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January 10, 1986

86-3

Resignation Rumors
Untrue, Criswell Says

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (BP)--W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, announced in a Jan. 5 sermon that he is praying for a young preacher to "come serve alongside" him and ultimately to succeed him as pastor of the largest church in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Criswell also said a new executive administrator had been hired to assume the church's programming responsibilities in the near future.

Coming in the same sermon, the two announcements resulted in some confusion and unfounded speculation the 76-year-old pastor is preparing to retire and that the new administrator was intended as future pastor.

However, in a telephone interview with Baptist Press Jan. 7, Criswell denied he is making any immediate plans to retire and explained the administrative post is unrelated to the co-pastor's position.

"They are two different things altogether," he said. The executive administrator's slot is an already-existing position, previously held by Tom Melzoni, who left to become pastor of Central Baptist Church, Oak Ridge, Tenn.

Criswell said the future executive administrator currently is a minister of music in another state. The administrator asked that his name not be released until after Jan. 19 in order to provide him time to resign and make arrangements to leave his church.

The proposed "fellow pastor" will occupy a new position, sharing the pulpit with the pastor until "my time comes," said Criswell. He said he hopes to follow the biblical model of Moses preparing Joshua, Elijah raising up Elisha and Paul training Timothy.

"I would love for us to have a man to come here to be with me and serve alongside me so that when my time comes, he might carry on--that there might be no hiatus, no break in continuity," Criswell said. "I think that would be the most marvelous thing for our church and its ministry."

He said he will ask First Baptist Church to set up a pastor search committee to find the man to work with him and share the pulpit.

For two years, leading Southern Baptist pastors have preached the Sunday evening services at First Baptist. Criswell said he had hoped that one of the preachers would stand out as being especially well-received by the church, but no one emerged as their clear choice.

Criswell said none of the men would be eliminated from consideration by the committee, nor would Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, fail to be considered.

"Once the committee is appointed and they begin to pray, seeking God's guidance, any man to whom they are led could be considered by them, and he (Patterson) is certainly one of them," he said.

Bishop Tutu Predicts
End To Apartheid

By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP)--Bishop Desmond Tutu predicted an end to the South African system of apartheid during a Jan. 8 address at the New Bethel Baptist Church in Washington.

"We're going to be free," Tutu declared. "There's no doubt about it. We don't talk about if, but when. We will link arms with God and walk out of bondage."

The Nobel Peace Prize winner, who visited the United States to raise support and financial assistance for anti-apartheid efforts in South Africa, thanked the overflow crowd gathered at the Washington church "on behalf of millions for your love, caring, commitment to justice and peace."

He emphasized the importance of Americans protesting apartheid during the past year. Because of those actions, he added, the world has "seen history being made in months."

Tutu recounted how surprised he was to find so little coverage of South Africa in the American press prior to his 1984 United States visit. He recalled wondering why there was so much media interest in one missing priest in Poland and yet so little mention of the scores of those murdered in South Africa.

After alluding to the radical changes that took place following that visit, Tutu broke into a long peal of laughter.

"I came in 1984," he said, "and God said, 'I run this world. I'm in charge.' I said, 'Why don't you make it a little more obvious?'"

"Many people had been trying to get others interested in South Africa. God said in his time." Tutu pointed to 1984 as the beginning of that time. He mentioned events including Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign, the South African riots, his Nobel Prize and American protests.

"We are now part of the victory movement," he declared. "We are not boasting. We are just saying, 'You have lost. You can't take on God and hope to win.'"

"In South Africa we know when the rubber bullets come, the police dogs, detention, torture, death, we can say, 'Ha-ha!'"

Tutu said he would say to white people in South Africa, "Why don't you join us and be what you are--our sisters and brothers?" He added he can hardly wait to see jailed activist Nelson Mandela sitting in the same office with South African President Pieter Botha.

"God is striding ahead of us," Tutu explained in conclusion. "He is a liberator God. He takes side with the weak and oppressed, the hungry and the homeless."

While Tutu addressed the Washington church, the congregation's pastor, Walter Fauntroy, was on a fact-finding mission in South Africa. Fauntroy, who also is the nonvoting congressional delegate from the District of Columbia, accompanied five other U.S. congressmen on a tour of various sites in that country.

Fauntroy and Rep. William H. Gray III, D-Pa., who also is a Baptist minister, preached sermons to a congregation in a mixed-race ghetto outside Cape Town.

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Friendship House Offers
Alternative To Loneliness

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
1/10/86

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (BP)--For more than 600 college students far away from home, Christmas wasn't as lonely as it might have been.

The 623 international students who participated in Friendship International House found the companionship of Christian families an alternative to desolate campuses during the Christmas holidays in 1985. Friendship International Houses were held at 28 sites for the 13th year of the program sponsored by national student ministries of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

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The program offers a Christmas season in the homes of Baptist families and a program to highlight the traditions of Christmas for international students.

In Dallas a Friendship International House provided a Christmas with love for two South African students, Audrey and Charmaine Hlapane.

Christmas for these students at Montevallo University, Montevallo, Ala., includes memories of their father and mother who were machine-gunned by terrorists a week before Christmas three years ago in their home in Soweto, a black homeland near Johannesburg, South Africa.

The Dallas Baptist Association paid travel expenses for the sisters from their Alabama campus. Otherwise, the students would not have been able to attend, according to Nell Magee, national student ministries consultant for international students, who coordinates Friendship International House.

Students normally are responsible for their own transportation to the Friendship International House location they select.

Although space was available for about 50 more students than in 1984, 230 students were turned away because homes were not available. "If we had 50 locations, we could take 800 international students. That's my goal," Magee said.

The 623 students are only a small percentage of the more than 344,000 international students in the United States. "These are only a drop in the bucket," said Everett Kerr, director of the Chattanooga, Tenn., Friendship International House.

Kerr sees the project as an involvement in foreign missions. Many of the students will return to their countries in significant leadership positions. Several are from countries where there are no Southern Baptist missionaries, he pointed out.

"This first-hand view of Christianity will help develop friendship and understanding later," Kerr said.

An opportunity for foreign missions was the reason Kathy Veal first accepted students into her home through the program. "I plan to do it forever and ever. People don't realize what they are missing," said Veal, a member of Ridgedale Baptist Church, Chattanooga.

Making people aware of what they might be missing has been Edie Griffy's job for the past two years as housing director for the Chattanooga program. "People have to overcome their fears and anxieties. Once people take a student, they are enthusiastic and want to do it again," Griffy said.

The job of finding homes for the students during the 14-day Christmas session begins the previous January and is not an easy task, she explained.

For the students, the program offers a unique look into the family-centered traditions and meaning of Christmas. T. Hugh Woo said Christmas is a developing trend in his native Taiwan, but is not a tradition and has no religious meaning.

Friendship International House gave him an alternative to an empty dorm at the University of Virginia. It also demonstrated the importance of Christmas to American families, he said.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by BSSB bureau of Baptist Press

Bible Called Foundation
Of Sunday School Board

Baptist Press
1/10/86

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—In response to continuing interest of Southern Baptists in the place of biblical authority in the work of the Sunday School Board, President Lloyd Elder said the Bible has been and will continue to be the foundation of everything the board does.

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"The Sunday School Board is a Bible board, a special kind of educational board," Elder said during a Jan. 6 consultation on biblical authority attended by BSSB employees. "I do not believe the expectation of us as a Bible board will or ever should go away."

Elder emphasized he has found a high view of Scripture--which he described as biblical conservatism--reflected in employees' work throughout the institution. "I stand in awe at the phenomenally consistent quality of work by our editors," he said.

James Williams, associate to the president, said the purpose of the one-day consultation was to enhance understanding of the place of the "Baptist Faith and Message" in the work of the board, identify key theological concerns facing Southern Baptists and evaluate principles of biblical interpretation including guidelines for board literature. Also, employees could receive counsel from the board president in dealing with questions related to biblical authority, Williams said.

Also during the consultation, reports were given on efforts to implement a guideline adopted by the board's trustees in August 1985 urging "special care in determining the biblical and doctrinal commitment of writers by carefully reviewing their published works, their public statements and their personal testimony."

Persons under consideration as writers are being asked to provide information about their beliefs and their writings and recommendations are being sought about potential writers, according to reports from several managers.

Elder said "enlisting writers is one of the most profound ways editors guide the board in meeting its editorial accountabilities for what is published."

He added, "Our ability to publish quality literature for churches is made possible by the commitment of the hundreds of Baptists who write for our publications each year."

Questions directed to the board related to the "Baptist Faith and Message" most often deal with the statement's preamble and Article I on Holy Scripture, Elder noted.

In applying Article I, Bill Stephens said the Bible must be approached with a sense of awe, wonder and anticipation as God's authoritative revelation and with a conviction that the canon is complete and correct.

Stephens, curriculum development coordinator in the church training department, also noted that editors should affirm the role of the Holy Spirit in interpreting Scripture and should "probe biblical truths by using every available resource plus a believing heart."

In biblical interpretation, Bob Dean said editors and writers should deal with four questions: What does the Bible passage say? What did it mean to the author and the first readers? What abiding truths does it teach? How does it apply to our lives?

Noting that the medium of church literature is not face-to-face communication but "cold print" where it is easy to be misunderstood, Dean, editorial and curriculum specialist in the office of church programs and services, suggested several guidelines in writing and editing.

First, he said materials should affirm basic Christian and Baptist beliefs and deal factually and fairly with issues about which there are genuine differences of opinion.

"Avoid anything that could appear to cast doubt on the truth of Scripture," he said. "Deal with diversity of Scripture in such a way as to affirm the unity of Scripture."

Follow an educational approach to change, Dean suggested. Leave people room to find and hold their own views. Also, he urged extra effort to study manuscripts for any writing that is unclear and could be misunderstood. Present unusual interpretations of Scripture in the context of traditional views, he said.

Johnnie Godwin, director of the Holman division, reported findings from a recent seminar in which selected employees attempted to identify key theological issues being discussed among Southern Baptists today.

After a brainstorming session in which 20 topics were listed, participants identified eight priority issues: inspiration of the Bible, biblical interpretation, ordination, role of deacons, humanity of Jesus, role of women in ministry, the age of accountability and the authority of the pastor.

"Divisions of opinion are evident among Southern Baptists, but a division of heart ought not to exist," said Godwin, a former curriculum editor.

Elder concluded, "I see our best days in front of us. I just do not want us to have a climate of fear in a place of love like this. We will continue to do our work in faithfulness to Scripture and in support of Bold Mission Thrust."

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Postal Rates Could
See Further Increase

Baptist Press
1/10/86

WASHINGTON (BP)—On the heels of a substantial Jan. 1 rate increase, the U.S. Postal Service board of governors approved and then rescinded a further increase for non-profit mailers pending further consideration.

The governors cited a shortfall in postal subsidy appropriations approved by Congress and signed by President Reagan as the reason for the second increase. That \$748 million figure fell \$233 million short of what the Postal Service said it needed to maintain the 1985 level of subsidized rates.

Following an announcement of the additional increase—which would affect state Baptist newspapers and some church newsletters—Jan. 7, the board of governors two days later announced the rescission until the matter can be reconsidered at a Feb. 4 board meeting. The proposed increase was scheduled to take effect Jan. 18.

The Jan. 1 rate increase pushed non-profit mailers up two rungs from step 14 to the final step of a 16-step plan begun in 1970 to phase out the postal subsidy. The new increase would move those mailers to above step 16.

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