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April 2, 1987

87-49

N-HMB

Larry Lewis Nominated
As Home Board President

By Jim Newton

ATLANTA (BP)--Larry L. Lewis, president of Hannibal-LaGrange College in Hannibal, Mo., has been nominated for possible election as president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board.

Lewis, 52, will be recommended to the position by a seven-member search committee during a called meeting of Home Mission Board directors on April 10.

Letters with a resume of Lewis were mailed March 30 to the 84 directors of the Home Mission Board and to editors of Baptist state papers by the chairman of the board and chairman of its search committee. The letters asked that the information be kept confidential until after the election April 10.

News of Lewis' nomination broke publicly in the April 1 issue of the Atlanta Constitution.

Troy L. Morrison, chairman of the search committee recommending Lewis for the position, confirmed the nomination, saying the committee was unanimous in its choice.

"We regret that the news was leaked to the secular press, but we have nothing to hide and want to be open and honest with Southern Baptists," said Morrison, director of church-minister relations for the Alabama Baptist State Convention in Montgomery.

Lewis, contacted in Hannibal, Mo., said he felt the secular press stories describing Hannibal-LaGrange as "a tiny fundamentalist college whose teachers are required to affirm their belief in the existence of a personal devil and a literal hell" were negative and "pejorative."

Lewis explained that the doctrinal statement faculty and staff at Hannibal-LaGrange are asked to support actually is a resolution which was adopted by the Missouri Baptist Convention, which owns the school, and certain minimum standards of conduct and morality.

"We ask our faculty and staff to refrain from use of tobacco, alcohol and other harmful drugs, that they be active in the church of their choice, that they be clean, upright, Christian examples in daily life and that they be born-again believers in Jesus Christ," Lewis said.

"We also ask that they support a resolution adopted by the Missouri Baptist Convention in 1978, which requested that faculty and staff of all four colleges owned and operated by the Missouri Baptist Convention adhere to certain Baptist doctrines," said Lewis.

The resolution requested that faculty members of the four Missouri Baptist colleges "believe in the inspiration of the whole Bible, the inerrancy of the original manuscripts, the existence of a primeval couple named Adam and Eve, the literal occurrence of the miracles as recorded in the Bible, the virgin birth and bodily resurrection and the personal return of the Lord Jesus."

Lewis said that Hannibal-LaGrange takes seriously the resolutions of the Missouri Baptist Convention, but it is no more a "fundamentalist college" than any of the other three Missouri Baptist colleges which have been asked to abide by the same resolution.

Hannibal-LaGrange, said Lewis, employs about 30 full-time faculty and 40 staff members, has an annual budget of about \$3 million and an enrollment of 759 students.

Before assuming the college presidency in 1981, Lewis was pastor of Tower Grove Baptist Church in St. Louis. Previously, he had been director of religious education for the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey, pastor of a New Jersey church in suburban Philadelphia, and a church in Columbus, Ohio.

Morrison, chairman of the committee which is nominating Lewis, acknowledged that Lewis is not well known in the denomination. Lewis was one of 64 candidates for the position to succeed William G. Tanner of Oklahoma City, who resigned last June.

Morrison said the committee interviewed 10 candidates and felt Lewis was best qualified for the nomination.

"After an interview with Dr. Lewis on March 9, we became convinced that God was leading the committee to nominate him as president," said Morrison. He stressed the committee voted unanimously to recommend Lewis during its last meeting on March 27.

"Larry Lewis is deeply committed to missions and evangelism and comes with a background of both state convention experience and service as pastor of three fast-growing churches in urban settings," said Morrison. "We believe he can give creative direction to the Home Mission Board's emphasis on reaching America's great cities with the gospel."

Morrison pointed out that when Lewis was pastor of Parsons Baptist Church in Columbus, Ohio, the congregation grew from 16 to more than 600 members in five years. It also started four new missions.

As pastor of Delaware Valley Baptist Church in Wilmington, N.J., across the river from Philadelphia, Lewis led the church in development of numerous ministries to meet the needs of urban people. Sunday school enrollment at the church increased from 116 to 600 during his five years as pastor. The church led the association in baptisms each year and started four new missions.

In St. Louis, he was pastor of the 5,000-member Tower Grove Baptist Church for seven years. The church sponsored a multi-ministry program including a bus ministry, day care, Christian day school, food and clothing distribution center, work assistance program and job placement service. The church participated in a pilot project which led to development of the Continuing Witness Training program by the Home Mission Board. Lewis was a consultant in the project.

While pastor of the largest Southern Baptist church in Missouri, Lewis was first vice president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference and president of the Missouri Baptist Pastors' Conference. At the 1985 Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas, he was chairman of the Resolutions Committee. He also was a member of the SBC Resolutions Committee in 1980.

A native of Missouri who grew up on a family farm near Centralia, Mo., about 50 miles from the college he now heads, Lewis said he understands both the problems of reaching the cities and the needs of rural people.

He said he appreciates all the Home Mission Board has been doing to reach the cities and minister to victims of the farm crisis and is anxious for the board to do more in these areas.

"I'm a church planter at heart," he said. "My greatest joy and fulfillment in life has come in starting a new church and building it into a strong, vibrant witness for Christ. I have a deep, life-long commitment to the Home Mission Board's efforts of starting new churches."

A graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, with bachelor of divinity and master of religious education degrees, Lewis also is a graduate of Hannibal-LaGrange and the University of Missouri. He has a doctor of ministry degree from Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville, Fla.

BJC Study Committee
Works On Final Report

By Marv Knox

N-10

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—The report on a study of Southern Baptist participation in the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is almost complete, the chairman of the special committee that is conducting the study said.

The nine-member fact-finding committee was appointed in September by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee. It has been charged with studying the relationship between the denomination and the Baptist Joint Committee, a religious liberty advocacy organization composed of representatives from nine Baptist bodies in the United States and Canada.

The fact-finding committee was formed in response to an effort at the 1986 SBC annual meeting to sever ties between the convention and the Baptist Joint Committee and establish an "exclusive Southern Baptist presence" in Washington.

The study committee drafted its final report during a meeting March 27 in Nashville, Tenn., and a three-member writing team worked on the final version March 28, said Chairman Gary Young, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Phoenix, Ariz. As soon as the report is typed, a copy will be sent to each member of the fact-finding committee, and that group will hold a telephone conference call to secure its final approval, Young said. Then the report will be sent to members of the Executive Committee and released through Baptist Press, the denomination's news service, he added.

"We hope this final release will take place before May 1, which is 45 days before the SBC annual meeting," he said.

The final report "will include an introduction, a description of our meetings and procedures, the scope of our research, information relative to the SBC Public Affairs Committee and our recommendation concerning the revision of Bylaw 18, a report of our committee findings and our committee's recommendations," Young said.

The SBC Public Affairs Committee is the 15-member group through which Southern Baptists relate to the Baptist Joint Committee. Bylaw 18 of the SBC constitution governs the formation of the Public Affairs Committee.

The proposed bylaw revision would increase the size of the Public Affairs Committee in accordance with a recent Baptist Joint Committee restructuring plan. Consequently, the SBC representation on the Baptist Joint Committee would increase from 15 to 18 members. The revision also would decrease the number of SBC agency heads who hold permanent seats on the Public Affairs Committee from seven to six, do away with two other seats available to agency heads on a rotating basis and increase the number of at-large positions from five to 12.

The bylaw revision already has been approved by the Executive Committee and will be presented to messengers to the SBC annual meeting June 16-18 in St. Louis.

The fact-finding committee's report is the result of three commissioned research studies, hundreds of pieces of information submitted to the committee by individuals, two public hearings and two brainstorming sessions, Young said. Documentation for the study fills a large suitcase.

As custom dictates, messengers to the SBC annual meeting will receive only the committee's recommendations, as approved by the Executive Committee June 15, Young said. He noted cost and logistics of printing and distributing the lengthy report to all SBC messengers is prohibitive. However, the full report will be the basis of the Baptist Press account of the fact-finding committee's research and recommendations, he said. The full report also will be available to individuals by requesting it from the Executive Committee, 901 Commerce, Nashville, Tenn. 37203.

Of his committee's work, Young said: "I believe the document (final report) has accomplished our objective, which answers the question, 'How can the Southern Baptist Convention have the most efficient and effective voice possible in Washington, D.C.?' We have worked diligently, conscientiously and prayerfully to reach this common objective. All of our committee votes thus far have been unanimous, and I am hopeful our final vote on this report will also be unanimous."

High Court Hears Arguments
In Employment Exemption Case

By Kathy Palen

10-BJC

WASHINGTON (BP)—The attorney for seven former employees of Mormon Church-owned businesses in Utah attempted to convince the nation's highest court that a 1972 congressional exemption in the Civil Right Act provides churches with an unconstitutional means for "economical coercion" of their employees.

But attorneys for the Mormon Church and the federal government argued Congress was correct in exempting churches from compliance with a ban on employment discrimination based on religion.

The dispute involves seven employees who were fired from Mormon Church-owned businesses after they failed to qualify for a special church status that requires regular church attendance and tithing. The fired workers mounted a court challenge to the constitutionality of the 1972 amendment to the federal civil rights law.

When enacted by Congress in 1964, the Civil Rights Act provided that religious employers could restrict their employment to "individuals of a particular religion to perform work connected with ... (their) religious activities." When Congress rewrote and extended the law in 1972, it deleted the word "religious" from the exemption, thus broadening the provision to include all employment activities of a church.

The U.S. District Court for Utah ruled in favor of the fired employees three times. In addition to holding the 1972 amendment unconstitutional, the district court awarded damages -- including back wages, benefits and reinstatement -- to one of the employees, Frank Mayson.

The federal government intervened on the church's side and assisted in appealing the decisions to the Supreme Court. A number of religious groups, including the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, filed friend-of-the-court briefs supporting the Mormon Church's position.

David B. Watkiss, attorney for the fired workers, said the 1972 amendment has a "glaring lack of neutrality." He contended it allows churches to grow "not because of dogma" but because of "economic muscle." He described the firing of his clients as "a heavy-handed attempt (by the Mormon Church) to coerce people into line."

Watkiss argued the exemption "singles out religious employers for absolute and sweeping accommodation" and places the burden of that accommodation on the employees without regard to their "religious liberties." He said it "turns First Amendment values on their head" by shifting the emphasis away from "protection of individual religious liberty."

The Salt Lake City attorney said the exemption also "treats religion better than non-religion." By exempting churches from the discrimination ban, he argued, Congress has allowed churches to "set up little enclaves throughout the economy" to advance not only their beliefs but also their economics.

But Rex E. Lee, who represented the Mormon Church, said the 1972 amendment does not put government in the position of promoting religion, but simply allows churches to do so. He argued that in amending the civil rights law, Congress correctly "drew the line" to avoid government entanglement in religious activities.

William Bradford Reynolds, U.S. assistant attorney general, told the court Congress had "navigated a neutral course" with the exemption, which he said allows "religious institutions to advance on their own terms."

Reynolds said Congress' "hands-off policy" avoids the control over and entanglement with religion that took place at the district court. He said the lower court set up a test requiring "intrusive, secular probing" to determine which of a church's activities should qualify as "religious."

A decision in the case is expected before the current Supreme Court term ends in July.

Required Chapel Vital Element
At Southern Baptist Colleges

N-10
(Ed. Comm.)
By Lonnie Wilkey

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Chapel may not be the most popular event among college students, but it still plays a vital role at Southern Baptist colleges and universities, according to a recent study.

The survey, conducted for The Southern Baptist Educator, a publication of the Southern Baptist Education Commission, polled college officials responsible for chapel or convocation services on their campuses. The college leaders answered several basic questions about chapel, then provided their feelings regarding the value of college chapel.

Almost 80 percent of the 51 Southern Baptist senior and junior colleges require students to attend either all or a significant portion of the institution's chapel programs. Only 11 schools do not require chapel.

Sam B. Carothers, campus minister at Meredith College in Raleigh, N.C., said his school is committed to a voluntary weekly worship experience as opposed to required chapels. "While there are times when I wish I could require all students to participate in a particular service, this would violate the spirit of Christian worship," he noted.

Monroe M. Ashley, college minister at Gardner-Webb College in Boiling Springs, N.C., where chapel is required, said one of the negatives regarding chapel is the perception of the event. "It is a general 'lightening rod' for dissatisfaction," he wrote.

One campus minister pointed to problems in conveying a positive image of required chapel. "It is difficult to promote a positive image of chapel since it's required, therefore we really try to line up good speakers or music," said Sandy Wilkerson, campus minister at Judson College in Marion, Ala.

Wilkerson added another problem is conflict between administrators and students regarding chapel programs: "Administration wants formal worship, and students desire informal worship. Speakers the students like best (who are more entertaining) are least liked by administration and faculty. It's difficult to please both."

A majority of the survey respondents viewed chapel as positive because it brings "a sense of community" to the institution.

Robert M. Newell, dean of religious affairs at Houston Baptist University, observed compulsory chapel "provides one of the few opportunities for the campus community to convene." This is especially important, he noted, for colleges which have a large percentage of commuting students.

Marie S. Bean, campus minister at Mars Hill College in Mars Hill, N.C., said a Baptist college campus needs "to pause for worship at least once a week to witness to the source of our identity as a Christian community."

Mark Baber, director of religious activities at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., viewed chapel as a vital part of the liberal arts educational experience: "Many students complain about required attendance (at chapel). They also complain about taking required courses in math, art, music, history and science.

"We do not try to force students to worship. We do compel them to attend chapel and feel that they will benefit from the exposure to outstanding leaders in Southern Baptist life."

Another positive benefit of chapel, according to the survey, is some students would not hear the message of Christ otherwise. Hugh R. Mathis, assistant vice president for public relations at Palm Beach Atlantic College in West Palm Beach, Fla., said, "From my perspective, the value of chapel is that it allows students who are not Christians the opportunity to receive a Christian witness."

Clyde Fant, dean of the chapel at Stetson University in DeLand, Fla., echoed Mathis' remarks. "Many 'fringe' students and professors will attend chapel who will not attend worship elsewhere."

The survey revealed not all college faculty and administrators give their wholehearted support to the concept of chapel. More than half of the survey respondents reported faculty and administrative support at their institution was only fair or poor.

The support of administration and faculty members for college chapel programs is a must, said W.T. Edwards, chaplain at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.: "Chapel is valuable if the administration and faculty, as a whole, stand behind it and support it with their presence. When it is perceived as being something for students alone, chapel is not as effective as it should be."

The survey revealed musical programs are among the "best liked" by students. Others that draw approval are dramas and programs led by students themselves. The "least liked" programs include "boring, dry speakers," "preaching" and "abstract" speakers.

The majority of colleges, according to the survey, hold chapel or convocation programs once a week. A large percentage, however, hold programs twice weekly.

Some college officials feel students gain a greater appreciation for chapel after they leave school. Van D. Quick, vice president for student personnel at Mississippi College in Clinton, said: "Students do not realize the value of chapel until they have been out of college for a few years.

"I feel that our chapel programs are one of the unique qualities of Mississippi College that makes us different. I believe that one 30-minute religious program, and some weeks two, is very little to require of students attending a Baptist college."

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N-FMB

Missionary Couple
Robbed At Gunpoint

By Wally Poor

Baptist Press
4/2/87

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay (BP)—Two men who gained entrance on the pretense of asking for food robbed Southern Baptist missionaries Jimmy and Peggy Bartley of money and other items valued at \$1,600.

The Bartleys, from LaGrange, Ga., and Harlingen, Texas, were in their home in Montevideo, Uruguay, preparing to leave for their church's Wednesday night service March 18 when the robbers appeared.

After gaining entrance, the men displayed a gun and a knife, demanding all the money in the house. Included in the money taken was \$75 in offerings from the previous Sunday service which Bartley was taking to the church treasurer and \$250 in funds from the Baptist Theological Seminary where he is the administrator.

The robbers also took Bartley's car and house keys, two tape recorders he uses to record a daily radio program, four pairs of tennis shoes and Mrs. Bartley's jewelry. Then they locked the couple in the bathroom.

This was the first time in more than 33 years as missionaries that the Bartleys had been robbed.

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