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McClellan Says Southern Baptists Are Changing

NASHVILLE (BP)--The program planning secretary for the Southern Baptist Executive Committee said here that the Southern Baptist Convention is in the midst of change, shifting from a "come-church" to a "go-church."

Albert McClellan, who helps coordinate the long-range plans of the 11 million member convention, made the observations in a speech to more than 600 professional staff members of Baptist state conventions and Southern Baptist agencies meeting here.

McClellan said he was convinced that in this change, "the Holy Spirit is forging a new dynamic for the future, a dynamic that centers in the congregation as the ministry servant of Christ both inside and outside the walls.

"This new dynamic will not emphasize the gathered worshipping and educating church any less, but it will emphasize the witnessing, ministering and applying church more," he said. "It will be a shift from the come-church to the go-church."

McClellan told the Baptist workers that change is inevitable as a part of history, and pointed out numerous changes in society which have had a bearing on Christianity.

Included as key changes were such things as the population explosion with half of the present 200 million under 26 years of age; the fantastic shift in where and how man lives, the change in the influence of the family and its affect on children; the growing emphasis on the scientific method which subtly replaces faith as a way of life, the new education, new economy, new ethics, new theology, new morality, the increase of leisure time, increased mobility, and new communication and learning processes.

"What happens to us if we don't change as everything changes around us?" McClellan asked of the church leaders.

Using as an example the extinction of the dinosaur, McClellan said that if any organization or program does not change with its environment, it disappears. "This does not mean that the organization must become like its environment, only that it remains viable as the situation shifts."

McClellan pointed out that the Southern Baptist Convention is changing, slowly, but it is changing. He pointed out 35 specific ways in which the SBC has experienced change.

"We have developed a new kind of SBC program leader. . .deeply thoughtful and studious, very cooperative, one who does his work by plan and not by emergencies prompted by the morning's mail.

"We have taken SBC planning of program actions off a rule of thumb, morning mail basis and put it on a systematic basis," he added.

"We have sounded the grass roots and found that they are demanding some new approaches," he observed.

"We have provided many new and innovating approaches for helping the churches develop and improve their programs," he added.

McClellan also pointed to such changes as establishing a convention purpose, pin-pointing 90 SBC programs, identifying the basic functions of a church, establishing church program organizations which exist to build the church, establishing a coordinating committee to prevent over-lapping, developing a broad base of fundamental source materials on which to construct new curricula or new methods, offering more resources, materials, alternate plans and financial assistance, securing a new task-oriented curriculum, shifting the grading plan "to allow the churches to become more flexible in responding to the needs of the new man," developing better relations, and opening channels to all emphasis programs.

McClellan also listed 28 things he feels that the SBC must do in the future. Included were such suggestions as:

"We must...do the hard prayerful work of finding exactly how we are to be involved in the cutting edge of modern life.

"We must study very hard to understand modern man and his social environment.

"We must move heroically forward as prophets, not as hirelings, to methods, but as servants of God who have a word to share with the world. The method must not become the gospel.

"We must be open to God's leading to help us find a new 20th century dynamic. The rural frontier dynamic of the 1800's is gone. In Christ we must find the new city dynamic of the new century.

"We must not go overboard in abandoning all of the traditions of the past.

"We must make more understandable that change in methods does not alter the fundamental nature and objectives of the churches.

"We must stop thinking that platform communications alone will really effect necessary changes in the churches and their leaders...We must introduce dialogue as a teaching method.

"We must do a better job of projecting our cause upon the world so that they can see our Lord Jesus Christ, not merely our process.

"We must still learn to do our planning in terms of purpose, objective, goals and action plans."

McClellan concluded by saying that all the convention's plans are trivia, and all its processes are trash unless they build upon the Lord.

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Women Plan Hemispheric
Baptist Prayer Campaign

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union here has beckoned adults and young people from every Baptist convention of the western hemisphere to join a massive prayer partners project.

Called Pact, the plan will link individuals, groups, families and churches in partnerships to pray for the 1969 Crusade of the Americas.

The Southern Baptist women's organization conceived Pact as a strategy to involve every Baptist in the 1969 evangelistic campaign in North, South and Central America.

"Prayer is the only medium that can cross all language barriers," said Miss Alma Hunt, executive secretary of the SBC Woman's Missionary Union.

"While Baptists reach out to non-Christians through meetings and personal witnessing, they will be supported by a network of prayer criss-crossing the continents," she said.

All Pact materials will be printed in Spanish, Portuguese, and English.

Interested individuals, groups, families, or churches must secure an application form from Pact headquarters at Woman's Missionary Union, Birmingham. The completed form is returned to Pact headquarters, where partners will be matched.

The women's organization will attempt to match Southern Baptist participants with partners from Latin America or from other North American conventions. However, if Southern Baptists outnumber other participants, they may be matched with each other.

Individuals will be matched with individuals, groups with groups, churches, with churches, and families with families.

Pact headquarters will send participants names and addresses of their partners and a booklet of Crusade information and prayer guidance.

All partners will be assigned before January 1, 1969. Applications may be sent any-time during 1968.

Pact partners are encouraged to correspond and share prayer requests throughout the Crusade, Miss Hunt said.

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Rio Grande Missions
Discussed In Mexico

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MEXICO CITY (BP)--An unprecedented two-day consultation in Mexico City on the Rio Grande River mission emphasis included representatives from the Foreign and Home Mission Boards of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Two key Texas Baptist leaders involved included T. A. Patterson, executive secretary of the Texas convention and Charles McLaughlin, secretary of the State Missions Commission.

The 12 persons involved in the discussions, including mission personnel in Mexico, pledged to work cooperatively in the sponsorship of the Rio Grande River missions thrust, both in Texas and Mexico during the next several years.

Fred B. Mosley, assistant executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Home Mission Board, commented:

"The Home Mission Board rejoices over the growing concern and exciting involvement of Texas Baptists in the mission responsibilities and opportunities in Texas along the Rio Grande. The reaching of thousands of Latin Americans in this effort will make a tremendous impact on mission work even beyond the borders of Texas.

"Christian Latin Americans who are migrating to other parts of the United States are forming the nucleus for starting new churches and missions, such as, in the Yakima Valley in Washington and throughout the Great Lakes areas."

Van Gladen, president of the Mexican Mission, the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries which serve in Mexico, said the missionaries are "pleased to cooperate with the Texas Baptist Convention's Rio Grande River ministries program."

Gladen said, "the long-range planning of the mission has included the placing of missionaries in strategic border areas."

He reported that James Short has lived in Ciudad Juarez-El Paso area since August, 1966, concentrating his ministry along the border. W. H. Gray, field missionary in the state of Coahuila, has promoted work on border points.

"We rejoice greatly in the upsurge of concern among Texas Baptists for the spiritual welfare of the Mexican-Americans in their midst," he said.

"We are thrilled with the prospect of a dramatic strengthening of mission work among the Spanish-speaking people near the border. We expect this spiritual contagion to stimulate increased efforts among Baptists on the Mexican side of the border."

The official said that the Mexican Mission will participate "both financially and personally in certain selected projects on the Mexican side of the border as our effort in the river ministries program.

He added, "We will maintain close contact with Texas Baptist leaders in order to coordinate whatever joint endeavors may develop on both sides of the river."

Patterson called the sessions in the Hotel Prince in the capital city of Mexico after consulting with Baker James Cauthen of the Foreign Mission Board and Arthur Rutledge of the Home Mission Board.