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N-HMB

Spiritual awakening coming,  
SBC prayer leaders say

By Mark Wingfield & Terri Lackey

ATLANTA (BP)--America is on the "front end" of a major spiritual awakening that could heal a divided Southern Baptist Convention and bring an apathetic Christian community to its knees, prayer leaders from two SBC agencies said.

Henry Blackaby of the Home Mission Board and T.W. Hunt of the Sunday School Board reported that their experiences this summer lead them to believe the long-awaited spiritual awakening has begun.

"The corner is turned, and God is moving like we've never seen," Blackaby said. "By this time next year, we could see one of the greatest movings of God."

"Every person I know who has been praying for spiritual awakening has said for the first time that awakening has begun. There is a profound moving of God."

Blackaby said he has seen more of the activity of God in the past year than in all the 32 years of his ministry. He is director of prayer and spiritual awakening for the Home Mission Board.

Both Blackaby and Hunt said they believe the awakening is a sign that the Southern Baptist Convention will not be dismantled by its 10-year-old denominational controversy.

"God has given us a clear word at this point that he is not through with Southern Baptists. There is something very significant that he wants to do," Blackaby said. "He's given evidence that he's in the process of bringing it about. If God is through with a people, history records that you'll see no evidence of his working among them."

Hunt, prayer consultant with the Sunday School Board, said he believes "God wants to bring awakening to the world through the Southern Baptist Convention" despite the current controversy.

Blackaby and Hunt cited several incidents from summer speaking engagements as evidence of the impending awakening. The two men, along with Avery Willis of the Sunday School Board, Douglas Beggs of the Brotherhood Commission and Minette Drumwright of the Foreign Mission Board, spent several weeks together in July and August teaching prayer seminars at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center and Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

At each of these events, the prayer leaders said, they encountered individuals who had experienced similar spiritual transformations at different times and in different places. The testimonies of those individuals became catalysts to spark renewal among others, they said.

"The Lord is changing lives right and left," Hunt said. "People, many of them pastors, go to these prayer conferences and come away different persons."

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After Blackaby had spoken to one Ridgecrest group about spiritual awakening, the pastor of a small Virginia church came to talk with him. Blackaby explained to him again that the Holy Spirit can guide believers to understand God's truths and apply those truths to life.

"That's the most significant truth I've known in my life," the man replied.

As he traveled home, inspired by the week's events, the pastor prayed for God to provide 13 decisions the next Sunday. Although the church averages only 30 in attendance, there were 43 decisions recorded that day.

The church was so moved by the pastor's changed heart that they sent him back to Ridgecrest for a second week of training, Blackaby said.

The next week, during the discipleship training conference at Ridgecrest, an "awesome sense of the holiness of God" fell upon the crowd, Blackaby said. "We felt the power of God and immediately fell on our knees and began to pray."

Hunt recalled Tuesday, July 18, as a significant date in the embryonic stage of the spiritual awakening movement.

"During a prayer training conference, there was a solemn and serious visit of the Holy Spirit," Hunt said. "It was accompanied by a profound confession of sin and the acknowledgement of the holiness of God."

Several of about 50 participants "were so overwhelmed by the presence of God that they could not even stand," he said. "They just sank to their knees. Many couldn't even go to the next meal because they were so profoundly gripped by the dread of the holiness of God."

Throughout the week, people gathered spontaneously for prayer and confession of sin, Blackaby said. He reported that one pastor entered the prayer garden wearing a light-colored suit, was struck by the presence of God and fell to his knees in the mud, crying, "Oh, God, who can stand in your presence?"

Similar incidents occurred during the Jericho conference at Glorieta, during the HMB's national mass evangelism conference in Nashville, and during two sessions of training state prayer coordinators, Blackaby and Hunt said.

Even now, as he leads prayer conferences in various states, Hunt said, "There is a prevailing spirit of deep yearning for the depths of God among those in the groups."

For the awakening to be widespread and long-lasting, it must be experienced and embraced by pastors and church leaders, Blackaby added. "The greatest single need I see right now is readying leadership for the awakening of God," he said.

Hunt, who has researched patterns of great revivals in the Bible, said: "God's normal way to bring revival is through leadership. Revival normally starts with leaders and comes down."

Hunt and Blackaby said they are holding meetings with several agency heads, telling them about the spiritual awakening movement and hoping for their involvement. Plans are being made to report the experience of the prayer leaders to SBC officers.

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"So far the response of the leadership has been deep and profoud," Hunt said.

Southern Baptists can hear similar reports from the prayer leaders on a live BTN National Prayer Corps Teleconference Sept. 17, 3-5 p.m., Central time.

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N-FMB

McGinnis resigns  
after visa problems

By Erich Bridges & Art Toalston

Baptist Press  
8/28/89

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (BP)--Mike McGinnis, whose letter questioning a fellow missionary's beliefs set off a denominational flap last year, has resigned as a Southern Baptist missionary.

The resignations of McGinnis, 37, and his wife, Sondra, both of Birmingham, Ala., will take effect Sept. 30, according to Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board officials.

The couple was appointed in 1987 and assigned to Venezuela, where he was to have worked as a church starter. But they were unable to obtain work visas from the Venezuelan government after finishing a year of Spanish language training in Costa Rica.

The McGinnises were offered the option of transferring to any of four other countries by the Foreign Mission Board. They declined, citing a specific call from God to work in Venezuela.

From their current home in Chattanooga, Tenn., the couple plans to travel and train Christian leaders in Venezuela and possibly other South American countries with Ambassadors for Christ International, a non-denominational agency based in Atlanta. A spokesperson for the agency confirmed McGinnis likely will be joining a team of 15 American missionaries who conduct leadership training seminars for overseas Christians.

McGinnis drew attention last year when he wrote a letter to a friend in Tennessee expressing concern about the theological beliefs of another Southern Baptist missionary in the language school, later identified as Michael Willett. Willett also was assigned to Venezuela.

The letter came to the attention of Foreign Mission Board officials, who later met with both missionaries. Willett eventually was asked to resign by board officials because of what they termed "doctrinal ambiguity," or lack of clarity, particularly regarding the miracles of Christ.

Willett resigned, but later rescinded his action. He was dismissed July 21, 1988, by vote of the Foreign Mission Board's trustees, who affirmed a staff recommendation for the dismissal.

Willett now is an adjunct professor of New Testament at St. Paul School of Theology, a United Methodist school in Kansas City, Mo.

The firing of Willett prompted discussion within the denomination and a number of letters questioning the decision. Even before the trustees took final action, board President R. Keith Parks wrote a letter assuring all 3,800 Southern Baptist missionaries that the request for Willett's resignation "is not the beginning of a 'purge' of the missionary force."

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McGinnis was reprimanded by mission board officials for the inappropriate way he reported on the situation. He was told he would be given annual work reviews during his first term in Venezuela, instead of the standard single review at the term's end.

But the McGinnises never reached Venezuela as missionaries. They began the visa application process before beginning their year of language study, as is customary for those studying Spanish in Costa Rica. After completing study in late 1988, they and another missionary couple assigned to Venezuela still had not received work visas by April of this year. Missionaries have encountered periodic trouble obtaining visas for work in Venezuela and a number of other countries around the world.

The two couples were asked to consider assignments elsewhere. The other couple accepted an assignment in Spain. The McGinnises looked at five urban evangelism assignments in four South American countries, but declined them all. They asked to live in Venezuela on temporary, renewable tourist visas. But board officials said Venezuelan lawyers have indicated missionaries cannot legally work in the country under such an arrangement. Board officials also expressed concern that working in the country with a tourist visa would jeopardize the status of missionaries already there.

In his letter of resignation, received by board officials July 31, McGinnis said, "... we can receive no peace from God about going to another field. This is not a matter of preference or personal desire. It is a matter of believing that it continues to be God's direction that we go to Venezuela."

Don Kammerdiener, FMB vice president for the Americas, said he supports McGinnis' decision to resign if he "cannot feel (the Lord's) leadership to accept another assignment."

In a telephone interview Aug. 24, McGinnis said his plan to work with Ambassadors for Christ International is "not a matter of choosing them instead of the Foreign Mission Board. It's just that my heart was in Venezuela, and because of the situation with the Venezuelan government at this time, I simply was not able to go through the Foreign Mission Board. My prayer is still to contribute to the common effort, and that includes the work Southern Baptists are doing in Latin America.

"It was with a heavy heart and a struggle that I came to a decision that it was reasonable for us to resign. But we believe that was God's leadership. The only recourse was for us to continue to wait indefinitely," he said. "The board cannot allow that. They cannot just pay a man's salary to sit in the United States, and we didn't want that. We understand the board's policy concerning that, and we received it gladly. We were weary of waiting for something to break."

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Housing request forms  
sent to state offices

N- CO

Baptist Press  
8/28/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--Housing request forms for the 1990 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, scheduled June 11-13 in the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans, have been sent to state executive offices, according to Convention Manager Tim A. Hedquist.

The forms, also available in the September issue of Baptist Program magazine, should be mailed to the Greater New Orleans Tourist and Convention Commission no earlier than Oct. 1, 1989.

"This year there is a day of grace because Oct. 1 falls on a Sunday," Hedquist said. "Many post offices do not postmark mail on Sunday, so any forms postmarked either Oct. 1 or 2 will be treated as if they were postmarked Oct. 1."

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He added housing request forms mailed earlier than Oct. 1 will not be processed. Those mailed later also will not be processed because it is likely the requests postmarked Oct. 1 or 2 will exceed the number of rooms available in the SBC block.

The envelopes will be opened by the New Orleans commission Oct. 10 "in a random manner," Hedquist said. The process uses only people who are not Southern Baptists in an effort to ensure impartiality in assigning rooms.

There are 6,450 rooms in 12 hotels in the 1990 SBC block. Included among the hotels are the Hyatt Regency, which will be the headquarters hotel, and the New Orleans Hilton, which will house participants at the Woman's Missionary Union annual meeting.

"There is a place on the form that allows an individual to set a maximum amount he is willing to pay for a hotel room," Hedquist said. "If the envelope is opened and there are no rooms available in the price range indicated, the request will be sent back."

He indicated the average cost of a hotel room in New Orleans is about \$86, "down about 10 percent from Las Vegas." Prices in the 12 hotels in the SBC block range from \$65 to \$105 for a single.

All of the hotels are in the downtown area, he said, and in walking distance "for a robust person." All also are in proximity to a New Orleans shuttle service, which will be augmented by the SBC to coincide with sessions of the annual meeting.

The forms also provide an opportunity for a potential messenger to select first-through fifth-choice hotels.

The forms contain complete information on filing. They should be mailed to the SBC Housing Bureau, 1520 Sugarbowl Drive, New Orleans, La. 70112.

Hedquist issued several reminders about registration:

-- Registrants may not submit more than one request per person. If they do, the housing bureau computer will cancel all copies of multiple requests by the same individual.

-- Multiple registrants may submit individual requests in the same envelope. However, all members of a group are not guaranteed rooms in the same hotel.

-- People with handicaps or special medical needs should make their requests to Hedquist at the SBC Executive Committee, 901 Commerce, Nashville, Tenn. 37203, before the Oct. 1 deadline.

"We hold rooms to provide for the handicapped," Hedquist said. "They should not attach notes to the registration forms and send them to the housing bureau. The housing bureau cannot help them, but I can."

He stressed people with special needs should send in their requests as soon as possible, but before Oct. 1.

-- People should not attempt to contact the Executive Committee or Hedquist about their room assignments. Those who are assigned rooms will be notified by the housing bureau. The assignments will be in the bureau's computer, Hedquist said, and information will be provided as soon as the computer prints out the forms.

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"We won't know what has happened, and they will pretty well have to wait for notification," he said.

Those who do not get rooms in the block will be notified as soon as possible by the Executive Committee, he said. The housing bureau sends the forms that were not assigned rooms to the Executive Committee, which returns them as quickly as possible.

Even if a messenger is not assigned a room in the SBC block, there are plenty of hotel rooms available in New Orleans, Hedquist said, noting there are some 30,000 rooms in greater New Orleans.

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Las Vegas convention draws  
messengers from 6,900 churches

N-CO  
By Dan Martin

Baptist Press  
8/28/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--Some 6,900 congregations -- less than 20 percent of the churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention -- participated in the 1989 annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nev.

"The largest number of those churches sent one or two messengers, usually the pastor or the pastor and his wife," said Lee Porter of Nashville, SBC registration secretary, who noted total registration for the Las Vegas meeting was 20,411.

According to an analysis of messenger registration, Porter said 263 churches sent the full complement of 10 messengers and an additional 190 had either eight or nine messengers.

"Messengers from 453 churches made up one of every five messengers, or 20 percent of the convention," he said, adding the 453 churches represent 1.2 percent of the 37,500 congregations affiliated with the SBC.

The constitution and bylaws of the convention specify each "cooperating" church is entitled to one messenger. Additional messengers, up to a maximum of 10, are gained either for each additional 250 members or \$250 contributed to the work of the convention during the preceding year.

Porter said messengers from six state conventions made up 50 percent of the messengers; from 12 made up 77 percent; and from 20, 93.65 percent. There are 37 state conventions and three fellowships affiliated with the 14.8-million-member denomination.

Texas had the most messengers -- 2,646, or 12.96 percent of the registration. Other top states were North Carolina, 1,819 (8.91 percent); Georgia, 1,798 (8.81); Tennessee, 1,517 (7.43); South Carolina, 1,260 (6.17); and Virginia, 1,242 (6.08).

Texas also had the most churches which sent the maximum number of messengers, 49; followed by Georgia, 36, North Carolina, 23, and Tennessee, also 23.

"The percentages were very normal, compared to 1981, the last time we met in the West, and to last year's convention in San Antonio. Compared to 1981, the percentages of messengers from the states was very similar. Three states -- California, Kentucky and Oklahoma -- decreased in the percentage of messengers and three -- Mississippi, Virginia and Nevada -- increased," Porter said.

Compared to 1988 in San Antonio, Texas -- the third-largest convention in SBC history with 32,727 messengers -- percentages were very similar, Porter said. Texas, the host state in 1988, and Louisiana, showed decreases, while California, Arizona and South Carolina all showed increases.

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Porter, who keeps hourly counts each year, also said the pace of registration also was normal.

According to Porter, 6,586 registered Sunday, compared to 10,685 registrants on Sunday in San Antonio. On Monday, 16,985 registered, compared to 27,567. By the time the vote was taken on the SBC president Tuesday afternoon, 20,202 messengers had registered, compared to 32,436 in San Antonio.

After the vote for president, registration dropped off. By the close of registration Tuesday, only 103 more people had registered. At the end of the day Wednesday, another 94 registered to push the total to 20,399. Only 12 people registered Thursday, giving a final registration of 20,411.

"There was a rumor going around about messengers being bused in from California for the presidential vote, but of the 3,251 people who registered Tuesday morning, only 210 were from California, and 183 of them gave a Las Vegas convention address," Porter said.

In addition to the top six of Texas, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina and Virginia, the leading 20 states include:

Alabama, 1,032 (5.06 percent); California, 1,027 (5.03); Florida, 1,024 (5.02); Mississippi, 836 (4.10); Missouri, 834 (4.09); Kentucky, 796 (3.90).

Oklahoma, 764 (3.74); Louisiana, 636 (3.12); Arkansas, 555 (3.12); Arizona, 365 (1.79); Illinois, 291 (1.43); Nevada, 245 (1.20); New Mexico, 219 (1.07); and Ohio, 208 (1.02).

Other states, all of which produced less than 1 percent of the messengers, include:

Maryland, 193; Colorado, 134; Indiana, 126; Kansas, 116; Michigan, 79; Utah, 68; Washington, 58; Hawaii, 55; Oregon, 53; Idaho, 51; Pennsylvania, 47; New York, 45.

West Virginia, 44; Alaska, 39; Iowa, 31; New Jersey, 24; Wisconsin and the District of Columbia, both 22; Montana, 14; Nebraska and Minnesota, both 12; Massachusetts, 7.

Delaware and New Hampshire, both 6; North Dakota and South Dakota, both 4; Vermont, 3; Maine, 2; and Puerto Rico and Rhode Island, both 1.

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(Reports of the names of churches sending more than 8 messengers were mailed to the Baptist state papers by Registration Secretary Lee Porter.)

Most messengers  
flew to Las Vegas

N- CO

Baptist Press  
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NASHVILLE (BP)--Most of the messengers to the 1989 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention flew to Las Vegas, Nev., the host city.

A year earlier, the majority of messengers to San Antonio, Texas, drove to the convention city in private automobiles.

In neither year did many of the messengers travel to the convention sites aboard buses. In Las Vegas, 1.1 percent said they rode buses; in San Antonio, it was 4.6 percent.

The mode of transportation was one of a variety of questions answered by messengers in a survey taken on the opening day of the convention. Tabulations were completed in mid-August.

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Respondents to the Las Vegas questionnaire indicated 66 percent flew to the convention, while 28.6 drove in private automobiles. In San Antonio, it was almost the reverse: 59 percent came in private automobiles while 31.4 flew.

For Las Vegas, most of the messengers were male, 56.2 percent; church staff members, 61.5 percent; married to homemakers, 50.9 percent; and more than 35-years old with only 19.5 percent younger than 35.

Most of them also spent more than \$200 to attend. Only 18.2 percent of the respondents to the questionnaire said they spent less than \$200, while 36.4 percent said they spent more than \$500.

Las Vegas apparently was more expensive than San Antonio. In 1988, only 26.5 percent of the messengers said they spent more than \$500 to attend the annual meeting, while 30.9 percent spent less than \$200.

Otherwise, the percentages were about the same between 1988 and 1989.

In San Antonio, 55.9 percent of the messengers were male; 60.6 were church staff members; 50.7 were married to homemakers and were middle age, only 23.1 percent younger than 35.

Denominational workers did not dominate either convention: in Las Vegas, 6.1 percent of the messengers indicated they were employees of a state or national institution or agency; in San Antonio, it was 6.0 percent.

For both conventions, the majority of messengers came from churches larger than 300 members. In Las Vegas, 73.6 percent were from congregations larger than 300; in San Antonio, it was 76.3 percent. In 1989, 32.6 percent of messengers were from congregations with more than 1,000 members; in 1988, it was 32.0 percent.

In the SBC, more than half of the 37,500 congregations affiliated with the convention are smaller than 300 members.

In Las Vegas, only 3.5 percent of the messengers came from churches with less than 100 members; in San Antonio, it was 3.2 percent.

For comparison, the last time the convention met in the West -- prior to Las Vegas -- was the 1981 convention in Los Angeles. In Las Vegas, 20,411 messengers registered; in Los Angeles, the total was 13,529.

In Los Angeles, 59.0 per cent were male; 65.2 percent were church staff members; most were over 35 years-old with only 23.5 under 35; 57.5 percent were married to homemakers; and the majority flew, 58.7 came by airplane while 42.3 came in private automobile and only 3 percent came aboard a bus.

The majority -- 70.1 percent -- spent more than \$150 on expenses. The chart of expenses is indicative of inflation. In 1988 and 1989, \$100 is the lowest figure listed; in 1981, \$150 was the highest.

In 1981, as in 1989, the majority of messengers -- 80.1 percent -- came from congregations with more than 300 members. Only 2.8 came from congregations with less than 100 members, while 37.6 percent were from congregations with more than 1,000 members.

Look to higher power to battle  
Satan, Lewis tells missionaries

By Joe Westbury

N-HMB

RIDGECREST (BP)--If Southern Baptists are going to change the world for Christ, they must be equipped with more than another seminary course or self-help brochure from the convention's Home Mission Board, agency President Larry Lewis said.

"Friends, don't try to explain away the devil. If you're going to battle him on his ground, you're going to need a power stronger than yourselves. ... You're going to need the very power of God in your lives," Lewis told US-2 missionaries during a commissioning service.

The service for the 26 missionaries, young adults assigned to work alongside career missionaries for two years, was held during home missions week at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

"One of the most tragic stories in the New Testament is when the disciples came up against the power of the devil and were powerless to help an individual possessed with a demon," he said.

Lewis often feels as powerless as the disciples were in that instance, Lewis said, but he added, Christians are commanded to call on Christ for their source of strength: "The Bible is very clear that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities of darkness. If you are in ministry -- whether as a missionary, pastor or layperson -- you are facing the devil face to face."

"If you're trying to face the devil in your own faith, power and ability, you are in for trouble. You only need one other source -- one person with Jesus is a majority in any crowd.

"Yes, the devil is strong and very powerful, but resist him and he will flee from you."

The reason Christians find themselves powerless in dealing with Satan is because they lack faith in what they can do with God's power in their lives, Lewis said: "Christ, in rebuking the disciples for their unbelief, said they could move a mountain if they had the faith of a grain of mustard seed. If Southern Baptists could get hold of what we could do with God's power, we could conquer our nation for Christ."

That depth of faith will not come through more seminary courses or "How-to" brochures but through prayer and fasting, he said.

Mark Swindell, an Arizona native who was commissioned to work in special ministries in Philadelphia, told how he grew in his faith through a battle with multiple sclerosis.

"Before a miracle allowed me to overcome MS, I learned to depend on God for strength -- I was reminded that my life is not mine to do with as I please, but it is God's to use in his service," he said.

US-2 missionaries are college graduates age 27 or younger who are appointed for a two-year term of service throughout the nation and its territories.

The newly commissioned missionaries will work in church and community ministries, evangelism, language church extension, new church extension and special ministries.

Palm Beach Atlantic  
starts honors program

N. 910.  
WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (BP)--The Frederick M. and Patricia Supper Foundation of Palm Beach, Fla., and Greenwich, Conn., has provided initial funding of \$1 million to develop the Supper Honors Program at Palm Beach Atlantic College in West Palm Beach, Fla.

The program is designed for academically gifted students who are majoring in business or are interested in business, college officials said.

The Supper Honors Program will begin in September 1989, said college President Claude H. Rhea.

The program synthesizes both liberal arts and fine arts with the business curriculum at the college to produce graduates who will be strong in managerial leadership, in oral communications, in writing skills, in appreciation of the arts and in international understanding, school leaders said.

The curriculum consists of 25 semester hours of core requirements, including overseas travel, visiting lecturers, oral persuasion, written communications and advanced educational technologies.

J. Brabban, associate professor of philosophy and religion, has been tapped to lead and coordinate the initial facet of the program.