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Starting Churches, Reaching People
Most Important, Says HMB President

By Sherri A. Brown

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)-- Home missionaries and other Southern Baptists must help this denomination achieve the goal of 50,000 churches by the year 2000, Larry Lewis told participants at the annual home missions conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

"This should become the magnificent obsession that dominates Southern Baptist thought, philosophy and achievements," said Lewis, new president of the board.

"There are not two more important endeavors on the earth than starting churches and reaching people. They are inseparably linked. No evangelistic effort is really fruitful and effective if it is not oriented in a church," he said.

Lewis told the congregation that even though the average Southern Baptist church wins and baptizes only seven people a year and 6,000 churches do not report any baptisms per year, the convention still must maintain a goal for establishing more churches.

"The purpose of the church is not to baptize 10 people a year. The church exists to fulfill the Great Commission. Every time we establish a Bible-teaching, Bible-preaching, soul-winning, witnessing, ministering church, we are putting Jesus in that place," Lewis stressed.

Jess Moody, pastor of First Baptist Church of Van Nuys, Calif., spoke to the theme, "Starting Churches! Reaching People!"

"We have to win the nation, and we have to do it fast. If not, we're going to be in trouble. We've got a lot of work to do, because people out there don't know God from a goose," Moody said.

During a "winning the cities" conference, Moody suggested urban churches restructure their worship services. "We're still singing songs that were written hundreds of years ago, in language that's hundreds of years old," he said.

"At my church, we write our own songs, we sing it 50 or 60 times, then we throw it out. We do that because we found out that CBS (television) did a study and discovered that after someone sings or hears a song more than 50 times, it becomes related to a memory. We want our songs to be fresh, to be heard as they are sung," Moody explained.

Final registration at the Glorieta conference was 2,388.

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Floridians Ask Senators
To Limit Abortion Insurance

By Greg Warner

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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)-- Several Florida Baptists went to Washington to ask the state's two senators to support an amendment limiting health insurance coverage of abortions.

Although neither Sen. Lawton Chiles nor Sen. Bob Graham endorsed the amendment -- labeled the Danforth Abortion-Neutral Amendment -- Graham promised to seek a solution to the legislative dilemma facing abortion opponents.

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The dilemma centers on the Civil Rights Restoration Act, which is expected to come before the Senate soon. Although the act is supported broadly, even among anti-abortionists, some observers fear enforcement of the bill will require many hospitals and colleges -- including some Baptist institutions -- to provide employees and students with health insurance for abortions.

"We don't think we should be required by the federal government to provide for something we find unconscionable," Patrick Anderson, a criminologist and first vice president of the Florida Baptist State Convention, told Graham.

The trip to Washington was organized by Anderson, head of the criminology department at Florida Southern College in Lakeland. He was joined by Gary Redding, pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church in Lakeland and president-elect of the Florida Baptist Pastors' Conference, and Robert Vickery, a businessman and member of First Baptist Church of Orlando.

The group was accompanied by Larry Braidfoot, general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

The Southern Baptist Convention in June passed a resolution calling for passage of the Danforth Amendment, which is named for its first proponent, Sen. John Danforth of Missouri. The amendment, which would be attached to the Civil Rights Restoration Act, has been the major battleground for the abortion debate in Congress this year. (Danforth has not indicated the exact language he would propose as a current amendment.)

The Civil Rights Restoration Act is designed to restore the 1963 Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on sex and race in institutions that receive federal funds. In 1984 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the Grove City case that the act applies only to the specific area of an institution that benefits from federal money. The Civil Rights Restoration Act would apply the original legislation to the entire institution.

Most Baptist institutions can qualify for a religious exemption from the Civil Rights Act by proving they are both controlled by and receive significant financial support from a religious body.

Some Baptist institutions could have trouble qualifying, however, Braidfoot said. Moreover, no exemptions are offered to non-religious institutions opposed to abortion because of the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision guaranteeing a woman's right to an abortion.

The requirements for abortion funding likely would have the greatest impact on colleges and hospitals, which are governed by Title IX of the Civil Rights Act, Braidfoot said.

Under the 1975 federal regulations for applying the Civil Right Act, for instance, colleges could be forced to include abortion coverage in health insurance policies for students and employees. Colleges routinely require students to carry health insurance and often sell such insurance at reduced rates.

The intention of the Danforth Amendment, advocates said, is to guarantee that the federal regulations used to enforce the Civil Rights Restoration Act be neutral in regard to abortion funding. In other words, they said, the civil rights laws should not be used to require public or private institutions to fund abortions if they do not want to. Neither should the law prohibit such funding, however.

Because the Danforth Amendment does not challenge the constitutionality of abortion, Redding said it is common ground for both fervent anti-abortionists and more moderate foes of abortion.

Redding and the other Baptists emphasized they were not opposing civil rights or the Civil Rights Restoration Act, but only asking for protection from the requirements to fund abortions.

The Senate is about evenly divided on the Danforth Amendment, according to Braidfoot, with about 20 senators still undecided. Although the House of Representatives has not yet acted on the civil rights legislation, it has approved Danforth-type amendments in the past, Braidfoot said.

Robert Parham, associate director of the Christian Life Commission, said a close vote on the Danforth Amendment could allow Southern Baptists to play a crucial role in the final decision. Many of the undecided senators are in the South, added Parham, who handles abortion issues for the CLC.

In separate meetings, both Graham and Chiles agreed the Civil Rights Restoration Act should be neutral toward abortion, but both said they were not sure if the Danforth Amendment would achieve neutrality.

The amendment's opponents contend it is both a back-door attempt to restrict the availability of abortions and an effort to sabotage the Civil Rights Restoration Act by making it less acceptable to some senators. Some fear it would legalize discrimination against women who have abortions.

"We don't want in any way to change the protections that are in the Civil Rights Restoration Act," Vickery told Graham, adding he believes Congress could find a way to keep the bill neutral without discriminating against anyone.

Graham said he and his staff would try to find an amendment or other remedy that would accomplish both goals. Such a solution may be a slightly different amendment, a change in the regulations or a congressional resolution expressing the legislature's intent not to force institutions to offer abortion benefits.

Chiles, however, said he would wait until the amendment reaches its final form before making an evaluation.

Some senators are leery of the Danforth Amendment, Braidfoot conceded, because it apparently would apply to all institutions -- religious and secular.

"That is not just a return to a pre-Grove City situation," Braidfoot said. "That is probably a broadening."

Graham encouraged Southern Baptists also to pursue a non-political solution to abortion through moral persuasion. "You can eliminate abortion by a spiritual assault," he said.

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Contempo Assistant
Takes WMU Post

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8/12/87

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Susan Todd of Birmingham, Ala., has been named public information specialist for the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

Todd formerly was editorial assistant for Contempo, the WMU missions magazine for women ages 18-29. She began her new job Aug. 3.

Todd graduated from Samford University in Birmingham in 1980 and was a summer missionary in Colorado following graduation. She joined the WMU staff in 1981.

In her new position, Todd will prepare and disseminate news and information about WMU, and will represent the organization to denominational and secular media outlets.

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Home Mission Board
Names DOM Of Year

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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Bob Lee Franklin, director of missions for Noonday Baptist Association in Georgia, and Fred Lunsford, director of missions in Truett Baptist Association in North Carolina, were named directors of missions of the year for the eastern United States during the home missions conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

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Franklin received the metropolitan award. He was director of missions in Montgomery, Ala., for eight years before coming to Noonday Association in suburban Atlanta two years ago. He received the award for his "strong leadership of associational workgroups in new work areas, said Jere Allen, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board director of metropolitan associational missions. Ten churches in Noonday Association have been involved in a workgroup since he came there."

Franklin's ability to lead churches to start missions also was cited as reason for the award. He has helped start eight missions in two years at Noonday Association.

Lunsford received the rural/urban award for his 23 years of work in Truett Association. "He has dedicated his life to work among our mountain churches," said Gary Farley, Home Mission Board associate director of rural/urban associational missions at the board.

"He has accepted churches where they were and been able to draw them into being cooperative churches, relating to all people," Farley said.

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Houston Church To Host
Southwestern Theologian

By Elizabeth Watson

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Willow Meadows Baptist Church in Houston will host the first theologian-in-residence sent to a local church from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Houston church has invited William Tillman Jr., assistant professor of Christian ethics, to act as "Christian ethics resource person" during his sabbatical leave this year. The church's pastor is George Gaston, former pastoral ministry professor at Southwestern.

Tillman, who has taught at Southwestern since 1981, also will serve as interim director of Southwestern's off-campus center at Houston Baptist University. In addition to Southwestern's main campus in Fort Worth, Monday and Tuesday classes are offered in Houston, San Antonio and Shawnee, Okla.

Also, Tillman will be visiting scholar in the department of religious studies at Rice University.

Although the theologian-in-residence concept still is new in Baptist circles, Tillman thinks bringing professors into local churches can bridge understanding between seminaries and Baptists.

"This congregation asks that I bring my professional expertise to bear upon them as part of my local church involvement," Tillman said. "I will guide them to learn how they may better apply Christian ethical values in their community."

Tillman will lead Christian ethics seminars at Willow Meadows and other Baptist churches in the Houston area on topics such as child abuse, abortion and amnesty.

"I believe that my writing projects, research at Rice and application through this local church will add significant credibility to my work and enhance communication of these concepts to students," Tillman said.

Before coming to Southwestern Tillman was director of research and editorial services at the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. He has written several ethics books, including Christian Ethics -- A Primer.

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Black Deaf Baptist Workers
Hold First National Meeting

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WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and Shiloh Baptist Church of Washington hosted the first National Baptist conference for black workers with the deaf at Gallaudet University, the only liberal arts school for the deaf.

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"We are here because you believe in the strength of your ministry to black deaf persons. You give yourself to deaf work so that black deaf people may have an equal opportunity to hear the gospel and come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as their personal Savior," Carter Bearden, national missionary to the deaf at the Home Mission Board, told participants.

"The primary objective of the conference is to provide fellowship and training to black deaf and hearing persons in the field of deafness," Bearden said.

During a business session the 40 participants -- representing 16 black churches in nine states and the District of Columbia -- voted to name the conference "National Baptist Conference of the Deaf."

The first officers elected were Paul Ellis of Birmingham, Ala., chairperson; Jeffrey Bowden, Washington, vice chairperson; Lottie Crook, Washington, assistant vice chairperson; Evone Butler, Detroit, secretary; and Vivian Maiden, Atlanta, assistant secretary.

The Home Mission Board participated in the conference through both its language missions division and black church relations department.

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Florida Baptist Witness Adopts
Response To Peace Report

By Greg Warner

Baptist Press
8/12/87

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--The Florida Baptist Witness will "continue to contribute to the process of reconciliation" in the Southern Baptist Convention but will not abandon use of theological terms to describe opposing positions in the SBC controversy, according to the newsmagazine's directors.

The Florida Baptist Witness Commission, which governs publication of the weekly newsjournal for Baptists in the state, has adopted a statement in response to the SBC Peace Committee report approved by messengers to the convention's annual meeting in June.

Recommendation VII of the peace report asks state Baptist newsjournals, other publications and individual Baptists "to refrain from the use of intemperate and inflammatory language, labeling individuals and impugning motives."

"Specifically, we request that all Baptist writers and individual Baptists refrain from characterizing fellow Southern Baptists in terms such as 'fundamentalist,' 'liberal,' 'fundamental-conservative,' 'moderate-conservative,'" the recommendation continues.

The terminology used by reporters has been debated in the nine-year-old SBC controversy. Some people say such labels are offensive and distort the positions espoused by leaders on both sides.

The response from the Witness Commission, which was adopted on a motion by Max Cadenhead, pastor of First Baptist Church of Naples, expressed "strong agreement with the intent of the recommendation."

The commissioners cited a statement on editorial policy, adopted last year, which in part calls on the Witness staff to use the highest journalistic standards to report the news of Southern Baptists in a "timely, objective and accurate" fashion.

The more recent response adds, "While recognizing that designations and terms must be used in reporting some events and defining certain issues, such language will not be used in an inflammatory or divisive manner."

Currently the Witness uses the terms "fundamental-conservative" and "moderate-conservative" to refer to the two major camps in the SBC conflict.

Horace Andrews, a St. Petersburg judge, told fellow members of the Witness Commission it is impossible to report news of the controversy without using descriptive terms. Others agreed.

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"I don't see any problem with using terms to identify groups" said Lorace Cothron, pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church in Palatka, adding such use should not be inflammatory.

To drop all labels would be like referring to a football team without "talking about offense and defense," said Ken Smith, pastor of Covenant Baptist Church in Gainesville.

"They are just trying to get us to stop referring to the division in the convention," said Smith, who seconded the adoption of the response.

Toni Clevenger of Pensacola, chairwoman of the commission, said everyone wants the SBC conflict to cease, but added, "If the division exists, it needs to be referred to from time to time."

Several commissioners said the Witness' editorial guidelines, adopted in July 1986, address what the Peace Committee targeted in its recommendation, namely the use of inflammatory rhetoric.

"This is precisely what we were trying to do," Smith said. "We think the intent of the Peace Committee has been met."

The commission's response, which was drafted following its annual budget-planning meeting July 27-28 in Orlando, will be sent to each member of the Peace Committee, said Editor Jack Brymer Sr. Brymer said the committee members also are receiving a complimentary subscription of the Witness so they can make their own evaluations.