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N-HMB

88-38

First Baptist Atlanta
To Vote on Relocation

By Joe Westbury

ATLANTA (BP)--First Baptist Church of Atlanta, a downtown congregation since its founding 140 years ago and ninth largest church in the Southern Baptist Convention, will sell its property and move to the suburbs if members vote to accept a proposal backed by church deacons and staff members.

Charles Stanley, former SBC president and pastor of the church for 18 years, outlined the plan during both Sunday morning worship services March 6. Later that evening, following a 60-minute question and answer period in an informal two-hour service, members decided to vote on the issue next Sunday morning.

If the proposal succeeds, it would be three years before the church could move into new facilities. Selling the present buildings to generate the cash would be no problem, Stanley said.

Stanley began the morning presentation by saying he was grateful for a congregation that "does not always believe all it reads" in the newspaper.

He then blasted the Atlanta Journal and Constitution for speculative stories that appeared in Friday and Saturday editions and which contained "15 to 20 errors. We asked them not to print the article and they did it anyway. They did not know what they were saying," he charged.

The 50-minute morning report, which stretched the worship services to about 90 minutes, included a video presentation and distribution of a 16-page color booklet outlining the church's plan for future growth.

Stanley said the proposal was the result of six years and 3,000 hours of study by the church staff and deacons.

Citing encroaching urbanization that has hemmed the church in on all sides and a neighborhood with a high crime rate that erodes Wednesday and Sunday night attendance, Stanley outlined a plan to relocate the congregation to an undetermined area closer to where its members live.

The plan would call for debt-free construction of a church plant with a sanctuary seating about 7,500. The current sanctuary, constructed in 1930, seats 2,600. The congregation has 11,056 members.

Funds for the project would be raised entirely by sale of the current facilities, which are scattered across parts of seven blocks in downtown Atlanta. The relocation would be at no cost to the congregation, Stanley stressed, underscoring the church's commitment to remain debt free.

During the evening service, Stanley again criticized local newspaper accounts that the church had a location in mind and an offer of \$62 million for its property.

"We have no location in mind and have no deals" with anyone seeking to purchase the property. "No one has offered us \$62 million, though I think that's a good place to start," he told the packed auditorium.

Stanley did say that in past months 14 individuals have contacted the church with tracts of land to be considered for possible relocation, and he was surprised to learn of the amount of land still available in large sections in the outlying area. But the church had not initiated any of the contacts, he stressed.

However, since the news reports began circulating during the weekend, Stanley said "somebody suddenly got very interested" in the downtown property.

Although no site has been selected, Stanley noted the church was not interested in locating near any other large Southern Baptist church that has a ministry to the metropolitan area.

During the committee's six-year study, Stanley said various alternatives to relocation had been studied but none were declared feasible. Relocation was considered to be the only way to deal with the constant overcrowding.

Since Stanley became pastor in 1971, average worship attendance has skyrocketed from about 600 to nearly 4,700.

Numerous parcels of adjoining property have been purchased to accommodate the congregation's growing Sunday school, singles and youth, and radio and television ministries. But even with two Sunday schools, fewer children are attending now than five years ago because of crowded conditions, he noted.

The church has run out of adjacent property it can purchase and renovate and parking is becoming more critical, Stanley said. First Baptist owns only a thousand of the 3,700 parking spaces it uses each Sunday.

The committee studying the church's future had considered three options in addition to relocating, he continued.

-- The first option, to remain in the current location without constructing new facilities, would cost \$10 million to upgrade the buildings to current electrical, plumbing and fire standards. And the church would have no guarantee of continued use of the additional parking spaces.

-- Option two was to stay in the present location and build new facilities. That would cost a minimum of \$50 million, Stanley told the congregation. A sanctuary that would seat 5,800 -- the largest the space would permit -- would cost \$22 million; providing parking for 3,600 automobiles would cost \$18 million; and the upgrading and repairs to remaining buildings would cost \$10 million.

Stanley reminded the congregation that previous suggestions to build a new sanctuary at the current site had met with lukewarm response from the church.

-- A third option to remain at the current location but establish satellite churches in the metro area was rejected because of the abundance of churches in the Atlanta vicinity.

"There are currently 547 churches in our association area, and many of them have space left over on Sunday. How many of you left a metro church to join First Baptist? Probably most of you; we have some members who drive up to 50 miles to attend services here.

"A small church cannot provide the same level of ministry that a larger church can provide. The growth trend today is to build larger churches because they provide a more complete ministry to the entire family," he said.

The fourth option, to relocate, would probably carry the church to the suburbs north of town where the majority of the congregation live and where Atlanta is experiencing its greatest growth.

To prevent driving up land prices for the church, Stanley would not disclose how much land would be needed, but said it would be "considerably more than the 17 acres we currently have."

When questioned by a member if the church would maintain its food and clothing ministry in the downtown area, Stanley said no decision had been made. "We could hold onto that piece of property and maintain the pastoral ministry" with little adverse affect to the sale of the remaining property, he explained.

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In response to another question, Stanley said the church would retain its name even if it relocated in an adjoining county. "We will always be First Baptist Church of Atlanta, wherever we are," he said.

"And our first reason for moving will be to reach more unchurched people."

The relocation, if approved by the congregation next Sunday, will leave only one Southern Baptist Church in the inner city area. Baptist Tabernacle, which has been in its current location since 1911, is currently evaluating its downtown ministry and is struggling with its future in the neighborhood.

The church, with a sanctuary which seats about 2,700, now averages 150 in Sunday morning worship.

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Jacksonville Man Starts
Inerrantist Magazine

By Greg Warner

N-10
(10)

Baptist Press
3/7/88

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--A new Southern Baptist magazine written by inerrantists is expected to begin publishing next month in Jacksonville, Fla., but its editor says it will be different from other autonomous publications in the denomination.

Editor Dan Allen, until recently vice president of public affairs for Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville, said The SBC Cause will be a "positive magazine for conservative Southern Baptists who want to win people to Jesus Christ."

Those who write for the magazine will have to sign a statement saying they are inerrantists, Allen said.

The publication will be a full-color monthly magazine with subscribers and advertisers nationwide, he said. Initially it will be mailed to every church in the Southern Baptist Convention, he added, "and they'll decide if they want to continue to receive it."

The magazine will be published by a non-profit group operated by a board of directors, but Allen said the directors will not be publicly named.

He would not discuss who in the convention is backing the venture. He confirmed he has talked about the publication to three men who have served as president of the SBC, but said none of them has been asked to serve on the board of directors.

At a Feb. 24 news conference in Nashville, SBC president Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn., and two former presidents -- James T. Draper Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, and Atlanta evangelist Bailey Smith -- each said they had discussed the magazine with Allen.

Smith said Allen asked that the magazine be promoted during a Smith-sponsored conference recently in Atlanta, but Smith said he refused.

Smith later did announce the magazine in a soul-winning conference last week near St. Louis and told participants how to subscribe.

Printed material available at Smith's conference said each issue of the magazine will include a "National Directory of Conservative Southern Baptist Churches." To be included on the list, a church must have an inerrantist for its pastor and contribute at least \$25 a month to the magazine.

Allen said the magazine will not be "aggressive" or negative. "We will not in any way be attacking anybody for their viewpoint," he said.

He said the magazine will be different from two other autonomous publications -- SBC Today, which is identified with the moderate movement in the convention, and the Southern Baptist Advocate, identified with conservatives. Both publications have been accused of politicizing the SBC controversy.

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"Other papers out there are meeting needs," Allen said, adding both SBC Today and Southern Baptist Advocate "have a place."

Rather than contributing to division in the denomination, Allen said The SBC Cause will emphasize those efforts in the convention that are "winning people to Christ." He said one article planned for the first issue will feature a missionary who recently converted 400 people in three weeks.

The publication will be supportive of the Southern Baptist Convention and its method of financial support for institutions and agencies--the Cooperative Program, Allen said. "We are not anti-convention," he said. "We believe in the state conventions. We believe in the associations."

Allen would not discuss financing for the magazine, but said "people who have an interest in the thing" have provided the money to get started. "We're not interested in a few large churches having this as their paper," he added. "There are many, many smaller churches that, if they believe in this, they'll get behind it."

Allen is a member of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, but he said neither the church nor individuals in it have helped fund the magazine.

Allen, a former pastor who resigned his job at Luther Rice to start The SBC Cause, said he is working for free now. "I'm not adverse to taking a salary, but I'm not creating this paper to create a job for me," he added.

Walker Knight, editor and publisher of SBC Today, said: "A lot of people think they can start a magazine or publication, but sustaining it is another thing.... If it fills a vacuum that needs to be filled in the conservative-fundamental movement, then more power to it. Apparently the Southern Baptist Advocate has not. They have published only one issue in the past year."

Robert Tenery, editor of the Advocate, said he had talked with Allen about the new publication in February, but that Allen asked for no endorsement or assistance. "I wish him well," Tenery said, adding Allen's plan is "pretty ambitious."

Although The SBC Cause and the Advocate will be appealing to the same readers, Tenery said, there will be no competition between the two because their approaches will be different.

"People still want the Advocate to speak to issues in the convention," said Tenery, pastor of Burkemont Baptist Church in Morganton, N.C. Articles in the Advocate are "pungent without being abusive," he said.

The Advocate has been published infrequently since last June in order to abide by the SBC Peace Committee's request for calm, Tenery said. But, when moderate publications like SBC Today and Baptist Laity Journal continued publishing, he said, "we didn't have any choice except to forge ahead."

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Seminary President
Lolley's Father Dies

N-10

Baptist Press
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OLD FORT, N.C. (BP)--Roscoe Al Lolley, 87, father of W. Randall Lolley, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., died March 5 in Old Fort, N.C., after a long illness.

The elder Lolley was a retired businessman and had lived in Samson, Ala., for many years before moving to Old Fort. For more than 30 years he was a deacon, church clerk and Sunday school teacher in First Baptist Church of Samson. While living in Old Fort, he was a member of Pleasant Gardens Baptist Church in Marion.

Survivors, in addition to Randall Lolley, include another son, Tom E. Lolley of Old Fort, western area missionary for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina; seven grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to Pleasant Gardens Baptist Church, Route 4, Box 652, Marion, N.C. 28752.

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Cooperative Program Bolts
Ahead Of Inflation Rate

N-LO

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists' conventionwide budget has bolted past the U.S. inflation rate for the first time this fiscal year.

Record February receipts pushed the national Cooperative Program total to \$56,862,761 for the first five months of the 1987-88 fiscal year, announced Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee.

The year-to-date total is 5.12 percent ahead of the total for the similar period a year ago, Bennett said. That compares to a current inflation rate of about 4.5 percent.

The Cooperative Program is the convention's combined budget that finances missionary, evangelistic and educational ministries around the world. Money is channeled from church members, to their congregations, to state Baptist conventions and to national and international causes.

Weak returns in November and December had pushed the Cooperative Program's year-to-date total below receipts for the first quarter of 1986-87. The program strengthened in January, when monthly receipts surpassed \$15 million for the first time. And February receipts totaled \$11,232,757, or 11.98 percent ahead of February 1987, Bennett reported.

"This was a high month; it's very encouraging," said Tim A. Hedquist, Executive Committee vice president for business and finance. "There's nothing unusual about this month. It's just a very strong month."

Comparisons to the Cooperative Program's 1986-87 fiscal year will reveal "glitches" from time to time, Hedquist said. But he explained the apparent irregularities actually will reflect apparently erratic returns for 1986-87, which were created by changes in the way some contributing state conventions keep their financial books.

"We're starting to see the reverse benefits of a drop last year, which reflect changes in accounting procedures," he said.

For the current year, which will end Sept. 30, Southern Baptists can expect to see an increase in Cooperative Program receipts of about 4.5 to 5 percent, he said.

The gain -- slightly ahead of inflation and a small increase in "real dollars" -- is bittersweet, Hedquist said: "We should rejoice in this figure, but let's keep it in perspective. It's a long way from where we need to be, looking at Bold Mission Thrust."

Bold Mission Thrust is the Southern Baptist campaign to present the gospel message of Christ to every person on earth by the year 2000.

"One-half of 1 percent over cost-of-living is not going to go far to help our boards and agencies accomplish Bold Mission Thrust," he said. "But it helps us get back on budget."

The Cooperative Program is vital, Bennett added: "I am strongly committed to world missions through the Cooperative Program. It is our lifeline. It expresses Southern Baptists' interest in the cause of Christ worldwide.

"I'm glad for the increased money received, as well as the year-to-date percentage increase."

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House Gives Final Approval
To Civil Rights Legislation

By Kathy Palen

N-BJC

Baptist Press
3/7/88

WASHINGTON (BP)--Just one month after the Senate passed legislation to overturn a 1984 Supreme Court decision that limited enforcement of federal civil rights laws, the House of Representatives followed suit.

By a vote of 315-98, the House March 2 approved the Senate version of the Civil Rights Restoration Act, which would restore institution-wide coverage of federal civil rights laws.

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In 1984, the Supreme Court held an education anti-discrimination ban in Title IX of the 1972 Education Act Amendments applied only to the "program or activity" receiving federal funds, not the entire institution. Although the *Grove City College v. Bell* ruling applied directly to Title IX, it also restricted the enforcement of three other civil rights statutes containing the same "program or activity" language.

The Senate version of the bill contains a so-called abortion-neutral amendment. The Danforth Amendment -- named after its sponsor, Sen. John C. Danforth, R-Mo. -- specifies that institutions receiving federal financial assistance would not be required to provide or pay for abortions. The amendment, however, would prohibit discrimination against anyone who has had or is seeking a legal abortion.

Although debate in the Senate focused mainly on the abortion issue, House debate shifted to the bill's religious tenets exemption.

The legislation would continue to allow institutions controlled by a religious organization to apply for exemption from compliance with Title IX if those regulations violate the organization's religious tenets. To date, no institution's application has been rejected and at least six Southern Baptist schools have been granted exemptions.

But some House members argued the religious tenets provision should be broadened to cover any institution "which is closely identified with the tenets of" a religious organization.

Proponents said the amendment was needed to ensure that a future administration could not change the law's current regulatory interpretation and to protect institutions that receive no federal funds aside from student aid.

"The significance of the religious tenets provision is fundamental," said Rep. Thomas J. Tauke, R-Iowa. "It is a question of whether or not we will force education institutions with strong ties to religious organizations to compromise their religious beliefs as a condition of receiving federal financial aid. The fact is, because of the evolution since 1972 of the administrative control of private education institutions, relying on the current law exemption for religious tenets jeopardizes the First Amendment rights of these institutions."

Opponents contended the change was unnecessary and would create a giant loophole for schools wishing to discriminate.

"It is a clear-cut and, I think, rather obvious theory in government that those who dip their hands in the public till should not object if a little democracy sticks to their fingers," said Rep. Augustus F. Hawkins, D-Calif.

Under a House-approved rule, members were prohibited from offering individual amendments during debate on the measure. The rule did allow introduction of one substitute motion -- which included an effort to expand the religious tenets provision -- but the substitute failed 146-266.

The bill now goes to the president for approval. In letters to both Senate and House Republican leaders, President Reagan has said he plans to veto the measure.

But since both the Senate and the House overwhelming passed the legislation, the two bodies most likely would be able to produce the necessary two-thirds vote to override the veto.