

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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**Baptist Leaders Rejoice
At Peace, Mourn Johnson**

NASHVILLE (BP)--Nearly 100 Baptist executives and leaders from throughout the nation meeting here rejoiced at the news of the announced ceasefire in Vietnam, and mourned the death of former President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Most of the executives and program leaders of the 19 Southern Baptist Convention agencies were in Nashville to attend the annual meeting of the 46-member SBC Inter Agency Council and the 77-member coordinating committee of the Inter-Agency Council.

Both organizations adopted a statement expressing gratitude for the announced peace settlement, and gratitude for the life and contributions of former President Johnson.

"As representatives of a cross-section of Southern Baptist life, meeting at the time of the agreed ceasefire in Indo-China, it is fitting that we express our profound gratitude to God, along with our fervent hope that the anticipated peace will be broad and lasting," the statement began.

The Baptist leaders said they joined "heartily in the general rejoicing of the people of America and the people of Indo-China, especially the families of prisoners of war and those missing in action."

In a spirit of confession, the Baptist executives acknowledged "the tragedy of war with its killing and suffering" and asked "God's forgiveness for our failure to pray enough and strive enough for peace."

"We mourn the death of former President Lyndon B. Johnson," the group stated, "with prayers of gratitude for his life and contribution to racial equality, concern for human welfare and desire for world peace."

The statement concluded by expressing good wishes and encouragement to the people in Indo-China and Christian missionaries there, assurance of prayer for a new day of enlarged opportunity for sharing God's love, and dedication anew "to an outpouring of Christian witness and ministry and a mission of reconciliation in a still troubled and needy world."

When the statement was introduced at the meeting, Miss Alma Hunt, executive secretary of the SBC Woman's Missionary Union in Birmingham told the group that when President Nixon made the announcement of the ceasefire agreement, a smaller group of Baptist executives interrupted a subcommittee meeting to listen to the report on radio.

The group stood, sang the Doxology, and prayed, thanking God for the peace that had come at long last. "I will always remember that experience, just as I will always remember when I was when World War II ended," Miss Hunt said.

"It was a very moving thing," added SBC Home Mission Board Assistant Executive Secretary Fred Moseley. "We were not alone in a hotel room somewhere when the news came, but were together with our collaborators, sharing the feeling and emotion of gratitude."

Porter W. Routh, executive secretary of the SBC Executive Committee, recalled that last June, the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Philadelphia had adopted a resolution urging Baptists to "a renewed concern for peace in Vietnam and throughout the world," and commending President Nixon for his "policy of planned withdrawal of armed forces...and summit meetings in behalf of peace."

"As the convention also resolved," Routh continued, "we hope that a portion of the massive resources now allocated to the military be utilized in the healing of those bleeding lands abroad and to the binding up of our nation's wounds at home."

Foy Valentine, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, the denomination's agency assigned to the emphasis of world peace, put it in even stronger words.

"Thank God for the prospect of a truce, however tenuous, in Indo-China," Valentine said. "Initials have effected a ceasefire; but only justice can bring peace."

Valentine explained that if real peace is to come, "some meaningful war, abroad and at home, must be accelerated against poverty, racism, militarism, family breakdown, white collar as well as blue collar crime, immorality, alcohol and drug abuse, and exploitation of the poor.

"The emotion-laden events of recent days challenge Christians everywhere to commit ourselves anew to work for what the Prince of Peace called 'the things that make for peace,'" Valentine concluded.

The new executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, James Wood, told Baptist Press the ceasefire can only be greeted by joy and thanksgiving by Americans and Vietnamese alike.

"First and foremost, it must be a time of rejoicing for the people of Vietnam who have experienced for a generation the ravages of the war without resolution," said Wood, who heads the public affairs agency sponsored by nine nationwide Baptist conventions.

"For the people of the United States, for whom the war has been the longest and one of the costliest in American history, the truce is long overdue," Wood said.

He called the war "a political albatross" to the nation and "a source of deep division and widespread conflict throughout our society.

"Meanwhile, let us hope and pray that we have learned a lesson from the tragedy of Vietnam," Wood concluded.

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Dixon Leaves Mission Board
Press Office for Editorship

1/25/73

RICHMOND (BP)--Mike Dixon, senior editor for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board press office here, has resigned to become editor of the Altavista Journal, a weekly newspaper in Altavista, Va.

Altavista, a community of about 3,300 population, is located 23 miles south of Lynchburg, Va. The Altavista Journal which Dixon will edit has a circulation of 4,900.

A graduate of Florida State University, Tallahassee, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Dixon was editor of the Gadfly, student opinion journal at Southern Seminary.

He has been senior editor in the board's press office, handling coverage for the Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press, for the past three years.

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Baptist Pastor Named Outstanding
Young Man for Hurricane Relief

1/25/73

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--The pastor of the First Baptist Church here, Larry G. Rohrman, was honored as one of 10 Outstanding Young Men of America for his contributions in coordinating a relief effort to victims of Hurricane Camille in 1968.

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Rohrman, 34, received the award along with nine other Outstanding Young Men of America, at the 35th national congress sponsored by the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Just after the award was presented, the governor of Mississippi, William Waller, declared "Larry Rohrman Day" in Mississippi, honoring the young Baptist pastor with a reception, and a special session of the state legislature with Rohrman as guest and speaker.

Rohrman was cited for his leadership role in coordinating relief efforts for the city of Biloxi, at the request of the mayor, when Hurricane Camille swept through the Gulf Coast city of 60,000 people in 1968.

Rohrman, then pastor of the First Baptist Church of Biloxi, directed a complex distribution system involving hundreds of Air Force personnel from nearby Keesler Air Force Base, working for five days and nights almost around the clock to distribute food, water and clothing to victims of what President Nixon then called the worst national disaster in American history.

In Salt Lake City, former NBC-TV newsman Chet Huntley presented to Rohrman the symbol of the honor--a statue of two hands, one reaching out to help others.

The citation was made "for selfless devotion to the betterment of mankind."

Only one other ordained Baptist minister had previously received the national recognition as one of America's Ten Outstanding Young Men--Bill Moyers, who was recognized for his contribution in the field of politics while serving as a top White House aide and press secretary for the late President Lyndon Johnson.

Rohrman, the third person from Mississippi ever to receive the award, told the legislature on his return he felt his selection for the award was a tribute to the people of the state of Mississippi.

He said his first reaction on learning of the honor was one of "extreme excitement," but added, "I then realized how undeserving I am, in thinking of the contributions of so many other Americans.

"All my life, God has treated me as one of his favored children," he told the legislators. "He has permitted me to be standing in just the right place at just the right time to afford me opportunities of service that are uncommon to most people.

"My goals and plans for the future are easily stated," he continued. "My one burning desire is to help make this world a place of peace, brotherhood and love."

Rohrman moved from First Baptist Church of Biloxi to the pastorate of First Baptist Church, Jackson, in 1969 at the age of 31. Rohrman is the youngest man ever to serve as pastor of the largest church of any denomination in Mississippi.

Since he became pastor of the church three years ago, more than 2,000 people have joined the church, including 700 in the past year. During 1972, the church baptized more than 200 new converts. In a \$1.5 million expansion program, the church raised the necessary funds in two months.

Active in the field of drug rehabilitation, Rohrman serves on the board of directors for the "The Crisis Center," a drug rehab center in Jackson staffed by psychiatrists, physicians and ministers. He also is on the board of directors of the Jackson Chamber of Commerce, the Mississippi Bureau of Drug Enforcement Commission, and the Rotary Club.

A native of Texas and Missouri Rohrman is a graduate of Baylor University, Waco, Tex., and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.