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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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April 15, 1987

87-55

'Unaffiliated' Pastors  
Call For Peace In SBC

By Marv Knox

Co-N

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--More than 30,000 Southern Baptist pastors have been mailed a two-page document calling for peace within their convention.

"A Pastoral Plea for Peace Among Southern Baptists" is subtitled "No Lord but Christ, No Creed but the Bible." It was formulated by four ministers who claim no affiliation with either faction of the theological/political controversy within the Southern Baptist Convention.

They are Ralph Langley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Huntsville, Ala.; William Lumpkin, retired pastor of Freemason Street Baptist Church in Norfolk, Va., and former professor of church history at Southern and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminaries; Paul Powell, pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas, and president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas; and Dan Yeary, pastor of University Baptist Church in Coral Gables, Fla., and national alumni president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The authors described their document as "a mainstream rallying point around the Bible," noting it does not include the word "inerrancy," which has become a point of contention between groups within the convention. The four primary points of the pastoral plea are:

-- "We hold to the Bible as the supreme and reliable source of authority in all matters of faith and practice, and we hold to the Bible first and foremost.

-- "We hold to the duty and responsibility of every person to learn the Bible, to interpret the Bible and to obey the Bible.

-- "The Holy Spirit is the true guide in interpreting the Bible to our hearts. The Spirit, and not human theories, is the sole defender of the authority of Scripture.

-- "Southern Baptists have always gathered around the Bible itself and not around theories about the Bible. This is the true secret and foundational basis of our unity and cooperation."

The document elaborates on each major point with several subpoints. (See following article.) It concludes:

"By taking our stand upon the Bible itself, the Bible alone and not upon a human notion about biblical inspiration, Southern Baptists can return to the basis of unity which gave us peace. By esteeming the Bible above theories about the Bible, and by esteeming the necessity of personal interpretation along with the centrality of the Bible, we choose for the Bible and for peace.

"We call for a return to our roots, to the tried and true way of cooperation."

"It is an old statement," Langley said of the pastors' plea. "There is nothing really new in this. It is a classic old statement of the view of Scripture Baptists have held since the 17th century."

The document is based upon the historic Baptist confessions of faith that were written in the 17th and early 18th centuries, Lumpkin said. He noted sources for the wording and ideas of the new document are derived from the First and Second London Confessions, dated 1644 and 1678, respectively; the General Baptists' Assembly Confession of 1660 and Orthodox Confession of 1678; and General and Particular Baptist associational confessions dating from 1651 and 1656.

"We regard these as basic," he added. "These were the foundational confessions (that were written) when positions were being identified and defined by early Baptists. We want to get back to our foundations. This is how the Protestant Reformation started; the reformers got back to their biblical foundations."

Powell explained the quartet's reason for sending the document: "We felt like we needed a good, clear, brief statement of what Baptists have always believed about the Bible and the priesthood of the believer. There is nothing inflammatory, nothing political in the statement. It's good for people to know they can affirm a statement like this and be in the mainstream, not only of traditional Baptists, but of current Baptists."

The statement already has been sent to between 30,000 and 34,000 Southern Baptist pastors, and organizers hope to send it to pastors of all the convention's 37,000-plus churches. It has been mailed from several places across the country, including Virginia, Texas and North Carolina, Lumpkin said. The project has been funded by "free-will contributors," Langley added.

"This is not a regional nor partisan move, but rather a plea for pastors especially to employ their reasoning powers to look at the issues raised in the document," Lumpkin stressed. "We think many of our pastors have been oblivious to some of the foundational positions upon which we have stood as a denomination. We just want to review the principles, pull back to our roots and rediscover some unity."

"We hope this is middle-of-the-road," Langley added. "We would like to find harmony instead of cacophony. We hope there would be a building of rapport rather than schism. We hope it (the statement) would stimulate discussion, even from laypeople — a dialogue from pulpit to pew."

"We hope it would eliminate the charge of liberal or non-liberal from anyone who bears the Baptist banner. We hope thousands of people will read it and affirm it as it affirms the Scriptures."

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Pastors' Plea  
Urges Peace

Baptist Press  
4/15/87

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—A four-part "Pastoral Plea for Peace" within the Southern Baptist Convention affirms the supremacy of the Bible, individual responsibility for interpreting Scripture, help of the Holy Spirit in that interpretation and the centrality of the Bible in Southern Baptist life.

The statement is the project of four Southern Baptist ministers — Ralph Langley of Huntsville, Ala.; William Lumpkin of Norfolk, Va.; Paul Powell of Tyler, Texas; and Dan Yeary of Coral Gables, Fla. — who have sent the document to more than 30,000 of their fellow Southern Baptist pastors.

The pastoral plea -- which is subtitled, "No Lord but Christ, No Creed but the Bible" -- is divided into four major points:

-- "We hold to the Bible as the supreme and reliable source of authority in all matters of faith and practice, and we hold to the Bible first and foremost."

The document states the Bible is held "high above all theories, doctrines, creeds, notions and other such purely human inventions which attempt to explain how the Bible works." It says doctrines of biblical inspiration "are only human rationalizations. ... They are not the Bible, and our loyalty must be to the Scriptures and not to human notions about the Scriptures. ...

"This is the Baptist way," it continues. "Baptists have always been suspicious of doctrinal statements as creeds, as 'final expressions' about the Bible or Christian faith."

-- "We hold to the duty and responsibility of every person to learn the Bible, to interpret the Bible and to obey the Bible."

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Since "God speaks through the Bible," every person "has an inescapable duty to stand alone for himself before the Scriptures," the pastors' plea says. "No one can understand, interpret or obey the word of God for another. Therefore, it is wrong and harmful to pressure, impose or otherwise require of others that they have our understandings, our experiences or use our words to describe the nature or meaning of Scripture."

The document notes Christians' duty to interpret the Bible individually is "the crown jewel of the Baptists." It adds: "The right and burden of private interpretation is as binding upon teachers, preachers and employees of the denomination as it is upon anyone else. One does not forego or escape this right and duty by accepting denominational employment, any more than the preacher is bound to speak from the pulpit only the thoughts of the people who pay him."

-- "The Holy Spirit is the true guide in interpreting the Bible to our hearts. The Spirit, and not human theories, is the sole defender of the authority of Scripture."

Because the Holy Spirit is the interpreter of the Bible, Baptists "depend upon the Spirit instead of creedal statements about the Bible," the pastors write, noting, "The persuasion of the Holy Spirit is the true way to religious conviction. ...

"Enforced uniformity in the interpretation of Scripture or in the way we express our belief about the Scriptures is distrust of the power of the Holy Spirit, the power and trustworthiness of the word of God and the competency of the individual to receive the Spirit's interpretation. It is an abandonment of the Baptist way."

-- "Southern Baptists have always gathered around the Bible itself and not around theories about the Bible. This is the true secret and foundational basis of our unity and cooperation."

The document notes: "Southern Baptists have cooperated for over 140 years and have built an eminently successful missions enterprise without ever basing that unity and cooperation upon a creed or theory about the Bible. ... Southern Baptists have never examined fellow Baptists for denominational employment on the basis of subscription to any one creedal or doctrinal statement about the Bible.

"Since Southern Baptists have gathered around the Bible ... and the right and duty of personal interpretation, to make a theory of biblical inspiration the basis of unity would be to shift the grounds of cooperation away from that upon which we have worked together successfully."

The statement claims an attempt "of the last eight years to impose a human creed is a recent and different approach to Baptist unity. This approach has wrecked the peace of other Baptist fellowships, and it has brought Southern Baptists to the brink of division.

"By taking our stand upon the Bible itself, the Bible alone, and not upon a human notion about biblical inspiration, Southern Baptists can return to the basis of unity which gave us peace," the document concludes. "By esteeming the Bible above theories about the Bible, and by esteeming the necessity of personal interpretation along with the centrality of the Bible, we choose for the Bible and for peace.

"We call for a return to our roots, to the tried and true way of cooperation." — by Marv Knox

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FMB Re-elects Chairman,  
Picks 4 Area Directors

By Bob Stanley

FMB-N  
Baptist Press  
4/15/87

LEXINGTON, Ky. (BP)--Bob Smith of McAllen, Texas, was re-elected chairman of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board by acclamation April 8. Smith was nominated by Mark Corts, a Winston-Salem, N.C., pastor who had been identified in a secular news report as a possible second nominee for the position.

Corts, in nominating Smith, said, "The nature and task of this board simply will not allow us to be dominated by contention."

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The board's responsibility does require firmness of conviction and a willingness to discuss and hear all points of view without reproach, Corts said: "I think Christian unity does not demand conformity. But it does demand kindness and openness, and if this board can maintain that kind of spirit, I think we can be a model for much of our convention on how to get along and work together." He said Smith "epitomizes that spirit."

After Corts' remarks, the board re-elected Smith, a retired Baptist associational director of missions, to the customary second year as chairman.

The only contest was for first vice chairman, with incumbent M.W. (Buck) Buckalew, a layman from Falls Church, Va., elected over Jimmie H. Carpenter, a physician from Seneca, S.C. Voting was by written ballot, and no totals were announced.

Claude Kirkpatrick of Baton Rouge, La., was re-elected second vice chairman, and Harriet Gilbert of St. Simons Island, Ga., was elected to succeed Mary Dalton of Asheville, N.C., as recording secretary. Dalton had served two years and was ineligible for re-election.

The night before the election, a record gathering of Kentucky Baptists in Lexington's Rupp Arena witnessed the appointment of 49 new missionaries. Estimates on the crowd ranged from 13,500 to more than 15,000. In a commitment time at the close of the service, 67 people made decisions, with 50 of these expressing interest in career missions. The largest previous crowd for such an appointment service was an estimated 14,000 in 1977 at Atlanta's Omni coliseum.

With the new appointments, Southern Baptists now have 3,813 missionaries assigned to 110 mission fields. During the board meeting, 73 young adults were approved for training as journeymen but will not be added to the missionary total until they receive medical clearance and successfully complete a five-week training program July 17.

The trustees also voted to hold their June 1988 appointment service and meeting in connection with the Southern Baptist Convention in San Antonio, Texas. The board hopes to give messengers from across the nation a chance to participate in appointment of the missionaries they support as part of the Foreign Mission Board report on Wednesday night, June 15.

In other actions, the board elected four new area directors and appropriated \$540,000 to set up offices and operating budgets for moving the nine area directors' offices to mission fields as Southern Baptists mobilize for world evangelization.

Elected as new area directors were John Faulkner, eastern and southern Africa; Billy L. Bullington, western Africa; G. Keith Parker, Europe; and Dale G. Thorne, Middle East and northern Africa.

Only three area director posts remain to be filled to complete the top level of the board's reorganization gearing up for world evangelization: middle America and Canada, Brazil and the Caribbean and southern Asia and the Pacific.

Faulkner, an Alabamian, has been associate director for eastern and southern Africa since 1985 and a missionary in Zimbabwe from 1971 to 1984. He will live in Nairobi, Kenya, and coordinate the mission work of about 550 missionaries in 21 countries in the eastern and southern portion of the continent.

Bullington, a native of Arkansas, has been associate to the area director for western Africa since 1977, most recently working with missionaries in 10 non-English speaking countries. From 1967 to 1977 he was a missionary in Togo. He is expected to continue living in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, but his new responsibilities will involve work with about 450 missionaries in 14 countries.

Faulkner succeeds Davis Saunders, who has been named regional vice president for Africa. Bullington succeeds John Mills, who will spend his final year before retirement as part of the transition team charged with helping coordinate details of the board's reorganization and interpreting these changes to Southern Baptists and the missionaries.

In recent years, both Parker and Thorne have been associates to the director for Europe and the Middle East. Under the board's reorganization, the former area director, Isam Ballenger, was named vice president for the region and two area director positions were created, one for Europe, the other for the Middle East and northern Africa.

Parker, a North Carolina native, had been associate to the director for work in Europe since 1982. Earlier he was professor of practical theology at International Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, from 1971 to 1982. He will supervise the work of 230 missionaries in 12 European countries from his present home base in Ruschlikon.

Thorne, an Oklahoman who served in the Middle East since 1965, will oversee 170 missionaries in seven countries from his present base in Cyprus. Since 1985 he has been associate to the director for work in these Middle East countries.

Board members also heard a report that during February and March, 20,000 telephone calls came to the board's special number, 1-800-ALL-SEEK, which provides information for the "Concert of Prayer" for world evangelization on the first Sunday of each month. Barbara Cunningham, chairman of the board's prayer committee, said at this rate more than 110,000 calls would be registered by the end of the year. But she added, "We expect the momentum to gain."

In another action, the board voted to add two island nations, New Caledonia and Vanuatu, which formerly was called New Hebrides, to its South Pacific Baptist Mission, which up until now has included work in Fiji and western Samoa. No change will be made in the country count until personnel are appointed for service in the new area.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: In cutline information mailed 4/8/87 on the new area director to the Middle East and northern Africa, please delete the reference to Dale Thorne's time in Israel. Substitute the words "the Middle East" for the word "Israel" in the cutline.

Thanks,  
Richmond Bureau

Record Crowd Witnesses  
Missionary Commissioning

By James H. Cox

Baptist Press  
4/15/87

LEXINGTON, Ky. (BP)—The largest crowd ever to witness the commissioning of new Southern Baptist foreign missionaries thronged Rupp Arena in Lexington, Ky., April 7.

Spectators numbered between 13,500 and 15,500. They were designated "the largest gathering of Kentucky Baptists in history" by William W. Marshall, executive secretary-treasurer of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, who welcomed them.

Participants witnessed the commissioning of 49 candidates to overseas service in 24 nations. The appointees bring to 3,813 the number of missionaries presently appointed by the Foreign Mission Board, an all time high.

A widowed grandmother who had felt the urge to go to the foreign mission field four decades ago testified at Lexington that she had now reached a conclusion that "life is time, and time is life." Prevented from going overseas earlier by her husband's poor health, Anda Littleford is fulfilling a life-long dream as she prepares to move to Swaziland.

Louisiana pastor Glenn Simmons, who with his wife, Sherry, will go to South Africa, said he had preached to his congregation for 12 years about following God's will in life. It took God "about 10 years to convince me I should do what I was telling everybody else to do," he acknowledged.

Native Tennessean James Hampton claimed, "I saw the movie, I heard the call, I'm ready to go." He and his wife, Barbara, will be missionary associates in Korea.

Board President R. Keith Parks claimed obedience to God's will "is not grim faced" but the "greatest joy" in life.

There are people, he admonished, who "cannot hear (of Jesus) unless someone tells them," who "cannot be saved unless someone goes."

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He observed several of the new appointees made a commitment to foreign missions in a previous commissioning service elsewhere. As thousands sang "Wherever He Leads, I'll Go," 67 people offered themselves for counseling as possible future missionary candidates.

A spontaneous standing ovation by the audience for the candidates occurred after certificates of appointment were presented, "the first time we have ever witnessed that," a Foreign Mission Board official said.

An 1,800-voice choir accompanied by a 225-member orchestra followed the appointments with "Take My Life, Lead Me Lord."

The service highlighted a three-day meeting of the Foreign Mission Board's 85 trustees in Lexington. The board has scheduled appointment services and trustee meetings away from its Richmond, Va., headquarters since 1969 in an attempt to involve more Southern Baptists in its ministry.

The event in Lexington was one of several Kentucky Baptists are experiencing in this 150th year since the founding of their state convention.

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Smith Named General Editor  
For New Baptist Commentary

BSSB-N

Baptist Press  
4/15/87

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—The general editor for a new multi-volume commentary to be published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Broadman division will be Michael A. Smith, chief editor of general religious books in the Broadman products department.

Smith will oversee editing of the commentary with the first volume expected to be released in 1991, said James W. Clark, senior vice president for publishing and distribution.

Smith, 33, an employee of the board since 1985, holds the master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He has been pastor of four churches, including Bellevue Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn., from 1983-1985.

Smith is a "thorough and committed student and teacher of the Scripture, an excellent editor thoroughly familiar with the intricacies of book publication," said Clark. "He will provide the kind of on-site leadership which will be absolutely essential to the successful publication of this major work."

The commentary, which was approved in February by the board's trustees, will use writers who are biblical inerrantists.

The "Baptist Faith and Message" will be the doctrinal guideline for editing the commentary, as it is for all other Broadman books, Clark said. The "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" developed by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy will be the guideline for defining inerrancy, he added.

"Several Broadman officials held a very productive meeting in mid-February with SBC President Adrian Rogers to discuss the project," Clark said. "The group agreed that the new commentary would include the Scripture text, that it should be a scholarly commentary and that it could be a significant tool for many Southern Baptists."

The first volume of the commentary should be released in time for the 1991 Southern Baptist Convention meeting and release of the final volume is planned by 1995 or earlier if possible, Clark said.

A meeting with an informal, pre-advisory group will be held in May, he said. Participants in this meeting will suggest people to serve as contributing editors "who will give more specific counsel concerning the shape the commentary will take."

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"Screening and selection of writers should begin by this summer," Clark said. "Broadman is already pulling together the various groups needed to make this project a worthy success. No stone will be left unturned in our efforts to produce a commentary of which Southern Baptists can be justifiably proud."

The new commentary will be the third multi-volume commentary set available from Broadman. Others are the "Broadman Bible Commentary" and the "Layman's Bible Book Commentary."

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Foreign Board Dominates  
RPRC Awards Competition

Baptist Press  
4/15/87

FMB-N

PHILADELPHIA (BP)--Southern Baptists, led by the denomination's Foreign Mission Board, swept 36 of 96 awards and four of seven "best-of-class" grand prizes in the Victor De Rose/Paul M. Hinkhouse Awards competition of the Religious Public Relations Council.

The Foreign Mission Board of Richmond, Va., won 31 of the 36 and all four Southern Baptist best-of-class awards at the 58th annual meeting of RPRC, an international, interfaith professional organization for religious communicators. Three awards went to the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, Tenn.

United Methodists were second overall, with 12 awards. Other groups with multiple awards were Roman Catholics and Lutherans, eight each; Church World Services, Presbyterians and Church of the Brethren, five each; Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Mennonites and Episcopalians, four each.

Foreign Mission Board best-of-class prizes included a victory in the magazine/newspaper class for the second consecutive year by The Commission magazine, edited by Leland Webb and his staff of Mike Creswell, Martha Skelton, Dan Beatty and Nancy Wogsland. Other best-of-class awards came in the broadcast class for a video feature by Don Dahler and Van Payne; print class, for a booklet, "Ridgecrest Workbook," by Ken Lawson, Kevin Irby and Judi Bell; and photography/illustration class, for "Hallowed Ground," color photography by Joanna Pinneo.

Webb, Dahler, Pinneo, Payne, Lawson, Don Rutledge, Erich Bridges, Marty Croll, Mike Creswell and Warren Johnson, all of the Foreign Mission Board, won or shared multiple awards.

Individual Southern Baptist awards went to Floyd Craig of Raleigh, N.C., for an entry done for the Home Mission Board, Atlanta; Linda Lawson, Terri Lackey and Jim Veneman, all of the Sunday School Board; Marv Knox, Baptist Press, Executive Committee, Nashville; and Foreign Mission Board staffers Robert O'Brien, Stanley Leary, Laurie Rathbun Hoen and Ray Fetty (jointly), Mike Chute, Dan Beatty and Susan Gordon.

Webb also collected a first place award of excellence in the national magazine category and two runner-up certificates of special merit for feature writing. Dahler also won an individual first place, shared another first with Payne and shared a runner-up award with Terry McMahon, all for overseas video coverages. Pinneo also won two firsts and a runner-up for photography. Lawson also shared a first in the booklet category with Irby and Bell and a runner-up with Payne for a motion picture, "Winter is Past."

Rutledge collected a first and two runners-up in photography. Croll won a runner-up for a feature series and shared a first in news writing with Bridges, who also won an individual first for news writing. Creswell received a first for an advertisement and a runner-up for feature writing, while Johnson gained a first and a runner-up in photography.

Craig won a first for a brochure; runner-up awards went to Linda Lawson, news writing; Lackey, video coverage; Veneman, photography; Knox, news writing; O'Brien, feature series; Leary, photography; Hoen and Fetty, video coverage; Chute, photography; Beatty, graphic design; and Gordon, brochure.

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Proposed Legislation Would  
Protect Taxpayers' Rights

By Kathy Palen

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WASHINGTON (BP)--During the 100th Congress' first hearing on proposed legislation designed to protect taxpayers' rights, four lawmakers urged passage of the measure as a guard against what one senator called the Internal Revenue Service's "bully mentality."

The hearing on the Omnibus Taxpayers' Bill of Rights Act, introduced jointly in the Senate and the House, was held by the Senate Subcommittee on Private Retirement Plans and IRS Oversight.

The proposed bipartisan legislation calls for changes in the Internal Revenue Code of 1986. One of the changes would prohibit the IRS from conducting any investigation into or surveillance of the beliefs or associations of any individual or organization, including an individual's or group's religious beliefs.

The measure also would require the IRS to prepare a brief, comprehensive statement of taxpayer rights and obligations. The statement would be distributed to taxpayers with all forms sent from the IRS.

Sen. David Pryor, D-Ark., subcommittee chairman and co-sponsor of the bill's Senate version, said his goal in introducing the measure is "to ensure that those taxpayers who, for whatever reason, become entangled or find themselves in a dispute with the IRS are still afforded their basic due process rights."

He told of letters he has received from hundreds of people from across the nation complaining about encounters with the IRS.

"What I have learned so far about IRS practices leads me to believe that these days the IRS, whether purposefully or not, suffers from a bully mentality," Pryor said. "Like a bully, the IRS relies on intimidation and arm twisting to strike fear in the hearts of those it bullies."

Pryor suggested compliance with tax laws could be achieved better by "re-establishing respect for the IRS in the manner in which it performs a difficult and unpopular task."

Another co-sponsor, Sen. Charles E. Grassley, R-Iowa, echoed Pryor's warning against giving a government agency "unchecked force."

"The major reason taxpayer abuse has been allowed to exist is because the Treasury Department is one of the most powerful government agencies but one of the least regulated by Congress," Grassley said. The lack of regulation has resulted in Congress' being "kept in the dark about activities within Treasury, including the IRS," he added.

The proposed legislation would help alleviate that problem by creating a statutory office of inspector general within the Treasury Department to audit and investigate the agency and make reports to Congress, Grassley said.

The third Senate co-sponsor, Harry Reid, D-Nev., said the bill would "place the taxpayer on equal footing with the tax collector" by seeking "to protect taxpayers from IRS abuse while preserving the ability of the IRS to collect taxes which are legally owed the federal government." He added, "This bill is not anti-IRS; it is pro-taxpayer."

Rep. Robin Tallon, D-S.C., who introduced the bill in the House, said he wants to prohibit "heavy-handed tactics" by the IRS.

"If taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society," Tallon concluded, "then let us make sure they are collected in a civilized manner."



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Baptist Press

Hobbs Urges Christians  
To Pray In Jesus' Name

By Jim Lowry

BSSB  
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Prayer is seriously neglected in the lives of many Christians who erroneously view it as a battering ram to a reluctant God, Herschel H. Hobbs told employees of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board during their recent Spiritual Emphasis Days.

"Some people believe that because they do not receive what they asked for in prayers, they can question the veracity of what Jesus said," explained Hobbs, who is pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City.

"Ours is not a name-it-and-claim-it theology but has to do with the work and will of God," said Hobbs. "Jesus loves to give gifts to his children, but he wants us to receive them in keeping with his will and authority.

"In the battle against the principalities and powers of the world, keep your lines of communication open," urged Hobbs, who preached three messages to board employees on the importance of prayer, the motivation for prayer and how to pray.

He cautioned employees to avoid the temptation of viewing spiritual truths they deal with in the workplace as merely tools of the trade: "It is one of my most besetting temptations and true of many others who deal with sacred things. I find myself reading the Bible and looking for sermons rather than feeding my soul.

"The greatest life ever lived was the most prayerful life. Jesus prayed publicly, privately, silently, alone and with others. In the crisis moments of his ministry, he was always praying.

"We should pray when a condition exists in our lives and we have a sense of need," Hobbs said. "God doesn't seal us in plastic bags, trouble free, but leaves us in the marketplace of the world to witness for him — to show the world what we have.

"When we pray, it is important to pray in Jesus' name. When we pray in Jesus' name, we are asking on the basis of his merit, not ours."

Hobbs, a member of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee and a former SBC president, said he has observed an alarming trend in the past few years of Christians not praying in Jesus' name to avoid offending persons who do not believe in Jesus.

He said when he was once requested to omit the phrase from a public prayer, he refused, because that was the only way he knew how to pray and, more importantly, he did not want to risk offending his Lord.

Hobbs also addressed the times in the lives of Christians when problems are so overwhelming they cannot even seem to pray: "I'm sure each of us has found ourselves in the position when we just can't pray any more. Words are wonderful, but they are limited. They break down when the idea or burden is so heavy.

"The Holy Spirit comes to us when we have burdens and can't pray. It is then the Spirit says, 'You get on that side of the problem, and I'll get on this side, and together, we will lift your problem to the throne of grace with groanings that cannot be uttered.'

"Through the power of the Holy Spirit, that groaning in your soul is the most eloquent prayer you ever prayed."

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

Easter Sunrise Service Anniversary  
Of Open Doors At Brazos Bend Mission

By Ken Camp

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Baptist Press  
4/15/87

DALLAS (BP)—When members of churches in San Felipe Baptist Association join vacationing campers for a sunrise service at Brazos State Park near Houston, Texas, on Easter morning, it will be an anniversary of sorts for Brazos Bend Baptist Mission.

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The dream of building a mission near the Southeast Texas park began with Mary Belle Rice Day, a missions committee member at Quail Valley Baptist Church in Missouri City, Texas, who was present at the Easter sunrise service two years ago.

"The Lord impressed her to give three acres of land near the park entrance for a Southern Baptist mission church that would minister to this rural community, as well as those who would come to the park on weekends," said Harold Sellers, who was at that time associational director of new work and now is director of missions for the Coastal Plains area of Texas.

The mission site is strategically located near three additions of rustic, ranch-style homes. Although secluded, the area is just about 25 miles from Houston and is attracting a growing number of commuters.

Quail Valley Baptist Church, San Felipe Association and the Baptist General Convention of Texas entered into a cooperative agreement to work together in developing Brazos Bend Baptist Mission on the site. The associational Baptist men's group spent several Saturdays and about \$1,000 working on the property, preparing a building site.

At about that same time, Orville Roberts retired as director of missions for the Coastal Plains area with the dream of starting five new churches in the first five years of his retirement.

"It just seemed that he and the Brazos Bend Mission project attracted one another," said Sellers. Roberts began visiting in the community one day each week, and he started a Thursday-night Bible study.

Temporary worship facilities became available when First Baptist Church of Bellville, Texas, provided a mobile home to the association at a discounted price. Proceeds from the sale were invested in the work of a Hispanic mission, the mobile home was moved to the mission site and the congregation began Sunday services there.

"The Lord has been really good," said Roberts. "He has opened a lot of doors."

Doors continued to open when the local George Foundation made available to the mission an old, restored German Baptist church building. The building was one of several old structures owned by the foundation, originally intended as part of an old-style village theme park that never materialized. Although the cost of restoring the church building was about \$85,000, the foundation agreed to sell it for \$25,000.

"The George Foundation was very anxious to cooperate in getting the building back to Baptists," said Roberts.

At about the same time, a former resident of the community provided \$25,000 to San Felipe Association as a self-perpetuating mission fund to be used in beginning new work. The fund more than paid for the building and the cost of moving it.

Additional funds to help provide furnishings and to put the building into operation were made possible by Texas Baptists' gifts through the Cooperative Program unified budget and to the Mary Hill Davis Offering for state missions.

As Roberts reflected on Brazos Bend Baptist Mission, he downplayed his own role in the mission's development, pointing instead to the way things fell into place like pieces in a puzzle.

"I tell folks that I'm mid-wiving a mission. I didn't cause it to come into being. I'm just helping to deliver it," said Roberts. "The Lord is the one who has opened all the doors that made this possible."

1990 Simultaneous Revival  
Goals Set For 175,000 Baptisms

By Joe Westbury

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ATLANTA (BP)—Evangelism leaders of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board are optimistic that more than a third of the denomination's baptisms for 1990 can be reaped from national simultaneous revivals scheduled for that year.

About 175,000 baptisms, or 35 percent of the denomination's projected 500,000 baptisms, are predicted to come from the revivals, said Richard Harris, director of mass evangelism for the board.

That would be an increase from the 103,000 conversions reported in the 1986 Good News America simultaneous revivals, which were 28 percent of the denomination's total of 364,000 baptisms. The 1986 figure ended a four-year decline in baptisms that had seen the totals steadily erode from a high of 411,000 in 1982.

Tied to the 1990 goals will be the first large-scale evangelistic effort among American ethnics and the launching of 1,000 new churches in 250 targeted areas of the nation.

Leaders and editors from the 17 Southern Baptist ethnic fellowships recently took the lead in pledging their support for the revivals. As a result of their commitment, a growing network of ethnic newspapers will be used for the first time in uniting the fellowships around Southern Baptist objectives of evangelizing the nation for Christ.

In announcing the goals, Harris called for greater involvement among Baptist state conventions, associations and churches to make the second set of national revivals the most far-reaching in the denomination's history.

Set for March 18-April 29, 1990, the evangelistic emphasis will be promoted as "Here's Hope. Jesus Cares for You." The theme recently was modified from "Here's Hope. God Cares for You" to present a more direct evangelistic appeal with a Christian flavor.

Some board members had questioned the effectiveness of the campaign if the word "Jesus" were left out and the campaign weakened, since many cults are using the word "God" in a generic sense, Harris explained. The modification will distinguish the meetings as "distinctly Christian in nature," he added.

Nevada will serve as pilot for the meetings, when statewide simultaneous revivals are launched prior to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Las Vegas in 1989. On a national scale the same year, 100 summer missionaries and 100 interns and PRAXIS leaders will be targeted for service in strategic areas of the nation to provide groundwork for the upcoming revivals, Harris said. PRAXIS is a partnership venture of the Home Mission Board and Southern Baptist seminaries that provides students with 10 weeks of supervised church-starting experience with seminary credit.

In addition to promoting community revivals across the nation in 1990, the board will be involved directly in sponsoring 50 area crusades, sponsoring up to 60 youth/adult-led revivals and sending 200 revival teams to new-work areas of the nation. Full-time vocational evangelists will be recruited for the six-week emphasis, Harris explained.

A five-year goal of training 1 million Sunday school workers in evangelism is expected to be reached by the revival date, which also will utilize 50 church planter apprentices, 100 interns and PRAXIS leaders, 500 retired ministers and 150 Mission Service Corps pastoral leaders in the evangelistic thrust and follow-up, Harris said.

Black church leaders also will be trained, and materials will be distributed in four major languages among ethnics. Partial materials will be available to 17 other ethnic fellowships, the first such commitment ever made to the diverse language groups.

When the revivals are launched on May 18, 1990, Southern Baptists — armed with up to 15 million complimentary copies of the New Testament — will be involved in the largest attempt to evangelize the nation in their 145-year history, Harris added.