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February 19, 1988

N-10

88-30

SBC Today Board
Elects Harwell

By Michael Tutterow

ATLANTA (BP)--Jack U. Harwell, former editor of the Christian Index, Georgia Baptists' weekly newsjournal, has been elected editor of SBC Today, an independent, autonomous Southern Baptist newspaper, effective June 1, the paper's board of directors announced.

Harwell's election, according to the board's action, is part of an effort to upgrade the publication by changing its frequency to twice monthly, adding other full-time staff members and increasing circulation.

The board has launched a campaign to raise \$250,000 by June 1, the time when Harwell would assume the editorship, in order to finance the changes.

In the board's February meeting, Harwell was offered the post of editor to replace SBC Today founder, Editor Walker L. Knight, who will remain with SBC Today as publisher.

"Harwell's being editor will of necessity have to depend upon a successful fund-raising campaign, but we have been encouraged by the heavy support shown by Jack's many friends," said board Chairman Melvin Williams, pastor of Oakhurst Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga.

Knight, who has announced he will take partial retirement next February, said: "The securing of Jack Harwell is an exceptional opportunity to guarantee Southern Baptists will continue to receive a fair and unbiased reporting of SBC affairs.

"I see this as a chance for SBC Today to reach a new level of effectiveness, to appeal more strongly to the laity of the convention and to ensure that in Baptist life censorship will not be tolerated. This assures us that there will always be a voice to champion freedom."

Harwell, who worked for the Christian Index for 30 years, the final 21 as editor, took early retirement last December. He drew increasing criticism from conservatives who were displeased with his editorial policies. After a review committee was established to monitor him, he announced plans last October to retire last Dec. 31, saying he could no longer work under the group's restrictive policies.

The Georgia Baptist Convention voted to request Harwell to stay during its November meeting. But by a 57-54 margin members of the convention's executive committee refused to reinstate Harwell, forcing him to abide by his Dec. 31 retirement date.

A native of Mobile, Ala., Harwell, 55, is a long-time reporter. After earning a degree in journalism from Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., Harwell worked for newspapers in Mobile, Ala., Birmingham, Ala., and Atlanta. He also spent four years as a public relations specialist for the U.S. Army and Air Force. He joined the Index staff in 1957 as associate editor and became editor in 1966.

Harwell is to join the SBC Today staff as editor prior to the 1988 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. Currently Harwell is completing a book on the nine-year theological/political controversy in the denomination.

His wife is the former Blanche Virginia Beard of Troy, Ala., and a graduate of Samford University. She has taught in metropolitan Atlanta schools. They have twin sons, Ronald and Donald.

In agreeing to take the editorship, Harwell said: "I believe there is grassroots support for what SBC Today stands for, which I describe as the mainstream, traditional Baptist concepts of missions, evangelism and freedom. I don't believe that group has been heard from. We've heard from both ends of the theological struggle, and there's a place for the mainstream person and a need for that mainstream person to be heard from. I'd like for SBC Today to be the voice for these people."

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N-10

California Board Rejects
Church's Mission Money

By Herb Hollinger & Marv Knox

Baptist Press
2/19/88

FRESNO, Calif. (BP)--California Southern Baptists have declined to accept nearly \$800 from a San Francisco church that allegedly accepts homosexuals as members.

The Southern Baptist General Convention of California's executive board voted to return the funds "based upon interpretation of biblical principles which places Dolores Street Baptist Church in conflict with and not in sympathy with the purpose of the convention."

Dolores Street Church is a small congregation that ministers to and allegedly accepts homosexuals into its church family.

The congregation first drew national attention in 1983, when Pastor Jim Lowder and 10 other church members were jailed following a nuclear protest at Livermore Research Laboratory in Livermore, Calif. At that time, the church received financial assistance from the state convention and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board to supplement Lowder's salary. The board reprimanded him, but the funds were not cut.

However, the California executive board discontinued the financial assistance in February 1986, when the homosexual issue surfaced. That action followed Lowder's appearance on a television talk show.

He told the TV audience: "I believe that the Bible is the supreme authority for our lives, and as a Baptist, I try to follow that. However, I do not believe, like many of my colleagues, that the Bible has a sexual ethic. It has an ethic of human relationships that are faithful, loving, life-enhancing and caring. If a gay relationship has those qualities, then I believe that the Bible affirms that relationship."

The matter resurfaced last year. In November, San Francisco Peninsula Southern Baptist Association voted to ask the state convention not to accept contributions from Dolores Street Church. The request was stated in a resolution that noted the association removed the church from its fellowship in April 1986 because of the church's "acceptance of homosexuality as an acceptable Christian lifestyle."

Associations as entities themselves are not represented at state conventions. But Richard Neely, pastor of Grand Avenue Baptist Church in South San Francisco, moved that "the state convention immediately cease accepting funds from Dolores Street Church in San Francisco."

That motion was amended, suggesting the issue be referred "to the appropriate committee of the executive board for further study."

The executive committee of the executive board decided to examine the matter at the first meeting of the board this year in Fresno. Sid Peterson, a Bakersfield pastor who is board chairman and also chairman of the executive committee, said representatives from the church and people who opposed the church were invited to speak to the committee.

The church was represented by members David Martin and Jane Medema, wife of singer Ken Medema. Neely spoke on behalf of the group opposed to the church.

Martin and Medema brought a letter from Lowder that said, in part: "Our church has never had an official position about homosexuality, divorce, abortion, South Africa or a host of other social concerns. A poll of our members will reveal, like any other church, a variety of feelings and beliefs."

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"What we do share a consensus about and have affirmed on several occasions is church membership. From the earliest days of the Christian church, efforts have been made to qualify and complicate the requirements for entrance into the church. But the evangelical church has resisted such attempts, holding that all that is necessary to become a part of the community of faith is a personal experience with our risen Lord and a belief that through him is the way of redemption and salvation.

"In keeping with that tradition, Dolores Street Baptist Church is open to anyone who can make the ancient biblical confession, 'Jesus Christ is Lord.'"

The committee then met in executive session and voted 6-1 to reject the funds.

The next day, Peterson told the full board how the committee arrived at its decision: "Everyone on the committee in executive session deplored homosexual activity. It's a sin against God. ... Our reasoning was that there was no evidence from Dolores Street that they felt a problem with a person who is redeemed living in sin. They seem to have no problem with people continuing in a homosexual lifestyle."

He interpreted the one negative vote on the motion to be a vote on constitutional grounds rather than favoring the church's position.

When the full board considered the committee's decision, two members voted against closing debate, and apparently only one negative vote was cast against affirming the executive committee's statement.

The committee's decision and executive board's affirmation are tantamount to removing the church from affiliation with Southern Baptists in California.

However, because churches, associations, state conventions and the national convention are autonomous, the church presumably remains affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and could send its mission and education funds directly to the SBC Executive Committee. The Executive Committee distributes SBC Cooperative Program budget funds to the convention's agencies and institutions.

California Baptist business services division Director Dennis Schmierer said the church had sent three checks, totaling \$769, to the state office since the fall convention. The business office held them in escrow, and they were returned following the vote.

Church officials did not return telephone messages from Baptist Press and were unavailable for comment.

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Retired Foreign Missionary
B.W. Orrick Dies At 100

By Marty Croll

N-FMB
Baptist Press
2/19/88

WACO, Texas (BP)--Bailis "B.W." Orrick, a retired Southern Baptist missionary who celebrated his 100th birthday Oct. 24, died Feb. 17.

Orrick, whose health had been declining since surgery in November, became Southern Baptists' oldest retired missionary Jan. 1 when former missionary Julia Lowe died at age 103.

Orrick lived with his wife, the former Vera Humphries, for 30 years in Waco, Texas, where they settled near the Baylor University campus after 37 years of missionary work in Uruguay. They were married 68 years.

"It's a great marriage," Mrs. Orrick said only weeks before her husband turned 100. "The Lord is so good to spare our lives this long together. You don't very often find two people in their 90s both living alone in their own home." Mrs. Orrick turned 96 in January.

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In Uruguay people who knew the Orricks rarely saw one without the other. They were a model in marriage, but in recent years their teamwork was tested to the fullest. Three years ago Mrs. Orrick survived an operation for a burst artery that doctors told her would have killed most people 20 years younger. She has spent much time since then in bed, and Orrick said his job was to wait on her. As his sight grew worse, she read to him and tended to their business.

Much of the Orricks' work in Uruguay took them to less developed areas. They carried a gospel tent with them in a Model A Ford they used for 25 years. "You can preach the gospel anywhere, and if you put your heart in it and preach it, people will listen," Orrick said. "Everywhere, we were preaching, preaching, preaching."

The Orricks regularly received letters from Uruguayans thanking them for the life they gave. Before they bought their car, the couple would rise early in the morning, walk up to 60 blocks a day visiting people, and tumble into bed exhausted at midnight. Many congregations resulted. One, the Radio Norte Baptist Church in Montevideo, hosted the Orricks in 1973 to celebrate its 50th anniversary.

In recent years the Orricks' lives were limited mostly to the one room of their house where Mrs. Orrick's bed is. But they continued their involvement in missions. They studied and prayed together for missionaries and Baptists around the world, shared their faith with visitors and wrote a handful of letters nearly every day that circled the globe.

The Orricks never had children. In recent years, as they were less able to get out, they were cared for by close friends, including several Baylor faculty and students, their church community at Seventh and James Baptist Church and retired missionaries John and Ruby Parker, who live only blocks away from the Orrick home.

On his 100th birthday the Orricks rode through downtown Waco in a Model T Ford as part of the university's homecoming parade. The day before, he spoke a few minutes to an assembly of Baylor trustees and attended a birthday party on campus.

A man who loved to study, Orrick received his master's degree from Baylor at age 78. At first he had planned to attend the university just to learn, but Mrs. Orrick insisted he take college credit for his work. The Orricks, who both earned their college degrees from Baylor before being appointed missionaries, received the school's annual Founder's Day Award in 1985.

Funeral services were scheduled for Feb. 19 at Wilkerson Hatch Funeral Home in Waco, and graveside about 100 miles away in Madisonville, Texas, where Orrick grew up.

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

UPDATE: In the 12th graf of the 2/15/88 BP story titled "Drummond Recommended For Southeastern Post," please change the effective resignation date for Rod Byard to July, 31, 1988, as it is for Lolley, Ashcraft and Niswonger. Also, please note Byard is taking early retirement, as is Niswonger.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Lebanese Couple Finds Help Maintaining
Christian Presence In War-torn Beirut By Bill Bangham

F-10
(B'hood)

Baptist Press
2/19/88

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Amin and Queen Khoury, committed to maintaining a Christian presence in war-torn Beirut, Lebanon, have found unexpected help from a Southern Baptist church halfway around the globe.

For 10 years, the Khourys have lived in a Lebanon at war. From their apartment, they watched their native Beirut burn. Artillery fire often lit up the night. At times they didn't allow their children on their balcony for fear of snipers. And some of their friends were killed by boobytrapped cars.

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They left Lebanon in 1983 when Eastwood College, the Christian kindergarten-through-high-school Khoury operated in Beirut, became a focus for warring militias. At the time, it was located in the predominantly Muslim, western section of the city.

"The school was located almost on the demarcation line in the village of Kafr Shima," said Khoury. "The old campus, today, is still a military barracks."

Displaced by the war in 1983, they fled to Germantown, Tenn., an upper middle-class community near Memphis. On Germantown's quiet streets, they found physical refuge from the war. "We passed through rough times," said Khoury. "It took our son, Michael (age 3 at the time), three months here before he could relax."

And in a Sunday school class at Germantown Baptist Church, they found another refuge. "These people ... this church was our refuge in the whole sense of the word," said Mrs. Khoury.

With the move to Germantown, Khoury felt his ministry in Beirut was at an end. And after a year he returned to Lebanon alone to shut down the school officially.

But within three weeks, the school relocated and reopened on a new campus in East Beirut in what Khoury described as the unprecedented providence of God. "There is no other way it could have happened," he said.

Families, both Muslim and Christian, worked to reopen the school in spite of traditional hostilities between them. "Moslems still hold a grudge against the Christians," said Khoury. "They still say, 'You helped the Crusaders in the 11th century.'"

A year later, Queen and the children rejoined him.

Since then, members of Germantown Baptist have supplied airline passage for the Khourys to return to Tennessee during Eastwood's recess each year. The trip gives the family respite from the stress of living in Beirut and maintains their resident-alien status with the U.S. government.

The situation in Beirut is so uncertain, they may be forced to leave again at any moment.

This year a shell exploded at the entrance to Eastwood, and one of the school's buses was bombed and burned. "It is that close," said Khoury of the war. "But no one (at the school) died. God's protection is that real."

But the problems they face have changed during the past year. They have experienced less fighting. Now the pressing issues for most are economic. Out of 3.2 million people in the city, 700,000 are displaced, living in temporary shelters in schools, monasteries and mosques.

"There is no middle class left," said Khoury. "Inflation runs at 500, perhaps 800 percent. Now people are either very rich or very poor."

It costs \$150 a year per student for a quality education. But students no longer provide enough income to keep the school operating.

"People pledge," said Khoury. "But when the second term comes in December and they can't pay, what do you do? The worry of people now is just to keep their families going."

Khoury has used bazaars to keep Eastwood solvent. Some Germantown members have contributed financially in the past. And others are considering supporting students on a continuing basis.

Although Khoury claims not to worry, his wife said: "He worries. Especially today, when he learned another teacher is leaving."

Khoury lost three teachers in the past year. "They can make more money sweeping streets in Cyprus than they can teaching in Lebanon," he said. "But people are still open to the message of Jesus Christ. Parents see how the lives of their children are changed, and they're appreciative ... whether they're Catholic, Orthodox, Moslem or whatever. So we stay."

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The Khourys talk freely about the cost of their ministry, of raising children in Beirut.

"We teach them the Bible and the love of Christ, and all they hear and see is war, killing and hatred," said Mrs. Khoury.

As for their safety, "Queen and I grew up in the Moslem areas (of West Beirut)," said Khoury. "If anyone is not scared, it is us. We have friends in those areas. Friendships are so binding in Lebanon."

And they have learned that friendships are binding elsewhere as well.

In Germantown, other friends gathered. The Khourys sat in the center of a comfortable room in a suburban home -- a room bordering on elegant.

The warm cast of their skin, her hair honey-colored and his black, set them apart from the blondes and brunettes -- and the tans -- of white, middle-class America. And their lilting accent further proclaimed they are from somewhere else.

Ten men and women gathered around them, praying, touching them. It was a commissioning by Tennessee friends for yet another year in Lebanon.

Someone prayed, "We who have come from such varied backgrounds are united in you."

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Bibles Expected
In Moscow Soon

Baptist Press
2/19/88

STUTT GART, West Germany (BP)--With 75,000 Bible commentaries recently delivered to Christians in the Soviet Union, the first shipment of 100,000 Bibles from the Baptist World Alliance and the United Bible Societies now is en route to Moscow.

The 35,000 Bibles were loaded on trucks in Stuttgart, West Germany, by the United Bible Societies. After rolling through Warsaw, Poland, and then Brest and Minsk in the Soviet Union, the 28 metric-ton shipment will be delivered to the Moscow offices of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the U.S.S.R., Baptist World Alliances officers reported.

This shipment, the first of four such transports scheduled in coming months, contains 25,000 Russian-language and 10,000 German-language Bibles. Other Russian-language Bibles are to be sent alternately from England and Germany in late February, March and April until 98,000 are delivered. Another 2,000 in the language of the Ukraine, one of the largest of the U.S.S.R.'s 15 republics, will accompany the March truck delivery.

The gift of 100,000 Bibles, proposed originally by the Baptist World Alliance, is in recognition of the 1,000th anniversary of the Russian Orthodox Church, which was founded in Kiev in A.D. 988.

Gerhard Claas, general secretary-treasurer of the Baptist World Alliance, has received an invitation from Patriarch Pimen, spiritual head of the Russian Orthodox Church, to take part in the major events scheduled in June. Evangelist Billy Graham also has announced his acceptance of an invitation from the patriarch.

The 10,000 German-language Bibles now being transported to Moscow are given by the Mennonite Central Committee of the U.S.A. and Canada and will be shared among Mennonite congregations within the All-Union Council. In April, 5,000 more German-language Bibles will be shipped to Lutheran congregations in Siberia. They are given by the Lutheran World Federation through the United Bible Societies.

The United Bible Societies has now sent more than 175,000 Bibles to the Soviet Union in the past few years, many jointly with the Baptist World Alliance and other world Christian organizations. The United Bible Societies is the world association of national Bible societies, including the American Bible Society.

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