



May 9, 1979

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**Bennett Plunges
Into New Work**

By Norman Jameson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--While the crowd around him rose to its feet in unanimous applause, two people who knew Harold C. Bennett best recalled the time the Southern Baptist Convention's new executive secretary jumped in the North Mills River fully clothed.

Albert Ambrose, president of the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey and a member of Bennett's junior high Sunday School class of 40 years ago, shared the reminiscence with Ray E. Roberts, executive secretary of the Ohio Baptist Convention and the teacher of that "rowdy bunch."

Roberts had taken the junior high boys from First Baptist Church, Asheville, N. C., in his dry cleaning delivery van to the mountains for a Sunday afternoon picnic. They weren't prepared to swim, so Roberts declared everyone a landlubber for the day.

That upset the square-jawed gang leader, Bennett, so he "accidentally on purpose" fell in, Roberts recalled after his former pupil was elected chief administrative officer of the SBC Executive Committee. "He thought while he was in there he might as well go for a swim," Roberts said.

Well, Bennett's in it up to his neck again. The 54-year-old former executive secretary of the Florida Baptist Convention succeeds Porter Routh, a man who has achieved near legendary status as an administrator and constitutional data bank in his 28 years at the helm of the agency that conducts business between annual meetings for the 13 million member denomination.

Bennett brings extensive experience into a job that requires interaction with absolutely every element of the diverse Southern Baptist Convention. He has been a chaplain, pastor, district Sunday School superintendent, superintendent of new work at the Baptist Sunday School Board and of metropolitan missions at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, state missions director for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and executive secretary in the Florida Baptist Convention for the past 11 years.

He hadn't planned to make all those moves and in fact says he planned to retire in each position. When he went to work for the Sunday School Board in 1960, he put the most expensive linoleum on the floor of his new house because he thought he would be there when it wore out and he didn't want that to be for a long time.

"I couldn't understand why I had made so many changes, because that was not my nature," Bennett says. "When I went to Florida as executive secretary, it all began to fall together. I think I served better and more effectively because I had been both at the Sunday School Board and the Home Mission Board, two of our national agencies, and then in two state conventions. I knew really where I was going and how I was going to get there. So all of the background experience really equipped me."

It's equipping that will be vital as the SBC is in the midst of an aggressive, expansive program to give every person in the world a chance to hear and respond to the claims of Jesus Christ by the year 2000. Called Bold Mission Thrust, the effort seeks to double national budgets three times, double membership, and double the number of missionaries currently at work at home and abroad by the year 2000.

"I believe the adoption of Bold Mission Thrust is both the most challenging and demanding program that we as Southern Baptists have ever adopted, so I'm quite excited about it," Bennett says. "It's a priority approach to reach this nation and world for Christ. To me, when we've lifted up these priorities in the goals of Bold Mission Thrust, we've lifted up the priority concerns of Southern Baptists."

Though Bennett thought he wanted to be a dentist like his dad, he was bound for a Christian vocation from the moment he wailed his first unintelligible sermon hanging from a doctor's hand in a delivery room across the street from Asheville's First Baptist Church.

It was the church his mother sent him to every Sunday with his two brothers, where he would grow up to "inspire" Ray E. Roberts into the ministry. There was a period when First Baptist, Asheville, could claim three former members among state executive secretaries at the same time: Bennett in Florida, Roberts in Ohio, and W. Perry Crouch, now retired, under whom Bennett surrendered to the ministry, in North Carolina.

Bennett had at first felt the call of God while a Navy pilot in Texas. But he got no encouragement from friends and relatives and erased the idea. Then later, while the organizer of a youth-led revival back in his home church, he and four others took Crouch's hand and surrendered to full-time service.

He was in junior college in Asheville when a former girl friend introduced him to pert, bright-eyed Phyllis Metz, then a student at MacMurry College, Jacksonville, Ill. After a cross-country courtship, with Bennett hitchhiking back and forth, they married Aug. 17, 1947. They now have three children: Jeff, 29; Scott, 24; and Cynthia, 22, a student at Southwestern Seminary.

Bennett became pastor of Glen Royal Baptist Church while attending Wake Forest. It was a little church in a mill town that only met for worship on Sunday night. He told the deacons he would preach on Sunday morning too, and if they wanted to come, they could. They did.

The church grew and he faced graduation with reluctance to leave that pastorate. So he stayed, commuting to Duke Divinity School for two years before going to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, where he earned a master of divinity degree. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from Stetson University in 1968.

While in Louisville, he became chaplain at both the men's and women's prisons and soon accepted the pastorate of a local church in addition. After seminary, Bennett considered work behind prison walls, but decided his greater ministry was in the church. So he went as assistant pastor to First Baptist, Shreveport, La.

"I really felt that I would be a pastor all my life," he says now, "because God had called me in a very special way to the ministry and I assumed all along that meant the pastorate. I prepared for it. I had a mindset towards the pastorate, a preaching ministry, a pastoral ministry. To me I still think this is God's greatest and highest calling."

Bennett was pastor of Beech Street Baptist Church in Texarkana, Ark., five years, during which time his ministry became more and more missions oriented.

He was district Sunday School superintendent in southwest Arkansas while at Beech Street, then went to Nashville and the Baptist Sunday School Board as superintendent of new work. He started April 1, 1960, exactly 19 years before the day he would return as executive secretary of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee offices were in the Sunday School Board building then, but have since moved to a new building downtown.

Harold Bennett has faced many crossroads in his 54 years. A different turn at any of them would have sent him marching down a road that led away from the Executive Committee.

That would have been all right, because, unlike the college student who asked Porter Routh what courses he should take so that he could become the executive secretary, Bennett never aspired to the office.

He simply abided in the verse he refers to over and over again, Proverbs 3: 5-6, which reads: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

"When he moved me in the direction of the Southern Baptist Convention, I had a strong conviction that the Lord had prepared me for this job," Bennett says. "Never anywhere had I planned to be executive secretary of the SBC Executive Committee. It had not crossed my mind. God has directed my paths."

**BUREAUS****ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041**DALLAS** Richard T. McCartney, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996**MEMPHIS** Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) L. Bracey Campbell III, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2798**RICHMOND** Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151**WASHINGTON** Stan L. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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**Groups Meet in 15 States
To Push SBC President**

By Toby Druin

DALLAS (BP)--Paige Patterson of Dallas has confirmed reports that meetings have been held in at least 15 states in recent months to encourage messengers to attend the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston, June 12-14, to elect a president committed to biblical inerrancy.

Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies operated by First Baptist Church, Dallas, acknowledged that he and Houston appeals court judge Paul Pressler have attended many of the meetings, according to a report in the May 9 issue of the Baptist Standard, Texas Baptist newspaper. Patterson has attended a half dozen or more of the "spontaneous meetings" and Pressler at least three or four.

The Dallas preacher-educator denied that the meetings radically depart from the procedure usually followed in the electing of a convention president. They are "unique but not different," he told Baptist Standard Editor Presnall Wood, who said in a separate editorial in the May 9 issue: "It is fine for an individual or group to meet as many times as they desire prior to a convention, but it is the wrong direction when an attempt is made to turn the Southern Baptist Convention into something like a national political convention of block-voting of messengers, favorite son candidates and messenger demonstration for nominees."

The established practice over the years has been for friends of a particular nominee, with his encouragement or simple consent, to contact others and urge them to vote for him. Occasionally someone is nominated spontaneously. But most of the nominees know well ahead of time that letters are being written and calls made in their behalf. However, meetings to organize such an effort are believed to be new to the process.

Both Patterson and Pressler previously have been linked to the ultraconservative Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship, although Patterson said he had never been a member of it and that the organization, in his opinion, had exercised "poor judgment" in the past. The BFMF has sought to ferret so-called "liberals" in the SBC.

Pressler said he had been a member of the fellowship but had let his membership lapse several months ago.

The meetings, Patterson said, have had two priorities:

"1. To meet together with fellow Baptists who were greatly concerned about some things happening in the Southern Baptist Convention with a view to discussing how we could help those in leadership to know what we feel the majority viewpoint really is and especially as it concerns the reliability of the Scriptures.

"2. To discuss ways by which we might be able to secure the elected leadership of the convention from among those who we know are committed to biblical inerrancy."

The meetings, he said, grew out of a concern over the fact that every resolution offered in recent years aimed at underscoring Southern Baptist belief in biblical inerrancy "has come back toothless."

He said he feels there is a growing feeling of frustration among Southern Baptists, and, saying he was borrowing a quote from radio commentator Paul Harvey, added, "I certainly would hate to see an uncivil war break out in Houston."

Both Patterson and Pressler cited "liberal" teachings in Southern Baptist seminaries such as Southern and Southeastern and in state Baptist colleges such as Wake Forest University and the University of Richmond as cause for alarm.

The president of the convention could be strategic in ferreting out so-called "liberals" through appointments, in conference with the vice presidents, to the Committee on Committees, which could in turn appoint persons to other committees. The president also names the Committee on Resolutions in conference with the vice presidents.

Both Patterson and Pressler stressed they were pushing no particular person for president at the time, although Patterson said there were several men who would be acceptable--Jerry Vines, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala.; Bailey Smith, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla.; Richard Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix Baptist Church; Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn.; Homer Lindsay Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.; and John Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church, Houston.

Pressler is a member of First Church, Houston, which he admitted joining after Second Baptist Church, Houston, last year failed to elect him a messenger to the convention in Atlanta.

Smith told the Baptist Standard that he has not encouraged a nomination but that calls from "quite a few" people indicate "I may well be (nominated)." Vines said he would have to pray about it if someone asked permission to nominate him, and Rogers, Lindsay, and Bisagno have already ruled out their nomination, although Patterson said he feels Rogers is "draftable." Jackson could not be reached for comment.

(In another interview dealing with potential SBC presidents, the Standard's May 9 issue reported that four other persons--not related to the meetings attended by Patterson and Pressler--have been mentioned as possibilities. They are Abner McCall, president of Baylor University, Waco, Texas, Douglas Watterson, SBC first vice president and pastor of First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tenn.; William L. Self, pastor of the Wieuca Road Baptist Church, Atlanta; and Porter W. Routh, who is retiring after 28 years as executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee.)

(Routh told the Standard he has not been approached and that it would "be just impossible for me this year to even consider letting my name be presented." McCall and Watterson, who said they were not campaigning for the job, said they have been contacted by a number of persons and will likely be nominated. Self said he is not seeking the job and has not decided whether to allow his name to be placed in nomination.)

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Home Mission Board
Adds Personnel

Baptist Press
5/9/79

ATLANTA (BP)--Directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board named Kathryn Lynn Wright to the board's personnel division staff and appointed missionary personnel during their May executive committee meeting.

They also heard reports that the 1979 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions is running more than \$600,000 behind last year and noted the absence of William G. Tanner, executive director-treasurer, who was in Berchtesgaden, Germany, for an annual retreat for chaplains and their spouses stationed in Europe.

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The lag in Annie Armstrong giving was predictable, according to Leonard Irwin, planning section director, since Easter Sunday, when churches usually collect the offering, was three weeks later than last year.

Ms. Wright, who will become associate director of personnel development services on June 1, holds a doctor of philosophy degree in clinical and child psychology and a master's degree from Florida State University and is a graduate of Duke University.

The new associate director, who has skills in clinical testing and parent/child counseling, will strengthen the counseling and psychological services for home missions personnel, according to Charles Hancock, director of personnel development services.

Noting that that increasing use of psychological testing in personnel appointments and screening process has increased the work load, Hancock said, "One of the issues involved in being a home missionary is changing cultures and changing geographical areas. Children often pay a heavy price for these changes. And what we want to do is give these children more support."

A native of Spartanburg, S. C., Ms. Wright has taught introductory psychology at Florida State, worked part-time in pre-doctoral private practice in psychology and was a counselor for the human development clinic at the Florida State. She has also interned in psychology in Gadsden, Ala.

The board named four career missionaries and a US-2 missionary for a two-year term and approved eight pastors for financial aid. The career missionaries are Frances Brown of Louisville, Ky.; Marta Clay of Harlingen, Texas, and Jonah and Doris Reynolds of Flora, Ill. The US-2 missionary is Jean Ann Stewart of Morristown, Tenn., appointed to service in Groton, Conn., after graduation from the University of Tennessee.

Ms. Brown, a native of Morehead City, N. C., will serve as director of the Family Counsel Resource Center in Columbia, Md. Prior to appointment she attended the Kent School of Social Work at the University of Louisville and was a counselor in pastoral and social work in the personal counseling service in Jeffersonville, Ind.

She served as a chaplaincy intern for a year in Winter Haven, Fla., and has worked in children's and child care services for several churches. She holds a master of religious education degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, and was graduated from Campbell College in Buies Creek, N. C.

Mrs. Clay, whose husband serves on the faculty of the Valley Baptist Academy in Harlingen, joins her husband as an appointed home missionary.

The Reynolds, both Illinois natives, will serve the Antioch Baptist Association in Illinois where he will be director of associational missions. Prior to appointment he was pastor of the Oak Street Baptist Church, Flora, Ill., and has served bi-vocationally as a pastor while he taught school in Michigan and Missouri. He is a graduate of Southwest Baptist College and holds a masters degree in educational administration from Eastern Illinois University.

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Board Rushes Aid To Uganda;
Votes \$715,000 For Relief

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Moving quickly to meet needs on a large scale, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board voted to send more than \$715,000 to finance relief work in six countries.

More than half the funds--over \$380,000--will go to Uganda, the East African nation where religious freedom is being restored in the wake of fighting that deposed President Idi Amin.

Another \$300,000 will finance a major community development project in India. The 3- to 5-year program will be administered by the Baptist Hospital in Bangalore.

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The actions came at a meeting May 8 in which the board appointed 15 missionaries, employed three special project medical workers, and approved 12 Mission Service Corps personnel and six long-term volunteers. It also moved to open work in Transkei, a tribal homeland within the borders of South Africa. But Transkei will not be added officially to the 94 countries and territories where Southern Baptists have work until personnel are assigned there.

Relief appropriations were the largest since 1975, when \$729,194 was sent to Bangladesh to aid victims of the 1974 flood which left 15 million homeless and millions hungry.

The board also approved \$42,000 from other funds for projects related to the relief and rehabilitation work in Eastern Uganda. Of this amount, \$30,000 will be used to send a team of Swahili-speaking volunteers to help distribute aid in the area where Baptist work was strongest before Amin banned Baptists and 26 other religious groups in 1977.

The other \$12,000 will pay for printing of 100,000 posters emphasizing Christian themes that will be displayed in schools, government offices and dispensaries.

The volunteer team includes two former East Africa missionaries--Jimmie D. Hooten and Charles A. Tope, now a member of the Foreign Mission Board--and six college-age MKs (missionary kids), who also speak Swahili, the common language of many East African tribes.

The team will use a five-ton truck and three vans which will help distribute relief goods in the eastern sector. These vehicles will be purchased and operated through a \$140,000 appropriation approved by the board.

The truck will haul supplies from the Kenyan port of Mombasa to Jinja, an urban center in Eastern Uganda. From that point the vans will take the supplies out to the villages. Unless fuel for such vehicles becomes available in Uganda, it will be shipped in along with other supplies. Baptist churches will be distribution points for the relief items.

Two Southern Baptist missionary couples, Mr. and Mrs. G. Webster Carroll and Mr. and Mrs. James L. Rice, continued work in Uganda even after Baptist churches were banned and now are leading in the plans for the relief and rehabilitation projects.

Carroll, who went to Uganda only a year after the country gained independence from Britain, has worked closely with leaders of the new Ugandan government, including President Yussufu K. Lule, in developing the plans.

Rice, summarizing the country's needs in a recent newsletter, said, "Uganda has had eight years of difficult, harsh days. The land needs to be flooded with the beauty of the Lord's healing. We must infuse the people with love, kindness, joy, forgiveness, and purity--all from Christ."

A large part of the relief appropriations, \$231,429, will help provide agricultural supplies to be distributed to villagers through the churches. The money will provide 10,000 hoes, 10,000 pangas (large knives used in clearing land), 5,000 slashers for cutting grass, 5,000 axes, 10,000 hand pumps for spraying crops, 2,000 bags of fertilizer and a variety of other agricultural supplies.

From general relief funds, \$10,000 was voted for repair and reconstruction of churches. Carroll said at least 12 churches were damaged or destroyed. The money will go primarily for roofing supplies. Village churches usually have walls made of native mud-construction and metal or thatch roofs.

Missionaries and Baptist workers from neighboring Kenya will join with Uganda missionaries and Baptist leaders helping to restore work in Uganda. The Kenya teams will

take turns teaching in all five Baptist Bible schools where Ugandan church leaders are trained. The Ugandan missionaries also have requested eight more career missionaries and seven volunteers to take advantage of evangelistic opportunities.

Former missionary Hooten, now minister of outreach of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, will accompany the six missionary kids to Uganda in June. Hooten will stay at least six weeks and the MKs for 10. Tope, pastor of Northwest Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, will go out later in the summer and stay at least a month.

The India community development program, although supervised by hospital personnel, also will depend heavily upon availability of additional missionaries and volunteers.

It will begin with feasibility studies and emphasize such aspects as food production, assistance with livestock, training for cottage industries and handcraft production, literacy training, disease prevention, sanitation and hygiene instruction, and training of village health workers.

W. Eugene Grubbs, the board's consultant for laymen overseas and relief ministries, said the type of major projects approved in May are now possible because of Southern Baptists' generous giving for relief ministries. More than \$1 million was given for hunger relief alone in the last four months of 1978, and another half million dollars has been given thus far in 1979.

Smaller relief ministry projects also were approved for work in the Philippines, Argentina, St. Vincent and the Dominican Republic.

The missionaries appointed in a special service included Mr. and Mrs. John G. Bane III of North Carolina, to Italy; Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth H. Beck, New Jersey and Pennsylvania respectively, to Ghana; Mr. and Mrs. E. Carson Brisson, North Carolina, to Israel; Mr. and Mrs. H. Wayne Dunn, North Carolina, to Windward Islands; Donald D. Gardner, Texas, to Hong Kong/Macao; Mr. and Mrs. Felix V. Greer Jr., Louisiana and Mississippi, to Liberia; Dr. and Mrs. Victor D. Norman, Alabama, to Colombia; and Mr. and Mrs. Marvin R. Wright, Delaware, to France.

The Dunns and Becks were employed as missionary associates. Approved as special project medical workers were Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth P. Haywood, Kentucky, to Ghana, and Doris (Mrs. Ebb T.) Hudson, Louisiana, to Jordan.

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Southern Seminary Extends
McCall, Names Personnel

Baptist Press
5/9/79

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Trustees of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary extended the service of President Duke K. McCall, named a chief administrative officer for student services and elected three new faculty members during their annual meeting.

McCall, president of the seminary since 1951, was extended through July 31, 1981, in accordance with seminary policy which provides for extension of personnel beyond retirement. McCall will be 65 in September.

Elisabeth (Beth) E. Lambert was appointed assistant dean of students, effective May 1, 1979. A member of the seminary staff since 1975, Mrs. Lambert will be the chief administrative officer of the student services division, reporting directly to the president.

Effective Aug. 1, the trustees named Raymond H. Bailey as associate professor of communication and adjunct professor of Christian preaching; Carl Gerbrandt as associate professor of church music; and Timothy George as assistant professor of church history.

They also promoted Walter B. Shurden to professor of church history; elected Ronald E. Boud, a faculty member since 1976, as associate professor of church music, and R. Alan Culpepper, on the faculty since 1974, as assistant professor of New Testament with tenure; granted tenure to professors J. Ralph Hardee and Bill J. Leonard; and extended the contract of Lucie Easley, assistant professor of church social work, through July 1982.

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In other action the trustees authorized expenditure of \$150,000 to upgrade campus roads and provide additional parking and awarded senior professor status to six persons and emeritus professor honor to another.

Allen W. Graves, dean of the School of Religious Education, was named senior professor for the 1980-81 school year, following his retirement as dean. Hugo Culpepper and G. Earl Guinn were named senior professors for the 1979-80 school year and George Beasley-Murray, Dale Moody and Frank Stagg as senior professors for the 1980-81 school year.

Eric C. Rust, retired professor, will become emeritus professor of Christian philosophy, Aug. 1.

The trustees also elected T. T. Crabtree, pastor of First Baptist Church, Springfield, Mo., as chairman of the board of trustees and established the E. Y. Mullins Visiting Professorship in Christian Preaching.

Bailey, pastor of First Baptist Church, Plantation, Fla., since 1977, holds master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees from Southern Seminary in addition to a master of arts from Texas Tech. Prior to his involvement in the pastorate at his present church and First Baptist Church, Newport, Ky. (1974-77), Bailey taught at Bellarmine College, Hardin-Simmons University and Sul Ross State College.

Gerbrandt, an operatic concert artist and former director of admissions for Peabody Conservatory of Music, holds degrees from Tabor (Kan.) College, Wichita University, University of Southern California and Peabody Conservatory of Music. He has made numerous guest or solo operatic appearances throughout North America.

George, who holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and a master of divinity from Harvard Divinity School will receive the doctor of philosophy degree from Harvard in June. His primary areas of teaching competence are church history and historical theology.