



**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE  
SBC Executive Committee  
901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203  
(615) 244-235  
Alvin C. Shackelford, Director  
Dan Martin, News Editor  
Marv Knox, Feature Editor

**BUREAUS**

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550  
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300  
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151  
WASHINGTON Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

September 7, 1988

88-144

CLC search committee  
selects Richard Land

By Dan Martin

N-CO

NASHVILLE (BP)--Richard Land, academic vice president of Criswell College in Dallas, will be recommended as the executive director-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission when it meets in Nashville Sept. 13-14.

Land, 42, is the unanimous recommendation from the eight-member search committee that has been seeking a replacement for N. Larry Baker, who resigned the post in early June following 16 months as the director of the Southern Baptist Convention's moral and social concerns agency.

If elected by the 31-member commission, Land is expected to assume day-to-day leadership of the agency Oct. 24.

Joe Atchison, a director of Baptist associational missions in Rogers, Ark., and chairman of the search committee, described Land as having "impeccable qualifications. He graduated from Princeton University magna cum laude, graduated from New Orleans (Baptist Theological) Seminary as the outstanding seminarian and has his doctorate from Oxford University.

"From the standpoint of qualifications, he has them. He has academic qualifications, and he has written quite at length and written in the field of ethics. We feel he is a man who has leadership qualities, who can sit down with a senator and hold his own or talk with a preacher from a rural church and make him feel comfortable and be understood," Atchison said.

The search committee met in Dallas Sept. 1 for its third meeting since being appointed June 3, Atchison said. At a previous meeting Aug. 12-13, also in Dallas, the committee reviewed the resumes of 12 people who had been recommended before narrowing the list to three candidates. At that point, the committee interviewed the three men, including Land, Atchison said.

The search committee chairman said that when the committee met Sept. 1, it had "had two weeks to think and pray and study over all of the qualifications. When we came (to the meeting), we came to vote. I asked the committee if they wanted to have any discussion before the vote, and they said they were ready to vote. So we voted."

Following the vote, the committee invited Land and his wife, Becky, to "come and share with us. He was asked some questions, and she was able to share a couple of things of interest to us."

Following adjournment, the 31 members of the commission were sent copies of the recommendation and supporting materials by overnight mail.

Land was recommended to the search committee by Ralph Smith, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church of Austin, Texas, and current president of the SBC Pastors' Conference, Atchison said. Another letter of recommendation came from Joel Gregory, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas, and current president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

"Joel (Gregory) wrote a two-page letter highly recommending Richard," Atchison said. "That carried a lot of weight. Both of these men made very strong recommendations, and neither of them have been in the quote political unquote arena in the past years, so we felt these recommendations were objective and very credible."

Land, a native of Houston, has been associated with Criswell College, sponsored by First Baptist Church of Dallas, since 1975. He has been professor of theology and church history, academic dean and, since 1980, vice president of academic affairs. Also, since 1975, he has been an associate pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas.

He received a bachelor of arts degree from Princeton University in 1969, master of theology degree from New Orleans Seminary in 1972, and a doctor of philosophy from Oxford University in 1980.

From January 1987 to May 1988, Land was on leave of absence from Criswell College and was administrative assistant to Texas Gov. William P. Clements Jr. He was senior adviser in church-state issues and matters relating to "traditional family values," which included anti-abortion, anti-drug and anti-pornography legislation, as well as public education, mental health, mental retardation, physical handicap and AIDS.

Currently, Land is consultant on the same issues and a member of the Governor's Task Force on Welfare Reform.

Land also has been pastor of churches in Louisiana and England, as well as interim pastor of congregations in the Dallas area.

In SBC affairs, he has been a member of the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. He also has been an adviser to the SBC Resolutions Committee in 1988 and a member of the Texas Baptist Historical Committee.

He and his wife have three children: Jennifer, 14; Dale, 11; and Rachel, 9.

Atchison told Baptist Press: "Before we interviewed Richard, there were some negative feelings by what we had heard and read. But when he sat down and we interviewed him, he put those fears to rest. There was a growing confidence as we asked him very probing questions and listened to his answers. He just handled everything well. He came across as a man who had it together, understood the situation very well and had a vision of what he and this agency can do.

"I am sure there will be some (in the convention) who will be unhappy, but there will be a lot more over the SBC who will be happy. If a person, even if they are of 'moderate persuasion' will give Richard a fair hearing, they will be as impressed as the members of our committee have been."

The Arkansas director of missions said one of the questions asked of Land was: "What will you do in your first year? He told us he would first try to re-establish the credibility of the agency. He said he would try to get out and meet with the people, sit down with pastors and get their feedback and suggestions.

"He told us he would major on a couple of more pressing moral issues but that he will mainly try to see where we are and try to get things back together by establishing credibility with the broad spectrum of the convention."

Atchison said Land indicated to the search committee the SBC "has gotten a little lax about addressing the racial issue and indicated he feels the issue needs attention. He also said the abortion issue needs some attention."

In other matters, Atchison said Land told the committee he would consider doing a radio ministry on moral issues, may shift the focus of the agency from printed materials to video tapes and may work toward getting materials directly to the churches rather than "depending on the states to promote the materials."

Atchison also said the question of the CLC's depleted Nashville staff was "brought up several times in the discussions. He (Land) made it clear he is not going in and firing anybody. He said he will go in and sit down and talk with each staff person, where he will lay out for them his philosophy and what he expects of them. There will be no purge or anything like that."

He noted: "We feel very good about his vision for the agency. I really believe that when he gets out over our convention and people have a chance to raise their fears and anxieties, what they hear will be very reassuring.

"Richard is a good, solid Southern Baptist. He takes conservative positions on the issues, but he is flexible. When the people of our convention get to know him, they are going to be very pleased."

Land says position  
'in line' with SBC

By Dan Martin

N-10

NASHVILLE (BP)--Richard Land, who will be nominated to become the next executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, says his position on abortion is "completely in line with resolutions passed by the Southern Baptist Convention in the past decade."

Land, 42, will be nominated at the annual meeting of the CLC in Nashville Sept. 13-14, on the unanimous recommendation of an eight-member search committee that has been working since June 3 to find a replacement for N. Larry Baker, who left the agency in early June after 16 months as director.

In a telephone interview with Baptist Press following announcement of his selection for nomination, Land listed several things he will emphasize if elected by the 31-member board.

"I want to have a strong emphasis on pro-life issues. I also want to have an emphasis on racial justice and racial equality, for I am fearful we have slipped in this country in the last 10 years on race relations.

"I think the CLC was right to stand up and protest the blasphemy of the (movie) 'The Last Temptation of Christ,' but I think we also need to stand up and be equally strong in our condemnation of the blasphemy of the Ku Klux Klan using the cross of Christ as a symbol."

He noted he had sent position papers to the CLC search committee spelling out his positions on abortion, capital punishment and ordination of women.

These issues were the focus of disagreement between Baker and the conservative-dominated CLC. Baker favored ordination of women, opposed capital punishment and felt abortion should be allowed in cases of rape, incest, severe fetal deformity and to save the life of the mother.

Land, in the position papers, opposes abortion except in extreme cases, opposes ordination of women and favors capital punishment.

"I oppose abortion except where the mother's physical life is in extreme danger," he wrote.

Land told Baptist Press his position "puts me completely in line with resolutions (opposing abortion) passed by the convention in the last decade."

He added he believes the CLC should have a "many-pronged emphasis" on abortion: "We should be working and preparing materials that can be used by churches in counseling people who have had abortions or been involved in abortions. We are faced with a problem that has plagued our society for almost two decades, and it has left scars we need to begin ministering to in a very specific and positive way."

On capital punishment, Land wrote, "I firmly believe in capital punishment as part of the biblically mandated authority of the civil magistrates."

Of women's ordination, he wrote: "Man and woman are clearly both created in the image of God. They both have eternal souls. They both have the same potential to respond to God. They both have infinite opportunity to serve the Lord.

"However, there are scriptural distinctions in role assignment and official position. As I Timothy 2:11-15 and Ephesians 5:22-24 clearly indicate, the woman is to be in subordination to the man in the structure of the church as an organized body and in the family as a team in the household."

He added the New Testament "asserts the full equality of men and women and distinguishes their role and assignments in the church and in the home. ... The New Testament forbids" women to serve in a "teaching-ruling office or ordination to the ministry or ruling authority."

During the interview with Baptist Press, Land said other emphases include "a very strong involvement in drug education and drug prevention." ... and opposition to pornography. I am pleased the commission has come out as strong as it has in opposing pornography."

--more--

Land said: "We need to emphasize the whole issue of the family and the assault on the family. We need to address child abuse, both physical and sexual, and be prepared to face the issue of incest, which is here in epidemic proportions and is not going to go away.

"Emphasizing these issues does not mean I am hostile to other issues. I think, for instance, the emphasis on hunger is an appropriate one. My concern is that while it is an appropriate concern, we do not emphasize it to the neglect of others."

During the interview, Land also addressed other issues:

-- First activities. "I would become extremely conversant with the current situation and the recent past as it impacts on the commission. I want to meet with the staff individually and at some length, to get to know them and let them know me. I want to gather as much information as possible and then try to make an assessment of where we are and where we ought to be," Land said.

As to the current staff, Land said he would not come in with any "personnel agenda. As far as I am concerned, I will go in there and everyone will have a clean slate. There are currently staff vacancies, and others have said as soon as there has been time for an orderly transition they are planning to move on. I do not know what the staff members are planning.

"I will meet with them and find out where they are coming from. I will let them ask me any questions they want to ask so they will have a clear perception of who I am and where I am intending to go. I also will try to alleviate misperceptions about myself."

Currently, the three program leaders are Robert Parham, interim executive director and director of hunger concerns; Larry Braidfoot, general counsel and director of Christian citizenship development; and W. David Lockard, director of organization.

Since Baker left, three other staff members have resigned: Tim Fields, director of communications; John Young, director of product development; and Shirley Young, administrative assistant. At full staff, the commission has had an executive and six associate directors.

-- Financial pressures. Land said he did not discuss financial pressures at the agency with the search committee: "I didn't ask, and information was not volunteered. I do know finances are an issue of some concern at the present moment. There was a concern expressed, and that was about as intimate as it got."

-- Merger with Public Affairs Committee. Land was one of four members of the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee which met with leaders of the CLC in December 1987 to discuss the possibility of a merger between the PAC, a standing committee that relates to the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, and the CLC.

"I was asked to come to that meeting by the chairman of the PAC (Sam Currin, a state court judge from Raleigh, N.C.) and at his request drafted a working proposal. At the meeting, everyone had input into the proposal, including Larry Baker," Land said.

The proposal followed an October 1987 PAC action to sever all financial and institutional ties with the Baptist Joint Committee which is composed of nine Baptist bodies in the United States and Canada.

Land, who voted to dissolve relationships with the Baptist Joint Committee said the issue is one of Southern Baptists requiring accountability from agencies it financially supports. The Baptist Joint Committee board declined to allow the PAC to conduct evaluations of the Baptist Joint Committee staff.

However, he said he believes "most of my concerns about the structural relationship would be resolved if the Baptist Joint Committee would reconsider and allow the PAC to evaluate the Baptist Joint Committee staff."

If Land is elected to be executive director-treasurer of the CLC, he will lose his voting membership on the 18-member PAC, and will become an ex officio, non-voting member.

As CLC executive, Land said he "will do my best to assure a close working relationship between both the PAC and the Baptist Joint Committee." Of the Baptist Joint Committee, he said, "As long as we are in joint relationship, I will do my best to facilitate that relationship."

Commentary writers  
meet to begin work

By Jim Lowry

N ~~SSB~~  
SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--The newest commentary planned for Southern Baptists received a kickoff Sept. 2 in the only planned meeting of writers and editors working on the 40-volume project.

Forty-one of the 44 writers enlisted to contribute to the biblical commentary gathered in Nashville from 12 states for a meeting to receive orientation, guidelines, answers to questions and to meet the other writers.

Lloyd Elder, president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, challenged the writers "to know you have committed yourselves to the project so that churches are built up."

"This project will call us into a comradeship in the faith of our fathers," Elder said. "It is that fellowship of faith that causes us to listen to one another."

"This is a heavy assignment, a significant assignment. You are right at the heart of one of the major projects of the Sunday School Board, and I am grateful for that. I applaud you and I commission you to take up the task you have before you."

Michael A. Smith, chief editor of Broadman books and general editor of the commentary, said: "The new commentary is a chance to demonstrate conservative scholarship and sound scholarship. This is not to show off, but simply to enable sound, conservative scholarship to get a fair hearing. It's a magnificent opportunity for ministry to make a commentary pastors and theological students will read."

The first volume of the new commentary will be released in June 1991, which will coincide with the 100th anniversary of the Sunday School Board. A decision has not been made regarding which volume will be released first, Smith said. About eight volumes will be published each year until the last one is released in 1995. The first manuscripts are due to be received in Broadman in January 1990.

Paige Patterson, president of Criswell College and one of six consulting editors, said in the meeting of New Testament writers that he hopes the commentary "will produce a measure of healing" in the denomination. "We felt the representation and the collegiality that would develop among us would be healing and even monumental in our Southern Baptist Zion at this time," he noted.

The writing team selected by the consulting editors and approved by Broadman officials includes three pastors, numerous educators and one layman. Hayne Griffin, a businessman from Greer, S.C., with a doctoral degree from Aberdeen University in Scotland, is the layman who will write on the New Testament book of Titus.

The only writers unable to attend the meeting were a Baptist missionary teaching in Argentina, Mervin Breneman; a professor from Melbourne, Australia, J.A. Thompson; and Duane Garrett, professor at Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary.

Institutions that are heavily represented by writers on the commentary project are Criswell College in Dallas, seven writers; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, six; Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn., five; and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, three each.

The three pastors enlisted as writers are Kenneth Hemphill, First Baptist Church of Norfolk, Va.; Joel Gregory, Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth; and Frank Page, Gambrell Street Baptist Church in Fort Worth.

Other Southern Baptist-affiliated institutions that have writers participating in the commentary project are Baylor University, Waco, Texas, two writers; Samford University Divinity School, Birmingham, Ala., one; California Baptist College, one; Hannibal-LaGrange College, Hannibal, Mo., one; and Seminario Internacional Teologico Bautista, Buenos Aires, Argentina, one.

--more--

Other institutions represented include Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., two writers; Denver Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, two; and Bethel Seminary West, San Diego, one.

The six consulting editors who worked with Broadman officials to select the writers each have accepted assignments to write a volume of the commentary.

The text of the Bible to be printed in the commentary will be from the New International Version. This version was selected by the consulting editors and approved by Broadman officials.

Curtis Vaughn, retired professor of New Testament at Southwestern Seminary and one of the consulting editors, said in the New Testament writers' session the New International Version was selected because of "the wide and enthusiastic acceptance this version has enjoyed, the sheer quality of the work and the evangelical commitment of the translators and all those involved in the production of this translation."

Writers were told the commentary will be edited according to the doctrinal guidelines of the Baptist Faith and Message Statement, and the Chicago Statment on Biblical Inerrancy will serve as the operating definition of biblical inerrancy. Both principles were affirmed earlier by the consulting editors and trustees of the Sunday School Board.

The multi-volume commentary project was approved by Sunday School Board trustees in February 1987, and the names of the consulting editors were approved at the August 1987 meeting of trustees. The consulting editors have been invited to attend the semi-annual trustee meeting in February 1989 in Nashville.

The other consulting editors in the project are Robert Sloan, Baylor University, who will write the volume on Romans; Russ Bush, Southwestern Seminary, who is writing two volumes on Psalms; Kenneth Matthews, Criswell College, Genesis; and Larry Walker, Mid-America Seminary, Isaiah.

--30--

(BP) photo and a list of commentary writers mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press