



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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February 29, 1984

84-34

## 'SBC Forum' To Offer Pre-convention Option

By Dan Martin

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--The "SBC Forum," a meeting aimed at pastors and other ministers, is being planned to offer "another pre-convention option" for messengers to the 1984 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Forum, being organized by a loosely-knit group of pastors, will be in the 2,000-seat Music Hall of the Roe Bartle Convention Center in Kansas City, 1:30-5 p.m., Monday, June 11.

"The forum is not an attempt to preempt any other pre-convention meeting," said Bill Bruster, pastor of Central-Bearden Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tenn., and publicity chairman for the event. "The Forum is an attempt to provide a meeting for those messengers not attending any other pre-convention gathering."

Bruster said the Forum is not a second Pastors' Conference, the traditional pre-convention meeting which draws upwards of 10,000 participants. This year's meeting, presided over by Charles F. Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, will meet in the Convention Center Sunday afternoon and Monday, June 10 and 11.

Other sessions preceding the annual meeting June 12-14 include the Woman's Missionary Union-SBC, and specialized gatherings for religious educators, music ministers, directors of missions, student workers and women in ministry.

"It is believed a significant segment is not being represented or attending any of the pre-convention meetings," Bruster said. "The SBC Forum is Southern Baptists speaking to Southern Baptists. It is not a split off anything."

Gene Garrison, pastor of First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, and immediate past second vice president of the SBC, will preside at the SBC Forum.

"I was asked to preside and I agreed to do so simply because I personally would like to see a positive approach to providing help and encouragement for pastors," Garrison said.

"I remember the day when I looked forward to the annual Pastors' Conference as a place for inspiration and affirmation. Recent years, I believe, have seen the conference become merely a revivalistic religio-political platform.

"Our program will be entirely non-political and completely positive. It will provide a clear alternative for those who come to Kansas City seeking this kind of fellowship and proclamation," Garrison said. He added the SBC Forum will not be "a lot of pulpit pounding harangue, but substantive preaching."

Henry Crouch, pastor of Providence Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C., who has been working to plan the Forum, said the program "has not yet been completely put together," but said four persons have agreed to speak.

Major messages will be delivered by Kenneth L. Chafin, pastor of South Main Baptist Church of Houston; David L. Matthews, pastor of First Baptist Church of Greenville, S.C.; Duke K. McCall, president of the Baptist World Alliance and chancellor of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and Kirby Godsey, president of Mercer University in Macon, Ga.

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Godsey replaces the previously announced J. Gordon Kingsley, president of William Jewell College in Liberty, Mo., who withdrew from the program.

Another feature will be a "pro and con discussion" on ordination of women. Although several prominent SBC leaders have been approached to take part in the program, presenters of the opposing views have not been named, Crouch said. "This will not be a debate, but just a presentation of points of view," he explained.

Chafin told Baptist Press he agreed to participate in the program only if the "program addressed itself to the ordinary needs of the pastor and his staff, if there is nothing political--said or unsaid--about the program, and if it would be very supportive of the agencies and institutions of the denomination.

"I did not have any part in the planning of the meeting," Chafin said. "But I think it is pretty obvious for a number of years that the Pastors' Conference has been used as a platform for political operation."

He added he believes the Pastors' Conference in the past several years "has had a very limited perspective and a very narrow modeling of the pastorate."

Bruster echoed Chafin's remarks, noting he believes the Pastors' Conference "has been far too politicized...far too much a preaching marathon. I am not interested in going and hearing the same people say virtually the same thing year after year.

"I haven't really found anything that has been helpful to my ministry or to help me to be a better pastor. Not everybody can grow a humongous church and when I was a pastor in a town of 5,000, I would leave the Pastors' Conference feeling like a failure because I wasn't running 2,000 in Sunday school. I think we need another kind of affirmative model."

John Hewitt, pastor of Kirkwood Baptist Church in Kirkwood, Mo., who is local arrangements chairman, added he believes there are "many issues crucial to the ministry that are not being addressed by the Pastors' Conference.

"It seems we have had a succession of preachers preaching on evangelism. We feel there is more to pastoral ministry than evangelism, although that is very important," he said.

Hewitt said the organizers of the SBC Forum "are not staging a rump session. We are not seeking to take anyone away from the Pastors' Conference. But there are a lot of people who do not attend the Pastors' Conference because it does not meet their needs.

"We are not organizing a separate convention. I personally probably will go to the Pastors' Conference Sunday evening and Monday morning and probably Monday evening. But on Monday afternoon, I will go to the Forum and experience something a little different from what we have been getting in the past several years," he said.

Hewitt added, "There is no place for people who want to discuss things like worship, pastoral care or administration. The Pastors' Conference has become a preaching conference. That's important, but not the only thing which should ever be done."

He added when the Forum concludes "we will go to the convention and participate as loyal messengers from loyal churches."

Bruster used a "local church analogy" to describe the Forum: "The SBC annual meeting is like the church and the pre-convention meetings are like Sunday school classes. Many church members (messengers) are not coming to Sunday school (the pre-convention meetings). The Forum is simply starting another Sunday school class for those who are not attending," he added.

Bruster added the Forum "will not be political, and underline the 'not.' It is not designed to get anyone elected to anything. Not one of the speakers is running for SBC office. It is simply designed to help contemporary Christians deal with the issues of the day."

Musician Losing Sight  
Seeks God's Surprise

By Charles Willis

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--By the world's standards, Mabel Boyter has every right to be depressed. Instead, she is excited about the surprises she knows God has in store for her.

A leader of children's choirs and a popular program personality for Southern Baptist music clinics for several decades, she is losing her eyesight.

Now unable to read sheet music, she is doubly handicapped because she cannot recognize the faces of her young choir members unless they come very near.

Despite what she describes as an initial devastation upon learning she has untreatable hardening of the arteries of her eyes, Boyter isn't about to give up her work, her optimistic spirit or her faith in God's watchcare.

"I know there's a plan in it," she explained. "I'm not a 'sit downer,' and God's timetable isn't meeting mine. I'm having a hard time with Mabel on this. He wants another area of my life to be meshed with my music. I am listening and waiting for a direction. Day by day I am getting a peace within myself."

Then grinning mischievously, she added, "I certainly won't have to live as much of my life without sight as I have with it. I have a birthday coming up, but I'm not going to tell you which one. Everybody will just have to guess at that. Age is a matter of mind. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter. The quality of life is so much more important than the length."

Just two months after learning her surgery would not help, she was participating in a Baptist Sunday School Board music seminar and making plans for the future. Also she is continuing as director of children's choirs at Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church in Atlanta, and plans to do so "as long as I can."

Her career has included teaching music in both junior and senior high schools, teaching piano privately, directing a children's school of music in her home for 25 years, developing teaching materials and writing extensively.

With all of that, she worked along with her minister of music husband, Haskell, for 43 years until his death eight years ago. Since that time, she has continued her work, much of the time as a clinician for music events across the Southern Baptist Convention.

She had been aware for five years she has hardening of the arteries in her eyes, but it was just a year ago very real problems developed. First she noticed difficulty seeing well enough to drive at night. Four months later, her vision began to blur in the daytime.

"Last November I went to renew my driver's license, and I couldn't see a single number on the test," she said. "Medical tests showed there is no need to do laser surgery on my eyes, but the fortunate thing is that my peripheral vision will not be impaired. I do not expect to be totally blind. How grateful I am that I will always be able to get around."

Today, Boyter, whose livelihood and personal interests have been dependent on vision, is learning to be thankful for magnifying glasses, recorded books and a special radio channel broadcast by readers for the blind.

"It's a great disappointment," she said of the diagnosis. "I feel that I have more experience and know-how to share with others than I have ever had. But I am still hoping and praying someone will find something to do for the problems I have."

Kay Payton, children's choir coordinator for Metropolitan Baptist Church, Houston, is one of many persons who has been influenced by Boyter's work with children in music clinics.

"She works magically with them," said Payton. "She never patronizes children. She challenges them. She's able to draw from them the singing of the song--not just the mechanics. She makes music come to life."

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Despite her reputation as a "walking encyclopedia of children's music work," Boyter continues to attend seminars and conferences sponsored by the Sunday School Board's church music department.

"They're my inspiration--my shot in the arm I need every now and then," she said. "Every one I go to, I realize how much there is for me to learn. When you're satisfied, you're slipping. I enjoy meeting and seeing people who are interested in the same thing. I learn from everybody."

Though she is continuing her work now, Boyter is waiting to see what God has in store for her. She quotes a verse from a song, "The Blind Plowman," that says "God took away my eyes that my soul might see."

"I'm going to call it a surprise," she said, eyes sparkling with anticipation. "It's going to be beautiful, whatever it is. It will be better than I could have chosen myself."

"I've had a perfectly wonderful life," she said. "I couldn't hope to have it perfect all my life, could I? From here on out, it's going to be a constant surprise that God is going to send into my life."

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CORRECTION--In (BP) story "Court Rules For Government In Private College Dispute" mailed 2/28/84, the following corrections need to be made. In 4th graf, delete the phrase with the backing of women's groups.

Also, please change the 9th graf to read: Women's organizations, whose leaders expressed outrage at the more narrow compliance requirement approved by the court, had sought the broader application of the law, reasoning the federal assistance to students indirectly caused dollars to flow throughout all other college programs.

Thanks,  
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Missionary Paralysis Victim  
Believes He's Being 'Remade'

Baptist Press  
2/29/84

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Four weeks into rehabilitation from the temporarily paralyzing Gullain-Barre Syndrome, Southern Baptist missionary Randy Rains says he's living in "magnificent defeat."

Defeat, because he's not on the field ministering to the people of Bangladesh. Magnificent, because he believes God is remaking the character of Randy Rains.

"You know when they're showing those little clips at the beginning of the Wide World of Sports and that guy's coming down the ski jump and he gets to the end and goes off the edge?" asks the Tennessee native.

"That's sort of the way I feel. We just got to Bangladesh and were just getting into it, and then suddenly we just wiped out totally."

Yet defeat is temporary. "The thing I feel like God has impressed upon me is it is sometimes through defeat we change and reshape our identity."

Rains, his wife, Betty, of Birmingham, Ala., and their three children had been in Bangladesh less than a month when he collapsed while climbing a flight of stairs.

He was treated for a slipped disc, but three days later was lying in a Dhaka, Bangladesh, clinic partially paralyzed. Soon his arms became useless, his stomach muscles ceased to function normally, and doctors feared he could develop convulsions or slip into a coma.

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On Jan. 24 he was flown on a stretcher in the back of a commercial airliner to Washington, where he was loaded onto a critical-care transport plane for a trip to the Baptist Medical Center in Birmingham. He stayed there nine days:

Doctors have told Rains recovery normally takes from six months to two years. But he and his wife are hoping to be back in Bangladesh by the middle of the summer.

"That's our goal, and the doctors haven't said it's unrealistic," said Rains, 30, a former pastor in Indiana and Kentucky. "In my case, since I'm young, they don't think it will take the two years (for recovery), but it will probably be at least a year before I'll be back to fairly normal strength."

Rains expects to be in the Spain Rehabilitation Center in Birmingham for another two weeks. Then he plans to move to temporary quarters with his wife and the children he has seen only twice weekly for the past several weeks.

His biggest need is patience, he said. "I feel that general sense of being out of control of things. The simple things like walking and dressing that have always been natural are now a major task. So your whole existence changes."

Rains spends much of his time in therapy exercising his working muscles and mentally commanding his other muscles to act. The disease, which attacks the nervous system, caused a condition that blocked the message flow from the brain to parts of the body. At one time he couldn't tolerate light and he suffered severe digestive problems.

Medical authorities say about 90 percent of Gullain-Barre's victims heal totally. Doctors don't know what causes the disease.

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CORRECTION--In (BP) story "Ethnics, Blacks Deserve Full Inclusion: Draper," mailed 2/28/84, please make the following correction: please change the subject's name from Nova to Nava.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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