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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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August 26, 1988

Dallas First to seek  
co-pastor for Criswell

By Toby Druin

**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
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DALLAS (BP)--First Baptist Church of Dallas, has voted unanimously to seek a co-pastor of the 25,000-member congregation, to serve alongside its pastor of 44 years, W.A. Criswell.

The action, at a Wednesday night prayer service, Aug. 24, was requested by Criswell, who will be 79 in December, and said he sought it to prevent any "hiatus" in the church's ministry in the event of his death or if he should become disabled.

Criswell, who over the past two years has brought 22 Southern Baptist pastors before the church, said the man he has in mind for the post and with whom he has talked informally about it is among that group, but he declined to name him.

Asked if the man would be a "fundamentalist," Criswell said, "Yes, because this is a fundamental Baptist congregation."

The man preferably would be 40 years or more younger than he is, the pastor said, and the man he has in mind, he noted, is not from Texas or the Southwest.

"We are seeking the finest, best, most gifted and successful, most God-blessed pastor in this universe," he said. "He will be invited to come here and be a pastor co-equal with me."

The search for the co-pastor, who Criswell said will share both preaching and administrative duties with him, will be carried out by a committee to be named by the church's committee on committees. It probably will be composed of 15 or more people representing every area of the church, Criswell said, noting a similar procedure was followed when he was called as successor to the late George W. Truett in 1944.

The committee will seek the co-pastor, who must be a man he can work with, Criswell said. "If they brought in a man who was not congenial with me and in rapport with me, I would have to quit," he said.

Criswell said he felt the search could be done quickly. He was called in September after Truett's death in July. "The idea that it takes forever and ever to find a new pastor is folly wide the mark," he said. "We don't have to take forever."

The committee will simply bring a recommendation to the church when they have decided upon a man, Criswell said. He will not be asked to preach in view of a call.

"We won't have a preacher race," he said. "The committee will just bring a recommendation."

Should Criswell retire or die, the co-pastor would become head pastor "if the church wants him," Criswell said.

He cited the tremendous load of administration and preaching and pastoral duties as reasons for recommending the church call a co-pastor. The church has more than 325 employees -- more than the population of his hometown, he said.

"Another thing that is obvious is that I am 78 years old," he said. "Before the year is out I will begin my 80th year. It is obvious that the church ought to bring in a man who could work with me and be with me and instead of waiting until I die or have a stroke or heart attack that disables me and the church enters into a hiatus.

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"Instead of doing that, let's call a man now and let him come in and get acquainted and then whatever happens to me we will carry right on -- only better."

However, in spite of his 78 years, he said, "I still preach as loud as ever. All you have to do to hear me preach is open the window of your house toward the church on Sunday morning."

The church had 7,709 in Sunday school on Aug. 21. Criswell said he envisions it having 12,000 in the future.

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Justice Department sues  
Virginia Baptist camp

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8/26/88

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A Christian conference center operated by a group of Southern Baptists in Virginia is in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the U.S. Justice Department has charged.

But Larry Ferguson, president and director of The Masters Inn in Altavista, Va., says the government is trying to violate the center's constitutionally protected religious freedom.

Ferguson, a member of Hyland Heights Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va., said The Masters Inn holds spiritual retreats for Christian groups which anyone may attend. While most of the retreats are sponsored by Southern Baptists, members of Lutheran and Presbyterian churches have also used the center, said Ferguson.

However, last year the center refused a request by a group of Mormons to use its facilities.

"To open our doors to cults would mean that we'd have to propagate beliefs that are against our gospel," Ferguson said. "Their (the Mormons') beliefs are anti-Christ. If we were forced to open our doors to the Mormons, we'd have to open them to the Church of Satan.

"They can come into the programs we conduct. Anyone can. We do not allow groups that are the antithesis of Christ to come in here and teach anti-Christ doctrines."

According to the Justice Department suit filed Aug. 3 in U.S. District Court in Lynchburg, The Masters Inn is a public accomodation and must abide by the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which forbids discrimination in accepting lodgers on the basis of religion.

"The defendant follows a pattern and practice of denying to persons on the basis of their religion, including persons who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the use and enjoyment of the facilities and services of The Masters Inn on the same basis as such facilities are provided to other members of the general public," the suit says.

But Ferguson denied The Masters Inn is a public accomodation. "We are a Christian conference center," he said.

Advertising is done only in fliers distributed to Southern Baptist churches, he continued, adding a person could not simply stop at the inn and ask for lodging or a meal for the night. Only Christian retreat groups are accomodated.

The government is seeking a court order prohibiting what it calls further discrimination. If an order is issued and The Masters Inn refuses to comply, it could be found in contempt and fined.

A spokesperson at the District Court in Lynchburg said the conference center must respond to the complaint by Aug. 29. No action has been taken on the case yet, she said.

Ferguson said the center's board of directors, all of whom are members of Southern Baptist churches, had voted to "fight this all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary."

He said the board has asked the Rutherford Institute, a private organization in Manassas, Va., which closely watches church-state issues, to take charge of the case.

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"They (the institute) plan to sit down with officials in the Civil Rights Section of the Justice Department and ask them if they know what they're doing," he said. If federal officials could be convinced The Masters Inn is not a public accomodation, the complaint could be dismissed without further action. Attorneys at the Rutherford Institute examining the case could not be reached for comment.

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Baptist archaeologist  
J.A. Callaway dies

Baptist Press  
8/26/88

ATHENS, Ga. (BP)--Joseph A. Callaway, a Southern Baptist Old Testament scholar and biblical archaeologist, died Aug. 23 in Athens, Ga. He was 68.

Callaway taught Old Testament and biblical archaeology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., for 26 years. He moved to Athens following his retirement in 1984.

A native of Warren, Ark., he was a graduate of Ouachita College (now Ouachita Baptist University) in Arkadelphia, Ark., and Southern Seminary, where he received the master of divinity degree in 1954 and the Ph.D. degree in 1957.

Callaway supervised several archaeological expeditions to biblical sites in Israel and wrote extensively on a wide range of archaeological subjects. He was curator of the seminary's Nicol Museum of Biblical Archaeology for 24 years.

Callaway is survived by his wife, Sara; two children, Linda Callaway Biggers of Atlanta, and William J. Callaway of Athens; his mother, Elizabeth Callaway of McGehee, Ark.; one brother; and three grandchildren.

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Commitment to students runs deep  
For U.S. Senate candidate's wife

By Bill Bangham

Baptist Press  
8/26/88

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Teresa Gunter is center stage. The illuminated platform of Spilman Auditorium separates her from 1,500 student week participants in the darkened hall beyond.

But her voice closes the gap between platform and participant during Ridgecrest's 1988 Student Conferences as she tells how she grew from a shy, withdrawn teenager to the wife of a Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate.

Gunter's presence on the platform is more in line with a commitment to college students than a desire to be a program personality. In the midst of a busy election, she left husband, Bill, on the campaign trail so she could spend the week at Ridgecrest with students from her church, First Baptist of Tallahassee, Fla. Florida State University in Tallahassee.

It's a commitment she dismisses with a laugh. "I feel like I'm giving a gift to myself working with these kids," she said. But it's also a commitment that runs deep, and one she shares with her husband.

For the past four summers they have participated in challenge trips for the college-age Sunday school class they teach at their church. The trips, on bicycle, usually cover about 250 miles in four days, and include developing and giving worship programs at churches along the way. As many as 75 students participate.

"It's difficult, something people train for," said Gunter. And something in which she sees many parallels and parables. "It's a cross section of life with hills and valleys." To make it work, participants have to work together.

"You're a body," she said, "like the body of Christ. You have to grow within yourself and grow within the group. There are even times when you feel very much alone."

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She tells of one trip along the Outer Banks of North Carolina. The group was strung along the highway for miles and she was alone approaching the last bridge spanning an inlet between islands. The bridge was long, tall and steep. She was having a difficult time making it to the top when, "I had an overwhelming experience of the Lord speaking to me: 'We can do this together.'"

It's an experience Teresa says has helped carry her through other challenges. If Bill Gunter wins Florida's U.S. Senate seat in November, Teresa says he'll consider commuting weekends between Washington and Tallahassee. They both want to continue working with their class.

"But that comes later," she said. "First comes the election. We don't talk about it that much, but the polls look good. Real good."

If the Aiken, S.C., native was shy and withdrawn as a teenager, she's anything but today. Yet it's something she had to develop, a challenge in response to a call she felt from God early in life.

"When I was 12, I knew the Lord was calling me to serve him full time. Maybe not as a vocation, but full time as a Christian."

So she chose North Greenville (S.C.) Junior College for her first two years of college, majoring in voice performance. "I dove into everything, even yearbook queen." Gradually the person she is today began to emerge.

Gunter met her future husband in Jerusalem on Christmas Day 1969. Teresa was with a tour group from South Carolina; Bill with one from Florida. The groups merged and traveled together, and Bill and Teresa began to feel a merging of their lives.

Teresa elected to finish her education at the University of Central Florida. Within 18 months she and Bill were married.

Bill's first wife had died the year before they met, so Teresa inherited a family with two sons. Since then they have had two more children.

From the beginning of their marriage, Gunter has campaigned for her husband, traveling the length of Florida, often in a separate direction from him, taking the children with her.

"We made it a real fun time," she said. And while it was physically demanding, campaigning for Bill has always been easy, she maintains. "I always felt, if you get a chance to meet him, you're going to like him."

And within the political arena she has been challenged to flesh out another portion of her calling. "The expectations people place on you are just phenomenal," she said. "You're put in many situations where there are no Christians but you." For her, that meant becoming a witness there.

"I decided that's where I needed to be. I realize I have to be who God called me to be."

It's a call she perceives as going beyond a willingness and desire to help other people to "... how we go about our daily lives -- what we're willing to say."

During a party at Ted Kennedy's Florida home, a Jewish couple who had donated money for several of Bill's campaigns told them they had just learned the wife had cancer. She asked Teresa where she found so much energy to cope with life, so Teresa shared her faith in Jesus Christ with the woman. Over the months that followed Teresa continued to talk with her.

"I don't know if she ever accepted Christ," said Gunter. "But after she died, her husband told me it was the strength I gave her that helped carry her through."

She says the pressures in political life, "are just like those in anyone else's life -- power, prestige -- anything that can come before the Lord in our life. The temptation we all have is to put other things first."

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She also says it's a temptation they deal with constantly in the political arena.

Bill Gunter has wanted a U.S. Senate seat since he was 16, when he served as a page in the Senate. His road to the Senate has included six years in the Florida Senate and one term in the U.S. House of Representatives.

He has lost only one election -- his first bid for the U.S. Senate in 1974 -- by less than 1 percent of the vote. Since then he was elected Florida's state treasurer and insurance commissioner in 1976, a position he still holds and has been reelected to twice by large margins.

Over the years he and Teresa have had to weigh their busy public lives against their private life, and their commitment to church and family. And it has resulted in some difficult decisions.

Last year Bill resigned from the board of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs citing time considerations. And he has turned down opportunities to run for governor of Florida twice, said Teresa.

"You get so busy the Lord and your family gets left behind," she said.

The decision to run for the Senate this year came late and unexpected. The Gunters were on this year's challenge trip when Rubin Askew of Florida announced he was withdrawing from the race. They learned of his decision when they returned home May 9.

Bill was met at the bus and encouraged to step into the race. He and Teresa called a family council, prayed about the opportunity with their children, and announced their decision two weeks later.

Though it is an abbreviated campaign -- most Senate candidates begin two years before the election -- Gunter hopes this is another opportunity the Lord is opening for her husband. "My husband has the ability of doing things I can't do through legislation and influence," she said.

If not, "We have no other plans. The Lord has always provided in the past."

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(BP) photo available upon request from the Brotherhood Commission

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