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Rwanda missionaries relocate
to Tanzania to help refugees

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
5/24/94

BUKOKA, Tanzania (BP)--Following your heart doesn't often take you into a nightmare.

But if your heart belongs to Rwanda, the path can lead into the middle of hundreds of thousands of refugees who have fled the bloodstained country for the relative safety of neighboring Tanzania.

That's exactly the situation for the 11 Southern Baptist missionaries assigned to Rwanda. Less than six weeks after evacuating Rwanda for Nairobi, Kenya, the missionaries voted to relocate en masse in Bukoba in western Tanzania by the end of May to work in refugee camps strung along the border.

Meanwhile, the Rwanda and Tanzania missionaries, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board staff and representatives of the Florida Baptist Convention are planning refugee relief efforts following two survey trips to assess needs.

"It's hard to deal with the things we saw -- the bodies floating in the rivers, people starving en route to the refugee camps, fear in the eyes of orphans -- but not as hard as wanting to help and being unable to," explained Rwanda missionary Larry Randolph, who went on both trips.

Exactly what they will do remains unclear. Southern Baptist missionaries in Tanzania have submitted a proposal to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees to use educational and language skills of the Rwanda missionaries -- backed up by their Tanzania colleagues, local pastors and laity.

Jimmy Foster of Richmond, Va., head of the Foreign Mission Board's human needs department, made an emergency trip to assess the situation and determine how Southern Baptists can financially underwrite the effort. At the same time, the Florida Baptist Convention, which was already in a partnership with Tanzanian Baptists, is launching a special offering for Rwandan refugees.

The proposal the Southern Baptists submitted to the U.N. refugee commission offers assistance in:

- staffing and funding a supplemental feeding program for "vulnerable groups" such as orphans, the elderly, widows and handicapped;
- supplying water purification units for clinics, hospitals and supplemental feeding sites;
- supplying the services of a veterinarian, a nurse and a social worker (all Rwanda missionaries).

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- taking census of the refugees and helping reunite scattered families;
- providing utensils such as dishes, basins and hoes; and
- distributing supplementary packets (coined "Baptist bags") of basic personal hygiene and dietary products and other articles to make the refugees feel more like individuals instead of just a number to be fed and housed.

"Even if we're not allowed in the camps we still intend to do ministry," said John Crews, who coordinates human needs for Tanzania missionaries. "We can pass out 'Baptist bags' and offer counseling inside or outside the camps.

"We also want to set up worship centers where missionaries and Tanzanian pastors can preach and witness and operate recreational programs, show videos and teach literacy and nutrition," he said. "With the vast needs it will be a matter of deciding how to use the people and resources available."

Foster urged the missionaries to "try to stay on the delivery end of relief work so you can be in touch with the people," and to take an approach which allows Baptists to move from emergency relief to long-term development.

"Six months from now many of the relief agencies now here raising funds and putting together programs will be gone to the next crisis spot," he said. "But Baptists are known for going the distance. It's important that we commit to being around to help these people for as long as they need us."

Southern Baptist personnel, both missionaries and volunteers, are in place or on the way. Funding, through the Foreign Mission Board and through the Florida Baptist Convention offering, is a bigger variable.

Southern Baptists who want to help make a difference "can continue to pray for the Rwandan people and they can provide financial support for hunger and general relief," said John Faulkner, FMB administrator for eastern and southern Africa.

"The FMB is ready to commit as many budgeted funds as we are able, but much of the basic cost will be borne by the relief budget, which is funded by special gifts from Southern Baptists who care about what's happening to people half a world away from them."

"We've grieved at the tragic human suffering in Rwanda and initially saw it as devastating to our work and ministries when the missionaries had to evacuate," added Jerry Rankin, who is visiting missionaries in Africa on his first overseas tour since becoming president of the Foreign Mission Board.

"But as is often the case, this has opened up even greater opportunities for ministry. We're glad Rwanda and Tanzania missionaries have the vision and commitment to minister to refugees and are looking to Southern Baptists to respond with the resources needed to do their job."

Most of the world's attention is focused on Nagara, Tanzania, which almost overnight became "the world's largest refugee camp" when 250,000 people fled the ethnic slaughter.

But Southern Baptists also are looking at four camps north of Nagara where 75,000 homeless, frightened and disheartened refugees have sought refuge.

"We visited Nagara first, but many relief agencies were already there," Randolph said. "But when we got to the Karagwe District, it seemed natural to focus there because Tanzania missionary Rob Moor already has relationships with the local government and the needs there are just as great or greater."

Also, Moor has identified 20 Tanzania Baptist pastors and laymen in the area who speak Rwandan -- a major bonus since the Rwandans' second language is usually French while Tanzanians speak Swahili and English.

Moor made his first trip April 20 into the area where the Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda borders meet, 10 days after the demons of ethnic bloodletting broke loose in Rwanda. Local government officials told him there were too few Rwandans to worry about.

But three days later more than 15,000 had crossed the swampy river bottom. He began making contact with U.N. refugee commission, writing budgets and suggesting projects. He also became the prime resource person for Rwanda missionaries languishing in Nairobi.

Four Rwanda missionaries met him in early May at the border -- Randolph, Vernon Sivage, Stan Lee and David Hooten. For three days they toured the camps, visited refugees and discussed future plans.

Meanwhile Foster grabbed a plane to Kenya. He and Faulkner met May 12 with the four emotionally and physically exhausted men back from Tanzania and the rest of the Rwanda missionaries.

By May 16, Randolph, Foster, Moor and Crews were surveying Tanzania again to draw up more concrete plans. The Florida Baptist Convention sent Hugh Cater to join the missionaries and Floridian Tom Harper, on-site coordinator for the Tanzania-Florida Baptist missions partnership. Cater coordinates disaster relief and overseas mission partnerships for Florida Baptists.

On a hectic trip the team found a lot had happened since the first survey team had passed through the week before.

"Then the numbers coming across were 400-600 a day," Moor said. "On the drive up we were thrilled that the river was no longer filled with bodies and thought things were improving."

Instead, they were told the numbers had jumped to 2,000-3,000 new refugees a day checking into the northern camps. Reports had reached U.N. officials that 20,000 Rwandans were trying to find their way across swamps in the game park famed as the home of the mountain gorillas featured in the movie "Gorillas in the Mist."

The men talked to scores of refugees. Every one reported they had lost family members. Almost all said they would never willingly go back to Rwanda.

That leaves a big job of relief in Tanzania. It can only be accomplished if the world responds to the mass of grieving, destitute, hungry men, women and children who fled a massacre claiming up to 500,000 lives.

In other words, Southern Baptists -- like the Rwanda missionaries -- also have an opportunity to follow their hearts.

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Bird, Baptist Press correspondent for Africa, accompanied the Southern Baptist survey team to assess the needs of refugees fleeing into Tanzania from Rwanda. (BP) photos (4 vertical and 2 horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press to accompany story above and sidebar entitled "Who would relief aid for refugees help?" Cutlines available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Who would relief aid
for refugees help?

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
5/24/94

KAYANGA, Tanzania (BP)--Who would benefit from Southern Baptist aid to Rwandan refugees?

-- Thousands of orphans who have been brought into Tanzania by people who found them wandering through the dense bush of the border area. As a survey team of Southern Baptist missionaries drove toward a river May 16, they met a man and woman walking with six children in tow. Another child, too young to walk, perched on the man's weary shoulders.

The group had just crossed 10 miles of swamp to get into Tanzania. "No," the man replied when asked if all the children were his. "We picked up four during the three weeks we were in the bush. They're all orphans, like this baby here. We had to bring them with us or they would have died."

-- Grieving, destitute families like the one the survey team met at the edge of the swamp. Thirteen were in the group -- eight fewer than when they left their Rwandan village almost a month before. The others died en route to the safety of the refugee camp.

Even when Tanzania was in sight things were tough. A local boatman agreed to take them across the swamp and river -- but at a price. The bicycle they had struggled to carry through the bush was almost enough to pay the fare. The addition of a piece of cloth got them across the water.

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-- The man recovering from a machete wound to the head. His physical wounds will heal faster and cleaner than his emotional scars. He was forced to watch his wife and nine children be hacked to death before he was attacked himself and left for dead.

-- Once hard-working, self-sufficient farmers who had to trade their dignity to survive. There are no fields to plow now, no cows to milk. Just the degrading existence of depending on strangers to provide shelter, food and medical care.

-- Tens of thousands -- if not hundreds of thousands -- of refugees who wonder where God is in all of this, or if anyone cares for them. Refugees who may be ready to see if Jesus Christ really does care for all those who are weary and heavy laden.

Contributions for Rwandan Refugee Relief may be sent to human needs department at the Foreign Mission Board, P.O. Box. 6767, Richmond, VA 23230.

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(BP) photos (4 vertical and 2 horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press to accompany story above and main Rwanda refugee story entitled "Rwanda missionaries move to Tanzania to help refugees." Outlines available on SBCNet Newsroom.

SBC to be challenged to adopt
racism repentance statement

By Dennis L. Sanders

Baptist Press
5/24/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--A document calling for the Southern Baptist Convention to repent of its involvement in racism will be presented at the 13 Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Directors of Missions session in Orlando, Fla., with the hope it will be approved by the SBC in 1995, the 150th anniversary of the convention.

Called the "Declaration of Repentance," the document is the result of a meeting of 15 directors of missions and ministers from large urban areas in Atlanta last October. The attendees appointed a Race Reconciliation Taskforce that drafted the document.

The declaration's introduction states Southern Baptists are becoming increasingly diverse, with the convention making inroads to the African American community. However, the declaration continues, many African Americans still view the convention as racist because of such past stances on the issue of race including its early position in favor of slavery and an unwillingness to take a decisive stance on civil rights.

"This negative perception is an obstacle toward our efforts to evangelize, plant churches, and minister among Black people, especially for those called to minister in the metropolitan cities," it states.

The body of the declaration includes a definition of and a call to reject racism and statement of repentance which reads: "We publicly repent and apologize to all persons of African descent for condoning and perpetuating individual and systemic racism in our lifetime. Though we may not have personally participated in such distant acts of evil (i.e. slavery), we continue to reap the bittersweet harvest of the resulting inequality."

It continues, "Therefore, we ask for the forgiveness of our brothers and sisters of African descent. ... We believe racism negates the liberating and reconciling work of Christ. It is therefore our fervent hope that by acknowledging and repenting of the sins of the past we will be freed to live in justice and peace in the present."

The document also contains a resolve for directors of missions, among other things, to develop multicultural dialog groups consisting of African Americans and whites and to encourage the convening of a convocation of Southern Baptist black leaders and directors of missions to discuss these issues in 1996.

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Penny Hildreth-Ellis, former minister of Christian education at New Faith Baptist Church in Chicago and a member of the task force, said she would like to see the document passed by the SBC in 1995 but is doubtful it will be passed, citing the ongoing struggles taking place in the SBC and the past history of having strong statements on racism reduced to generic pronouncement on the matter. "If it's passed, it will be an act of God," she said.

But Hildreth-Ellis said she hopes the declaration's impact will be felt individually and at the associational level. Of the 12 urban associations located where 42 percent of all African Americans in the nation live, 11 directors of missions have signed on to the statement.

Kenneth Chadwick, president of the Conference of Associational Directors of Missions, expressed mixed feelings on how the declaration will be received at its meeting in Orlando prior to the June 14-16 SBC annual meeting. While he said he does not believe there will be much resistance, he said he is unsure how people will respond to it.

In addition to its presentation at the directors of missions conference, the two candidates for the presidency of the SBC, pastors Fred Wolfe of Alabama and Jim Henry of Florida, are being invited to respond to the document at a gathering of the African American Fellowship in Orlando the same day of its initial presentation, June 13.

A spokesperson for the SBC Christian Life Commission said he believes Southern Baptists have made significant progress in the last quarter century in the arena of racial unity but more still needs to be done.

"The Christian Life Commission has long fought against the evil of racism in all its shameful forms," said Louis Moore, CLC director of media and product development.

Joe Ratliff, pastor of Houston's Brentwood Baptist Church and president of the African American Fellowship, said while the fellowship endorses the declaration he believes similar statements of repentance should be made to other ethnic groups as well.

When asked of the document's chances to be adopted by the convention, he echoed Hildreth-Ellis' doubt. The church reflects the political climate of the country, he commented, and at present the climate is not one of reconciliation. The nation, he noted, is more polarized than it has been for 20 years.

Besides Hildreth-Ellis, the other members of the task force are Jere Allen, executive director of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention in Washington; Mike Fahey, director of metropolitan missions for the Baltimore Baptist Association; and Delroy Reid-Salmon, pastor of Grace Chapel, Bronx, N.Y.

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Sanders is a free-lance writer in Washington.

True Love Waits organizer
notes effort's goals, history By Russell N. Dilday

Baptist Press
5/24/94

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--True Love Waits has accomplished one of its two primary goals, affirmed one of the campaign's originators, Richard Ross, but achievement of the second "is yet to be realized."

"The first goal was to bring a positive challenge of abstinence to unmarried Christian teen-agers," said Ross, youth ministry consultant for the Baptist Sunday School Board. "I think that goal has been realized far more effectively than we ever dreamed.

"There have been hundreds of thousands of teen-agers who have made a formal commitment to abstinence," he detailed, "and hundreds of thousands more who have heard this challenge for the first time and are giving it serious thought. In fact, that number could well be in the millions."

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He said the second goal is for the campaign "to make a moral impact on the conscience of the nation. They must have evidence. That evidence is signed pledge cards on display June 14 at the Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando and July 29 on the Washington Mall near the U.S. Capitol." The Washington celebration, he said, will include 24 other denominations and Christian organizations that have chosen to participate in True Love Waits.

Ross emphasized that measurable proof is essential to make an impact on America. "I believe that adult society in general has significantly underestimated the willingness of teen-agers to make a commitment to abstinence. And the only thing that will make an impact on those adults is seeing concrete evidence that hundreds of thousands of teen-agers have gladly made that commitment."

Ross also detailed some of the factors that contributed to the campaign, which was introduced in April 1993. "The vision for True Love Waits grew out of the development of the Christian sex education resources. It was the team that developed the sex education resources who birthed True Love Waits.

"From the very beginning, it was our perception that the most practical action a church can take to help teen-agers keep a True Love Waits commitment would be for churches to equip parents and youth leaders to take teen-agers through this study," Ross recounted.

He said after the materials were completed, the team met to decide whether to disband. "The group had a strong sense that somehow their work was not done. They felt that as strong as the materials would be, some further challenge must be presented to young people."

In the days that followed, he said, the TLW campaign was mapped out on cafeteria napkins as the members came together to share ideas. "When I presented the framework to (BSSB president) Dr. (Jimmy) Draper, he asked for a written report. We had to hurriedly type it up, for all we had were stacks of napkins. From that stack of napkins came the design to carry the message to teen-agers."

He said no formal market testing of the campaign was performed, but informal testing proved successful. Ross, also minister of youth at Tulip Grove Baptist Church in a Nashville suburb, presented the plan to the youth group. "A large percentage of the group willingly and enthusiastically made the commitment."

He acknowledged the success of the campaign "surprised" him. "I expected TLW to be well-received by many Southern Baptist churches. I never expected it to be adopted by so great a majority of Southern Baptist churches nor ever envisioned that this would be a dream shared by 24 other denominations and Christian organizations," he said. "And I would never have imagined that it would spread to 150 other countries around the world.

"It has been obvious all during the process that God had a design and scope for this campaign that we simply discovered piece by piece," he added. "There is no precedent for TLW in terms of the coalition of denominations that have joined Southern Baptists in the endeavor nor is there a precedent for the positive media coverage related to a Southern Baptist media campaign."

More than 400 news organizations have carried the True Love Waits story, he said. Based on media inquiries to date, Ross said "scores" of reporters are expected to be on hand at both national True Love Waits events.

"They will either report on a surprising turn by teen-agers toward abstinence or they will focus on how the campaign failed to meet its goal," he said. "The choice is ours and it comes down to whether churches, Christian organizations and individuals send in their covenant cards for use in the displays."

Defending the use of signed commitment cards, Ross noted, "I have been asked by a number of journalists about the significance of the card. Some have viewed it as a legal contract or document." He said the card "is simply a communication tool" and is "a way to make their voices heard in a time of moral crisis in our nation."

H said future plans for True Love Waits includ "a continuing effort to challenge new youth who promote into the youth group, teenagers who join churches, and an annual emphasis to str nngthen the resolve of teen-agers who have made a commitment to stay true to that commitment."

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Young cites '93 SBC in Houston
as high point of his tenure

By Toby Druin

Baptist Press
5/24/94

HOUSTON (BP)--The 1993 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston has been the highlight of his two years as SBC president, said H. Edwin Young.

"There was a wonderful feeling in Houston," he said in a telephone interview with the Texas newsjournal Baptist Standard. "I felt a wonderful spirit there; it was a real turning point I felt God did his business in our lives at that meeting."

Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston, said he would like to duplicate the feeling with his experience at the 1994 meeting in Orlando, Fla., June 14-16, but with a two-way race for president, a recurring controversy over Freemasonry, anger over the firing of Russell Dilday as Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary president and opposition to policies of the Clinton administration, he isn't counting on it.

Young wraps up two years as SBC president in the Florida convention city. He said he is glad it is over.

"It's been a challenging two years," he said, "but I am thankful the end is in sight."

Being president of the almost 16-million-member convention is difficult, Young acknowledged.

"You get cards and letters and phone calls on every issue," he said. "Every church is autonomous and feels it is at the very center of what is going on. And they feel that they have the president of the convention to write, call, ask to appear in court, to be moderator or intercessor.

"It is a frustrating thing. Some things you are not qualified to do and by the nature of the office it's not what you should be asked to do."

He has talked with former SBC presidents about the problem, he said, and believes it is increasing. "There is now so much litigation involving churches, so much tension. The forces of light and darkness have drawn sharp lines."

The demands of the SBC presidency today are such, Young said, that he questions if a person without adequate secretarial help could do it. He said he has tried to handle his church responsibilities first and then spend Mondays and part of Tuesdays on convention matters, answering calls and letters. When he was working on his appointments to key SBC committees, he said he was on the phone for three or four days a month.

He said he is pleased with his appointments to the committees on committees, resolutions, tellers and credentials. He said he sought input from others, particularly state executive directors, and used many of their recommendations.

Young said he expects several issues to surface at the convention in Orlando.

"I really hope and pray that the situation at Southwestern Seminary, which is on everyone's agenda right now, will clear up in the months ahead," he said.

He has talked to deposed President Russell Dilday and his wife, Betty, has wished them the best "and I know God has great plans to use him," Young said. There were tensions for years at the seminary, he added, and "it may be a real relief" for Dilday to be out from under the pressure.

Young said he does not believe there was any "Machiavellian plan" to ask for Dilday's resignation, but expects motions or resolutions in Orlando to address the firing and/or the way it was done, possibly a request for the recall or replacement of the trustees.

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"We are researching the records (about such matters), and I will rule fairly," Young said.

He said he expects the Freemasonry issue to come before the convention again, attempting to position the SBC through motions or resolutions. And the positions taken by President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore, which dominated business sessions in 1993, are expected to come up again.

Young said he regretted that two of his friends, "two super guys," Jim Henry of First Baptist in Orlando, and Fred Wolfe of Cottage Hill Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., will be vying for the presidency.

"I would have hoped that only one would run and not both of them," he said, "but maybe it's time (for more than one nominee). But I hope we haven't re-politicized it (the presidential election process) again."

Young said he doesn't anticipate anything, but it is possible that some action might be proposed regarding the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, though he doesn't consider it a threat. "We have several churches with budgets larger than theirs," he said.

As to his personal feelings about the CBF, he said, "I have said before that anybody who is winning people to Jesus Christ, I am on their side. But I do think that those who are going to use this vehicle for giving their mission gifts need to withdraw and build their own thing. You can't have it both ways. If this is another denomination, let it be another denomination and to God be the glory."

Young called together several study groups at the outset of his presidency to make proposals in a variety of areas. The work of those groups was turned over to the SBC Executive Committee for follow-through. He was thrilled with what they did, he said, and feels he had a part in "a lot of things that are in the incubator stage."

He praised the "turnaround" made at the Baptist Sunday School Board the last two years, noting improvement in literature and quality of materials produced. "What they have done is phenomenal," he said, "and Jerry Rankin at the Foreign Mission Board is doing the same thing, restructuring, getting us back to principles."

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Teen-age cancer patient's
salvation sparks revival

By Russell N. Dilday

Baptist Press
5/24/94

AUGUSTA, Ark. (BP)--Morgan Cox, pastor of First Baptist Church in Augusta, Ark., is convinced ministry and evangelism are inseparable. That belief was confirmed recently as he witnessed a revival in the church that sprang from one evangelistic visit.

Cox said that several months ago a church member related the need to visit Tommy (not his real name), a 14-year-old Little Rock resident being treated for cancer at Children's Hospital in Little Rock. "I went to see Tommy, shared the gospel with him for about an hour and he was saved," said Cox.

But the story of the church's revival was only beginning. "Tommy and his family moved to Augusta," Cox related. "And they moved into a home one block from our church."

After the family moved in, Cox asked Tommy's mother and father, Jerry and Pam, to visit his office at the church, "and they were gloriously saved." The list of conversions kept growing as the parents told friends and family members about Christ.

"Jerry then brought his daughter Linda to the office and Linda was saved," Cox said. "Pam then called and said she had been talking to a friend, Sue, about Christ. I'd given Pam a marked New Testament and she used it in leading Sue to the Lord. I went with her and talked to Sue and it became evident that she had been saved."

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Others won to faith in Christ in the next few months included Tommy's grandmother, an uncle, an aunt, Pam's friend and a cousin.

The church was scheduled to have a revival, Cox said, "but I was about to call the evangelist and tell him there was probably no need to have a scheduled revival because God had already brought a revival to our church on his own."

"We had been praying for revival for a solid year," he recalled. "We'd been praying extremely hard and it should not have shocked us that we had it. We told God we wanted his perfect will to be done and if his will included people being saved, we were for it.

"We went ahead and had the revival," he said. "And we never expected what happened every night of the revival. The church was packed to capacity and we had to put chairs in the aisle.

"The first night I didn't even have counselors available because I didn't expect what happened," said Cox. "During the revival we saw 20 people saved and one rededication. Out of all of the people that were saved, 11 or 12 were relatives or acquaintances of this family."

He said family members packed into a van and cars to "average bringing in 20 to 30 people to the revival every night."

He said it is "wonderful to see how God has poured out his Spirit on this extended family. They have been so obedient to the Scriptures and I cannot praise God enough for their dedication and enthusiasm for the Lord."

Clarence Shell, director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention evangelism department, said the Augusta revival is a good example of how evangelism and ministry go hand in hand.

Sharing one's faith can be easy, Shell said, when people "discover who the evangelistic prospects are, build relationships with them by caring and share the good news of salvation with them."

"We are aware most people have a fear of sharing with others," he commented. "This can only be overcome as they realize God does not give us a spirit of fear but of love, but it can only come as one makes a commitment to be available to the Lord."

"During the 15 months I've been here, I've seen 44 people go through the baptismal waters," Cox recounted. "I have to believe that is a revival, not just a natural occurrence of events. God says if we sow the seeds, he shall bring the harvest and I truly believe we have seen a wonderful harvest."

Cox said he doesn't want any of the credit for the revival. "There is nothing more discouraging than to hear a minister of the gospel boast about leading people to Christ. I just hope that this will be a source of inspiration and encouragement to anyone who reads this and that God will be glorified for the wonderful things he has done and is continuing to do."

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Southern grads advised to heed
God when 'easy answers' fail

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
5/24/94

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--God's call to Christian ministry is a summons that "sets you on a journey," church historian Timothy George told graduates at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

George, dean of Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham Ala., said such a call is required to "get you through those hard nights when there are no easy answers." The former Southern Seminary professor addressed approximately 220 graduates at the Louisville, Ky., seminary's 173rd commencement May 20.

In his address, George compared the call of Christian ministers to the call of Abraham and Sarah in the Old Testament. They received "a call that came to them from outside themselves," he said. "They were not just getting in touch with their true feelings. This was an objective summons that demanded a personal response."

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Abraham and Sarah set out on the journey not knowing where they were going, said George. While emphasizing ministers must not doubt central theological convictions, George maintained God often calls ministers to a life filled with uncertainties. He cautioned against planning a ministry based on "our own abilities and things that are passing away." Instead, he urged graduates to enter a journey from "carnal certainty to triumphant trust."

George said God's call also leads people on a journey from "security to vulnerability" and from the "ephemeral to the eternal." He exhorted graduates to invest their lives in eternal things such as God's Word, the gospel, God's purposes and the church.

God's call to a journey is a call to an ultimate destination, noted George. "We're looking for a city whose builder and maker is God," he declared. "That's what your ministry is all about."

During commencement, William B. Rogers, professor of Christian education at Southern, was presented the Findley B. and Louvenia Edge Award for Teaching Excellence. The award, named for a retired Christian education professor at Southern Seminary and his wife, is presented annually to a Southern professor. The selection is made by a committee composed of students, faculty and alumni.

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You're never 'too little'
for God, Crews tells grads

By Cameron Crabtree

Baptist Press
5/24/94

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Success in ministry depends not on who you are or where you serve but whether God chooses to bless you, William O. Crews told graduates of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary at commencement ceremonies May 20.

Golden Gate Seminary awarded degrees to 115 men and women representing 21 states and 10 foreign countries. With three campuses along the West Coast and 25 Ethnic Leadership Development centers in western states, Golden Gate is one of six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries and the only SBC agency in the West.

Crews, president of Golden Gate, used the Old Testament Book of Joshua to show God uses people who are weak, who are wise enough to be guided by his Word and who are willing to let God use them.

"Many of us become too big for God to use, but you never become too little for God to use," he said. "God can bless you where you're weak.

"It is not your giftedness that impresses him," he added. "It ought to amaze all of us that God can use any of us."

Christian leaders must measure their ministry by biblical standards, Crews noted: "We Baptists are well known for talking about the Word of God, but we are notoriously poor at 'doing' the Word of God. A ministry built upon the principles of God's book will succeed no matter who you are."

Ministers also must be willing to let God use them, he said.

"Your temptation will be your willingness to consider the will of God, but God asks you to do his will," Crews said.

During the spring ceremonies, the seminary faculty awarded the annual Harold K. Graves Award, named in honor of the seminary's retired president, to Clayton K. Harrop, retiring as vice president for academic affairs and member of the faculty after 39 years.

In addition, graduating student James Simmons was awarded the annual President's Award for Excellence in Leadership. Simmons is a chaplain at Marin General Hospital and pastoral intern at Petaluma (Calif.) Valley Baptist Church.

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