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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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77-102

President Carter Urges  
Volunteer Mission Effort

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Jimmy Carter, a Southern Baptist layman, challenged Southern Baptists to a massive world mission program at a White House luncheon attended by ten Southern Baptist leaders.

Earlier, the President had been inspired by a Sunday School lesson on Timothy taught by Fred Gregg, executive vice president of marketing for the Equitable Life Insurance Company, at the First Baptist Church here. The President has been impressed by the volunteer mission program of the Mormon Church, in which young Mormons are encouraged to give two years of volunteer mission service. The Mormons regularly have about 26,000 young people on a two-year mission for the church.

President Carter urged the Baptist leaders to develop more fully the volunteer mission programs of the denomination to encourage larger numbers of both young and older people to give up to two years of service at their own expense or paid for by their families or by the church of which they are members.

"The test of a church is not in its building or in its staff, but in the number of people reached for Christ," the President said.

Such a voluntary mission program is not new in the President's thinking, because he himself volunteered time for special mission projects as a layman before he became governor of Georgia. During one of these missions, Carter made use of his knowledge of the Spanish language to carry out his Christian witness. His mother served as a Peace Corps volunteer in India after reaching the age of 67.

Following the White House luncheon, which was initiated by the President himself, the Southern Baptist leaders issued a statement to Baptist Press. They said, "The President shared with us his concerns for a greater missionary effort at home and abroad. We felt his heart concerns about winning the world for Jesus Christ. We all came away from the consultation with a determination to convey the President's concerns to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and to make plans to achieve the goals set before us by the President."

During the consultation, President Carter discussed several of his ideas and goals for the proposed step-up in missionary activity. He noted the denomination's mission program targeted at the year 2,000, but he wondered why Baptists should wait that long to get a massive and effective mission program underway. He wanted it to get going now.

Among the ideas advanced by the President are the following:

- Volunteers should be sought beginning at age 19 with no upper age limit;
- They should be enlisted for one or two years of voluntary mission service;
- The denomination should provide up to three months of special orientation or training for the particular project to which they may be assigned;
- The expenses should be paid by the volunteer or his or her family or his or her church with no reduction in contributions to the Cooperative Program (unified budget of the Southern Baptist Convention).

Although the President took note of the SBC Home Mission Board's US-2 program and the Foreign Mission Board's journeyman program, he stressed that what he is proposing is

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~~something~~ new and different and over and above the regular denominational program. He envisioned literally thousands of Baptists, ranging from young people to persons in retirement who would devote two years exclusively to this specific work, both in the U. S. and overseas.

Earlier, the same week, four Southern Baptist agencies announced a joint venture, "Volunteer Involvement in Missions" for laypersons desiring to contribute time, gifts and funds to short or long term missions projects.

One participant in the meeting with the President suggested that the new joint-agencies' project could be a forerunner of what Carter envisions as a massive endeavor of volunteer missions for the denomination.

Neither the President nor the Baptist leaders at the luncheon went away from the meeting with specific details worked out for the proposed new mission expansion. However, all were committed to the concepts discussed by the President, to communicating the President's concerns to Southern Baptists, and to an implementation of these concerns in the most effective manner.

Those present for the luncheon meeting with the President were: Porter W. Routh, executive secretary of the SBC Executive Committee; Baker James Cauthen, executive secretary of the Foreign Mission Board; William G. Tanner, executive secretary of the Home Mission Board; Glendon McCullough, executive secretary of the Brotherhood Commission; Mrs. A. Harrison Gregory, president of Woman's Missionary Union; Grady C. Cothen, president of the Sunday School Board; Owen Cooper, former SBC president; Fred Gregg, executive vice president of marketing for the Equitable Life Insurance Company and the President's Sunday School teacher; Annie Ward Byrd, a retired editor of the Sunday School Board; and Charles Trentham, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Washington, D. C., of which President Carter is a member.

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NOTE to Baptist state paper editors: An official White House photo to go with this story is being mailed to you directly from the Washington Bureau of Baptist Press.

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President Proclaims  
June 19, 'Father's Day'

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6/8/77

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Jimmy Carter proclaimed June 19 as Father's Day and asked "all Americans to make a special effort this year to let our nation's fathers know that they will always have our love and gratitude."

At the same time the President said, "A father must be ready to supply the love, discipline, security and support from which his children can draw strength--even as he faces his own problems and concerns which are, for him, beyond their understanding."

The third Sunday in June of each year has been designated by Congress as Father's Day. The congressional resolution calls on the President to issue a proclamation calling for an appropriate observance.

Accordingly, the President has instructed federal officials to display the U. S. flag on all government buildings on that day. He urged all citizens to display the flag at their homes and other suitable places.

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Bruce Edwards Going  
To Hawaii Pastorate

Baptist Press  
6/8/77

ATLANTA (BP)--Bruce E. Edwards, who resigned the pastorate of Plains (Ga.) Baptist Church in February will become pastor of Makakilo Baptist Church on Oahu, Hawaii, in mid-July, it was learned here.

Edwards' new congregation of about 125 persons is the only church in a city of some 5,000 population. He will be jointly sponsored by the congregation, the Hawaii Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (HMB) church extension department, subject to approval by the HMB's directors in July.

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The minister drew worldwide attention during the presidential campaign of Jimmy Carter, a former member and deacon in the Plains church, and during subsequent battles over whether to admit a black, activist minister to worship services and membership with the Plains congregation. Edwards had been pastor in Plains more than two years when he resigned.

In Plains, some 50 persons formed the Bottsford Baptist Mission, meeting in a building formerly used by the Plains Lutheran Church. Several weeks ago, Baptist Press learned, a group from the Plains Baptist Church decided to form their own congregation.

The Bottsford Mission has called as pastor, effective July 1, Fred Collins, who has served since 1975 as pastor at Geneva, Ala., and interim pastor at Southside Baptist Church, Camilla, Ga. Collins preceded Edwards as pastor of the Plains church.

Moderator for the mission is Jim Lawson, county extension agent in Americus, Ga. Lawson was a deacon in the Plains Baptist Church and a strong supporter of Edwards, according to one observer.

T. L. McConnell of Smithville, Ga., was serving as interim pastor at Plains Baptist Church.

Edwards and his wife, Sandra, are in the process of adopting a daughter, who is part Hawaiian, according to reports. They already have two sons.

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Anita Bryant Wins;  
To Continue Fight

Baptist Press  
6/8/77

MIAMI, Fla. (BP)--Southern Baptist Anita Bryant, who led anti-gay forces to victory in a special Dade County election repealing a controversial law prohibiting discrimination in employment and housing against homosexuals, says she will carry her fight to other cities having similar ordinances.

Miss Bryant, former Miss America, a prominent entertainer and television star, said she has been contacted by many cities that have laws similar to the Dade County ordinance. She claims she has suffered bookings as a result of her fight.

She specifically referred to San Francisco, Minneapolis, and San Antonio, Tex., as cities where she expects to carry the Save Our Children fight against the "gay rights" laws.

The controversy arose after Miss Bryant objected publicly to an amendment to Dade County's Fair Housing and Equal Employment ordinance extending the act to prohibiting discrimination due to an individual's "affectional or sexual preference," in addition to race, sex, religion and marital status. Some 40 other cities in the country have similar laws, reports say.

Miss Bryant headed the Save Our Children organization formed to lead opposition to the Dade County law.

Her opposition to the law triggered a national fight and campaign between anti-gay forces and homosexuals. Anti-gay forces won a referendum on the homosexual amendment, then won the fight for repeal of the law.

There was no unanimity within the religious community in the Dade County area or even nationally during the pre-election campaign.

The Florida Baptist Convention's state board of missions adopted a position statement opposing homosexual activity at its May meeting, declaring that homosexual activity "is not in the interest of the social order, that it is "not simply a private matter as it has a negative effect upon families who become its victims," that it is "contrary to the teaching of the Bible . . ."

The position statement noted also, "we believe that those who are homosexuals have an intrinsic value in the eyes of God, and a positive program of rehabilitation through guidance and counseling should be provided."

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Strong backing of Miss Bryant's stance on gay rights came from the Miami Baptist Association's Christian Life Committee, which sponsored a full-page advertisement in the Miami Herald the day before the June 7 election.

The ad, endorsed by 110 clergy from various denominations in the greater Miami area, advocated repeal of the ordinance amendment on the basis of religious freedom, since "the ordinance required that private and parochial schools employ homosexuals," according to a Save Our Children spokesman.

Final votes on the question of repeal were 202,319 for repeal and 89,562 against. Not quite 45 percent of the Dade County registered voters turned out. Originally, a 15-20 percent vote had been predicted. No other major issues were cited on the ballot, although one observer noted it was the largest non-Presidential election voter turnout Dade County has had.

Reports indicated that precincts known to be heavily Jewish voted 2-1 to keep the ordinance as it was; blacks did not turn out as anticipated or hoped for by either side. And those blacks who did vote went more than 2-1 for repeal.

The Save Our Children spokesman noted that most blacks are Baptists and Methodists in the area, and black leaders of the two denominations were by and large for repeal, as were their white counterparts.

There was some split among the Methodists, he noted, and while Pentecostals were generally silent on the issue, those who did speak out were for repeal.

No Baptists endorsed the ordinance but "a couple were ambivalent," one observer said. Instead, they advocated that voters simply vote what their consciences dictated. A few black Baptists saw the issue as a civil rights fight but did not advocate repeal, it was noted.

In the heavily Spanish-Catholic areas of greater Miami, the vote was 4-1 for repeal, and in the middle to upper income, single family dwelling areas (mostly white), the vote was also 4-1 for repeal.

It is anticipated that gay rights forces will appeal to a district court.

Miss Bryant's Save Our Children organization was described by a spokesman as "loose knit" with wide ranging support. Miss Bryant said the group had received strong support from groups in San Francisco and in Boulder, Colo., where a court has reportedly forced a county to accept homosexual marriage, under the Equal Rights Amendment. Most support, she said, had come from California.

In Dade County, a coalition of Baptists and half a dozen other evangelical Protestants and the Conservative Jews--described as two of the "most powerful religious groups in Miami," came out separately for repeal of the gay rights amendment shortly before the election, while another strong organization of "liberal" Jews took a stand against repeal.

The evangelical coalition of nearly 100 clergymen took a Constitutional approach to the issue, calling the Dade County amendment to the anti-discrimination ordinance, "a flagrant violation of the First Amendment guarantee of the free exercise of religion."

At the heart of the coalition's charge was a written opinion from County Attorney Stuart L. Simon, author of the amended ordinance, declaring that a religious school is required by law "to employ a teacher with homosexual preferences if the teacher was academically qualified, even though the school was theologically opposed to homosexuality."

The question was raised by Tommy Watson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Perrine, Fla., which operates a kindergarten through junior high school. The cause was taken up by the Miami Baptist Association which invited members of the clergy from other denominations to join in an ad campaign advocating repeal.

In their ads, the clergy said, "We believe that all persons, including homosexuals, have intrinsic value in the eyes of God. We accept individuals where they are, and we believe in compassionate aid and rehabilitation in a positive helpful way."

They continued, however, "Our acceptance of individuals does not mean that we accept homosexuality as an approved lifestyle. Rather, we believe that the Judeo-Christian tradition, based on the Bible, is that a morally responsible heterosexual relationship is God's intention for mankind."

After the election in Dade County, Miss Bryant said, "Today the laws of God and the cultural values of man have been vindicated. She added, "In victory we shall not be vindictive. We will continue to seek help and change for the homosexuals themselves."

Jack Campbell, who led the homosexuals' campaign in favor of keeping the ordinance told reporters pro-gay forces would continue their fight.