



BAPTIST PRESS

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March 11, 1988

88-41

N-CD

'Building Great Churches'
Pastors' Conference Theme

By Dan Martin

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--"Building the Greatest Churches Since Pentecost" will be the theme of the 1988 Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference June 12-13 in the Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center in San Antonio, Texas.

The Pastors' Conference is one of several meetings that precede the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, scheduled this year June 14-16, also in San Antonio.

Stan Coffey, president of the Pastors' Conference and pastor of San Jacinto Baptist Church in Amarillo, Texas, said: "It has been some time since the program of the Pastors' Conference has emphasized church growth. We have had programs on doctrine, but in my own ministry, I have always tried to emphasize the practical.

"I know how much it has helped me to hear how other men have built strong churches, and I have invited speakers who will emphasize what will help the other pastors."

Coffey said he believes "we are in the greatest days for church growth since the Book of Acts. I am hoping our program will encourage us, particularly at a time when we have had some discouraging news about baptism. I hope the program will encourage us to know God is still on the throne and he is still going to use Southern Baptists to build local, New Testament, Bible-believing churches."

Each of the invited speakers "is outstanding in some aspect of church growth," he said. "I have asked them to include in their messages what they feel in their own ministry is the strength and key to growing their own church."

The Pastors' Conference program features addresses by three former presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention: Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta; Bailey Smith, now an Atlanta-based evangelist; and W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas. It also features a greeting from current SBC President Adrian P. Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn.

Also to address the conference will be Paige Patterson, president of Criswell College of Dallas. "I do not ever remember Paige addressing any official body like the Pastors' Conference. I know that as a Christian educator, he puts a lot of emphasis on missions and church planting and I feel that whatever he shares will be very upbeat and uplifting," Coffey said.

Two men frequently mentioned as possible conservative nominees for the SBC presidency also are featured preachers: Ed Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Houston, will speak in the Monday night session, and Jerry Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., will deliver the concluding address.

Coffey said he has not specifically instructed speakers to keep away from convention politics, "but I trust the integrity of these men (the speakers). I have told them I want them to encourage the pastors and to give them the tools to build great churches."

The Pastors' Conference president said he "would like for this not to be perceived as political, but realistically I know some will see it that way. I regret they will, but I have had to come to a peace a long time ago with what I was trying to do to serve the Lord, both in my own church and in the SBC.

"I have tried to seek the Lord's will with planning this Pastors' Conference, and I have a real conviction that these men (the speakers) will be the most helpful," Coffey said, adding: "I invited Jerry to speak about two weeks after we got back from St. Louis (the 1987 SBC).

"He (Vines) was the first one I invited and one of the reasons was the tremendous message he brought in the convention sermon (in 1987). I invited him before it was ever announced he might be a candidate. In fact, because the convention was in Texas, I thought he probably would not be a nominee, that someone else would be."

Other speakers include Freddie Gage, a Hurst, Texas, evangelist; Jay Strack, a Dallas evangelist; Morris Chapman, former Pastors' Conference president and pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas; Ron Herrod, pastor of First Baptist Church of Fort Smith, Ark.;

Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla.; Gerald Harris, pastor of Colonial Heights Baptist Church of Jackson, Miss.; and Richard Lee, pastor of Rehoboth Baptist Church of Tucker, Ga.

Two newcomers, Coffey said, are Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church of Springdale, Ark., who "has a strong emphasis on the Sunday school in building a great church," and Bobby Boyles, pastor of First Baptist Church of Moore, Okla., who had "tremendous success in building a country church" near Burleson, Texas, before recently moving to Oklahoma.

Music for the Pastors' Conference will be coordinated by music evangelist Jack Price of Dallas. Officers include Coffey, president; Gerald Davidson, pastor of First Baptist Church of Arnold, Mo., vice president; and Don Deel, pastor of Eastlake Baptist Church of Merrillville, Ind., secretary-treasurer.

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Baptist Press
3/11/88

SOUTHERN BAPTIST PASTORS' CONFERENCE
Henry Gonzales Convention Center
San Antonio, Texas
June 12-13, 1988

Theme: "Building The Greatest Churches Since Pentecost"

Sunday Evening, June 12, 1988

Stan Coffey, president -- Presiding; pastor, San Jacinto Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas
6:00 Pre-Conference Music
6:10 Congregational Singing
6:15 Special Music
6:25 Welcome and Prayer, Carlos McLeod, evangelism director, Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas
6:30 Special Music, Wanda Jackson, music evangelist, Oklahoma City
6:45 Message, Freddie Gage, evangelist, Go Tell Ministries, Hurst, Texas
7:25 Greetings, SBC President Adrian Rogers, pastor, Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn.
7:30 Special Music, Trent Sisemore, San Jacinto Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas
7:35 Message, Charles Stanley, pastor, First Baptist Church, Atlanta
8:20 Congregational Singing
8:25 Offertory Prayer, Charlie Martin, pastor, First Baptist Church, Indian Rocks, Largo, Fla.
8:30 Special Music, John McKay, music evangelist, Bailey Smith Ministries, Hurst, Texas
8:35 Message, Bailey Smith, evangelist, Atlanta
Benediction, Nick Garland, pastor, First Baptist Church, Broken Arrow, Okla.

Monday Morning, June 13

Gerald Davidson, vice president -- Presiding; pastor, First Baptist Church, Arnold, Mo.
8:30 Pre-Conference Music
8:45 Scripture and Prayer, Wallace Edgar, pastor, Trinity Road Baptist Church, Texarkana, Ark.
8:50 Congregational Singing
8:55 Special Music
9:05 Message, Ron Herrod, pastor, First Baptist Church, Fort Smith, Ark.

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- 9:30 Congregational Singing
- 9:35 Special Music
- 9:45 Message, Ronnie Floyd, pastor, First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark.
- 10:15 Congregational Singing
- 10:20 Offertory Prayer, Jim Prock, pastor, First Southern Baptist Church, Chandler, Ariz.
Offering
- 10:30 Special Music
- 10:35 Message, Paige Patterson, president, Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, Dallas
- 11:05 Congregational Singing
- 11:10 Special Music, Mike Speck, music evangelist, Owasso, Okla.
- 11:15 Message, Morris Chapman, pastor, First Baptist Church, Wichita Falls, Texas
- 11:45 Benediction, Rod Masteller, pastor, Putnam City Baptist Church, Oklahoma City

Monday Afternoon, June 13

Stan Coffey, Presiding

- 1:20 Pre-Conference Music
- 1:30 Congregational Singing
- 1:35 Scripture and Prayer, Gerald Harris, pastor, Colonial Heights Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss.
- 1:40 Special Music, Jack Price, music evangelist, Dallas
- 1:45 Message, Richard Lee, pastor, Rehoboth Baptist Church, Tucker, Ga.
- 2:10 Congregational Music
- 2:15 Special Music, Alan Celoria and Celoria Family Singers, music evangelists, Smithdale, Miss.
- 2:20 Message, Tom Elliff, pastor, First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla.
- 2:50 Offertory Prayer, Claude Thomas, Council Road Baptist Church, Bethany, Okla.
Offering
- 3:00 Election of Officers
- 3:15 Congregational Singing
- 3:20 Special Music, Jim Bob Griffin Family, music evangelists, Rusk, Texas
- 3:25 Message, Bobby Boyles, pastor, First Baptist Church, Moore, Okla.
- 3:55 Congregational Singing
- 4:00 Special Music, Jack Price
- 4:05 Message, Jay Strack, evangelist, Dallas
- 4:35 Benediction, Dennis Sewell, pastor, Highland Baptist Church, Laurel, Miss.

Monday Evening, June 13

Stan Coffey, Presiding

- 6:15 Pre-Conference Music
- 6:30 Congregational Singing
- 6:35 Scripture and Prayer
- 6:40 Special Music
- 6:50 Message, Ed Young, pastor, Second Baptist Church, Houston
- 7:20 Congregational Singing
- 7:25 Offertory Prayer, Sid Peterson, pastor, Stine Road Baptist Church, Bakersfield, Calif.
Offering
- 7:35 Special Music
- 7:40 Message, W.A. Criswell, pastor, First Baptist Church, Dallas
- 8:25 Congregational Singing
- 8:30 Special Music
- 8:35 Message, Jerry Vines, co-pastor, First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.
Introduction of New Pastors' Conference Officers
Benediction - Newly elected Pastors' Conference President

Officers

Stan Coffey, president; pastor, San Jacinto Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas
 Gerald Davidson, vice president; pastor, First Baptist Church, Arnold, Mo.
 Don Deel, secretary-treasurer; pastor, Eastlake Baptist Church, Merrillville, Ind.
 Jack Price, music leader; music evangelist, Dallas

Pastors' Conference,
Forum Still Estranged

By Dan Martin and Bob Terry

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--Despite a recommendation that the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum "explore the possibility of 'getting together'" rather than have separate sessions, the two pre-convention meetings will remain estranged, at least in 1988.

In its report to the Southern Baptist Convention 1987 annual meeting, the SBC Peace Committee recommended "that the leadership of the Pastors' Conference and the SBC Forum take immediate steps to explore the possibility of 'getting together' in ways that will enhance and promote our mutually strong beliefs as expressed in the Baptist Faith and Message Statement."

George Steincross, chairman of the Forum steering committee and pastor of Second Baptist Church of Liberty, Mo., told the Word and Way, newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention, efforts by Forum leaders to explore ways of reuniting the two groups have been unsuccessful.

Since the 1987 convention in St. Louis, Forum leadership had initiated three overtures to Pastors' Conference President Stan Coffey, Steincross said. All of the proposals have been "disregarded by the president," Steincross charged.

Pastors' Conference President Stan Coffey, pastor of San Jacinto Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas, told Baptist Press: "The chairman of the Forum and I have exchanged some letters. We have different views of how the recommendation of the Peace Committee needs to be accomplished. We have communicated about that.

"I think we are agreed on the fact it would be good to get back together, but we are not agreed on how to accomplish that."

Copies of three letters written by Steincross to Coffey were released to outline Forum efforts to fulfill Recommendation 9. "We want Southern Baptists to know about the 'peace' initiatives of the Forum," Steincross said.

In the first letter, dated Aug. 18, 1987, Steincross wrote: "I am, on behalf of the SBC Forum steering committee, taking the initiative ... as evidence of our willingness to comply (with Recommendation 9). We invite the officers of the Pastors' Conference to 'explore' with us the possibility of 'getting together.'"

Coffey replied in a letter dated Oct. 22 that the Pastors' Conference would "welcome back with open arms" participants in the Forum. The letter made no reference to meeting with the SBC Forum steering committee or of joint participation in planning sessions sponsored by both groups.

Coffey's letter noted the merger of the two groups was already in progress, since attendance at the SBC Forum declined at the St. Louis meeting.

Coffey told Baptist Press: "My position is that the Pastors' Conference was founded in 1935 and, until recent years, was the only meeting for pastors prior to the convention. I just invited the Forum to rejoin the Pastors' Conference. They are the group which left and are welcome to come back and be part of the Pastors' Conference."

Steincross' second letter, dated Nov. 6, said: "It appears that you have misunderstood the intent of my letter of August 18. My letter was not requesting permission to 'come back' to the Pastors' Conference. Rather it was for us to comply with the Peace Committee's adopted recommendation that we get together and explore possibilities."

Steincross asked Coffey if the Pastors' Conference officers would be willing to meet with the Forum steering committee and explore ways of reuniting the two groups. He said Coffey did not reply to the letter.

When the Forum steering committee met Feb. 1, the group decided to make a third attempt at possible reconciliation, Steincross said. "Coffey's lack of response left us with no choice but to plan a separate meeting for 1988," he said. "But we did not want to give up on the future."

Steincross wrote a third letter to Coffey Feb. 4, this time outlining a specific proposal for reuniting the two groups. The letter said: "We suggest that the SBC Forum steering committee and officers of the Pastors' Conference agree to develop a program for a combined meeting of these two groups in 1989 in Las Vegas. The program would be based on persons speaking who would represent the vote for president of the Southern Baptist Convention at the 1988 convention in San Antonio.

"Specifically, the SBC Forum steering committee would prayerfully select _____ percent of the speakers and the officers of the Pastors' Conference would prayerfully select _____ percent. The percentages would be based on the ratio of votes cast in the presidential election at the 1988 Southern Baptist Convention."

Steincross requested a reply to the proposal by March 1, writing, "If I do not hear from you by March 1, 1988, I will assume you do not desire to accept the above proposal or fulfill Recommendation 9 of the adopted report of the Peace Committee."

No reply had been received as of March 10 when Steincross released copies of the letters as well as a news release.

Coffey told Baptist Press he has invited the Forum to "come back" to the Pastors' Conference, "but they have placed conditions on their coming back. Their conditions involve their group electing officers and our group electing officers and then the officers jointly planning a program. I think if that is done, then all you will have is two groups meeting together under one roof. We really won't have unity, just two groups meeting under one roof."

He added: "I don't know why the Forum was started unless there were those who did not like the Pastors' Conference programs and felt they needed a different type of program. But the majority of pastors -- the overwhelming majority -- are in the Pastors' Conference. Baptists have always been a group of people who have been governed by the majority, and I see no reason to change that.

"I feel I have carried out the wishes and desires of the pastors. I feel I have planned the type of program the majority want. I think the speakers are consistent with the aims and objectives of the majority of pastors."

Steincross said he and other Forum steering committee members were disappointed at the lack of response by the Pastors' Conference.

"We want Southern Baptists to know we have tried to comply with Peace Committee Recommendation 9 and stand ready to try again. However, the recommendation places responsibility on both parties. We prayerfully hope the Pastors' Conference soon will realize that it too has a responsibility to help restore peace and harmony in our beloved Southern Baptist Convention," Steincross said.

Pastors' Conference Vice President Gerald Davidson, pastor of First Baptist Church of Arnold, Mo., told Word and Way he had received no communication about a possible merger of the two organizations.

Davidson said he had talked with Coffey about the program of the upcoming Pastors' Conference, but they did not talk about meeting with the Forum.

"The only reference I have heard about that (meeting with the Forum) is a passing reference Stan made about inviting the Forum back to the Pastors' Conference. Basically, we both felt that since no one asked them to leave, no one had to ask them to come back," Davidson said.

"People who have been attending the SBC Forum are welcome at the Pastors' Conference, just like anyone else," he said.

Prayer Helps Injured Acteen
Return To Accident Scene

By Ken Camp

F Texas

DALLAS (BP)--Returning to campus of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, two years after the accident that nearly ended her life was a "spooky" feeling, but it also was answered prayer for Stefani Johnson.

Stefani, Carrie Bass and Kelly Lynn Greene and their adult Acteens leader, Melanie Tate -- all from University Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas -- were struck by a car during the statewide Acteens IMPACT conference in March 1986, at Baylor.

The accident left Carrie with severe head injuries, Kelly with a concussion and knee, tendon and ligament damage, and Tate with serious leg injuries. Although recovery was slow, the three were able to attend Acteens IMPACT last year.

Stefani, on the other hand, was only semi-conscious for several months and six months passed after the near-fatal accident before she spoke her first words. Although she wanted to be with her friends at the 1987 Acteens meeting, she and her parents determined the trip would be too much of a strain both physically and emotionally.

"She kind of had butterflies in her stomach last year when we talked about coming, and we finally decided she just didn't quite have the strength for it," said Karen Johnson, Stefani's mother.

But Stefani rolled her wheelchair onto the Baylor campus March 4 to attend Acteens IMPACT 1988. It was a moment of victory long in coming and not one easily attained.

"We went onto the street where it (the accident) happened. I felt kind of queasy," she said. "It gave me a spooky feeling."

Even so, Stefani was determined to attend the Acteens meeting and participate fully in as many seminars and special-interest conferences as possible. In fact, she was disappointed to learn she wouldn't be able to take part in a workshop on clown ministry that was offered by invitation only.

The 15-year-old Acteen, who was in an accelerated academic program one grade level ahead of her peers prior to her accident, is now working on schoolwork appropriate for her age through a homebound ninth grade study program.

Carrie and Kelly both are in school and have recovered from their physical injuries. However, Carrie said she still is sometimes nervous and troubled by memories of the accident.

Tate, who spent nine months in a cast and was walking with a cane at last year's Acteens IMPACT, now can walk without aid and is able to drive alone. She still is expecting one more operation in the near future to correct remaining damage, she said.

After extensive physical therapy, Stefani is able to stand alone and walk with assistance but still has difficulty maintaining balance. Although eye surgery helped to correct double vision, she is still unable to read, a setback the former honors student finds frustrating.

"I often lose patience," she said, "but I handle it by sitting down and counting the good and the bad that has come out of it. I've met a lot of people I never would have met had this not happened to me."

One benefit of the return trip to Waco was renewing acquaintances with some of those people whom she encountered following her injury.

"We went by and visited with a nurse who had cared for Stefani at Providence Hospital," said Mrs. Johnson. "She was so thrilled. She hadn't even known if Stefani was still alive."

Stefani says "a good 90 percent" of her success thus far has been due to prayer. In the months following their accident, Stefani and the other injured girls collected scrapbooks filled with notes and cards from Southern Baptists around the world assuring them of their prayer support.

"Every day we feel it (effects of prayer). When it gets hard and we start to get down, something breaks through to let us know that people are praying," said Mrs. Johnson. "We know that's what keeps us going."

Mrs. Johnson also pointed to the support of University Baptist Church as vital to Stefani's recovery. The teenager is active in the programs of the church and now sings in the choir.

"One man at the church made Stefani a ramp up to the choir loft for Christmas. He even put a big red bow on it," she said.

The friendship, empathy and support that Carrie has offered Stefani also has been very important, Mrs. Johnson noted.

"The two of them talk on the phone all the time now," she said. "Carrie says its her job to help Stefani get well."

Although the recovery of memory has been a gradual process for Stefani since her injury, she was able to memorize all of the Scripture verses necessary to complete her queen step rank in Acteens. She is quick to recite one verse that particularly has been meaningful to her:

"Cast your burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain you." (Psalm 55:22)

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MK With Brain Tumor
Faces Bright Future

By Eric Miller

N-FMB
Baptist Press
3/11/88

HOUSTON (BP)--Death seemed only five years away for an 11-year-old boy with a brain tumor. But doctors removed the tumor while thousands prayed, and now his future looks bright.

David Fairchild, son of Southern Baptist foreign missionaries Ray and Sharon Fairchild of Houston, left Methodist Hospital in Houston Feb. 29 and went home to a victory party. He and his parents and brothers, Michael and Stephen, plan to return to Brazil in early April.

David was diagnosed in late February as having a brain tumor. Doctors at Methodist Hospital suspected the tumor was astrocytoma. "David stands a 50 percent chance of living five years," a doctor explained.

"We hit rock bottom," his father said. His family members describe the time that followed as the roughest of their lives.

David had started having seizures in January. He temporarily lost his hearing during each seizure, and his head trembled. The symptoms lasted nearly a minute, then were followed by a headache, which he slept off.

Doctors in Brazil first thought he had epilepsy. So did a Houston neurologist.

But additional testing at Methodist Hospital revealed conclusive evidence of a brain tumor. The Fairchilds watched hospital nurses roll David down a hall to surgery Feb. 24. Friends, relatives and pastors huddled with the Fairchilds and prayed with them during eight hours of surgery. Around the world, thousands were praying. A tumor the size of a small apple was removed.

"If David just has a few years to live, then we'll find some way to make his life fruitful in the years ahead," Fairchild told his wife.

That night alone, "I bargained with the Lord," Mrs. Fairchild said. "My emotions were playing havoc with me." She read Hebrews 4, and it seemed Christ was beside her. Finally she was "able to turn David over to the Lord and accept whatever the Father had coming," she recalled. She dropped into a peaceful sleep.

Days later, doctors had good news. A pathology report revealed David did not have terminal cancer. He had a rare, often harmless, tumor known as oligodendroglioma. "There's a 70 to 75 percent chance that this tumor will not return," doctors said. He won't need chemotherapy or radiation treatment.

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A banner over David's hospital bed before and after surgery read: "Be strong and of good courage; be not dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. Joshua 1:9" Doctors were amazed at the turnaround in David's case. "God got all the credit," Mrs. Fairchild said.

The Fairchilds have asked for continued prayer for David and for the tumor not to return. They also have asked for prayer for an evangelism effort in Brazil's state of Paraiba, where Fairchild is director of evangelism.

David's illness has made his father consider the mango trees in his yard in Brazil that stopped bearing fruit. He had the trees pruned, and they now produce many mangoes.

"John 15 says if you bear fruit, you're going to be pruned so that you can produce more fruit," Fairchild said. "I see this as the pruning aspect. I took my missionary career for granted. I just assumed that I would be in Brazil the rest of my life, and I did not foresee any problems. I'll not take my missionary career for granted in the future."

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Draper Touts Robertson
In Direct Mail Campaign

By Ken Camp

N-Texas

Baptist Press
3/11/88

DALLAS (BP)--Former Southern Baptist Convention President James T. Draper Jr., who authorized a personal endorsement letter as part of a direct-mail campaign for Republican candidate Pat Robertson, said he was disappointed but not surprised by the "Super Tuesday" primary results.

Robertson, the former host of the "700 Club," placed third in the regional primaries March 8, behind Vice President George Bush and Kansas Sen. Robert Dole, but ahead of U.S. Congressman Jack Kemp, who withdrew from the race March 10.

Draper, in addition to the letter, also made several personal appearances on Robertson's behalf in advance of the March 5 South Carolina Republican primary. The former religious broadcaster also placed third behind Bush and Dole in South Carolina.

Robertson's third-place showing in the South Carolina March 5 Republican primary was the first signal that all was not well for his presidential campaign, according to Draper.

"I'm disappointed, but that's just part of the system," said Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas. "I wasn't against anybody. I have a high regard for Bush, Dole and Kemp."

"Unsubstantiated" statements Robertson made in recent weeks and "the television evangelist syndrome," including the Jimmy Swaggart sex scandal, contributed to the candidate's defeat, Draper said. He also agreed with one political analyst's observation that the voting results show, "You can't stereotype fundamentalists," noting the absence of a solid conservative Christian voting block.

"I think he (Robertson) had his best chance yesterday," Draper told Baptist Press March 9. "It will be uphill from here."

Draper said he considers Robertson "a good friend" and will continue to support Robertson. However, he said that when Robertson's backers asked if their candidate could speak at First Baptist Church of Euless, he refused.

"I steadfastly refuse to allow politicking from the pulpit," Draper said. He emphasized the mass-mailing for Robertson he authorized was a personal action, not related to his church or the denomination.

The letter bearing Draper's name states: "I would like to ask you to join me in supporting Pat Robertson for the Presidency of the United States. The kind of leadership he offers is badly needed in America today -- and your help can make all the difference in deciding what kind of heritage we will leave for our children in the next generation."

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The letter was paid for and authorized by Americans for Robertson, Draper said. He indicated the Robertson campaigners sent him a draft of a proposed letter for his signature which he, in turn, revised and approved.

"The letter took me maybe three minutes," he said. "It wasn't a great investment of time."

Although the post office box listed on the return address belongs to First Baptist Church of Eules, the letterhead used carried only Draper's name and a return address, and the church was not mentioned by name in the letter.

"I'm writing you this letter on a personal basis, not as a pastor, or past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, but as a private citizen who shares with you a deep concern about the moral direction of our nation," the letter begins.

After naming Robertson as the man "who offers us the strong, moral leadership our nation so badly needs," Draper's letter deals with questions of church/state separation and the electability of Robertson.

On the church/state question, the letter states "Separating church and state does not mean that we should separate or remove God or morality from our government, our culture or our schools." Concerning Robertson's electability, Draper's letter indicates that issue was raised primarily by Robertson's opponents and "the liberal reporters in the media."

The letter ends with a post-script reminding readers to vote in the Republican Primary, regardless of their past party affiliation.

Draper said he did not know how many copies of the letter were sent out or where the Americans for Robertson office obtained its mailing list. A number of laymen in his church had received the letter, but he assured them that the church mailing list was not made available to the campaign office, Draper said.

Although Draper said his original understanding was that the letter was meant for Texas alone, he later learned it also had been mailed to people in South Carolina. However, he said he "didn't have any problem" with it being used there.

A source at the national office of Robertson for President in Virginia estimated at least 125,000 of the letters were sent out nationally and said many different mailing lists were used.

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Retired Missionary
Dies In Accident

By Sue Harper

N-10
(S.C.)

Baptist Press
3/11/88

SPARTANBURG, S.C. (BP)--Gladys Elizabeth Farmer, a 74-year-old retired home missionary, was killed March 8 in a traffic accident in Spartanburg, S.C.

She was on her way to her home in nearby Enoree following a doctor's appointment when the car in which she was a passenger was struck by a van. No one else was seriously injured in the collision.

Farmer retired in December 1979, after seven years as director of Christian Social Ministries for Montgomery (Ala.) Baptist Association. She then worked in a similar position for Springfield Baptist Church in Springfield, Tenn.

Prior to her work in Montgomery, Farmer was director of Russell Association weekday ministries in Phenix City, Ala., and as director of Baptist Center work in Columbia, S.C.

While a student at Tift College, she was a student summer missionary in Washington. She was a graduate of the WMU Training School in Louisville, Ky.

Farmer originally was appointed by the Foreign Mission Board and worked in Hawaii from 1948-51. During that time, she was supported by SB First Baptist Church of Enoree.

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When poor health forced her return to the United States, the Felton, Ga., native moved to Enoree, where she was educational secretary. When she regained her health, she began work in Christian social ministries in Columbia, where she worked for 10 years before moving to Alabama.

The Enoree church did not forget its missionary, however, and when Farmer retired for the second time two years ago in Tennessee, she was invited to live in the church's parsonage for as long as she lived.

"She was in fragile health," said Mayson Easterling, Baptist Student Union director at North Greenville College. She suffered from rheumatoid arthritis for much of her career. Easterling and his wife Mary worked as US-2 missionaries for Farmer in Montgomery and they remained close friends. ↑ ↑

"She spoke to our BSU last spring," Easterling said. "She could barely talk above a whisper but she always had something worthwhile to say. If anybody taught me a commitment to missions, it was Gladys Farmer."

A book, "Farming the Inner City for Christ: The Gladys Farmer Story," was written about her work in Montgomery and published in 1980 by Broadman Press.

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N-BJL

Jehovah's Witness Loses
Child Custody Appeal

By Stan Hasteley

Baptist Press
3/11/88

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Miami woman who failed to win custody of her daughter because she belongs to the Jehovah's Witnesses sect has failed to persuade the U.S. Supreme Court to review her complaint that the custody decision violated her religious rights.

Rita L. Mendez was divorced from Ignacio Mendez after converting from Roman Catholicism and joining the sect in 1983. The couple's daughter, Rebecca, now 6 years old, became the object of the protracted legal battle. A trial court in 1985 awarded "residential parent" status to her father, a non-practicing Catholic.

The court further decreed the parents would have "shared parental responsibility" for Rebecca's upbringing. A three-judge state appeals court later upheld the trial panel in a 2-1 decision.

Backed by the parent organization of Jehovah's Witnesses -- the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York -- Mrs. Mendez asked the high court to strike down the lower rulings on grounds they violated the First Amendment's guarantees of free exercise of religion and no establishment of religion.

In papers asking the court to review the dispute, the group noted last year it received more than 1,000 inquiries from parents facing custodial battles and argued a Supreme Court decision is needed to clarify the legal status of parents who are sect members. The group represents nearly 1.8 million Jehovah's Witnesses in the United States.

But by refusing to intervene, the high court let stand the lower decisions, bringing the dispute to an end.

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