



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

-- FEATURES

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HFU's Bible Building
Shows Phelps' Handiwork

By Mede Nix

BROWNWOOD, Texas (BP)—For months while Howard Payne University President Ralph A. Phelps Jr. was keeping an eye on the education of students at the school, he was also watching over the construction of a Bible building—not as an onlooker but through the surveyor's glass as general contractor and job supervisor.

The building which bears his name was dedicated Oct. 23, but for a while it seemed the project would never get off the drawing board.

It had been in the talking stages for 12 years and two efforts at fund raising had been attempted. There were two "official" groundbreakings for what would have been an Institute of Christianity complex. Finally, Phelps received permission from the HFU board of trustees to proceed with only one building with the approximately \$500,000 on hand. A building permit was issued May 26, 1981.

The building was redesigned using colonial architecture instead of the original Spanish design and to include not only the chapel, which had been planned as the first building of the complex, but also a classroom and office wing. The trustees stipulated that no money could be borrowed for what was to be built.

"Since there was not enough money on hand for a full job and no guarantee any would come in, it was impossible to award a turnkey contract for the building," said Phelps. "We had to serve as contractors and let sub-contracts for specialties as work progressed to that point.

"We started with another foreman but when he was called back without notice by his former employer, I took over as job supervisor as well as general contractor and continued in that dual role for the last year of the project," he explained. "Fortunately, money came in when people found out that a reality was replacing an ancient promise and we never had to miss a day's work for lack of funds.

"Having grown up in the building business and having built the approximate same building at another school where I was president (Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark.), I was conversant with the problems of construction although I was not knowledgeable about the suppliers of materials and services in this part of the United States."

Many times during the months of construction visitors would find Phelps keeping office in the construction shack on the building site rather than behind his presidential desk.

"Running a major construction project and serving as chief executive of a university simultaneously will provide one with a full day's work every day," he said.

Emmanuel C. McSween of the McSween/Parker architectural firm, said, "Phelps has done a tremendous job in the construction administration of this project by successfully accomplishing the two main goals of construction, scheduling and cost. The cost factor is the more remarkable of the two, a possible savings to the university of approximately \$25 per square foot."

The building is to be the focal point of the HFU master plan and is in keeping with the main campus architecture of red brick. The chapel seats 250 persons, the classroom/office wing has five classrooms, nine offices and a small prayer chapel. It is the first building constructed on the main HFU campus since 1963.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist papers by Baptist Press
(Mede Nix is director of public relations at Howard Payne University.)

Mississippi Convention
Supports Condensed Bible

By Tim Nicholas

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)—The Mississippi Baptist Convention voted to take no action on two controversial matters brought by messengers in the form of resolutions.

In the last session of their three-day annual convention Nov. 8-10, meeting at Jackson's First Baptist Church, messengers refused to oppose the Reader's Digest condensed version of the Bible. They also declined to name a fact-finding commission to investigate charges that "policies and practices at Mississippi College are contrary to the standards of Mississippi Baptists."

The resolutions committee did present favorably a resolution condemning the illegal trafficking of drugs which messengers passed without dissent.

The condensed Bible opposition brought by Michael O'Brien, pastor of First Baptist Church, Lexington, failed with only scattered support. John Barnes, chairman of the resolutions committee and retired pastor of Main Street Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, said "anything that gets the word of God out we're in favor of it."

The resolution concerning the fact-finding commission was brought by Charles Wilbanks, a Corinth attorney, and a former teacher at the Mississippi College school of law. In an earlier business session Wilbanks accused the Baptist-owned school of serving liquor at student/faculty functions and pointed to hiring of persons for faculty positions on the school of law "who have very, very sharp conflicts with the Baptist faith."

Barnes said the charges had been considered by the trustees of Mississippi College and the Mississippi Baptist Education Commission. Since the two groups had concluded the concerns "lack sufficient merit" for further investigation, the resolutions committee suggested no action be taken. Messengers agreed by a show of hands with only a dozen dissenting.

In other action Mississippi Baptists passed a \$15.07 million budget for 1983 with 34.5 percent (up from 34 percent) going to national Southern Baptists causes.

James Yates, pastor of First Baptist Church, Yazoo City, was re-elected to a second one-year term as president of the convention. James Hurt, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Cleveland, was elected first vice president and J. T. Hannaford, minister of music at First Baptist Church, Moss Point, was elected second vice president.

Messengers voted to offer prayer support for members of Pass Road Baptist Church in Gulfport and to its pastor and family. Ricky Edwards resigned as pastor this past weekend facing charges of bringing money into the country illegally, according to police.

The 1983 Mississippi Baptist Convention will meet Nov. 14-16 at Jackson's First Baptist Church.

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A-Bomb Survivor Tells
Story; Pleads For Peace

By Michael Tutterow

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ATLANTA (BP)—"Hiroshima and Nagasaki were just baby bombs," warned a Japanese atomic-bomb survivor. "But if nuclear war starts that means the end of the world, no survivors."

Kiyoshi Tanimoto pleaded with visitors and members at Oakhurst Baptist Church to put an end to nuclear weapons proliferation or risk the annihilation of all life on earth.

Tanimoto, retired pastor of Nagarekawa United Church of Christ (Methodist) of Hiroshima, Japan, recounted his experiences of the Aug. 6, 1945, bomb blast which leveled his home and killed an estimated 250,000 people. On his seventh peace trip to the United States Tanimoto returned to his alma mater, Atlanta's Emory University, to participate in a series of campus emphasis on the prevention of nuclear war.

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Oakhurst Baptist Church member Roger Sundy, who coordinated the elderly pastor's Atlanta visit, explained, "We believe nuclear weapons and their use are matters bearing directly on our Christian faith. It is not a question of strategy but a question of who we say we are.

"We say we are followers of the Prince of Peace," he said, "so how can we fail to bear witness at a time like this?"

Tanimoto recalled standing on the western edge of Hiroshima, about two miles from the center of the explosion. "I saw a flash of light, more brilliant than sunshine, and I felt danger," he said. The next thing he remembers was the "entire city in flames."

Believing the city had undergone a massive air raid, Tanimoto worked his way toward the downtown area passing long lines of people, most of them naked and burned, filing toward the suburbs. Because most medical supplies and personnel were lost to the blast, burn victims received little treatment and suffered "tremendous pain that endured until death," he said. He noted doctors did not know about radiation and could not treat radiation sickness.

But Tanimoto stressed that Japanese people harbor no resentment toward the United States. He explained Hiroshima erected a peace park beneath the spot where the bomb was detonated to reflect the city's desire for peace.

The memory of Hiroshima stands as a reminder of what could happen to the world should a nuclear war erupt, said Tanimoto. He called for nuclear disarmament "for the sake of the entire (world) community," referring to an inscription on a war memorial in Hiroshima Peace Park: "Rest in peace for we shall not repeat this sin."

Mel Williams, pastor of Oakhurst Baptist Church, said peace had become a "major priority of the church's ministry."

"This is a way of saying we oppose nuclear war and armaments, not to save our skins, but because Jesus is Lord," he asserted. "It is an act of faith. To say Jesus is Lord is to say we want the kind of world Jesus died to bring about."

Williams commented that "if the church stops blessing the war machine (the government) will have great difficulty continuing" the arms race. "We are called to raise our voice, not for destruction, but for peace," he added.

He added the Oakhurst congregation has a strong concern for peacemaking, centered around a peace and reconciliation mission group co-chaired by Sundy. The church also voted to endorse a bilateral nuclear freeze and submitted that proposal at the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in New Orleans. A modified peace proposal was passed.

"More and more Christians are facing this issue, not just as a policy issue, but as a question of faith," noted Sundy. Americans should have been "shaken" by the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he said, but political rationale justified the use of the bomb in ending the war and thus condoned further development of nuclear weaponry.

But stockpiling nuclear weapons "has not given any greater security," Sundy said, but rather it has "brought us to a crisis with every indication of continuing this elusive quest for 'superiority'."

Tanimoto encouraged the congregation to pursue disarmament efforts and challenged them to make a survivor's prayer come true: "No more Hiroshimas again, anywhere on this earth, forever."

Mississippi Pastor Arrested On Currency Violation Charges

GULFPORT, Miss. (BP)—Ricky Edwards, 30, pastor of Pass Road Baptist Church, Gulfport, resigned his pastorate Nov. 7 in the wake of charges concerning currency violations, said Pass Road deacon chairman Paul Sullivan.

Sullivan said Keith Thrash, associate pastor, will fill the pulpit for the time being and "we solicit the prayers of all our sister churches around the state for Brother Edwards and our church."

Edwards was arrested along with another U.S. citizen and two Columbians after Edwards, a pilot, landed a four-seat Cessna 210 at the Hattiesburg airport Friday. U.S. customs agents were reported to have followed the plane into U.S. airspace and the plane was seized by customs officials, the Federal Drug Enforcement Agency, Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics and the Gulfport Police Department. More arrests are expected.

Police reported the plane had over \$100,000 in U.S. currency and several handguns aboard. It is a misdemeanor for citizens to enter or leave the country with more than \$5,000 without making declaration. Edwards and the other American, Arthur Keith Smith of Fort Pierce, Fla., were released on bond and the two Columbians were held pending further investigations.

According to news reports the plane landed at another airport but was chased by customs officials. Apparently trying to take off to evade officials the plane almost hit the customs plane.

The Pass Road church, which runs about 280 in Sunday School according to Thrash, added 27 in Sunday School and had seven additions the day Edwards resigned. The church has led the state in baptisms for the past several years, this year reporting 279.

Edwards has said through his attorney that when he is cleared he plans to return to the ministry and the pulpit.

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Evangelism Requires Changes In Preaching, Says Bailey

Baptist Press
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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)—Southern Baptist pastors bemoaning a decline in evangelism ought to take a second look at their own preaching a seminary professor has warned.

Raymond Bailey, associate professor in communications and adjunct professor in preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, believes deficiencies in preaching today lie not with the message but with the messengers. "The problem is not with the gospel," he said. "The gospel is as relevant and as vibrant as it's ever been."

Bailey, a Baptist pastor for 11 years, describes much preaching in churches and on television as "religious ghetto" language which "ignores the existence of millions of people for whom words like 'grace,' 'born again' and 'faith' have no meaning."

"If you don't know the language of Zion you're totally lost," he explained. "Ninety-five percent of what the high-powered TV preachers say can only be understood by people reared in the church. And that's tragic."

Among other things, he believes such preaching means "evangelism is suffering." To correct the problem he urges preachers—and all Christians—to find new ways of communicating the gospel to persons outside the church.

He counsels preachers to study the techniques as well as the content of Jesus' preaching. Jesus, he points out, used common language and illustrations from everyday life. Furthermore, "he went where the people were and brought them face-to-face with a decision, a choice about life."

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Biblical preaching, Bailey said, needs to be "creative in form and communication." He believes Southern Baptists "have tended to cling to rural forms of preaching which has hindered us in reaching people in urban areas."

Also "overemphasis on programs" has meant that "often what we hear in the pulpit is a 25-minute commercial for what's going on during the week at the church," he added. "Programs ought to be the implementation of the gospel proclaimed in the pulpit, not a substitute."

Bailey suggests creative use of techniques such as story, dramatic monologue, improvisation, dialogue and "interlude preaching," where series of brief presentations are intertwined with music, Scripture reading and other elements in worship.

But he emphasizes that technique is not the fundamental issue in modern preaching. "At the heart of the problem," he said, "is superficial study and use of scripture."

"A lot of preachers like to talk about the Bible but they don't struggle with the dual task of hermeneutics (study of the principles of biblical interpretation) and exegesis (interpretation of a Scriptural text)," he claimed.

The first step in teaching preaching at the seminary, Bailey explained, is "to help students learn how to open the Bible and let it speak to them. Then comes the process of translating that message into images and terms everybody can understand and delivering the message in an interesting and effective manner."

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Faith Development Leader Urges
New Definition of 'Vocation'

Baptist Press
11/11/82

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)—Christians need to redefine "vocation" to describe their relationship to God instead of the way they earn a living, according to a pioneer in study of development of faith.

James Fowler, professor of theology and human development at Emory University's Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, made the claim during the annual Norton Lectures at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"Our vocation is to be partners with God ... finding a purpose for one's life that is part of the purposes of God," Fowler said.

Christians are partners with "creator" God as they create families and contribute to the arts, agricultural and technological development and other productive areas of life, he said. They are partners with the "redeeming and liberating God" as they offer healing and deliverance from oppression to those who need it.

Vocation for Christians is not the same as professions or careers, he explained. Rather, vocation is the response a person makes with his or her total self to the calling of God, at service to God and fellowman.

Fowler claimed this Christian definition of vocation has positive implications not present in a secular view.

For example, it allows persons to strive for "excellence not based on competition but on God's addressing us," he said. It also frees people from the fear of being "beaten" by competitive colleagues and allows them to "enjoy the gifts and graces of others."

It allows people to grow and change rather than remain trapped in unsuitable patterns of living and relating, he added.

The Norton Lectures were held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Eastern Baptist Religious Education Association held at the seminary. The annual lectures on science and philosophy and their relation to religion are named for seminary benefactor George W. Norton.

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