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## -- BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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April 24, 1992

92-72

Indianapolis convention  
forecast: 17,000-18,000

By Herb Hollinger

NASHVILLE (BP)--Although it will be the first time the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention has been held in Indianapolis, the Hoosier city can expect as many as 18,000 messengers June 9-11, according to an SBC official.

Lee Porter, SBC registration secretary, told Baptist Press he expects between 17,000 and 18,000 messengers to register for the 135th session in the Hoosier Dome in Indianapolis. Porter has had an impressive record in predicting messenger registration since 1978, including a prediction last year in Atlanta of 22,500 with actual registration of 23,465.

With spouses, visitors and guests, total attendance at the 1992 annual meeting could approach 23,000 to 25,000, SBC officials said. Most of the motels and hotels near the downtown are full although there are still rooms available in the outer loop area of Indiana's capital city.

The convention's largest attendance was in Dallas in 1985 when 45,519 registered followed by the 1986 Atlanta convention with 40,987 messengers. The meeting usually is much smaller in attendance when held outside the Bible belt area between Texas and the east coast.

Porter said registration for the convention would open at 4 p.m. Sunday, June 7, and 8 a.m. Monday and Tuesday, June 8-9. The registration area is near the front entrance to the Indianapolis Convention Center and Hoosier Dome, in the "500" ballroom.

"We want to help messengers to register and that can be facilitated with them having their messenger cards completely filled out," Porter said. "If they do that, we will register them in less than five minutes."

Porter suggested people try not to register at the opening each day but rather an hour later to keep from standing in line.

"Each church needs to secure their messenger cards by writing their state convention office and getting the cards they are entitled to," Porter said.

Each church is entitled to messengers according to membership or by giving to "convention causes," Porter said. Actual requirements are printed on the messenger cards.

"It is important that each messenger be elected by their church and that they have their card completely filled out and then bring that card to the convention," Porter said.

If messengers do not have cards, they will have to secure a statement from their church and will have to go before the credentials committee, Porter said.

"Churches should elect only their required messengers; alternate messengers do not register," Porter said. Churches often have problems when alternate messengers try to register and they exceed their allotted number of messengers. It becomes embarrassing to the church and their regular messengers if alternate messengers are elected, he said.

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"Every messenger must be elected, including the pastor; no one is automatically a messenger ... not denominational workers or missionaries. Every messenger must be elected by a cooperating church," Porter said.

Details on messenger qualifications can be found in the SBC constitution and bylaws.

"Missions (congregations) can only be represented through their sponsoring church and churches have had to give (financially) last year to come to this year's convention," Porter said. For more information about the registration procedure, Porter can be reached at (904) 785-8596.

Asked by Baptist Press if he would be a candidate for renomination as recording secretary following a close election in Atlanta last year, Porter said he was still "mulling over" the possibility.

Porter, 62, became assistant to the pastor and administrator at St. Andrew Baptist Church in Panama City, Fla., Mar. 1. He previously had been with the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville 15 years.

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Key SBC committee  
appointments made

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press  
4/24/92

WICHITA FALLS, Texas (BP)--Appointments to two key committees to serve during the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Indianapolis, June 9-11, have been announced by SBC President Morris Chapman.

Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, announced the appointment of the Committee on Committees and the Committee on Resolutions April 24. The SBC bylaws require the president to announce the appointments "at least 45 days in advance of the meeting."

The credentials and tellers committees must be made public 30 days before the annual meeting, according to the SBC bylaws.

#### COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES

The committee has 68 members, 2 from each of the 34 state or regional conventions qualified for representation on SBC entities.

SBC Bylaw 21 says the Committee on Committees "shall nominate all special committees authorized during the sessions of the convention not otherwise provided for." The usual responsibility of the committee is to nominate members of the Committee on Nominations, which, in turn, nominates trustees to serve on the 24 national entities of the SBC.

Chapman named Keith Thomas, pastor of First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, Fla., as the committee chairman.

The committee includes a clergy or denominationally-related person and a layperson from each convention. The occupations of the people listed are as given by Chapman.

ALABAMA -- Perry L. Calvert, insurance executive and member of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville; Cecil Sewell, minister, Westwood Baptist Church, Birmingham.

ALASKA -- Gary Lee, military and member of Faith Baptist Church, Anchorage; Johnny McCoy, minister of First Baptist Church, North Pole.

ARIZONA -- Larry Rhodes, minister of First Baptist Church, Springerville; and Alan J. Thompson, minister of Valley Heights Baptist Church, Phoenix.

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ARKANSAS -- Marsue Fields, homemaker and member of First Baptist Church, Russellville; Gene Thomas, minister of Magnolia Baptist Church, Crossett.

CALIFORNIA -- Robert Lewis, director of missions and member of El Camino Baptist Church, Sacramento; Dan Nelson, minister of First Baptist Church, Camarillo.

COLORADO -- Larry Mallett, minister of Trinity Baptist Church, Grand Junction; Mrs. Walter Partain, homemaker and member of First Baptist Church, Pueblo.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA -- William L. Bort, pastor of Kendall Baptist Church, Rockville, Md.; Charles Harding, retired military and member of Fort Foote Baptist Church, Ft. Washington, Md.

FLORIDA -- Larry Lawrence, military and member of Harbor City Baptist Church, Indialantic; Keith Thomas, minister of First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach.

GEORGIA -- Tom Atwood, minister of Prays Mill Baptist Church, Douglasville; Robert Lamb, retired and member of Cave Springs Baptist Church, Cave Springs.

HAWAII -- Hermon Ray, minister of Waikiki Baptist Church, Honolulu; Dennis Shiroma, retired teacher and member of Pukalani Baptist Church, Pukalani.

ILLINOIS -- Raymond McCain, minister of First Baptist Church of Machesney Park; Paul Sadler, minister of First Baptist Church, Golconda.

INDIANA -- Keith Fisher, retail business and member of Ridgecrest Southern Baptist Church, Vincennes; William Mize, minister of Sullivan Southern Baptist Church, Vincennes.

KANSAS-NEBRASKA -- John H. Hardy, minister of Blue Valley Baptist Church, Stilwell, Kan.; Robert E. Miller, sales manager and member of Shawnee Heights Baptist Church, Topeka, Kan.

KENTUCKY -- Mike Morris, minister of First Baptist Church, Wickliffe; Terry Lynn Sammons, minister of New Heights Baptist Church, Louisville.

LOUISIANA -- Wade Coker, minister of New Light Baptist Church, Monroe; Julee Frazier, bank manager and member of Parkview Baptist Church, Baton Rouge.

MARYLAND-DELAWARE -- Howard Edmonson, minister of Mason Dixon Baptist Church, New Freedom, Penn.; Melvin Pride, minister of Colonial Baptist Church, Baltimore, Md.

MICHIGAN -- Paul Edwards, minister of Roscommon Baptist Church, Roscommon; Jim Wimberley, layperson executive, Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Rochester Hills.

MISSISSIPPI -- Max L. Loper, certified public accountant and member of First Baptist Church, Philadelphia; Paul Walley, layperson and member of First Baptist Church, Richton.

MISSOURI -- Bob Curtis, minister of Ballwinn Baptist Church, Ballwinn; B.J. Ferguson, minister of Southwest Baptist Church, Raytown.

NEVADA -- Janie L. Holmes, retired teacher and member of First Southern Baptist Church, Henderson; Neal J. Myers, minister of First Baptist Church, South Lake Tahoe.

NEW ENGLAND -- Richard Gregory, minister of Gallup Hill Baptist Church, Lodyard, Conn.; Adrian Burk, museum curator and member of Rice Memorial Baptist Church, Northborough, Mass.

NEW MEXICO -- Jean Martin, retired insurance claims and member of First Baptist Church, Albuquerque; Bob F. Miller, minister of First Baptist Church, Tucumcari.

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NEW YORK -- Steven Blake, minister of New Hope Baptist Church, Hurley; David Pope, minister of Floyd Baptist Church, Rome.

NORTH CAROLINA -- Richard Alan Cox, minister of Woodland Hills Baptist Church, Asheville; Ernest Ferrell, minister of First Baptist Church, Robbins.

NORTHWEST -- Terry Little, minister of Pines Baptist Church, Spokane, Wash.; Richard Seim, minister of Trinity Baptist Church, Renton, Wash.

OHIO -- Debbie Davidson, layperson and member of New Harmony Baptist Church, Milford; Will Langford, minister of Lakota Hills Baptist Church, West Chester.

OKLAHOMA -- Frank Ashby, minister of Gracemont Baptist Church, Tulsa; Dennis Hooper, minister of First Baptist Church, Purcell.

PENNSYLVANIA-SOUTH JERSEY -- Jim Aldridge, minister of Silver Springs Baptist Church, Columbia, Penn.; Jim Sims, minister of Allentown Baptist Church, Allentown.

SOUTH CAROLINA -- Michael Cloer, minister of Siloam Baptist Church, Easley; Linda Ann White, layperson and member of Northside Baptist Church, West Columbia.

TENNESSEE -- Beverly Ann Gatton, retired nurse and member of Second Baptist Church, Knoxville; Glenn Rogers, minister of Tri Cities Baptist Church, Kingsport.

TEXAS -- Iris Englet, self employed and member of First Baptist Church, Midland; John McGuire, minister of First Baptist Church, Garrison.

UTAH-IDAHO -- Emory Huey, minister of First Baptist Church, Tooele, Utah; Ted Osborne, U. S. marshall and member of First Baptist Church, Granger.

VIRGINIA -- James W. Bolejack, minister of Kingsland Baptist Church, Richmond; Archie R. Smith, layperson and member of Kempsville Baptist Church, Virginia Beach.

WEST VIRGINIA -- George Kinchen, minister of Grace Baptist Church, Vienna; Everett W. Powell, minister of Berkeley Baptist Church, Berkeley Springs.

#### RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

The Resolutions Committee is composed of 10 members, three of whom must be members of the SBC Executive Committee. The committee, according to Bylaw 21, has the "duty ... to prepare and submit to the convention resolutions which the committee deems appropriate for adoption and to report on all matters submitted to it by the convention, with or without recommendation or amendments."

The bylaw also asks that proposed resolutions be sent to the committee 30 days before the annual meeting.

Chapman named R. Albert Mohler, editor of the Georgia Christian Index, as the committee chairman.

Executive Committee members are Julian Motley, pastor of Gorman Baptist Church, Durham, N.C.; Joe H. Reynolds, attorney and member of Second Baptist Church, Houston; and Rex Terry, attorney and member of First Baptist Church, Fort Smith, Ark.

Other members are: Curt Dodd, pastor of Metropolitan Baptist Church, Houston; Gary Frost, pastor of Rising Star Baptist Church, Youngstown, Ohio; Charles E. Jackson Sr., insurance executive and member of Cottage Hills Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala.; Jo Ann Miller, educator and member of First Baptist Church, De Soto, Mo.; Ben Watts, merchant and member of First Baptist Church, Columbia, Miss.; Bobby Welch, pastor of First Baptist Church, Daytona Beach, Fla.; and Mohler, who is a member of Atkinson Road Baptist Church, Lawrenceville, Ga.

Chairman buoyed by nominations,  
defends Pressler as FMB trustee

By Art Toalston

NASHVILLE (BP)--The chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention Committee on Nominations said he feels "even greater confidence in the way our Southern Baptist system works" as the 68-member committee released its 1992 nominees for trustees or directors of SBC-related agencies and institutions.

Chairman Bobby Boyles, pastor of First Baptist Church in Moore, Okla., also defended the nomination of Paul Pressler as a trustee of the Foreign Mission Board. Pressler, a Texas appeals court judge in Houston, has been a key leader of the SBC conservative movement and last year concluded two terms on the SBC Executive Committee.

"Judge Pressler is a man who loves God with all his heart and has a tremendous heart for missions," Boyles said. "He has served tirelessly for years to the best of his ability in our denomination. I respect him for his commitment to the Word of God."

Pressler told Baptist Press he hopes to "be part of a support team using the knowledge I have acquired through active involvement in world missions to assist our staff and missionaries in what I consider to be the greatest mission program in the world."

His missions involvement includes preaching in more than 20 countries in Latin America, Europe and Asia, he said. Last summer, he spent a month in the then-Soviet Union and Romania preaching in churches and accompanying Baptist leaders in Moscow, Kiev and Arad, Romania, in meetings with government officials about religious freedom and restoration of church properties.

As a new trustee, Pressler said, he will not be involved in the search process for a successor to R. Keith Parks, FMB president who has announced retirement in October when he turns 65. Pressler also said he will miss his first trustee meeting, June 22-24 in El Paso, because he will travel with fellow members of First Baptist Church in Houston to Romania for an evangelistic campaign in Arad. The effort will include services in a large sports stadium with First Baptist pastor John Bisagno preaching.

Pressler was nominated for the FMB board by the two Texas representatives on the Committee on Nominations, Stan Coffey, pastor of San Jacinto Baptist Church in Amarillo, and Luan Stallings, a layperson from Big Spring. Baptist Press could not reach either committee member for comment about Pressler's nomination.

Boyles said his experience as Committee on Nominations chairman "has reconfirmed in my mind, in my heart that we have the best denominational system the world has ever known. It is fair, it is equitable in representation. And the agencies and boards receive the best each convention has to offer."

The committee recommends members for the SBC Executive Committee and trustees for the Foreign and Home mission boards, the six SBC seminaries, the Christian Life, Radio-TV and other SBC commissions and several other SBC organizations.

It consists of two people from each of the 34 state or regional conventions qualified for SBC representation. One is a layperson; the other is from the clergy or denominational work in the state. Each state's committee members suggest persons from their state to fill various openings, Boyles said. The nominees represent "all walks of life ... with different perspectives (yet) whose heart fits a certain area of our convention life."

Most SBC entities, Boyles noted, have policies that neither clergy/denomination workers nor laypersons can comprise more than two-thirds of their boards.

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Describing the committee's nominees as "Bible-believing," Boyles said, "In Southern Baptist life, the majority rules. We are electing Bible-believing (SBC) presidents and thus Bible-believing people. Through this system, the majority of grass-roots Southern Baptists have input into every Southern Baptist entity. And it is a very positive thing the majority of Southern Baptists are moving toward a Bible-believing base."

The committee did much of its work during a three-session March 19-20 meeting in Nashville. "We had a worship service at the beginning of every session," Boyles said. "We would sing together, we took prayer requests, we prayed together and then we had someone share Scripture. In every session, we would ask God to guide us in every thought we had, that he would choose the nominees, that no one would be nominated who was against his will and no one would be missed who was God's man or woman for a position." Boyles said the committee had "a wonderful, sweet spirit of fellowship ... and worked hard together to make the agencies and boards the very best they can be."

Boyles said the Committee on Nominations has delegated authority to a six-member subcommittee to make changes among the nominations that may be needed before the Southern Baptist Convention meets June 9-11 in Indianapolis. Subcommittee members each represent a different state, one is a Hispanic pastor and another is a laywoman, Boyles said.

For Boyles, chairing the committee was the first time he has been asked to serve on an SBC committee or agency. He has been pastor for five years of First Baptist in Moore, which he said leads Oklahoma Baptist churches in dollar-amount giving to the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' fund for national and international missions and ministry. The church's CP giving equals 15 percent of its budget, Boyles said.

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Baptist vice president leaves  
Argentine Embassy in Peru

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press  
4/24/92

LIMA, Peru (BP)--Peruvian Baptist Carlos Garcia has left the Argentine Embassy in Lima, Peru, where he sought political asylum April 10 after being named president by the country's dissolved Congress.

Garcia, a Baptist pastor and Peru's second vice president, reportedly is staying in a private home in Lima, the capital. A source in Lima said Garcia attended church services on Easter Sunday, April 19.

Garcia has handed over leadership of Peru's opposition government to Maximo San Roman, the country's first vice president, who returned to Peru April 18. San Roman was out of the country April 9 when the suspended Congress named Garcia president in opposition to actions by Peru's President Alberto Fujimori.

Fujimori dismissed the legislature April 5, suspended the constitution and declared an emergency government. He defended his actions, saying legislative and judicial corruption was hampering his efforts to revive Peru's economy and curb guerrilla violence.

After publicly denouncing Fujimori's measures, Garcia accepted the congressional appointment as president until the return of San Roman. Legislators advised Garcia to seek political asylum for his own safety.

Since leaving the embassy, Garcia has been seen in a television news report of an April 23 meeting at San Roman's home with officials of the Organization of American States, which opposes Fujimori's actions.

San Roman has condemned Fujimori's decisions and called on him and his associates to resign. However, most Peruvians still support Fujimori's measures, despite opposition from the OAS and the United States, according to public opinion polls.

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On April 21 Fujimori announced a plan to return to democracy within a year, starting with a July referendum on his suspension of constitutional rights. He said a popular vote would be held this year on constitutional amendments. Congressional elections would follow in 1993.

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Clendenen nominated  
to edit commentary

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press  
4/24/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Ray Clendenen, chairman of the Old Testament and Hebrew department at Criswell College in Dallas, has been nominated to become general editor of The New American Commentary at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

The board's trustee executive committee voted without opposition April 23 to forward the administration's recommendation of Clendenen to the full board of trustees. Ballots and biographical information on the nominee will be mailed to trustees. Ballots are to be returned to the administration by May 10.

In addition to naming Clendenen as general editor, the recommendation asks trustees to name current editor David Dockery as associate general editor for New Testament and Ken Mathews, associate professor of divinity at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Ala., as associate general editor for Old Testament.

Dockery has been selected to become dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., effective Aug. 1.

Clendenen will become the third editor of The New American Commentary, a 40-volume conservative commentary series being published over a six-year period by the Sunday School Board's Broadman Press. Dockery replaced Mike Smith in May 1990 after Smith resigned to accept a church pastorate.

Clendenen was recommended with agreement of consulting editors who also favored the associate editor concept, board President Jimmy Draper told the trustee executive committee.

Draper said the arrangement allows the work to continue with the existing writers and provides broader experience and a sharing of editorial responsibilities.

Clendenen is one of two writers for the NAC volume on "Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi" while Mathews is a consulting editor and writer of the "Genesis" volume.

Prior to joining Criswell College in 1982, Clendenen was an instructor in Bible at Philadelphia College of Bible from 1979-82. He was pastor of Rozetta Baptist Church in Little York, Ill., from 1975-78.

He received a doctorate in humanities from the University of Texas at Arlington and has done graduate studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. He received a master of arts degree from Dropsie College of Hebrew and Cognate Learning in Philadelphia and a master's in theology in semitics and Old Testament from Dallas Theological Seminary. He earned a bachelor's degree from Rice University in Houston.

Three volumes of the commentary have been released and the fourth volume, "1 and 2 Timothy/Titus" will be published in May.

Sales of initial volumes have been ahead of forecasts, according to Broadman officials. The first two volumes appeared in Bookstore Journal's top 100 list of best-selling Christian reference books for 1991.

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Baptists feed survivors  
after Mexico explosions

By Mary E. Speidel

GUADALAJARA, Mexico (BP)--Baptists have set up a feeding station for rescue workers and displaced residents in the wake of gas explosions in Guadalajara that killed more than 200 people and injured 1,000 April 22.

Mexican Baptists and Southern Baptist representatives began the effort after consulting with local relief officials. The station, which began operating April 24, is housed at Bethany Baptist Church near the explosion site. The church reportedly was not damaged in the explosions.

In addition, some medical personnel from the Mexican American Hospital have visited clinics in the area to offer their services and donate medical supplies. The hospital, which Southern Baptists helped begin in 1958, sent an ambulance to the blast site to assist in rescue efforts throughout the day April 22.

Southern Baptist worker Larry Gay traveled to Guadalajara to help plan Baptist relief efforts. His presence freed Southern Baptist health workers living in Guadalajara to concentrate on meeting medical needs. Gay also took Baptist relief funds to meet emergency needs.

The series of gas blasts in the city's sewer system began the morning of April 22 and continued into the night in southeastern Guadalajara, Mexico's second-largest city. The explosions were caused by a liquid called hexane that leaked from a factory into the city's sewer, according to press reports.

Some 1,000 buildings and houses were damaged in explosions that ripped up more than three miles of city streets. Officials immediately evacuated the area and some 4,500 rescue workers began trying to save victims pinned under debris or inside vehicles, press reports said.

No Southern Baptist representatives living in Guadalajara were harmed by the explosions but some Mexican Baptists had not heard from relatives living in the area as of April 23.

When the first of the blasts occurred, Southern Baptist representative Judy Wise, a nurse from Houma, La., was working at the Mexican American Hospital in western Guadalajara. A few injured people were brought to the hospital, she said, but most were taken to medical centers closer to the area where the explosions occurred.

Neither Wise nor Southern Baptist representatives Lee and Ruth Baggett, from Vernon and El Paso, Texas, respectively, live near the blast sites. Several Mexican Baptist churches are located on the edge of the area but no reports have been received about damage to these structures.

Baggett, a physician, and his wife reportedly were conducting a medical clinic in another area of the city when the blast occurred. Wise confirmed their safety.

Members of Guadalajara's Star of Bethlehem Baptist Church where Wise attends had a time of prayer for victims and their families April 22. Several church members said they have relatives living in the blast area and had not yet heard of their safety, Wise said.

Later some church members visited a shelter housing explosion survivors. The Baptists took supplies and prayed with some of the families seeking refuge there.

"Many people have lost their homes. Some are uncertain because they have been evacuated from their homes . . . . These people are kind of in limbo," Wise said.

Mexicans have responded well to the crisis, she added. "People from all over the country are coming here to help," she said.



NOTE TO EDITORS: Europe correspondent Mike Creswell visited Albania twice in recent weeks and filed the following stories. Until last year Albania was the most isolated and rigidly controlled communist state on the continent. It also proclaimed itself the "world's first atheist state." But now Albanians have voted for democracy and the nation is opening up to the outside world, including Christians.

Baptists to begin work  
in once-atheistic Albania

By Mike Creswell

TIRANA, Albania (BP)--Baptists are poised to begin ministry in Albania, once said to be the most atheistic country in the world.

The European country of 3.3 million people formerly remained aloof from Western, Soviet and Chinese influence and banned all religions. But its strict communist regime has finally fallen domino-style like those in other Eastern European countries.

In March Albanians voted for democracy. On April 9 Sali Berisha, a heart surgeon, was elected as Albania's first non-communist president.

Southern Baptists expect to send their first missionaries to Albania later this year. But a Scottish Baptist missionary couple already has located a residence in Tirana and will be moving there this spring with two small children. Chris and Mairi Burnett, both physicians, are missionaries with the Baptist Missionary Society of England.

Cooperating with the European Baptist Federation, the Burnetts will help coordinate work by Baptists throughout the country in a wide range of ministries. Karl-Heinz Walter, the federation's general secretary, said he hopes coordination of all Baptist aid and evangelistic outreach in Albania by the federation will help maximize ministry by different Baptist groups and reduce friction and overlap.

Extensive contacts with a wide range of Albanian government officials have been made cooperatively by Walter; John Keith, Eastern Europe representative for the Canadian Baptist Federation; and Paul Thibodeaux, Eastern Europe administrator for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Walter, Keith and the Burnetts visited Tirana in April to meet government representatives and secure an apartment -- a difficult task in a city with a housing shortage. Harald Edvardsen, a Norwegian Baptist pastor and electrician, is in Tirana to renovate the apartment. He had to get supplies and equipment from Italy since little is available in Albania.

Albania needs all the help it can get. Decades of isolationist communism have left it with virtually no economic system. Unemployment reportedly hovers at 80 percent. Virtually all factories have closed. A year ago one American dollar exchanged for 10 leks, the national currency. By mid-April the black market rate was 90 leks for \$1.

Rioting broke out in several locations before the March elections. Order has been restored by police and soldiers throughout Tirana, although gunfire is still heard at night in the city. Theft is rampant.

The first half of a shipment of 270 tons of flour sent by Southern Baptists, Canadian Baptists and the Baptist World Alliance arrived April 8 at the state-operated bakery just outside Tirana. The rest was expected by month's end. The European Baptist Federation also has promised to send urgently needed medical supplies.

Baptists are far from being the first Christian workers in Albania.

A group called the Albanian Encouragement Project is an umbrella organization helping coordinate the work of 25 mission groups, including Campus Crusade for Christ, Youth With a Mission, Operation Mobilization, Trans World Radio and numerous Europe-based groups.

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Youth With a Mission alone has 55 workers in Albania and Operation Mobilization has 15, according to Paul Murray, an Australian supported by the Assemblies of God who coordinates the Encouragement project.

But Christians aren't the only ones setting up shop in Albania. Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and members of the Baha'i faith also have sent workers to Albania. Some Christian workers expect Muslims to make a strong effort to re-start the once-dominant Islamic faith in Albania.

"They will come in and buy Albania," warned one medical support worker from the United States, referring to the well-financed Islamic evangelization efforts of Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries.

Historically Albania was considered to be about 80 percent Muslim, with the rest of the population divided among Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. But two generations of Albanians have grown up with virtually no religious instruction. All religion was banned in Albania for decades. In 1967 the government closed 2,169 mosques, churches and convents and ordered them destroyed or converted to secular use.

An Albanian physician of Muslim background waved away questions about religious faith. "My brain has been closed by 50 years of communist propaganda," he said.

The Mosque of Et-hem Bey on Skanderberg Square in central Tirana is now heavily attended for prayer times. Several Catholic and Orthodox church buildings in the city remain standing, but appeared in poor condition. Leka Tasi, government secretary for the Orthodox church, said renovating the buildings is a key need.

Evangelical Christians in Albania number 300 at most, Murray said. A recent evangelistic crusade led by Swedish evangelist Ulf Ekman and his Word of Life Church was attended by 20,000 people. A church growing out of the effort now has about 100 members, according to an Ekman staff member.

A similar Ekman crusade April 8 at a Tirana soccer stadium again attracted many. Hundreds of people raised their hands when asked to accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

Although it's been impossible for decades to send missionaries into Albania, Southern Baptists have provided \$30,000 annually for Albanian-language radio broadcasts. The 15-minute messages have been aired seven days a week, aimed at the estimated half-million radios in the country.

Christian outreach in Albania will occur against a backdrop of pressing physical needs and shaky political foundations of the fledgling democratic government. Regional politics also could affect the country. Some 2 million ethnic Albanians reportedly live in Albania's crumbling neighbor, Yugoslavia.

These "Yugo-Albanians" have been pushing to set up their own autonomous country in Yugoslavia's Kosovo region. Some observers fear that kind of movement could drag the Kosovo area, and possibly Albania itself, into the ongoing Yugoslavian war. That conflict already has produced some 10,000 fatalities and 800,000 refugees.

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(BP) photo and graphic illustration sent to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Driver's courage foils hijack  
of Baptist shipment to Albania

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press  
4/24/92

TIRANA, Albania (BP)--Gunmen failed to hijack a Baptist shipment of flour sent to ease food shortages in Albania when delivery drivers refused to hand it over.

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Drivers of five 18-wheel trucks carrying the flour said three men stopped their convoy soon after they crossed into Albania from Yugoslavia in April. One of the would-be hijackers aimed a pistol at the lead truck driver and demanded keys to the vehicles.

But the Albanian driver refused to hand over the keys, telling the gunman to shoot if he wanted to. The hijackers said they were so impressed with the driver's bravery they let the convoy proceed. The trucks, filled with 142 tons of flour provided by Baptists, arrived safely at a bakery in Tirana, Albania's capital city.

The flour originally was to arrive by ship at an Albanian port city near Tirana. But crowded shipping schedules caused the trucks to be unloaded in Yugoslavia. The trucks were delayed five days in the city of Titograd, awaiting paperwork and other clearances to be processed.

The shipment represented about half of \$100,000 worth of flour -- 270 tons in all -- to be sent from a supplier in Italy. The rest was due to arrive later in April. The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board provided \$50,000 of the total, the Canadian Baptist Federation contributed \$25,000 and the Baptist World Alliance gave \$25,000. Delivery of the flour was coordinated by the European Baptist Federation.

Albanian government representatives repeatedly expressed gratitude to Baptists for their assistance. They said the country needs 2,700 tons of flour daily to produce bread, a food staple in Albania. But their supplies have been just a few days ahead of running out in recent weeks.

The wheat flour will be baked into loaves of bread and sold for 10 cents each through government bread distribution centers. Albanians said the bread is inexpensive, even in their fractured economy. In Tirana citizens stand in long lines around the centers. At times pushing and shoving breaks out as people press forward to pick up their allotments.

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(BP) photo and graphic illustration sent to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Albania: 50 years  
back in time

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press  
4/24/92

TIRANA, Albania (BP)--To walk the streets of Tirana, Albania's capital, is to step 50 years back in time.

Albania, a country of 3.3 million people in Eastern Europe, nestles between Greece and splintering Yugoslavia. But the streets feel like a booming Third-World village.

Cars were illegal and impossibly costly for Albanians until last year. Now cars and trucks fill the streets. Horns honk as new drivers speed down streets filled with horse-drawn wagons and pedestrians unaccustomed to watching for cars.

Virtually every sidewalk in Tirana now is lined with small stands where budding capitalists sell anything they can find. One displays a few cartons of eggs; another hawks a few bottles of imitation Coca-Cola, razor blades, two pencils.

In mid-April many people were selling spring onions. Trucks unloaded vegetables that sold out quickly. Food is in short supply. The government provides bread, cooking oil and a few other items at low cost. "But you can't live on bread and oil," one Tirana woman said bitterly.

"Milk has not been available here at any price for two years," another woman said.

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Meat is expensive when available at all, and if found is of inferior quality. "You don't know if you're buying lamb or donkey," she said. Recently she paid a high price for meat, but it made her sick.

"Everyone wants to open a shop. They think that's the way to get rich quickly," another Albanian resident said.

In the topsy-turvy world of communism-meets-the-real-world, American dollars vie with Albanian leks for a place in the economy. A steak-and-rice dinner, possibly with spinach, costs about \$2. But a can of Coca-Cola, imported from Greece, costs the same.

A plaza in front of the National Museum of History once held a large statue of Enver Hoxha, the dictator who ran Albania for decades until his death in 1985. But today the plaza is empty; mobs pulled his statue down in 1990 in the press toward democracy.

Large signs proclaiming communist slogans that once adorned tops of public buildings in Tirana are gone. Although known as a communist government, the regime crafted by Enver Hoxha after World War II was hardly an example of classical Marxism.

"Not even the works of Marx were published here -- Marx was censored along with everything else," declared Rudolf Marku, who now works with the government's department of culture. Marku, one of Albania's best-known poets, has produced eight volumes of poetry and translated works of American poet Walt Whitman into Albanian. His reputation did not win favors with the former government. Until recently he and his wife had to live in an attic and were not allowed an apartment. Just ahead of the March elections, he received death threats.

"I took them seriously; they are good at killing people," he said.

George Orwell's novel "1984" about a repressive "Big Brother" society is just a book of fiction to most Westerners. But Marku wept when he finally read it. He realized someone outside Albania understood his people's sufferings.

Some of those now in government jobs suffered even more under communist rule.

Sokol Mirakaj, for example, now serves as government secretary for Roman Catholicism. He spent 40 years in prison, beginning at age 2. Now, aged beyond his years, he is in frail health. But those who know him marvel he is not bitter about his lost life. "Let's not talk of the past. Let's talk of the future," he said.

Henrike Prendushi, 61, spent 10 years in jail for trying to leave the country. He got into Yugoslavia but authorities there arrested him and returned him to authorities in Albania. He spent his 10 years digging canals. Other prisoners had to work in dangerous underground mines with worse conditions, he said.

Prendushi was released in 1991 when many of Albania's estimated 100,000 prisoners were released. Catholics were especially targeted because the government feared their Western interests, he said. Many prisons, including the one where he was locked away, are underground, he said.

Being in an Albanian prison essentially sentenced the prisoner's entire family to reprisals, Prendushi said. Family members had to visit prisoners once a month to take food and other supplies. But getting to the isolated prisons was difficult because the few drivers with cars feared they might get shot at the prisons. Prisoners' families were even prevented from attending school beyond elementary level, Prendushi said.

Stories now circulate about how repressive life was under Hoxha's reign. Tirana resident Gilbert Galanxhi, formerly a tour guide with the state tourism agency, said the following story was known by his mother to be true because she personally knows the man to whom it happened.

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A postman, he had the same first name as the dictator -- Enver. He stayed too long at a bar one night and became drunk. Later, fumbling with the lock on his bicycle on the street, he berated himself for drinking so much: "Oh Enver, how foolish you are!" A policeman heard him and assumed he was speaking of the country's leader. Enver the postman was hauled off to jail, where he spent three years.

Even in the midst of misery, Albanians made jokes about their situation. One man was put in a prison cell with two other inmates who asked what offense he committed.

"I didn't do anything," he replied.

"How long are you in for?" they asked.

"For 25 years," he answered bitterly.

"Oh, then you must have done something," the two replied. "They only sentence you to 10 years for doing nothing!"

Back on the street, two middle school students in front of their school were asked how classes are going.

"Are you kidding?" one girl answered in good English. "Look at this school," she said, pointing to an aged building with many broken windows. The school has an enrollment of 1,500, she said. Asked about textbooks, she pointed to a thin instruction manual she carried with obvious distaste.

Nearby two girls sat on the curb watching passing pedestrians. One listened to a Walkman; she passed over the headphones to confirm she was listening to Western rock music, once forbidden.

All of Albania's textbooks need revision; even mathematics and chemistry books were saturated in communist ideology. On a trash heap behind an apartment building, a book by former dictator Hoxha lay sprawled in mud, its pages chased from their binding by the passing breeze. Such sacrilege would have been unthinkable until recently.

Although televised pictures of Albanians fleeing their country on ships headed to Italy got international attention last year, those scenes were just capsule versions of what has been happening for years. For a long time, Albanians have voted against communism with their feet, fleeing to other countries. About 2 million ethnic Albanians live in Yugoslavia alone.

One of the things Albanians sought was better medical care. Doctors at Tirana's main hospital said they are short on virtually every drug and supply. They do not even have pain medication for women in childbirth. It does not test blood for AIDS.

Albania already has Europe's highest infant mortality rate; 40 of every 1,000 babies die by age 1. Government ministers said many areas need ambulances to transport the sick. Roads are so bad in rural areas four-wheel drive vehicles are needed, they said.

In the rural areas outside Tirana, farm families work in the fields, most using simple hand tools. Only a few tractors were to be seen.

Seventy-five percent of all farm land has been returned to 400,000 farm families, according to Sali Metani of the government ministry of agriculture. Twenty-five percent of the land will remain with the state-owned cooperative farms, though these will be called something besides "cooperatives," he said.

"The farms need technical help, fertilizer, pesticides, seeds -- everything," he said.

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Women who work on the farms usually wear head scarves. A local resident said those of Muslim background wear white scarves; those of Christian background wear black scarves.

There is still some question whether farmers will plant crops this spring; they are waiting to be sure they get title to the land. Aid workers visiting outlying villages report many homes with dirt floors still shared with farm animals.

One of the most remarkable sights for visitors is the presence of some 700,000 concrete bunkers, preparation for a military attack that never came. The rounded bunkers, lying mostly below ground level and perhaps 10 or 12 feet across, are scattered alongside roads and throughout pastures like giant concrete mushrooms. The image is like a scene from a science fiction movie.

Albanians point out bitterly each bunker cost about as much as a new apartment in short supply in the country.

All apartments follow the same small, four-room floor plan. All the buildings have a worn look about them; most would be considered slums in Western countries. Tirana residents said current plans call for residents to be given the apartments they now rent, either at no cost or low cost.

Water comes to most apartments just three times a day; electricity is sporadic.

Despite such conditions, Albanians have not lost hope or pride. But they have come to see how poor their situation is compared to the rest of the world. Many are impatient for change.

It is right the new democratic president of Albania, Sali Berisha, is a physician "because Albania is quite sick today," said poet Rudolf Marku. "We need a physical and spiritual doctor today so Albania can join the great family of European countries. Our poverty is not a sin. It is the consequence of a dictatorship the people hated. Albanians must feel equal to other nations.

"Albanians want to know everything. People in the rest of Europe may have many channels of information but not a thirst for information like here," he said. It is quite amazing, he said, not to have to check behind doors before talking.

Communists wanted to say the year zero was when the Communist Party was created, he said, but this is not true. Albania was one of the first countries in which there were converts to Christianity.

In those days Albania was known as Illyria. The Apostle Paul preached at the port city of Durrës, where some 70 Christian families were reported to live. At Durrës a partly excavated Roman amphitheater has remains of Christian artwork and a baptistery in its interior.

Pope Clement IX was Albanian; so is Mother Teresa, Marku noted.

"There was a great spiritual energy here. That is something else the dictatorship destroyed," he said. Even though villagers were not allowed to mention Christ, they remembered they were Christian. "Even if all seemed destroyed, the spirit is not destroyed," he said.

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Sending missionaries only part  
of individual Baptist's job

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press  
4/24/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists should not be content that sending missionaries fulfills their commitment to Christ's Great Commission, participants in an April 22 missionary commissioning service were told.

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After 87 new home missionaries were presented at Nashville's First Baptist Church for commissioning, James T. Draper Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, told those participating in the service it is not enough to send missionaries.

"The call of Christ is personal, unique and it is for all of us. We do not send out these missionaries instead of us. Those of us who remain behind also have a calling."

Draper said Southern Baptists must pray for and financially support missionaries, co-labor with them in volunteer missions and report to others about the work of missionaries.

The 87 new missionaries will join 4,922 other Southern Baptist home missionaries in all 50 states, Canada and Puerto Rico, said Bob Banks, HMB executive vice president.

HMB President Larry Lewis charged the new missionaries with the commitment to evangelism. "No matter what your assignment is, there is no more important task than to be a faithful soul-winner," he said.

The commissioning service also served as a celebration of Southern Baptist commitment to the Bible, involvement in Bible teaching and leadership in Bible publishing.

A Holman "Family Worship Bible" was presented to the James L. Sullivan family. Sullivan, retired president of the Sunday School Board, was joined on the platform by four generations of his family. Sullivan said in his home the Bible was never a book to remain on the shelf but a book to be lived and shared.

Al Riddley, director of the Illinois Baptist State Association's Sunday school department and president of the association of state Sunday school directors, presented to Harry Piland, director of the Sunday School Board's Sunday school division, a Bible that has been read in public ceremonies in each state convention during the past six months.

Billie Pate, associate director of the Sunday school division, presented copies of a Hmong translation of the Bible produced by the Sunday School Board and the American Bible Society. The translation is the first complete translation of the Bible in Hmong. Of the 300,000 Hmong speaking people in the world, 120,000 live in the United States, Pate said. Many Hmong people came to the United States as refugees from their homeland in the highlands of Cambodia and Laos in Southeast Asia.

Piland showed participants a copy of a microfiche Bible similar to one taken into space aboard the space shuttle Atlantis which landed April 2. The Bible was taken by David Leestma, flight chief engineer and member of University Baptist Church in Houston.

The commissioning service was coordinated by the Sunday School Board Sunday school division and also sponsored by the Home Mission Board, Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood Commission.

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

EDITORS' NOTE: This story can be used in tandem with a (BP) story April 21 titled "Cuban Baptists see rapid growth, FMB leaders say."

Cuban Baptists' commitment  
impresses American visitors

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press  
4/24/92

HAVANA, Cuba (BP)--"How much would a heart transplant cost in the United States?" a Cuban government official asked the visiting Baptist delegation.

"Maybe \$150,000," estimated a Southern Baptist mission leader in the group.

"In Cuba we give them free," the official said.

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"That means we have something in common," responded another Southern Baptist visitor to Cuba. "We also are in the (spiritual) heart transplant business and we give them free. But ours last forever."

That conversation occurred recently inside Cuba's Central Committee Headquarters in Havana, the country's capital. A small group of leaders from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba were visiting the office of Cuba's ministry of religion, which grants approval for religious activities there.

"We had a very congenial discussion," said John Cheyne, mission board administrator who was part of the delegation received by Cuba's deputy minister of religion. The mission officials were in Cuba to meet with Cuban Baptist leaders, including the western convention's new officers.

It was Cheyne's first trip to Cuba since he preached during revival services there in 1954, five years before the Cuban revolution brought Fidel Castro to power.

More than 30 years later, Cuban Baptist work "is as vibrant as ever," said Cheyne, associate director of the board's research and planning office. "These folks have an exciting faith. I saw no despondency . . . They are very forward-looking, very hopeful for the future."

Cheyne, two other mission administrators, Ronald Wilson and Van Williams, and missionary Mark Smith spent about a week with Cuban Baptist leaders. "This trip gave us a chance to consult with newly elected leaders, to review plans for the future and how we are relating to them," said Wilson, area director for Brazil and the Caribbean.

Wilson has been to Cuba seven times since 1989 to build relationships with western convention leaders and to coordinate Christian training seminars requested by Cuban Baptists. (In 1989 the Foreign Mission Board officially began relating to the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba. Earlier, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board had been responsible for those relationships since Baptist work began in Cuba in the late 1800s).

But for Williams, the trip was his first visit to Cuba. "I was most impressed by the maturity of the Cuban Baptist leaders and the growth reported by the churches," said Williams, director of missionary health.

Williams was especially impressed by a Cuban Baptist pastor who took the Baptist delegation to see a farmer he had led to Christ during his early ministry. During the visit the pastor prayed with the group and read several Scriptures. The verses had been meaningful to the pastor while he was imprisoned nearly four years by the Cuban government in the mid-1960s.

Another highlight for Williams, a physician, was visiting Havana's Salvador Allende Hospital, where Baptist physician Eliezer Veguilla works. Veguilla leads the convention's youth program. His father, Leoncio, is a Baptist pastor and the convention's new general secretary. The older Veguilla became a Christian through the ministry of the late Herbert Caudill and his wife, Marjorie, former Southern Baptist home missionaries to Cuba.

Williams said the government-operated medical center, which included about 30 buildings, was "very sophisticated." He and other Baptist visitors saw a geriatric day care center, a degenerative eye disease unit and surgical and intensive care facilities.

Besides touring the hospital, the mission delegation visited the convention's camp, home for the aged, several churches and some farms operated by Cuban Baptist families. The group stayed at the Baptist seminary in Havana.

Wilson said he observed "a powerful movement of God's Spirit" in Cuba and "Baptists who have been faithful in their commitment to the Lord."

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The visitors also noticed the fruits of a 1989 Foreign Mission Board stewardship conference for Cuban Baptists. The seminar was the first in a series of annual leadership events board officials have planned in Cuba at the western convention's invitation. Cuban Baptists demonstrate "a strong commitment to stewardship in spite of their (economic) situation," Wilson said.

Wilson told of a 1991 visit to a Baptist church. A young Cuban church member told fellow believers he had just received his first 50-peso bill, then newly issued by the Cuban government. Since it was the first one the young man had ever possessed, he said he wanted to give the money to God. Later the pastor told Wilson this gift was about a quarter of the man's monthly income.

"These folks are going to teach us as Southern Baptists so much about stewardship of time and money and the gospel. I continue to be more inspired with each trip I make," Wilson said.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press.

GA's 'Christmas in August'  
overwhelms Army hospital

By Susan Todd Doyle

Baptist Press  
4/24/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Walter Reed Army Medical Center is 10,000 Bibles richer thanks to a group of Southern Baptist grade-school girls. Not to mention \$13,000 the girls sent to purchase additional Bibles.

Members of Girls in Action, the missions organization for girls in grades one through six sponsored by Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, first heard about the need for Bibles last summer by chaplain Paul Dodd of Walter Reed Army Medical Center. He was one of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board-designated recipients for the 1991 "Christmas in August" collection.

Christmas in August is a tradition which began in the early 1920s as a way for Sunbeam Bands -- the name at the time of the WMU-sponsored organization for children -- to send gifts to missionaries in China to share with children. Packages had to be sent in August in order to make the trip from the United States to China by December.

Today, home missionaries are asked to list items which they can use in their work. Their lists are included in the August issues of the GA magazine, Discovery, the Acteens magazine for teen-age girls, Accent, and the Mission Friends magazine for preschool leaders, Start.

"Each year missionaries are asked to list items which children can provide -- school supplies, toiletry items and such," said Barbara Massey, editor of Discovery. "Christmas in August is a very participatory way for GAs to be involved in missions.

"They learn what missionaries do through their Girls in Action meetings and Christmas in August is a way they can become actively involved with the missionaries they study," she said.

Massey recently received a letter from Maj. Gen. Richard D. Cameron of Walter Reed Army Medical Center expressing thanks for the gifts.

"We in the armed forces are encouraged and strengthened by the enthusiastic support we receive from local churches and communities," Cameron said. "You have been a catalyst of that support among Southern Baptists."

Christmas in August gifts were sent from 25 states and the District of Columbia, Cameron said.

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4/24/92

Page 18

Baptist Press

"The overwhelming generosity of Girls in Action has made it possible for us to 'share the wealth,'" he said. "We have shipped Bibles to many other medical centers and Army hospitals throughout the continental United States."

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