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**News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention** 

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96-35

MIAMI--Miami churches reel from events after Cuba downs unarmed planes. WASHINGTON--Clinton proposal would gut D and X ban, pro-lifers say. ALABAMA--HMB's Begaye: Restructuring must take ethnics into account. ALABAMA--McPherson: SBC must address challenges to black churches. ALABAMA--SBC agencies launch 'Start Something New.' ALABAMA--Pastor offers tips on facing change. KENTUCKY--Great Commission given all believers, Rankin says. NORTH CAROLINA--Reccord: It's not winning but how you run the race.

Miami churches reel from events after Cuba downs unarmed planes

By Barbara Denman

Baptist Press 2/29/96

MIAMI (BP)--The shooting down of two civilian aircraft by Cuban fighter jets over the Caribbean and the subsequent disclosure of the defection of an alleged Cuban-American spy have rocked two Miami Baptist churches.

"One's a hero. One's a turncoat," said Ray Carvajal, language missions director for the Miami Baptist Association.

Members of Estrella de Belen Iglesia are mourning the loss of church member Pablo Morales, 26, a Cuban-American who belonged to the Miami-based group Brothers to the Rescue. Morales, Armando Alejandre Jr., Mario de la Pena and Carlos Costa -- members of the anti-Castro group -- were near Cuban airspace Saturday, Feb. 24, when the two planes they were flying were shot down by Cuban MiG-29 fighters. All are missing and presumed dead.

"We don't understand why this happened," said Javier Sotolongo, Estrella de Belen Iglesia's pastor. "We know there is a purpose in this. We just don't know what it is."

Meanwhile, members of University Baptist Church in Coral Gables are even more perplexed about the role Juan Pablo Roque played in the downing of the unarmed aircraft. Roque mysteriously disappeared from Miami Friday, Feb. 23, the day before the planes were shot down. Three days later, Roque appeared on Cuban television saying he had infiltrated Brothers to the Rescue. He claimed the group, best known for mercy flights to rescue Cubans fleeing on rafts, was involved in attempts to overthrow the Castro government with U.S. government agencies.

Members of University Baptist had befriended Roque who had been involved in the church's English classes and Spanish Bible study groups. His wife of 11 months, Ana, and her children from a previous marriage are members of the church.

Roque defected to the United States from Cuba four years ago, telling members of the church that as a trained diver he swam through the mined waters off the coast of Havana to seek exile in Guatanomo Bay.

Bill White, University Baptist's pastor, said the congregation feels "a great deal of sentiment for Ana and for her heartbreak and confusion of her situation." In a television interview, Ana Roque said she believes her husband was coerced to return to Cuba where his children from a previous marriage live.

The church is surprised by the allegations, White said. "No one who knew Ana and Juan Pablo would have suspected for a minute any duplicity.

"The Spanish ministry has surrounded them," White said. "Who knows if the allegations are true? Right now, we are going to give attention to the family as victims. ... We will try to be careful, understanding, supportive and encouraging. We will not try to jump to undue conclusions, but at the same time try not to be naive about the situation of the world."

"We have a lot of mixed feelings," said Gaby Viggiani, assistant director of the Spanish Bible study. "There are some that are angry, some are disbelieving, but the church is praying for Ana in our 24-hour prayer ministry to show our support."

During a recent banquet sponsored by the church, Roque indicated he had accepted Christ as his Savior, Viggiani reported. "There was an honesty in him, something very genuine, yet he always seemed a little hesitant." When he had returned to Cuba, Roque took his nicest clothes, a picture of his American family and two Bibles the church had given him.

"It's hard when you think you know what people are like and find out they're not that," Viggiani said. "It's not up to us to point fingers but see what the Lord wants to do with all this. He turns negative things into positives for his glory."

The Bible study group planned to provide child care and meals for Ana Roque and children during the coming week.

Members of Estrella de Belen Iglesia also are involved in a prayer watch for the loved ones of the downed exiles. "Pablo was somebody special," said pastor Sotolongo. "He always had a laugh on his face. He was full of love. He would wake up early in the morning to pray and read his Bible."

In 1992, Morales left Cuba on a raft and was rescued at sea by Brothers to the Rescue 15 days before Hurricane Andrew struck Miami. "The reason he was flying (when he was shot down) was because he was looking for rafters like he was," Sotolongo said. "That was the main purpose of the trip."

Morales had strong evangelical influences in his life but was not a Christian when he arrived in Miami, the pastor said. "He was saved in the U.S. and on April 10, 1994, was baptized by me."

Sotolongo said the young man was engaged to a woman in the church and worked for her family's frozen food business. Many of her family members attend the Hispanic church. A memorial service filled the church with mourners two days after Morales had been shot down.

"He was a pastor's dream. He grew in the Lord, witnessed, tithed to the church and gave offerings to missionaries," Sotolongo said.

The pastor has contacted Morales' family in Havana. "It's very painful for them. His mother is devastated and his sister can't understand why he was killed. They cannot hold a memorial service. They cannot even talk about him. In Cuba, they are calling him a terrorist. Please pray for his family."

When he left Cuba on a raft, Morales brought with him a copy of a New Testament with a personal inscription and a reference to John 14:2. That Bible was always in Morales' car until it was given to Sotolongo after the young man was killed. "That passage says, 'In my father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you,'" Sotolongo said. "The Lord was preparing him for this."

Carvajal said the tragic story clearly shows how Miami churches are "busy in the outreach of those who come as refugees. Thousands of others have been reached through our Baptist churches here," he said.

"One's a hero. One's a turncoat. All you can do is open your hearts, and open your arms."

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Clinton proposal would gut
D and X ban, pro-lifers say

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press 2/29/96

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Bill Clinton has made it clear the only way he will sign a bill outlawing a gruesome, late-term abortion procedure is if the legislation is amended to include an exception which the measure's supporters say would make it meaningless.

In a Feb. 28 letter to Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, R.-Utah, the president said he would sign the Partial-birth Abortion Ban Act, H.R. 1833, if it is amended by Congress to allow the procedure when it is "necessary to preserve the life of the woman or avert serious adverse health consequences to the woman." Otherwise, he would veto it because he does not believe the bill meets the "constitutional requirements" set forth by the Supreme Court in the 1973 Roe v. Wade opinion and other decisions, Clinton said.

An exception for health reasons would have the effect of allowing abortions for a wide range of reasons, thereby gutting the bill, said supporters of the legislation.

"Clearly, 'health' continues to be defined by those with the most extreme abortion agenda in ways that would ensure that this exception swallows the rule," Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, R.-Kan., said in a letter to Clinton the same day. Dole asked the president to reconsider and to sign the bill.

The measure already includes an exception for a "mother whose life is endangered by a physical disorder, illness or injury," Dole said. "A broader exception would simply defeat the purpose of the bill, which is to stop this grisly procedure."

High court decisions buttress the arguments of the bill's supporters. The Supreme Court's definition of health in Doe v. Bolton, the 1973 companion case to Roe v. Wade, includes "all factors -- physical, emotional, psychological, familial and the woman's age -- relevant to the well-being of the patient," thereby permitting abortion for a wide variety of reasons throughout pregnancy.

The Senate passed H.R. 1833 in early December in a 54-44 vote. The House of Representatives had approved it by a 288-139 margin in early November.

The bill awaits House approval again before going to the president because the Senate amended H.R. 1833 to provide an explicit exception when the mother's life is threatened. The Senate already defeated an attempt to amend the bill using Clinton's recommended language. By a 51-47 vote, the Senate rejected an amendment by Sen. Barbara Boxer, D.-Calif., which would have permitted the procedure to avoid "serious adverse health consequences to the woman."

The procedure, named partial-birth by the bill's sponsors but commonly known as dilation and extraction (D and X), occurs in the second half of pregnancy. With ultrasound for guidance, an abortion doctor uses forceps and his hands to deliver an intact baby feet first until only the head is left in the birth canal. The doctor pierces the base of the baby's skull with surgical scissors. The doctor inserts a catheter into the opening and suctions out the brain. The collapse of the skull enables easier removal of the dead child. This method is used by a limited but unknown number of doctors in the country.

Punishment of up to two years in prison and fines could be levied on any doctor found guilty under the legislation.

Pro-life advocates see Clinton's refusal to support the bill as a concession to the abortion lobby, which strongly supports his re-election.

"President Clinton is between a rock and a hard place," said Rep. Charles Canady, R.-Fla., chief sponsor of H.R. 1833. In an effort to avoid political consequences on a bill strongly supported by the public, the president "is trying to deceive the American people," Canady said. "He claims he supports banning this 'disturbing' procedure, but in reality his proposed amendment would gut" the ban.

"We are not considering the fate of unborn children in this bill," Canady said.
"We are considering how our country will treat babies who are in the process of
emerging from the womb. If, as a society, we do not act to protect children at the
most vulnerable time of their lives, we do not deserve to call ourselves civilized."

In his letter, Clinton said he found the D and X procedure "very disturbing" and could not support its use on "an elective basis."

"I have always believed that the decision to have an abortion should be between a woman, her conscience, her doctor and her God," said Clinton, who is a member of a Southern Baptist church in Little Rock, Ark. "I have studied and prayed about this issue, and about the families who must face this awful choice, for many months."

A Southern Baptist ethics specialist took issue with the president's conclusion.

"I can appreciate the fact that President Clinton has sought God's guidance on this matter through prayer," said Will Dodson, director of government relations for the Christian Life Commission. "However, God does not reveal to our hearts that which is contrary to the truth revealed through his Word. The Word of God clearly condemns the killing of innocent human life.

"We do not need to pray for God to reveal the truth about abortion. He has clearly done so. What we need to pray for is the grace and courage to do what is right."

The House and Senate votes marked the first time Congress has outlawed an abortion procedure since the Roe and Doe rulings.

Opponents of the bill have charged it is part of a strategy to reverse abortion rights. They have said the procedure is used only in cases of severely defective children or a threat to the mother's life.

Martin Haskell, one of the leading practitioners of the procedure, has said, however, about 80 percent of his D and X abortions are "purely elective," according to a 1993 interview with American Medical News, a journal of the American Medical Association. In a 1992 speech, Haskell said he had performed about 700 D and X abortions.

A request for comment from the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League was not met before the deadline for Baptist Press.

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HMB's Begaye: Restructuring must take ethnics into account

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press 2/29/96

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--The restructured Southern Baptist Convention must factor in the impact of non-Anglos on America or risk becoming a remnant of its current self, said the Home Mission Board's director of ethnic church starting.

Russell Begaye called the 21st century the start of an ethnic millennium for America with greater cultural diversity. "I challenge our leaders to put our denomination in a position to impact the new civilization by restructuring for the ethnic millennium," Begaye, a Navajo Indian, told state church-starting leaders during their annual conference Feb. 26.

Among his recommendations: naming ethnics as the at-large members of the Great Commission Council, a body to be formed through planned restructuring. "Furthermore, if we are serious about impacting the ethnic millennium, the new president of the North American Mission Board must be bilingual or trilingual," he said.

Begaye noted statistical and cultural indicators that America is growing more culturally diverse. In the 1990 census, one-fourth of Americans claimed African, Hispanic, Asian or Native American ancestry, he said.

"We have moved from Ozzie and Harriet to the Cosbys, from Walter Cronkite to Connie Chung, from Chevrolet to Honda," he said. "In 1991, salsa outsold ketchup by \$40 million dollars."

Last year, Southern Baptists added a record number of new language congregations -- at least 519, although final figures are not available. Of those, 481 were new starts and 38 were existing congregations that aligned with the denomination, according to the HMB extension division.

Southern Baptists currently worship in 106 languages each week. Ethnic contributions to the Cooperative Program average \$5.6 million per year. Begaye contended, however, that strategies are still being designed for reaching ethnic groups with no grassroots input.

"Too many administrative decisions are being made without any knowledge of how they impact the local church or ethnic communities," he said. "There are ethnic pastors and missionaries who have never been visited by associational or state staff."

Other ways to include ethnic input, Begaye said, are:

-- Develop networking between Southern Baptist agencies and ethnic leaders for producing language materials and services.

-- Broaden curriculum and expand degree programs in educational institutions.

-- Develop ethnic mission councils, with ethnic representation, on the associational level.

Speaking earlier to state directors of missions, Begaye said a grassroots model of church starting with lay leaders could triple the number of new ethnic congregations annually. "We're talking about 1,500 new starts per year."

The method must be based on relationships, and it must be contextual according to the ethnic group being reached, he added. "If this is not a grassroots movement, it becomes an institution," he said. "We cannot direct this thing. The delivery system has to be out there and not in our office."

In a related development, Begaye, on behalf of the language church extension division of the HMB, "enthusiastically" endorsed the "Resolution on the Establishment of a Task Force on Racial Reconciliation" adopted by the SBC Inter-Agency Council. Begaye said the creation of the task force by the IAC Feb. 17 was an "historic and far-reaching resolution ... reflective of God's people going through a spiritual revival and a real desire to evangelize the many ethnic people groups in North America.

In a Feb. 22 letter sent to Ernest Mosley, executive vice president of the SBC Executive Committee, Begaye said the language church extension division, since 1985, has seen the number of ethnic language churches rise 217 percent, 194 percent in Sunday school and contributions from those churches have been more than \$46 million to the Cooperative Program.

Begaye's letter also said growth is "directly related to our stand on Holy Scripture and our evangelistic zeal." He promised to "work alongside you as the spirit of (the reconciliation resolution) is carried out ... We look forward to working with you in reaching the more than 600 ethnic people groups in North America.

Herb Hollinger contributed to this article.

McPherson: SBC must address challenges to black churches

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press 2/29/96

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--The Nation of Islam, racism and other challenges must become the concern of all Southern Baptists, said the Home Mission Board's director of black church extension.

"Otherwise, we cannot say we are inclusive," said Willie McPherson, who addressed state church-starting leaders on issues important to black communities during a Feb. 25 meeting in Birmingham, Ala.

"The challenge of the Nation of Islam must become the problem of all Southern Baptists, not just African Americans," he said. "When we deal with the issue of racism, we will solve the Islamic problem because their tool of recruitment will no longer exist."

McPherson noted the O.J. Simpson trial and Million Man March last year signified the races are a long way from coming together and "racism is a two-way street."

He called the Southern Baptist Convention's resolution last year on racial reconciliation "a giant step" that will affect other issues.

"Moving forward in this area will make facing the other challenges much easier." True reconciliation will mean "opening up some areas of leadership that were off-limits to African Americans heretofore."

Racism and the Nation of Islam were two issues black church leaders said will affect African American communities entering the 21st century, McPherson said. The HMB black church extension division (which includes church starting) sponsored several listening sessions last year in metropolitan areas in order to help serve the churches, he said. Other issues leaders cited include:

-- cultural diversity. McPherson noted America is predicted to have no clear ethnic majority by the year 2050. "This trend is and will continue to create a need for building cross-cultural relationships," he said.

-- unemployment and underemployment. "The African American population has progressed significantly since the 1960s," said McPherson. "But in the past decade, economic and political factors have helped derail the progress of many American blacks."

African American churches are beginning to join Anglo congregations in moving to the suburbs, leaving the cities with fewer Christian ministry and witnessing points, he noted.

-- family life. McPherson stated 51 percent of African American families have only one parent. "We must challenge every law that will cause a man to leave his family in order for them to live decently -- i.e., welfare."

The black church extension division focused on the Nation of Islam in 1995 and produced training materials for churches on the subject. The focus for 1996 will be bivocationalism, said Dennis Mitchell, HMB associate director for black church extension.

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SBC agencies launch 'Start Something New'

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press 2/29/96

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Seeking to launch a new wave of growth through churches large and small, Southern Baptist agencies unveiled the "Start Something New" campaign in Birmingham, Ala., Feb. 22-24.

The two-year emphasis is designed to encourage Southern Baptist churches to start new churches and new initiatives in their own churches.

From a lunchtime Bible study in Springdale, Ark., to a mobile home worship service in Colorado, a variety of models were showcased to more than 700 church and state convention leaders from across America.

"There are thousands of different ways that you could start something new," said Charles Chaney, Home Mission Board vice president for extension, which includes church starting.

In addition to starting churches, other possibilities include adding another worship service, birthing a language outreach or creating a new Bible study, he said.

Baptist Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr. said America's rapidly changing society requires Southern Baptists have multiple initiatives to reach a diverse culture. "We're fast becoming a 24-hour society," he said. "The day when we can say to people, 'If you don't come to Sunday school at 9 o'clock in the morning you've missed it,' is over."

Draper added in small groups ministries and relationships are built, helping lead non-Christians toward a profession of faith. He said when he entered the ministry the denomination's baptism ratio was nine Southern Baptists to every baptism in a year -- a figure that has grown to 43 for every baptism. Meanwhile, one-third of non-Christians enrolled in a Bible study will be reached, he said. "When Bible teaching is sown, evangelism is the greatest fruit that is produced."

HMB President Larry L. Lewis noted size does not determine whether a congregation will start a new effort. "I don't believe there's any church too small to start something new," he said. "It could be as simple as starting a Sunday school class or department or it could be a new bus route or ministry of some kind."

Lewis, a former church planter, said he hopes thousands of church-type missions will be started through the initiative. Recalling his church-planting work in Columbus, Ohio, he said, "We started our first mission while we were still a mission ourselves."

Church and state convention leaders were invited to the conference because they already were involved in new initiatives or encouraging new starts, Chaney said. "We want them to be available to state conventions and associations to talk about growth through the multiplication of new units," he said.

The convention-wide Start Something New emphasis will highlight church starting the first year and ministry the second, Chaney said. "For us (in the HMB extension section), we're going to keep emphasizing Start Something New through the rest of the century."

Success for the campaign will be measured through how many Southern Baptist congregations grow during the emphasis, he said, noting new units are vital to sustained church growth. "You can reach people and win them to Christ, but if you don't start some new structure for them to be a part of, then they'll drift away."

Chaney noted many of the conference speakers came from churches and missions that started small, showing that new efforts can be started by any size group. Of Southern Baptist churches, 26 percent are "one-cell" groups with 35 or less on Sunday, he said. "Every mission congregation could start a new Sunday school class," he said. "The secret is starting something new."

A materials package for the Start Something New campaign, including 21 how-to models for new units, is being mailed to every Southern Baptist church.

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Pastor offers tips on facing change

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press 2/29/96

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--While starting something new may be exciting, it also results in change that can be difficult for a congregation, a Missouri pastor told the "Start Something New" summit in Birmingham, Ala.

Vernon Armitage said he became pastor of Pleasant Valley Baptist Church in Liberty, Mo., 26 years ago, shortly after the members had been in a church split. The situation offered challenges he hadn't anticipated before coming, he said. "I always wanted to start a church from the ground up. I didn't know I was going to start in the basement and go up from there."

Average attendance has grown from about 100 to 2,100. The church has two Sunday morning worship services and a Saturday evening service. "Starting Saturday night (services) was just like starting a new church."

Accomplishing change requires leadership with the planning, passion and persistence to bring a vision into reality, he said.

The conference was designed to encourage church growth through starting new units and congregations. Armitage offered seven characteristics of change to help pastors and their congregations accomplish new work:

-- Most people can handle no more than three to five changes at a time. Armitage counseled the audience to not start too many initiatives at once. "I wanted to go a lot faster than the people wanted to go."

Armitage noted one church expert said a major change takes three years to accomplish. That sounded long until he realized his Saturday night worship took 18 months to plan and another 18 months to solidify, he said.

- -- If you don't feel awkward doing something new, you're not doing something new. Members should be shown those feelings are a normal part of change and be reminded the end result of the change will be for good, he said.
- -- When asked to do something different, people often ask what they must give up, not what they can gain.
- -- In a change, people tend to think they are all alone. After the addition of several new Bible study classes, many members had difficulty finding their room, he said.

Armitage said he wrote and sang a song from the pulpit joking about the difficulties. Members laughed together and realized they were not alone, he said. "All of them began to realize we were experiencing the same thing,"

-- When changing, most people feel they don't have enough resources. Pleasant Valley Baptist offers members a class to help them discover their spiritual gifts, personality traits and skills.

Through that, Armitage said, members realize how much they have to offer the church. "A lot of my preaching is targeted toward helping them discover all the resources God has placed inside of them."

-- After change, there's a tendency to relapse to the way you were.

-- Don't assume everyone is at the same readiness for change. Concentrating on those unwilling to change will only expend futile energy, he said. Instead concentrate on those willing to do something different. "There's your core group to move with."

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Great Commission given all believers, Rankin says

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press 2/29/96

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Jesus' command to preach the gospel to the entire world applies to every Christian believer, Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin told a seminary chapel audience.

"To whom do you think that the Great Commission was given?" asked Rankin Feb. 27 at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. "Just a handful of disciples on a hillside in Galilee? Just a few among us who happen to respond to that call to go as foreign missionaries?"

Rankin spoke during the Louisville, Ky., school's Global Missions Week, which is being observed Feb. 26 through March 1. The week's activities include a series of special chapel services, lectures by missionaries to seminary classes and informational sessions for seminarians considering foreign missions service. Approximately 35 FMB personnel are visiting the campus.

"If we had just one Southern Baptist out of a thousand, just one tenth of one percent, who would take seriously that mandate to share the gospel and disciple the nations we would not be talking about 5,000 (FMB) missionaries, but 15,000 missionaries, "Rankin said.

Rankin said 100,000 people are serving as Southern Baptist pastors, church staff members and denominational workers. However, Southern Baptists are sending only one missionary for every 2.8 million people who have not yet heard the gospel, he noted.

This seeming indifference toward those who have never heard the gospel stems from Christians who believe salvation is for their benefit alone, said Rankin. "When the reality of the fact is that God has given us the privilege of knowing him for the praise of his glory."

God desires "all the nations might know him and declare the excellencies of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light," he said.

Rankin said he was first convicted of the need for world evangelization during a geography class in college. "As we were studying the peoples of Asia, suddenly I began to comprehend the masses of people, their religions, their philosophies and the reality of the fact that they were living a lifetime and by the millions were dying and going to hell, not because they had rejected Jesus Christ, not because they did not want the salvation that he died to give them, but simply because no one had ever told them the message of salvation."

He immediately began to wonder why there were not more missionaries to spread the gospel, he said. "And God reflected that thought back into my heart to recognize there was the potential in my life of going." Reccord: It's not winning but how you run the race

# By Dwayne Hastings

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Having run track in high school, Robert Reccord said he still recalls falling -- soaked with sweat and exhausted from the race -- into his waiting coach's arms at the finish line.

"I can remember race after race when I would finish and he would be standing there with his arms out," recalled Reccord, pastor of First Baptist Church, Norfolk, Va. "I'd fall into his arms, sweaty, tired, and he'd just hold me."

It wasn't important whether I won the race or not, said Reccord Feb. 28 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, "My coach would always tell me: If you keep your eyes on the finish line, whether you win or not, you'll finish the race well."

Likewise, Reccord said, the portrayal of the Christian life as a foot race in Hebrews 12 makes clear it is less a matter of who wins the race than how the race is run. The measure of our success should not be who is first across the finish line, but if we are living up to the standards that are revealed in God's Word, he continued.

A lot of Christians are running the race just to win, Reccord suggested, "Their biggest concern is who they are outrunning and how they compare to everyone else."

Recalling a film clip he had seen of a 100-yard dash during a Special Olympics meet, Reccord said one of the youngsters in the race stumbled and fell at the 75-yard mark. "All those kids stopped and went back and picked up their fallen mate and walked together across the finish line."

Such behavior reflects Jesus' intent for his Church, insisted Reccord, who is chairman of the Implementation Task Force, the SBC Executive Committee-appointed committee charged with the responsibility of planning for the expected restructure of the Southern Baptist Convention according to the Program Structure Study Committee report approved by messengers to the 1995 convention in Atlanta. He said believers must be sensitive to where others are in the race so that when someone falls, the rest make sure they are there to help them get up to finish the race.

"As I run my race, my job is not to finish ahead of you, and your job is not to finish the race ahead of me," Reccord said on Southeastern's Wake Forest, N.C., campus. "Our job is to make sure that everyone of us finishes the race together."

Reccord said the Christian who becomes consumed with self or the position of the others in the race so as to promote their own self-gain is likely to fall to the track just as a careless runner would: "When you start to look at your own pace, you will invariably trip yourself up. Don't be worried about where everybody else is running, where they are is not your concern; your concern is running your race well."

There are "spiritual Olympians" who already have run the race, Reccord said, explaining these are the giants of the faith, the "great cloud of witnesses" the writer refers to in Hebrews 12. They are those who already have run the race, he continued, noting they stand as models to exhort those still in the race.

"When I finish the race I'm running now, there's going to be another coach waiting for me at the finish line," Reccord said. "I want to be able to fall into his arms and have him hold me; and I pray that I hear, 'You've run well, good and faithful servant.'"

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