

Associated Baptist Press

Editor: Greg Warner
Associate Editor: Bob Allen
Phone: (904) 262-6626
Fax: (904) 262-7745

October 26, 1994

In this issue:

- Fellowship continues to grow despite opposition, Sherman says
- Henry accompanies Clinton to signing of peace accord
- Baptists will provide food, water, health care to Haiti
- Baptists from several states help flooded southeast Texans
- Teen birth rate drops for first time in years

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

Fellowship continues to grow despite opposition, Sherman says

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Despite "entrenched, powerful, misrepresenting opposition," the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship continues to prosper, according to Fellowship Coordinator Cecil Sherman.

Four months after the Southern Baptist Convention took action to bar its agencies from receiving money from the Fellowship, the moderate organization "continues to move forward in the affections of Baptist people," Sherman wrote in the October 1994 issue of Fellowship News, a monthly newsletter published at the Fellowship's offices in Atlanta.

The Fellowship received \$8,397,148 through September, \$553,000 -- or 7 percent -- more than it took in during the first three quarters last year, according to Gary Skeen, the Fellowship's financial coordinator.

Monthly receipts for September, however, declined from last year, from \$786,184 to \$716,673, the third drop in the Fellowship's history, all in 1994. Still, Skeen predicted the Fellowship will meet or exceed last year's total of \$11.2 million.

The number of churches sending contributions to the Fellowship during the year stood at 1,294 through the end of September, compared to 1,210 for all of 1993.

"The state of CBF continues to grow," said Sherman, adding he expects the trend to continue for several years. "The Baptist way of doing cooperative missions will survive and thrive and CBF will be one of God's instruments," he said.

The Fellowship's rate of growth has slowed considerably, however, from the rapid expansion of its first three years.

In 1991, the Fellowship took in about \$4.5 million from 391 churches. In 1992, 841 churches gave \$7.3 million, an increase of 56 percent. Last year, receipts reached \$11.2 million, 53 percent higher than the previous year.

Before this summer, the Fellowship gave nearly \$9 million to SBC missions since 1991, in addition to building its own missions program to offer churches alternatives to the conservative-dominated SBC.

Even before the SBC action, churches sending money to the Fellowship increasingly directed it to the Fellowship's own programs rather than the SBC's. In 1991, 76 percent of the money sent to the CBF was forwarded to SBC agencies. In 1992, it was 56 percent. Last year, just 25 percent went to the SBC.

That trend continued into 1994. For July, gifts to the SBC amounted to 14 percent of total Fellowship receipts. In August the figure was 9 percent. In September it was under 8 percent.

"Our churches are catching on," Sherman said. "Slowly the money directed to the SBC is drying up."

The Fellowship's growth no longer seems to be at the expense of the SBC, which recently reported a \$6 million increase in gifts to its unified budget. Gifts to the Cooperative Program reached \$142,866,783 in 1994, exceeding last year's total by 4.6 percent and reversing a three-year decline, according to SBC officials.

-30-

-- By Bob Allen

Henry accompanies Clinton to signing of peace accord

ORLANDO, Fla. (ABP) -- Southern Baptist Convention President Jim Henry is among a group of leaders who accompanied President Clinton to the Oct. 26 signing of the Israel-Jordan peace accord.

Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla., was invited to be among the group of 58 religious leaders and leaders of the Arab-American and Jewish-American communities, the Orlando Sentinel reported.

-30-

Baptists will provide food, water, health care to Haiti

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- Baptist volunteers from the U.S. will help rebuild Haitian Baptist facilities and distribute food within the next few weeks, and they will repair water well pumps and staff medical clinics in the months ahead, according to John LaNoue of Texas Baptist Men.

LaNoue represented the Baptist General Convention of Texas on an assessment team that recently returned from Haiti.

The 11-member team also included personnel from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Florida Baptist Convention.

Twelve Baptist volunteer construction workers will begin working in Haiti Nov. 9-19, renovating annex offices for the Baptist Convention of Haiti in Port-au-Prince.

The annex will be used as a staging area for volunteers and supplies. Sleeping and cooking facilities will be built at the annex to house and feed up to 24 volunteers.

The team will include diesel mechanics, plumbers, carpenters, block layers, concrete helpers and a cook.

After the renovation, the first of 17 food distribution teams will arrive Nov. 19 for two weeks. Food service teams will include a cook and nine packaging and distribution workers.

Repair and replacement of about 500 of the country's water wells is projected to start in early 1995. By February, medical teams will begin to work with churches and schools to provide for basic health care needs.

Providing a system for the orderly distribution of food in Haiti's cities is top priority, LaNoue said.

"The people are so hungry. They are so oppressed by the economy, the embargo and life itself. They are absolutely living on the edge," he said.

While rural villagers grow just enough food to feed their own families, the gaunt faces and emaciated bodies of many people in Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien testify to the desperate situation in Haiti's cities, he said.

Men and women line the streets begging for money from visitors, and children chase cars -- sometimes clinging to them -- hoping passengers will take pity, LaNoue reported.

As Baptist volunteers minister in a superstitious society in economic and political turmoil, they need to be supported by prayer, LaNoue said.

"Every time a truck goes out with food, there needs to be people on their knees in prayer. This is going to be a spiritual battle," he said.

Transportation of food and supplies will be a challenge for Baptist relief workers, according to LaNoue.

"The roads are so bad, it took us seven hours just to go 150 miles," he said.

Since food supplies will have to be purchased in Haiti and diesel fuel there sells for \$15 U.S. per gallon, the project will be costly. Donated equipment will allow Baptist relief funds to go farther, said Bob Dixon, executive director of Texas Baptist Men.

Equipment needs include: off-road, four-wheel-drive pickup trucks and four-wheel-drive all-terrain vehicles (preferably diesel-powered); fuel storage containers designed to fit in the beds of pickup trucks; collapsible, two-ton capacity grain storage bins; diesel-powered portable generators; welding units; a large household refrigerator; freezer; gas stove with large oven; and a heavy-duty washing machine.

Anyone willing to donate equipment -- or experienced relief workers willing to volunteer for the Haiti project -- may contact Texas Baptist Men at (214) 828-5352 or the Brotherhood Commission at (800) 280-1891.

Financial contributions for relief in Haiti may be sent to the Baptist General Convention of Texas, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, TX 75246-1798; to Baptist World Relief, Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104; or to the Foreign Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230-0767.

-30-

Baptists from several states help flooded southeast Texans

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- Baptists from Oklahoma and Louisiana have joined in providing food service and child care for flooded southeast Texans.

Tennessee Baptists on Oct. 25 were on their way to Angleton, where they were slated to begin preparing hot meals the next day.

Every regional Texas Baptist disaster relief unit except one has been called into service. Arkansas and Tennessee Baptists were standing by to provide additional child care if needed.

Baptists prepared about 64,000 meals in six days, not counting those served at shelters in churches, and provided care for 165 children during the first three days of temporary emergency child care.

The state disaster relief units moved into areas flooded Oct. 18 by the rain-swollen Trinity River, along with regional units from Smith, Wichita Falls, Tarrant, Golden Triangle and San Marco Baptist associations.

At the request of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Baptists were providing free temporary emergency child care at FEMA centers four locations.

They offer licensed child care and hot noon meals while parents file claims and clean up their homes or businesses. Trained volunteers also use instructional modules to help children cope with the trauma of disaster.

Southern Baptists work cooperatively with other private organizations through Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster which includes the Red Cross, Salvation Army and a number of other church groups.

-30-

Teen birth rate drops for first time in years

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The rate of teenagers giving birth in the U.S. dropped for the first time since 1986, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Oct. 25.

Officials hailed the 2 percent drop in the 1992 teen birth rate as a turnaround. From 1986 to 1991, the rate had increased 27 percent.

The center reported 60.7 births for every 1,000 women aged 15-19, down from the 62.1 births that occurred the year before.

"We feel it's a real change," said Stephanie Ventura, a statistician with the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics. "It reverses a pattern where it has been going up 5,6,7 percent a year from 1986 on."

Ventura speculated that a trend toward sexual abstinence and increased use of condoms might explain the drop.

The CDC study also found bad news, reporting that 7.1 percent of babies are born with low birth weight, the same percentage as the year before. Underweight births are associated with lack of prenatal care and mothers who smoke while pregnant. Low birth weight can contribute to developmental problems in infants.

-30-

-- By Bob Allen

END