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May 14, 1993

93-81

ALABAMA -- Jimmy Carter 'casts his lot' with Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.
SOMALIA -- Somali newspapers: Christians commit crimes against Islam.
SOMALIA -- Radical Muslim groups have radical differences.
ALABAMA -- Associated Baptist Press directors vote to allow CBF representation.
ALABAMA -- Baptist Women in Ministry mark 10th anniversary.
ALABAMA -- David Wilkinson selected for CBF communications post.
NASHVILLE -- AIDS impacting families, churches in growing numbers.
NASHVILLE -- Murrell walks tightrope in AID support groups.
NASHVILLE -- Suggestions offered for helping with AIDS.
NASHVILLE -- States show increase in HIV infection.
VIRGINIA -- Jericho to offer something for all senses, all ages.
HOUSTON -- Ed Young names members of Credentials Committee.
HOUSTON -- Tellers Committee named by SBC President Ed Young.
CALIFORNIA -- Missionary from California hurt in accident in Thailand.
ATLANTA -- Crossover projections highlight HMB executive committee meeting.
ARKANSAS -- Baptist campus ministers to meet at Ouachita University.
WASHINGTON -- Religious liberty bill passes House by voice vote.

Jimmy Carter 'casts his lot' with
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Baptist Press
5/14/93

By Herb Hollinger & Sarah Zimmerman

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Jimmy Carter, who "cast his lot" with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship during its annual assembly here, said the CBF should be a transcendent ministry, not competitive with the Southern Baptist Convention, measured by the life of Christ and characterized by service.

The former U.S. president spoke at the opening assembly of the CBF May 13-15 meeting as well as before students and the news media attending the meeting.

Carter said he has been a Southern Baptist since he was 3 and a Sunday school teacher since he was 18. Despite that religious heritage, Carter said he and his wife have been in a quandary the last few years with the Southern Baptist Convention, but they have now "found a home" in the CBF.

Changing attitudes toward the autonomy of the local church, separation of church and state, priesthood of the believer and a focus on pastoral authority made Carter dissatisfied with the Southern Baptist Convention, he said. The member of Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, Ga., also said "too many ministers don't think it's proper Christian service to minister to the poor."

Carter said his decision to endorse the CBF also came after talking to R. Keith Parks who recently left the SBC Foreign Mission Board to head the CBF's mission efforts.

But he said he was not urging CBF backers to bring the matter to a vote in their churches.

"I don't want it brought to a vote in our church," Carter told news media May 14. "It would fragment our church."

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Also adding to his decision for the CBF was his use of SBC Sunday School Board literature in which he said he became "increasingly concerned over some of the texts." He said he found the CBF's Sunday school literature more suitable.

"I feel I am a conservative Baptist," Carter said. "But I don't believe in the fundamentalist approach."

Carter said his own children have turned away from church, especially Amy, their youngest child. "(However) they do come to church when they visit Plains," he said.

Despite his endorsement of the CBF, Carter said, "It's a mistake to come here in a self-congratulatory mood." He urged CBF members not to criticize SBC leaders although he offered some criticism in his remarks.

Carter urged CBF members to apply three principles he uses at the Carter Center in Atlanta.

1) Don't be competitive. Rather than duplicate others' ministries, meet special needs and fill a vacuum.

2) Be all inclusive. Carter specifically mentioned the need to include women, whom he called a "tremendous reservoir of untapped talent and inspiration." Ethnic groups and people from other denominations also need to be included in CBF plans, Carter said. Yet he said it would be a mistake to "reach the lowest common denominator in our Christian faith just to have unanimity."

3) Don't undertake things just for analysis. "Unless a direct result is anticipated, don't do it."

Carter said he is sympathetic with President Clinton's dilemma with a low poll rating following the first 100 days of Clinton's presidency.

"Clinton's agenda seems too complicated," Carter said. Regarding the current situation in Bosnia, Carter said there are some things which are not possible for the president to solve by himself.

Speaking to the homosexual ban in the military, Carter said Clinton would have been better off to "do it (end the ban) and get it over with."

"He's learning in office," Carter said of Clinton and noted he also had to do that when he entered the White House in 1976.

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(EDITORS' NOTE: Southern Baptist missionaries work directly with Somali refugees in various African, European and North American countries. But inside Somalia Southern Baptists have worked only with registered humanitarian aid groups and, as chaplains and individuals, as part of the U.S. military force.) The following two reports reveal differences between Muslim groups and misperceptions many Muslims have of Westerners/Christians.

Somali newspapers: Christians
commit crimes against Islam

Baptist Press
5/14/93

MOGADISHU, Somalia (BP)--Articles printed in Somalia newspapers vividly illustrate fears and misconceptions Muslims have about the presence of Christians.

Stories like these are common:

- Christian prostitutes seduce Somali Muslims to give them AIDS.
- Starving Somali children are kidnapped from feeding centers and shipped to Sweden to be raised by Christian families.
- Missionaries operate beauty salons to entrap Somali youth.
- American troops ("30,000 Jewish soldiers") came to the desolate North African country not for humanitarian reasons but to destroy Islam and prepare to loot the country of its mineral and oil wealth.
- Christian groups oppose peace negotiations since the end of the civil war would end their opportunities to make converts.

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These stories may not make newspapers in New York, London or Paris but they are routine in the Somali press. It's a press dominated by militant Muslims who resent the cultural invasion by Christianity of their country and intend to resist it as violently as necessary.

"It's difficult to determine how large a segment of Somali society these articles speak for," one Christian aid worker said.

"From conversation with many Somalis, both inside and outside the country, I know many hold opinions diametrically opposed to the sentiments expressed in the newspapers. But dissenting opinions, though frequently voiced, aren't generally printed."

Despite the media saturation of Somalia, few foreign journalists, if any, have noticed the local press. Clan-based factions print most newspapers and many have failed financially in the past year.

But if Western reporters aren't interested in local papers the reverse is true. In fact one article in Somalia said American troops were accompanied by "hundreds of CIA spies disguised as journalists."

A sampling of local newspapers distributed in Mogadishu between July 1992 and February 1993 showed 30 percent of the articles related to Muslim radical movements or Somali perceptions of Western intervention, especially relief groups.

Americans interpret Operation Restore Hope as an effort to keep a nation from starving but radical Muslim clerics interpret it as a well-financed, subtle and determined effort to destroy the "one true religion of Allah" as revealed by Mohammed, his prophet.

They think Somalis should die before changing their religion "for one piece of bread or one cup of porridge." And they're ready to punish -- with death -- Somalis who do convert.

Following are some allegations translated from the Somalia press.

Allegations from "Codka Islaamka":

-- The only "pure Americans" are Indians. The "not real Americans" are either blacks (who are kept from power and given little freedom) or Jews. All the world's governments are like "Jewish dogs" and do what Jews say.

-- America militarily threatens only Muslim countries (Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Syria, Palestine and Somalia) because it hates Islam. President Bill Clinton's first words after being elected were that he would build a church in Jerusalem. Is Clinton not sending Jewish soldiers to Somalis to kill Somalis like Jews kill Palestinians?

-- Others (an apparent reference to Christians) "gave the Somali people knives" to kill each other and encouraged the civil war so they have no desire for the civil war to stop.

Allegations from "Xog-Ogaal":

-- Christians want to convert children "to remove the roots of the future of the next generation ... to stop the spread of Islam" throughout Somalia. Church groups have been operating a plan to "snatch children and relocate them abroad since 1950." A Swedish law allows Somali children to be given to Christians without permission of the biological parents.

-- Somalia's problems can only be solved "if we are ruled by the law that God intended for his slaves (Sharia -- Islamic law)."

-- Christians "might have a plan for mining minerals and drilling oil from Somalia in the near future."

-- Countries now supplying troops for Somalia send "undisciplined troops, corrupted ones, sick ones, etc." and are positioning themselves to grab part of Somalia as a colony.

-- President George Bush is a Jew who observed Christmas with troops in Somalia "to convert our people to Christianity." But he should not think Somalia is "like Los Angeles ... the center of AIDS, spies and drug addicts."

-- There's a Somali refugee camp in Italy but the only way you get permission to go on to Canada is to become Christian.

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-- Nuns, age 14-16, work in refugee camps in Somalia for high salaries and operate a church called a hotel that becomes a dance hall at night.

-- Somalis who go to Christian countries are refused help unless they step on the Koran (Muslim sacred book).

Allegations from "Qaran":

-- Many Somalis, mostly youth, now follow the infidels' culture and traditions. Organizations hiding under the cover of being humanitarian are really in Somalia to convert Somalis to Christianity and gather children and youth in special places to teach them evil things like dancing.

-- Even though Christians fight among themselves, some Muslims nevertheless have united with their enemies, the Christians.

-- Somali Christian middlemen earn commissions for children they steal and bring to Christian organizations.

-- One feeding station was closed when Muslim women refused to kiss missionaries.

-- Many Christian women have entered Somalia and behave as prostitutes to spread AIDS among Somalis.

-- "Let these few Somali Christians and these Christian organizations know that we know every step they take and we will take action against them. If God wills, soon we will publish the hidden secrets of those organizations."

Considering the public threats of violence against Christians, it is also noteworthy that, in the papers translated, articles defending the Western relief agencies from attack for alleged religious, ethical or religious offenses were conspicuously absent.

Radical Muslim elements assume Western aid workers and soldiers are on the payroll of a sinister Christian effort to eliminate Islamic influence, according to one man who helps run feeding stations.

"That makes us all potential targets," he added.

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Radical Muslim groups
have radical differences

Baptist Press
5/14/93

MOGADISHU, Somalia (BP)--Outsiders may consider them all part of the Muslim Brotherhood, but the three major radical Muslim groups in Somalia won't even pray together in the same mosque.

In fact, the only major common traits shared by the three are a strident profession of faith in Allah and Islam and a deep hostility toward Westerners/Christians.

Details of the groups were gathered by a Somali refugee who interviewed members of each of the organizations -- Al-Hijra Wa Al-Takfir, Al-Itixaad Al-Islaami and Al-Islaax.

Al-Hijra Wa Al-Takfir ("Flight and Repentance") has the same name as the Muslim radical group that assassinated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat but it's not known if there's a direct connection between the two. It's the most fanatical in its defense of its version of pure Islam.

A major distinctive is that they are Shiite Muslims and not Sunni, the larger of the two major divisions of Islam. Until recently all Somali Muslims were Sunni.

That means if they are being directly funded by a Muslim government, it would likely be only Iran. They reportedly get aid from individual followers of the Sylaymaaniya section of the Shiite sect. Most members are involved in the lucrative commerce between Somalia and Kenya.

Other Somalis usually consider Al-Hijra Wa Al-Takfir followers as mentally ill teen-agers. Often they are disowned by their family.

They consider anyone not of the group as an infidel and opposed to God (that includes all other Muslims as well as Christians and Jews). This logically means they will not pray in mosques with non-believers so they pray in their own homes.

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Unmarried girls or virgins are not able to pray to God so they must marry other members of the group, following arrangements by their sheik. When people join Al-Hijra Wa Al-Takfir they assume new names since former Muslim names would not have been "true" Muslim.

Al-Itixaad Al-Islaami ("Islamic Unity") follows the teachings famous sheiks such as Muhammed Abdul Wahab of Saudi Arabia who died in the 18th century.

They have great differences with traditional Somali religious leaders in three areas:

-- They do not allow pilgrimages to the graves of saints, insisting that the dead cannot help the living and anyone needing assistance should ask Allah directly.

-- They will worship and pray only in their own mosques since they feel other Somalis know nothing about true Islam.

-- They believe every Muslim country should be ruled by Sharia law and, if possible, the Muslim religion must be spread to every country in the world by force. They have a well-trained military wing to call upon if they feel it necessary.

Al-Itizaad Al-Islaami generally has had good relations with the outside world and with the common Somalis. They use megaphones to preach in the market and near tea shops and have opened special schools that educate children at no charge. Every member has to bring at least one person daily to join the organization.

AIAI members are in charge of Muslim voluntary agencies in the refugee camps such as the African Muslim League, Kuwait Fund and others. They also are in charge of the Muslim Orphanage Fund.

Their military wing has advisers and equipment from Afghanistan and Sudan. Compared with other radical groups, they have the best financial situation.

Al-Islaax ("The Reformation"), unlike the first two groups, is officially connected with the Muslim Brotherhood. Members include some of the most famous sheiks in the Muslim world. They believe that at some future date Muslims will rule the entire world.

They are most influential in Sudan (where they are linked with Hasan al-Turabi), Egypt and Algeria and other Maghreb countries. A stated goal is to unite all Muslim groups.

They do not segregate themselves in private mosques which earns them much support from other Muslims. When dealing with others they are tactful and polite.

AI does not have a military wing but they have a missionary wing ("Al-Tabliq") dedicated to spreading their version of Islam and representatives in almost every country of the world.

Financially they are as wealthy as Al-Itixaad even though they do not have known links with oil-rich Arabs. Most of their finances come from individuals and is spent on missionary efforts.

"Likely there are other splinter groups in addition to these three," one Western aid worker explained.

"But such organizations are secretive by nature. It's difficult even for Somalis to obtain much information about them. It would be virtually impossible for a Westerner to interview them, especially Al-Hijra Wa Al-Takfir and Al-Itixaad Al-Islaami."

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Associated Baptist Press directors
vote to allow CBF representation

Baptist Press
5/14/93

By Herb Hollinger

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--The Associated Baptist Press approved steps May 13 to increase the size of its board of directors to include representation from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and other sizeable contributors.

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ABP directors, in a semiannual meeting prior to the start of the CBF annual meeting in Birmingham, also voted to study: the possibility of adding a second full-time editor; an increased fund-raising emphasis; an intern program with Baptist colleges/universities; a journalistic awards program. Directors also were told ABP's finances were "right on pace."

Associated Baptist Press is a twice-weekly news service formed in 1990 by some state Baptist paper editors and others following the firing of two Baptist Press editors by the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee. Baptist Press is the daily news service of the SBC.

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is an organization of moderate Southern Baptists critical of the conservative leadership of the SBC.

ABP's directors have not been officially tied to any organization heretofore but the May 13 action could lead to a director from the Baptist General Association of Virginia as well as the CBF, according to R.G. Puckett, ABP board chairman and editor of North Carolina's Biblical Recorder.

Puckett said the addition of a CBF director would not present a conflict of interest for the news service.

"The CBF would have no control over ABP," Puckett told Baptist Press. "Cecil Sherman (executive director of CBF) has said he wants communication and accountability."

Currently there are 17 members of the self-perpetuating board but the action would create up to three additional "appointed" members. Both Virginia and the CBF had asked for representation on the news service's board of directors since both make sizeable gifts to ABP.

Although called "appointed" directors, they would be elected by the ABP board for one-year terms (there are no limits on current directors at this time) but would have full voting privileges.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship budgeted \$63,000 for ABP in 1992 while state conventions in Virginia, North Carolina and Texas together gave more than \$54,000. ABP's budget for 1993 is just under \$200,000.

The CBF's importance to Associated Baptist Press was underscored in remarks by Don McGregor, retired editor of Mississippi's Baptist Record and the news service's executive director.

Noting the significant contribution by CBF last year, McGregor told ABP directors "we can't sit back and depend on CBF. That would be to deny everything we stand for ... (but) without CBF we would not be in business even though we were founded before it."

Following a financial report by Greg Warner, ABP executive editor, which indicated income was "right on (budget) pace" for the first four months of the year, directors voted to have the executive committee hold a monthly conference call with an emphasis on fund-raising.

The possibility of a journalistic awards program was discussed by the directors before the idea was sent to an awards committee for study.

Thirteen Baptists colleges/universities responded to a letter from ABP about interest in an intern program, according to a report from Carl Kell, Western Kentucky University communications professor. That subject also was sent to committee for study and possible implementation but "no sooner than the summer of 1994."

Directors went into executive session to deal with personnel matters related to the possible increase in the two-person ABP staff. Although more study is to be done, including its financial feasibility, directors liked the idea of an "associate executive director" to assist Warner at the Jacksonville, Fla., office.

The news service's first newsletter has been sent out to friends, Warner told the directors, with 1,000 free copies sent on a three-month trial subscription. A new promotional video also was previewed by Warner.

Directors voted to schedule three upcoming meetings: in Jacksonville this fall for an annual meeting; just prior to the CBF meeting in Greensboro, N.C. in the spring of 1994; and in Nashville in the fall of 1994.

The board also voted to ask Bob Stevenson, an Oklahoma City retiree who has been active in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in Oklahoma, to serve as a director.

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Baptist Women in Ministry
mark 10th anniversary

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
5/14/93

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--To mark their 10th anniversary, members of Southern Baptist Women in Ministry celebrated ministry opportunities that have opened for them and recognized new officers.

"We're trading in our begging rags for party clothes," Nancy Hastings Sehested told 200 people gathered for a SBWIM worship service May 13 preceding the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship annual assembly.

Though women ministers still are rejected by many Southern Baptists, Sehested said, "When we are resisted, we know we've been heard." Sehested, pastor of Prescott Memorial Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., encouraged participants to celebrate, "not because justice has been done, but because it is being done and it will be done."

"We're not asking for our share of the institutional pie. We're not asking just for a place on a program. We're not asking for another offering to be named for us," Sehested said.

Terry Huneycutt, new president of Southern Baptist Women in Ministry, said the group's goal is for gender to not be a consideration in ministry qualifications.

"The desire of this organization is to someday dissolve because there won't be a need for it," said Huneycutt, minister of education at Greenwood Forest Baptist Church in Carey, N.C.

Other new officers for 1993-94 are Mary Zimmer, professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, vice president and program chairman; Dixie Petrey, student at Southern Seminary, recorder; Ronda Stewart-Wilcox, recent graduate of Southern Seminary, treasurer; and Brian Cole, leader of Appalachian Ministries in Berea, Ky., membership chairman.

The group approved a \$32,650 annual budget, which includes some money for salaries and publication of its newsletter, Folio. The group's income is from membership dues, gifts from the Southern Baptist Alliance, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and individual churches.

SBWIM has scheduled a brunch and worship service June 13 prior to the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston. The brunch will be in the downtown Marriott followed by worship in Methodist Hospital's Weiss Memorial Chapel. Information about the events can be obtained by contacting SBWIM's office in Louisville, Ky.

The group has 462 members. They report 30 women pastors in Southern Baptist churches and more than 900 ordained women.

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David Wilkinson selected
for CBF communications post

Baptist Press
5/14/93

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--David R. Wilkinson has been named communications coordinator/interim staff administrator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an Atlanta-based coalition of Southern Baptist moderates.

Wilkinson, vice president for seminary relations at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary since 1987, is the fourth administrator to resign at the Louisville, Ky., school since March 26, when trustees elected R. Albert Mohler Jr. to succeed Roy L. Honeycutt as president of the seminary. Wilkinson's resignation, which will be effective May 31, was submitted two weeks prior to his election to the CBF post during the organization's coordinating council meeting May 13.

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Other administrators who have stepped down include Provost Larry McSwain, who will become president of Shorter College in Rome, Ga., and two deans, Milburn Price, dean of the school of church music, who will become dean of the school of music at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., and William Rogers, dean of the school of Christian education, who will return to full-time teaching at Southern.

Wilkinson earned a bachelor of arts degree from Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary and is finishing requirements for a doctor of ministry degree from Southern.

A Southern Baptist communications professional his entire adult life, Wilkinson came to his present position at the seminary from the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, where he was director of news and information services from 1984-87. Wilkinson also was director of communications at Southern Seminary, 1981-83; associate editor of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission's World Mission Journal, 1979-81; staff writer and later director of news and information services at the Christian Life Commission, 1977-79; and information specialist at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, 1976-77.

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AIDS impacting families,
churches in growing numbers

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
5/14/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists in increasing numbers are waking up to discover AIDS has come home.

Many people in Southern Baptist churches are carrying alone the heavy burden of their own death sentence from AIDS or that of a loved one.

Belinda Mason, a Southern Baptist who served on the President's Commission on AIDS until her death from the disease in 1991, regularly challenged fellow Christians to educate themselves about AIDS and to get involved in ministering in Jesus' name to those affected by the disease.

Mason, who acquired AIDS from a transfusion of tainted blood, said, "Christians will never get serious about helping people with AIDS until they quit asking how they got the disease."

Two Baptist Sunday School Board employees and the wife of an employee shared their experiences with friends and family who have had AIDS in the May issue of "The Circle," the board's monthly magazine for employees.

Ragan Courtney, church music ministries department; Bob Metcalf, church growth-Sunday school division; and Martha Lowry, wife of Jim Lowry, communications department, spoke out of a desire to help others understand how to reach out in Jesus' name when AIDS touches the life of someone they love.

And it will.

Courtney left the bedside of his dying friend, Raymond Brown, and boarded a plane for Nashville to begin work at the board Feb. 1.

"I cried all the way from Austin, Texas, to Nashville," he said. A day later, when Brown died, Courtney found he had no more tears. Much of the grieving had already been done.

Earlier, when he had learned of Brown's illness, Courtney had set out to learn about AIDS.

"I educated myself. I found out I could get the disease only through an exchange of blood or body fluids," he said. Hugging and touching Brown to assure him of their love and support was a continuing part of ministry by Courtney and his wife, Cynthia Clawson.

Courtney applauds Southern Baptist churches and individuals taking seriously the challenge of helping people with AIDS and their families. Fear, ignorance and a failure to understand they are to reach out to the hurting as Jesus did are barriers keeping others from involvement, he said.

"We don't understand at all that the last shall be first," Courtney said. "We think the first will be first."

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He recalled the scene as Brown lay dying, struggling to breathe, his face covered with cancers. He had turned away momentarily. When he turned back, Brown was attempting to write.

Courtney stooped to read the words, "Wipe my tears." He looked at his friend's face. Then he saw the tears on his cheeks.

"As I leaned over my friend, one of the least of these, I saw the face of Jesus. Those tears were holy," Courtney said.

Metcalf's brother, Randy, died of AIDS in 1992. One of the first critical family issues after Randy's diagnosis was deciding who could know the truth. Randy and Bob's parents at first were reluctant to talk about their son's illness.

"I was the one who took the proactive stance, who said you need to talk about it," Metcalf recalled.

The Metcalfs walked together through Randy's illness.

"By the time he died we had gone through most of the grief process," Metcalf said. "He went through most of it with us. The nature of the disease allows some AIDS patients to be involved in preparing family members for death."

For Metcalf, the ministry of his church was truly Christlike. "I found out (while leading conferences at Glorieta) my brother had died at 1 in the afternoon. Before I left, my deacon from Crieveewood (Baptist Church in Nashville) had called me. That was a very meaningful phone call."

By the time he got to Norman, Okla., Randy's home, Metcalf had phone calls and messages from other youth Sunday school workers.

"What was especially important to me was seeing the church family respond the way we say we are supposed to respond," he said.

Martha Lowry, her parents and brother, Marc Womack, chose to be open with friends and family about Marc's diagnosis of AIDS. He died on March 29, 1991.

"He died at home. He wanted it like that," Lowry said.

When in September 1990, Womack was given about six months to live, he moved from Denver to Memphis, Tenn., where he had friends and was closer to his parents who live in Tupelo, Miss., and to Lowry, who resides in Franklin, Tenn.

"We're so glad he moved back to be near us. I think he did it for us to be close to him and have time with him before he died," Lowry said.

She made regular trips to Memphis. She sought to lighten her brother's life with humor.

"I was sort of the comic relief," she recalled. "We had a good, good time."

Lowry found her friends to be supportive and observed Womack's friends meeting his every need, whether for transportation, groceries or companionship. "This taught me a lot," she said.

Openness in sharing with friends and family was vital," Lowry said. "My family was open about it. Most people aren't. If you are open, it gives other people someone they can talk to, to feel they're not alone."

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Murrell walks tightrope
in AIDS support group

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
5/14/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--As facilitator of a support group for family members of people with AIDS, Rich Murrell walks a tightrope.

The issues are intense; the sessions often confrontational.

"I have to work very hard to keep fear at a low level for the new people but not sugar coat reality," said Murrell, manager of the adult editorial section in the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division.

The support group which meets at Nashville CARES, a social service agency offering services to people with AIDS and their families, includes people who have just learned their loved one is HIV-positive and those in the final stages.

Some are coping with geographical distance while others are caring for their family member at home or struggling with whether to be a caregiver.

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Because people today are living longer with AIDS, bereavement and grief are only one aspect of needs concerning family members.

Quality of life, nutrition, advocacy, family dynamics and many other concerns surface in the sessions.

While the situations are sometimes difficult, Murrell said, "This is the most rewarding ministry I've ever had in terms of personal fulfillment."

While Murrell works with a community agency in AIDS ministry, he believes churches also need to be involved.

"Churches that are saying we want persons with AIDS to come like anyone else to our church to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ are extremely rare," Murrell said. "We're still hiding from it."

"We're not supposed to be looking on the sin but looking at the sinner as a person in need of ministry from the church," Murrell said. "We have no hope with AIDS. It's still a terminal illness. Our hope is in the redemption found in Jesus Christ."

Whether church leaders realize it or not, AIDS is impacting their members, Murrell said.

"Every large church and most small churches have someone with AIDS. They just don't know it," he said.

Murrell, whose section at the board produces LIFE support materials on a variety of subjects, believes support groups may be one way Southern Baptist churches will become involved in AIDS ministry.

"We're finally understanding where people are. They're hurting. People will only come to church if we meet their needs," he said.

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This article was adapted from an article in the May issue of "The Circle," employee magazine of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Suggestions offered
for helping with AIDS

Baptist Press
5/14/93

NASHVILLE (BP) -- From people who have walked with friends and families through living and dying with AIDS, the following list of suggestions for ministry have been compiled.

- Educate yourself about AIDS.
- Talk to your pastor or a counselor for suggestions.
- Enlist the help of a pastor or counselor to support you as you help a person with AIDS or a family member.
- Take action. Don't wait until the person is critically ill.
- Be sensitive to the fact that people at church, whether or not you know who they are, have family members with AIDS.
- Look for practical needs you can meet. Be proactive. Recognize people with AIDS and their caregivers sometimes may not know what they need.
- Be honest.

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States show increase
in HIV infection

Baptist Press
5/14/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Media coverage about AIDS has included a variety of statistics pointing to the worldwide spread of the disease.

Consider these facts:

- Anywhere from 20-25 percent of babies born to women who are HIV-positive are born infected. (USA Today)
- By the year 2000, an estimated 80,000 American children will have been orphaned by AIDS. (Nashville Banner)

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-- In 1992, the number of new cases of pediatric AIDS in the United States increased 11 percent. (USA Today)

-- AIDS is the ninth-leading killer of people in the United States. (USA Today)

-- In 1992, approximately 47,000 Americans were diagnosed with AIDS. An estimated 40,000 more are thought to have become infected with HIV. (USA Today)

-- Among 40,590 men diagnosed in 1992, 61 percent got HIV from homosexual contact; 21 percent, IV drug use; 6 percent, homosexual contact and IV drug use; 4 percent, heterosexual contact; 1 percent, hemophilia; 1 percent, blood transfusion; 6 percent, undetermined. (USA Today)

-- Among 6,118 women diagnosed in 1992, 45 percent got HIV from IV drug use; 39 percent, heterosexual contact; 4 percent, blood transfusion; 1 percent, hemophilia; 11 percent, undetermined. (USA Today)

-- In 1992, there were more than 18,500 motherless children and adolescents due to AIDS. That number will double by 1995. (Journal of the American Medical Association)

-- States with the highest rates of AIDS among the population (number of cases per 100,000 population): District of Columbia, 132.5; Puerto Rico, 50.9; New York, 44.8; Florida, 38.8; New Jersey, 28.8; California, 27.5. (USA Today)

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Jericho to offer something
for all senses, all ages

Baptist Press
5/14/93

By Mary E. Speidel & Kathy Fogg Berry

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Fly overseas on an imaginary jet. Feel the frustration of learning a new language. Build furniture for a church damaged by Hurricane Andrew. Hear stories of missionaries. Taste international foods.

"Jericho: A Southern Baptist Missions Festival" will confront participants twice this summer with the sights, sounds and challenges of missions, according to planners of the annual missions extravaganza.

Open to all ages, Jericho will run July 3-9 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center and July 31-Aug. 6 at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center. Sponsors are the Southern Baptist Home and Foreign Mission boards, Brotherhood Commission, Sunday School Board and Woman's Missionary Union.

"Shout It Out," the 1993 theme for Jericho, is tied to the Old Testament account of the tumbling walls of Jericho, according to Jericho publicity chairman Marshall Walker of the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville. "It speaks to the walls or barriers that separate people from each other such as culture, age or race," Walker said. The theme points to ways God uses his people to tear down such walls. Jericho planners will creatively intersperse the biblical story throughout the conference to show how God's people responded in faith, obedience and cooperation.

The conference will continue a tradition of including hands-on missions in the Jericho program.

Under colorful tents, Jericho participants may help build furniture -- pews, pulpits and tables -- and toys for churches with missions needs. Items made at Ridgecrest will go to a church in Miami damaged by Hurricane Andrew; those built at Glorieta will go to a church in Juarez, Mexico.

Jericho includes many experiential activities along with conferences on missions-related subjects, Bible study, multi-media worship services, prayer groups, speakers and contact with home and foreign missionaries. Last year's Jericho involved more than 150 missionaries.

Worship leaders for both Jericho weeks will be Kenneth Rains, director of Brotherhood administration and World Missions Conferences at the Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn., and Mary Alice Collier of Albuquerque, N.M., a professional singer and full-time music evangelist.

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William Hendricks, professor of Christian theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., will lead morning Bible study on Amos for both weeks. He also directs graduate studies and the Center of Religion and the Arts at the seminary.

Youth Jericho offers a separate track of activities for young people during the week. These include celebrations, group times, drama, games, contemporary Christian music, conferences and Bible studies.

While teen-agers experience these events, children who have completed grades one through six will participate in a day camp planned and staffed by the Sunday School Board's church recreation department. Child care for preschoolers and babies also is provided.

Jericho also features "The Company," a drama troupe from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; a global awareness game called "Air Jericho"; and a game that tests missions knowledge, modeled after the popular TV show, "Jeopardy."

A missions fair, held on Monday during each conference, will feature nearly 60 exhibits offering hands-on activities.

Participants also may choose from about 60 special-interest conferences, including a conference on "Here's What Missions Looks Like," led by the heads of each sponsoring mission agency.

A free packet of information on Jericho is available by calling toll free (800) 727-6466. It includes a Jericho video, sightseeing brochures and information on conference costs, meals and lodging at both locations. Registrants who sign up 15 paid participants for Jericho will receive a free registration, room and board for one person in their group.

To register for Jericho at Ridgecrest call (704) 669-8022. For Glorieta, call (505) 757-6161. Accommodations are on a first-come, first-served basis.

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Ed Young names members
of Credentials Committee

Baptist Press
5/14/93

HOUSTON (BP)--Members of the Credentials Committee for the June 15-17 Houston meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention have been named by SBC president and Houston pastor H. Edwin Young.

The committee will be chaired by Tommy Knotts, a director of missions from Belvedere, S.C.

Other committee members are:

Jim Alley, minister at Friendly Avenue Baptist Church, Greensboro, N.C.; Grace Atchley, layperson, First Baptist Church, Germantown, Tenn.; Floyd Booth, layperson, 9th and O Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.; Bob Brandt, pastor, Leavenworth Baptist Church, Leavenworth, Kansas; Stephen Diehl, pastor, First Baptist Church, Vandalia, Ill.; Charles Farish, layperson, Christ Baptist Church, Hopedale, Mass.

Mary Fulhart, layperson, (no church listed), Muncie, Ind.; Dearing Garner, pastor, Kingwood (Texas) Baptist Church; Don Gauthier, pastor, Twin Bridges Baptist Church, Alexandria, La.; Ed Gregory, minister, Immanuel Baptist Church, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Dennis Humphreys, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Wilmington, Ohio.

Greg Kirksey, pastor, First Baptist Church, Benton, Ark.; Tony Lambert, pastor, Westside Baptist Church, Omaha, Neb.; Wendell Lang, pastor, First Baptist Church, Pryor, Okla.; Harry Lewis, layperson, Immanuel Baptist Church, Ridgecrest, Calif.; Walter H. Lumpkin, pastor, Honea Baptist Church, Montgomery, Texas.

Glennwood Mathis, layperson, First Baptist Church, Beaumont, Miss.; Ed Miller, layperson, University Baptist Church, Fairbanks, Alaska; Charles Owens, pastor, First Baptist Church, Anniston, Ala.; Ronnie Provost, pastor, University Baptist Church, Fairbanks, Alaska;

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Ralph Sawyer, pastor, Hallsville (Mo.) Baptist Church; Lee Sheppard, pastor, Arlington Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.; Ray Simpson, pastor, First Baptist Church, Gracewood, Ga.; Robert Whitten, layperson, Wayne Hills Baptist Church, Waynesboro, Va.; and Earl Wood, pastor, First Baptist Church, Louisiana, Mo.

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Tellers Committee named
by SBC President Ed Young

Baptist Press
5/14/93

HOUSTON (BP)--H. Edwin Young, SBC president, has named members of the Tellers Committee for the June 15-17 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center.

Robert Jeffress, pastor of First Baptist Church in Wichita Falls, Texas, will be the committee chairman, said Young, pastor of Houston's Second Baptist Church.

Other members of the Tellers Committee are:

Tyrone Berry, pastor, First Baptist Church, Bettendorf, Iowa; Daniel Bryant, pastor, Bay Village (Ohio) Baptist Church; John Burris, pastor, Chillicothe (Ohio) Baptist Church; Phil Card, layman, Central Baptist Church, Aurora, Colo.

Winston Curtis, layman, First Baptist Church, Texoma, Okla.; William Day, pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, Clinton, Iowa; Joe Godfrey, pastor, Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, Ala.; Mark Hern, pastor, Grace Baptist Church, Evansville, Ind.; Roger Johnson, pastor, First Baptist Church, Grayson, La.

John Joiner, minister, Tusculum Hills Baptist Church, Nashville; Rich Kincl, pastor, Central Baptist Church, Magnolia, Ark.; Tom Marsh, pastor, First Baptist Church, Casey, Ill.; Barry Norwood, pastor, First Southern Baptist Church, Prescott, Ariz.; Darryl O'Barr, pastor, Ramah Baptist Church, Palmetto, Ga.

Joe Owings, pastor, Brookleigh Baptist Church, Gastonia, N.C.; Bud Parker, minister, First Baptist Church, Moore, Okla.; Ron Pracht, pastor, Olivet Baptist Church, Wichita, Kansas; H. Warren Rice, pastor, Staples Road Baptist Church, Glen Allen, Va.

Samuel Shaw, pastor, First Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla.; Keith Thrash, pastor, Russell Baptist Church, Meridian, Miss.; David Turner, layman, Bellview Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.; Steve Ford, pastor, Crossroads Baptist Church, Albany, N.Y.; and Charles Germany, layman, First Baptist Church, Atlanta.

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Missionary from California
hurt in accident in Thailand

By Mark A. Wyatt

Baptist Press
5/14/93

FRESNO, Calif. (BP)--Al Barnes, a former California pastor and director of missions in Costa-Meda Southern Baptist Association, was hospitalized May 11 after he was struck by a bus while involved in a prison ministry in Bangkok, Thailand.

A relative in California said Barnes remained in intensive care several days later but was showing signs of improvement.

Barnes, 59, and his wife, Loyce, are Southern Baptist missionaries in the Thai capital where he serves as pastor of Calvary Baptist Church. His wife is minister of education at the church.

The couple arrived in Bangkok last June. A son and four daughters live in California, and another daughter lives in Florida.

One of their daughters, Barbette Hayball, a member of Bell Road Baptist Church in Auburn, Calif., said she learned of her father's accident from her sister, Jocelyn, who relayed news of the mishap to other family members after receiving a call from their mother.

Hayball said in addition to an injured vertebra, Barnes suffered "a punctured lung, several fractured ribs and multiple lacerations" and bruises when the bus hit him on a Bangkok street.

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Barnes reportedly was struck while crossing the street in front of a prison to get some fruit for inmates.

"Six men picked him up out of the road, loaded him into a white truck and took him to a government hospital," Hayball said. There, Barnes reportedly lay untreated for three hours until a prison guard notified Loyce Barnes who arranged for her husband to be transferred to a private hospital.

Hayball said she learned her father was conscious but spoke incoherently during the first 24 hours after the accident. The following day Barnes began speaking clearly and one of his eyes, which had swollen shut as a result of injuries, had reopened, she said.

Two days after the mishap, Hayball said her father still had not undergone surgery.

"They're going to try to let everything heal by itself rather than trying to operate," she explained. "The only prognosis we can get is that it's going to be a long road to recovery."

Barnes was featured in an article in The California Southern Baptist newsjournal April 1.

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Crossover projections highlight
HMB executive committee meeting By Martin King

Baptist Press
5/14/93

ATLANTA (BP)--"Crossover Houston" could break records for participation and soul-winning according to the Home Mission Board's evangelism section. Crossover is the evangelistic thrust held the past four years prior to the Southern Baptist Convention.

Thad Hamilton, HMB director of personal evangelism, shared with the board's executive committee during its regular meeting May 11 in Atlanta that a record 109 churches and nearly 6,500 Southern Baptists from across the country are participating in door-to-door visitation alone.

"Utilizing these commitments and a formula developed from the past four years, we believe conservatively that 175,000 homes will be contacted resulting in 21,000 presentations of the gospel and perhaps 3,500 professions of faith," Hamilton said.

Crossover activities, June 9-13, will also feature block parties, evangelism rallies and street evangelism. Three block parties during Crossover Indianapolis in 1992 resulted in 93 professions of faith. Twenty-six block parties are scheduled for Crossover Houston.

Although there was no report from the board's administrative committee, board chairman Brad Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church in Duncan, Okla., shared with executive committee members that the board's study of Freemasonry cost approximately \$111,000.

"Although that figure is an estimate reflecting expenses as well as hours spent by the entire staff, it is accurate and I believe conservative," Allen stated.

Nine new home missionaries were approved, and 39 new Southern Baptist chaplains were endorsed. The executive committee also elected William Barner, pastor of First Baptist Church in Stockbridge, Ga., as a loan officer for the church loans division.

Barner is a native of Georgia and a graduate of Mercer University. He also has been pastor of churches in Georgia and Indiana and has served as a director of missions in Ohio.

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Religious liberty bill
passes House by voice vote

By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Religious Freedom Restoration Act, plagued by opposition on several points during much of its nearly three-year history, passed without a whimper of resistance when it finally received a floor vote in Congress.

The House of Representatives OK'd RFRA, H.R. 1308, by voice vote May 11. It was the first time either house of Congress had voted on the legislation since its introduction in mid-1990.

The Senate Judiciary Committee had approved its version of the bill, S. 578, by a 15-1 vote five days earlier. It is uncertain when RFRA will be considered by the full Senate but indications are it could be before the end of May. President Bill Clinton has endorsed the legislation.

"This is a tremendous step in the right direction and we look forward to the time when RFRA has become the law of the land," said Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"As we have said all along, RFRA is desperately needed to restore the compelling state interest standard that was in place before the disastrous Smith decision of 1990."

RFRA is designed as a legislative remedy to the 1990 Employment Division v. Smith ruling in which the Supreme Court said government no longer has to demonstrate a "compelling interest" before restricting the free exercise of religion. Since Smith, it has been easier for government to limit individuals' religious expression.

The House vote occurred when normal rules were suspended. Bills considered under suspension of the rules are not allowed to be amended, but they must pass with a two-thirds vote.

House members from liberal New York Democrat Charles Schumer, prime sponsor of the bill, to conservative Illinois Republican Henry Hyde, a leading pro-life advocate, spoke in favor of the bill. When time came for action, it passed by voice vote with no apparent opposition.

"I was ecstatic," said Brent Walker, associate general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee.

"I would like to think the good result in the House would prompt some speedy action in the Senate but I don't take what happened in the House to mean there won't be some problems in the Senate."

Some senators have signaled they may introduce an amendment exempting prisons from RFRA. Attorneys general from 22 states have signed onto a letter seeking such an exemption.

The coalition supporting RFRA contends an amendment is unnecessary because the courts will apply the "compelling interest" test to enable prison administrators to maintain order while allowing for limited religious freedom for prisoners.

During the nearly three years since its introduction, RFRA also has been accused at various times of being an unconstitutional use of congressional power, advancing abortion rights, inhibiting church social service programs, threatening churches' tax-exempt status and aiding pro-lifers blockading abortion clinic entrances.

While most of the concerns have been addressed, the question of RFRA's application to prisons appears to be the only one which could result in an amended bill.

In addition to the CLC and BJC, the diverse coalition of nearly 60 members supporting the legislation includes the United States Catholic Conference, American Civil Liberties Union, Concerned Women for America, People for the American Way, National Association of Evangelicals, Americans United for Separation of Church and State and Christian Legal Society.

Baptist campus ministers
to meet at Ouachita Univ.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. (BP)--The annual meeting of the Association of Southern Baptist Campus Ministers will be June 10-12 at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark.

The ASBCM will meet in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Baptist Association of Student Affairs.

ASBCM's featured speaker will be Judy Hamlin of Austin, Texas, author of "The Small Group Leader's Training Course."

Further information can be obtained from ASBCM's president, Kyle Klemcke, Baptist Student Union director at Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches, Texas, (409) 564-0473.

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