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Baptist Colleges Face Major
Turnover Of Faculty Members

By Lonnie Wilkey

N - Educ. Comm.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptist colleges are facing a major turnover of faculty members who will retire within the next five years, according to a group of Baptist college deans and academic vice presidents.

Academic representatives from 13 Southern Baptist colleges met in Nashville, Tenn., recently to air concerns and seek ways to recruit new faculty members.

The meeting, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Education Commission, was necessitated by the Sept. 30 retirement of Howard G. Kirksey, part-time placement consultant since 1975.

Kirksey has been responsible for finding applicants for the commission's placement registry, a major source used by Baptist colleges in finding qualified professors who identify with the concerns of a Christian institution.

The placement registry is not an employment agency. It emphasizes provision of names of individuals with specific qualifications colleges need.

A continued effort to find prospective faculty members is an imperative, said Arthur L. Walker Jr., executive director of the Education Commission. Walker estimated between 20 and 50 percent of faculty members at various Southern Baptist colleges will retire within five years.

He observed many faculty members began their careers during the decade following World War II, when college enrollments rose dramatically. When enrollments began to decline several years later, those who began after the war had gained tenure. Thus the younger professors frequently lost their jobs, he said. Now, Walker explained, colleges are faced with a large group of professors retiring at the same time.

Robert Clark, academic vice president and dean at Campbellsville College in Campbellsville, Ky., echoed Walker's comments. He predicted 50 percent of his faculty will have to be replaced in the next seven years.

Bill Little, vice president for academic affairs at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo., said 20 percent of his faculty, all of whom have doctorates, will retire within five years.

Finding qualified faculty members will not be easy, since all institutions face similar problems, Walker said.

He noted the increased secularization of society and a greater emphasis on specialization in graduate schools will limit potential Baptist college faculty members.

Malcom W. Huckabee, vice president and dean of Averett College in Danville, Va., observed some larger state universities hire younger professors now without any responsibilities so they will be on hand when current professors retire.

Paul Talmadge, vice president and dean at Anderson College in Anderson, S.C., noted the current climate in the Southern Baptist Convention makes it even more important to find faculty members who are Baptist. The best assurance of a strong Baptist faculty is a strong placement registry, he asserted.

The deans called for Walker and the Education Commission staff to find ways to continue the level of services provided by the placement registry.

SBC Leaders Voice Support
For Robertson Candidacy

By Kathy Palen

N-BJC

WASHINGTON (BP)—Supported by statements from two former Southern Baptist Convention presidents, religious broadcaster Marion G. (Pat) Robertson announced he will seek the presidency of the United States if enough registered voters pledge their support.

During a three-hour extravaganza that combined elements of a political rally, patriotic pageant and tent revival, Robertson told about 3,000 supporters at Constitution Hall in Washington, "Deep in my heart I know God's will for me in this crucial decision."

He said he will seek the 1988 Republican presidential nomination if during the next year 3 million registered voters will sign petitions pledging their prayers, work and donations toward his election.

Prior to Robertson's appearance, figures from the fields of entertainment, sports and religion voiced their support for Robertson's candidacy during the Sept. 17 program. Among those supporters were two former Southern Baptist Convention presidents, James T. Draper Jr. and Charles Stanley.

Draper said his "fellow Southern Baptist" is "uniquely qualified to protect us from the threats that we face today." Among the threats listed by Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, were social and political irresponsibility, destruction of the free enterprise system, a growing national debt and a weakened national defense system.

"His commitment to God and his understanding of the historical base of our nation which is grounded and rooted in biblical truth," Draper said, "will enable him to protect us from the threat of the dangerous notion that religious and moral convictions are inappropriate in the political and public arena." He added Robertson's legal background would equip him to protect the nation from the threats of reducing law to a state's precedent instead of basing it on eternal principles.

"His entire life and experience has prepared him to understand the relationship between the state and the church," Draper continued. "He understands that separation of church and state does not mean separation of God and government."

Draper, who said he spoke "with and for many Southern Baptists," then read a letter from Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, who was unable to attend the meeting.

In his letter, Stanley said, "I encourage you to pursue the course to which God has called you. Remember that God always honors our obedience." The letter closed with the statement, "Be sure of my prayers and support."

During his speech, Robertson addressed issues ranging from the national debt to education to world trade to military support. Much of his speech, however, dealt with the role of religion in various aspects of American life.

"There can be no education without morality, and there can be no lasting morality without religion," Robertson said. "For the sake of our children, we must bring God back to the classrooms of America."

Citing a poll he said shows only 6 percent of Americans to be atheists, Robertson said while he believes those atheists should have every right of citizenship, he does not believe "the 94 percent of us who believe in God have any duty whatsoever to dismantle our entire public affirmation of faith in God just to please a tiny minority who don't believe in anything."

Robertson said the nation has permitted an assault on its faith and values during the past 25 years. He placed blame on "a small elite of lawyers, judges and educators" whom he said have produced a "tortured view of the establishment of religion clause of the First Amendment to our Constitution."

He also pointed to today's motion pictures, television and radio as replacing God with casual sex, infidelity, easy divorce, drug use and radical lifestyles.

In addition to asking supporters to sign petitions, Robertson also asked each one to donate at least \$100 toward his possible campaign. That money is to be handled by a new exploratory organization, Americans for Robertson.

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Church Training Leaders Launch
Four-Year New Start Project

By Terri Lackey

N-BSSB

Baptist Press
9/18/86

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—When one-third of the 37,000 churches in the Southern Baptist Convention report having no church training program, somebody needs to do something about it, national church training leaders determined.

They launched a controlled four-year project in August to go into the offices and homes of pastors whose churches have no church training program. They are telling pastors about the many training options, and if the pastors are interested, they provide information on how to start a church training program.

A statewide new-start project, the brainchild of state church training directors and the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church training department, already has begun to make its mark, said Steve Williams, growth consultant in the board's church training department.

The pilot project state was Alabama, said Williams, who noted about 300 pastors were contacted and visited during one week in August by 38 consultants enlisted to branch out into all areas of the state.

Of the pastors contacted, 127 agreed as of Sept. 10 to start a new church training program, and 33 already have training programs, Williams said.

"We have never done a project like this before," Williams said. "The response was overwhelmingly positive. Most pastors were a little surprised that we would take the time to come see them instead of vice versa. Lots were surprised to learn there were so many different ways to have church training."

He said many pastors were unaware of equipping centers, "survival kits" and other materials provided by the church training department.

This "massive undertaking" was conceived three years ago during a mid-year meeting of state church training directors and Sunday School Board church training department leaders, Williams said.

Nine state directors from states with the largest number of churches not having church training agreed to participate in the program, Williams said.

Two statewide new-start projects will be held per year, one week in the spring and one in the fall, he said. The two new-start projects to be held in 1987 are Missouri in the spring and South Carolina in the fall.

Other participating states include Tennessee, Georgia, Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina and Illinois.

Williams said the informal goal for each state is to reach one-half of the number of churches that do not have church training programs.

"In Alabama, there are 780 churches without church training programs, so half of that would be 390," Williams said. "We reached about 300 and feel good about that."

Consultants who visit the pastors come from all areas of church life, Williams said. "Some come out of our department, and the rest are selected by the state church training directors," Williams said. "They can be pastors, ministers of education, association leaders and others."

Consultants are in charge of scheduling appointments with pastors of churches in their assigned areas. Most of the pastors contacted thus far have been bivocational with church membership of between 75 and 150, Williams said.

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Lowrie's Pilgrimage Led
To State Missions Post

By Orville Scott and Ken Camp

N-Texas

DALLAS (BP)—D.L. Lowrie says his journey toward leadership of the Texas State Missions Commission began more than 25 years ago while he was a second-year seminary student and pastor.

"I had been struggling with a missions decision and God brought me to the point of saying, 'I will do what you want me to do wherever that might be,'" said Lowrie, director-elect of the commission.

In 1979, while pastor of First Baptist Church in Texarkana, Texas, God used a presentation about the Southern Baptist Bold Mission Thrust program to convict him once again about going wherever God wanted him to, whatever that might mean, he reports.

"I've thought about it a number of times," he says. "Where is my place?"

When Charles McLaughlin, long-time director of the State Missions Commission, announced earlier this year his desire to retire and a search committee was formed to seek his successor, the committee came to the conclusion that they knew the "place" for Lowrie.

"We who were serving on the search committee had an absolute conviction that God was leading us to him," says William M. Pinson, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Lowrie was the unanimous choice of the committee, who selected him from among a field of more than 50 persons, says Pinson, who headed the committee.

Lowrie, who was chairman of the State Missions Commission and was therefore a member of the search committee, resigned from the committee when his name emerged in discussion.

Lowrie was endorsed by the commission on July 24 to succeed McLaughlin, and he was unanimously affirmed by the state convention's executive board Sept. 9.

On Nov. 1, Lowrie will begin a process of orientation to the work of the commission in preparation for becoming director when McLaughlin retires at the April 1987, meeting of the commission.

McLaughlin, who will be 67 in November, has served past normal retirement age in a special extension of tenure. He has headed the commission since 1964.

"My time as director of the State Missions Commission has been a period of inexpressible joy for Jewette (his wife) and me. Now it seems the time is right for my retirement. I have a peace in my heart, and I am sure that it is God's timing," says McLaughlin. "I believe D.L. Lowrie is God's man at God's time to serve with the State Missions Commission. I pledge my support for him and commit myself to working with him during this period of transition."

Lowrie reports leaving the pastorate at First Baptist Church of Lubbock, Texas, to come to the commission was difficult.

"We didn't come here to leave anything. Never have things been better for the Lowries in Lubbock," he says, noting on the Sunday before his election, the church had almost 3,000 in Sunday school and recorded more than 100 decisions for Christ.

"The economy is sick, but giving is up 6 percent at First Baptist Church in Lubbock, due primarily to Planned Growth in Giving," he says of his church and the Southern Baptist stewardship emphasis. "There is no earthly reason for doing it, but every time I pray about it, it has seemed to be the right thing."

The decision was equally hard for First Baptist to accept. More than 200 members of the church met the Lowries at the airport in Lubbock when they returned home from the July commission meeting in which he was nominated for the director's position.

"I shared my pilgrimage with the church that we were committed to keep moving forward unless God turned on the red light," Lowrie says. Not long afterward, the Lowries returned home from an out-of-town trip to find someone had put red bulbs in every light socket in their house.

Lowrie confessed at a reception for him and his wife, Alice, hosted by the staff of the Commission, "after 32 years of pastoring, leaving is something of a trauma."

Alice Lowrie says, "I'll miss being a pastor's wife, because I've always enjoyed being a pastor's wife. But we feel that our happiest years are ahead of us, and D.L. says we'll be amazed at how much the Lord has in store for us in this ministry.

"It's really an adjustment for our sons for their dad not to be a pastor, but they've been very supportive," she adds. "Our church has been so gracious and supportive. We've never been shown more love and acceptance."

Lowrie said that his vision for the commission is to maximize contributions to strengthening and helping every local congregation and association.

"I really have developed a sense that whatever God wants to do among Southern Baptists depends on what happens in Texas," he said. "I see this commission as having God-given assignment to assist local churches, that together we may reach this state for Christ."