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NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2353
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8911
CompuServe ID# 70420.1

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 Strade, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

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92-121

**FMB trustee chairman ready
to talk to moderate group**

By Mark Wyatt

FRESNO, Calif. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's trustee chairman says he "will be happy to sit down and talk with" Cooperative Baptist Fellowship leaders to "clear up misperceptions" about how foreign missionaries are appointed.

"Rather than continue the controversy, I want to heal relationships," John Jackson, pastor of First Baptist Church of Fairfield, Calif., told The California Southern Baptist, newsjournal of the California Southern Baptist Convention.

Although no timetable has been set, Jackson said he expects to talk soon with leaders of the CBF organization of SBC moderates.

Jackson was asked to initiate talks with CBF leaders during a July 27 meeting he and other FMB trustee leaders had with leaders of the Woman's Missionary Union about the past and future relationship between the FMB and WMU.

Jackson said the talks with WMU leaders are intended to "further the longstanding relationship we've always had." Noting the FMB is "dependent on WMU for much of our budget," Jackson said the possibility WMU may begin "raising funds for CBF places in jeopardy our relationship."

"We do not wish to control nor exercise any power over WMU. That's not our responsibility," Jackson said. "We are deeply concerned about any decisions that would jeopardize our longstanding relationship. We don't want to see any deterioration of our longstanding love relationship."

Dellanna O'Brien, WMU executive director, voiced gratitude for the dialogue, saying, "It was helpful to have a forum to discuss troublesome issues such as Ruschlikon and to express our prayerful concern regarding their selection of a new FMB president." (A Baptist seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, was eliminated by FMB trustees from this year's budget; FMB President R. Keith Parks has announced his retirement in October over philosophical differences with trustees.)

"We are also pleased," O'Brien said, "that there will be ongoing discussions in which we can deal with complex problems in our convention together. It is imperative that we keep missions lifted above a political agency and we jointly commit our influence and resources to that end."

Jackson told The California Southern Baptist on the issue of SBC-CBF relations: "I don't think I'm a knight in shining armor to alleviate all the problems between the SBC and the CBF. I do have a responsibility to resolve misunderstandings and assure them we will send candidates if they qualify like anyone else."

Jackson rejected the notion FMB trustees are refusing to appoint missionary candidates from churches which support the CBF.

"We do not appoint churches, we appoint members of churches," Jackson said. "Most of the FMB trustees don't know who is from a CBF church or not," he continued. "We go through the process. The trustees really have no idea whether a candidate is from a CBF church."

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Jackson said "the process" involves FMB missionary personnel recruitment staff, called "consultants," who screen prospective missionaries and present candidates to trustees for consideration. But the FMB chairman said candidates are not automatically appointed.

"There's a number of people in the churches who could not be appointed" for a variety of reasons, Jackson said.

Churches "might want to send some people we would not send, theologically," Jackson said. But, he added, trustees "are not dominated and controlled by where candidates come from. What we're interested in is that the consultants bring us names of individuals, not names of churches. Everybody would be considered based on their qualifications."

Jackson said FMB trustees have not taken a position that the CBF is a denomination, although some Southern Baptist leaders view it as such.

But Jackson noted one action taken by the CBF which he said suggests the group is more than just a fellowship: "The very fact they have established their own mission sending organization says they are" a convention.

Still, Jackson said FMB trustees will consider all qualified candidates for missionary appointment.

"We have a mandate to appoint Southern Baptists. If they (CBF) became a convention we could not appoint them," Jackson said. "As long as they have the capacity to vote at the convention and they are considered Southern Baptist, we have to consider them.

"The convention determines what is a Southern Baptist church," Jackson explained. "The convention has never said CBF is not Southern Baptist."

In an interview with the FMB news office, Jackson reiterated that "even though we've been accused of having a global agenda to transmit the SBC controversy overseas, we have no global agenda other than evangelism that results in churches."

"As I told the WMU leaders, the proof will be in the pudding. If we have a global agenda to transmit controversy, the trustees made a mistake in electing me chairman. I don't have a global agenda and I have no desire to disrupt the Foreign Mission Board's philosophy of working with overseas partners as equals through cooperation rather than coercion.

"But nothing is an island unto itself," Jackson said. "Anything can happen. The controversy may spill over into the overseas arena as a byproduct. I can't speak for every individual but the board as a whole has no agenda to cause that. I don't think there was an agenda to transmit neo-orthodoxy from Europe to the United State either, but it got here as a byproduct."

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Robert O'brien and Art Toalston also contributed to this story.

Patterson names 7 new profs
for Wake Forest seminary

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WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Signaling a time of "adjustment" and "wonderful potential," Paige Patterson, new president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, has announced seven new faculty members at the Wake Forest Southern Baptist Convention-related seminary.

Six of them are former faculty members at Criswell College, where Patterson was president before taking Southeastern's helm.

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Patterson said one of the new professors, Daniel Akin, also is being named to the permanent position of dean of students. On the faculty, Akin will be an adjunct professor of church history. Akin was dean of students at Criswell College.

The other six new teachers will serve under presidential appointments for one year, Patterson said.

Keith Eitel, new professor of missions, also will be an adviser to Patterson on accreditation and an assistant at the seminary's Drummond Center for Great Commission Studies.

Akin holds an undergraduate degree from Criswell College in Dallas, a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Arlington.

Eitel was dean of undergraduate studies at Criswell College. He holds an undergraduate degree from Dallas Baptist University, a master of arts from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and a doctor of missiology degree from the Faculte de Theologie Protestante in Ovest Afrique. Eitel is a candidate for a Ph.D. degree at the African institution.

Scott Tatum, new visiting professor of preaching and pastoral ministry, is a retired faculty member from Southwestern. He holds an undergraduate degree from Baylor and master's and doctorate degrees in theology from Southwestern.

Other new faculty members formerly on Criswell College's faculty are:

-- Gerald Cowen, professor of pastoral theology. Cowen holds an undergraduate degree from Mississippi College in Clinton and master's and doctorate degrees in theology from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He has done additional studies at Regent's Park College in Oxford, England.

-- Paul Carlisle, assistant professor of pastoral theology who will teach counseling. Carlisle holds an undergraduate degree from East Texas Baptist University in Marshall and master of science and doctor of education degrees in counseling from East Texas State University in Commerce.

-- David Lanier, associate professor of New Testament. Lanier holds an undergraduate degree from North Georgia College in Dahlonega, a master of arts from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and master of divinity and Ph.D. degrees from Southwestern.

-- Gary Galeotti, professor of Old Testament. Galeotti holds an undergraduate degree from Oklahoma Baptist University at Shawnee and master of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Southwestern.

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Churches shouldn't ignore
problems of child abuse

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
7/31/92

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--If church workers and ministers aren't seeing child abuse with children they come in contact with, it may be they aren't looking, according to a trauma center doctor and Sunday school worker.

"There are abused children in your church. There are child abusers in your church and there can be child abusers teaching in your Sunday school," said James Mullen, a trauma center doctor at Sharp Memorial Hospital in San Diego, Calif., and member of Bethel Baptist Church in Escondido, Calif.

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Mullen was attending a Sunday School Leadership Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center July 25-Aug. 1.

In the past 17 years, Mullen said, he has worked in preschool, children's and youth Sunday school areas and has discovered child abuse with all three age groups.

He said the problem is not limited to Southern California but is a national problem.

In his church, Mullen has called police and child welfare authorities to come into the church when child abuse is noted. "The church must be willing to work with authorities," he said.

Laws dealing with reporting child abuse vary by states and it is important to know individual state laws, said Belvin Cox, a preschool Sunday school consultant at the Sunday School Board who led a session on child abuse.

"Don't wait until you encounter a problem to find out the legal guidelines for your state," Cox said. "You need to know before you get to that point."

Most states require that child abuse be reported by any person who suspects it or becomes aware of it. "It is a legal matter and must be handled as such," Cox said.

Dispelling myths, Cox said child abuse is not limited to lower-income families. "It is just as likely to happen in upper-income families. You can't tell by the clothes they wear," he said.

Cox encourages workers to listen to children. "Listen with your ears, your eyes and your heart," Cox said.

Workers also should know warning signs of abuse such as bruises in odd patterns or in varying stages of healing. Burns, cuts or other injuries that a child does not explain or has an implausible explanation for also may be indications, Cox said.

Abuse comes in many forms and is not limited to physical abuse, Cox said. Abuse can include neglect, sexual abuse and emotional abuse in addition to physical abuse.

Sunday School Board materials dealing with abuse include a chapter in "Equipping Deacons in Caring Skills," Vol. 2 and a chapter in "Ministry with Youth in Crisis," both published by Convention Press.

For youth, two tapes from The 24-Hour Counselor are available on abuse. "I'm Being Sexually Abused" is tape seven in the 12-tape series, The 24-Hour Counselor II. "I'm Being Physically Abused" is the second tape in the 12-tape series of The 24-Hour Counselor I. Both are published by Broadman Press.

Cox encourages church workers to get additional information about child abuse from state departments dealing with child welfare.

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A listing of state agencies, addresses and phone numbers is available on SBCNet or upon request from the SSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Asians must reach Asians,
Baptist leaders declare

By Wendy Ryan

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7/31/92

SINGAPORE (BP)--Declaring "Asians must evangelize Asians," more than 800 Baptist leaders from 16 Asian countries met in Singapore for the 4th Asian Baptist Congress and shared plans for evangelizing their part of the world.

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"When the gospel first came to Asia, it came in Western trappings and it has never been unwrapped," Johnny V. Gumban, dean of the college of theology at Central Philippine University, said. "The gospel needs to be unwrapped in order for it to bless all of Asia."

Gumban described Asia as "a land of unfulfilled dreams" with poverty, natural disasters and repressive political conditions in various areas.

"Any Christian gospel must be concerned with the condition of the poor," Gumban said, "since two-thirds of the Asian population are people living below poverty lines." However, Gumban stressed "the poor" includes "those who lacked moral, social and spiritual well-being."

Based on the reports of evangelistic and mission work during the July 17-22 congress, Asian Baptists are showing perhaps they know best how to reach their people with the gospel. In Myanmar, Mongolia, Nepal, Cambodia, Mizoram, India, Indonesia, Taiwan and other countries, Asian Baptists reported significant progress in their goal to evangelize their people by the end of the decade.

In one report, Ernest Sukirman of Indonesia said the Union of Indonesian Baptist Churches already had planted 51 churches as they moved toward a goal of 250 new churches by 1995.

Each of their 106 churches had been challenged to plant one church and build one church building by the year 2000.

In their "5+1+1 Plan," each Indonesian Baptist in the union has been challenged to pray at least five minutes a day for evangelism for the next five years; witness to one person a week; serve their local church once a week; and give 50 Rupiahs (50 cents) a day to their local church to finance the plan.

Apart from their goal of reaching Myanmar (Burma) for Christ, Burmese Baptists are taking the gospel to the northeast border of China. "Sometimes, communism did something to help Christianity," said one Burmese leader, "because the Cultural Revolution left Chinese with nothing to believe in and now people are craving for something." He reported 99 people had already been baptized because of their efforts in 1991.

"God is shaking Nepal," said Kevi Meru of India who reported all imprisoned Christians had been freed with the restoration of democracy there last year. "Nepal is open to the gospel and not very difficult to win for the Lord," he said.

Meru reported there were Japanese and Korean missionaries already working in Nepal and there are about 100,000 Nepalese Christians in India, many in Nagaland.

"I am challenging my people to go to Nepal and preach," Meru said, "but many more workers are needed. Nepal needs help spiritually and economically."

Workers, prayer and resources were repeatedly called for. In a congress evangelism commitment, Asian Baptists determined to see "a new level of cooperation and evangelism in Asia" and committed themselves to one another "as partners in the Gospel."

"What talent we have in the (Asian Baptist Federation)!" said Billy Kim, pastor of a 4,000-member South Korean church who was elected as president to lead the nearly 3 million Baptists represented in the 18-member ABF. "We're right on target and I believe the Lord will do something great." Kim challenged Asian Baptists to "pray, pray, pray."

"There are billions of people in our region today who have never heard the gospel and are unreached," Norman B. Cheung said in his final address as ABF president. "This indebtedness cannot be discharged by a congress resolution. It is and must be personal. We must ask God to give us a vision and a call to the lost world in which we live."

Assimilating visitors into church
takes work from parking lot to pew By Frank Wm. White

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Churches, especially those with a southern tradition, should be the friendliest places around but many churches don't even realize how unfriendly they are to guests, according to a Southern Baptist growth consultant.

One of the biggest challenges facing the church may be how to assimilate people attracted by the church's evangelistic efforts, said Jerri Herring, growth consultant in the Sunday School Board's Sunday school division.

From the parking lot to the pew and every place in between, visitors are developing an impression of a church, Herring said in a session at a Sunday School Leadership Conference, July 25-31 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

"Most churches don't have any idea how bad of an impression they are leaving with visitors," she said.

From the lack of parking spaces to the decision about which door to enter, lack of greeters once inside and hospitality in the worship center, visitors are getting the impression they are not wanted in most churches, Herring said.

While a church with limited parking may be unwilling to allocate a few of its premium parking spaces for visitors, those are the churches which most need designated visitor parking, she said.

If a visitor has to hunt for a parking space and find one a block away, he likely will take his family elsewhere, she said.

Visitor parking spaces should be some of the best spaces near an entrance to a visitor welcome center, she recommended.

Curbside greeters should be outgoing people "who never met a stranger, not 'good ole boys' who will stand around and talk with each other," she said.

"When visitors pull up and see seven doors, how are they going to know which one is the quickest entrance to where they need to be?" she asked. Greeters can help with that problem as well as helping with diaper bags and with the children.

However, Herring cautioned that a greeter should never pick up a visitor's child without first asking if he may help get the children out of the car.

Although some churches have elaborate welcome centers, it does not have to be a formal area. "It may be as simple as three people standing at the door with clipboards," she said.

Relating an experience of trying to return a shirt to a store while holding a crying grandchild, Herring said she refused to fill out the required form. "I realized we are doing the same thing to people at church. They stand there with a baby and diaper bag and two other children hanging on their legs and we ask them to fill out a visitor's form," she said.

Volunteers at the welcome center should fill out the forms. When the welcome center volunteer asks the questions and fills in the blanks, there is a greater likelihood the church will have the information needed, she said.

While coffee in the welcome center may seem like a nice touch, it may only take extra time and attract unwanted "hall standers" to the area, Herring said.

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At the welcome center, visitors should be able to get answers to any questions and should receive a nice brochure about the church's activities including music, camps, Bible studies, family activities and other activities, she said.

"The brochure need not be four-color but needs to be good quality," Herring suggested.

Greeters should take visitors to their Sunday school classes, taking youngest children first and parents last, she said.

Once in the worship center, visitors should expect friendly greetings from those around them but likely will not want to be singled out as visitors. Some churches are requesting that everyone in the worship service register their attendance, she said.

Many of these churches use a tab on the order of worship for each person to provide their name, address and phone number. Other information such as prayer requests and decisions can be marked on tabs collected at the end of the service, Herring said.

The system allows church members to provide prayer requests, changes of address and other information while the visitors do not feel that they are being singled out, she noted.

Churches need to experiment with ways to make visitors feel comfortable. "No one way is going to work forever or for every church. You have to try different ways and use what seems to work," she said.

Additional information about the image a church presents to visitors is available in "Check Your Image," a Convention Press book by Tim Holcomb, church administration consultant at the Sunday School Board. The book is available in Baptist Book Stores or by calling the board's customer service center.

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Lewis issues challenge
for 'Luke 14 churches'

By Sarah Zimmerman

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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--A convention of "Luke 14 churches" is the vision of Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis.

"I want our churches to be not merely Baptist churches, not just New Testament churches, not only Bible churches but Luke 14 churches," Lewis told 2,000 people attending the annual home missions conference at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center.

Luke 14 includes the parable of a man who prepared a feast but the invited guests refused to attend. The man then told his slave to invite people from all over town to the feast so that the house would be full.

"God wants his house filled," Lewis said. "He is not pleased with empty buildings. He is not glorified with empty classrooms. Empty pews don't get saved. Empty chairs don't make decisions."

To fill churches, people should follow the parable's example of taking the invitation to the people, Lewis said. Evangelism is not a program or a strategy, he said, but a "spirit of people who say 'come to Jesus.'"

The slave in the parable also was told to bring the poor, the crippled, the blind and lame. Lewis said Luke 14 churches are those which "break out of the church walls" to reach people and meet their needs. He cited an example of a church which used a bus to bring students from a nearby school for the blind.

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Buses, however, are not essential. If people driving to church on Sunday morning would bring people with them, churches could at least double their attendance, Lewis said.

The slave also was told to bring people from the highways and along the hedges. Lewis said the highways in Luke 14 represent places that attract people, such as shopping malls and sporting events. The other places in the parable represent residential areas in cities and rural communities.

Lewis said Luke 14 churches are aggressive about reaching the lost. "You don't fulfill the Great Commission with a sign in the front yard or an ad in the paper."

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EDITORS' NOTE: Europe correspondent Mike Creswell and photographer Don Rutledge recently returned from a visit to Russia and neighboring Belarus, another former Soviet republic. The following four stories profile life for missionaries and Baptists in Belarus.

First missionaries to Belarus
laying groundwork for ministry

By Mike Creswell

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MINSK, Belarus (BP)--A huge statue of Lenin still towers over downtown Minsk, but communism casts fewer shadows over this part of ~~the former Soviet empire.~~

Lenin Square has become Independence Square. And in this city of 1.7 million people -- one of communism's birthplaces -- Southern Baptist missionaries now serve.

Dan and Libby Panter, of Pascagoula and Pearl, Miss., respectively, worked in the African nation of Togo 14 years before transferring last year to Minsk. They are Southern Baptists' first career missionaries in Belarus (also called Belorussia, Byelorussia and White Russia), the formerly communist land between Poland and Russia. Belarus is part of the fledgling Commonwealth of Independent States, the loose confederation of some former Soviet republics.

The Panters join more than a dozen missionary couples who have moved into Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, many of them transfers from other fields. The two have spent much of the past year learning Russian, their third foreign language, and learning to live in a society with a faltering economy. Their specific ministry will be determined later in cooperation with the national Baptist union.

"We see our ministry as working hand in hand with Baptist leaders here in Belarus in evangelism and church planting," Panter said.

Mrs. Panter hopes to teach English as a way to make contacts with people. "I'm going to have these Belarussians speaking English with a Mississippi accent," she declared with a laugh.

For now they continue to study Russian with the help of tutors. They expect it will take two years to become proficient in the difficult language. In addition to its Greek-based Cyrillic alphabet, the language has a complicated sentence structure. -- Change one word in a sentence and all the others must change.

Still, the Panters have had to grasp the basics quickly in order to exist in a city where few speak English or French. Shopping requires the use of Russian numbers. Riding the subway in Minsk requires the ability to read place names. "We were highly motivated; we wanted to eat," Panter admitted.

Baptist work in Belarus is about the same size as that in Togo. About 120 congregations count a total of about 10,000 members. For a nation of more than 10 million people, that's not very large.

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There are other similarities. In Togo, children sometimes would flee when they saw Panter. He was the first white person they had ever seen; they assumed he was a ghost. In Belarus he gets almost the same response when people hear he is American.

At a collective farm where Panter attended a Bible study, a pastor spoke to Panter in Russian. "Slow down! He doesn't understand everything you say!" another Baptist told the Russian speaker.

"Oh? Why not?" the pastor replied. "He's American."

"American? I never thought I'd see an American here!" the startled Baptist replied, peering at Panter intently. The color drained from his face as if he'd seen a ghost, Panter recalled with a chuckle.

When the missionary couple visited Svetlana Kapustin, a member of Minsk Baptist Church, they got a similar reaction.

"I never would have dreamed I would have an American in my home and have dinner with me," she told them with a choke in her voice.

After their initial shock, Belarussian Baptists are very welcoming, the Panters quickly point out. But their initial reactions are understandable. Five years ago a visit by an American almost certainly would have led to questioning by the police, perhaps even a jail sentence. A casual conversation in the street could have led to losing one's job or other problems.

Even today, Baptists talking to the Panters remain highly selective in what they will discuss by telephone. And they prefer to avoid discussing anything sensitive on visits to the Panter home, still fearing the modest two-bedroom apartment may be bugged.

Yet the Panters have found most people open to discussing the Christian faith and looking for spiritual answers. As they studied Russian at a language institute in Minsk, the Panters evangelized other students and teachers, gave out Bibles and showed a film on the life of Jesus.

They were the first Americans at the institute. "Why are you here?" people asked them, giving an excellent opening for sharing their missionary call and the Christian message of salvation.

"These people are hungry spiritually," Mrs. Panter said. "They have been so squelched. They were not allowed to say a word about God."

Panter feels God called them to the region long before they actually could work there. Back in the 1970s he attended New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary while serving as pastor of University Baptist Mission in Kenner, La. The pastorate was a missionary post funded by the Louisiana Baptist Convention. Mrs. Panter worked at a clothing store to help pay the bills.

Appointed foreign missionaries in 1976, they spent a year in France studying French before heading to Togo. But during that year Panter took advantage of a budget-priced, two-week tour of the Soviet Union. It changed his life.

"The Lord really spoke to me while I was here about how great the need was," Panter recalled. "One night I made a commitment to him that if the door ever opened I would like to come."

At the time, missionary service in the Soviet region was impossible. But Panter kept thinking about spiritual needs behind the Iron Curtain. He talked with Russians who visited Togo and read avidly about events in the Soviet Union.

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When he casually asked in 1990 about mission work in the Soviet Union, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board administrator told him requests for missionaries in the region were coming and that service was possible.

"It was like a bolt of lightning," Panter said. "The Lord said to me, 'You said if the doors opened, you'd go.'"

Mrs. Panter was less enthusiastic at first, but after praying through it, the two united in a sense of call and began to apply for a transfer.

They left for Moscow the day the attempted coup occurred there in 1991. They wound up staying in Amsterdam several days until the coup began to fail. When they finally arrived they met with Baptist leaders from Minsk, who were ecstatic about their coming.

So far the hardest part of serving in Belarus for the Panters has been sending their three children back to the United States. Traci, 20, is a college student and would be away from home anyway. But Katherine, 17, and Michael, 15, are staying with Mrs. Panter's parents in Florence, Miss., to attend high school there.

Despite such hardships, the Panters feel they are where God wants them.

Belarussian Baptists never thought they would have missionaries from the United States among them. The Panters never thought they would be able to work there. All agree their very presence is a miracle and they intend to make the most of it.

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

Shopping in Belarus:
'Twilight Zone' time

By Mike Creswell

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MINSK, Belarus (BP)--When Southern Baptist missionaries Dan and Libby Panter go to market, it's like visiting a financial "Twilight Zone."

Before walking to one of two nearby shopping complexes, Mrs. Panter first checks her ration coupons. This year common foodstuffs like sugar, flour, macaroni, butter, oil, cereal, rice, washing power and soap are strictly rationed.

Each person -- including the two Mississippians, who arrived in the former Soviet republic last year -- is allotted one bar of soap and one box of washing detergent every three months. Men get two undershirts per year.

Milk may or may not be available today; if it is, you take a container to bring it home in. Meat is in short supply and expensive if you can find it.

But "expensive" is a relative term these days. For Belarussians, prices have been skyrocketing.

The average worker earns about 2,000 rubles a month. A pair of tennis shoes can cost 1,600 rubles -- virtually an entire month's wages. A pair of women's dress shoes costs between 1,300 and 2,100 rubles. Sausage, the most common meat product, has gone from 8 rubles per kilogram (about 2.2 pounds) to 324. Cheese that cost 5 rubles a kilogram nine months ago now costs 77. Butter has gone from 3 rubles a kilogram to 40, sugar from 6 to 40.

Subway tickets now cost 1 ruble per ride -- a 20-fold increase in a year. It cost 5 kopeks (100 kopeks equals 1 ruble) to mail a letter a year ago; now it's 60 kopeks. Telephone service used to cost 4 rubles a month; now it's 290.

A Russian-made clunker of a car cost 30,000 rubles a year ago. Now the same clunker costs 500,000.

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Inflation reportedly runs 20 percent per month. Yet prices in Belarus are much lower than in neighboring Russia. The ration cards keep outsiders from cashing in on the lower prices of goods in Belarus.

But here's another "Twilight Zone" aspect: The rapid increases in ruble prices have been accompanied by a sharp fall in the exchange rate of the Russian ruble to the American dollar. In February 1991 \$1 could obtain 5.4 Russian rubles. In June 1992 \$1 purchased 120 Russian rubles. For now, a person with dollars can live well -- at least within the limitations of a tottering economy in which there is often little to buy at any price.

For a person with dollars, a 6-ruble ice cream cone costs less than 6 cents. A steak dinner in the best restaurant in Minsk costs about \$2. A subway ride costs 1 cent. A 10-hour train ride from Minsk to Moscow, complete with private cabin with beds and hot tea, costs under \$5.

It is "Twilight Zone" economics. Shopping doesn't seem real.

At a grocery store near the Panter apartment, shoppers stand in long lines to buy eggs, milk or meat. Some purchases require standing in line three times -- first to order an item, then to pay for it and again to pick it up. Several central aisles were filled only with large glass jars of watered-down fruit juice; few shoppers were buying them.

At the largest food market in Minsk, a few blocks from the Panter home, vendors sell their wares in small stalls, somewhat like an American farmer's market. The individual sellers charge more because they raised many of the fruits and vegetables themselves. Prices are higher but at least there are things to buy.

Sprinkled liberally throughout the city are "kiosks" -- small stands selling a variety of products through a small cashier's window. Some specialize in newspapers; others in makeup or food products. Others seem to sell whatever the owner is able to assemble.

In one kiosk where Libby Panter found two cans of imported pineapple, the vendor offered a haphazard collection: four balls of yarn, several bottles of liquor, juices, cosmetics, two chandeliers, several pairs of shoes, a few watches and calculators -- and a few cans of pineapple.

Even with money in hand, finding what you want to buy becomes a major adventure. Stop to look at a display and soon several other shoppers will crowd up close behind you. Perhaps you have found something worth buying, and they don't want to miss an opportunity.

In such an atmosphere shopping takes on a grim, life-and-death demeanor. The intent expressions of most shoppers reveal the tension of the search.

"Life is especially hard for retired people," said a hospital worker. "Many cannot buy meat. They can buy vegetables only in state shops where the quality is low. They cannot buy oranges or apples."

Such economic pressure also affects Baptist efforts to construct buildings. A new Baptist complex at Minsk that will include a church, retirement home, medical clinic, library and seminary was originally estimated to cost 2 million rubles. The estimate has soared to 140 million rubles and is still climbing.

A 3.5-million ruble grant from the government for the project evaporated in runaway inflation. "Before, we could buy 1,000 bricks for 60 rubles. Now for 60 rubles we can buy only eight bricks," lamented Ivan V. Bukatyi, president of the Baptist union.

Bukatyi earns 1,000 rubles a month -- less than \$10 at current exchange rates. He held out the union's savings account book to show that Baptists have less than the equivalent of \$15 in savings for now.

Where all this will lead remains to be determined. Citizens express growing dissatisfaction with Russian President Boris Yeltsin and his efforts to introduce Western-style capitalism to the Commonwealth of Independent States, of which Belarus is a member. Ironically, the Moscow television station seen in Minsk advertises computers, photocopiers and other products from the West. Most Belarussians cannot dream of buying such things for now.

Baptists say many older people now long for the old days under communism when prices were more stable, even though there was no more to buy.

"As people learn democratic processes, things will get better," countered Dyma Suschenyah, 19, who is preparing for a career as a radio and TV repairman. "Only God can bring about the changes people are looking for."

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

Belarussian Baptists scramble
to minister amid new freedoms

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press
7/31/92

MINSK, Belarus (BP)--Baptists in Belarus are ~~scrambling to minister amid their new~~ freedoms but they say the needs are overwhelming their small numbers.

This former Soviet republic between Poland and Russia has a population of about 10 million. Baptists have about 10,000 members among 120 congregations. In Minsk, a city of 1.7 million people, there are just four Baptist congregations and fewer than 3,000 evangelicals of all kinds, estimates Konstantin Lomaka, pastor of Minsk Baptist Church.

Yet the number of Baptists remains a testimony to their perseverance. When the communists came to power in 1917 fewer than 10 Baptist congregations worshiped in the republic.

By 1960 -- after four decades of persecution -- Baptists counted 40 congregations and several thousand members. That year Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev predicted there would be no more churches in a few years. Ivan V. Bukatyi recalls the announcement well. An active Baptist in 1960, Bukatyi became president of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in Belarus in 1979.

Despite governmental pressure, the number of churches and Baptists tripled between 1960 and 1992. "I thank the Lord for our brothers and sisters in America and other countries who have prayed for us because it has been very difficult for us," Bukatyi said.

"In this country where we never thought we would have any possibilities, the doors are open. When someone asks me about Gorbachev and how he has opened the doors, I say Gorbachev did not open the doors. God did," Bukatyi declared.

Until two years ago the Pentecostals, about as numerous as Baptists, were required by the government to belong to one union with the Baptists. Once controls were lifted the Pentecostals withdrew to form their own union, although cooperation between the two groups remains.

Today most Baptist churches are located in western Belarus, toward Poland. They are fewer in the north -- now one of the target areas for church planting by the union.

Baptists seldom brag about how difficult their times were under communism. At 1,100-member Minsk Baptist Church, pastor Lomaka shrugs off questions about the seven years he spent in Soviet prisons because he was a Christian leader.

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"I feel a headache remembering all that," he said. "I would not say I was a special man in suffering. There were a lot of brothers in really difficult conditions in the prisons. My conditions were not the worst."

Several others in the church also served prison terms, some longer than the pastor's. There were other pressures. Some leaders lived under constant surveillance when not in prison. Imprisonment has left Lomaka and others in fragile health.

Layman Sasha Romanchick was not imprisoned but remembers being ridiculed for his faith at school. Widely respected, he was asked to lead the local communist youth organization but refused. The backlash followed.

The Minsk church was "registered" in that it openly held services. But church leaders kept government inquisitors at arm's length. They repeatedly declined to report the names of new converts to authorities. The church maintained a hidden basement room where secret believers could come, hear church services and worship in private.

Most church members are working-class people. In earlier times educated people were forbidden to attend church. A university student could be expelled and ruin his future if he attended.

Today all that has changed. Baptists visit homes to spread their faith, hold public services and distribute thousands of Bibles. The church counts about 800 worshipers most Sundays out of its 1,100 members. Most of those who do not attend are elderly. Baptists also can minister to people in hospitals, prisons and retirement homes.

Valeri Kapustin, one of three assistant pastors, proudly displayed snapshots of large public baptism services held in rivers and lakes around Minsk during the past two years. A preacher for 12 years, Kapustin majors on visiting families of the 600 children who visit Sunday school each week.

"When I speak to them of Christ they are very interested. They ask questions," Kapustin said. But he acknowledges winning converts still requires work and persistence. Out of every 10 people he visits, only one actually will attend the church.

"It's very easy to talk about God today," Bukatyi said, "because atheism gave nothing to the soul of man. The souls of the people are thirsty to have somebody talk to them about spiritual things. When someone speaks to them correctly about God, they receive it very quickly. Very few people do not want to hear it."

But with freedom for evangelism have come new challenges. American cult groups such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses now operate in Minsk. Pastor Lomaka said the groups often watch the Baptists to see who they visit, then go to the same homes with their pseudo-Christian messages.

In one case, a Korean visitor to Minsk Baptist Church who demanded to be allowed to preach turned out to be a Jehovah's Witness. Hindu and Hare Krishna representatives also work in the region.

Despite such competition, Kapustin and Bukatyi agreed person-to-person contacts and work with small groups are more effective than large evangelistic crusades.

"In the beginning (after freedom) when we held large meetings, many people came. That was another time. Now the move is to small groups. It's better," Bukatyi said.

In 1990 the church baptized 165 new believers; in 1991 it baptized 90. In the first six months of 1992, the church had more than 60 new believers attending required doctrinal classes preparing for baptism.

The church also sponsors two growing mission congregations. One has about 100 members, the other about 60. One meets in a library and the other in a building used for playing chess, a popular game in the region.

Baptists looked puzzled when asked how many Bibles they have distributed in the past year. Distributing Bibles has become like breathing for them -- they do it all the time without counting.

Minsk church leaders guess they have distributed 100,000 Bibles in the past year. But because several members are Gideons and routinely distribute 20,000 Bibles on a weekend, the total likely is much higher, they said.

A Bible was once a dangerous commodity. One Baptist woman told of a time when the KGB stormed into her house looking for Bibles. Her mother had written out passages of the Bible by hand. When the KGB agents arrived, she buried the papers in the backyard before they could be found.

Like most other Christians in newly liberated Eastern European countries, Baptists in Belarus want church buildings constructed. "Forty percent of our churches are in the process of building new sanctuaries," Bukatyi said.

The push for new buildings isn't motivated by a desire for luxury, leaders stressed. With the shaky political climate in the region, they fear a rollback to the old repression could happen at any time.

Minsk Baptist Church's facility, a well-constructed building with a wraparound balcony in the sanctuary, is filled to capacity at every service. The former communist government grudgingly allowed Baptists to construct the building after lengthy hassles but refused to allow them to construct restrooms. Members hope to construct a new building beginning this summer.

In a land filled with onion-domed Orthodox cathedrals, Baptists feel having an adequate building is an important part of public outreach. Confronted by a Baptist for the first time, many Belarussians still are wary; for years the government told people Baptists were a crazy sect whose members beat each other.

Upon uneasily visiting a Baptist church for the first time, many Belarussians are surprised at the decorum of the services and the high quality of the music.

Along with building churches, Baptist union leaders dream of constructing a major complex on the outskirts of Minsk. The complex would include a church, retirement home, medical clinic, Christian library, seminary and other facilities.

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

Baptist woman cares for
'Chernobyl's children'

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press
7/31/92

MINSK, Belarus (BP)--Igor Tupik was 6 years old on April 26, 1986.

That was the day Reactor No. 4 at Chernobyl exploded, spewing radiation across a wide area of the Ukraine, neighboring Belarus and into Western Europe.

Thirty-one people were killed immediately. Hundreds were injured. More than 100,000 people were permanently evacuated. In 1987 abnormal farm animals were born at a collective farm near Chernobyl; newborn calves arrived minus heads, limbs, ribs or eyes. A fifth of the arable land was contaminated in Belarus. Then more and more people in the region began to fall ill.

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Today Igor Tupik is 12. The disaster he is hardly old enough to understand is being blamed for the leukemia sucking the life from his body. With shaved head, bandages and drip lines, Igor lives in a world reduced to a bed in a hospital ward room of the Institute of Oncology and Medical Radiology near Minsk.

It is a world of pain with little hope. The sprawling complex is the main pediatric cancer center for Belarus. All of its 45 beds have been filled in recent years.

Igor's mother, Galina, has three other children. They have lost their apartment. She spends many of her days watching life ebb from her elder son.

Patients like Igor and their parents are the people Vera Plucheva has in her ministry sights when she visits the hospital three times a week.

A trim, neatly dressed woman whose dark hair is always immaculately coifed, Plucheva is known as "Sister Vera" by doctors and staff at the facility. Reiman S. Ismail-Zade, the hospital director, gives the Baptist woman high marks for her faithfulness and zeal at sharing her faith.

"She visits and speaks to the mothers, helps them be calm," he said. "She ministers to the children and helps the doctors by being a bridge between the mothers and the doctors."

Ismail-Zade, who describes himself as a believer in Christ, feels it is important the children know God. "When men do not believe in God, it is very dangerous," he said with a lowered voice, as if sharing a confidence.

Plucheva prays with children or holds hands with them through short winter afternoons when the sun sets by 4 p.m. In the United States professional chaplains often do such work; here there are no chaplains.

She also brings flowers and pictures to brighten the institutional atmosphere. She has organized radio and television programs to suggest ways others can help. At Easter, Christmas and other holidays, she organizes music programs for the wards.

An acoustical and energy engineer by profession, Plucheva has been a Christian only two years. Religion simply was not allowed earlier, under communism, for educated people like her. Now she is an active member of Minsk Baptist Church. Earlier this year the church sent 30 radiation-stricken children to Germany, a project arranged in cooperation with German Baptists. Just getting away from the radiation-affected area improved their health, she said.

Not a day goes by without thoughts of Chernobyl or its effects, Baptists say. As they talk about different areas of Belarus, they mention casually whether an area was hit by radiation. Even today centers in Minsk offer to check fruits or vegetables for radiation levels.

One of the biggest increases in illness has been thyroid cancer, Ismail-Zade said. The usual rate of three cases per year at his hospital increased to 50 in 1991.

As is true elsewhere in the former Soviet region, the hospital is deficient in many ways. It lacks anti-cancer drugs and even simple equipment like drip sets and catheters. Many visitors have come from the West, promised much and done nothing to help.

At least one group has given more than promises, however. Baptists and other church members from five churches in Texas, South Carolina, Kansas and Oklahoma visited the hospital in June. They brought \$6,100 worth of desperately needed catheters and other equipment.

McNabb retires after 43 years
with California Baptist paper

By Mark Wyatt

FRESNO, Calif. (BP)--A California Southern Baptist institution, Polly McNabb, associate editor of The California Southern Baptist, retired July 31 after 43 years of service with the state paper.

McNabb's tenure -- which spanned seven editors -- was the longest of any California Southern Baptist Convention employee and one of the longest among Southern Baptist editors.

A native of Missouri, McNabb was a school teacher before being invited to serve as secretary at First Southern Baptist Church of Bakersfield, Calif. She subsequently was hired as assistant to the editor of The California Southern Baptist, Floyd Looney.

A later editor, Elmer Gray, reported McNabb's arrival in "Heirs of Promise: A Chronicle of California Southern Baptists, 1940-1978."

"The name of Miss Polly Anna McNabb appeared as a staff member for the first time in the August 11, 1949, issue," Gray wrote. "She began as assistant to the editor with a variety of responsibilities from secretarial work to editorial assistance."

Having interrupted her college work upon moving to California, McNabb later enrolled at California State University at Fresno. She changed her major from education to journalism and earned 30 hours of credit beyond a bachelors degree.

McNabb was named acting editor of The California Southern Baptist after Looney resigned in 1961 to accept a position with the SBC Annuity Board. She served in that capacity until J. Kelly Simmons, a former editor in Colorado and Arizona, was elected to succeed Looney as editor.

In 1962, after a dozen years as assistant to the editor, McNabb was promoted to associate editor and advertising manager of the paper.

Simmons served less than two years before he died in February 1963 following a bout with cancer. McNabb continued to serve as associate editor under ensuing editors J. Terry Young, 1963-71; Don McGregor, 1971-1973; Elmer Gray, 1974-1983; Herb Hollinger, 1983-1991; Mark A. Wyatt, 1991-present.

As associate editor, McNabb assisted in planning issues of the paper, setting goals and objectives and determining content. Additionally, her duties included page layout and newswriting.

For years, McNabb also concentrated on reporting news from California churches and associations in a regular feature called "California Cameos."

In 1984, encouraged by then editor Herb Hollinger, McNabb began writing her signature column, "Just Polly." In subjects ranging from personal observations and musings, accounts of service by various individuals, to stirring debate over issues confronting Baptists, McNabb displayed a fierce commitment to traditional Southern Baptist values and personal liberty. Her columns also provided occasional history lessons culled from her almost encyclopedic knowledge of California Southern Baptist churches and institutions.

When McNabb began working for The California Southern Baptist, there were 225 churches with fewer than 27,000 members among 16 Southern Baptist associations in California. Forty-three years later, there are 33 associations and more than 1,500 churches and missions with a combined membership exceeding 414,000.

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McNabb received numerous accolades over the years. Last May California Baptist College awarded her an honorary doctor of letters degree during commencement ceremonies at the Riverside campus.

One award in which McNabb seemed to take special pride occupied a prominent place on her office wall for years. The hand-lettered certificate which proclaimed her an "Honorary Pastor's Wife" was presented by a group of pastors' wives whose annual retreat McNabb attended and reported on for years.

Advancing technology sometimes daunted but never defeated McNabb. When The California Southern Baptist began computer operations in the mid-1980s, McNabb took the switch in stride, eventually mastering new hardware as well as word processing and desktop publishing programs. She even bought a personal computer for home use.

So while she may have been reluctant to make the change at first, it's apparent McNabb won't be stepping back out of the computer age just because she is retiring. And most who know her expect she will continue to be an acute observer and thoughtful commentator on issues and concerns facing Southern Baptists in California and around the world.

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Directors of missions
receive recognition

Baptist Press
7/31/92

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Four directors of associational missions were honored during home missions conferences this year.

Dub Hughes of Big Sky and Yellowstone associations in Montana was recognized for his work as town and country director of missions for the Western United States. Hughes has worked in Montana since 1975, helping the association grow from nine to 50 churches.

Hughes was a pastor in his native state of Mississippi until 1958 when he began working in North and South Dakota. He is a graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

William E. East was honored for his metropolitan director of missions work for the western United States. He works in Currin County Baptist Association in Bakersfield, Calif.

East and his family moved to California in 1933 and were involved in establishing California's first Southern Baptist church, first association and the state convention.

When East became director of missions in 1962, the association had no ethnic congregations. It now has seven Hispanic, one Korean, two black, one deaf, two Filipino, one Chinese, one Cambodian and one Arabic congregation.

During his 30-year tenure, the association has started an average of one church a year and its goal is to start 15 churches in the next three years.

Doc Lindsey was recognized for metropolitan director of missions work in the eastern United States. He has worked in the Greater Detroit Baptist Association three years.

Lindsey was recognized for his inclusion of ethnic pastors and lay people in associational leadership. He also was described as an encourager to church leaders and an innovator in ministries.

John Dent of Beaver Dam Association in Seneca, S.C., was honored for his town and country director of missions work for the eastern United States.

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Dent, who retired in April, was director there for 14 years. He has been influential in organizing construction and evangelism mission teams to several areas in the United States and abroad. He also helped open a crisis closet for a closing ministry in the association.

The awards are presented annually by the Home Mission Board associational missions division.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Youth ministers to gather for national conference" dated 7/29/92, please change the date of the conference to April 19-23, 1993, not August as reported.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "AAUP warns of possible action over faculty releases at DBU" dated 7/29/92, please insert this paragraph ~~to go fourth from the end:~~

Cook could not be reached for comment.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

CORRECTION: In a cutline accompanying (BP) story titled "Baylor musician has seen life from two extremes," dated 7/28/92, Hugh Sanders should be identified as the man on the left. Euell Porter is the man pictured on the right.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

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