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July 28, 1988

88-120

Home Mission Board elects
vice president, adds staff

By Joe Westbury

ATLANTA (BP)--Directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board elected a new vice president, named a special assistant in prayer for spiritual awakening and filled three other staff vacancies during their July board meeting.

Board members also heard newly elected SBC President Jerry Vines describe the denomination's No. 1 priority as being to win people to faith in Jesus Christ.

Ernest J. Kelley Jr., who has been regional coordinator for the board's planning section for the past decade, was named vice president for planning, effective Jan. 1.

He will succeed Leonard Irwin, who will retire Dec. 31 after 28 years with the board.

Henry Blackaby, director of missions for the Capilano Southern Baptist Association in British Columbia, Canada, since 1982, was elected special assistant in prayer for spiritual awakening. He will succeed Glenn Sheppard, who became director of an international prayer ministry last year.

Blackaby, who will assume the position Aug. 1, will be responsible for leading seminars and developing materials on spiritual awakening.

Filling other staff vacancies, the directors elected Ron Proctor of Grand Prairie, Texas, to the personal evangelism department; William E. Gordon of Cockeysville, Md., to the interfaith witness department; and Elmer W. Goble of Los Angeles to the special mission ministries department.

In a banquet the evening before the board meeting, Vines stressed the need for a return to soul winning in the denomination.

"We have pretty much settled the idea about the inspiration of Scripture," he told the directors. He urged them to place a renewed priority on personal evangelism.

"Other programs are important, but they do not share the priority to soul winning that is given in the Scriptures," the co-pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., said.

Vines' presence at the banquet and board meeting was his first appearance at a denominational agency since his election in June.

Directors also approved a recommendation from the long-range site development committee for an updated appraisal of the board's property.

Committee chairman John Faris of Laurens, S.C., said the appraisal, to cost not more than \$10,000, was needed to better evaluate long-range plans for the location. The board has occupied its current 6.1-acre site in midtown Atlanta since 1968.

In March 1986 the board voted to keep its headquarters at the site, which is in a location considered ideal by area developers. Faris said the board's property value has doubled in the past few years and is expected to triple again in the next decade.

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Paris and architects employed to work with the committee described the midtown area as "the fastest-growing, most vibrant business area of the city." In the last six months, a new 50-story IBM tower opened within five blocks of the HMB building, and Atlanta's subway has started service from a station two blocks from the board direct to Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport.

In other business, directors approved \$535,000 from the Cecil B. Day Memorial Fund for a variety of church-starting projects. The largest item was \$155,000 earmarked for church planter apprentices and new church operations in Las Vegas and Reno, Nevada.

The board has pledged to begin 25 new churches and church-type missions in the state in the 12 months leading up to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Las Vegas next June.

The three new staff members elected by the board each will be associate or assistant directors of three departments.

Proctor, a national consultant in personal evangelism for the Home Mission Board for the past year, was named associate director of the personal evangelism department, effective Aug. 1.

Proctor will help develop strategies to equip and involve laypeople, pastors and evangelists in personal evangelism. He will succeed Dean Doster, who was named associate vice president of the board's evangelism section in March.

Gordon, pastor of Cockeysville Baptist Church for the past two years, was elected assistant director of the interfaith witness department. Gordon, who will work primarily with Catholic and Protestant denominations, will assume the position Aug. 16.

Goble, a business development consultant in Los Angeles, was elected assistant director of the special mission ministries department. During the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, Goble was director of Baptist ministries, coordinating the involvement of volunteers in ministry and witnessing efforts. The southern Californian, who will assume the post Aug. 16, will succeed Ken Taylor, who resigned in March.

In addition to electing staff to fill vacancies, board members recognized five longtime employees who will retire by the end of the year.

Honored by resolutions of appreciation were Wendell Belew, associate vice president for missions strategy interpretation; Lyndon Wells Collings, associate vice president, missions; W.C. Dudley, associate director of the church loans division; Quentin Lockwood, associate director of the associational missions division; and Charles Lee McCullin, director of the Christian social ministries centers department.

Directors also appointed 12 missionaries, 15 missionary associates and 19 church planter apprentices during the meeting.

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Deepen commitment to lost world,
Southern Baptists challenged

By Mary Hogue

Baptist Press
7/28/88

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Southern Baptist churches and their members must deepen their commitment to non-Christians of the world if global evangelization is to be achieved, foreign missions leaders told more than 2,400 people gathered for simultaneous conferences at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center July 16-22.

Part of the challenge to complete the task of evangelizing the world rests on financial support, said John Mills, retired Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board director for West Africa. Mills spent last year on special assignment speaking to hundreds of Southern Baptist churches.

"There ought to be a commitment on the part of the pastor and people together to do more and more and more until our world is won," he said.

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Many Southern Baptists give to parachurch groups that must spend much of the money for administration and that, unlike Southern Baptists, do not have missionaries to assure that the money will get to those who need it.

"I want to give my major support to kingdom enterprises and to winning of the world through these (Southern Baptist) cooperative channels to do together what we said we'd do," Mills continued. "If we do not, Bold Mission Thrust (the Southern Baptist global missions campaign) cannot be achieved. It's that plain."

Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks, warned that Southern Baptists cannot wait until they have everything "just right" back home in their churches before they consider raising their giving to the denomination's Cooperative Program unified budget and missions. Thirty-four million people die without Jesus Christ every year, he reminded conference participants, and 13 million of these have never even heard Jesus' name.

"The only thing that stands between this world and Jesus Christ is disobedient Christians," Parks said. "It's not Islam, it's not communism, it's not wars, it's not famine, it's not the diseases, it's not the other religions, it's not the political systems, it's not the closed nations. The only thing that keeps this world from Jesus Christ is Christians."

"While we prepare, while we build our buildings, while we get ready, one by one, multitude after multitude continues to face God without any hope, with no knowledge of Jesus, never having had a gospel witness."

Many overseas Christians who live in poverty give more sacrificially than do Southern Baptists, he said. He quoted a newsletter from Bob and Marge Wakefield, itinerant missionaries working with the Tamil people, who told about a woman in India who came at the 1987 Lottie Moon foreign missions offering time and, "eyes aglow," laid two small brown eggs on the offering table.

Another family came leading a yearling calf that obviously had become a family pet. The father tied the calf to a support pole of the little church, the wife touched the calf gently and the two daughters put their arms around its neck and cried.

"We never saw them leave," the missionaries wrote, "but the calf remained."

Parks said the Wakefields became so concerned about the Lottie Moon offering not reaching its goal that they sent an additional offering of \$2,500. It arrived too late to be considered part of the 1987 offering but will be applied toward the \$84 million 1988 offering goal.

During invitation times throughout the week, 85 people made public decisions to serve Christ. Conference participants also gave \$8,115, the largest offering ever made to the Cooperative Program at a conference center program.

Hearing was different for 401 registrants who came for the 40th annual Southern Baptist Conference for the Deaf. Asked what it means to live as a deaf person, Carter Beardson Sr., for 39 years a language mission consultant with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, said it was "like living inside a crystal tube where you can see actions, but sound does not reach inside but bounces off the side of the tube."

But through interpreters translating the messages in sign language, the deaf "heard" and responded. Fifteen made public commitments to go wherever Christ leads.

Challenged by the life of Sue Hays, a deaf mission volunteer studying for a master of divinity degree in missions at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and other speakers, eight deaf people made decisions for missionary service and seven others committed themselves to other types of Christian work.

Hays told of questioning why she was born deaf. Then after a struggle, she responded to a call to become a teacher of the deaf. When she heard of Bold Mission Thrust, she said it caused her to develop a great burden for people all over the world.

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"My dream is that we will be able to see Bold Mission Thrust accomplished," she said. "That each person, deaf and hearing, will be reached for Jesus Christ."

Tim Tidenburg, one of 34 missionaries appointed at the Foreign Mission Board meeting during the Glorieta conference, said that as a summer missionary in Uganda, he had been sent to find the son of one of the employees of the Baptist mission. When he finally found the boy, his body was lying in a mass grave.

As Tidenburg stood beside the open grave, questions passed through his mind. "How many of these dear brothers and sisters never had an opportunity to hear the message and the gospel of Jesus Christ?" He knew he could not avoid God's call to be a foreign missionary.

The appointment of the missionaries, the reappointment of three others and the setting aside of one person for Cooperative Services International brings the total Southern Baptist foreign missionary force to 3,881. But the needs are still great for missionaries, board leaders said.

Rosalind Harrell, who serves with her husband, Ralph, in publications work in Kenya, spoke of a tremendous response to the gospel among the Maasai people. When asked why they had rejected Christ before, several of the Maasai replied: "We didn't reject him. No one ever told us about him."

As Harrell sounded a call to cooperation among Southern Baptists, she spoke of vital issues that need courageous thought and discussion, led by the Holy Spirit.

"Yes, we must deal with issues that matter," she said. "But a partisan spirit, continuous controversy, will fragment our mission efforts. Defend the faith we must, but I beg you, let us not be sidetracked from the mandate which Jesus Christ has given us to go into all the world."

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PAC supports effort to exempt
religious schools from D.C. law

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
7/28/88

WASHINGTON (BP)--A U.S. Senate measure that would force the District of Columbia government to exempt religious schools and colleges from a D.C. law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation has won the support of several religious organizations, including the Southern Baptist Convention Public Affairs Committee.

During a July 26 press conference, PAC member Richard Land voiced the committee's support of an amendment -- sponsored by Sen. William L. Armstrong, R-Colo., and passed by the Senate 58-33 -- to the D.C. appropriations bill.

A statement expressing the unanimous support of the PAC executive committee for the amendment also was cited by Armstrong during Senate debate on the issue.

The PAC comprises the 18-member Southern Baptist delegation to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a Washington-based church-state agency representing nine Baptist denominations. In addition, the PAC is empowered to act on SBC motions or resolutions the BJC cannot and/or does not support.

The Senate action was aimed at overturning a November 1987 ruling by the D.C. Court of Appeals that applied the law to Georgetown University, a Catholic school. In its decision, the appeals court ordered the Jesuit university to comply with the law's requirement to provide homosexual student groups the same money and facilities given other student organizations. At the same time, the court held, Georgetown was under no obligation to give official recognition to the homosexual groups.

The Armstrong amendment would condition all D.C. government spending upon the District's changing the law so as to exempt any educational institution affiliated with a religious organization.

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"The issue is not homosexuality, but separation of church and state," said Land, vice president for academic affairs and professor of theology and church history at Criswell College in Dallas. "The issue is whether a government institution, in this case the District of Columbia, has the right to force a religious institution, in this case Georgetown University, a Roman Catholic Jesuit institution, to subsidize the propagation and promulgation of beliefs diametrically opposed to its religious convictions.

"The issue is not whether homosexuals may attend Georgetown. They do. The issue is not whether they are able to participate in university life. They do. The question is whether Georgetown as a religious institution must subsidize a group which promotes beliefs totally contrary to the religious convictions of the institution's founders and supporters."

Since a provision similar to the Armstrong amendment was not included in the House version of the spending bill, the issue now will go to a Senate-House conference committee.

Although critical of the D.C. ordinance's broad application to all religious institutions, BJC General Counsel Oliver S. Thomas -- whose organization did not participate in the press conference sponsored by the National Association of Evangelicals -- said: "I have very little sympathy for Georgetown or any other religious institution that willingly accepts government funding yet wishes to be exempted from generally applicable government regulation. On the other hand, a religious institution that refuses direct government aid certainly should not be forced to subsidize or even to recognize student groups whose beliefs are repugnant to that institution."

In mid-July, Georgetown University -- which agreed last March to abide by the appeals panel's decision rather than appeal to the Supreme Court -- sent a letter to Armstrong pointing out its settlement with the homosexual student groups. That settlement was a "matter of internal university policy" appropriately left to the school's discretion, according to the letter.

Georgetown's decision not to take the case to the nation's high court went against written appeals from Cardinal James A. Hickey, archbishop of Washington, to do so.

Some critics have accused the university of giving in to pressure from the D.C. government in order to obtain District authorization to sell \$237 million in tax-exempt bonds.

During the NAE press conference, Joseph E. Broadus, assistant professor of law at Virginia's George Mason University, said Georgetown University's conduct since the introduction of the Armstrong amendment illustrates the university has cooperated with the D.C. government. Afterwards, he charged the university with dropping the case "because of its concern for the bonds. ... They just wanted to secure their financial future."

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Southern Baptists top list
of 500 fast-growing churches

By Joe Westbury

Baptist Press
7/28/88

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist churches have taken six of the top 10 places among the 500 fastest-growing churches in the nation, according to a recently released study.

Southern Baptist churches in Houston claimed the top three spots in the 1986 national study, and an Arizona congregation placed fourth.

The remaining top 10 spots went to two independents churches, an Assembly of God, a Dallas Southern Baptist church, another independent congregation and a San Antonio Southern Baptist church, in that order.

Second Baptist Church in Houston, where Ed Young is pastor, was rated the fastest-growing church in the nation among any denomination. It gained 2,842 in worship attendance during the 12-month period, boosting its attendance to 6,988.

Placing second was First Baptist Church of Houston where John Bisagno is pastor, and third place went to that city's Brentwood Baptist Church, where Joe Ratliff is pastor. Each congregation posted a 2,100 net gain.

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In 1986, First Baptist reported 5,500 in attendance, and Brentwood more than doubled its attendance to report 4,100.

Fourth place went to North Phoenix Baptist Church in Phoenix, Ariz., where Richard Jackson is pastor. North Phoenix reported a gain of 2,000 participants, boosting its worship to 9,000.

The survey focused on congregations that had gained more than 500 members in worship attendance in 1986. The top four Southern Baptist churches reported increases of 2,000 or more.

The study was conducted by John Vaughan, holder of the Ki Dong Kim chair of church growth, and the International Mega-Church Research Center at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo.

The survey, which included all major U.S. denominations, was partially funded by the research division of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Placing fifth behind North Phoenix was Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Ill., an independent congregation whose pastor is Bill Hybles. The church posted a net gain of 2,000, which pushed its worship attendance figure to 7,000.

Sixth place went to Vineyard Christian Fellowship of Anaheim, Ca., an independent charismatic church led by John Wimber. The church also increased by 2,000, for a total of 5,100 in worship.

Televangelist Jimmy Swaggert's congregation in Baton Rouge, La., placed seventh in the 1986 study. His ministry, known as the Family Worship Center and which listed Jim Rentz as co-pastor, posted a gain of 1,707, to 4,382.

In eighth place was Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas, where Pastor Bill Weber reported a 1,700 gain, to increase worship attendance to 6,900.

Orlando Christian Center in Florida, an independent charismatic congregation whose pastor is Benny Hinn, ranked ninth. It reported a gain of 1,700, to push its worship attendance to 4,500.

Rounding out the top 10 was First Baptist Church of San Antonio, where David Walker was pastor at the time of the study. Walker resigned in January 1988 to start a new church in San Antonio with a nucleus of members from First Baptist. The church reported a gain of 1,500 in 1986, to double its morning attendance to 3,000.

In a state-by-state tally, the Assembly of God denomination had the fastest-growing churches in 15 states, and Southern Baptists claimed seven of the 50 states.

"Overall, Southern Baptists and Assemblies of God share almost equally the 68 percent majority of these fast growing churches," said Orrin Morris, director of the Home Mission Board's research division.

"Vaughan points out that the location of the churches is no surprise -- 76 percent are in cities identified by Inc. magazine as the fastest-growing cities in the country," Morris added.

Included in the top 500 ranking are Denver and Los Angeles, each with five; Dallas and Atlanta, with four each; Houston with three; and Phoenix, Oklahoma City and Chicago with two each.

Morris noted the churches tend to be regional congregations and are not representative of typical Southern Baptist churches. The 148 Southern Baptist churches that placed among the 500 congregations account for only 0.4 percent of the total Southern Baptist churches, he said.

Morris cautioned against making any definitive statements based on the study, since it covered only one year of growth. Studies of successive years will give a better picture of the growth pattern of the churches, he said.

"One year is too short a time to make any long-term evaluations," Morris warned, "but it does include 52 Sundays of sustained growth. Such growth is not to be taken lightly."