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March 2, 1993

93-38

- TEXAS -- Baptist hospital cares for ATF agents, families following raid.
- ATLANTA -- Support groups give churches new avenues for ministry.
- ARIZONA -- New York executive heads state group.
- MINNESOTA -- BSSB retiree is named paper's interim editor.
- NASHVILLE -- Also available: feature on the use of banners in worship.

EDITORS' NOTE: Baptist Press will carry an update of the following story in its 3/3/93 release.

Baptist hospital provides care  
to ATF agents, families after raid

Baptist Press  
3/2/93

By Ken Camp & Orville Scott

WACO, Texas (BP)--Seven agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms remain in stable condition at Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center in Waco, Texas, as a standoff continues between a growing army of federal authorities and members of the Branch Davidian sect.

The seven are among 16 ATF agents received by the Baptist hospital since the federal agents attempted to execute an arrest warrant Feb. 28 at the Mt. Carmel compound and were met by high velocity gunfire.

The Branch Dividians are reported to be a cultic offshoot of the Seventh-day Adventists. Their leader -- self-proclaimed Messiah Vernon Howell, who legally changed his name in 1990 to David Koresh -- claims to be the "Lamb of God" sent to open the seven seals of Revelation, unleashing catastrophe leading to the end of the world.

Of the 16 people received at Hillcrest, six were treated and released and three died -- one at the hospital and two who were pronounced dead on arrival. Fifteen of the 16 had gunshot wounds and one had broken limbs.

A 3-year-old boy from the Mt. Carmel compound also was treated at Hillcrest March 1 for high fever and later was released to Child Protective Services. ATF announced March 2 that 16 children had been released from the compound.

Rebecca Adams, an emergency room nurse at Hillcrest, first learned about the tragic confrontation at Mt. Carmel soon after returning home from Sunday morning worship services at First Baptist Church in Mertens, Texas, where her husband, James, is pastor. Realizing she would be needed, she immediately made the 45-minute drive to Waco.

She discovered upon arrival two patients from the shootout already had been received at the emergency room and the hospital had implemented its disaster readiness plan calling for additional staff.

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An eye specialist saw an orthopedic case, hospital housekeepers helped clean ambulances, a local pizza parlor sent a free delivery to the emergency room staff, and routine job descriptions were meaningless as everyone joined the team effort, Adams said.

"No one was too good to do anything. It was wonderful. To an outsider, it must have looked like chaos, but it all worked together beautifully," she said.

"And the willingness of the community to help was so impressive. There were so many thoughtful things. It's the little things that add up to make a bad situation somewhat better."

Personally, Adams said, she has drawn strength from her faith in Jesus Christ, her family and her church.

"I have an outlet that some of my co-workers don't. I have Christ in my heart, and I have the peace and comfort that he brings," she said.

Assigned to deal with the non-critically wounded, Adams said she was impressed by the esprit de corps of federal agents and their unselfish devotion to duty.

"They are incredible men. They were very stoic. No matter how badly they were hurt, they all wanted somebody else treated before them. None of them complained. We offered them pain medicine, but they turned it down when anyone else would have been crying for it," she said.

"I remember them being so quiet. They must have been going through emotional turmoil over seeing their co-workers who had fallen."

While most of the ATF agents were visited within hours of admittance by multiple family members, Adams said her heart went out to those who were alone -- particularly those who had no spiritual resources upon which they could rely.

"There's a lot of emotional, spiritual need," she said. "It's a void you can see when you look at them."

Although her nursing duties to the wounded ended when they left the emergency room, Adams said she made a point to visit in the rooms of those in particular need of support.

"I went up and visited with them and took them a balloon. I just wanted to let them know someone is here -- someone cares," she said.

The parents of an ATF agent wounded in the Sunday morning shootout at the Mt. Carmel compound praised God for sparing their son.

The Baptist couple said they first received word from their local sheriff's department at 9:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 28, that their son -- who has served about five years with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms -- had been hospitalized at Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center for gunshot wounds.

A sheriff's deputy drove the couple to Waco, arriving in the wee hours of the morning. En route, they received word their son had successfully undergone surgery for his life-threatening wounds.

Upon arrival, they were met by Curtis Holland, director of pastoral care at the Baptist hospital, who prayed with the couple and found them lodging.

"We've been treated well and we appreciate everything that's been done," the mother said. "We couldn't ask for better treatment anywhere."

"Everybody here at the hospital greeted us with smiles, and we're still getting the smiles."

While some have criticized the ATF operation, the father of the injured agent said he bore "no ill will" toward anyone.

"I don't have any problem with what the ATF did. They were well within their rights for doing what they did. I'm just sorry it was not more successful," he said.

"A man who would stand up and profess to be Jesus ... needs to be stopped."

The father said he was purposely unfamiliar with the details of his son's mission, adding he makes it a practice not to "pry" into his work.

"I knew he was over here, but I didn't know why," he said.

He attributed his son's survival to divine intervention, adding, "It could have been a lot worse than it is. God was on somebody's side."

Although their son has been heavily sedated, the couple said they had been able to talk with him and reassure him everything would be fine.

Noting their faith in Jesus Christ had sustained them, the mother said, "I just asked the Lord to give us strength to get through this ordeal, and he's done it."

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Churches discover new ways to minister through support groups By Joe Westbury

Baptist Press  
3/2/93

ATLANTA (BP)--As American society struggles to get a handle on new social issues such as living with AIDS or helping unwed mothers, churches are responding with redemptive ministry through support groups.

Sara Hines Martin, an Atlanta counselor, author and public speaker, sees a growing number of churches which are turning to support groups to expand their outreach into the community.

Martin sees a correlation between the breakdown of traditional support systems such as families and neighborhoods, and the rise of alternate forms of "community." As society becomes more technological and dehumanized, support groups have evolved as a natural way people learn from each other's experiences, she explains.

"The support systems of the past are simply no longer in place to do the work they once did," she says. "The fragmentation of the nuclear family and increased mobility have created a void that people are seeking to fill."

Support groups are emerging as places where people find a family atmosphere of support and affirmation. And, she says, that's where churches are stepping in with groups tailored to a community's needs.

Martin has given examples of how churches can minister through support groups in a recently-released book, "Meeting Needs Through Support Groups," published by New Hope Press, a publishing arm of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

"Twenty years ago terms such as verbal abuse or battered women were not part of our vocabulary," she says. But today they illustrate ways society has developed, with a heightened sensitivity, to righting wrongs.

Martin says the church's traditional role has been to identify a problem in the community and offer a ministry to deal with it. That usually has been accomplished through physical ministries such as food or clothing closets. But emotional needs have to be treated differently, she says, and support groups offer the framework Christians are most comfortable with to administer emotional and spiritual healing.

"Evangelism can result from support groups, but not as quickly as from other avenues of ministry," Martin explains. "A support group may be a slower approach to evangelism but its roots go much deeper."

"People who attend support groups on a regular basis create a bond with the group members, similar to family bonds, and become anchored to the church because of those caring relationships. That's more difficult through other types of evangelism where people may be quickly converted but soon drop out of church because no emotional bond was established."

Martin defines support groups as a peer-led groups of individuals who share a common need and who meet on a regular basis in a confidential setting. They share what is happening in their lives, receive encouragement from each other and learn to grow in the process.

"Confidentiality and refraining from advice-giving are the hallmarks of a support group," she says. "In a healthy support group, members feel free to be themselves, warts and all."

Martin concedes some Christians view support groups in a negative light because they feel the groups substitute counseling for biblical answers to problems.

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"Comparable to the fact that we seek doctors for medical solutions and dentists for dental solutions, then we should seek psychological help for emotional problems," she says. "Those are the avenues God uses as healer."

Martin sees support groups as important developmental factors in the growth of the early church.

"Christianity began with a small group of people -- Jesus chose 12 and called them friends, not servants. They eventually bonded together in communion with God and with one another.

"A small group also gathered in the upper room after Jesus' crucifixion. Those men were distressed, defeated, discouraged, scared and lonely. What did they do in that room? They talked, shared, and comforted one another and bonded in a unique way.

"In the words of author Henri Nouwen, the 'walking wounded' became the 'wounded healers' and went out to accomplish the things that are recorded in the book of Acts.

Martin has few mandatory ground rules in starting a support group, but she does insist on two:

First, an individual desiring to start such a ministry should present the proposal to the appropriate approving body in the church, such as church council. Without the backing of the leadership, any program is doomed to fail.

Second, before starting a group the leader must attend a 12-step recovery program to work through his or her own recovery program. "A person cannot learn to lead such a group simply by reading material," she says.

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Joe Westbury prepared this article on assignment from WMU.

New York executive  
heads state group

Baptist Press  
3/2/93

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (BP)--R. Quinn Pugh, New York Baptist Convention executive, was elected president of the Southern Baptist Association of State Convention Executive Directors during its recent annual meeting in Scottsdale, Ariz.

The state convention executives also elected Roy J. Smith, North Carolina executive, as president-elect and R. Rex Lindsay, Kansas-Nebraska executive, as secretary.

"We had one of the best attended annual meetings ever," said outgoing president Cecil Sims, Northwest convention executive. Ten new executives of state conventions or fellowships were "initiated" into the group, said Sims.

The largest group of new executives welcomed into the group were Dewey W. Hickey, Dakota Fellowship; David C. Waltz, Pennsylvania-South Jersey; B. Carlisle Driggers, South Carolina; Robert White, Georgia; William C. Tinsley, Minnesota-Wisconsin; David F. Meacham, Nevada; Orville H. Griffin, Ohio; Elhu Camacho-Vasquez, Puerto Rico; James M. Porch, Tennessee; Don R. Mathis, West Virginia; and Morris Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee as an honorary member.

Four western state executives gave a summary of Southern Baptist work in the West: C.B. Hogue, California; John Thomason, Wyoming; Dan Stringer, Arizona; and Sims. Reginald M. McDonough, Virginia executive, and Mark Short, Louisiana executive, directed three hours of "professional development" for the group, Sims said.

The executives also met with the state Baptist paper editors, who were meeting simultaneously in the same hotel in Scottsdale, for a banquet, dialogue and presentation during the Feb. 16-18 meeting.

Appointed to a committee which will work the denomination's Inter-Agency Council were McDonough, Short and Griffin.

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**BSSB retiree is named  
paper's interim editor**

ROCHESTER, Minn. (BP)--Gomer R. Lesch, retired director of the public relations department at the Baptist Sunday School Board, has been named interim editor of The Minnesota-Wisconsin Southern Baptist, monthly publication of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Southern Baptist Convention.

Lesch, former BSSB director of public relations, was appointed by William C. Tinsley, executive director-elect of the convention, and will succeed Louise Winningham, who was the editor nearly 18 years.

Lesch will continue to live and work in Nashville but will visit the Minnesota-Wisconsin area regularly in directing production of the paper.

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Also available upon request:

-- Feature by Dana Williamson on the use of banners in churches.

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