecent according to FCC rules.

Examples of leased-access programming depicting full nudity, oral sex and ads promoting bestiality and rape were cited by Helms.

"These leased-access channels were intended to promote diversity but instead they promote perversity," Helms told the Senate.

Fowler's amendment instructs the FCC to establish regulations enabling cable companies to ban "obscene material, sexually explicit conduct or material soliciting or promoting unlawful conduct" on public-, educational- and governmental-access channels. He especially targeted the use of such channels to "basically solicit prostitution through easily discernible shams such as escort services, fantasy parties."

Helms' amendment passed, 95-0, while Fowler's passed by a voice vote. On the same day, Jan. 30, a Helms amendment holding cable operators liable for telecasting legally obscene programs was passed by a voice vote. The amended bill passed the next day.

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"We commend Jesse Helms and Wyche Fowler for taking action to address a growing problem," said James A. Smith, Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission director of government relations. "The use of these cable channels for pornography, which cannot be controlled by unsuspecting parents, is a serious matter which must be fixed.

"Senator Helms wisely uses a mechanism which already has been upheld by the Supreme Court in the 'dial-a-porn' case by making adults ask for the trash if they want it," Smith said. "This will protect children and parents who may not be aware of how these channels are being used.

"We urge Southern Baptists to contact their U.S. representatives and request them to support similar amendments when the House deals with this legislation."

The House of Representatives has yet to vote on a companion bill, H.R. 3380. Public-access channels generally carry educational, governmental and civic programs without charge to the programmer. Leased-access channels allow programmers to lease time to show their programs. In addition, advertising can be purchased on leased-access channels. If a company has at least 36 channels, it is required to set aside 10 percent of them for leased access.

Among other amendments approved were one introduced by Sen. Strom Thurmond, R.-S.C., requesting networks and producers to increase efforts to monitor and remove "offensive sexual material" from programming and one introduced by Sen. Carl Levin, D.-Mich., encouraging networks and local stations to establish voluntary codes keeping "violent commercials out of family programming hours." Both were "sense of the Congress" or "sense of the Senate" resolutions, without the force of law.

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God delivers guest professor
to Southwestern Seminary

By Matthew Brady

Baptist Press
2/7/92

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Driving across war-torn Liberia in a Red Cross van packed with family and friends, Joseph Gbana Hall knew only God could lead them out of the country safely. Too many checkpoints stood between him and the safety of the neighboring country, Ivory Coast. Too many guards asking too many questions would otherwise doom his quest for freedom.

Hall, national guest professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, for the 1991-92 school year, said 13 of his passengers, including his wife, were of the tribe targeted for extermination by the rebel forces.

"If they had known they were of that tribe, not only would they have been killed, I would have been killed," he said. "It was only God's grace that helped us get through."

But arriving safely in Ivory Coast was only the first step on a road that would take Hall, his wife, Beatrice, and their three children through four months in a refugee camp before leading them to Southwestern.

Since 1977 Hall had served as a professor of religious education at the Liberian Baptist Theological Seminary in Monrovia.

He also was active in the Liberian Baptist Convention, serving as the national Royal Ambassador director from 1977 to 1984, as evangelism chairman from 1986 to 1989 and as vice president of the convention in 1989. But the civil war which engulfed Liberia in 1989 forced Hall and his family from their home and finally, last year, from their country.

Once he arrived in the Ivory Coast, Southern Baptist missionaries helped arrange for Hall's invitation to teach at Southwestern. This spring he is teaching "Missions in Africa," "Theological Issues in Africa" and "The Missionary Message of the Bible."

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Hall said despite the violence of the past two years, the church in Liberia is growing stronger. Young people are becoming pastors and teachers in the church and are proving to be courageous leaders, he said.

"Even when the fighting was going on, the young people were there having services and Bible study," he said. "They have been a great help."

The young leadership reflects the predominance of youth in Liberia today. Hall said 75 to 80 percent of the population is between the ages of one and 38. "The churches in Liberia have more young people than old," he said.

Hall also attributes the continued strength of churches to the Liberian Baptist Theological Seminary. During lulls in the fighting, seminary students and staff do church work, he said.

"If it were not for that school, the war would have brought Baptist work to an end in Liberia," he said.

In a few months Hall must decide whether to return to Liberia or remain in the United States. Although the political situation in his country remains "explosive," Hall said he is praying he can return to his position in Liberia and "go back to doing what I enjoy doing."

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

Seminary teaching has been
child's play for Jeroline Baker

By Matthew Brady

Baptist Press
2/7/92

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Jeroline Baker has seen a lot of child's play during her three decades at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

For Baker, who recently retired as the Bessie M. Fleming Chair of Childhood Education and director of the Goldia and Robert Naylor Children's Center at the seminary, those years have allowed her to see children's education grow to maturity.

In her 30 years at Southwestern, Baker saw children's ministry develop from a Sunday morning necessity into a viable weekday outreach tool in the local church.

She also saw the seminary's Naylor Children's Center evolve from a dream into a facility which now serves more than 250 children each year.

As a college student, Baker told friends she wouldn't attend Southwestern if it were the last place on earth. But Baker not only graduated from Southwestern, she went on to give 27 years of her life to it as a professor of childhood education.

As a college student in Kentucky, Baker recalled, she didn't know how to combine a desire to teach children with a call to the ministry.

"At that time the only thing I knew was I could preach or go to the mission field," she said. "I assumed it was the mission field -- I didn't think God wanted me preaching."

The breakthrough came when Othal Feather, then professor of education administration at Southwestern, visited her college campus. For the first time Baker heard about the role of children's ministers in the local church.

"When he started talking about Southwestern and children's education, God said, 'That's where you're going,'" she said.

Baker said from that point on she never questioned her decision to attend Southwestern, not even after seeing the campus for the first time in the summer of 1954.

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"I thought it was the most God-forsaken place," she said. "It was dry as all get-out -- not a spark of green grass anywhere in sight."

After earning her bachelor's degree in 1954 from Georgetown College, she taught third grade in Lexington, Ky., and started work on her master's in elementary education from the University of Kentucky.

In 1956 she came to Southwestern and graduated in 1958 with a master's in religious education. She returned to Kentucky and for the next six years taught elementary school, served on a church staff as an elementary director and finished her master's in elementary education from the University of Kentucky. In 1964 she was elected to the Southwestern faculty. She later received her doctorate in education from North Texas State University.

Baker said children's ministry has grown and improved greatly since she first came to the seminary. She said churches should continue and expand on the movement to reach out to families through children's ministry.

"We used to have extended families, with the family members helping parents be good parents," she said. "Now the church needs to fill that role."

Baker, who retired in December to her native Kentucky, said she plans to stay involved in children's ministry through writing and leading workshops in Kentucky and surrounding states. But she also plans on taking time out to explore the state she was so reluctant to leave 35 years ago.

"I'm looking forward to rediscovering Kentucky and kind of being a tourist again," she said.

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

ALSO AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST:

-- Feature by Toby Druin on a woman whose imprisonment in The Netherlands years ago enabled her to aid an imprisoned woman in Texas.

-- Feature by Marv Knox on a Kentucky university president's philosophy on modeling his Christian faith.