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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 Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

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**Southeastern accreditation
is reaffirmed by SACS**

**Baptist Press
12/17/93**

WAKE FOREST, NC (BP)--Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary has been removed from probation, reaffirmed in its accreditation, and reestablished as a member in good standing with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

That announcement was made Dec. 16 at the annual meeting of the regional accrediting association in Atlanta.

Southeastern President Paige Patterson said he "profoundly appreciated" the accrediting agency's affirmation of the seminary's academic program, and he saw it as "an invitation for the school to expand rapidly."

SACS placed the seminary on probation in December 1991, principally citing trustee involvement in administrative practices and lack of long-range planning as the major reasons for the action.

Patterson said throughout the probationary period nothing SACS asked the seminary to do was beyond reason. He said the seminary actually fulfilled most of the requests last year; however, SACS wanted to see Southeastern go through a one-year cycle, utilizing its new procedures.

Accreditation is "often said to be optional, but in our present society, there is nothing really optional about it," Patterson said. Accreditation is a "litmus test for credibility" within the academic world, Patterson said. Accreditation also facilitates the transfer of academic credit and enables students to receive certain scholarships and vocational endorsements.

Southeastern trustees' chairman Ned Mathews, pastor of Parkwood Baptist Church, Gastonia, NC said the seminary "can now focus on its primary task of training men and women for the ministry."

"For the short-term, we will continue to concentrate our energies on building the enrollment and endowment," Mathews said.

Despite accreditation difficulties, Southeastern has seen an increase in enrollment since June 1992 when Patterson arrived on campus. Currently, there are 688 students enrolled at Southeastern.

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"(The SACS ruling) affirms what many of us knew all along: Southeastern is administratively and academically strong. This should impress new students that we are on the right track and moving forward," Perri Wade, a master of divinity student with emphasis on Christian education from Gadsden, Ala. said.

Southeastern's Academic Dean Russ Bush said Southeastern's academic program has always been strong.

"Some of our record keeping procedures and planning processes needed revision and improvement, but we have now taken care of that," Bush said. He said the seminary is involved in a curriculum review and will be implementing innovative delivery systems next fall.

One of the seminary's representatives at the SACS meeting in Atlanta, professor Keith Eitel, expressed "jubilation" that the school's accreditation had been reaffirmed. "This gives us the ability to grow and to expand many of our programs," Eitel said.

"I think this is great news," said Tim Suddeth, a divinity student from Charlotte, NC. "This seminary has so much potential, and this decision opens the door for it to be put to use. The faculty has a lot of good ideas."

Although SACS has removed Southeastern from probation, the seminary is still on probation with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in the U.S. and Canada.

"ATS, of course, is the next item on the agenda," said Patterson. "We hope to have our probation with them resolved within the next six months."

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**New law in Mongolia
could limit Christianity**

By Erich Bridges

**Baptist Press
12/17/93**

HONG KONG (BP)--A new law passed by the Mongolian Parliament could confine Christian activities inside churches, require churches to register with the government and ban religious activities in state-owned buildings or schools.

The law reportedly takes effect Feb. 1 in the once-isolated Asian nation surrounded by Russia and China. It also will give the state final say over the location of churches and number of church workers and bar foreigners from engaging in religious activity.

The Mongolian people were the focus of 1993's Day of Prayer and Fasting for World Evangelization in May. Many Southern Baptist churches participate in the annual prayer campaign.

The legislation acknowledges the right of Mongolians to believe in any religion they choose. But it recognizes Buddhism alone as essential to Mongolia's long history and heritage and decrees Buddhism "shall be given its rightful place."

Other religious activity judged to be against Mongolian "customs and tradition" can be forbidden.

Islam and Shamanism also receive special exemption from the restrictions.

"Apart from Buddhism, Islam and Shamanism, it is forbidden to carry out any religious teaching ... or any other activity, anywhere other than in churches and monasteries," the law states.

The law has alarmed the fledgling Mongolian Christian community, now estimated at between 800 and 2,000 members, which began barely three years ago with less than 10 known believers. But a Western Christian observer with high-level government contacts counseled against panic.

"It sounds a lot worse than what it may turn out to be," said the observer.

"No one is panicking right now. It's very difficult to predict what could occur."

The observer, who requested anonymity, cited three possible factors behind the law:

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1) All kinds of mission and para-church groups have inundated Mongolia -- once the hardest of hard-line Soviet bloc states. That also has happened in other formerly communist countries opening up to democracy and the outside world. Some outside groups perform excellent public service. Others engage only in aggressive evangelism. Others promise the state such things as Western experts in various fields. Some deliver that; others deliver only untrained, incompetent workers.

"The people who make a lot of noise and create disturbances are going to have a difficult time" under the new law, the observer predicted. "The people who quietly go about their business are not going to be interfered with."

"Mom and Pop" mission agencies that don't screen their personnel, he added, have "raised the ire of some Mongolians. They're trying to police against some of these things."

2) Some Buddhists feel threatened because Christianity is growing and has attracted the interest of many young Mongolians.

3) Spiritual forces are at work. "Mongolia was the last country in the world to have a (Christian) church," the observer reminded. "It's only been in the last two and a half years that a church has ever been established. Satan does not give up his territory without a fight."

Southern Baptists provide medical aid, humanitarian assistance and English teaching in Mongolia through the aid organization Cooperative Services International (CSI). CSI workers also are helping Mongolians develop a family practice medical program through the Advanced Training Institute.

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Answered prayer amazes
missionary who asked it

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
12/17/93

ZAMBAREJA, Mozambique (BP)--Southern Baptist missionary Ed Moses prayed for something that seemed almost impossible.

The answer taught him once again the power of prayer.

The story began with Anai Anna, a refugee woman, and her four children who became Christians in 1992 through the efforts of Chambuta Baptist Church at the Chambuta refugee camp in Zimbabwe.

When years of civil war ended in Mozambique, her home country, she went back to her remote village -- not long after she was baptized.

As the family struggled to rebuild their home, clear fields, plant crops -- and dodge land mines scattered along the roads -- they told others about Jesus.

Within months they had 21 new believers and sent word back to Zimbabwe for someone to come baptize them.

When missionary Ed Moses arrived, he found that none of the 26 Christians in Zambareja could read or write. How could anyone be trained in the isolated African village when no one was literate? he asked. How could they teach and preach without reading?

Back home, Moses and others quickly wrote to Christians throughout Zimbabwe and the United States asking people to pray for "one literate leader for the church in Zambareja."

Still, the chances of that happening seemed remote. So the Foreign Mission Board missionary took a hand-cranked tape recorder, teaching tapes and pictures on his next trip to the village.

But when he arrived, a man named Manuel Zhiwawo introduced himself -- in English. He could read and write, was a Christian and wanted to join the church.

Experience caused Moses to rein in his excitement while listening to the man's Christian testimony. After a few moments Zhiwawo excused himself to go back to his hut.

He returned with a proud smile and a tattered envelope. It contained a diploma from the Zimbabwe Bible Way Correspondence School.

He had completed five study courses by mail from the Baptist school while living in Zimbabwe and had become a Christian during that study.

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"Ask and you shall receive," Moses said.

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Editors' Note: The following three stories were developed to be used during January, Make Your Will, month on the SBC calendar.

Dying with no will can deprive
relatives and Baptist causes

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
12/17/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Clara Smith, an 80-year-old widow, has no will. She lives alone and is in poor health. Though her husband, Bill, died a year ago, Clara is financially comfortable -- thanks to years of frugal savings and investment.

Clara and Bill Smith (not their real names) had no children.

Since Bill's death, Clara's greatest comfort has come from her local Southern Baptist church and from Bill's niece, Shirley, whose family has always been close.

Clara has told friends that she wants to leave a tithe of her estate to her church's building fund, with Shirley receiving the rest.

Friends have warned Clara that her wishes won't be followed, unless she has a will. But Clara says her plans are well-known to her family and will surely be honored by those who handle her estate.

Who is right? Not Clara. Unless she makes a will, her local church and niece-in-law, Shirley, will receive nothing.

Since Clara was one of five children, then according to the laws of her state, Clara's estate will be divided four ways -- one-fourth to each of her brothers and sisters.

One sister has been in a nursing home for years, supported by Medicaid. Clara's other sister is financially independent and has no need of her money.

Since Clara's two brothers have already died, their share of her estate will be divided between their descendants.

Though Clara loves all her family, she is closest to Shirley and barely knows her own nieces and nephews, most of whom live in other states.

According to estate planners and financial advisors, Clara should follow the advice of Southern Baptists' annual January emphasis, which is "Make Your Will Month."

"If you don't have a will, the state's got one for you," said Hollis Johnson, president of the Southern Baptist Foundation, which promotes the special emphasis. "The state's will does not have a provision for charitable causes.

"If an individual had particular Baptist causes -- such as a local church, Baptist school, or other ministry -- then they won't be able to give through their estate," Johnson said, "unless they make a will."

But it is not just elderly people with lots of savings who need a will.

"Everyone over the age of 18 needs a will," said Chester Jernigan, vice-president for development at the Baptist Foundation of Alabama. "It allows you to decide the manner in which your property is distributed. You can select your own executor and name a guardian for your minor children or for a disabled family member. Otherwise, the state does it for you."

Angelina ("Dee Dee") Jackson, who is the Alabama foundation's legal counsel, agreed. "Basically, everybody needs a will, no matter what their financial situation is. In Montgomery County (in Alabama), it costs around \$65 to probate a will. It's not as expensive as most people think."

Jackson said a will helps survivors deal with "the aftermath of somebody's death. ... It gives the family a starting point for dealing with the desires of the one who died."

David Coleman, director of development at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, said, "Many Southern Baptists are not aware that they can give beyond their lifetime to the causes they loved while they were here on earth, such as Lottie Moon, Annie Armstrong, their local church, and other Baptist causes."

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Some Christian wills leave money to a Baptist cause, such as the FMB, which may spend the money immediately upon receiving it for current budgetary needs.

But other wills have a longer lasting impact by placing the money in an endowment fund, where the money is held "in perpetuity" -- meaning "from now until the Lord comes again," said Jernigan.

Though the principal is not spent, the interest earned is distributed annually to a Baptist cause that was dear to the heart of the deceased, Jernigan said.

Endowments managed by the foundations of state Baptist conventions provide money for such diverse causes as children's homes, local church cemetery and building funds, world hunger relief, missions, and Baptist schools.

Jernigan noted that endowments are not just for wealthy Baptists. A relatively small amount of money -- even \$1,000 or less -- can be held in trust with the interest benefiting a Baptist cause, he said.

"If you don't make a will," said Coleman, "the state will take care of your estate for you. But it is not likely that most of us would be satisfied with the distribution the state would make."

Though the Baptist foundations do not themselves write wills for people, most will assist the attorney of someone who wants to leave money to a Baptist cause.

For more information on making a Christian will, contact the office of your state Baptist foundation or the Southern Baptist Foundation in Nashville.

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Heirs and charity can benefit
from careful estate planning

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
12/17/93

NASHVILLE (BP)-- Every adult should have a will, but careful estate planning is especially important for well-to-do Baptists, say financial advisors and estate planners in the Southern Baptist Convention.

"A lot of folks want to take care of their children and surviving spouse up to a point but also leave something to Baptist causes," said Hollis Johnson, president of the Southern Baptist Foundation. "All of this is in the context of taking care of your family first."

Johnson said giving is the "number one motivator" for leaving something to Baptist causes, such as a school, missions program, or local church.

But there is also the motivation of tax advantages -- both for reducing present taxes and eventually reducing inheritance taxes, Johnson noted.

David Coleman, director of development at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, noted that a person may leave an estate to a surviving spouse without an inheritance tax.

"That's the unlimited marital exclusion," he said. But an inheritance tax of from 30 to 50 percent kicks in when the surviving spouse dies and leaves an estate worth more than \$600,000 to the couple's heirs, said Coleman.

Even with such large estates, there are ways to reduce inheritance tax through careful charitable giving, Coleman said, advising would-be donors to contact an attorney that specializes in wills.

Angelina ("Dee Dee") Jackson, legal counsel for the Baptist Foundation of Alabama, agrees about the importance of having an attorney involved. She cautions against quick fixes, such as "will kits" that are available through mail order and retail stores.

"I'm not saying all will kits are bad," Jackson said, "but everybody's situation is different. Every couple or every person I have ever dealt with is different. ... Certain general provisions go into every will, but I don't think you can get a standard will kit that will meet everybody's needs."

Chester Jernigan, vice-president for development at the Alabama foundation, said, "In Christian estate seminars I conduct with attorneys and CPAs, I tell participants, 'For every dollar you spend on this side of death, you may save your family or your estate hundreds or thousands of dollars on the other side of death'."

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People interested in leaving money to a Baptist cause may ask their attorney to contact a state Baptist foundation, said Jernigan. He said although the foundations do not themselves prepare wills, they will work with attorneys in wording paragraphs to incorporate into wills to benefit Baptist causes.

In interviews with Baptist Press, Johnson, Coleman, Jackson, and Jernigan offered the following additional pointers on how to use charitable giving to reduce both present taxes and, eventually, inheritance taxes:

-- Avoid capital gains tax by giving stocks or real estate directly to a charity.

Example: A donor has five acres of land, originally purchased for \$5,000. If the donor sells the property for \$50,000 (planning to give the proceeds to a Baptist cause), a capital gains tax must be paid on \$45,000 -- the difference between \$5,000 and \$50,000.

At the current tax rate of 28 percent, the tax would be \$12,600 -- a substantial reduction in the amount of money available to give charitably.

On the other hand, if the donor gives the property directly to a Baptist cause, the capital gains tax is avoided, and the charity takes responsibility for selling the property and receives all the income from its sale.

-- Spread a charitable tax deduction over five years, if necessary. When itemizing deductions, a taxpayer is limited to 50 percent of adjusted gross income on the current year's tax return. But any excess can be "carried over" and deducted on any of the next five years' tax returns.

-- Consider setting up a trust or annuity that will pay you income during your lifetime and then benefit a charity when you die. The general idea is this: A donor places a large amount of money in trust with a state Baptist foundation, agency, or school, which invests the money and pays income to the donor throughout his lifetime and perhaps to a surviving spouse.

When the donor and surviving spouse die, the money becomes the property of the charity -- either as an outright gift or as funds held "in perpetuity," with interest paid to the charity on an annual basis, from now on.

There are many types of trusts and annuities. Some provide greater tax benefits. Others allow "invasion of principal," if the donor has an unexpected financial need. Some can be amended or changed; others are irrevocable.

For more detailed information, contact the office of your state Baptist foundation or the Southern Baptist Foundation in Nashville.

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Missions gifts can be unusual,
says FMB development director

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
12/17/93

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--David Coleman has seen his share of unusual gifts to missions.

As director of development at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, he has received donations of coin collections, silverware, and gold teeth.

"Actually," said Coleman, with a chuckle, "it costs more to extract the gold from teeth than it's worth."

One year, a Baptist church in Virginia collected pennies to benefit the Lottie Moon Offering for Foreign Missions.

"Several vehicles arrived," said Coleman, "literally loaded to the ground with pennies -- several thousand dollars worth. It was the largest Lottie Moon offering the church had ever raised."

Another time, an elderly woman sent the FMB a diamond engagement ring, which was eventually sold to benefit foreign missions.

"The ring arrived in a regular envelope," Coleman said, "and it had already cut through the paper. It's a wonder the ring wasn't lost."

Some gifts can even be financially hazardous to the health of the charity receiving them.

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Coleman noted that gifts of real estate can expose a charity, such as the FMB, to lawsuits, unless the property is environmentally safe.

"We have to be very, very careful about properties we receive," said Coleman, "because there's a potential liability. Any owner in the lineage of ownership becomes liable for environmental cleanup.

"When the government gets involved, they're going to look for the one with the deepest pockets," he said. "There are some tragic cases where charities are facing liabilities that are worth more than their total organization's assets."

Coleman once heard someone comment, "It sure is hard to give away money" -- and that can be true, particularly if strings are attached.

"Some donors want to create restrictions on money, that it has to be used to start a new program," Coleman noted. "But what happens when that gift money is gone? The program would still have to be funded."

In one such case, the FMB actually had to return several thousand dollars. "That's a tough thing to do," Coleman said.

Coleman has even found himself in the unenviable position of declining an outright donation of money.

One elderly woman wanted to donate \$100,000 to the FMB, but Coleman said, "When I looked at her assets, I realized she would be without financial reserves," he said, "and in good conscience, I had to decline her gift."

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Society, churches more
open to Christian ministry?

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
12/17/93

ATLANTA (BP)--As crime, homelessness and drug abuse have grown in recent years, so have churches' receptiveness to Christian involvement in social ministries, said the Home Mission Board's vice president for ministry.

"We are really in the beginning of a movement of ministry," said Larry Martin, discussing trends affecting such work. "There has been a stronger response to churches ministering outside their own membership than we've experienced in many years."

Martin called ministry a primary area where Christians can gain acceptance in an increasingly secular society. Martin was director of missions for the Greater Boston Baptist Association for nine years before joining the HMB staff.

"Churches throughout the country are relating to people who have no church background and little if any consciousness of the church," he said. "We found in New England (ministry) was by far the best way -- and in many times the only way -- to reach them."

Changes in the business world have also influenced some ministry approaches, he added.

"One of the fastest growing areas of our chaplaincy division is in business and industry," he said. In eight years, the number of chaplains in local United Auto Worker unions has increased from one to more than 200.

Such receptiveness to the spiritual needs of workers represents opportunities for Christians to try new methods for ministry and sharing the gospel, he said. "The message doesn't change, but the methods, of necessity, must change."

During Crossover Houston, the annual soul-winning effort before this year's Southern Baptist Convention, workers recorded many of their professions of faith from block parties.

Evangelistic block parties offer food and clothing ministries in an entertainment setting while people trained in witnessing share the gospel.

In 1994, Southern Baptists will observe Hope for Hurting Humanity, a six-week period from June 19 to July 31 for all churches to be involved in simultaneous ministry projects.

"I think it is providential that it's coming at this time," he said. "I see our role not so much to promote a program as to help influence a whole new movement of ministry."

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Southern Baptists assisting
Somali masses and individuals

By Craig Bird

MOGADISHU, Somalia (BP)--Perhaps someone else would have helped the starving, crippled boy living under the bridge.

But Somalia has thousands of starving, crippled children. So perhaps not.

Perhaps someone else could have reunited an elderly, sick man with his family, separated by civil war, many months and miles. But who can count the families scattered in the nightmare of this African country? So perhaps not.

Perhaps someone else would have dug wells, operated medical clinics and paid for four tons of seed corn so people in one district could plant crops to avoid starvation and death. But many such areas need assistance, and this one is out of the way. So perhaps not.

But because Southern Baptists through the Foreign Mission Board have donated almost \$2 million to help Somalis, and because a handful of anonymous Southern Baptists working with secular aid organizations in Somalia care:

-- Mohammed Hussein, the crippled 12-year-old boy, is no longer starving and can walk without even a stick to support himself;

-- Farah, the elderly man, and his family are together again;

-- In one neglected district of Somalia, the promise of a spectacular corn crop carpets the land, wells are being dug to provide a permanent water supply, and regular medical care is now available.

Perhaps Southern Baptists should forget about Somalia, as so many other Americans would like to do. Perhaps not.

Mohammed either can't remember or won't tell the name of his home village. All he says is: "My mother put me down beside the bath and left me." He doesn't know what happened to his family -- just that "there was a lot of fighting."

An uncle took him to a feeding center near Mogadishu and left him, he said. When a Southern Baptist nurse noticed him begging beside the road, his right leg was drawn at a 45-degree angle -- and he was severely malnourished. He pulled himself with his arms, dragging his legs behind him.

She brought him to Mogadishu and he began eating lunch with the aid of relief team members. One worker gave him an extra bed and invited him to eat breakfast and supper with the worker's family. The nurse had Southern Baptist missionary friends in Kenya with a son Mohammed's size, so they clothed him.

Two operations and hours of massage and physical therapy later, Mohammed can walk almost as well as he can grin. He has progressed beyond a walker, then a stick, and now walks unassisted. He limps, but it's not too limiting.

Mohammed spoke only his tribal language before his rescue, and is now learning Somali. That may be why he shares little about his background.

Or, as the nurse speculates: "If your mother abandoned you when you couldn't walk, would you want to remember it -- or go back to her?"

So, now well-fed and dressed, Mohammed hobbles around the relief agency compound, hitching an occasional ride. Mostly he follows the electrician, with a 12-year-old's fascination. The electrician will train him as an apprentice -- giving him a future after Southern Baptists gave him life.

Farah and his wife and children, meanwhile, joined several other families from their clan fleeing south from Mogadishu in January 1991 to escape the bloodletting sweeping the city. But fighting in the area cut them off for a month. When it let up, Farah's heart problems meant he couldn't travel.

He was left in an almost deserted village, in a hut near a good water supply. For months he survived on his own, scavenging food and buying it when he could. He went three days and nights at one stretch without eating before he saw a man walking on the road with a sack on his back. He was taking dik-diks (a tiny antelope-like creature) to town to sell. Farah bought two of them and cooked them on the spot.

"I ate five and a half pounds of meat and then drank the broth," he claimed.

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The next day two girls from another clan passed by and took pity on him. For several weeks they went to a nearby market, bought camel meat and cooked it for him. He grew strong enough to travel, but before he set off for Mogadishu, his family unknowingly "passed me in the night" and returned to their home because of heavy fighting in the south.

Farah passed through about 30 checkpoints manned by different clans, yet was never questioned. He arrived to see a looted house and terrified neighbors. "They had heard I was dead and thought I was a ghost -- and they knew no one from our clan could travel safely."

But Farah, one of the elder Somali Christians who assisted in the translation of the Somali Bible, declared: "I have the biggest strongest Allah: my God, my Jesus who I love and who loves me and who protected me."

Then it was his turn to ask the hard questions. He had heard of the massacres in Baidoa, where his family had fled. Had the neighbors heard anything of them? As a matter of fact, they had. Not only were they alive, but they were in Mogadishu, nearby.

For nine months they were together. Then fresh fighting forced them to move again. Farah couldn't risk travel. Rival clans were killing men they caught. But women and children were fairly safe. So they separated again.

Finally Farah met an aid worker in a Mogadishu refugee camp where he was treated for gunshot wounds in both arms. "It was a tribal thing," he explained. "Someone just shot through my hut while I was sleeping."

The aid worker, a Southern Baptist, had met some other Southern Baptists who were working at the massive Somali refugee camp in Mandera, Kenya. Maybe they could find out about his family.

Within days they were located. Soon his wife and children were on a United Nations flight to Mogadishu.

That was six months ago. Today when he gets off work, Farah goes home to his wife, son and two daughters. "Twice evil has separated us and twice God has reunited us," he said. "This last time he used Southern Baptists."

Of course, most Somalis who benefit from Southern Baptist aid aren't so directly involved with individual Southern Baptists. Sometimes they are among 4,000 to 5,000 people lining up to get a daily ration of five pounds of grain paid for by Southern Baptists and distributed by a secular aid agency.

Other times, they are 40 or 50 people in a small village waiting for a Southern Baptist nurse (the one who saved Mohammed) to give them medications purchased with Southern Baptist gifts.

And in a handful of villages, miles from a steady water supply, wells are dug by hand to 90 yards deep. The aid group providing concrete pipe and paying workers in food receives grants from the Foreign Mission Board.

Across the area, the green shoots of a new corn crop bear witness to a widespread result of Southern Baptist concern.

"No one was doing anything for this area. But when the Foreign Mission Board made some money available to our aid organization, we could buy and distribute four tons of seed corn," one aid worker said. "If we get two more good rains these people will be safe from famine for a long time."

Perhaps Southern Baptists can't do much in a country like chaotic Somalia. Perhaps they can.

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(BP) photos (three vertical) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outlines available on SBCNet Newsroom.

NOTE TO EDITORS: For security reasons, names and other identifying information in the following story have been altered. But the people and situations described are real.

**Somali Christian baptized
despite persecution risks**

By Craig Bird

MOGADISHU, Somalia (BP)--Abdul was baptized in late November -- less than 100 yards from four Somali Muslims bowing toward Mecca for their afternoon prayers.

Across town, Ali slipped furtively from one hiding place to another. It was the third day since he had been condemned to death by four mosques for passing out Bibles and telling others about Jesus.

If any Somalis outside the small, tightly knit groups of local Christians find out what Abdul did, he could soon be living the same kind of life as Ali.

"I'm not yelling to the whole world what I've done, just telling a few people," Abdul said. "I have hesitated to be baptized for many years. But it is clear in the Bible that Jesus was baptized -- not because he needed to be but as an example we must follow."

Abdul and Ali -- not their real names -- could well be the prototypes of the future for those who join the Somali evangelical Christian community.

One option is to aggressively -- some would say foolishly -- confront the Muslim culture of the country with the claims of Jesus.

The other is to "tell a few people" while building relationships and growing a strong, hardy core of believers. Some would say that lacks boldness.

But, in a country like Somalia, how do you apply the biblical concept of being wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove?

The last official government statistics before the outbreak of civil war in 1990 listed 2,000 Catholics and 1,000 Protestants out of a population of more than 5 million. Evangelicals estimated 600 "believers" in their ranks five years ago, but now say many, perhaps most of those have fled the country.

A consensus among Abdul and his friends is that "probably 100" evangelical Christians live in Mogadishu, the embattled Somali capital. Abdul personally knows only 10. Perhaps 20 have been baptized; the average wait between profession of faith in Christ and immersion is seven years.

This tiny group attracts the interest of Christians on temporary duty in Somali with Western military units, as well as Christians who work for the secular aid organizations now keeping the country alive.

But it also attracts the intense interest of resurgent Muslim fundamentalist forces that have swept the country alongside the looting of Somali warlords.

"Before the war we could dress in Western clothes," said one Muslim woman who befriended some Christian aid workers. "Now we couldn't dare wear anything except traditional dresses or we would be punished."

The same holds true with tolerance of religious differences, according to Abdul. "Before, if you wanted to become a Christian, the government's attitude was, 'Go ahead, just don't bother anyone else.' Most people just thought you were stupid -- but they wouldn't fight you over it," he explained.

Today, newspapers publish public death threats against anyone who abandons Islam for Christianity. It's widely believed that militant Muslim groups from Sudan and Iran have established themselves as enforcement squads in the holy war within the civil war.

Ali already has paid a terrible price, even if his current effort to flee the country succeeds. He had been a Christian for five years when he met some Western Christians who trained him in their style evangelism and supplied him with Bibles. In the past few months he passed out hundreds of copies of Scriptures.

When his pregnant wife resisted pressure to leave him, she and their 4-year-old son were kidnapped. She was forced to have an abortion and, within days, was married to a wealthy Muslim businessman. Bereft of his family, Ali continued to evangelize.

He even gave Bibles to two of his uncles -- who promptly turned him in to Muslim authorities. That Friday, death sentences for blasphemy were proclaimed by the imams of four mosques. Ali returned home to find his house looted. Neighbors warned him "people have been here looking for you every two hours." He fled to the home of another Somali Christian.

"Not only has Ali suffered terrible loss personally, but he's exposing other Somali Christians who now run grave risks by assisting him," one Christian said.

"By ignoring the cultural realities of Somalia, he may die and other Christians may die," the Christian continued. "People interested in hearing the gospel may be intimidated. And what will the church have gained?"

Abdul also stands ready to face persecution for his faith, but he doesn't plan to seek it unnecessarily. He doesn't accept someone's professed Christianity automatically. Because spies are a reality, he exercises great care before telling someone where he lives and works.

Even three Somalis who witnessed his baptism (two of whom were baptized a week earlier) have not been told where most other Christians live. Instead, they will be visited by other believers in their homes and given the chance to prove the sincerity of their newly proclaimed faith.

Numbers aren't firm, but an estimated 75 percent of Somalis who convert to Christianity either revert to Islam under pressure or are killed once it is known what they have done.

"We need time to help new Christians mature and be ready to stand the persecution before too many people know," Abdul added. "I need a strong heart. Pray for me."

He didn't even tell his wife he had become a Christian in 1985 until they had agreed to be married. Then he offered to break the engagement. To his surprise, she was thrilled.

"Oh, I have been a Christian for years but was afraid if I told you you wouldn't marry me," she said.

But she wasn't baptized with her husband. "She's too big right now -- our first baby is due in January," he said. And another friend who was to be immersed with him decided to wait awhile longer.

When, and if, they are baptized, they will have made an overpowering commitment to their faith.

How they live it -- or die for it -- will shape the Christian church in Somalia. Just as Abdul and Ali are shaping it now.

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(BP) photos (two vertical) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Bobbye Rankin: still a
missionary despite 'title'

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
12/17/93

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Crossing an ocean does not a missionary make. Nor does coming back from the other side mean a missionary stops being one.

From the time high school-age Bobbye Rankin voiced her dream of being a missionary teacher during a beauty pageant, she says God has shown her how his missionary plan weaves itself through her life -- whatever her title.

Just months ago, she took on a new title, though unofficial: wife of the president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. She acquired it when Jerry Rankin, her husband of 27 years, was elected FMB president June 14.

Actually, it's been six years since she has held the title of foreign missionary. In 1987 she had to resign after 17 years as a missionary when her husband was elected to the FMB staff as area director and based in Singapore to administer mission work in Southern Asia and the Pacific.

Still, she's no less a missionary now than she's ever been. "I definitely do have a call on my life, and that call hasn't been revoked," she said.

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In 1982, when the Rankins took a mission assignment in Thailand, they left Indonesia after 12 years. Since they went to Indonesia expecting to retire from there, she felt a great loss at being separated from the work that had become so much a part of her.

But God showed her then that -- even with new responsibilities -- she would always have a role in Indonesia as a missionary who could pray intelligently about needs there.

In her new life in Richmond nerve center of Foreign Mission Board worldwide outreach, she plans a similar prayer role -- only this time for the entire mission field. She also plans to confront Southern Baptists with the needs of a dark world.

"I feel God has equipped us by helping us to see the world and putting it on our hearts," she said. "One of my main roles will be to become informed about all our missionaries so I can pray for them and encourage other people to pray."

The Rankins are buying a house less than a block from the Foreign Mission Board's main building. They sought a home with an open floor plan to allow them to entertain guests from around the world. Throughout their missionary career, hospitality has been one of her loves.

But her ministry has never stopped there. On the mission field, she also helped start churches, led Bible studies for Muslim women, taught seminary extension and English classes, and led in student work.

In fact, she found the missionary wife role particularly liberating. "The title 'church and home' missionary ... is not an excuse to be uninvolved with people overseas," she said.

"When I first arrived on the mission field, I was challenged by missionary homemakers whom I considered role models. I saw what fruitful ministries they had even though they would not ever be called, quote, 'professionals.'"

Many missionary wives she served with in Indonesia were trained as nurses. While some might consider their talents wasted, Rankin finds it refreshing they chose to design ministries around their home.

She studied to be a schoolteacher and taught in Texas before missionary appointment in 1970. But she became a full-time mother after the first of her two children was born in 1968.

Her views about women and the role of wives seem to fly in the face of modern-day theory. But they have worked in her family to provide the backbone for a fruitful missionary partnership and to rear two children who have gone on to their own productive lives.

"A woman is naturally a nurturer of relationships," said Rankin.

"I see this as one of our strongest resources on the mission field, that our women have such strong relational skills. Women have such needs of relationships that they're eager to reach out to others who need relationships. It's one of her greatest assets, because she becomes a relational lifestyle minister."

Like her husband, Rankin, the former Bobbye Ann Simmons of Brookhaven, Miss., grew up in a family with faith. Born the second child to educator parents -- a high school principal father and teacher mother -- she said there was never any question about her attending college.

In high school, where she graduated as valedictorian, she excelled at everything from basketball to Future Homemakers of America (FHA) -- and even was picked as a national FHA committee member representing Mississippi. Encouraged by her father, she concentrated on public speaking, at first in church prayer meetings and training union.

As a freshman at Mississippi College, she became active in the Baptist Student Union and made her debut in student government -- quite by accident -- with her election as freshman dorm president. She was campaigning for a new friend when she heard her name had been written in on the ballot. She won.

Before graduating a semester early with distinction, she was secretary of the Women's Affairs Board, counselor for two years to the freshman dorm and a BSU summer missionary in Hawaii.

She also won contests for Miss Mississippi College and Homecoming Queen. And she won the heart of Jerry Rankin.

She remembers as a freshman wearing a red dress of raw silk the day they were introduced on the steps of the library. He didn't ask her out until the next year. That's when her roommate's fiance told Jerry at lunch one day that -- even though everyone thought she was serious about another boy she was seen with frequently -- in fact she would like to be considered available.

The way he tells it, he left his unfinished lunch right there and went to call her. They married about two years later, the same month she graduated, and they set out on a path which led to the mission field.

Nearly seven years later, more than two years into their missionary career, they got word her father had been killed in an auto accident. It culminated months of other heartaches and struggles -- like many missionaries face -- that would have sent some fleeing from the field.

But they never considered it.

And even now, without the title, Bobbye Rankin is still a missionary.

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(BP) photo (vertical) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Saving marriages is fervent mission
of 'Ethics and Religion' columnist

Baptist Press
12/17/93

By Terri Lackey

NASHVILLE (BP)--Saving marriages is not Mike McManus' only passion, but it certainly is one of his most fervent. The journalist/marriage-for-life protagonist is taking on the religious establishment and charging it with neglect.

Saving marriages "is not the job of the government; it is not the job of the school; it's the job of the church," McManus told a group of Southern Baptist Convention leaders in Nashville recently for annual meetings. McManus is writer of the nationally syndicated column, "Ethics and Religion."

"Certainly the church is helping fight the epidemic (of divorce), but not as effectively as it could," McManus wrote in a special supplement to the "National & International Religion Report."

"Many pastors sidestep tough topics like chastity, cohabitation and divorce, even though secular evidence supports a biblical position on these issues.

"We have a strange paradox in the United States," he told state discipleship and family ministry directors at the Baptist Sunday School Board. "We have more people in church than any other modern nation. Gallup says two-thirds of our people are members of a church.

"And 42 percent are in church on Sunday, yet we have the highest divorce rates, the highest teen pregnancy rates and the highest crime rates. We seem to have all this religiosity and no demonstration of that religion."

McManus said Tennessee, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Nevada, Wyoming, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas have some of the highest divorce rates in the country.

"The states with the highest divorce rates are in the South," said McManus, who can spew off indicting statistics about divorce that he hopes will motivate churches to take action.

"Sixty percent of American children born today will see their parents divorced by the time they are 18. Of those children who have suffered this pain of divorce, half of them will see a second divorce before they are 18," McManus said.

Other statistics McManus routinely quotes are:

- Six out of 10 n w marriages will end in divorce or separation.
- One million children will see their parents divorce this year.
- One-half of new marriages annually are remarriages.
- Seventy-five percent of remarriages fail.

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McManus is not boldly spouting stats with no solution. He has a battle plan for what he calls his "War on Divorce."

"America's pastors, priests and rabbis have access to U.S. marriages, but less than 20 percent of all American couples have had any premarital counseling," he said.

A member of Fourth Presbyterian Church in Bethesda, Md., McManus has traveled to at least 25 cities from Fairbanks, Alaska, and Modesto, Calif., to Nashville and Atlanta touting his "Community Marriage Policy." Twenty have committed to the policy.

Essentially, the policy is an effort to join the forces of area clergy from several denominations in signing a community contract that would radically reduce the divorce rate, he said. He believes the answer lies in ecumenical cooperation.

The rules of the community marriage contract include several actions.

- Require engaged couples to undergo a minimum of four months of marriage preparation, completing a premarital inventory that identifies areas of conflict in the relationship.

- Enlist mentor couples in the congregation to work with engaged newlywed couples.

- Encourage engaged and married couples to attend weekend encounters.

- Appoint a committee of attorneys to draft possible changes in marriage and divorce laws.

McManus' Community Marriage Policy works off principles he has uncovered during years of research. He's even written a book, "Marriage Savers," that outlines his strategy for reducing the number of divorces in America.

In his book, McManus targets trial marriage as one catalyst to divorce. Those who cohabit before marriage are about 50 percent more likely to end up in divorce than those who don't, he said.

"Sixty percent of all couples married today live together first. Of those people who cohabit, 40 percent don't marry," he cited. "Of those who marry, 45 percent will divorce before year 10."

McManus believes cohabitation is the reason the number of never-married adults has doubled from 21 million in 1970 to 42 million today.

"Some people live with partner A, B and C, then wind up not married at 37, and they wonder why," McManus said.

McManus' personal interest in saving marriages came in the 10th year of his marriage to Harriet. He was traveling to work in another state, staying away for a week at a time. When he came home, McManus said he didn't seem to have time for his family.

After a year of that type of work schedule, a member of their church "suggested a marriage encounter weekend that makes a good marriage better." Harriet did not want to go, and McManus said he didn't feel the need.

Finally, after much urging and promising their way would be paid (an integral part of the "Encounter" program), the couple agreed to go to the marriage encounter weekend where they spent time communicating and "falling in love again."

In their 28th year of marriage, the McManuses have been mentors to about 20 newly married couples and trained more than 20 couples to become mentors. In the Encounter program, mentors must be married a minimum of 20 years, he said.

In the back of his book, McManus offers several programs that deal with marriage preparation for engaged couples, strengthening already good marriages and saving seriously troubled marriages.

McManus is presently writing another book, "25 Proven Ways to Prevent Divorce," to be released through the Baptist Sunday School Board's FamilyTouch imprint in July 1994.

The board also is offering a Marriage Savers Video Series to help church leaders know how to address the issues and needs of persons who are dating, engaged and newly married; estranged couples; separated and divorced couples; and remarried/blended families.

The Marriage Savers Video Series contains six 30-minute videos, a leader's guide, McManus' "Marriage Savers" book and a "Marriage Insurance" book. The video series will be available in February.

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(BP) photo of McManus, a copy of the special supplement to the National and International Religion Report, which outlines McManus' "Marriage Savers" book will be mailed to state Baptist newspapers. A seven-part series for use by state Baptist newspaper editors based on the "Marriage Savers" book will be put on SBCNet Newsroom at the first of the week of Dec. 20.

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