

(BP)

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420,17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
NASHVILLE 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Tom Strobe, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

August 5, 1993

93-129

MOSCOW --Yeltsin said to reject law restricting missionaries.
MOSCOW -- Yakunin: Keep those cards and letters coming to beat law.
WASHINGTON -- Senate votes to subsidize federal employees' abortions.
SOUTH CAROLINA -- Church plan medical rates will not go up Jan. 1.
SOUTH CAROLINA -- Annuity Board assets rise with contributions, earnings.
MISSISSIPPI -- Mississippi College's Nobles resigns amid trustee inquiry.
WASHINGTON -- Even most conservatives OK Ginsburg confirmation.
SOUTH CAROLINA -- Trailer park ministry, drowning stir 10 family members to faith.
BALTIMORE -- Despite youthful rebellion, India native now a pastor.
NASHVILLE -- Facts & Trends, teaching helps added to SBCNet computer service.

Yeltsin said to reject law
restricting missionaries

By Marty Groll

Baptist Press
8/5/93

MOSCOW (BP)--Russian President Boris Yeltsin refused Aug. 3 to sign a controversial new law restricting religious freedom, reportedly telling lawmakers to bring it into line with international human rights agreements.

In a meeting with the Russian Orthodox priest who led the committee that wrote the law passed by Parliament, Yeltsin specifically objected to a provision allowing Russian officials to bar foreign missionaries.

The lawmaker priest, Vyacheslav Polosin, kept up his ardent campaign for the law in its current form. On Aug. 4 he was quoted in Pravda, the national news service, as still supporting it.

Yeltsin has presented Parliament with proposed changes written by his own legal advisors. The extent of those changes is unknown at this point.

The law -- which has inspired Western ire, opposition from the White House and a cross section of U.S. congressmen and threats to press for cutting off monetary aid -- also gives the government power to declare certain groups of Russian religious believers illegal.

Despite Yeltsin's action, many religious liberty experts believe he eventually will have to sign some form of the law to keep mainstream Russian Orthodox leaders happy.

The religion bill sailed through Parliament -- dominated by Orthodox, nationalist and communist forces -- with nearly no opposition July 14. To call it law, Russian lawmakers must vote for it twice more.

If that happens, opponents of the law expect Orthodox priest Gleb Yakunin, a Parliament member and reform leader, to spearhead an appeal in constitutional court. Yakunin, who originally reported Yeltsin's rejection of the bill, said Aug. 4 his case would be strengthened by Yeltsin's objections and the growing international protest.

The law would give the Russian Orthodox Church favored status in the nation, possibly returning to government officials the right to open and close churches. The Orthodox Church, which claims 60 million members, considers itself the nation's true church by culture and heritage. In government circles its voice is by far the most influential among religions. It has reacted bitterly to Western evangelical groups and others spreading a wide range of beliefs on Russian soil.

--more--

Western religious and human rights groups are calling Yeltsin's rejection of the law a victory -- for now. Their enthusiasm is tempered by the knowledge of Russia's instability and the marriage between the mainstream Orthodox Church and communists in Parliament.

After its passage, the religion law immediately got sucked into the lawless morass of a reform struggle between Yeltsin and hard-line lawmakers left over from communist days. Religious liberty experts describe it as just one of many gambling chips in a complex poker game for power.

Seated at the table are former Russian communist leaders, democratic reformers and the Western world. At stake, observers say, is what force will prevail to guide Russia into the 21st century: the rule of law in line with United Nations standards or an authoritarian oligarchy calling itself something other than communism.

U.S. officials who oppose the religion law nevertheless want Yeltsin to maintain enough of a power base to complete Russia's reform. Last spring the Russian people voted to allow him to write a new constitution, which could establish a new lawmaking body and abolish the current Parliament. It also could firmly establish commitment to the historic 1990 laws that swept away seven decades of communist repression of religion.

The new constitution is being written. But how it will be ratified -- either by popular vote, a constitutional congress or the current Parliament -- is yet to be determined and has become yet another struggle between Yeltsin and Parliament members.

The power structure of the current Parliament has changed very little since the days of the Soviet Union. Stalinists have bitterly fought Yeltsin at every turn in his reform program.

Yeltsin has been strongly opposed to the religion law since it was sent to him, according to at least one source in Moscow. Before he saw the law as passed, newspaper reports indicated he supported it.

Once a communist and professing atheist, Yeltsin returned to the Orthodox Church and was baptized after he renounced communism and became president. But it is unknown whether his objections to the law stem from his personal beliefs or a desire to sustain reform and international favor.

Some non-Orthodox Christians in Parliament voted for the law. Some Orthodox members, more open to pluralism and ecumenism, voted against it. But the Orthodox Church's leader, Patriarch Alexei, saw to it that a letter voicing his support for the bill was circulated among Parliament members on the morning it was passed.

Law proponent Polosin claims evangelicals in Russia were given a chance to contribute input but chose not to do so. Evangelicals, however, say their voice was never heard on the Parliamentary Committee on Freedom of Conscience, which drafted the law under Polosin's guidance.

The law would be enforced through the Justice Department, according to Polosin. Ultimately, that would give a government agency the job of judging how and when to allow religious organizations to exist.

Many Americans see Russia as having declared free thought, and they consider the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the reorientation of its secret police force as indications that authoritarian control has passed. But liberty watchers in the United States find scant evidence of the rule of law in Russia.

Many of the nation's freedom fighters have abandoned their seats in the Parliament, according to a spokesman at the U.S. State Department. Whether they did so by choice or were forced out by communist nationalists is unknown. Other lawmakers still in the assembly reportedly have been boycotting votes.

The State Department says 308 people sit in the Supreme Soviet (Parliament), the lawmaking body whose members are elected from the Council of Deputies. However, the Russian Embassy in Washington puts the number at 247.

Either way, it appears supporters of the law restricting religion may have enough votes in the current Parliament to overcome rejection by Yeltsin with the necessary 50-percent margin.

**Yakunin: Keep those cards
and letters coming to beat law**

MOSCOW (BP)--President Boris Yeltsin's rejection of proposed religious freedom restrictions passed by the Russian Parliament is seen as a victory for evangelicals, but they say the fight is far from over.

To help establish religious liberty in Russia, Parliament member Gleb Yakunin urges that letters, faxes and other communications opposing the restrictions be addressed to: Mr. Ruslan I. Khasbulatov, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, Krasnopresnenskaya Nab. 2, Moscow 103274, Russia. His fax number is 011-7-095-205-5744.

Yakunin said copies of letters to Khasbulatov should go to:

President Boris N. Yeltsin
The Kremlin
Moscow, Russia
Fax: 011-7-095-206-3961 or 011-7-095-206-3591.

Ambassador Vladimir Lukin
Russian Embassy
Washington, D.C.
Telephone (202) 628-7551
Fax 202-483-7579

Ambassador Thomas Pickering
American Embassy
Novinsky Bulvar 15
Moscow 121099
Russia
Telephone 011-7-095-230-2101
Fax 011-7-095-252-9270

Also send copies to U.S. Senator Richard Lugar in Washington, D.C., who has been spearheading protests against the law (fax: 202-224-7877).

--30--

**Senate votes to subsidize
federal employees' abortions**

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
8/5/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--For the first time in 10 years, American taxpayers will pay for federal employees to have elective abortions.

Using a rarely invoked procedure, the Senate recently voted 51-48 to kill an amendment which would have prohibited federal funds from helping pay for most abortions through health insurance coverage for federal employees and their dependents.

Despite the defeat, pro-life advocates expressed encouragement the close vote signals trouble for President Clinton's plan to include abortion coverage in his health care reform proposal.

The margin "indicates that unless abortion is dropped from President Clinton's national health bill, that bill will die in the Senate by filibuster, if not by majority vote," said Doug Johnson, the National Right to Life Committee's legislative director.

Only 41 votes are needed to maintain a filibuster, which blocks a pending vote.

Since 1984, federal law has prevented any plans under the Federal Employees Health Benefits program from funding abortion except to save the life of the mother. The House of Representatives passed the fiscal 1994 Treasury, Postal Service and General Government appropriations bill in June without such language.

--more--

On Aug. 3, Sen. Don Nickles, R.-Okla., introduced an amendment which would have prevented federal funds from paying for abortion under the health plans except to save the life of the mother or in cases of pregnancy from rape or incest. Nickles' amendment, however, would have allowed federal employees to pay for a rider which would have covered all abortions.

Barbara Mikulski, D.-Md., challenged the amendment, asking it be ruled out of order because it legislated on an appropriations bill. Although introducing legislation in an appropriations bill is against the rules, it is commonly done in Congress and rarely challenged.

When Nickles asked for a roll call on the amendment's germaneness, it failed. The appropriations bill passed by a 73-27 vote later in the day.

"This vote is terribly disturbing in that Americans who are conscientiously opposed to abortion will now be forced to subsidize this repugnant act with their taxes," said James A. Smith, the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's director of government relations. "Unfortunately, only President Clinton is left to stand in the way of this change, and we all know that isn't going to happen.

"Although this vote is not necessarily a harbinger of things to come on the Hyde Amendment in the Senate, it does indicate, just as we thought, that maintaining the House victory on Medicaid funding of most abortions will be difficult."

The House has approved a modification of the Hyde Amendment which prohibits Medicaid funds from being used for abortion except in the case of rape, incest or threat to the life of the mother.

Twelve Democrats voted for the amendment. They were Joseph Biden of Delaware, John Breaux of Louisiana, Kent Conrad of North Dakota, Dennis DeConcini of Arizona, Byron Dorgan of North Dakota, James Exon of Nebraska, Wendell Ford of Kentucky, Howell Heflin of Alabama, J. Bennett Johnston of Louisiana, Sam Nunn of Georgia, Harry Reid of Nevada and Harris Wofford of Pennsylvania.

The seven Republicans who voted against it were John Chafee of Rhode Island, William Cohen of Maine, James Jeffords of Vermont, Robert Packwood of Oregon, Alan Simpson of Wyoming, Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania and Ted Stevens of Alaska.

Judd Gregg, R.-N.H., did not vote.

The cost of premiums under plans offered through the FEHB program is paid 60 percent by the federal government and 40 percent by employees, including those opposed to underwriting abortions. The FEHB program provides coverage for 9 million employees and their dependents.

--30--

Church plan medical rates
will not go up Jan. 1

By Thomas E. Miller Jr.

Baptist Press
8/5/93

CHARLESTON, S.C. (BP)--Trustees of the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention declared there will be no increase in the rates for the Church Comprehensive Medical Plan in the first six months of 1994.

The improved financial strength of the comprehensive medical plan joined reports that included growth in retirement plan contributions and earnings, benefits paid and growth in endowment gifts as trustees met in Charleston, S.C.

Paul W. Powell, board president, said, "I am delighted management could make the medical plan recommendation and the trustees enthusiastically approved holding the rates. Though the national trend in health care cost predicts a 20 percent increase in overall cost next year, we'll hold the line."

Rates in the medical plan were last raised July 1, 1992, meaning the Church Comprehensive Medical Plan will go two full years at the same rate. Better claims experience and effective use of managed care procedures are credited with precluding a rate increase. A decision concerning the rates for the last six months of 1994 will be made during the spring of the year.

In other insurance matters, trustees approved a new term life plan to be introduced Jan. 1, 1994 and introduction of the Prudential Health Maintenance Organization, PruCare, in as many as 31 regions where the HMO is active.

--mor --

The new life plan will be part of an "unbundling" of coverages through which participants will have greater flexibility of choice and should find rates more competitive.

Effective Jan. 1, 1994, all current participants in existing life plans will be guaranteed re-enrollment in the new plan for no less than current coverage amounts. Rates for most participants will decrease.

Instead of three current "schedules" of term life amounts available to churches, all participants will be able to choose a "times salary" of one to eight with a maximum of \$500,000 coverage, or flat amounts in \$10,000 increments up to a maximum of \$50,000.

Spousal coverage is being offered in \$5,000 increments to a maximum of \$100,000 so long as the amount does not exceed 50 percent of the employee coverage. Dependent children coverage of \$5,000 per child is offered for a total rate of 75 cents a month, regardless of the number of children.

Joel H. Mathis, senior vice president for insurance administration, said, "We are pleased to offer a more competitive term life rate structure and a wide range of other coverages. Each participant can apply for exactly what meets his or her family need."

There will be just one term life plan design for both present church and group accounts. The church plan will be known as the "Personal Security Program" and the group plan will be marketed as "Employer Security Program."

The new program also will feature a built-in continuation of coverage with premium paid by the Annuity Board in event of disability, with separate coverages available for disability, accidental death and dismemberment, and person accident losses.

Each current participant will receive a letter in October detailing automatic re-enrollment coverage, new rates and options available.

The Annuity Board's first offering of a Health Maintenance Organization will be through existing PruCare HMOs in as many as 31 locations.

Mathis said, "We will be looking for and examining other HMOs in an attempt to make the HMO option available to more of our participants, but for now only about 30 percent of our participants reside in regions where the PruCare HMO is in place."

Eligibility for an HMO is determined by the participant's residence ZIP Code. Participants who appear to be eligible will be offered information.

--30--

**Annuity Board assets rise
with contributions, earnings** By Thomas E. Miller Jr.

**Baptist Press
8/5/93**

CHARLESTON, S.C. (BP)--Total assets of the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention rose 6.8 percent in the first six months of 1993 to \$4.18 billion.

Trustees of the Dallas-based pension and insurance agency met Aug. 2-3 in Charleston, S.C., and heard reports of financial gains in the first half of the year in all areas of work.

Contributions of members and employers to individual retirement income accounts continued to rise. In six months, paid-in additions from all sources totaled \$104,922,659, a 3.4 percent increase over the same period in 1992.

Benefits paid to retirees continue to rise also, with six months' payments of \$66,259,989, exceeding the 1992 figure by 16.9 percent.

Earnings on investments tracked established goals or exceeded them, Annuity Board President Paul W. Powell reported.

"Total assets have grown at a rate of \$1.4 million a day for the past year," Powell noted. "This growth, which keeps us solidly in place as the second-largest church pension board in the world, moved us up one step to the 127th largest pension fund among all funds in the United States," he said.

--more--

Harold D. Richardson, the board's treasurer, reported net earnings of \$214,653,038 for the January-June period, compared to \$65,935,069 in 1992.

The Variable Fund of common stocks finished June at a new record high unit value of \$12.24, an increase of 4.87 percent, after expenses, since Dec. 31, 1992. This exactly matched the growth of S&P 500 Stock Index, the target of the Variable Fund.

The Balanced Fund of stocks and bonds credited earnings of 7.67 percent in six months, well above the targeted benchmark of 5.98 percent. The Fixed Fund credited 3.69 percent, which was above the preannounced target range. The Short Term Fund credited 1.43 percent cumulative earnings compared to 1.45 percent for 90-day Treasury Bills.

While paying \$66.25 million to more than 24,000 annuitants, the Annuity Board also allocated relief monies provided by the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program and Adopt An Annuitant benefits provided by the board's own fund-raising activities.

At the Charleston meeting, the trustee Relief Committee considered 35 new applications for relief. Seven were approved for two-year monthly grants, two for three-month monthly grants, four for two-year expense grants and three for one-time grants. Nineteen were declined for being outside guidelines. There are 1,167 annuitants receiving an extra \$50 each month through the Adopt An Annuitant program.

An "average" relief recipient is 78 years old with total monthly income of \$562 and expenses of \$691.

The Annuity Board's "A Time to Remember" campaign for endowment gifts has received pledges totaling \$4,936,307. The three-year (1992-1994) goal is \$8.25 million.

Trustees elected Leonard Bruce Sides and Thurman Bradley Thompson vice presidents. They will succeed Charles Vanderslice and Harvey J. Wright who have announced plans to retire as heads of Region 3 and Region 2, respectively, in the member services division. Sides and Thompson are currently managers in their respective regions.

The next scheduled meeting of the Annuity Board trustees is Nov. 1-2 in Dallas.

--30--

Mississippi College's Nobles
resigns amid trustee inquiry

Baptist Press
8/5/3

CLINTON, Miss. (BP)--W. Lewis Nobles resigned Aug. 3 as president of Mississippi College amid a board of trustees-initiated inquiry into the handling of donations to the college.

Nobles, 67, who has led the Mississippi Baptist college 25 years, and the trustee board mutually agreed to his resignation Aug. 3 after disagreements arose over management of certain financial gifts to the college, according to a news release from the college, based in Clinton, Miss., near Jackson, with some 4,200 students enrolled in its various programs.

Nobles previously had announced his intention to retire in May 1994 and a search committee already had been formed.

Harry Vickery, trustee chairman and a Greenville, Miss., businessman, said, "We have retained outside accountants to review the management of certain donations to the college that were handled directly by Dr. Nobles. We intend to deal with this matter in the Christian spirit of honesty and fairness; therefore, it would be inappropriate to make any further comments until the auditing process is completed. A report of findings will be made public upon completion of that review."

The questions were first raised in a staff review of donations, Vickery was quoted as saying in an Aug. 5 story in The Clarion-Ledger, Jackson's daily newspaper.

Vickery also said, "This man has great accomplishments to his credit -- he's a great educator. I'm a person very grieved over the whole affair."

--more--

Nobles, however, had come under fire from some college supporters in January when the football program was placed on NCAA probation for four years and was stripped of its only Division II national championship, from the 1989 season.

Among the violations were grants-in-aid awarded to 98 players during the 1989-90 academic year, equaling 80.21 scholarships, according to the NCAA, twice as many as the 40 allowed by the association, The Clarion-Ledger reported.

The coach who headed the football program at the time is no longer at the school. Vickery credited Nobles with reporting the violations to the NCAA in early 1992, following a college investigation. During probation, the college will be limited to 30 scholarships.

Rory Lee, the college's vice president for institutional advancement and 20-year staff member, will be acting president until the trustees select a successor.

--30--

Even most conservatives
OK Ginsburg confirmation

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
8/5/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--In an uncommon demonstration of agreement in this Congress, the Senate voted 96-3 Aug. 3 to confirm Ruth Bader Ginsburg as the latest justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Though Ginsburg affirmed support for abortion rights, the Equal Rights Amendment and, apparently, homosexual rights, nearly all of the Senate's most conservative members voted for her.

Only Republicans Jesse Helms of North Carolina, Don Nickles of Oklahoma and Robert Smith of New Hampshire opposed her. One Ginsburg supporter, Donald Riegle, D.-Mich., was absent.

Conservative Republican Dan Coats of Indiana said on the Senate floor before the vote he disagreed with Ginsburg on "some of her rulings and many of her positions" but she met the criteria of "character, experience, qualifications and intelligence."

"Is Judge Ginsburg a moderate as the press has attempted to portray her? Probably not," Coats said. "Do her views fall within the mainstream of liberal philosophy? Probably so.

"Are there special and strong reasons to deny her the Senate's consent? I don't believe so, and for that reason I will vote for her today."

Ginsburg becomes the 107th justice and only the second woman to sit on the Supreme Court. Sandra Day O'Connor was confirmed in 1981. Ginsburg has served on the District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals the last 13 years.

The court will begin its 1993-94 term in October.

During her hearing two weeks before the confirmation vote, Ginsburg seemed to indicate homosexuality should receive civil rights protection.

Sen. Edward Kennedy, D.-Mass., read a 1979 statement by Ginsburg in which she said, "I think discrimination based on sexual orientation should be deplored."

When Kennedy asked if she still believed such discrimination should be deplored, Ginsburg said, "I think rank discrimination against anyone is against the tradition of the United States and is to be deplored."

Though she was asked several times during the hearing about her church-state views, Ginsburg provided little insight.

Of the court's Lemon test on whether a government action violates the separation of church and state, she said it "is the governing test, and my approach is the law stays the law unless and until there is a reason to displace it."

Earlier, Ginsburg had said she did not have an appropriate alternative to Lemon but she is "open to arguments, to ideas."

The Lemon test, based on the court's 1971 opinion in Lemon v. Kurtzman, is a three-pronged test stipulating that a government action must have a secular purpose, not primarily advance or inhibit religion and not foster excessive entanglement with religion.

--more--

Ginsburg also said she agrees with the court's unanimous 1993 Lamb's Chapel v. Center Moriches School District decision, which found public schools may not refuse churches use of their buildings when use by other groups is permitted.

The Senate Judiciary Committee approved Ginsburg July 30 by an 18-0 vote.

--30--

Trailer park ministry, drowning
stir 10 family members to faith

By Sue Poss

Baptist Press
8/5/93

FOUNTAIN INN, S.C. (BP)--Ten members of a South Carolina family were baptized July 11 as a result of a trailer park ministry four years ago and the drowning of a teen-ager in June.

For Jim and Jane Pfeiffer, parents of 13-year-old Jennifer Pfeiffer, her June 8 death by drowning took them away from their "passive Christianity" and Catholic background to acceptance of the Lord as Savior and baptism and membership in a Southern Baptist congregation.

But events leading to their professions of faith and that of eight other family members baptized July 11 by pastor Arnold Heitte at Pine Grove Baptist Church in Fountain Inn, S.C., had begun four years earlier with a trailer park ministry sponsored by Heitte's former congregation, Peoples Baptist Church in Greer, S.C.

It was through that trailer park ministry Jennifer's oldest brother, Jim Jr., 34, became a Christian.

Jim had sent his children to the Vacation Bible School sponsored by Peoples church at the trailer park, thinking it was the right thing to do even though he himself saw no need to attend church.

But eventually both Jim, a Catholic, and his wife, Deana, started attending Peoples where they met Heitte and joined in June 1989. Jim felt the need to go back to his Catholic heritage, however, and stopped attending Peoples for a time and Heitte in the meantime moved on to Pine Grove.

But Jim didn't lose his zeal for Christianity and almost every day for the next four years spent time with his parents, Jim Sr., a draftsman, and Jane, a hotel banquet manager, explaining the plan of salvation.

The day after they were baptized they recalled how they had ignored their son and often walked away from him. They also took comfort in the fact Jennifer had not walked away, and a just few weeks before her death Jim Jr. had led her to the Lord.

"My sister was strong-willed and I knew that if she didn't want to accept the Lord, she wouldn't," Jim Jr. said. "I know she was saved."

Jennifer died on a Tuesday afternoon while swimming with her brother and his children at his apartment complex pool. Jim pulled her from the pool and, despite repeated attempts by him and others, they were unable to revive her.

Her parents were stunned by the death of their youngest child. But first Jim Sr. and then Jane were able to build on what Jim Jr. had been telling them about Christian faith for four years

"Jim was used as a tool of God and we have come to believe that Jennifer's death was the will of God," said Jane, who for three days after Jennifer's death "couldn't think of hell being worse" than what she was feeling.

"I hurt very badly and kept asking God why was he punishing me," she said. "But finally I looked at Jennifer and realized she wasn't there. She was in heaven. That's when I accepted the Lord and that is what keeps me strong now."

Jim Sr. said he had feelings similar to his wife's when he first learned of Jennifer's death but almost immediately "prayed for the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ to bring me strength."

"All my life I had been searching and lost," he said. "I read the Bible and believed it but didn't feel I could give up what the Bible said I should give up."

The family left Jennifer's funeral arrangements to Jim Jr., who immediately thought of his former pastor. He tracked Heitte down at Pine Grove and Heitte started witnessing to and comforting Jim's family.

--more--

Jim Sr. said he is thankful the Lord used Heitte in bringing salvation first to his oldest son, then his youngest daughter and eventually 10 other Pfeiffer family members, ranging in age from Jennifer's 9-year-old nephew to her 78-year-old grandmother.

Jim Jr. moved his membership to Pine Grove and has enrolled at North Greenville College and wants to enter the ministry when his education is complete. Jim Sr. and Jane aren't sure what their future role will be but for right now they are nurturing their new-found faith and looking for the best way to serve. They both plan to get "very involved" at Pine Grove.

Looking back to 1989, Jim Jr. said, "That Vacation Bible School has proved to be one of the greatest blessings for me and my family. It was used to save me and I was able to grow in the Lord and talk with my family about my salvation."

And now that salvation helps Jim Sr. and Jane deal with Jennifer's death. "As I feel weak, I get on my knees and pray for the hurt to go away," said Jane. "I don't know how I existed all these years without faith in the Lord."

--30--

Despite youthful rebellion,
India native now a pastor

By Ellen Walker

Baptist Press
8/5/93

BALTIMORE (BP)--Twenty years ago, few people would have suspected that Paul Viswasam would be preaching and ministering to Asian Indians in America -- least of all himself. That's because at 14, Viswasam was an adventuresome teen-ager, resentful of his parents' calling to Christian ministry.

Now, following a circuitous call to ministry, Viswasam represents Southern Baptists in attempting to share the gospel with a large Asian Indian community in the Baltimore/Washington area as pastor of Tamil Christian Church in Clarksville, Md.

Raised in Madras, a large city in southern India, Viswasam had difficulty understanding why his parents would leave a comfortable career in the military to start an orphanage and Christian school.

His rebellion and frustration grew when his sister quit medicine to go to seminary and his brother left engineering to follow God's call into ministry. "I thought it was dumb," Viswasam recalls.

Viswasam's father placed him in a seminary for higher education. "I hated the seminary," Viswasam says, "but God had a plan behind it." There he met his future spouse, Chelly, a Hindu convert to Christianity.

"When I listened to her testimony, it was a turning point for me," he says, leading him to receive Jesus as Savior and to experience his own call to ministry.

Paul and Chelly were married in 1980 and Viswasam began to pursue his calling in India. He worked for various Christian organizations as a researcher, missionary, Christian social worker and a church starter.

Between ministry positions, awaiting the birth of a second child, Viswasam considered coming to America for further study. He began working in an import-export business selling leather in exchange for passage to the United States. After some success, he turned down an opportunity to help build the business with a friend.

"It was a very big temptation," Viswasam says. "In business, one could make good money," but God's call took precedence. He applied at several colleges, but could not afford tuition, eventually completing a 15-month correspondence course.

After raising money to bring his family to America, Viswasam began teaching at Grace Bible Baptist Christian School near Baltimore, where his daughter was enrolled.

Through those contacts, Viswasam became burdened for a flourishing, unchurched, Asian Indian community around him. He began meeting with families, developing home prayer meetings and fellowships. As he met more people, he identified more and more ministry needs.

--more--

Meanwhile Don Walker, pastor of Rolling Hills Baptist Church in Clarksville, became concerned about an Asian Indian couple who visited his church. Walker contacted the couple who knew of another family hosting one of Viswasam's home prayer meetings. Walker and Viswasam met and discovered they shared a vision for starting a church of Asian Indians.

The two met with Bill Crowe, director of missions for Howard Baptist Association, to discuss financial support. "All three of us were of the same mind," Viswasam says. After several months, support was approved by the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

In 1991 the congregation of Tamil worshippers formed the Tamil Christian Church at a home in Gaithersburg, calling Viswasam as their pastor. Attendance grew to 85, and they moved to Rolling Hills three months later.

At first the fellowship met twice a month on Saturdays for Bible study. Now, they meet on the first and third Sundays at 9:15 a.m., with their children joining Rolling Hills' Sunday school. "We would eventually like to have our own Sunday school, but it will not happen overnight," Viswasam says.

Recently the church held its second annual retreat. More than 125 adults attended and adopted a constitution for the church.

The vision, however, does not end there. At the retreat were Asian Indians from New Jersey and Pennsylvania. "We need to spread the news. There is no other Southern Baptist Asian Indian congregation on the East Coast," Viswasam says.

Viswasam has proposed the Home Mission Board establish evangelism and church-starting efforts among Asian Indians along the Eastern Seaboard. Contacts have been made for Bible studies in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

An unexpected offshoot to Viswasam's ministry has been to a Pakistani community in the Baltimore-Washington area. A marital counseling opportunity grew into the beginning of a Bible study. A first meeting and Bible study was attended by 65. Subsequent meetings drew larger crowds.

Viswasam is leading the studies until a Pakistani pastor can be located to assume that responsibility.

"Although traditionally Pakistanis and Indians have been political enemies, under Christ we are one," Viswasam says.

--30--

Walker is a correspondent for the Maryland/Delaware Baptist True Union.

Facts & Trends, teaching helps
added to SBCNet computer service

Baptist Press
8/5/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Facts & Trends, the Sunday School Board's newsletter for church staff members and other denominational leaders, will be added to SBCNet, Southern Baptists' data communications network, in October.

Facts & Trends, to be posted on the first day of each month, will include the text of all articles. Design editor Chip Alford said additional information, charts, graphs and related articles not included in the print edition also may be posted from time to time. As with the printed edition, users may copy articles for distribution or publication.

Alford said he hopes the electronic edition of Facts & Trends will enable information about trends in ministry and resources to be more readily accessible to lay persons using SBCNet.

Also on-line: teaching supplements for Bible Book and Convention Uniform youth Sunday school lessons.

According to David Haywood, SBCNet coordinator, Life and Work youth teaching supplements will be posted on Wednesdays, with Bible Book supplements added on Thursdays and Convention Uniform supplements on Fridays. Material is for lessons to be taught one week from the Sunday after material is made available.

--more--

Other information available on SBCNet includes Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention's news service; News Room, offering news and feature stories from Southern Baptist agencies and state conventions; Facts and Trends Information Service, news briefs from the Sunday School Board, Home Mission Board and Foreign Mission Board with usage suggestions for church newsletters.

Also included is Clip Art, a collection of ready-to-use art pieces; Bold Mission Prayer, requests for prayer from home and foreign missionaries; adult and collegiate Sunday school supplemental teaching helps; youth discipleship training helps; and Minister's Corner, a collection of sermons and illustrations.

SBCNet may be accessed by using a computer, modem and a membership kit distributed by the Sunday School Board. Cost of the kit, available in both DOS and Macintosh versions, is \$20. The kit includes CompuServe Information Manager software, account information and a \$15 credit toward usage. Kits may be ordered by calling 1-800-458-2772. Additional information about SBCNet and CompuServe may be obtained by calling Haywood at 1-800-325-7749, ext. 2895.

A reduction in rates for SBCNet users was announced in August, bringing user cost to a flat rate of \$7.95 monthly, plus CompuServe charges. Users must choose between CompuServe's standard plan, which provides unlimited access to 35 basic services at \$8.95 monthly or the alternate plan at \$2.50 monthly, plus time on line.

With more than 900 church and individual customers signed with SBCNet in early August, Haywood said the number of network users is continuing to grow each month.

HOUSE MAIL



BAPTIST PRESS

901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

So. Baptist Library & Archives
901 Commerce
Nashville, TN 37203

HOUSE MAIL