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N-10

Peace Committee
Day Of Prayer Set

By Dan Martin

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Sunday, Oct. 19, has been designated as a Day of Prayer and Fasting for the Southern Baptist Convention's Peace Committee on the eve of its three-day prayer retreat with executives of SBC agencies.

The request for the special, convention-wide prayer effort came from Peace Committee Chairman Charles Fuller in a report to the September meeting of the SBC Executive Committee.

Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church of Roanoke, Va., urged all Southern Baptists "to seek the face of God on behalf of all of those who will participate in the special prayer retreat" Oct. 20-22 at the Glorieta Baptist Conference Center near Santa Fe, N.M.

The prayer retreat has been planned to bring together the special 22-member convention-created committee and the executives of the 20 national SBC agencies in an effort to seek reconciliation of the seven-year controversy in the nation's largest non-Catholic denomination.

Fuller told Executive Committee members, agency executives and more than 200 other persons present for the meeting: "I call upon us all, including the Peace Committee chairman, to ask of our motives, 'Is it reconciliation we seek, or only victory?'"

He urged his listeners to consider the example of Christ, who "although it was us who had offended him, took the initiative in reconciliation."

Following the report, Executive Committee Chairman David Maddox called all agency executives and members of the Peace Committee to the front of the meeting hall for a time of special prayer, for the persons individually, for the convention and for the prayer retreat.

During his report, Fuller told the Executive Committee the Peace Committee "hopes to have a preliminary report to present to the Executive Committee in its February 1987 meeting. At that point, we would hope to profit from your response and, if the schedule we have made for ourselves progresses as planned, will attempt to release a final report with recommendations at least two months prior to the 1987 Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis."

He commented the full Peace Committee has met once since the 1986 annual meeting and that five of its members met in mid September with the presidents of the six Southern Baptist seminaries, whom he thanked for "their cooperative part" in the session which was "preparatory to the prayer retreat at Glorieta."

During the Executive Committee meeting, Milton Ferguson, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., and chairman of the seminary presidents' informal organization, reported on the meeting.

"We (the presidents) responded with enthusiasm to the invitation from...the Peace Committee," Ferguson said. "Our meeting...was very helpful. Our conversations were frank and productive. We did not seek to reach any specific conclusions; nevertheless, the seminary presidents feel that significant progress was achieved in understanding and perspective."

Ferguson also said: "We are aware that we (the seminaries) are perceived to be at the heart of the controversy in our SBC fellowship. We acknowledge that fact and are ready and committed to become partners in achieving a solution which will allow us to devote our energies once again to evangelism, missions and education."

Ferguson said the presidents are preparing a proposal to present at the prayer retreat which will include "our plans to help resolve the controversy, unite our hearts and minds and enable us to move ahead with our primary task of proclaiming the gospel to a lost and dying world."

In addition to reporting on its plans for the prayer retreat and final report, Fuller also reminded the Executive Committee of the assignment given the Peace Committee, which is "to discover the causes of the controversies in our convention, to make findings and statements about those causes and to make recommendations about ways to accomplish reconciliation."

He added specific guidelines also had been handed down, including the respecting of the trustee system and the use of the Baptist Faith and Message statement "as the measurement in theological matters...."

Fuller added: "There has been a great deal of political activity outside of the Peace Committee work. In my opinion, there have been violations of the convention's call for reduced politicizing on the part of individuals involved in both major factions of our controversy. But the Peace Committee has not been given the power to police such activity and that is probably as it should be.

"Considering the nature of our Baptist view of freedom, we can only call upon each other's conscience and self-discipline," he said, adding: "Frankly, I would like to reply to my own detractors, those who are only too glad to evaluate my performance, but such excursions become time consuming detours."

"The Peace Committee itself must maintain a steady course regarding our assignment and I pledge again my attempt to chart that course."

Later, in an interview with Baptist Press, Fuller did comment to "set the record straight" on recent criticisms of the Peace Committee made during a meeting of laymen in Fort Worth, Texas. During that meeting, speakers lambasted the Peace Committee for meeting in a "clandestine atmosphere" and for sealing the records for 10 years in what speakers called an attempt to deny Baptists access to the deliberations.

Fuller commended the laymen's group, called "Laity for...the Baptist Faith and Message" for their "desire and spirit." He said the group appears to "be trying to take the initiative to bring about reconciliation," which is the same purpose the Peace Committee has.

He commented that "at this point in our controversy and in the pressure of time...it is not uncommon for someone to just step right up to a problem and tackle it. People can get frustrated, but the Peace Committee has been given the official assignment and we are trying hard not to get caught in detours."

He said the committee is meeting within the guidelines set down by the convention, which gave the group the privilege of meeting either in executive session or in open meetings.

"It is important to know that the Peace Committee chose of its own volition to invite Baptist Press to be present throughout each of its meetings and to release a statement at the close through the chairman. That is an attempt on our part to fulfill our responsibility to keep Southern Baptists informed while at the same time trying to maintain an atmosphere which allows people to speak freely and not be cramped," Fuller said.

Fuller said he feels "compelled" to respond to the charges the Peace Committee has met "clandestinely. I interpret that word to mean 'sinister' or 'subterfuge'. We have met and released statements to try to inform Baptists about what we have done. I do not feel we have been clandestine."

He also said the committee had decided to keep detailed minutes and to make tape recordings of its meetings in order to fully inform Baptists of its activities, rather than attempting to deny them access to the deliberations.

"Our intention has not been to deny Southern Baptists access, but to the contrary. Any other interpretation would be a misreading of our purpose. We adopted the idea of sealing the records for 10 years to allow the committee to be able to function freely, while at the same time trying to keep faith with Baptists of the future," he said.

'Commitment' Dominates Discussion
At Planned Growth In Giving Meeting

By Marv Knox

N-100

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Talk of commitment dominated the Planned Growth in Giving National Seminar held in Nashville, Tenn., in late September.

Planned Growth in Giving is a 15-year Southern Baptist Convention spiritual growth-stewardship emphasis campaign. Created in 1983 and launched in local churches a year ago, it is designed to help increase annual gifts to SBC churches from \$3.5 billion to \$20 billion by the year 2000.

"What we do about Planned Growth in Giving likely will come down to commitment. Our goal is a higher level of commitment," Lloyd Elder, president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, told about 85 denominational stewardship and program leaders at the seminar.

"Commitment is really measured by behavior and actions, not by comments and words," Elder insisted. "Behavior is the truest expression of one's commitment."

Commitment will be required if Southern Baptists are to complete the 15-year goals of Planned Growth in Giving, he added, noting commitment is "stable, not emotional, lifelong, solid."

Keith Parks, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, challenged Baptists to commit themselves to worldwide missions and evangelism, and let dollars take care of themselves. "We need the level of commitment to reach out and share Jesus with people," he said. "And once we reach that level of commitment, money won't be a problem.

"Our whole purpose is to tell people about Jesus," Parks added. "The purpose, the only purpose that I know that will galvanize the people of God (is to proclaim) that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost."

Although God has given Southern Baptists "a stewardship responsibility that is as heavy as has been laid on any people at any time," Parks promised Planned Growth in Giving can "enable us to fulfill the task to which God has called us."

Commitment to that task also is vital for the future of the United States, said Robert Hamblin, vice president for evangelism of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. "Not only can we witness to America; we must," he said. "We do not have time to fail. This generation will either win America to Christ, or it is lost."

Hamblin called on Southern Baptists to have a "witnessing, giving lifestyle" that will be reflected in the second phase of Planned Growth in Giving, Witnessing Giving Life, set to begin in 1990. That emphasis will focus on both evangelism and stewardship as a total approach to Christian living.

And living like Christ is what Planned Growth in Giving is about, speakers insisted.

"God wants us to be like himself...holy and generous," said T.T. Crabtree, pastor of First Baptist Church of Springfield, Mo., and chairman of the National Planned Growth in Giving Task Force.

"The basic philosophy of Jesus was that it is more blessed to give than to receive," Crabtree explained. "Until we imitate that lifestyle of giving, we will be Christian in name only. (But) if we could help people see God as he really is, they would want to be like him in the here and now."

Similarly, Christians are to "do that which the Incarnation of Christ stated as his mission—to seek and to save that which was lost," added A.R. Fagan, president of the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission.

"It is my mission, it is your mission in this world to represent God to do what God wants done," Fagan said. He noted Planned Growth in Giving is part of Southern Baptists' "strategy" for doing God's mission, because it aims to raise funds to support the effort.

A major challenge facing Planned Growth in Giving leaders is getting Southern Baptists to catch the vision which seminar speakers described.

"We've got to get through to the pastor if we're going to get to the church," Earl Kelly, executive secretary-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, said of the task of greater participation by Southern Baptists in Planned Growth in Giving. "We have pulled out all the stops; we have spared no expense; but our pastors are not excited about it," he lamented of the PGG experience in his state.

Nationwide, many pastors have difficulty promoting a strong stewardship campaign, Crabtree added. He noted they try to motivate 80 percent of church members who are under the "curse of unsatisfied greed;" others who are themselves economically poor feel awkward preaching on stewardship; others fear criticism by "materialistic, secular people...seeking security through things;" and some do not themselves feel any joy in giving gifts to God.

"Our churches are tragically below the biblical standard of giving," added James Thompson, stewardship director for Texas Baptists. He cited a survey which revealed many Texas churches are "at a point of danger" in the ratio of givers to non-givers, illustrating that in one church 7 percent of the members carry 70 percent of the financial load.

However, several speakers pointed to Planned Growth in Giving as the means of lifting Southern Baptist churches to new heights of stewardship commitment. Cecil Sims, executive director-treasurer of the Northwest Baptist Convention, called PGG "a teaching of spiritual truths that will get people out of the jail of covetousness."

The national seminar marked a point of maturity for Planned Growth in Giving, noted Reginald M. McDonough, executive vice president of the SBC Executive Committee. When the program was started in 1983, organizers began with a burst of enthusiasm for the immediate task of getting PGG off the ground, he explained. Now, however, those same leaders are positively realizing the 15-year campaign will require persistence and endurance.

Cecil Ray referred to that idea when he explained PGG is a "spiritual journey that does two things—changes lives and claims resources." Ray, national director of the program, urged leaders to "be a patient people, willing to make a growing, step-by-step journey."

"Fifteen years does not come easy," Ray acknowledged during the final session of the meeting. "This was a renewal seminar,...a renewal to keep on with what we have committed ourselves to do.

"If we are to carry on in the journey forward, we must renew our commitment to the long journey," he added. "God will honor it."

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Architects Urged To Design
For Changing Church Needs

N-BSSB
By Charles Willis

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WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (BP)—Changes in Southern Baptist churches of the future will require changes in church building designs, Gary Cook told more than 80 architects meeting in Williamsburg, Va., for an annual national workshop.

Sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church architecture department, the meeting was designed to acquaint architects with the functions, purpose and space needs of Southern Baptist churches.

Cook, director of the board's church and staff support division, said creative ministries in a "back to basics" mindset is a growing trend. Church emphases increasingly are centered in the basics of Bible study, prayer, missions, evangelism and discipleship, he said.

Also, "the idea that ministry begins at home may be more true in the future than it has ever been in the past," he added. "We are likely entering a time in which more and more churches are going to insist that the work be done first at home. Churches will want unique facilities for their specific community needs."

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At the same time, more laypersons are likely to be involved in volunteer and short-term missions with supporting funds coming in part from church budgets, Cook continued.

"The implication for those who are concerned with designing facilities is the need to ensure that facilities do not take away from mission support," he said.

Cook observed Americans "may be in the first stages of learning to get by on less money. Churches need to be aware of a trend toward slower growth in available funds. Program, budget and facility planning becomes a far more serious undertaking when there is not a seemingly unlimited supply of financial resources.

"The money will be available for the well-planned, productive projects, but resources will quickly dry up for the superficial and insignificant," he noted.

Cook said an obvious implication of an austere national economy is the need for churches to meet human needs that are no longer met by the government.

"There are definite implications for church facilities in a world that is looking for ways to meet diverse needs. Ministers and church members must work together, making conscious decisions about the kind of church they want to be, which ministries they will emphasize and then have facilities designed to match," he explained.

The increasing percentage of persons who are 60 years old and older is moving Southern Baptists toward increased ministry with senior adults, he said. Physical needs and leisure activities by this age group will continue to be a concern that must be addressed by facility planners.

There is also a need for "high touch in a high tech world," Cook said. "The implications for church facility planning should include an awareness that opportunities for Christian ministry will be increased dramatically for those churches that are prepared. People will be looking for places where they are known and cared for, where they have their needs met."

For many Americans, this is an age of pessimism, he noted.

"However, for Christians, it may be the ultimate moment of opportunity. Out of the discovery that there is not enough money to buy a quality life, that government cannot guarantee it and that the healthcare complex cannot always sustain it, comes a search for life worth living," he concluded.

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Vietnamese Survives Terror
To Lead Mission In Texas

F-Texas
By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
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WICHITA FALLS, Texas (BP)—Through years of terror, starvation and imprisonment, Think Ngoc Kim sees the hand of God guiding him to minister at the Vietnamese Mission of Jefferson Street Baptist Church in Wichita Falls, Texas.

When the communists took over Vietnam, Kim was pastor of five churches in the Saigon area. As the communists set about destroying the churches and dispersing the members, Kim and his family were forced to live in the jungles of Vietnam for three years.

"I was afraid my family would die in the jungle," says Kim with tears in his eyes, "but one night I read in Romans 1:16, 'The righteous shall live by faith.' I told my wife, Luu, and our children, 'Let us pray.'"

Their prayers were answered, Kim says, when an uncle came to the jungle to cut wood and saw the condition of Kim and his family.

"Why don't you escape from Vietnam," the uncle asked. He sent his sons to repair two boats Kim had brought from Vihn Long, and Kim's father-in-law helped buy fuel, compasses, a map and other necessities for their flight to freedom.

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At sea they were attacked by pirates who robbed them and kidnapped a teen-age daughter. "They said, 'If you have one piece of gold, we will give your daughter back,'" says Kim, "but I didn't have one."

Two other children, in another boat, were separated from the family and had to return to Vietnam.

The Kims still do not know the fate of their daughter, but Fred McDowell, director of missions for Wichita-Archer-Clay Baptist Association reports, "We hope through government help to bring their other two children here and to put a tracer on the daughter who was kidnapped."

As a result of their encounter with the pirates, the Kims were forced to change course and land in Thailand where they were placed in a refugee camp. After two years, some representatives from the U.S. Embassy in Thailand came to interview refugees.

"They asked for proof that I had been a pastor in Vietnam. I did not know what proof I could give them," says Kim, whose papers had been destroyed by the pirates. "I prayed to God to solve the problem for me."

Then Kim remembered the pirates had ripped the cover from his Bible but had tossed the rest of it into the boat. On one of the pages was an inscription from his church in Saigon.

The Kims were moved to the Philippines, where they studied English for six months and then came to the United States under sponsorship of First Baptist Church of Ardmore, Okla.

When he was asked to be the pastor of the Vietnamese Mission at Jefferson Street Church last June, attendance at the mission was about three. It has grown to about 20, and its future looks bright, says McDowell.

Kim also conducts services on Sunday afternoons for an average of about nine people at Lamar Street Baptist Church in Wichita Falls.

It has been obvious the growing Vietnamese mission needs a worship facility of its own. Fortunately, Flake Industry of Wichita Falls gave Jefferson Street Baptist Church some property across the street from the church. Volunteers are converting a frame building on the donated property into a chapel for the Vietnamese.

Many other Texas Baptists are sharing in the mission's ministry through the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions and the Cooperative Program, which provide \$500 a month program support through December and then \$250 a month through June.

Kim's long, heartbreaking journey of faith from Vietnam is reaping rewards in Wichita Falls, where hearts are being transformed and lives changed for Christ through his testimony and ministry.