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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 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

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92-32

Brotherhood Commission to coordinate
food distribution in Russia

By Mike Day

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--An emergency food distribution project initiated by the Baptist World Alliance and coordinated by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission will begin March 28 in Moscow, according to James D. Williams, president of the Memphis-based agency.

Brotherhood Commission officials were in Moscow last week to confirm logistical details for the project. Called Project Brotherhood, the effort will focus initially on the delivery and distribution of 570 tons of USDA surplus food now on the way to Moscow. The food was secured on behalf of BWA through a grant to Brothers Brother, Inc., a nonprofit relief organization in Washington.

It is estimated about 40,000 families will benefit from the expected delivery.

Coordination of Project Brotherhood will require the placement of teams of volunteers in Moscow for the next four to six months. The teams will work in cooperation with the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the Commonwealth of Independent States and assist Russian Baptists in repackaging the food shipment, monitoring its distribution and maintaining accurate records.

"We sense the direct leadership of God in responding immediately to this urgent request from the Baptist World Alliance," Williams said. "It is our intention to assume leadership for this project on behalf of the Baptist bodies of North America through the BWA World Aid Committee and in partnership with our own SBC agency family, the Foreign Mission Board, Woman's Missionary Union and the Home Mission Board. All Southern Baptists will be asked to respond generously to this unique opportunity for ministry in the name of Christ.

"We certainly want this effort to be closely tied to the Foreign Mission Board's 'Green Alert' for the former Soviet republics and represent the worldwide Baptist concern for hurting humanity," Williams said.

Baptist World Aid director Paul Montacute requested Brotherhood Commission involvement in the project, citing the agency's proven record of effectiveness in providing humanitarian relief and coordinating disaster response.

"The Brotherhood Commission is known and appreciated by Russian Baptists," Montacute told a meeting of commission officials. "They know your pedigree because of your initial involvement in the 'Bibles for Russia' project."

In responding to Montacute's request, Williams said, "The Brotherhood Commission, through its state network, has developed a reputation that says, 'You can count on us.' But if this effort is going to be successful, we must count on all Southern Baptists and the world Baptist community.

"We are keenly aware our initial response is very limited and will still leave many citizens in the Commonwealth of Independent States hungry," Williams added. "We anticipate broadening our involvement to include food distribution, medical relief and Scripture distribution in other CIS republics."

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A second Brotherhood Commission logistics team will arrive in the CIS in mid-March, Williams said. The team will assess food and medical needs in eastern Russia and some southern republics in the former Soviet Union. Plans for future involvement will be based upon this assessment.

"Expansion of our involvement is dependent upon the leadership of God and the response of our Baptist family in this project," Williams said. "Expanded involvement will create the need for additional food, medical supplies and volunteers.

"We need Southern Baptists to begin to pray now about their involvement in this effort," Williams said. "We will need volunteers who will commit themselves to spend one to two weeks in Moscow. We also will need Southern Baptists to support any expanded involvement with financial resources for additional food, medical supplies and project expenses such as shipping and fuel costs."

Southern Baptists who wish to volunteer to participate should apply through their state Brotherhood departments, Williams said.

People who want to financially support the project may send contributions to Project Brotherhood, Brotherhood Commission, SBC, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104, or to Baptist World Alliance, 6733 Curran Street, McLean, VA 22101. All contributions should be clearly designated "For Project Brotherhood."

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Homosexuals, Bush campaign
meet; SBC leaders protest

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
2/21/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--The chairman of the Bush/Quayle campaign recently hosted a meeting with homosexual rights activists, and two Southern Baptist Convention leaders have challenged the President to take strong personal action against the meeting or forfeit any hope of regaining the trust of evangelical Christians on the issue.

The meeting is not a sign of outreach to the homosexual community, a White House spokesperson said, but Richard D. Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, said, "Actions speak louder than words."

Robert Mosbacher, the President's campaign chairman and former secretary of Commerce, met Feb. 13 with three staff members of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and a representative of the AIDS Action Council.

It is the first time representatives from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force have met with the campaign staff of a major presidential candidate, said Robert Bray, the task force's public relations director, in a telephone interview. Bray told The Washington Times the meeting was "historic," saying, "1988 was a very different year. Our phone calls weren't returned even by the Democrats."

In a Feb. 19 letter, Morris Chapman, SBC president, and Land called on President Bush to "disavow any support or sympathy for the homosexual civil rights agenda.

"Having the highest ranking member of your reelection campaign meet with the homosexual lobby is a direct contradiction to your attempts to portray your administration as pro-family," they said in the letter.

One way the President could prove his opposition to the homosexual rights agenda, the letter said, is to issue an executive order recommended by 18 evangelical leaders, including Chapman and Land, in October 1990. The suggested order, which would be directed to the Executive Branch, affirms the traditional family and opposes homosexual rights.

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"It is our firm conviction that this is your only hope in restoring trust on this issue with Southern Baptists and the entire evangelical community," Chapman and Land said in the letter.

The Feb. 13 meeting is not a signal the Bush campaign will court the homosexual vote, a White House spokesperson said.

"Does this mean outreach? The answer is no," said Leigh Ann Metzger, deputy assistant to the President for public liaison.

When Torie Clarke, press secretary for the Bush/Quayle campaign, was asked if the meeting was a signal the organization would reach out to homosexual rights supporters, she said, "I would say it was a signal the meeting took place."

"This meeting has not been disavowed," the CLC's Land said in a telephone interview. "They've just called it a meeting. They haven't said they're sorry or that it was wrong or that it won't happen again.

"Evidently, they are trying to court both evangelical groups and homosexuals," Land said. "I think they will find that's not acceptable, wasn't acceptable and won't be acceptable to most evangelicals."

Mosbacher has no say in the Republican Party platform or administration policy, Metzger said.

"I can't imagine Mosbacher was able to offer them anything," she said. "... we have nothing to offer them ... on their homosexual rights agenda."

Homosexual participants in the meeting asked for "equality and an end to discrimination and bigotry," Bray said in a telephone interview.

The October 1990 meeting with Bush was requested by evangelicals primarily because of invitations to homosexual rights activists for April and July bill-signing ceremonies at the White House. It was a first for their lobby, homosexual activists said afterward.

There has been no White House outreach to homosexual rights supporters since then nor did she and others in the administration know beforehand of the meeting granted by Mosbacher, said Metzger.

"There have been no overtures here, I guarantee you, for the last two years," she said.

"Mosbacher is clearly astounded at the reaction he's gotten," Metzger said. "I would say, 'How could you not know this?'"

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FMB administrators react
to Ballenger, Parker stand

By Bob Stanley

Baptist Press
2/21/92

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Two Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board vice presidents have written administrators in their areas to express a different perspective on relationships with the board's trustees than that of the two top Europe administrators who resigned in protest Jan. 7.

Bill Wakefield, vice president for Asia and the Pacific, wrote in a Jan. 17 letter that his own assessment of the defunding of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, is that the trustee decision resulted from a long history of unusual financial support for this institution. He believes this was a major factor that led the trustees to "look at the seminary as a whole in determining their action."

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Wakefield said he has "no reason to believe that the decision regarding this seminary represents a pattern of trustee involvement which would result in similar involvement in Asia. Certainly," he added, "I have not experienced problems in working with the trustees in a similar way."

Lewis Myers, vice president for Cooperative Services International, wrote a confidential memo Jan. 10 to top administrators of the Southern Baptist aid organization. In the memo, Myers said his perception "is that this board continues to be a viable and desirable instrument for Southern Baptists to use to accomplish our missions agenda."

Myers said the board is "not a perfect instrument and never has been, but it is the best we have available and I am committed to it. I want to affirm my own commitment to continue serving the cause of global missions through this board." He added: "In working with the CSI Committee I have not been unduly circumscribed by non-missions agendas, moves to achieve and/or exert power on the part of any individual, confusion of the roles of staff and trustees, nor mutual distrust."

"What is ultimately at stake here is the salvation of the millions of people who have not yet heard the gospel. ... This is the time to double our prayer efforts on behalf of our global mission and in support of each other," Myers said.

A third top administrator, Bill Bullington, vice president for Africa, said he did not write to administrators of his area but said he has tried to express his personal opinion that "the Foreign Mission Board is still the best option for mission service overseas." He said the board has nearly 4,000 missionaries who are "doing a good job and need our support."

Parks, asked about the administrators' statements, said, "I feel missionaries, trustees and staff all have the right to express their own opinion about matters like this, and it has never been my desire nor intention to try to control that." A letter from administrators to missionaries to interpret unusual events is a fairly normal procedure, Parks said.

Isam Ballenger, vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and Keith Parker, area director for Europe, announced their early retirements in a controversial Jan. 7 press conference at the FMB home office in Richmond. They said they could no longer represent the agency because of what they termed the trustees' "global agenda" to exert control and enforce theological orthodoxy overseas. A Southern Baptist missionary couple to Romania also resigned later in protest.

The administrators' decision to step down followed weeks of controversy after the trustees' action in October transferring \$365,000 in funds originally earmarked for the Ruschlikon seminary to theological education in Eastern Europe.

In December, after a special two-day meeting devoted to the Ruschlikon situation, trustees voted to sustain their October decision. They asked their chairman, Bill Hancock, to write a letter explaining the board's action to all Southern Baptist churches, state conventions and people who had written letters about the defunding. In this letter Hancock noted that the board's disagreement with the decision allowing Glenn Hinson, a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., to teach four months at Ruschlikon was only one of many reasons the board acted. Many of the trustees perceive Hinson as liberal.

Hancock's letter cited the historical, financial and theological aspects of the Ruschlikon seminary decision from the trustees' perspective and said the cost of educating students at the seminary near Zurich, Switzerland, far exceeds that involved in educating students in the six Southern Baptist seminaries in the United States. Supporters of the seminary said it provides conferences and educational services to a number of Baptists across Europe in addition to the full-time students who are counted in figuring cost per student.

The latest development came at the trustees' February meeting, when FMB President R. Keith Parks, who has strongly disagreed with some of the trustee actions, asked trustees to decide by April whether they want him to continue as president.

A spiritual retreat has been set March 19-20 in a hotel near the Dallas-Fort Worth airport to try to resolve the issue on Parks' tenure. In addition, to Parks and the trustees, a number of other top FMB administrators are expected to participate. Parks, who will be 65 in October, had asked last August to be allowed to continue as president through 1995 to set in motion bold new mission initiatives leading up to the 150th anniversary of the FMB in 1845.

Wakefield said he decided he needed to send a statement after learning that another representative from the FMB had carried to Asia copies of the Ballenger and Parker statements.

In his letter, Wakefield said that "some folks on the field" had asked whether the viewpoints of Ballenger and Parker are "a perception shared by all of the Global Strategy Group," the FMB's top executive planning council. In private conversations with Ballenger, he said, "some of us shared with Isam that while respecting his convictions and perspective, we did not share these and would need to let this be known in order to clarify the matter."

He said it is helpful "to keep in mind that we (in Asia and the Pacific) have not experienced what Isam and the staff related to Ruschlikon have. We have not had similar issues which the trustees have been asked to work with." Wakefield traced the history of the board's dealing with the Europe seminary back to 1978, when it was in financial difficulty and staff asked trustees to approve special budget funds for the institution for five years. In 1982, as the end of that period drew near, he noted that a second appeal was made to trustees for an additional 10-year aid plan in which the amount allocated to the seminary would increase \$5,000 yearly through 1992.

"My own personal assessment of the situation is that this action on the part of the trustees comes as a result of this history," Wakefield said. "I have no reason to feel that the decision regarding this seminary represents a pattern of trustee involvement which would result in similar involvement in Asia. Certainly I have not experienced problems in working with the trustees in a similar way."

Referring to the statements of the retired Europe administrators, Wakefield said he does not agree with their assessment that trustees will be involving themselves in field matters and making inappropriate decisions based on doctrinal purity at the expense of missiological principles. "I don't find evidence of this at the present time as I examine our experiences these last few years," he wrote.

In the past five or six years, Wakefield noted, the trustees have appropriated and made decisions on about \$1 billion. "Apart from Ruschlikon," he said, "as far as I can recall the action in regard to every other appropriation was done at the recommendation of our staff." He said this had been true of recommendations in regard to matters "other than financial" for his region.

Wakefield also said decisions made to elect five top administrators in the past three years had all been made by trustees on the recommendation of staff and those chosen had been selected because of missiological qualifications.

He described FMB trustees as being "as varied as Baptists are in any gathering. They are born-again Christians who are committed to world evangelization." He said the May 20, 1991, letter written by one trustee, Ron Wilson of Thousand Oaks, Calif., which had been cited by Parker in his retirement statement, "certainly illustrates the concerns of some of the trustees." But he added: "The fact that Hancock didn't follow any of Ron's suggestions illustrates that this viewpoint was not determinative for the Board."

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Observing that change always has been and will continue to be an inherent part of the board's operation, Wakefield noted that Parks had brought significant change during his 12-year tenure. "I would guess that when a new president takes over, we will experience a change with his/her new leadership!" he said.

But he expressed confidence "that God will continue to use this board in His purpose and will use each of us in accord with His calling. My confidence is reflected in the fact that last month, with our concurrence, our son and his wife began the process toward career appointment. I am convinced that our Foreign Mission Board is the best channel available to us as Baptists in impacting a world that doesn't know about Christ," he said.

"In that conviction I feel this is a time when we need to inspire confidence in our constituency in the work we are doing and the channel through which we are doing it (the FMB). I hope that each of us will find assurance in our call from God and in His power and promises and that we will be able to share this with the folks in our convention."

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Nelson Price announces
for SBC presidency

By R. Albert Mohler Jr.

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2/21/92

MARIETTA, Ga. (BP)--Citing "a broad base of encouragement from friends across the country," Marietta pastor Nelson L. Price announced Feb. 21 he would allow himself to be nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Convention at the 1992 session in Indianapolis.

Price, pastor of Marietta's 8,000-member Roswell Street Church for 26 years, currently is the convention's first vice president. He also served terms as president of the Georgia Baptist Convention from 1982-1983 and was president of the SBC Pastor's Conference in 1987.

In a prepared statement, Price said, "Since June of last year, persons have encouraged this announcement." He said his decision to allow his nomination "is a consequence of grass roots requests and comes after much prayer."

Price said his leadership style, experience and theological commitments could allow him to "congeal the body, heal wounds and allow the convention to concentrate on carrying out the commission of our Lord."

He stated his commitment to continuing the "conservative resurgence" within the SBC and to a process of enlarging convention involvement among those "with whom we share doctrinal kinship but who have not been a part of the conservative movement."

"I am unequivocally an inerrantist," he said, "who believes the doctrines of biblical inerrancy and Christology are inter-related. If you deny one, you debase the other. Inerrancy is foundational, but the ultimate issue is the person of Christ."

Price added the inerrancy issue "will never be settled, but must be perpetually guarded and dealt with. Great strides have been made to confirm it, but they must be conserved."

He said this would be done "without doctrinal equivocation while being loving and compassionate to persons of all persuasions."

Price's announcement came through his office, and did not emerge from any strategy session with the leadership of the conservative movement, he said. In recent years only one conservative candidate has been nominated each year for the presidency. That candidate usually has emerged from a process of collaboration and consultation among conservative leaders.

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That process, said Price, has been essential in the past, but he said "this is a new day, when a candidate emerges by grass-root encouragement."

California pastor Jess Moody, running on a "centrist" platform, has said he will be nominated for the office. From 1979 to 1990, the presidency was fiercely contested by SBC moderates and conservatives. Moderate leaders have said they do not intend to nominate a candidate in Indianapolis.

In addition to his elective offices, Price has been a trustee at New Orleans Seminary and the Home Mission Board. At the state level, he has been a trustee of Louisiana College and of the Christian Index, newsjournal of the Georgia Baptist Convention.

He is also known through the "Come Alive" television ministry of Roswell Street Church, which reaches a national audience and is broadcast on the ACTS television network. He also preached the inaugural message for President Jimmy Carter in 1977.

A native of Mississippi, Price is a graduate of Southeastern Louisiana University and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He is the author of 13 books.

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Rocky Mountain Baptists adopt
60-congregations-per-year goal

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CASPER, Wyo. (BP)--Southern Baptist leaders in five Rocky Mountain states have adopted their first regional goal: 897 churches and missions by 1997, or nearly 60 new congregations per year.

The goal emerged from the first regional meeting of Southern Baptist home missionaries in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and Idaho. Such a meeting was long overdue, said Clyde Billingsly, executive director of the Utah/Idaho Southern Baptist Convention.

Currently there are three state conventions, one state Baptist fellowship, 37 Baptist associations and 605 congregations in the region. Prior to 1956, Southern Baptist work in the five states was tied to the Arizona Baptist Convention.

A task force of four state directors of missions also has been formed for strategy planning and joint efforts.

"This was the most helpful meeting in my 28 years of experience in the Rocky Mountains," one Home Mission Board worker said. "This was not a meeting; it was a vision," another said. Several workers said the meeting, attended by 65 home missionaries Feb. 6-8 in Casper, gave them for the first time a vision and common strategy for the direction of Southern Baptist work in the region. One observer reported that Baptist work previously was held together only by a common legacy dating back to the late 1940s and a common challenge -- the vast geographical region is one of America's most unchurched, with church membership reflecting only 1 to 3 percent of the population.

The goal of 897 churches and missions by 1997 reflects the addition of 129 congregations in Colorado, 64 in Utah and Idaho, 57 in Montana and 41 in Wyoming.

Conference speakers experienced in ministry in the Rocky Mountains recounted failures as well as successes to serve as points of discussion. The conference also was marked by warm fellowship, especially in reunions of HMB missionaries who have worked several decades in the Rocky Mountains.

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Discussions during the conference often focused on the question of starting and growing churches with a meager amount of funding. Participants noted that churches in the region must rely on bivocational workers and lay pastors rather than professional ministers. Some workers voiced a belief that Rocky Mountain churches must be self-reliant from the start, without dependence on a sponsoring church or the Home Mission Board. They would be lay-led, meeting in houses or rented facilities until they can afford a permanent building.

A number of workers said their best hope for evangelizing the region is in a dynamic multiplication of churches rather than the emergence of large churches, currently numbering less than a dozen after 40-plus years of work in the five states.

Gary Farley, HMB associate director of town and country work, was the only conference speaker from outside the region. Rocky Mountain Baptists, with their 37 associations and 600-plus churches, are capable of effective evangelistic efforts -- and of challenging Mormon growth in the five states. Southern Baptists have the best networking of any denomination in the region, he added. Southern Baptists came late to the Rocky Mountains and do not carry the "baggage" of 100 years of outdated methodology, Farley said. He said Baptists make particularly effective use of lay preachers and of women in various leadership roles.

The group voted to ask Baptist officials in the five states to plan another such meeting in 1993 when regional goals would be further developed.

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John H. Allen, director of cooperative missions and stewardship for the Colorado Baptist General Convention, contributed to this report.

'Short-term' WMU clothing project
begins its 10th year in Oklahoma

By Dave Parker

Baptist Press
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WOODWARD, Okla. (BP)--When Shirley McCleery's Sunday school class decided to start a clothing closet, she thought it would be a good short-term project:

Nine years later, the closet is going strong and helping more than 5,000 persons per year from across the country. It is open two hours every Tuesday, 52 weeks per year.

"We carry everything from maternity to newborn to adult and we even had one man buried in one of our suits," McCleery said. "Most of our suits are to go to a funeral or wedding. We have sent clothes as far away as Michigan, Georgia and Mexico. It's amazing -- for a little one-room building -- the amount of clothes that travel out of here."

The class project, begun in connection with the Woman's Missionary Union at Crown Heights Baptist Church in Woodward, started with one rack of clothes stored in the classroom. As the idea caught on, the men of the church constructed a one-room building on the church's parking lot. Now, the clothing closet can open without opening the entire church.

There are six women who help sort and fold clothes on Mondays and they have a "real good working spirit. You fold clothes all day in this little room and you're bound to get close," McCleery said.

One secret of the closet's success is the lack of pressure.

"We don't ask for any kind of donation," McCleery said. "We do ask for their name, address, how many people they are getting clothes for and if they attend church. We don't ask for ID or anything -- we just leave it up to the honor system."

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In addition, there are signs in the closet reading, "These are not for resale" and "These are given in the name of Jesus." The clothes are given to anyone in need, regardless of religious background.

There is no limit to the amount of clothes one person can take. "When we first started we said one sack, but now I've seen them carry out two to three garbage bags full. The people used to be kind of bashful about coming in, but now it's just like they're going to a clothing store. With the job situation the way it is and the number of people laid off, many are just grateful to have clothes. In the oil boom days we didn't have the great need we do today."

Several mothers with small children dropped in to look at the selection, and one woman brought in a 15-month old girl with Downes Syndrome. Both left empty-handed. "We have a shortage in newborn clothes and large men and women sizes," McCleery explained. "Those just go so fast."

Many of the families helped are one-parent families, but McCleery said they also help nursing home residents, prisoners at nearby Ft. Supply and families who have lost their homes in fires. In the late summer, she said they try to make school clothes available.

"One time we had a family of 14 traveling from California, en route to Wisconsin," she said. "As they went further east and north, it got colder, so they needed warmer clothes. They stopped here, got fixed up and went on. One lady had a son going into the oil field who needed some steel-toed shoes and couldn't afford it. They were so happy to find something in his size."

"A while back we had a man in a truck wreck who lost his suitcase," she continued. "Sometimes we have hitchhikers who come in. It's surprising how they know about us. Word of mouth works great and we try to keep notices up in Wal-Mart and other stores."

"Some pastors' wives from small churches will gather clothes for different families in their churches," she added.

Due to a shortage of space, she said at the end of each season any remaining clothes are donated to other shelters in Oklahoma City and to the Salvation Army. Others have been sent to Mexico and a juvenile detention center in Georgia.

Because the closet helps people from all denominations, it in turn is helped by churches all over.

"People are very generous," McCleery said. "We even got one pickup load from Kansas. Instead of yard sales, people send clothes to us. For widows, it helps them to know their late spouse is doing good" by helping clothe someone in need.

McCleery received a master's degree in religious education in 1973 from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Since she was divorced, she said her options in the ministry were limited. She later remarried and moved to Woodward, where she became active in WMU. Now, she is ministering to many hurting families.

"I never thought I'd be doing anything like this," she said. "So many of these people have no church home, that I used to get so depressed. Emotionally it took its toll. There is such a poverty in spirit as well as in clothes."

She has overcome that by realizing how many people are being helped and by playing gospel music.

"People will be in here looking at clothes and I'll notice them singing along with the music and it makes me feel good," she said. "This ministry helps so many people. It helps the people who get the clothes, it helps the people who work here and it helps the people who donate clothes."

MBTS student composes music
as she drives 256-mile commute

By Brenda Sanders

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Every Friday, Gail Scott drives 256 miles to St. Louis where she serves as organist at Kirkwood Baptist Church. Every Monday, she drives back to Kansas City for another week of classes at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

One might think such a long weekly drive would be tiresome and even boring. But Scott puts the time to good use. She composes music as she drives.

Scott has composed seven hymn arrangements for piano-organ duets which recently were accepted for publication by the Genevox Music Group, a publishing division of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. The collection, titled "Adoration and Praise," will be released in May.

"I wrote several of the pieces in the collection during my weekly drives to St. Louis," Scott said. "I would kind of sketch it out in my mind as I drove. It really has been a productive time."

Scott said she actually began composing about seven years ago, but noted, "I just wrote for church and never thought about getting anything published."

Then, a little over a year ago, her pastor, Paul Duke, encouraged her to submit one of her compositions to a publisher. She sent one piece to Genevox and it was accepted. Then the publisher asked her to send enough compositions to publish a collection of piano-organ duets.

Duke said he felt Scott's compositions were worthy of being published because "her music is stunning. It has assisted me again and again in my personal worship experience."

Scott said she enjoys composing hymn arrangements and said the music "just comes to me. I really believe it is a gift from God."

She said having her compositions published is "really very rewarding because I feel in this way I am contributing to the atmosphere of worship in other churches."

When translating her music from a mental image to the printed page, Scott composes by using a computer program which is connected to an electronic keyboard. "What you play on the keyboard shows up on the computer screen as musical notes," she said. "It really speeds up the whole process of writing music."

A first-year student in the master of church music degree program at Midwestern, Scott occasionally serves as organist during chapel services at the seminary and sings with the seminary's choral group, Midwestern Singers.

She also is receiving private instruction from well known composer Mark Hayes, a Kansas City-area resident.

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Biker/seminary student
rides high on ministry

By Lydia Murphy

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--If looks are deceiving, then it pays to take a second look at Shelton Bratcher.

Sitting in class at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, Bratcher looks like any other ministerial student. Then again ...

Underneath Bratcher's average seminary demeanor lurks a low-riding Harley-Davidson motorcycle, a leather jacket and a biker for Christ.

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It's at the point of his Christian commitment the two Shelton Bratchers meet.

Yet for a time in his life, Bratcher's motorcycle interests waned. After his conversion, he thought Christians should give up everything to be devout. But when he saw the opportunities for ministry riding a Harley could give, Bratcher jumped back in the saddle.

"When you make Jesus the center of your life, then everything else is secondary. When I realized this, then I had the desire to get a motorcycle again," he said.

Bratcher thought his motorcycle interest was unusual in the Christian community until a casual reference by another seminarian led him to a Christian motorcyclists' organization.

According to Bratcher, most motorcycle hobbyists are the family bikers who consider each other as part of one big, happy family.

Then there are the "one percenters," so called because they are a minority among motorcyclists.

"There are sub-cultures, complete with symbols and language familiar to all motorcyclists, as well as degrees of commitment," Bratcher said. "To be a one percenter, you must have killed someone.

"They wear a black diamond patch no matter what club they belong to. Considered the ground troops for organized crime, they are involved in drugs and crime and usually are low-key and hard to find."

The one percenters are generally not ministered to because they are such trouble-makers, although Phil Aguilar, an ordained Baptist minister, tried to minister to a group of Hell's Angels, but he eventually faced serious harm, Bratcher said.

When Bratcher learned that Aguilar's California-based Set Free Fellowship was having a local rally, he attended. It was his first exposure to a ministry that targeted Harley-Davidson bikers.

"It's neat when you meet another brother, even if he has long hair and a beard and wears tatoos all over his body," Bratcher said. "While his lifestyle is committed to the biker genre and mine is more mainstream, the bond between us is Jesus Christ.

"When Christ is the center of your life, you can love that other person for who he is and you can be loved for who you are."

Riding motorcycles was Bratcher's dream from the time he was 2 years old.

At 18 while traveling down the highway on his new motorcycle, a motorist pulled out in front of him. There was no time to stop so Bratcher swerved to the median, flipping the motorcycle about 50 times and landing more than 100 feet away.

"All I had on was a T-shirt, shorts and sneakers. My fingers were shoved up my wrist and some of my leg was torn to the bone. But even though my body was torn up, my head was not hurt. It did not even hit the ground.

"The Lord delivered and protected me that day and continues to do so," he said. "God has a purpose for my life."

One purpose was for Bratcher to come to Southwestern. He felt called to the ministry while in Japan as an exchange student, pursuing a career track to be a young corporate executive.

Bratcher became a Southern Baptist after his conversion, joining Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas. Associate pastor David McKinley encouraged him to consider seminary and recommended Southwestern.

"God has a rich life ahead of me and I can enjoy it if I am just obedient," Bratcher said. "I'm not trying to make my mark in the world by my own power. God will give me a fullness and richness in whatever career I do."

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

BWA communication conference
first for Papua New Guinea

By Wendy Ryan

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MOUNT HAGAN, Papua New Guinea (BP)--Baptists in Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya, Indonesia, were given basic tools to write their own Bible study materials and produce publications and photographs during a Christian writers and communicators conference sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance in the western highlands of Papua New Guinea.

A few participants came by plane; some walked. But most came on the back of a flatbed truck down the winding mountainous dirt roads. Fifty-two Baptists from Papua New Guinea, including 18 women; three from Irian Jaya; and two aboriginals from the Northern Territory of Australia joined eight BWA leaders for the conference.

"This is the first time in our history as Baptists we have had anything like this," said Kongoe Sipwanji, president of the Baptist Union of Papua New Guinea.

Sipwanji, who took the curriculum course, said that Papua New Guinea Baptists are now ready to see "what God has yet to do" because of the conference.

The two-part conference, Feb. 10-13, included a Christian writers section on the basics of writing Bible study and Sunday school materials for adults, youth and children, and a communicators section for journalism and photography.

The teaching staff included Southern Baptists, New Zealand Baptists and Australian Baptists, all housed in the homes of Australian Baptist Missionary Society workers.

Challenged by Denton Lotz, general secretary of the BWA to "interpret for your people what the great gospel of Jesus Christ is all about," conference participants attended lectures and received course materials on curriculum and journalistic writing.

Perhaps the most popular short course was the one on photography, taught by Jim Veneman, photojournalist of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and Baptist Press.

Encouraged to "know when you are in the presence of a good picture, participants had a first-time experience of taking photographs and developing them in a darkroom constructed by Veneman in a Sunday school room of a Nazarene church. Veneman then produced a slide show with the pictures they had taken.

"My job here was not to teach complicated technical stuff in a short space of time," Veneman said, "but to get them to appreciate the things that go into making a photograph that will communicate."

"I never thought of becoming a writer or a photographer," said Norma Semi, leader of her women's group who flew from the coastland area of Port Moresby to attend the conference. "But through the skills I have learned from this conference, I have a great desire and vision already building up in my mind to produce something."

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Matias Jarollo from Irian Jaya who received all his instructions through an interpreter who translated from English to Indonesian, wrote of his appreciation for the photography course. "I learned how to take a good picture and the process of developing it until it is finished," Jarollo said.

Participants were challenged to present the gospel in their own language and in the terms of their own culture, a lesson powerfully demonstrated by one of the participants, Jerry Jangala, an Australian aboriginal.

Jangala won the hearts of conference participants when he sang an aboriginal Christian song "God sent his Son to our country" accompanied by the tapping and vibrating of two boomerangs. Normally used to kill, "the boomerangs were now redeemed," Jangala said.

While many aboriginals in Australia can now read English, he said the message of the gospel must primarily be taught through the symbols of their everyday life, which have come down from their ancestors and can be traced in the sand.

While Baptists in Papua New Guinea have produced some publications, none of them have been written by the Baptists there, but by Australian Baptist-missionaries whose work began there in 1949 and whose ministry has fostered a Baptist movement of 35,600 baptized believers.

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Also available upon request:

-- Feature by Carolyn Blunk about the multi-faceted ministry of Southern Baptist home missions leader George Russ in New York City.

-- Feature by Ron Chaney on a Virginia pastor's approach to fashioning worship services of appeal to baby boomers.