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April 7, 1993

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Refugee sponsors sought
for Somalian refugees

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist
4/7/93

SAN DIEGO (BP)--To most Americans, Somalis are starving people on the other side of the globe. To Eric and Linda Berquist, Somalis are friends living in the apartment complex down the street.

At least 5,000 Somalis are expected to come to the United States this year. Refugee resettlement coordinators predict the refugees will resettle in cities across the nation. For example, at least 200 Somalis are expected in Atlanta by September.

To the Berquists -- he is a graphic artist and she is director of extension ministries for Del Cerro Baptist Church in La Mesa, Calif. -- the influx of Somalis is an opportunity to share Christ with an unreached people group. The Encyclopedia of Christianity reports that 99.8 percent of Somalians are Muslim, and foreign mission work in Somalia is limited.

Somalis' "healthy resistance" to Christianity makes sharing Christ with them difficult, Berquist said. Many Muslims equate Christianity with pornography, alcoholism and other vices they associate with America and "Christian" countries, he explained.

The Berquists have established relationships with the Somalis by being good neighbors.

When the electricity went out in a thunderstorm, Berquist took candles to the Somalis. The women talk to Berquist to practice their English. He promises to look for volunteers to help them study. When Berquist had an extra job, he hired a Somali to help him.

Somalis who make it to the United States are typically resourceful, Berquist said. The men he has met are educated and bilingual. But in most cases, it has taken all their resources to get here, and they arrive with virtually nothing.

A. Samme Warsame, director of Somali Relief and Community Service, Inc., in Atlanta, says Somali refugees arrive with "barely enough clothes to cover their backs."

Many of the refugees were never on a plane before their trip to the United States, said Warsame, a Somali who came here 20 years ago. It takes some Somalis a year to recover from the jet lag and to adjust to living in a different hemisphere, he said.

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Though many Somalian refugees are trained in professions such as electrical engineering, the language gap makes it difficult to transfer those skills to jobs here, Warsame said.

Bill Fulkerson, director of refugee resettlement for the Home Mission Board, said refugees receive limited government assistance. Sponsors assist refugees in a number of ways, including finding housing, enrolling children in school and helping adults find work.

For information about sponsoring refugees, contact Fulkerson at (404) 898-7395 or 1350 Spring Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30367-5601.

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

National Geographic praises
Baptists' disaster response

Baptist Press
4/7/93

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--The immediate response of Southern Baptists to Hurricane Andrew's devastation of south Dade County has been cited by National Geographic magazine.

In an article, "Andrew Aftermath," in the April issue, senior assistant editor Rick Gore tells of returning to the "ruins south of Miami" to examine the damage and efforts at aid and reconstruction.

The Fort Lauderdale native tells of "seeing care ladled out by Southern Baptists" at a Florida City church. "The Baptists, renowned for feeding disaster victims from mobile kitchens, were perhaps the first Samaritans on the scene."

Noting the mobile kitchen operated by the Tennessee Baptist Convention has been cooking 4,000 hot meals a day, Gore adds it is about to be relieved by a Kentucky unit that can fix 8,000.

Gore tells of traveling with Jacksonville youth minister Jeff Revels to feed a "largely forgotten niche of victims -- those who live in the hard-to-reach regions near the Everglades. "

"We were here before the Red Cross," the article quotes Revel as saying. "If they are hungry, we feed them."

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Freemasonry controversy
divides St. Louis church

By Tim Palmer

Baptist Press
4/7/93

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Controversy surrounding the adoption of a policy prohibiting Masons as church staff or deacons at Parkway Baptist Church was a factor in Stoney Shaw's decision to resign after 12 years as the St. Louis congregation's pastor.

The Home Mission Board's recently adopted recommendation to the Southern Baptist Convention that Masonic lodge membership be a matter of individual judgment may spare individual churches a lot of pain, based on Parkway's experience.

Shaw, who resigned Feb. 28, began looking into Freemasonry after a Sunday school teacher brought the subject to his attention. The teacher had used literature that said Christians should avoid Freemasonry, and some members of the class protested.

The pastor took the matter to the deacons last June, and they agreed a study of Freemasonry should be undertaken.

"The more we studied it, the more we felt it was very cultic and very anti-Christian," Shaw said. The committee reviewed materials from modern Freemasonry critics as well as the works of the late Albert Pike, a Masonic writer.

The interfaith witness department report noted Pike's books dealt with pagan religions; disagreement exists over their purpose.

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Parkway's deacons voted to recommend the policy that no Mason could be a staff member or a deacon. When the church voted on whether to accept the recommendation last November, it passed by a margin of 148-100.

Normally fewer than 100 people vote at a business meeting, Parkway member Arthur Swope said.

"Bitterness erupted from both sides in this meeting," Swope wrote in a letter to the Home Mission Board. "The most damaging things in this entire issue were that many members were affected. Those who had fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers who were longtime Christians, workers in the church, and had been Masons, felt condemned too."

Shaw expressed regret the issue generated such hard feelings. He noted some older women in the church even became fearful that their deceased husbands had gone to hell because they were Masons.

Members made their feelings known in different ways. One deacon served the Lord's Supper while wearing a Masonic lapel pin, Shaw said. "It literally amazed me that men would defend a man-made organization over the church of the living God."

Shaw claimed opponents of the anti-Mason policy misrepresented it. "We tried to make it a truth issue, but they made it into a personality issue," he said. One deacon who was a Mason had to leave the board.

A study by the HMB's interfaith witness department came to no conclusion on whether Freemasonry is a religion, but Shaw said he concluded it is. He cited Freemasonry's emphasis on oaths and its concept of an inclusive God called the "Great Architect" as contrary to Scripture and to Christian principles.

Men who approach its rituals as a sort of "fraternity hazing" are deceived, Shaw said. "I think their intent is good, but they're connected to evil."

To the argument "but they do good things" Shaw countered if Christians accept this logic, they also should stop witnessing to Mormons, Jews and other groups.

Arthur Lewis, a Mason and a former deacon at Parkway, said Freemasonry was not the real issue.

"I believe Jesus is my high priest," Lewis said. "Does a minister have a right to determine who's a Christian or who's not? That's the whole problem here.

"Do I have a right to tell you how to live your life? No. As long as we're believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, as Lord."

Lewis pointed out the nation's Baptist churches have grown strong over the past century and Masons have played a part in their growth. Some of Parkway's charter members were Masons, he noted. "God has blessed this church."

Shaw emphasized the Freemasonry issue was just one factor in his decision to resign. Parkway has a strong history in prison ministry, in missions and in giving, he noted. "I just didn't want to see that interrupted."

He said he was not planning to seek another Southern Baptist pastorate, and his stand against Freemasonry might make it hard for him to find one.

"I am not angry at any Mason, but I am categorically opposed to Freemasonry and its deception," Shaw said.

Repercussions of the issue continue to be felt, Swope said. "This has really put a heavy spirit on the church at Parkway."

Lewis was more optimistic. He said the church will need time to heal, but its future is bright. He also said he expected that with Shaw gone, someone would make an effort to overturn the controversial policy.

**Texas CLC rejects restrictive
revision of abortion statement** **By Ken Camp**

DALLAS (BP)--The Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission at its quarterly meeting rejected a move to make the commission's 1992 statement on abortion more restrictive and approved a motion calling for expanded minority representation on the CLC.

The commission -- the governing board for the Texas Baptist moral concerns and public policy agency -- met along with its non-voting board of consultants April 1-2 at Bishop Mason Conference Center near Dallas.

With two dissenting votes and one abstention, the commission defeated a motion by Roger Deerinwater, pastor of First Baptist Church in Archer City, Texas, to revise the CLC position paper, "Abortion and the Christian Life," to bring it more in line with the stance of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. The vote came after a motion to table the issue resulted in a tie.

Deerinwater advanced the position that abortion should be considered only to save the life of the mother, and he proposed removing exceptions for cases of rape, incest or severe fetal deformity from the CLC document.

The four-page statement adopted last year states, "Aborting the life of the fetus should be regarded as an extreme act undertaken under extreme circumstances."

Abortion might be chosen "as the lesser of evils" only in such cases as rape or incest, pregnancies which severely threaten the mother's physical or emotional survival, or in pregnancies involving severe fetal deformity and disease incompatible with life, according to the CLC position paper.

"Every instance in which reverence for fetal life is set aside in behalf of reverence for the life of the mother is intended as an urgent exception to the basic aversion to abortion," the commission paper states.

Citing Psalm 139 as proof text for belief that protection for human life should begin at conception, Deerinwater maintained that the Texas CLC abortion statement "ignores the sovereignty of God in birth and conception."

Any exception for severe fetal deformity is "saying that God made a mistake in the womb" and opens up the possibility of elective abortions for convenience, he said.

George Mason, pastor of Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas, warned against building a systematic theology around a single, poetic passage of Scripture.

"To be consistent in that approach to interpretation, you would also have to conclude that God ordered the systematic slaughter of people," Mason maintained.

Deerinwater countered his view of God's sovereignty also includes God's prerogative for judgment and wrath, saying, "If you go wrong in that, you go wrong in your theology."

"No," Mason replied, "If you go different in that, you go different in your theology."

Deerinwater's original motion was that the Texas CLC change its abortion stance "to move into agreement with the position of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission."

"Why not leave the Southern Baptist CLC out of it?" suggested G. A. McGee, pastor of Bellview Baptist Church of Midland.

Deerinwater reworded the motion, proposing instead the Texas CLC state as its position that abortion should be considered as morally viable only when performed to save the life of the mother, not considering any exceptions for rape, incest, severe fetal deformity or emotional trauma to the mother. McGee seconded the restated motion.

Men have no business drafting position statements on issues exclusively effecting women, according to Cassandra Northcutt of First Baptist Church of Longview.

"Let the women write the position papers on abortion," said Northcutt. "You can't really speak until you have walked in someone else's shoes. And you men will never be able to walk in a pregnant woman's shoes. It's not in your makeup."

In other business, the CLC unanimously approved a motion requesting that the commission be expanded from 15 to 18 members with three at-large positions added to provide additional minority representation.

The move -- similar to one recently approved by the Texas Baptist State Missions Commission -- requires the endorsement of the Baptist General Convention of Texas administrative committee and approval of the BGCT executive board.

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Journal's board elects interim;
begins search to replace Mohler

Baptist Press
4/7/93

ATLANTA (BP)--The board of directors of The Christian Index elected Clarence E. Drummond, director of the special missions department of the Georgia Baptist Convention, as interim editor March 31. He will serve until a permanent replacement is found for editor R. Albert Mohler Jr., who recently was elected as the next president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Drummond, 55, will join the Index staff May 1 and will take over full responsibilities of the editor after Mohler leaves the position May 31, according to Gary Abbott, pastor of First Baptist Church of Milledgeville and chairman of the Index board.

"I've known Clarence Drummond for a long time personally," Abbott said. "... I know him to be a dedicated, stable, solid Georgia Baptist who has an understanding of what The Christian Index is and what it means to Baptists in Georgia.

"He has a pastor's heart, he understands the missions emphasis of Georgia Baptists and the board felt that he would just be a very good person for us to utilize during this interim period."

Abbott said the board, which will act as the search committee for a new editor, has begun the search process and hopes to have a permanent editor selected before the GBC annual meeting in November.

Nominations for the position should include a signed letter of recommendation and a resume. All nominations should be addressed to Gary Abbott at First Baptist Church of Milledgeville, P.O. Box 795, Milledgeville, GA 31061-0795.

Drummond came to the Georgia Baptist Convention staff in 1988 as an associate in the education extension division. He became director of the special missions department in 1991. Among the responsibilities of the department are support for vocational chaplains and training for volunteer chaplains, coordination of other volunteer services, ministry to offenders and families, resort ministries and Christian social ministries.

Previously, Drummond was pastor of Garden Lakes Baptist Church in Rome, Ga., from 1978-88. Earlier pastorates included Browns Mill Park Baptist Church in Atlanta, Pisgah Baptist Church in Rome and Musella (Ga.) Baptist Church. He also served churches in Kentucky and Pennsylvania.

A native of Thomaston, Drummond holds doctor of ministry and bachelor of divinity degrees from Southern Seminary and a bachelor's degree from Mercer University. His writing credits include articles in The Christian Index, Church Administration magazine, The Baptist Program and Leadership magazine.

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**Spiritual interest continues
in post-Soviet Kazakhstan**

By Beth Sammons

ALMA-ATA, Kazakhstan (BP)--Religious leaders in Kazakhstan rejoice at the spiritual interest Kazakhs and Russians living in the Central Asian republic are showing since the leaders signed a "manifesto" of religious freedom.

The manifesto was signed during the 1991 Kazakh-American Cultural Exchange attended by more than 300 Southern Baptists. It led to laws guaranteeing religious freedom in the republic, long dominated by Marxism-Leninism and atheism.

According to Viktor Gorelov, pastor of the Russian Baptist Church of Alma-Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan, people no longer fear to seek answers to spiritual questions.

"People now have an open way to God. We think it's an answer to our prayers. We hope Christianity can be taught everywhere here," Gorelov said.

Russian Baptists see a rise in baptisms, strong interest in spiritual literature and a desire among schoolteachers for Bible teaching in schools.

"Teachers have invited people from this church to give spiritual lessons at their schools," Gorelov said. "This is the result of a vanishing fear among the people. Now people have freedom of choice. There's not any kind of suspicions or threat to their jobs or otherwise."

Russian Orthodox Archbishop Alexi believes Kazakhstan is exclusive among other Central Asian republics in its interest in spiritual things.

"People now see the former way of life and they realize and understand that it was not good. They see it is normal that they should think about and believe in spiritual things," he said.

Representatives of the Russian Orthodox, Russian Baptists and the Islamic constituency of Kazakhstan signed the manifesto.

Ratbek Hujji Nisanbay Ulu, an Islamic mufti (interpreter of religious law), said the process of returning Kazakhs to their Islamic roots has begun.

"The process of spiritual revival has begun. That is why a lot of Muslim worshippers have begun coming to the mosque and that is why we are doing our best to lead people to the truth," the mufti said.

Prior to the manifesto signing, only one mosque existed in Alma-Ata. Now seven are open. Mosques in the republic have increased from 28 to more than 300. More than 100 are under construction.

An Islamic Institute has been established in the capital city and has four teachers from Arab countries. It expects six more teachers from Turkey. A school for Muslim preachers has been established, and plans are under way for a school to train children. "A lot of revolutionary changes are occurring and we must work very hard," the mufti said.

When the Soviet Union shattered in 1991, the door -- already ajar -- opened wide. Atheistic propaganda is now a fading memory but in its place residents of Kazakhstan now face a gamut of religions and pseudo-religions. Healers, cultists and astrologers promote their beliefs alongside Muslim, Christian and Jewish teachings that appear regularly on radio and television.

"Today, as we are experiencing the fall of communistic ideology, there's a spiritual vacuum here. By all means this should be filled," Archbishop Alexi said. "Many people are turning to their cultural background. That's why in Kazakhstan there's a return to Islam."

Alexi said although the state propagated atheism for years, a rich, historically based religious culture of Christianity, Islam and Judaism remained in Kazakhstan.

"Most of the population worshipped only one religion -- Marxism-Leninism," he said. "There was an ancient religious culture, but in that period it took courage to emphasize your belief and faith. The government did its best to force people to express Marxism-Leninism and atheism."

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The archbishop expressed a commonly held belief that Kazakhs, a Turkic people composing 40 percent of the population, should return to Islam and Russians, making up 40 percent, should return to their Russian Orthodox roots.

But whether Islam is truly the religion of Kazakhs is a point widely debated. Most Kazakhs claim to be Muslim but few adhere to the religion's rituals and few can explain what Islam is.

The archbishop said the two nations have lived together for two centuries. "For the most part it's rather clear that Kazakhs historically confess Islam and Russians are Russian Orthodox," he said. "You can't just draw the line of many centuries of religious tradition here. For a rebirth of cultural and spiritual life to occur, the people should be encouraged to return to their cultural backgrounds."

The archbishop said a person's religion can be likened to "DNA in human genes." He believes religion is inherited from generation to generation. For Kazakhs to become Christians, he said, is to deny their heritage.

Concerning historical roots of Islam among Kazakhs, evidence suggests Christianity reached this once-nomadic nation before Islam did.

Kazakh researcher Marat Barmankulov, studying religious growth, wrote: "Propaganda became a shroud over people's minds, and it needs to be taken off. It's interesting that Kazakhs, who come from Mongolia, those of whom belong to the Kerei tribe, have their national caps embroidered with Nestorian crosses. They are still keeping some old traditions and national clothes."

His report -- entitled "How Many Religions Do Kazakhs Have?" -- attempts to show Kazakhs that Christianity among Turkic peoples has deep, traceable roots. "(Turks) are much closer to the Christian religion than people usually think. They don't know that 'Ave Maria' sounded in Turkic 700 years ago ... that Turks belonged to Eastern Orthodox and to Western Catholic branches of Christianity, and that Pontius Pilate was known among Turks as well as Jesus, Joseph and David," he wrote.

Baptist pastor Gorelov said history points out that many Christians came to Kazakhstan from the northern and southern parts of Russia.

"Russian and Ukrainian Christians came here to labor in new lands. They organized many churches," he said. "Concerning Muslims, we know that in the fourth century A.D. many Kazakhs were Christians, but in the sixth and seventh centuries the Sufi Muslim traditions and beliefs came and were accepted by the nomadic tribes of Kazakhs."

Gorelov said Christian workers from such places as North America, Germany and Austria have shown Kazakhstan Christians that large numbers of believers live throughout the world. Both Russian and Kazakh people readily accept foreign Christian workers. The pastor said their visits are especially important now since Kazakhs are open to different religions.

"It's important that missionaries from Korea, the U.S. and Germany are accepted by the Koreans and Kazakhs here," he said.

Christian workers in Kazakhstan expressed similar sentiments. They said Kazakhs are currently open to religion because "they've never really had one."

But the slower Christians are at making the gospel available, they add, the less likely Kazakhs will be to accept Christianity because Islam will have taken root again.

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Texas Baptists distribute medicine,
equipment to 6 Ukrainian hospitals By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
4/7/93

DALLAS (BP)--The activity of God clearly was evidenced in Lugansk, Ukraine, according to Texas Baptists who recently distributed 90,000 pounds of vitally needed medical equipment and supplies to six hospitals there.

"Time after time, hospital officials would request the specific items that we had available," said John LaNoue, director of Texas Baptist Young Men.

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"One hospital director pointed to a picture of an operating table in an old magazine and said, 'It's my dream to someday have something like this.' We had that exact model available to give him."

LaNoue worked with Lee Roy and Willie Gendke, volunteers from First Baptist Church in Center, Texas, in unloading and distributing the equipment.

When LaNoue and Gendke made a preliminary visit to the central prison hospital in Lugansk, they were surprised by the receptiveness of the warden. He told them how grateful he was for their coming and for the ongoing work of a prison minister associated with the Registered Baptist Church in Lugansk.

"What these men need more than anything is the Word of God to help them get their lives straight and to learn how to live morally," he said.

After seeing the varying needs and different strengths of the hospitals in Lugansk, LaNoue said it became clear that the equipment could be used to serve the largest area and most diverse population by distributing it among a half dozen hospitals.

Later this month, Kerfoot and Marietta Crowder Walker, medical doctors from Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas, will travel to Lugansk to conduct clinics, finish installing the equipment and train Ukrainian doctors in using it.

Last June, after a Texas Baptist group went to the Ukraine to explore ministry opportunities, First Baptist Church of Center bought for one of the Lugansk hospitals a \$10,000 X-Ray machine -- purchased when a local county hospital was closed.

A few months later, Texas Baptist Men purchased most of the remaining contents of that hospital for \$7,500 -- a fraction of the equipment's appraised value.

Volunteers from First Baptist Church of Center helped pack the hospital equipment and medicine secured by TBM in containers for shipping.

Although the equipment could have been sold for a fortune on the Eastern European black market, it arrived at the Black Sea port of Odessa clearly marked but protected by a cloak of anonymity in its accompanying paperwork, according to LaNoue.

The freighter on which the equipment originally was being carried encountered trouble in the Mediterranean Sea and its contents had to be off-loaded onto an Israeli freighter and placed on a different bill of transit.

"The containers arrived at the port two weeks later than expected on a different ship and on a different way bill," LaNoue said.

TBM also provided about \$100,000 worth of food to be distributed to needy Ukrainians by Baptists in Lugansk.

As the vice mayor of Shastze and her chief social worker assisted with food distribution in their city, the Baptists shared their faith. Both of the officials accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior.

"Now, whenever the social worker presents food to anyone in Shastze, the plan of salvation also is presented," LaNoue said.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Please hold the two photos mailed April 2 by (BP)'s Richmond bureau tied to a story to be released headlined "Native American Baptists launch missions among Latin American tribes." Due to a writer's illness, release of the story has been delayed.

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