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**Middle East's Baptists
claim victory amid strife**

**Baptist Press
4/23/93**

By Wendy Ryan, Stanley Crabb & Mike Creswell

LARNACA, Cyprus (BP)--Baptists in the Middle East are growing -- despite continuing strife and an increasingly militant Islam.

About 60 Baptist leaders -- half of them women -- from several Middle Eastern countries met April 20-21 in Cyprus in the first such gathering for the area sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance. They prayed together and traded encouraging stories of evangelism across one of the world's longtime hot spots.

"Your experiences are precious to us. You have experienced things we have never experienced," BWA President Knud Wumpelmann told the group.

Despite their upbeat reports of growth and increasing hunger for knowledge about the Christian faith across the region, the leaders stressed persecution and problems continue, although varying widely from country to country. They insisted specific names and locations not be publicized for fear of reprisals.

Baptists from several countries said their very success in evangelism has led to reprisals from militant Muslims as well as from Catholic and Orthodox church leaders. Baptists are a minority throughout the Middle East. Their numbers range from fewer than 200 to more than 1,000 members per country.

But the leaders reported growth in each country, often obtained at a high cost. "We evangelicals are the only people who evangelize so we are the only ones who suffer persecution," said one leader.

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In Egypt several Baptist churches have been closed -- then reopened -- in the past year as a minority of militant Muslims has waged a violent campaign to move the country towards their brand of Islam. Construction of churches has been banned and persecution of native Coptic Christians has increased. Baptists in another country said they can build churches only in restricted areas. In yet another country, Baptists face lengthy delays in getting government permission to build churches.

Throughout the area, the leaders agreed, opponents often harass them or try to discredit them by identifying them with Jehovah's Witnesses, a U.S.-based cult group banned in some Middle Eastern countries. In Lebanon in recent weeks Baptists have come under attack in newspaper stories identifying them with Jehovah's Witnesses.

Despite such barriers, pastors related story after story of personal evangelism encounters that often last through the night.

One man told of a group of Muslim engineers who asked him about the sins of the biblical prophets compared to the sins of Jesus. "I told them Jesus was sinless, that he came down from heaven, perfect God and perfect man," he said. "These engineers were afraid, so they closed the door and then asked me to speak more about Jesus."

Other pastors listening to the story broke into applause; they understood the risk involved in such encounters in his area.

Although Christian witnessing is restricted throughout the region, Baptist reports revealed differences in the degree of restrictions. Approaches to evangelism vary widely.

Pastors who discussed Islam described it as a religion based on fear, therefore Christians must be sure to present a God of love in their witnessing.

"Don't fall into the trap of saying our book (the Bible) is better than their book (the Koran)," urged one pastor.

In one country, a pastor said, Baptists are careful to work only with individuals or small groups. But in another country they now preach and distribute Bibles on the streets and evangelize in Muslim neighborhoods. The popular "Jesus" film has been used with good results in many areas.

Baptists throughout the region emphasize Bible distribution as a key tool in evangelism. One pastor said the government must approve his Bible distribution. "If I don't I can be imprisoned for six months," he said.

In some areas Baptists have been able to use mass approaches to spreading the gospel. When one church advertised free New Testaments in local newspapers, almost 10,000 people responded.

Muslims who respond to the gospel also face persecution. One pastor told of a girl who accepted Christ as Savior and was beaten by her family for her decision. Children who attend Baptist Sunday schools sometimes face parental anger and abuse. Another leader told of Baptist young people in his hometown sharing an apartment because they have been disowned by their Muslim families and have no other place to live.

Despite such tensions, the principles for witnessing to Muslims and others in the Middle East are similar to witnessing to anyone else, said Tony Cupit, BWA evangelism director and conference organizer. They include sharing the Bible, showing concern for people, providing practical helps to meet needs and witnessing through a committed life, he said.

"Every environment in which the gospel is proclaimed is difficult. There are forces working against you to discourage you to stop you," said speaker Michael Batarseh of Nazareth, Israel, who now is pastor of the Arabic Community Christian Church in Glendale, Calif. "But we must remember this is not our ministry. It is his," he said, referring to Jesus. "And the battle is not ours. He has overcome and in him we can overcome."

While no one disputed that the Middle East is a difficult region, all agreed they are encouraged by the current responsiveness.

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"I believe the desert can become a fertile land again," said one speaker. "It's from our part of the world that the message went out. We are asking the Lord to bring back revival here."

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L.A. pastors commend
King verdict response

By Mark A. Wyatt

Baptist Press
4/23/93

LOS ANGELES (BP)--In an open letter to the community, Baptist pastors and other clergy in Los Angeles have praised citizen response to the verdicts in the federal Rodney King civil rights trial.

The letter was released April 21, several days after a jury found two Los Angeles police officers guilty of violating King's civil rights. Two other officers charged in the case were acquitted.

Despite fears the verdicts would trigger a repeat of deadly rioting that followed the first King trial in Simi Valley one year ago, calm prevailed throughout the area.

The Southern Area Clergy Council issued the open letter. Lonnie Dawson, Southern Baptist pastor of New Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, is president of the council.

In the letter the group stated it would like "to commend and applaud the behavior" of citizens of Compton, Willowbrook, Lynwood and south-central Los Angeles. Those areas were among the hardest hit by the 1992 riots that left 58 dead and caused an estimated \$1 billion in damages.

The SACC's open letter said that by exhibiting restraint the community "proved to the world once again the inner strength of a democratic society."

Before the verdicts were handed down, the SACC had distributed hundreds of thousands of leaflets calling for calm in the area. The fliers were printed in several languages and urged citizens to "Keep It Good In The Hood."

The open letter encourages continuing efforts to "Make It Good In The Hood" to achieve "the dream of economic justice and economic empowerment." It says that will be accomplished through economic development, entrepreneurial activity such as training and experience, educational excellence and equality in opportunity.

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EDITORS' NOTE: The following story substitutes for one with the same headline in (BP) dated 4/20/93.

Waco Baptists feel conflicting emotions
as cult standoff reaches fiery ending

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
4/23/93

DALLAS (BP)--Baptists in Waco, Texas, felt sorrow, shock and anger as the 51-day standoff between members of the Branch Davidian sect and federal agents reached a fiery conclusion April 19.

"We're all still sifting through the debris," said Dan Bagby, pastor of Waco's Seventh and James Baptist Church. "While law officers are doing it literally, a lot of us are doing it mentally. There's a lot of pondering left to do."

Kenneth Massey, pastor of Waco's Calvary Baptist Church, was enjoying lunch with some church members and watching unfolding events at the Mt. Carmel compound on a big-screen TV when the holocaust started.

"Our first reaction was shock, then a certain disbelief," Massey said, adding that those feelings were soon washed away by a wave of sadness as the great loss of life -- particularly the lives of children -- became apparent.

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At about 6 a.m. April 19, the FBI started punching holes in the Mt. Carmel compound walls with Bradley armored vehicles and pumping in non-lethal doses of tear gas. Six hours later, flames engulfed the compound, burning the Branch Davidian stronghold to the ground.

One person from the compound -- Ruth Riddle, 29, who sustained a broken ankle and first and second degree burns over less than four percent of her body -- was taken to Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center, Waco. The woman was placed under guard at Hillcrest, a health care institution affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, where she was listed in stable condition.

Only nine of the 95 persons inside the compound -- and none of the 17 children under age 10 -- were known to have survived the inferno.

The Branch Davidians were led by self-proclaimed Messiah Vernon Howell, who legally changed his name in 1990 to David Koresh. He claimed to be the "Lamb of God" sent to open the seven seals of Revelation, unleashing catastrophe leading to the end of the world.

The standoff began Feb. 28 after agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms unsuccessfully attempted to execute a warrant at the Mt. Carmel compound and were met with a hail of gunfire. Four ATF officers were killed in the shootout and 15 were injured.

Sixteen ATF agents -- including three of the fatalities -- were received at Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center following the Feb. 28 shootout.

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. Within the first five days after the attempted raid, 21 children from the compound were released, but 17 young children -- 24 minors total -- remained inside.

Almost exactly 24 hours after the Mt. Carmel compound exploded into a land-locked lake of fire on the central Texas prairie, some Baptists joined more than 100 other people in a community-wide prayer service at Central Presbyterian Church, organized by the Waco Ministerial Alliance.

Bagby of Seventh and James, a member of the ministerial alliance, said the prayer service grew out of community leaders' desire to "do something tangible" to express sorrow and begin healing.

The spirit of the community remained "somber" in the days following the Mt. Carmel tragedy, he said, as residents continue to recount mentally the events leading to the Branch Davidians' apparent self-immolation.

Bagby acknowledged local religious leaders felt "some sense of relief that a painful chapter in the story of a distorted religious movement was ended, but no sense of joy that it was resolved that way."

There was a "weight of sadness that will not go away" among area residents, according to Nathan Stone, pastor of Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco, particularly as they began to realize the Branch Davidians were human beings with relatives -- some of whom live just down the road.

To help heal the hurt, Lake Shore planned to serve as host facility to a memorial service for victims of the Mt. Carmel tragedy April 24. The service was sponsored by the Heart of Texas Hospice, a Temple-based organization serving all of central Texas.

Aside from "coffee shop talk" about how federal agents handled the situation and a superficial renewed interest in the New Testament Book of Revelation, the most long-lasting effect of the seven-week standoff on Waco's citizens could be the way the city's religious image has been twisted into a bizarre, fun-house mirror distortion of itself, according to Massey of Calvary Baptist Church.

Religion and churchgoing is woven into the fabric of the community, he said. Many local believers have taken the attention given to David Koresh and his followers as a personal affront.

"It seems like Christians feel they have been back-handed in a way," Massey said. "David Koresh has been seen by some as the media prototype of what it means to be devotedly religious. He is perceived by some as a typical Bible believer, but that's not really who we are."

The events at Mt. Carmel point both to the reality of sin and its tragic consequences, he noted, adding, "It underscores how seriously we need to take our mission.

"Particularly, it should make us sensitive to the truth of how leadable some people are -- how easy it is for some people to divest themselves of all responsibility," Massey said.

"It points to the danger of authoritarian leadership. A person doesn't have to be a cult leader to exploit that kind of power."

The presence of splinter groups and religious sects is a reality mainstream Christians must learn to live with, according to Stone of Lake Shore. He noted that his church's facility is just two blocks off of Mt. Carmel Drive, where the Branch Davidians lived in the 1940s.

"For me, the thing that troubles me most is the 'compound mentality' that we create as believers. The more that we refuse to listen to people -- and I mean everybody, regardless of their position -- the more we push them off into compounds," Stone said.

Apparently, that's what happened to the Branch Davidians to some degree. I believe that's what we're doing with the gay and lesbian communities. Refusing to listen alienates us from one another."

Stone noted with irony that the Branch Davidians had at one time held pacifist beliefs, but it was David Koresh's militaristic vision of apocalypse that sealed their doom.

"It was their ability to hurt and destroy that was the downfall of the whole thing," he said. "In the end, it was might against might. That's the tragedy."

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**Mt. Carmel children were bound
for Texas Baptist child care**

By Ken Camp

**Baptist Press
4/23/93**

DALLAS (BP)--If the 24 children remaining in the Mt. Carmel compound on April 19 had been allowed by cult leader David Koresh to leave unhindered, they would have been released into the arms of Texas Baptists.

Instead, the children -- including 17 under age 10 -- all are believed to have died in the fire that destroyed the Branch Davidian stronghold near Waco April 19.

"We had been notified that all of the children remaining in the compound would be released in our care," said Kevin C. Dinnin, president of Baptist Children's Home at San Antonio.

The involvement of Baptist Children's Home at San Antonio with the children from Mt. Carmel dated back to the days immediately after the Feb. 28 shootout between the Branch Davidians and agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Within the first five days after the attempted raid, 21 children from the compound were released.

On March 8, the administration of Baptist Children's Home at San Antonio was asked by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services to establish an emergency child care facility for the released children at an undisclosed location in Waco, Texas.

Twelve of the children who were released from the Branch Davidian compound received care at the Baptist Children's Home Waco Emergency Shelter, a licensed temporary emergency child care facility, Dinnin said. Others were sheltered by a Methodist child care institution in Waco.

Special needs funds were allocated to the emergency child care facility by the Human Welfare Coordinating Board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Several members of the child care home staff worked in Waco with a treatment team headed by Bruce Perry, chief of psychiatry with Texas Children's Hospital of Houston.

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The treatment team sought to provide counseling for the children to help prepare them for transition into the homes of relatives and for life outside the control of cult leader Koresh -- a challenging task, to say the least, according to Dinnin.

"The children were extremely stand-offish. One girl was wearing a T-shirt with a picture of David Koresh on it. She kept clutching it, saying, 'He will protect me.' These children literally believed that judgment day was happening," Dinnin said.

One child whose father was shot to death at the compound told a police officer guarding the child care shelter, "My mommy said you killed my daddy."

"How do you deal with that?" Dinnin asked. "It's a difficult thing."

Because of the intensive religious indoctrination the children had received at Koresh's compound, the child care staff was unable to share the gospel with the youngsters as freely as they would with others in their care.

However, both they and several Texas Baptists working with the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services sought to show the children -- raised on visions of apocalypse and wrath -- the love of God as lived out by his people.

"The Protective and Regulatory Services workers demonstrated remarkable concern for the children. They weren't hardened or regimented, as state case workers are sometimes thought to be," Dinnin said.

"They were genuinely concerned for the mental, physical, psychological and spiritual well-being of the children."

Barbara Patterson, a DPRS worker whose husband, Bob, teaches religion at Baylor University, likewise was impressed by the work of the children's home and by the cooperation of other Baptist entities.

"It makes me proud to be a Baptist," she told Dinnin.

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S.C. association revises
stance on WMU speaker

By Sue Harper Poss

Baptist Press
4/23/93

PAWLEYS ISLAND, S.C. (BP)--The South Carolina Baptist association that voted in January to withdraw its invitation to WMU Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien to speak at its annual meeting in 1995 has reconsidered its decision.

The Waccamaw Baptist Association's executive committee had voted 25-22 Jan. 18 to rescind its invitation to O'Brien because the pastor of the host church, Charles Thrower of Juniper Bay Baptist in Conway, did not want a woman to speak from his pulpit and because he said WMU was "abandoning its historic heritage."

At its quarterly meeting April 19 at Pawleys Island Baptist Church, the executive committee voted to instruct its annual meeting committee to search for a different site for the 1995 annual meeting and to invite a national WMU leader to speak. O'Brien was not specifically named.

No count was taken on the motion but director of missions Bill Harrill said it passed by "a definite majority."

Harrill said the association's annual meeting committee will meet in May to decide on another location for the 1995 meeting and to decide on which WMU leader to invite. These recommendations will be presented at this year's annual meeting Oct. 18.

The association's moderator, Kevin Childs, pastor of Green Sea Baptist Church, said the January vote left the association "very polarized." A compromise he is suggesting is that the association invite a WMU leader to speak specifically about the work of WMU and another person to bring a sermon.

Harrill said he has "sad feelings" about what has happened in his association and hopes to find a middle ground where he can work effectively with both conservative and moderate pastors and laymen.

A special prayer meeting for the association was scheduled for April 27 at Cedar Grove Baptist Church.

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Kirke White, pastor of First Baptist Church of Loris and one who voted in January against rescinding the invitation to O'Brien, brought the issue back to the committee April 19.

He was first ruled out of order by moderator Childs, who said that since White had voted in the minority in January he was not allowed to bring the issue back to the floor for reconsideration. But vice moderator Cecil Granger, a layman from North Conway Baptist Church, made a motion, subsequently adopted, that the chairman be overruled.

White said he made the motion because he believed "a great deal of hurt" had arisen from the January decision and because he believes in the diversity of Baptists. "Recognizing the diversity among Baptists and the different Baptist positions, it was my feeling if Juniper Bay Baptist Church didn't want a woman in its pulpit, my church and others would welcome a woman to speak," he said.

Childs said it was obvious at the meeting the majority wanted to reconsider its January action. "The folks who voted for Kirke's motion wanted to voice their support of WMU and defend the right of women to speak," he said.

Stephen A. Lemons, pastor of North Conway Baptist Church who voted for White's motion, said he thinks the executive committee realized it acted hastily when it voted in January to rescind its invitation to O'Brien. That vote had come just a few days after the national WMU executive board had approved various recommendations about WMU's mission, broadening its scope of work beyond Southern Baptist Convention agencies.

"I think it is real clear that our people saw the decision was made hastily and they determined they wanted to reverse it," Lemons said. "They realized it was a bad decision and they understood how severe what they had done was."

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**Speaker urges Christians
to lobby for children**

By Pat Cole

**Baptist Press
4/23/93**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Christians can help the plight of children in America by lobbying lawmakers on behalf of the nation's youngest citizens, stressed a public policy advocate for children.

Shanon Daley, director of religious affairs for the Washington-based Children's Defense Fund, said children are "the ones least equipped to speak up for their own interests."

The cause of the 14.6 million American children living in poverty would be helped if Christians would use their political clout and moral persuasion on behalf of children, Daley told a workshop during a conference on "Children and the Church" April 22. The conference was directed by the Gheens Center for Christian Family Ministry at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and co-sponsored by seven other Baptist entities.

Writing letters, offering prayers and visiting members of Congress are ways Christians can help America's children, said Daley, urging that individuals and churches strive to keep informed on key pieces of legislation before Congress.

Many bills to aid children languish in Congress because members of Congress simply "don't hear from people back home," Daley noted. Congress, she added, is now considering bills to provide universal immunizations for children and expand the Headstart program. Another pending piece of legislation, the "Family Preservation Bill," would provide services for families at risk so that children can remain with their parents and not be placed in foster care, Daley said.

Only 60 percent of America's children are fully immunized against childhood diseases while 80 percent of the children in developing nations have been immunized, Daley said. Each dollar spent on immunizations will save \$10 in the years to come, she claimed. "This piece of legislation as far as CDF can tell doesn't have a downside," Daley said. "It will save illnesses and lives."

Headstart, she noted, has been an effective program yet due to lack of funding only one-third of eligible children are able to attend.

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Programs to keep children with their parents and out of foster care have met with a "terrific success rate" of 80 percent in areas where they have been tried, Daley said, adding every successful intervention keeps children out of the already overburdened foster care system. Daley said about one-third of the families who surrender their children to foster care would be good candidates for family preservation services.

When Christians enter the public policy arena, they must keep their faith perspective in focus, Daley said. "The most fundamental thing we have to explore and be familiar with is our faith basis and the biblical imperative" to care for children, she said.

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**Faith prof urges partnership
with God in behalf of children**

By Pat Cole

**Baptist Press
4/23/93**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Christians are called to improve the lives of children through a "partnership with God," according to an expert on faith development.

James Fowler, Charles Howard Candler professor of theology and human development at Emory University in Atlanta, said April 22 such a partnership is needed to address massive problems of drugs, violence and neglect facing today's children.

He addressed a conference on "Children and the Church" directed by the Gheens Center for Christian Family Ministry at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and co-sponsored by seven other Baptist entities.

Fowler urged Christians to join God's activity of creating, governing, liberating and redeeming.

While parenting is one of "the most blessed gifts of God's creative action," the call to participate in God's creative work demands a concern for all children, said Fowler, founder of the Center for Faith Development in Atlanta and the author or editor of nine books.

"Our partnership with God in co-creation involves the development of culture and, within it, the nurture, formation and education of all of the young children in each generation. These are the children and youth of our common trust."

Fowler suggested the "equivalent of a Marshall Plan for cities and counties" to address problems facing children. He called for the expansion of child-care centers and schools plus more parenting classes and job opportunities for adults.

Partnership with God's governance means "extraordinary action on behalf of those who are the victims who become the perpetrators in our cities and towns." By pressuring government to fight the drug abuse, violence and exploitation in society, Christians will be "aligning ourselves with the wrath and judgment of God who does not countenance the waste of young lives and the suffering of the old in our cities and towns," Fowler said.

Failure to act could have severe consequences, he warned: "Nations that allow corruption to permeate their economies and that harden their hearts toward the suffering of the poor are like those cities whom the prophet charged with selling the needy for a pair of shoes. The judgment and destruction of a God that intends justice on such a society is still certain and sure."

Societal and personal problems cannot be solved apart from God's action, Fowler said. "In short, we know there is no redemption and liberation from the personal and social bondage to which children of violence and poverty are often subject, apart from the presence of commitments of persons and groups who have aligned themselves -- sacrificially and wholeheartedly -- in partnership with God's liberating and redeeming action."

In a response to Fowler's address, Kathryn Chapman, professor of Christian education at Southern Seminary, said she liked the concept of partnership with God "because I'm a better human 'doing' than a human 'being.'" Partnership with God, she said, invites adults to re-create accepting environments for children, "balance law and grace" in relationship with children and tenaciously love children and their families.

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**Mr. Rogers' neighbor
suggests turning off TV** **By Sarah Zimmerman**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--While Fred Rogers uses television to remind children they are special, the associate producer of "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood" says children are better off playing than watching TV.

Turning the TV off is one way Hedda Sharapan recommends to monitor television exposure. Sharapan spoke April 22 to a conference on "Children and the Church" directed by the Gheens Center for Christian Family Ministry at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and co-sponsored by seven other Baptist entities. Rogers, she said, shares the opinion that too much TV is detrimental for children.

Families can establish rules such as no television before dinner or no television after dinner or no television on certain days, Sharapan said. In most households, the TV is on seven hours a day, she noted. Turning it off may be difficult, but she said, "It's an addiction, and you have to live with withdrawals."

When children watch TV, Sharapan suggested adults watch to get "a window to their world." Watching the same program helps adults talk to children with images they will understand, she said.

While watching TV together, adults can teach their values by making comments such as, "I can't believe that character was so rude to her mother" or suggesting that children look for the helpers during news programs.

Adults also need to help children understand the difference between reality and fantasy, Sharapan said. Helping children view TV realistically is necessary because of television's impact, she said.

According to one report Sharapan cited, 77 percent of broadcast programs contain a violent act or the threat of hurting or killing someone. Children who continually watch such violence typically respond by imitating it, becoming "hyped up" or being fearful of the world, Sharapan said.

Television is often called "happy violence" because results of the behavior are not portrayed, Sharapan said. Children who see violence without consequences can become immune to terror, she said.

Children also learn greed and commercialism from television, Sharapan said. "The business of commercial television is not to produce a program for an audience but to produce an audience for a sponsor to sell a product," she said.

Too much TV is also threatening because it presents stereotypes, Sharapan said. For example, if all a person knew about drinking beer was what he learned from TV, he would believe that beer drinkers are always happy, have lots of friends and never gain weight.

"Television is not a window to the world," Sharapan said. "It is a story telling machine that happens to be telling the same story."

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**Children, parents need help
in dealing with divorce** **By Mark Wingfield**

**Baptist Press
4/23/93**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Churches can help both children and parents deal with the issues of divorce, a professor of psychology and family ministry said.

Paul Sorrels of Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, led a workshop on "Helping Children and their Families through Divorce" during a conference on "Children and the Church" in Louisville, Ky., April 22. The conference was directed by the Gheens Center for Christian Family Ministry at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and co-sponsored by seven other Baptist entities.

The No. 1 problem children face after divorce is continued conflict between the parents, Sorrels said.

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The professor and counselor presented a model of a six-week program he has developed in Abilene to assist elementary-age children and their parents after a divorce is finalized.

The family-based program features six videotaped puppet dramas, each with specific lessons about issues children commonly struggle with after parents divorce. Parents and children watch the videos together and attend weekly small-group sessions.

The Abilene program usually accommodates no more than 12 children at a time and includes an average of one therapist for every two to three children enrolled.

Sorrels listed six issues both children and parents need help addressing after divorce:

-- Accepting that divorce is final. Children especially are prone to foster fantasies and idealized remembrances of perfect families that never were, he noted. This "Leave It to Beaver" mentality can even afflict 20-year-olds whose fathers left them at a very young age, he noted.

-- Resolving anger and self-blame. All parties involved with the divorce must find a way to release their need to find fault, Sorrels said. "Once divorce has occurred, it is irrelevant to assess blame." This step also includes learning to deal appropriately with anger, he said.

-- Adjusting to losses. As a result of divorce, children may lose a parent, a house, friends, extended family and even pets that have been part of their support system, Sorrels said.

-- Disengaging from conflicts. Children traumatized by divorce often will withdraw from their favorite activities or hobbies, he noted. A good sign that healing is beginning is when these activities are resumed, he said.

-- Realizing that divorce is a parental decision. Children are prone to blame themselves for the parents' problems, Sorrels explained, adding parents often contribute to this misconception unwittingly.

-- Finding realistic hope for future relationships. Although divorce is a horrible thing to live through, it is no more difficult than many other major life adjustments people routinely survive, he said. The key is helping children find hope for the future -- something that will be a lifelong process, he added.

The materials used in the Abilene program are available from Sorrels at Hardin-Simmons at a cost of \$60 for registered nonprofit organizations or \$129.90 for private clinics and private practitioners. The package includes six videotapes and a large notebook with session outlines, directions for family sessions and other support materials.

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Russia's Yeltsin apologizes for persecution of church

Baptist Press
4/23/93

MOSCOW (BP)--Russian President Boris Yeltsin said the Russian government accepts full blame for abusing the Christian church during the communist years and has apologized for it.

Yeltsin made the statement during an April 21 meeting at the Kremlin with Russian religious leaders. The embattled president took time for the session while fighting for his political life as a national referendum on his administration approached.

Baptist leader Vasili Logvinenko expressed appreciation for Yeltsin's statement. Baptists were one of the most persecuted religious groups during communist days, he said. Many were imprisoned for their faith. Even today the word Baptist is suspect among some Russians, he said.

Logvinenko, who represented the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, assured Yeltsin that Baptists are hardworking, honest and trustworthy people. He also expressed full support for Yeltsin's reform program, currently delayed by hard-liners in the Russian Parliament.

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The patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church attended the meeting and told Yeltsin his church wants to have peace with the government. Leaders of Pentecostals, Adventists, Jewish groups and others also were present at the special meeting.

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**Surveys help RTVC plan
its programming efforts**

By Doug Dillard

Baptist Press
4/23/93

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Look for a new children's program from the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, according to Mike Wright, vice president for network operations.

Viewer surveys previously were too costly for RTVC to use on a regular basis but now are an indispensable tool for programming and marketing, Wright explained to RTVC trustees during their April 19-21 meeting. The commission has these studies available now because of ACTS' shared satellite agreement with VGI, Inc.

Wright said the reports "clearly show a strong need for children's programming," and he noted RTVC is ready to begin to move to meet the need as funds are budgeted for new program production.

A children's program, "Sunshine Factory," has the largest distribution of all Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission programs on FamilyNet, Wright reported.

"Sunshine Factory," produced in RTVC studios a decade ago, is carried by affiliates who reach a potential 20 million American households.

The commission's first response to the need for children's programming is a commitment to do two live pilot programs in July featuring the popular puppet, Gerbert, according to Wright.

"'Gerbert Live' will be a call-in children's program chock full of creative contests, original songs, poems, music videos and other interactive features," Wright said.

"Gerbert" already is a popular TV feature with a taped version now running on ACTS and FamilyNet Saturdays at 8:30 a.m. and Thursdays at 5:30 p.m. Central time. But Wright emphasized "Gerbert Live" will be a brand new approach to the show.

Wright said licensing agreements for the surveys do not allow them to be published at this time, "but I can say that we are very encouraged by the number of viewers reported on some of our programs."

"Our new evening program, 'Capital News,' has been the most successful launch of any FamilyNet series," Wright reported. "To date, 70 stations serving more than 18 million households and stations serving another 9 million households are expected to be added soon.

"Also especially strong have been Jerry Johnston's teen programs and Kay Arthur's Bible studies on prayer."

Wright also was optimistic about the future of "Talk to Me," a live, call-in feature-oriented program introduced this spring in a successful pilot run. The program aired in what had been thought to be "dead" time -- 4:00 to 6:00 a.m. Central time. Callers responded from every one of the 48 contiguous states, he said. "The number and serious nature of the calls show that this could turn out to be one of our most valuable ministries."

"Talk to Me" is expected to premiere as a regular feature in September if funding can be arranged through some combination of sponsorship and commercial sales, he said.

Wright said he is encouraged by the growth in ACTS viewership in a static cable market, and "FamilyNet, when viewed over the two years since RTVC acquired it, seems to be rising off the chart."

Total households reached by FamilyNet have grown from 11.4 million in April 1991, when the commission acquired the network, to nearly 42 million today, at the same time climbing from 56 affiliates to 118.

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Wright reported to RTVC trustees that ACTS and FamilyNet combined now reach 60.5 million households with 163.4 million potential viewers. FamilyNet, on 66 low-power and 52 full-power stations, has achieved 41.7 million total verified households, or 112.6 million potential viewers, and ACTS, on 1,249 cable systems, at 19.1 million total verified households, has 51.6 million potential viewers.

"These are harder numbers," Wright said, adding more than 92 percent of affiliates are now providing regular affidavits of performance verifying the programs carried.

"It is simply an indication of the public's strong desire for the type programming we provide," Wright said. "As we move aggressively into new, fresh programming, I expect the upward curve to continue."

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Religious educators to weigh
future challenges in Houston

Baptist Press
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HOUSTON (BP)--Futurist Tom Sine, founder of the World Future Society, will be the featured speaker during the 38th annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association, June 13-14 in Houston.

SBREA sessions on "Creative Approaches to Tomorrow's Challenges," at the Doubletree at Allen Center hotel, will be at 2 and 7 p.m. Sunday, June 13, and 8:45 a.m. and 2 p.m. Monday, June 14.

Sine, of Seattle, Wash., also is the founder of Mustard Seed Associates, an organization for assisting churches to respond to challenges of the future, and author of "The Mustard Seed Conspiracy" and several other books.

He has done futures research for the State of Washington, Weyerhaeuser Corp. and other public and private agencies.

Sine will deliver three addresses during the SBREA meeting.

Christian vocalist Cynthia Clawson of Nashville will be featured both days.

Interest groups will meet at 10:30 a.m. June 14 on such topics as "Surviving the Information Age Explosion"; recovery, family and ethnic ministries; missions involvement; and new member assimilation.

Bill Cromer, professor of Christian education at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., is the current SBREA president; Bill Taylor, associate pastor/minister of education at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas, is the president-elect.

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Southern Baptist Religious Education Association
Annual Meeting
June 13-14, 1992

Doubletree at Allen Center, Houston

Theme: Creative Approaches to Tomorrow's Challenges

Sunday afternoon

1:00 Registration opens

2:00 Introduction of Program -- Bill Cromer, SBREA president; professor of Christian education, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

Devotional -- William B. Rogers, dean of the School of Christian Education, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

Music for Inspiration -- Cynthia Clawson, vocal artist, Nashville

2:40 Nominating Committee Report

Theme: Shifting Christian Education into the Future Tense, "Anticipating Tomorrow's Challenges: -- Tom Sine, author; president of Mustard Seed Associates, Seattle

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3:30 Membership Committee Report

3:35 Break

3:55 Focus Groups

4:50 Adjourn

Dinner

5:00 Board Meeting

Sunday evening

7:00 Hearing our Responses -- Bill Taylor, SBREA president-elect; associate pastor/minister of education, Prestonwood Baptist Church, Dallas

7:20 Response -- Tom Sine

7:40 Dramatic Monologue: "Mary Magdalene" -- Mozelle Clark Sherman, professor of church music, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

8:00 "Discerning Biblical Vision" -- Tom Sine

8:45 Dramatic Monologue: "A Contrast: The Mothers of Judas and Jesus" -- Mozelle Clark Sherman

9:00 Fellowship

Monday morning

7:30 New Member Breakfast

Breakfast for state & regional REA presidents

8:45 Morning Session -- Joel Harrison, SBREA vice president, director of educational ministries, Atlanta Baptist Association, Atlanta

Music for Inspiration -- Cynthia Clawson

9:10 "A Future History: The One-Room Church" -- Bob Hughes, professor of communications and mass media, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

10:00 Fellowship Break sponsored by the Annuity Board

10:30 Interest Groups -- Lawrence Klemptner, vice president for student services, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas

11:45 SBREA Luncheon -- Dennis Swanberg, pastor, First Baptist Church, West Monroe, La., speaker

Presentation of Distinguished Leader Award Recipient

Morning afternoon

1:45 Music for Inspiration -- Cynthia Clawson

2:00 Business Session

2:50 "Creating New Possibilities: Wild Hope" -- Tom Sine

3:30 Passing of Gavel

3:35 Adjourn

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Hispanic fellowship slates
evening meeting in Houston

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
4/23/93

HOUSTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist National Hispanic Fellowship, now an incorporated Baptist entity for some 3,000 Hispanic churches and missions in the Southern Baptist Convention, will hold its annual meeting at 7 p.m. June 14 at Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center.

Featured speakers will be the fellowship's president, Yamile Fernandez, pastor of Good News Community Baptist Church in Santa Ana, Calif., and Isaias Cardenas, president of the Houston-area Baptist Hispanic Fellowship.

The fellowship's executive committee, in a special meeting in Los Angeles, voted unanimously to incorporate in the state of California.

"We will continue to work cooperatively with all agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention and its programs," Fernandez said in a statement after the April 3 meeting. "We will especially continue to support the language missions division of the Home Mission Board as we work together to evangelize the Hispanic community in America, to plant new churches and to develop existing churches."

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Counselor urges awareness
of legal issues in ministry

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE (BP)--Almost any dimension of youth ministry -- counseling, sports and recreation activities, trips, volunteer workers -- can become the subject of a lawsuit, a clinical therapist warned April 20 during a session of Youth Ministry National Conference 4 in Nashville.

Tony Rankin, of Antioch, Tenn., a former youth minister, said lawsuits against churches and ministers center in six categories: clergy negligence, physical and sexual abuse, confidentiality, consent, sports/amusements and religious freedom.

Whatever the issue, Rankin advised, know the laws of your state.

In clergy negligence, Rankin said Southern Baptist ministers can be vulnerable because they are not regulated by a peer board and frequently not accountable to an official body. He cited a case where negligence was alleged when a minister failed to refer a troubled youth for psychiatric help and the youth committed suicide.

Concerning physical and sexual abuse, Rankin warned that laws differ from state to state and that ministers must know and follow the law. For example, in Tennessee any adult is responsible for reporting incidents of suspected abuse. Reports are kept confidential.

"If you suspect abuse, you need to report it. The protection of teen-agers is Christlike," Rankin said. "In my opinion, it's important to let your pastor know you have made a report so he knows you have taken correct legal action."

When youth ministers counsel with teens or their parents, Rankin said they are bound by confidentiality laws. Three issues require breaking confidentiality -- the counselee is considered a threat to take the life of another, a threat to commit suicide or is being abused.

"You are bound by law to report these. Let them (people being counseled) know up front that things remain confidential except for three things," he said.

In the area of consent, Rankin said youth ministers may be under the impression that consent and waiver forms signed by parents eliminate liability.

"The only thing consent forms are good for is they show intent on your part to cover all bases," Rankin said. Hospitals are not required to honor consent forms, but some will.

In sports and recreation activities, "you need to be careful that all equipment is in working order. You can get sued even if a teen was goofing off if the equipment was not in good order."

He also urged purchasing "trip-specific" insurance for youth trips.

On religious liberty issues such as holding Bible studies or other religious meetings at school, Rankin said youth ministers may not direct, conduct, control or regularly attend such meetings held during school hours. Laws are more flexible before and after school.

"The key is the local school principal," Rankin said. He urged youth ministers always to get the principal's permission before engaging in activities at school.

He said churches should carry a minimum of \$1 million in liability insurance for each minister and \$1-2 million for the church. Also, youth ministers should carry personal liability coverage which is available at reasonable rates through renter's or homeowner's policies.

Also, Rankin said youth ministers should talk regularly with a lawyer to get counsel on legal implications of issues and activities and maintain close communication with the pastor and a clinical therapist about the handling of issues.

"The Bible says forgive and forget, but the law doesn't," Rankin said.

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