



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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February 22, 1985

85-19

Stanley Willing  
To Serve Again

By Dan Martin

**ATLANTA (BP)**—Southern Baptist Convention President Charles F. Stanley said he is willing to serve a second term at the helm of the 14.3-million member denomination.

Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, said: "I have been praying about the matter for some time. God has given me perfect freedom in my heart to serve again if someone feels led to nominate me and I am reelected."

The announcement ended several weeks of speculation as to whether Stanley would serve another term as president of the SBC. He was elected on the first ballot against two opponents during the 1984 Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City.

Under SBC rules, a president is elected to a one-year term, but is eligible to serve a second term, if he chooses. Until recent times, an incumbent president was usually reelected without challenge if he wished to serve. However, in the politicized climate of the convention during the past five years, two incumbent presidents have been challenged for election to a second term. Both, however, were reelected.

Stanley did not decide to allow his name to be placed in nomination in Kansas City, Mo., until hours before nominations were to begin. He said earlier the decision to allow the nomination came only after a powerful experience with God.

Since being elected, Stanley says he has "not spent one minute of my time talking politics. I did not do one thing last time (to be elected) and I will not do one single thing this time. Any politicking will have to be done by others on both sides."

He said while he is "willing" to serve as president again, he has "plenty to do. But if I am honest with God and with myself, I have to be willing to serve. If I am elected again, that will be fine; if I am not elected, that is still fine."

The announcement was made only a few days after Stanley exhorted Southern Baptists to measure their performance in comparison to the potential rather than past achievements. He said that while the denomination baptizes about 400,000 persons per year, that figure should be "in the millions if we live up to our potential."

In the sermon, he urged Southern Baptists to "do what we are capable of doing," and pointed to a simultaneous revival crusade planned for 1986, Good News America—God Loves You, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

"What a great opportunity to shout to the nation, 'You are loved, just as you are!' I do not believe we could have come up with a theme more fitting than that for the day in which we live," he said, adding, in his opinion, no other denomination has ever had the opportunity facing Southern Baptists "if we obey God."

In the interview with Baptist Press, Stanley said he would like to use a second term to help "Southern Baptists mobilize to make an impact on this nation in Good News America. That is my primary concern, where I would spend my time, energies and efforts. I believe if we carry out that, there should be a healing. We cannot do that if there is ill will, resentment and bitterness.

"(To do that) we must be right with God, and we are going to get right with God somehow."

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Stanley said "healing" has started in the SBC, which has been rocked by controversy during the past six years. "It is like healing of the body; it starts on the inside before it manifests itself on the outside. I am very encouraged by what I see. I have not let the supposed opposition to me concern my mind because my goal is not to win something, but to do something I believe God has called us to do."

"In spite of all of the conflict we have seen, we have agreed there are some problems. We have denied that before. We have to face those problems and I see some evidence of people who are now able to sit down and talk through the disagreements," he said.

Stanley added that "in some areas there must be give and take. I think there will be issues on which we cannot give and we must learn to live with each other in diversity. Some people will probably decide they can't live with that and have to do something else."

The pastor said he "still believes our view of the Scripture is the basic issue...the vital issue. I believe our attitude toward the Scripture will determine how God blesses us. When other denominations have departed from the authentic word of God, there has been a diminishing of God's blessings on them."

"I cannot compromise my faith in the authenticity of the word of God under any conditions," he said, adding the leaders of the SBC agencies he has met do not appear to differ significantly from his view. "I have not met all of them, though," he said.

He added he "knows there is not going to be wholehearted agreement" on issues within the convention, but reiterated the "authenticity of the Scriptures is something we cannot give on. If someone is totally committed to a liberal viewpoint, he may be happier somewhere else."

Stanley commented that in the midst of the controversy "the angrier some people get the more intense the verbiage becomes. That is part of it (the controversy)."

He noted he "is the same (theologically) as when I graduated from Southwestern (Baptist Theological) Seminary. But (since the SBC controversy has intensified) I have moved from being (being described as) 'conservative' to 'ultraconservative' to 'fundamentalist' to 'independent'. Yet I haven't changed a bit."

"When diverse issues rise to the surface, men of real character will be able to respond in the spirit of love and honest discussion. But when there is bitterness and anger and resentment, ill will and jealousy, that says something about the character of the men involved. When that happens, they lose their usefulness before God. God can use a man who may be in error, but whose spirit is right, but a man who is right in his theology but wrong in his spirit is a hinderance to God," he said.

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Patterson Predicts  
SBC Showdown, Not Split

By Terry Barone

Baptist Press  
2/22/85

DALLAS (BP)—Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, predicted a showdown, but not a split, when the Southern Baptist Convention meets June 11-13.

Patterson's comments came during a forum on SBC issues at the five-day School of the Prophets sponsored by First Baptist Church, Dallas. More than 200 persons participated in the forum, which dealt with the six-year battle between conservatives and moderates.

Patterson said, "We have a number of problems in the SBC, but we are not close to 'splittin this critter' up. I believe we may be on the verge of a great revival.

"I don't see the necessity for dividing up the convention. The fly in that ointment is who's going to get the Annuity Board?"

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He said the talk of division is "much, much premature" and said the situation is "only as serious as conservatives take the convention this year."

Patterson urged those attending the forum to be sure more than just the pastor and his wife attend the convention as messengers from their church. Failure to do so, he said, could be a sad situation if "Charles Stanley, the only internationally-known television preacher Southern Baptists have ever had, is humiliated (by being defeated)."

Richard Land, vice-president for academic affairs at CBI, echoed Patterson's sentiments and said, "I can't imagine any meeting of th SBC where you could muster a majority vote for a division of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Even if we were to lose a presidential vote or some other vote," Land said, "we have a lot of practice at losing. We lost a lot before 1979 and we didn't leave even when our views were being ridiculed in class."

Patterson said the chances of unseating Stanley depends on who shows up at the convention. "There is the possibility, but I do not think they (Southern Baptists who plan to support another candidate they say will be more pro-denomination and more healing) will be successful (in defeating Stanley)," he said.

When asked if some large churches would leave the denomination if the moderates win in Dallas, Patterson said, "There is no disposition on the part of many of the men of leading churches to continue funding that which is unconscionable.

"There is a sense of accountability among these men that they will have to stand before the judgement seat of Christ and will have to give an account of their lives, time and even money."

Patterson again said he thought a split was unlikely.

He said the best thing to do would be to open up the convention and let everyone know where each faction stands and then let the convention messengers ask denominational leaders to be accountable.

Patterson asked Bailey Smith, former SBC president, and pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., to give an account of himself, of what he and his church believe and teach and of what the SBC should be doing.

Smith said, "I believe a man who does not believe all the Bible is the Word of God ought to go sell aluminum siding.

"I don't know why we are debating the issue," he said, "if you don't believe in the accuracy of the Scripture, the problem is you are dead wrong. We should not have people of such erroneous, shallow beliefs standing in pulpits or college lecterns."

Smith went on to say he did not mind being identified with Paige Patterson and said, "I am grateful to stand with men who are a little extreme to the right and extremely committed to Jesus Christ."

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Bryan Models Lay Involvement  
In Denominational Leadership

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press  
2/22/85

BLUEFIELD, W.Va. (BP)—By word and example, John Bryan has been emphasizing the importance of laypersons being involved in the Southern Baptist Convention for more than 20 years.

Bryan, a clinical pathologist and a Sunday school teacher at First Baptist Church, Bluefield, W.Va., currently is chairman of the board of trustees of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

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He has filled many leadership roles in the Virginia Baptist General Association (his church is affiliated with the Virginia convention), including the presidency, 1970-71.

"If we are going to be a cooperating convention, someone has got to give the time," said Bryan, a tall, soft-spoken Texas native. "I haven't said yes to everything, but I have said yes when I had the time and thought I could make a contribution."

He attributed the degree of his involvement in denominational life to a strong and historic commitment by Virginia Baptists to utilizing laypersons. For example, the constitution of the convention requires approximately 50 percent of the members of the general board and standing committees be laypersons.

Also, he noted, a layperson traditionally is elected president of the convention every other year. "It's not in the constitution, but it is a long-standing tradition," he said.

The most time-consuming job Bryan ever has undertaken for Southern Baptists came in 1982 when he was asked to chair the Sunday School Board's presidential search committee. For one year he averaged working about 20 hours per week, overseeing the work of the committee and handling a mountain of correspondence.

However, he said, "It was tremendously rewarding. Of all the places I have served, I have never felt more comfortable than about the final decision to recommend Lloyd Elder for the presidency." Elder was elected in February 1983 and assumed the presidency in February 1984.

After his work on the search committee, Bryan was elected in 1984 to chair the board of trustees. He describes part of his role as being a "sounding post" to Elder.

Bryan grew up in First Baptist Church, Houston, where he taught Sunday school and was ordained a deacon. He met his wife, Dee, at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center in 1941 when both were serving on the summer staff.

"It's dangerous to go to Ridgecrest," he quipped.

The Bryans have three daughters and five grandchildren. For recreation, he pitches for his church softball team. At 63, "I'm the oldest player in the league," he laughed.

Denominational service is also a priority for Dee Bryan who currently serves on the Foreign Mission Board.

Bryan describes his role as a clinical pathologist as being a "doctor's doctor," consulting with physicians in determining what lab tests may be needed and interpreting the results.

He compared his many years of work in a laboratory to the role of laypersons in churches and the denomination, a role he considers "underutilized."

"I guess I've spent all my life in a lab," said Bryan. "That's where you prove what you have learned, put your knowledge to work. At church, a lecture or a soul-winning course is fine, but at some point you've got to get into the lab. That's where you learn to be a soul winner."

Bryan said his most rewarding church-related work has been his 40-year role as a Sunday school teacher. He currently teaches married young adults.

"I really believe my Sunday school class involvement is the most important thing I've done," said Bryan, citing opportunities to see families grow spiritually. Also, he noted, "teaching disciplines me to study."

Reflecting on his service to Southern Baptists, Bryan emphasized, "I have been blessed by having some wonderful opportunities. These were not necessarily deserved. There is nothing special about me. I just seem to have been in the right place at the right time. I am most grateful. I wish more laymen had these opportunities."

Child, Infant Death Rates  
Targeted By Hospital In Yemen

By Art Toalston

JIBLA, Yemen (BP)—Measures to save the lives of 1,000 children a year have been initiated in the mountainous region served by the Jibla Baptist Hospital in the Yemen Arab Republic.

The hospital, in cooperation with the Islamic nation's ministry of health, is working to vaccinate all children in the Jibla district against six diseases which remain deadly in Yemen: tuberculosis, measles, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus and polio.

Hospital vaccination teams travel to the small mountain villages where the district's 120,000 people live. The teams of Southern Baptist missionaries and Yemeni hospital workers use vaccines provided by the government. The hospital also provides prenatal and child health instructions and services.

In Yemen the chance of a child dying by the age of 5 is 50 percent. Infant mortality claims 159 out of every 1,000 births. Life expectancy at birth is 37 years.

If the Baptist hospital teams can vaccinate all children in the Jibla district, and can set up effective prenatal and child care programs, infant mortality may drop by 50 percent and childhood mortality by 75 percent in the area, said Southern Baptist physician Van Williams.

(Williams, a missionary from India who helped develop the vaccination program, will join the Southern Baptist Foreign Board's stateside staff in May to advise medical missionaries worldwide on health care ministry.)

In all, the project may save 1,000 children's lives each year in the Jibla district, Williams predicted. "The quality of life will improve," he added, "as the paralysis of polio, the deformity of tuberculosis of the bone, abnormal growth and development due to malnutrition and other chronic diseases are eliminated."

The severity of disease outbreaks became tragically clear during a measles epidemic last year in the DhaSufaal area. The epidemic claimed the lives of hundreds of children, including 30 in one village on a single day.

To help contain the epidemic, the hospital's mobile team vaccinated 3,511 children during a 15-day period of Ramadan, an Islamic holy month of fasting during daylight hours.

One Yemeni immunization worker went to a mosque for noon prayers and met a man burying three of his children. Another worker gave vaccine to the two remaining sons of a man who had lost four children.

But not one child died in a village where the immunization team has worked several months earlier.

Still, the region had "villages like Christmas tree ornaments decorating the mountainsides in an area we had never visited...child after child, parent after parent...unreached," said Martha Myers, Southern Baptist missionary physician in charge of hospital immunization efforts.

"This is typical," Williams explained. "As one epidemic subsides, another begins in another area."

About 10 children die every month of preventable diseases at the Baptist hospital.

"This represents only the tip of the iceberg in the Jibla district," Williams said. "There are probably 10 children dying at home of these diseases for every one dying in the hospital, even in non-epidemic times."

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