



BAPTIST PRESS

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November 23, 1977

77-207

Flynt Becomes Christian,
Promises 'Hustler' Change

By Orville Scott

SAN ANTONIO (BP)--Larry Flynt, publisher of "Hustler" magazine, says he has become a Christian and wants to turn his pornographic monthly into a Christian publication.

The 41-year-old publisher, whose magazine is read by 15 million people a month, made the announcement during Sunday services in Houston and San Antonio churches.

The previous Friday he and Southern Baptist Convention President Jimmy Allen drew headlines when both urged a Texas legislative committee in San Antonio to seek stiff criminal penalties for use of children in pornographic literature and films.

Flynt said he did some serious thinking about his relationship to the problems of society and to Christ. The climax to his concern came when he called evangelist Ruth Carter Stapleton, the President's sister, who was in Houston to speak at the Braeswood Assembly of God Church.

Mrs. Stapleton said Flynt repeated over and over again into the phone, "Ruth, som thing is happening, something is happening..."

Flynt said the prelude to his conversion began months ago--the night he spent six hours talking to the Stapletons in their home in Fayetteville, N. C. Mrs. Carter's husband is a veterinarian in Fayetteville.

Mrs. Stapleton, a Southern Baptist, said she and her family had exchanged visits with the Flynts a couple of months ago. She said she found him to be a very enjoyable person "and so full of love," but there was no indication of his real commitment until the phone call from San Antonio.

Flynt said his conviction and 25-year sentence for obscenity in Cincinnati had made him do some thinking. "I didn't know what I was doing was wrong...all I started out to do was make money," said Flynt, who reportedly went from rags in east Kentucky to riches in publishing.

Flynt told the Houston Assembly of God Church that while doing research to prepare for his court testimonies, he asked a team to research the Bible and find some passages to support pornography.

Instead, the team came up with over 100 passages condemning it. Flynt said God led him to a missionary and in a conversation with him, Flynt became convinced there is a God and that he was working against God.

Flynt said it was an awesome realization and brought him to a turning point in his life.

Before he professed Christ as Savior, Flynt had told reporters during the pornography hearings in San Antonio that his magazines are symptoms rather than the causes of problems in society.

"It's not Christianity I have trouble with," he said them. "It's not God I have trouble with...It's the distortion of God's Word.

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"Now there's been more murder and violence committed in the name of God than anyone else's.

"I've been called everything from the anti-Christ to Ralph Nader, but I'm probably a better Christian than most people who go to church every Sunday."

After Flynt made a public profession of faith in Christ on Sunday, he said he would change his magazine as soon as possible.

He said it is already in pre-publishing stages that cannot be changed for the next four months. He said the transformed "Hustler" could serve as a "conduit to explain the position of the church."

That story needs to be explained to a lot of people, he said, including the 15 million readers of "Hustler."

Flynt's wife, Althea, who is assistant editor of "Hustler," said her husband has undergone a religious conversion and that he intends to change the format of the magazine.

She attended services with him and Mrs. Stapleton at a non-denominational San Antonio Church. Flynt told the congregation that he came along as proof of his belief in the philosophy of President Carter's sister of inner healing and of his acceptance of Jesus Christ.

Flynt was to appear before the California legislature to repeat his plea for strong legislation against child pornography.

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Plans Advance to Teach
About Religion in Schools

Baptist Press
11/23/77

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Plans to expand the scope of the National Council on Religion and Public Education (NCRPE) were begun at the organization's seventh annual meeting here, according to James E. Wood Jr., newly elected vice president of the organization.

Wood, executive director of the Washington, D. C.-based Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, said NCRPE appointed a special committee to study the establishment of regional units throughout the nation to advance the inclusion of religion studies in the public school curriculum. Joseph Forcinelli of the Harvard University School of Education is the chairman.

NCRPE is composed of a board of directors of educators, clergy and other interested persons and organizations. Its purpose is "...to provide a forum and means for cooperation among organizations and institutions concerned with those ways of studying religion which are educationally appropriate and constitutionally acceptable to a secular program of public education."

The expansion of NCRPE activities is designed to increase contacts with local, state and regional groups involved in religion studies on public education, Wood said. Increased participation by teachers and administrators in teaching about religion in public schools is one of the objectives of NCRPE.

In a keynote address at the annual meeting, Fenwick W. English, associate director of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), warned NCRPE that its approach to public schools would probably not be warmly welcomed because of the built-in problems involved in teaching religion. He said little sustained headway would be made with public school officials "until the content and thematic issues are faced and resolved."

English then proposed that NCRPE seek a grant from a foundation to discover solutions to the problems of teaching about religion in public schools. He pledged that if NCRPE would "take that step" he would offer his personal assistance as well as that of the National Center for the Improvement of Learning of the AASA.

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He listed what he considers as four major obstacles in the way of teaching about religion in public schools:

- (1) The attempt to study about religion at the same time it is being celebrated is poor timing. Neither Christianity nor Judaism can be objectively examined during the Christmas or Hanukkah seasons.
- (2) Violations of religious practice in public schools continue. A study "about" religion cannot be effective until the violations are cleared up.
- (3) The clergy and religious community cannot agree on what should be taught about religion.
- (4) Public school professional staff members look upon religion as an intrusion into their professional prerogatives. Professionals are not willing to seek lay interference in the conduct of their jobs.

In spite of the problems, English said that he advocates teaching about religion in public schools because of its unique role in the life of individuals and of society.

Although NCRPE has met in connection with the meetings of the Religious Education Association in the past, Wood said that its future meetings would be more closely connected with public school groups. Serious consideration is being given to meeting in connection with the annual session of the American Association of School Administrators in 1979, he continued.

A proposal is now before NCRPE that, at its 10th anniversary in 1980, it conduct a national symposium beamed toward educators, Wood said. J. Blaine Fister of the National Council of Churches is NCRPE president.

Berry Named
To Seminary Post

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Baptist Press
11/23/77

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary trustees elected Thomas A. Berry vice president for development, according to Landrum P. Leavell, seminary president.

Berry will succeed Russell McIntire, who recently resigned the position to accept the pastorate of the Oak Park Baptist Church in New Orleans. Berry, director of admissions and development at Louisiana College, a Baptist school in Pineville, since 1972, will assume his new position after the first of December.

A native of Forest, La., Berry was educated at Oak Grove High School, Louisiana College and New Orleans Seminary.

He has served as pastor of churches in Louisiana and Mississippi and as minister of education at Calvary Baptist Church, Alexandria, prior to becoming director of admissions at Louisiana College in 1972. He became director of development at the college in 1975.

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(BP) Photo to be mailed to Baptist state papers by New Orleans Seminary.

Southern Baptists Send
Relief Funds to India

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Baptist Press
11/23/77

RICHMOND (BP)--Southern Baptists are sending at least \$6,000 in disaster relief funds to help people in the section of India hit by a cyclone and tidal wave Nov. 19.

Wire service reports said that about 10,000 lost their lives and as many as one million were left homeless. The cyclone--the Indian Ocean equivalent to a hurricane--was called the worst in a century. A week earlier, a less destructive cyclone claimed about 500 lives in Tamil Nadu state.

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The major storm hit along the coast of Andhra Pradesh state, north of Madras and about 300 miles northeast of Bangalore, the main center of Southern Baptist work in India.

Indian government officials told some U. S. agencies that they expect the death toll to be lower than that reported by the press, but because many of the victims were washed to the ocean, an exact count is impossible.

W. Eugene Grubbs, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's consultant on hunger relief and disaster response, said the U. S. government relief agency indicated that more than 2½ million acres of rice crops and about 2 of other crops were damaged.

No Southern Baptist missionaries serve in that immediate area, and Southern Baptist relief funds will be administered through missionaries of the American Baptist churches who have been at work in the area for many years. Lewis Noll, American Baptist missionary and relief representative for that denomination in India, said it was the worst cyclone and flood he had witnessed in 25 years of service in India.

The American Baptist official estimated about \$18,000 was needed in immediate aid and \$12,000 of that will be provided by the American Baptist Denomination.

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Cauthen Sees Offering Goal
As Vital to 'Bold Mission'

Baptist Press
11/23/77

RICHMOND (BP)--This year's \$34 million goal for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions represents a "bold goal in keeping with the challenge of Bold Mission Thrust," Baker J. Cauthen, executive director of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Foreign Mission Board, said in a statement released here.

The statement, made as Cauthen continued steady progress toward full recovery from a Sept. 18 heart attack, called on Southern Baptists to respond to a time of "superlative challenge."

The ultimate success of Bold Mission Thrust, Southern Baptists' program to proclaim the gospel of Christ to the entire world in this century, will depend upon "understanding the needs of the world, the challenge of our Lord's expectations, and the mighty power of the Holy Spirit released throughout the world in response to fervent prayer," Cauthen said.

In the first statement he has issued since his heart attack, Cauthen, responding to a request from Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union to comment on the offering, noted that it will be used to supplement support provided through the national SBC Cooperative Program and "enable the objectives of the mission thrust to become realities."

"The money will make possible the sending of new missionaries and strengthening support of the present staff of nearly 2,800 in 90 countries," he said. "It will help to provide resources for evangelism, student work, radio and television, Christian education, theological training, publications and medical ministries around the world."

"One million dollars of the amount," he said, "will be used to provide for additional mission field costs made necessary by the Mission Service Corps" (new SBC program for one-to-two-year term volunteer missionaries).

"The Lottie Moon Offering is much more than money. It is a marshaling of spiritual resources through mission study and intercessory prayer," he declared. "This is a time for Southern Baptists to 'expect great things from God and attempt great things for God.'"

-30-

Ordination and A
Woman Named Martha

By Debbie Stewart

DALLAS (BP)--A woman named Martha made Biblical history because the pages of the new Testament recorded her faith in her friend Jesus. A woman named Martha Gilmore is becoming a legend in her own time here because the pages of newspapers have recorded her ordination as a Southern Baptist minister to serve as a hospital chaplain.

The continuing theological debate over the right of women to serve as ministers in Southern Baptist churches has been brought into sharp focus in Dallas by the ordination of the modern-day Martha this fall, and the resulting response of W. A. Criswell, pastor of the 19,000-member First Baptist Church.

Criswell, minister of the largest Southern Baptist church and a respected Bible scholar, represented the traditional Southern Baptist sentiment when he said the ordination of Mrs. Gilmore by the 6,200 member Cliff Temple Baptist Church was "outside the Bible" and that he feels the denomination won't accept ordination of women. However, both Criswell, who has expressed admiration for her capabilities, and Mrs. Gilmore won't take time from their ministries to debate each other. "We've both got too much to do in the Kingdom," she explains.

When the Cliff Temple congregation enabled Mrs. Gilmore to become the first in Dallas, the fourth in Texas and about the 30th woman in the nation to be ordained as a Southern Baptist minister, the pastor, A. Douglas Watterson, said the church "acted in the liberating spirit of the Gospel." The action of Dallas' second largest church, where Mrs. Gilmore has belonged since her childhood, demonstrated the autonomous nature of the local Baptist church within a denomination that traditionally has opposed ordination of women as ministers or deacons.

Southern Baptists on both sides of the women's ordination issue agree that the authority of ordination belongs to the local church rather than the denomination. However, the magnitude of the controversy over the ordination of women as ministers was demonstrated when a Southern Baptist association in Kentucky dismissed a small congregation for ordaining a woman to the ministry earlier this year.

The issue is based on the broader concept of the role of women in the church. Pro and con opinions on the ordination of women stem from differing interpretations of specific Biblical references to women's service in the church. "What parts of a scripture reflect historical culture and what parts represent lasting Biblical truth often bring in differing opinions of Bible students," said Huber L. Drumwright, dean of the school of theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"With reference to ordination, the character, not the sex, of the person, is the matter of lasting importance, said Drumwright, who was ordained at First Baptist Church, Dallas. He does not "personally feel the responsibility to participate in the ordination of women."

Although Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) president Jimmy R. Allen maintains that "the Bible is not a male-chauvinist document," and Criswell states that "the whole nature of the Bible is against women's ordination," the modern-day application of Biblical teachings provokes conflicting opinion.

Criswell and other opponents of women's ordination often cite Biblical teachings by the Apostle Paul on a woman's role in the church, such as I Timothy 3:2, that a minister must be the "husband of one wife." Supporters of women's ordination interpret the third chapter of I Timothy as a description of the character of an ideal minister rather than a specification of the sex of the person. They believe that verse two reflects the cultural times of 2,000 years ago rather than a theological principle that endures in the 20th Century.

"It never occurred to Paul to ordain a woman," according to Criswell, who interprets verse two as a ban against polygamy. Criswell said the Bible does not forbid the ordination of qualified single men who have never been married, widowers, remarried widowers, divorced men, or remarried divorced men.

Criswell says an even stronger ban against ordination of women than I Timothy 3:2

is found in I Timothy 2:12, when Paul wrote: "I suffer not a woman to teach, not to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." According to Criswell, scriptures such as this mean that women should not assume the governing, authoritative positions in the church. He said that women can "beautifully" serve in responsible positions as Sunday School teachers, and mission study leaders. Criswell applies that viewpoint even to his wife, who teaches a popular First Baptist Sunday School class attended by more than 500 men, women and children.

Mrs. Gilmore, who has been a teacher in Sunday School at her church and in Dallas schools and classes for pregnant women, began to feel a spiritual "sense of call" to be a woman chaplain when she was teaching at the Dallas county jail. Her husband Jerry, an attorney and former city councilman, was supportive and proud as he watched 100 ordained men and women of four denominations perform the laying on of hands during his wife's ordination ceremony. The close-knit Gilmore family, which includes their three children, are involved members of the church family at Cliff Temple.

Mrs. Gilmore, her pastor and others who favor ordination of qualified women to the ministry often cite Paul's writing in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

"The Word of God is always breaking through to show how we can be God's love in our times," Mrs. Gilmore said. "I know Jesus was one of the most up-to-date men who ever lived...and a friend of women. He spoke to and for them."

Mrs. Gilmore believes that her natural gentleness and understanding as a woman strengthen her effectiveness as a hospital chaplain, which will be her full-time ministry after she completes theological studies. She feels that ordination and theological study undergird her "call" to the hospital ministry, in which she first developed her interest as a hospital volunteer. When Mrs. Gilmore was interning as a chaplain, a patient requested a visit from her by asking a nurse to "send me the woman who held my hand."

Criswell said that "there is no reason for Mrs. Gilmore to be ordained in order to work beautifully as a woman of God." A pastor who loves hospital visitation, Criswell admires Mrs. Gilmore's spirit and capabilities while disagreeing with her ordination. He met Mrs. Gilmore, who likewise admires the First Baptist pastor, several months before her ordination at a hospital where she was a chaplain.

In response to the issue of women's ordination and after being informed of Criswell's and Mrs. Gilmore's comments, SBC president Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Tex., issued this statement:

"I am far more interested in expediting the contribution of women to sharing the Gospel than I am in the ceremonies of ordination. Baptists have historically held a non-ritualistic emphasis on ministry. In fact, Charles Spurgeon, one of the greatest Baptist preachers in history, refused ordination altogether."

"God is obviously calling a great number of women into his service these days. Our seminaries are filled with them. Lottie Moon was a prototype of the Bible woman who ministered in establishing fellowships and teaching the world.

"The Bible is not a male-chauvinist document. I believe the burden of the message in the description of the role of the pastor in I Timothy was to set a standard of character and family stability rather than addressing the sex of the minister. I believe each local Baptist church, in keeping with our autonomy, will continue to search for the Holy Spirit's leadership and will do what is necessary to support these persons in their service to Jesus Christ."

When the Cliff Temple congregation was considering Mrs. Gilmore's request for ordination, it also voted to consider all qualified persons, regardless of their sex, for positions as ministers or deacons in the church. Mrs. Gilmore hopes that both of these actions will help more women to expand their roles in other Southern Baptist churches and in other denominations where women's ordination is controversial.

"I can't understand why men and women are saved equally from the bondage of sin, but not equally allowed to put their Christian service into action," Mrs. Gilmore said.

(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers

Nixon Named
To LC Post

ALEXANDRIA-PINEVILLE, La. (BP)- William R. (Nick) Nixon, Jr., has been named public relations director at Louisiana College, Pineville, effective December 15.

Nixon, 29, is a native of Carthage, Tenn., and holds a B. S. degree in communications from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He currently lives in Louisville, Ky., where he is a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and a journalism intern with the Western Recorder, state Baptist paper in Kentucky.

-30-

Two Soviet Pastors Claim
Measure Of Religious Freedom

By Wallace Henley

Baptist Press
11/23/77

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP)--The leader of the Soviet Union's largest Protestant group claims there is more religious freedom in his country than believed here and confirmed that negotiations are underway for a possible invitation to evangelist Billy Graham to preach there.

Alexei Bichkov, general secretary of the All Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the USSR, said that he had spoken with a Graham assistant at the team's headquarters in Atlanta.

The Graham visit is being approached as would that of any other minister, said Bichkov. It has not been decided where Graham would preach if invited. The American evangelist spoke in open air meetings recently in Hungary, but outside assemblies of believers are prohibited by law in the Soviet Union.

Bichkov and Michael Zhidkov, pastor of the Moscow Baptist Church, attended sessions of the Alabama Baptist Convention here.

One of their fellow Baptists is Georgi Vins, a Kiev pastor now imprisoned for refusing to register his church with the government. Obviously regarding Vins as a maverick, Zhidkov said "He rejects asking for pardon because he thinks he's right."

Later, Bichkov said that authorities have helped him erect a "big building" for the Kiev group. Another Kiev pastor, who works fulltime in an office, has placed believers in key jobs in management, according to Bichkov. Superiors are happy with the arrangement because work in the office has improved.

Despite government supported efforts to encourage atheism and keep youth from religious exposure, there is a strong increase in the number of young people turning to Christianity in the Soviet Union, Bichkov said. Of the 6,000 people baptized in registered churches last year, about half were youths, said the Russian pastor.

Baptists, the leaders said, maintain a focus on the guarantee of the Soviet constitution for freedom of conscience. "Sometimes there are clashes here and there," he said.

"But," said Zhidkov, "Baptists are the same everywhere. We fight for freedom and independence."

Asked if President Carter's human rights stance had affected his religious life in the Soviet Union, Bichkov said the position was accepted negatively because, "every person who points fingers at others points three fingers to himself."

"Our government is also concerned about human rights," said Bichkov. When asked how this balances with the inability of Jews to emigrate from the Soviet Union, Zhidkov said they could leave but perhaps not as fast as they would wish.

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Both Bichkov and Zhidkov are officers of the Baptist World Alliance and travel widely throughout the world. Some critics have charged that the government permits their travel to give the appearance of religious freedom in the Soviet Union.

They each denied "seeing" violations of human rights in the communist country, "In many cases, your press exaggerates," Zhidkov said, adding that violations of human rights can be pointed out in many countries.

Asked if they were required to report to authorities about their visit when they return to the Soviet Union, Bichkov jokingly replied, "My wife is expecting my report." He also said the Soviet news agency TASS is now very interested in the work of religious leaders and might seek an interview.

Soviet society does impose some restrictions on religion, the leader said. For one thing there can be no Sunday School as there is in the United States. But, at the Moscow Baptist Church the Bible is taught during the worship period. There can be no open air meetings, but believers can and do share their faith with people on the streets, in public squares and other places, Zhidkov said.

The churches are not permitted to have youth organizations, but there is a "spontaneous" set of youth activities at the churches. "Church life cannot be regulated," said Zhidkov.

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Wallace Henley is religion editor of the Birmingham News.

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Allison In Wonderland
Of President, Governors

Baptist Press
11/23/77

DENVER, Colo. (BP)--Allison McKinney has enough faith for 10 people.

So when she wrote asking President Jimmy Carter and Colorado Gov. Richard Lamb to visit her tiny town of Fairplay during Carter's recent visit to Colorado, she no doubt expected a positive response.

She was rewarded for her faith when Lamb personally invited the 11-year-old Southern Baptist and her family to the governor's mansion to meet the western governors meeting there, to see Carter, and to get all the autographs they wanted.

The governor had earlier told Allison he was glad she and her family could be with him in Denver for the president's visit.

In Allison's letter to the governor she told him: "...My sister gave a tour guide my autograph book to give to you, and I haven't got it back, and it's my fault because you didn't have my address. I have always wanted to be a governor or president and when I heard President Carter was going to be in Denver, I wanted to go to see you and him, but Grandma said that I couldn't. I got mad!

"So I wanted to ask you if you'll ask him to come here to Fairplay. If he can't that's fine, but please ask him. I'm in the sixth grade. P.S.--and please ask him to come, you too if you can. --Love, Allison McKinney.

-30-

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77-207-a

NOTE TO EDITORS: This 77-207-a is Baker J. Cauthen's full statement requesting support for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Edited version released in (BP) 11-23-77. Use either.

Cauthen Sees Offering Goal
As Vital To 'Bold Mission'

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The statement, made as Cauthen continued steady progress toward full recovery from a Sept. 18 heart attack, called on Southern Baptists to respond to a time of "superlative challenge."

The ultimate success of Bold Mission Thrust, Southern Baptists' program to speed the proclamation of the gospel throughout the world, will depend upon "understanding the needs of the world, the challenge of our Lord's expectations, and the mighty power of the Holy Spirit released throughout the world in response to fervent prayer," Cauthen said.

In the first statement he has issued since his heart attack, Cauthen said: "It gives me delight, at the request of the Woman's Missionary Union, to say a word concerning the forthcoming Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The goal is \$34 million. This is a bold goal in keeping with the challenge of Bold Mission Thrust. The money will supplement support provided through the Cooperative Program to enable the objectives of the mission thrust to become realities.

"The money will be used to make possible sending new missionaries and strengthening support of the present staff of nearly 2,800 in 90 countries. It will help to provide resources for evangelism, student work, radio and television, Christian education, theological training, publications and medical ministries around the world.

"One million dollars of the amount will be used to provide for additional mission field costs made necessary by the Mission Service Corps.

"The funds, joined with resources from the Cooperative Program, will make possible church buildings, missionary residences, and many other necessary structures. Funds for special projects in urban evangelism and church development will also be made possible.

"The Lottie Moon Offering is much more than money. It is a marshaling of spiritual resources through mission study and intercessory prayer. The ultimate success of Bold Mission Thrust will depend upon understanding the needs of the world, the challenge of our Lord's expectations, and the mighty power of the Holy Spirit released through the world in response to fervent prayer.

"The concern of heart and spiritual power experienced during the time of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering will continue to be expressed throughout the coming year in an increased outflow of giving through the Cooperative Program.

"This is a time for Southern Baptists to 'expect great things from God and attempt great things for God.' We face a time of superlative challenge, and victory will bless everything dear to the heart of Southern Baptists and will bring joy around the world. May God bless every pastor and every church in a spiritual way at this time."

EDITORS: This is the introductory "Special Feature" of the type requested by you as a service of Baptist Press. The special russet color of the feature page will help you to easily locate this feature among the other papers that often crowd our desks. If any of the special needs, unique to state paper editors, can be met with a feature of the type not normally carried by Baptist Press, please communicate those ideas to us.

Since all of the normal recipients of Baptist Press are not included in this special mailing the editors here would rather the (BP) logo not appear with this feature or any of the special feature material you receive in the future.

We're looking forward to hearing from you concerning ways we can be of better service.

Thanks--Baptist Press