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95-189

OHIO--Prayer quietly contributed to Bosnian peace agreement.  
VIRGINIA--Southern Baptist relief aid headed to Bosnia, Croatia.  
PENNSYLVANIA--16 Baptist colleges honored for character development.  
IRELAND--ISC couple in Ireland finds God at work among Catholics.  
TENNESSEE--Rebecca St.James learned servanthood with family.

Prayer quietly contributed  
to Bosnian peace agreement

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press  
11/27/95

DAYTON, Ohio (BP)--Untold hours of intense negotiations for a Bosnian peace agreement were quietly buttressed by the prayers of Christians especially in southwestern Ohio, where the talks were taking place at Wright Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton.

One example of the intercession occurred at First Baptist Church, Fairborn, the Southern Baptist church nearest the base.

At the conclusion of Sunday morning worship Nov. 19, one of the church's Sunday school teachers went forward to request prayer.

The teacher related that a member of his class involved with the negotiation's logistics had asked the Sunday school class to pray because "something would happen in the next two days or not at all," recounted David Rakes, pastor of the congregation of 2,000, a sizable portion of whom are military or civil service personnel at the base.

The teacher felt led to carry the prayer request to the church at large, so the congregation immediately had a time of prayer "that God would honor all those folks coming together" for the negotiations "and bring peace," Rakes said.

On Nov. 21, the presidents of three rival Balkan states -- Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia -- agreed to make peace, signing an agreement capping 21 days of negotiations to end, as The New York Times put it, "nearly four years of terror and ethnic bloodletting that have left a quarter of a million people dead in the worst war in Europe since World War II."

The agreement calls for 20,000 Americans to be deployed as part of a 60,000-member NATO peacekeeping force in a war-weary land where more than 2 million people have been uprooted from their homes -- with most of them still refugees.

A deployment of 20,000 troops would include 20 to 25 chaplains, said Lew Burnett, director of military chaplaincy for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Three to five of those chaplains could be Southern Baptists, he said.

"Maybe more," Burnett said. "Because of the nature of the situation, they may have more chaplains than normal." Reports that the troops will be authorized to protect themselves from potential threats, he explained, could make this mission more proactive than other recent peacekeeping operations. That could require more chaplaincy skills for counseling before and after battle, Burnett said.

President Clinton was to address the American people Nov. 27 about reasons for sending U.S. troops to Bosnia.

In his weekly radio address Nov. 25, Clinton said "our values, our interests and our leadership are at stake" in safeguarding the Bosnian peace agreement.

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"The Bosnian people have suffered unspeakable atrocities -- mass executions, ethnic cleansing, campaigns of rape and terror," Clinton said. "The violence done to those innocent civilians does violence to the principles on which American stands. ... Now our conscience demands that we act."

The agreement is to take effect at a formal signing in Paris in mid-December. Among components of the agreement are:

- affirmation of the legal integrity of the Muslim-dominated government of Bosnia; restoration of the capital, Sarajevo; and a semi-autonomous republic for Bosnian Serbs. The agreement calls for a central elected presidency and two-house parliament presiding over a Bosnian-Croat federation and a Serb republic, each with their own presidencies and legislatures. All elections are to be internationally supervised.

- control of 51 percent of the land will reside with the Bosnian-Croat federation, 49 percent with the Serb republic, with some areas of control to be given up by each side along agreed-upon cease-fire lines.

- a NATO peacekeeping force, headed by an American general, which the agreement states will be "an active, robust force capable not only of implementing a peace agreement but also of defending itself vigorously."

- secure national borders for Croatia and the opportunity to nurture ties to Croats in Bosnia.

Several key issues, however, remain to be solved in the conflict, according to news reports, including:

- whether Bosnia can survive as a single state with ongoing tensions among its Muslim, Serb and Croat populations, and how much power the central government will actually have.

- the extent to which Bosnia's Serb minority will be granted self-government.

- the fate of two Bosnian Serb leaders who have been indicted by an international war crimes tribunal.

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David Winfrey contributed to this article.

Southern Baptist relief aid  
headed to Bosnia, Croatia

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press  
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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board was releasing \$255,000 for relief to the former Yugoslavia region in late November, including \$120,000 for Bosnia-Herzegovina and \$135,000 for Croatia.

The appropriation to Bosnia is only half of what missionaries in the region actually requested, but the board's human needs office was forced to wait until more funds become available.

Since September 1992, after conflict broke out in the former Yugoslavia, the FMB has allocated nearly \$2 million for refugee relief and hunger relief ministries in the region.

Human needs coffers for foreign fields have slid during the past years. Giving is down about 15 percent this year from last year during the same period, and projections show that giving this year will equal only three-fourths of that in 1991. The board has only \$1 million left in its hunger funds and \$1.7 million in general relief funds. More than \$1 million in hunger requests are outstanding.

The request for Bosnia calls for missionaries to work with Croatian Baptists to buy and distribute 2,000 two-person food parcels in Sarajevo during a three-month period, and 3,500 parcels for three other areas to be distributed during a six-month period.

The money for Croatia will provide food to the Krajina region of the nation, where Croatians are returning to cities and villages occupied by Serbs from 1992 to this past August. While food is the most pressing concern for these refugees, they do have other needs as winter sets in, such as bedding, hygienic materials and fuel for cooking and heating. That request has yet to be filled.

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## 16 Baptist colleges honored for character development

RADNOR, Pa. (BP)--Sixteen Southern Baptist colleges and universities have been elected to the 1995 Templeton Honor Roll for Character Building Colleges, designed to recognize institutions that promote the development of character.

The Baptist schools were among 124 schools in 33 states selected for the honor.

The 16 institutions, which are members of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools, are Belmont University, California Baptist College, Campbellsville College, Carson-Newman College, Cumberland College, Furman University, Georgetown College, Louisiana College, Mississippi College, Oklahoma Baptist University, Ouachita Baptist University, Palm Beach Atlantic College, Samford University, Union University, William Jewell College and Wingate College.

The honor roll serves as a reference list of schools for prospective students, their families and secondary school guidance counselors, said John M. Templeton Jr., president of The John Templeton Foundation, Radnor, Pa., which developed the honor roll.

"The honor roll is based on the principle that character comes from three primary sources: the family, the religious community and educational institutions," Templeton said. "These colleges are taking the important steps to make character development an integral part of the campus experience for their students."

Honor roll criteria include encouraging students to explore an individual moral reasoning process, fostering positive attitudes and overall well-being, encouraging spiritual growth and moral values, promoting community-building values and advocating a drug-free lifestyle.

Each four-year accredited undergraduate institution in the United States was invited to qualify itself for participation by submitting an essay that addressed each of the above criteria. Following initial qualification, all essays were redistributed to all participating schools. Each school was asked to review the essays and vote on their top four choices.

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## ISC couple in Ireland finds God at work among Catholics

By Brian Garland

Baptist Press  
11/27/95

DUNDALK, Ireland (BP)--Jeff and Jean Whitfield went to Ireland to do youth work but ended up helping a broken church find its feet in the will of God.

The Whitfields, members of Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, arrived nearly two years ago in this low-built, 800-year-old, working-class town about 15 miles from the country's border with its United Kingdom counterpart, Northern Ireland.

About 98 percent of Dundalk's residents are Roman Catholic. An imposing tan cathedral, ornate with architectural trimmings, serves as the center of spiritual life. The Whitfields hear its bells bonging every quarter hour from their nearby home.

Just a short drive south is the town of Drogheda, where a Catholic church has preserved the grayed and shrunken head of St. Oliver Plunket. A 17th-century Irishman, Plunket was the last Catholic martyred in primarily Protestant England. The church installed an altar around his head, so Catholics could lift up prayers to it.

In October the Whitfields ended their term in Dundalk as International Service Corps workers through the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. They have witnessed small but significant miracles at Dundalk Baptist Church, a 17-member congregation of converted Roman Catholics and an oasis of evangelical faith.

The church was spiraling downward when they arrived.

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"People were playing church and having their own agenda, and every business meeting had an argument," said Jeff Whitfield, 33. "But the church is now single-minded in its mission for the Lord."

With a history of dissension and finger-pointing, the church lost a few members but discovered a new focus.

"Dundalk Baptist Church is full of converted Catholics learning (how to be evangelicals and church members)," said Jean Whitfield, 35. "They rely on the Book of Acts a good deal."

Members got back to God and the Bible last winter with a little help from the study, "Fresh Encounter," by Henry Blackaby and Claude King. It helped produce five new members, a family of five who now attend regularly, and three baptisms. And children's Sunday school attendance has doubled.

But not just numbers are changing. "They're focusing on being on mission with God to a lost community," Jeff said. "There is going to be a spiritual awakening in Ireland soon. It's been building here for a while."

The Whitfields have learned that Irish Catholics are very religious; 80 percent of them attend Mass regularly. Still, more and more are becoming disenchanted with the church because the idea of receiving eternal security freely from God has been neglected, they said.

"According to them, you're not led to salvation through Jesus Christ, but by good works," Jeff said. "You pray to the saints, take pilgrimages, go to rituals and services, and worry about purgatory. There is no grace. People pray to Mary because they think she'd be more sensitive to prayers than God."

Many Catholics believe purgatory to be a state after death in which Christians must suffer for their sins before entering heaven.

"Rarely do Catholics hear the gospel and get struck by lightning to make an immediate decision," Jean said. "But they see the changes in people's lives and study about the faith, and their conversion is just as genuine."

"That's why it takes so long for (nominal) Catholics to accept Christ -- because they keep wanting to do something (to earn salvation)."

Dundalk Baptist Church grew out of a Bible study started about a decade ago by a Baptist teacher. The teacher left, and Stephen Murphy, now the church's pastor, began leading the study.

Three families decided God was leading them to become a Baptist congregation, and Murphy was called to be pastor in 1988. Now the congregation draws about 40 to 50 on Sunday mornings and meets in a converted building next to a block of flats on the outskirts of town.

"Every Sunday, we have more non-members than members coming," Murphy said. "God's bringing them in to build them up and send them out."

The church is using the study "Experiencing God" as well as a study on the basic tenets of the Christian faith. "Doing 'Experiencing God' has been the most decisive experience in the life of the church," Murphy said. "I've seen pretty much everybody's life turned around with it."

The Whitfields' ministry will be truly missed.

"They were key architects of spiritual renewal in the church," Murphy said. "Their coming exactly coincided with a major low point in the church. They parachuted in and provided tremendous support to me personally in my ministry."

The Whitfields know God ordained their coming. But he is also ordaining their going. "It's time for the Americans to get out of the way," Jean said.

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Garland, a Foreign Mission Board journeyman based in England, is assigned as a journalist for the United Kingdom.

**Rebecca St. James learned  
servanthood with family**

**By Tim Ellsworth**

FRANKLIN, Tenn. (BP)--Three years ago, shortly after moving to the United States from Australia, Rebecca St. James found herself cleaning houses and raking lawns to help her family make ends meet.

"We were left with no income, no car, furniture or family to fall back on and my mum pregnant with my sister," St. James said.

But God provided, she said, and through the problems her family grew stronger. "One thing it really taught us was about servanthood, because we would rake and mow lawns and work together as a family," she said. "We just saw what a joyful experience it was to clean people's toilets.

"You just stop worrying about your own little needs and focus on the other person's needs," said the 18-year-old ForeFront recording artist and member of First Baptist Church, Franklin, Tenn. "I almost see what I'm doing now as a furtherance of that cleaning houses ministry."

What she's doing now is coming off her nationwide "Side by Side" tour, which began in September and ended in mid-November.

For performing purposes, Rebecca's last name has undergone a change. She's actually the oldest of seven Smallbone children, all of whom piled into a van with their parents (her father David is her manager) and traveled to each of her concert dates.

"The family usually comes out about once a month," St. James said. "But on this tour the whole family is out. Everybody has their own jobs with the lighting and the sound and the merchandising. It's a real team effort, and they're just as big a part of the team as I am."

And each family member knows his or her job is important, even though they aren't the star.

"You hear a lot of people wishing they could be a singer," said Daniel Smallbone, Rebecca's 16-year-old brother who set up and worked lights at the concerts. "But I know God's called me to do my own thing, and I know that's not to be a singer."

Singing is Rebecca's job, and she has become very adept at it -- recording albums (her second release is due in February), writing music, climbing charts and being nominated for Dove Awards of the Gospel Music Association.

She also finds time for her youth group at church, squeezes classes in with her mother as her home-school teacher and swims on a home-school swimming team. Not a typical way of life for most 18-year-olds.

Rebecca, however, said she keeps Jesus Christ as her top priority, and the radiance of her personality leaves no doubt about that.

But, aside from her Savior, Rebecca's family is the pride of her life, and this young artist's face lights up when she talks about it. Most of the time, anyway.

Large families can have their drawbacks, especially with five brothers. "Meal time is so loud," she said.

A small price to pay for the joy her loved ones bring her, and for the impact her whole family's ministry is having on others.

"God is doing amazing things," St. James said. "I am always saying, 'It's God. There's no other way to explain it. It's just God.' He is everything to me. He's the only reason that I can keep doing what I'm doing."

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