

(BP)**BAPTIST PRESS**

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Thomason Resigns BSSB
 Executive Vice Presidency

NASHVILLE (BP)--W. O. Thomason, executive vice president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, has resigned that position, effective Nov. 5, to pursue private practice in the field of consulting and counseling services, in association with local psychologist Glenn Larson.

It was announced that James W. Clark, director of the Broadman division, will serve as interim executive vice president until the office is filled by trustee action.

In a letter to Sunday School Board trustees, Thomason cited family obligations which have been "of an unusual and time-consuming nature," to which he needs to devote more time than is presently possible. His wife, Mary, has been a complete invalid for the past nine years as a result of multiple sclerosis, a board spokesman said.

Thomason, in his resignation letter, praised the leadership of board president Grady C. Cothen, thanked Cothen, the trustees, and board personnel for their friendship and concern; and noted that "the Sunday School Board is on the threshold of vast new programs and enlarged horizons."

Cothen stated that "It is with the greatest possible regret that we lose the services of Bill Thomason. He has a brilliant mind and great administrative skills. This decision is one he has arrived at as a result of his personal needs and problems. We will miss him, but we are grateful for all the years of faithful service he has given the Sunday School Board."

Thomason started with the board in 1958 as editor of Living With Children. He became assistant to the director of the education division the following year and director of the book store division in 1971. In 1975 he was elected executive vice president of the agency.

A native of Birmingham, Thomason is a graduate of Auburn University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has served as minister of education in churches in Texas, Oklahoma and Tennessee. He is the co-author of two Convention Press books, "A Church Organized and Functioning," and "A Dynamic Church," and the author of "The Life Givers," a Broadman book.

He is an engineer, a contributor to religious education theory and a consultant in long-range planning. In addition to his engineering and education degrees, he holds a doctor's degree in psychology. For several years he has devoted part of his time to personal counseling.

The Thomasons, who plan to continue to reside in Nashville, are the parents of one daughter, Mrs. Dan Brown, Washington, D. C.

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(BP) Photo to be mailed to Baptist state paper editors.

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Court Asked to Clear Up
 1973 Obscenity Guidelines

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By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court heard arguments here that persons convicted on obscenity charges committed before its most recent rulings on what constitutes obscenity should not be covered by those guidelines.

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In an unusual development, attorneys for three Newport, Ky. men convicted of showing obscene films and the solicitor general of the United States both asked the high court to send the case back for a new trial.

Robert H. Bork, the federal government's top lawyer, told the justices he was making his unusual request because he is convinced the Kentucky man did not receive a fair trial, because he was judged by standards which were not in effect when his conviction occurred.

During the oral arguments, three of the nine justices publicly scolded Bork for not presenting his case in the customary "adversary" fashion.

The Kentucky men argued also that a lower federal court erred in refusing to view the films for themselves and in ruling that so-called "community standards" of obscenity for Newport are identical to those of the entire eastern section of Kentucky.

The Supreme Court ruled in 1973 that prevailing community standards in individual localities must be considered in determining what constitutes obscenity. At the same time, the court declined to specify what constitutes a community.

As a result, the high court has been flooded with cases similar to the one from Newport. Presumably, the justices will address the question directly and clear up some of the confusion left after the 1973 ruling.

One of the films shown by the Newport men is the well-known, hard core pornographic movie, "Deep Throat."

In another case from Newport, the high court declined to review the conviction of a woman for violating the Federal Travel Act, a law which forbids interstate money transactions to pay for the services of prostitutes.

The Newport woman, who operated a night club which also provided prostitution on its premises, was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment and fined \$5,000 for doing business with an Ohio man who repeatedly patronized the Newport establishment.

In other related cases, the high court likewise denied review to obscenity cases from California and Georgia.

The California case was brought by the district attorney of Los Angeles County, who asked the justices to overturn a decision by the California Supreme Court which prohibited local law enforcement agencies from closing theaters for showing allegedly obscene movies because they constituted public nuisances.

An Atlanta, Ga., man was also unsuccessful in convincing the justices to review his conviction and sentencing for transporting obscene materials. He argued that his sentence, three years in prison and \$45,000 in fines, was excessive and violated the Constitution's ban on cruel and unusual punishment. Three of the nine justices agreed with him, but four must agree before a case can be heard by the nation's highest tribunal.

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Plains Church to Decide
Whether to Fire Pastor

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11/4/76

PLAINS, Ga. (BP)--Plains Baptist Church, cast into a global spotlight by the membership of President-elect Jimmy Carter and his family, was called to a conference set for Sunday morning, Nov. 14, by pastor Bruce E. Edwards to discuss his tenure.

Sources earlier said the conference would be called for Wed., Nov. 10, but the date was changed to the following Sunday, Edwards said.

Edwards announced on Nov. 3 that he would call the conference to discuss tensions that arose when a black minister from Albany, Ga., came to present himself for membership at the church two days before the national elections, and found worship services had been cancelled by the church's deacons.

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Earlier that week, Clennon King of Albany, pastor of a non-denominational church, had announced he would be at the Plains church seeking membership.

The Plains deacons met and revived a 1965 resolution which barred all blacks and civil rights activists from the church.

Edwards said he objected to the deacon's action and to a subsequent move by the deacons in which they cancelled the Oct. 31 worship services.

Next, the deacons wrote Edwards a letter asking him to resign. The Plains church's constitution calls for one week's advance notice for the church to be called into conference. Edwards said he called the conference himself to bring the issue to a conclusion.

At a Wednesday evening prayer service, according to wire reports, the day following the elections, Edwards told the 25 worshippers assembled of the deacons' letter requesting his resignation, and quoted from it:

"Your effectiveness and leadership of the Plains Baptist Church has been lost and we therefore request your resignation immediately."

The deacons also were reportedly upset because Edwards had allowed himself to be quoted inaccurately as saying the 1965 resolution referred to "Niggers" and "civil rights demonstrators," when the actual word used was "Negroes."

He later admitted he had used the wrong word in referring to the actual wording of the resolution but had done so, he said, because the chairman of deacons had used the word "Nigger" in speaking of the resolution, and Edwards thought that was what it said.

Edwards said he did not intend to submit his resignation and noted that under the church's rules only a vote of the congregation could terminate him as pastor.

Edwards, a 1974 graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, told the Wednesday evening worshippers, according to reports:

"I think it's a very dangerous precedent for the board of deacons to ask for my resignation because I disagree with the 1965 resolution . . . If I do continue as pastor of this church, it is my God-given responsibility to tell you that resolution is wrong and sinful."

Edwards said that when he came to the church on Sun., Oct. 31, and saw deacons guarding the locked doors, "It tore my heart out that I was pastor of a church where men stood guard to keep people out of a church when I spent my whole life trying to get people into the church."

The Baptist minister said he has received hundreds of telegrams condemning the church.

Southern Baptist Convention President James L. Sullivan and other national denominational leaders have been widely quoted as denouncing any form of racism among Southern Baptists. But they emphatically stated they felt the Plains church incident involving King was "insincere" and "coercive," as Sullivan said. They said it was an apparent attempt to sway the election away from Carter.

Edwards, who holds the master of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary, is a 1969 graduate of Norman Baptist College, Norman Park, Ga., and of Georgia Southwestern College in Americus, 1970.

He has been pastor in Plains since Jan. 1975 and came here upon graduation from New Orleans Seminary, Dec. 1974. Before attending seminary he was pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Americus, 1968-71. During his seminary days he was pastor of Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church in Mt. Hermon, La.

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Sullivan: 'Baptist Vote
For Carter Not a Bloc'

By Theo Sommerkamp

Baptist Press
11/4/76

FAIRBORN, Oh. (BP)--Baptists did not vote as a bloc for President-elect Jimmy Carter even though he is a prominent layman in their denomination, the President of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) said in a post-election interview here.

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James L. Sullivan, interviewed while in Fairborn to address the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio, said that "Baptists voted for the man and not for the church he belongs to."

This indicated they balloted along lines related to issues and party preference rather than religion, Sullivan said.

He also said the widely publicized interview article with Carter in Playboy magazine did not influence the outcome of the election. It did, however, "change some Baptists votes both ways for and against Carter."

The SBC president defended Carter's interview with Playboy: "The religious people already knew where Carter stood, how was he going to make himself known to people who had never known of Jimmy Carter? His interview with Playboy Magazine was not an endorsement of the magazine but an effort to reach a different audience."

Sullivan also defended Carter's theology as expressed in the Playboy interview. "He made it clear that Christ dealt with the cause of sin, such as adultery, rather than the result. Carter also explained that as Christians we condemn sin, but we have compassion on the sinner." Sullivan questioned the use of certain words chosen by Carter in expressing himself, however.

Asked if an unusual religious atmosphere would prevail in the White House with Carter's occupancy, Sullivan said, "The White House is not the base of a religious movement. It would be regrettable if Carter set up a church in the White House. He has indicated instead that he will join a local Baptist church where he lives."

What would happen if Carter's religious and moral convictions conflict with politics?

"We'll have to wait and see," Sullivan said, "but I don't believe Carter will compromise his convictions. These compromises have a way of backfiring."

Where moral and ethical decisions are involved in the presidency, Sullivan felt Carter's religious faith will have an influence:

"Carter is a man of honesty and integrity and is a diligent worker. There isn't a lazy bone in his body."

From his own 22-years of experience as a denominational administrator and as retired president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Sullivan analyzed Carter's mode of operation:

"He doesn't shoot from the hip, he explores things in depth with his counselors. After they determine the best course, he plows on through with it. Carter doesn't act impulsively or inconsistently as some administrators do, and his followers can almost always know where he is."

Sullivan said Carter's candidacy had brought the Southern Baptist Convention to the attention of large numbers of the news media in the East, who had no idea what or who Southern Baptist are:

"Some of them thought we were snake handlers; they were amazed when they found out they were totally mistaken with a stereotype concept of us."

What influence Carter could have on religious liberty on an international level?

"I hope that Carter could be an influence for religious liberty around the world in his handling of international affairs of America," Sullivan said.

He added, "As we become a larger denomination, it's inevitable by the law of averages we'll have more Baptists in places of leadership. We teach our people to be Christian citizens."

The 1976 election offered the American people "a wonderful option to high grade men (Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter) of good moral character" to choose from, he said.

Sullivan said that as president of the Southern Baptist Convention he did not give a personal endorsement to either candidate for president.

This was the primary reason, Sullivan believed, election results in state after state showed Ford and Carter running almost even despite both totals in the millions.

A native of Mississippi, Sullivan said, the voting results in the South showed that blacks and whites have moved closer together and found they can support the same candidates and platforms.

During a recent trip to Australia to attend a Baptist World Alliance executive meeting, Sullivan said he found "virtually unanimous" support for Carter.

"I never found one person there, Baptist or non-Baptist who didn't support Carter. They felt that if someone so unknown as Carter could come out of nowhere to become a serious contender for the presidency of the United States he must possess some rare quality," Sullivan noted.

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WMU Director Laments
Apathy to World Needs

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MEMPHIS (BP)--Christians in the United States fail to respond to world needs "because our minds are boggled by information overload, and because our hearts are suffering from carrying underload," the executive director of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) said here.

Miss Carolyn Weatherford, in an address to trustees of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, lamented a sense of apathy that she said seems to exist among some churches and the U. S. in general.

The WMU executive told the Brotherhood leaders she was excited, however, as she traveled across the nation and world and found church after church where the Baptist Men and Women are involved in missions.

She was especially excited, Miss Weatherford said, about the growth of Baptist churches among the Quiche Indians in Guatemala, which she visited recently.

Twenty Baptist congregations exist among the Quiche Indians, and since July, there have been 110 new believers to join the churches, she said.

The Quiche Baptist churches, with a total membership of two thousand members, have a goal of increasing membership to 100,000 in the next 10 years, she said.

"That means every believer will be responsible for winning 50 people to Christ in the next 10 years," she said.

"Can we say the same about churches in (the U. S.) America or about our own church?" she asked.

In too many cases, she responded, Baptist churches in the U. S., have lost the excitement of the natural response to faith in Christ that the Quiche Indians demonstrate.

"No church," she observed, "can become more than the individual members want it to become."

Miss Weatherford expressed appreciation for a "new sense of cooperation" between the Brotherhood and WMU organizations nationally. She reported that the staff of the two agencies held a joint planning meeting in September and that Brotherhood and WMU will have a joint leadership conference at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center, July 9-15, 1977.

In introducing Miss Weatherford, Brotherhood Commission Executive Director Glendon McCullough praised the new look in creativity in WMU that Miss Weatherford has brought to the missions education agency since assuming the WMU executive directorship in 1974.

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