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August 30, 1989

89-125

Dilday faces pressure  
from seminary trustees

By Scott Collins

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(SWBTS)

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The possibility of a called meeting to discuss "political activities" by Russell Dilday was considered by Dilday and trustee officers of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in a mid-August meeting.

News reports in several newspapers -- including the Richmond (Va) Time Dispatch and the Nashville Banner indicated trustees may be targeting Dilday, president of the 4,800- student school in Fort Worth, Texas, for "censuring or muzzling" this fall.

Dilday and trustee Chairman Ken Lilly, a physician from Fort Smith, Ark., issued a joint statement Aug. 28, saying the purpose of the Aug. 15 meeting was to "discuss questions regarding Baptists Committed (to the Southern Baptist Convention), and to seek clarification about an article written by Dr. Dilday for the May Southwestern News."

Lilly said the trustee officers discussed the possibility of a called meeting -- to be set Aug. 29 -- but decided not to do so.

The chairman, however, said he anticipates the issue to be raised when the full board meets Oct. 16-17. "I don't see at this point how it can be avoided" at the full board meeting, Lilly said.

"The issue is still hot and it will come up ... . I don't know the best way to deal with it, but I know the guys (trustees) are going to have their say."

In the prepared statement, Lilly and Dilday were critical of news coverage of the mid-August meeting, saying it "may hurt attempts to reach an understanding" between Dilday and trustees.

They said the meeting gave Dilday and the three officers and opportunity to discuss questions privately rather than through the media.

"We believe it is in the best interest of Southwestern Seminary, its president and board of trustees to talk about these issues privately and face-to-face rather than through public rhetoric," the statement says.

Lilly explained the background of the meeting, noting: "The deal was that a number of trustees had written me. I got a bunch of letters requesting that we meet with Dr. Dilday and ask him to quit doing political things."

The focus of the letters, he said, was Dilday's speech in late May before a meeting of Baptists Committed, a moderate political organization.

While Dilday said he believes the source of complaints is an account of his speech in the Southern Baptist Advocate, a conservative-oriented newspaper, Lilly denied the Advocate report prompted the meeting.

"There was only one (trustee) who was influenced by the article," Lilly said. "The article was not the issue, but rather Dr. Dilday's renewed political activity."

Dilday said his address, titled "Denominational Unity," at the Baptist Committed symposium was an attempt to call for Baptist unity and to pull together the fractured Southern Baptist Convention. He said it was not intended to be a political statement.

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Dilday said he showed trustees the full text of the speech and "they seemed less concerned."

"I will accept any invitation I can to speak on Baptist unity, whether I'm addressing the left or the right," he added.

He continued: "I would be irresponsible if I didn't speak on convictional issues affecting the seminary and the convention. I don't intend to do anything to make the conflict in the convention worse. I haven't been a part of any political group on either side and I don't intend to be. I have spoken out in the past against the inappropriateness of political actions.

Lilly said, "My personal thinking is that he (Dilday) is going to have some troubled times if he doesn't "quit speaking out."

Of the Aug. 15 meeting, Lilly said: "We were trying to meet privately to solve potential difficulties. I don't think we solved them. The spirit intended was to tell our brother in Christ, Russell Dilday, that he had trustees who didn't agree with what he was doing. The way you do that in our opinion was to go to him personally."

In addition to Dilday and Lilly, the Aug. 15 meeting was attended by Damon Shook, pastor of Champion Forest Baptist Church in Houston, vice chairman, and John McNaughton, a Fort Worth rancher and businessman.

Seminary dismisses student  
for homosexual behavior

By David Wilkinson

N- (C)  
(SBTS)

Baptist Press  
8/30/89

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--An avowed homosexual has been required to withdraw as a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Kevin Kouba, 32, from Florissant, Mo., was forced to withdraw in mid-July after a fellow student at the Louisville, Ky., school charged that Kouba was involved in homosexual behavior.

Following a hearing involving both students, the dean of the school of Church Music and the vice president for student services, Kouba was instructed to withdraw from school.

Since then, Kouba has appealed the decision before two disciplinary groups composed of students, faculty and administrators. Both times the appeal was denied.

Following the second appeal Aug. 23, Kouba told Louisville television and newspaper reporters he plans to pursue the final step in the seminary's appeals process and take his complaint to seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt.

Kouba has argued that the seminary's policy forbidding homosexual behavior is discriminatory and that his initial hearing was unfair. He claimed he was told in the hearing that he would not be "expelled" if he was truthful, yet after confessing to the allegations he was required to "withdraw."

Students required to withdraw eventually may apply for re-admission if they meet requirements established by the seminary. Expulsion, however, is irrevocable.

Kouba, who had planned to graduate with a degree in church music next May, said he believes he should be allowed to stay at the seminary and pursue a church music career.

"That's what really bugs me, that I'm being told that I can't do what I think God wants me to do," he told the Louisville Courier-Journal.

Kouba has been supported in his appeal by members of Honesty, a gay-rights group of about 15 homosexual and heterosexual people primarily from Southern Baptist backgrounds. The Louisville organization advocates "equal rights and equal treatment of gay, lesbian and bisexual persons."

David Tribble, who quit Southern Seminary last fall and helped form Honesty, told the Courier-Journal the seminary's policy is unfair because it permits sexual activity between only heterosexual people within marriage. "That option is not given to gay and lesbian people, and that's discrimination," he said.

Seminary officials have declined to comment on details of the case, citing students' right privacy. However, a statement issued Aug. 30 by the seminary claimed the disciplinary policy is "thorough and fair."

Emphasizing the seminary's purpose of training Christian ministers, the statement maintained the school "has a right and an obligation to expect certain standards from its students. It said Southern Baptists and the churches who recommend students to the seminary "expect this of us."

The statement noted that every student receives a copy of the seminary's disciplinary policy which states that certain actions, including "homosexual behavior or heterosexual misconduct," are "unacceptable" in the seminary community.

"In this particular case," it said, "a student has stated publicly that he plans to continue behavior that is clearly in conflict" with seminary policy.

The statement added that the seminary's disciplinary policy focuses on "the ethical standards of Christian ministers." It acknowledged that homosexuality is a "sensitive and complicated issue" and expressed the seminary's support for "every effort on the part of the Christian community to minister compassionately and redemptively to gay persons and to families who are affected by this social issue."

Kouba told the Courier-Journal he enrolled at Southern in 1986 "with the intent of living the 'straight' life, (but) that became increasingly difficult."

He said he established a relationship with another man at the end of his second year at Southern.

After undergoing psychiatric care at the request of his family during much of his third year in school, Kouba said he decided homosexuality was something natural rather than sinful.

"God expects people to be happy," he said. "You can't live a guilty life all the time. "

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Handling future shock is greatest  
challenge to SBC, says researcher

By Joe Westbury

N-HMB

Baptist Press  
8/30/89

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--How Southern Baptists handle future shock could be the deciding factor in how the denomination ministers in the next century, barely 11 years down the road, Larry Rose told Baptist associational directors of missions.

Rose, associate director in the metropolitan missions department for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, gave the directors of missions a glimpse of the change affecting their world -- and the local church -- by the turn of the century.

Rose presented contemporary facts and futuristic scenarios during the National Convocation on the Baptist Association at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

As the United States continues to decline in world economic power and competes against foreign nations in a global marketplace, U.S. citizens -- and therefore Southern Baptists -- no longer will be able to view themselves as the most influential power in the world, Rose said.

"We now live in a global community. What happens in Tokyo has impact on Wall Street and Main Street. How we shall live, work and survive are the major issues of the future," he said.

The decline of the nation's international influence already has become a reality in the religious arena, where the country's spiritual standing is on the wane and the United States is being viewed as a mission field by evangelicals and religious groups from other countries.

That perception will continue as the country loses its Christian image and continues to evolve into a country with a plurality of religions, Rose warned.

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The growing number of educated women also will impact a society long dominated by male wage earners. In 1950, women comprised 30 percent of the college enrollment; by 1987, that percentage had nearly doubled to 52 percent.

How the denomination relates to those women and harnesses their intellect is yet to be determined -- but society will embrace them as a valuable asset to the workforce, he added.

Rose then described a new lifestyle that will change the face of rural America, where most Southern Baptist churches are located.

Citing research from Washington State University, Rose described the end of the family farm as it historically has been known. Joining the few remaining farmers will be numerous high-tech sophisticates who live in the country but do their work at home on computers linked electronically to offices in cities around the world.

"This will bring different kinds of people to the rural areas. Much of the homogeneity of rural America will be lost," he said.

The impact on the rural church "will be tremendous," Rose continued. "Churches built on homogeneous groups -- who lived close together, who farmed, whose children attended the same small schools and who shopped in the same stores -- will be facing heterogeneous people of various ethnic-social backgrounds."

Many newcomers will come from large urban areas with a vastly different set of values and priorities, he suggested.

On the other hand, such change will offer one of the greatest mission challenges for the rural church. Christians who are creative and motivated will find a mission field. How Southern Baptists adapt to these newcomers in their midsts may prove the greatest challenge to the denomination, he said.

Although rural churches may have to rethink their historical role and be more open to outsiders moving into the community, urban churches will not be spared the shock of similar change.

The steady exodus from the cities to rural America is daily being mirrored by a flood of immigrants from around the world to the nations cities. The influx is due to overcrowding in other nations of the world, Rose said.

For example:

-- If present trends continue, Bangladesh will have a population of 240 million in only 30 years -- almost the population of the United States today -- on a land mass almost the size of Arkansas.

-- Asia is growing at a rate of 2 percent per year, which means it will double in 39 years. Latin America will double its population in only 24 years.

-- Ninety-two percent of the world's projected population growth until A.D. 2000 will occur in the less-developed countries. Stated another way, of every 100 babies currently born in the world, eight are white and 92 are non-white.

Those changes already are showing up in U.S. immigration figures -- and eventually will trickle down in the form of the increasing number of ethnic families who move into communities with Southern Baptist congregations, Rose said.

"From 1790 to 1960, 80 percent of all immigrants came from Europe -- mostly white Anglo Saxons from the northern reaches of the continent," he said. "But in the past 19 years, 80 percent have come from Hispanic and Asian countries -- non-whites who bring with them a background of Catholicism and Eastern religions."

For example, Los Angeles will experience an annual net gain in population over the next 11 years. That gain will reflect increases only among Hispanic and Asian groups.

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Other changes in American society -- such as the graying of the nation and the change in the workplace from a nation of factory workers to a nation of information clerks -- will impact the local church.

"Southern Baptists have the message, the technology, the methods, the financial ability, the people to share the gospel with our nation and our world," Rose said.

"But do we have the willingness?"

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O'Brien urges "new era  
of associationalism"

By Karen Benson & Jim Newton

N-4MB

Baptist Press  
8/30/89

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Collaboration among Southern Baptist associations is the last frontier for world evangelization, Bill O'Brien said.

O'Brien, executive vice president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, challenged the denomination's associational directors of missions to become "global strategists" and called upon the associations to see themselves in a "global mosaic." His remarks came during the National Convocation on the Baptist Association at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

The hope for Southern Baptists as a denomination "lies in our ability to rally our people to a renewal of mission in the very heart and soul of our churches," O'Brien said.

"I am not talking about missions projects. Rather, I'm talking about a movement. If our magnificent obsession could become world evangelization locally and globally, we would witness a miracle in our denomination."

The times call for an "era of new associationalism," he said. "The new dimension is that of networking in such a way that the corporate giftedness of all the churches is brought to bear on the single reason for the existence of the association -- missions.

"I am not suggesting that every director of missions and each association become a mission board unto themselves. That would result in fragmentation and individualism that undercuts our cooperative approach to missions and would be totally counter-productive."

But each church and association must understand that they exist for the doing of local and global missions, he said. This "big picture perspective" will allow associations to "think expansively and plan broadly."

In the Baptist tradition, this perspective gives associations and churches the best of both worlds, O'Brien said -- freedom and cooperation.

He also challenged the directors of missions to become people of foresight and strategic planners.

"The era of new associationalism calls for missions with foresight, for strategic vision and for adaptive planning."

Southern Baptists must cooperate with other "Great Commission Christians" who have developed plans similar to Baptists' Bold Mission Thrust effort to proclaim the gospel to every person in the world by the year 2000, he said: "Southern Baptists can never do it alone," he declared. "Even if we could, God wouldn't allow it, because God will not permit pride in heaven."

As a result of the Global Consultation on World Evangelization in Singapore last January and the Lausanne II World Congress on Evangelization in Manila recently, "a new era of cooperation and collaboration in world evangelization is emerging, he said.

O'Brien added a sixth dimension to a five-point call for partnership in missions and evangelism voiced in the convocation's opening session by Carl Duck, director of missions for Nashville Baptist Association.

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Duck, a former president of the national organization of Southern Baptist associational directors of missions, urged Southern Baptists to cooperate as partners in missions at five levels: individual, local church, the association, the state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. "For a partnership to work," Duck said, "there must be a genuine spirit of cooperation and mutual trust."

Southern Baptists have the potential for the greatest partnership in missions involvement that the world has ever seen, Duck said.

The Ridgecrest convocation could become "the catalyst for our entire convention coming together for a new thrust in world missions," he added.

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Associations finally  
get respect, Pinson says

By Karen Benson & Jim Newton

N-HMB

Baptist Press  
8/30/89

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--The association finally has achieved the respect it deserves in Southern Baptist life, Bill Pinson said in a speech that won him a standing ovation from associational directors of missions.

Pinson, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, spoke during the National Convocation on the Baptist Association at Ridgecrest( N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

The directors of missions also gave a spontaneous standing ovation the same day to Lloyd Elder, president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, who urged Baptists to build bridges from the past to the future. Elder, who recently survived an attempt by Sunday School Board trustees to fire him, was greeted with a standing ovation as he came to the platform at the convocation.

Both Pinson and Elder called for strengthening the partnership between associations, state conventions and Southern Baptist Convention agencies, and warned that the denomination's Cooperative Program unified budget is being threatened by direct appeals to the churches.

Pinson issued a plea for more appreciation, more cooperation and more deliberation between the partners.

Baptist polity needs renewed appreciation if the partnership is to be effective, he said: "Churches -- congregations of believers -- are the basic unit of Baptist life. No ecclesiastical or political entities are to dictate to a church what it believes or does. Only the members under Christ have the authority to determine the church's actions."

In Baptist polity, the church is basic to all other entities, he added: "A church relates directly to the association, directly to the state convention and directly to the national convention. The churches do not go through any of these to the other, nor do any of these go through the other to the churches."

It becomes inappropriate, then, to speak of "levels" of Baptist organizations, Pinson said -- the "associational level," the "state convention level" or the "national level."

Apart from the church, "they all are on the same level," he said. "Each is equal to the other. None is more important than the other. All have vital roles to play in enhancing the life and ministry of the churches."

Because of this Baptist polity, state conventions have a right to go directly to the churches and promote programs without communicating with associational leaders, Pinson said, noting, "But it is far better to correlate matters with the association."

Similarly, a national agency has a right to go directly to the churches, he said, "but how much better if it will coordinate with the state convention and the associations involved. Polity does not demand this, but courtesy, common sense and cooperation do."

That right to direct access creates tough issues that state conventions and associations must face, Pinson said.

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For instance, Pinson asked, should all national agencies go directly to churches to promote their programs? Should all of the entities of a state convention have direct access to churches? "I don't think so. If not all, which ones, if any, should? And how should these relate to the association?" he asked.

The number of direct appeals from state conventions and national agencies is "causing frustration and resentment among the pastors in our denomination," Pinson said. "The partnership is in danger of being dismantled by being overwhelmed."

That issue -- and many others -- cannot be dealt with constructively apart from a loving, cooperative, appreciative mindset, Pinson said.

Such an approach will help when tough issues need to be dealt with or when relational matters arise that need to be resolved, he said.

"On the other hand, if we allow turfdom, selfish interests and pride to prevail, we will be fragmented and ineffective in our service for the Lord. What we do is up to us. No one can make us cooperate. But I believe we want to, and we will."

In another address, Elder said Baptists need to look to their heritage and make sure the future is solidly anchored in the denomination's mission past.

Elder compared the denomination to a bridge that is solidly anchored at each end of the span, combines functional strength with aesthetic appeal, and is built for the purpose of linking a logical departure point with a needed destination.

"Our Southern Baptist roots are firmly embedded in a missions past," he said. Today's generation of Baptists "must be good bridges to our missions future. We must make sure that this future is solidly anchored, remains powerful and appealing, yet holds tenaciously purposeful, ever faithful to our heritage."

Voicing support for the Cooperative Program, Elder warned that the denomination is in danger of returning to the "society" approach of each Southern Baptist agency going directly to the churches with fund-raising appeals.

"We find ourselves on the verge of AD 2000 not with enlarged missionary Cooperative Program resources, but reverting to the early 1920s on a new crisis-funding and society approach," he said. "As for me and my house, I want to revitalize the Cooperative Program and grow again in its spiritual impact."

The six-day convocation was sponsored by the associational missions division of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

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Cooperation in diversity  
essential, Lewis says

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

Baptist Press  
8/30/89

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Cooperation despite diversity is essential to the survival of the Southern Baptist Convention, Larry Lewis told associational directors of missions.

Lewis, president of the SBC Home Mission Board, made the statement during the National Convocation on the Baptist Association at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Lewis compared Southern Baptists to two tomcats hanging over a clothesline with their tails tied together. A union does not automatically bring about harmony, he noted.

Despite current difficulties, Southern Baptists historically have been a cooperative people, he explained: "That is precisely why we are who we are today.

"Cooperative is not an option, it is an imperative."

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In addition to the 10-year-old denominational conflict, he cited the need for greater cooperation within the SBC on how the Cooperative Program unified budget offerings are divided: between small churches and mega-churches, between ethnic groups, between rural areas and metropolitan areas, and between associations and state conventions.

"Neither the Home Mission Board or the Foreign Mission Board has the resources needed to fulfill all our missions needs," he said. "Financial support for missions causes has been a growing concern."

Lewis, who has been a critic of recent changes in the Cooperative Program funding formula, called for greater cooperation within the SBC.

"Let's not struggle and fight with one another over how we're going to divide the offerings. Let's focus our efforts on increasing those dollars, on nurturing the growth of missions funds as comrades and companions," he said.

Beyond the national level, Lewis called on state conventions and associations to cooperate more in partnership missions.

The 37 state and regional conventions in the SBC have identified 22,000 places where new churches are needed, he noted, adding that resources not available from national agencies could be found in partnerships: "There is a desperate need today for churches in the South and in stronger areas to cosponsor new churches in new work states. I challenge you to find additional ways to engage in partnerships."

SBC agencies in recent years have paid greater attention to metropolitan areas than rural areas, he said. "You have not been forgotten," he declared to rural directors of missions.

Lewis announced the launching of a new program called "Town and Country Thrust" that will be for rural associations what Metro Thrust has been for metropolitan associations. More than 900 of Southern Baptists' 1,250 associations are outside metropolitan areas.

Having completed successful pilot programs in Georgia and New Mexico, the Home Mission Board now will begin adding additional states into the new strategy-planning process. In 1990, Arkansas, North Carolina and South Carolina will be the first to join the cooperative process.

Lewis also called on Southern Baptists to forge greater cooperation between ethnic groups: "It is not enough to simply establish new churches in communities that are predominantly black or ethnic. It is not enough simply to place a leader from those groups on our platforms to preach or to lead in prayer. We must reflect the colors and tongues and cultures of our churches in the leadership roles of the associations and our national agencies.

"For the mission partnership to be its best, each of the people groups we've reached for Christ must be fully franchised, equal partners in every respect."

Finally, Lewis called for greater cooperation between the smaller, traditional churches and the new mega-churches.

He said he realizes most mega-churches have the resources to function without an association or state convention. But rather than shunning mega-churches, associations should challenge them, he said.

"We must not overlook the tremendous potential of these churches for missions and ministry if properly challenged and directed," Lewis said, citing the accomplishments of First Baptist Church of Dallas, First Baptist Church of Houston and California's Saddleback Valley Community Church as examples.

"God has blessed us with some of the greatest churches in the history of Christendom. I think we ought not to moan about that, but we ought to rejoice in it."

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Photos from the National Convocation on the Baptist Association will be mailed to state Baptist papers by the Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press Sept. 1.

Baptist evangelists lead  
'world's largest crusade'

By Mary E. Speidel

N-FMB

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil (BP)--Two Baptist evangelists led what they called the "largest crusade in the world this year" Aug. 17-19 in the world's largest soccer stadium.

Brazilian Baptist evangelist Nilson Fanini invited Southern Baptist evangelist Bailey Smith to preach the three-day crusade in Rio de Janeiro's Maracana Stadium.

Some 15,000 people attended the first two nights of the crusade, Fanini said. About 100,000 attended the final afternoon service, broadcast via satellite to 134 television stations across Brazil.

The crusade was the climax of a week-long outreach effort led by Smith, 153 Southern Baptist volunteers -- including 70 pastors -- and Brazilian Baptists.

Smith, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, heads Bailey Smith Ministries, based in Atlanta. Fanini is pastor of First Baptist Church of Niteroi, Brazil, reportedly Latin America's largest church.

The evangelism project was jointly sponsored by Fanini's "Reencontro," or Re-encounter, television program, the Brazilian Baptist National Mission Board and two Brazilian state Baptist conventions.

Some Southern Baptist missionaries helped as translators during revival services led by volunteers Aug. 12-16 in Baptist churches around Rio de Janeiro, Smith said.

About 5,000 Brazilians made public spiritual decisions in those revivals, Fanini estimated; some 3,000 made professions of faith in Christ. About 20,000 people made spiritual decisions during the crusades at the stadium, he said. Responses to the television broadcast still are coming in by mail.

Those estimates caused differing reactions among Brazilian Baptists.

Juracy Bahia, director of the department of evangelism at the National Mission Board, said 664 spiritual decisions were reported on decision cards filled out during the crusade. Of that total, 417 were listed as professions of faith in Christ, he said.

Bahia said no records were available of decisions made in pre-crusade services held in Baptist churches.

But Joaquim de Paula Rosa, general superintendent of the Brazilian Baptist Religious Education and Publications Board, said he thought at least 20,000 people made spiritual decisions during the week. More than 1,100 churches participated in the outreach, he said.

Smith attributed the differing reports of decisions to the lack of enough counselors at the crusade. Counselors gave people who made public decisions a follow-up book by Smith and a decision card. Some 50,000 copies of his book were printed in Portuguese, Smith said, but only about 600 were distributed because not enough counselors were available.

Smith reported seeing hundreds of people respond who did not have a counselor to pray with them. "I was very sorry about that," he said. The counseling efforts were not arranged by his organization, he added.

In addition to revivals, Southern Baptist volunteers led Vacation Bible Schools for children and spread the gospel on the streets, in hospitals and in schools.

On the group's last day in Rio, Smith preached a revival service on the beach. About 35 people accepted Christ as savior.

Smith said one young woman approached him after making a profession of faith. She had hitched a ride to the beach, not realizing a revival service was going on there.

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The woman told Smith, "I was angry at first, because I thought they had taken me to the wrong beach, but now I know it was the right beach." She asked for a stack of tracts. "I have many friends," she said.

"That's what happens when Jesus really comes into a heart," Smith said. "We want everyone to know about it."

According to Fanini, the National Mission Board is coordinating crusade follow-up efforts. People who made decisions will be mailed a Bible correspondence course. Decision cards will be sent to Baptist churches.

The crusade was "a tremendous blessing for us here in Brazil, because we could cover all of Brazil," Fanini said, referring to the televised crusade services.

Smith added, "The most amazing thing is that the final Saturday telecast was watched by more people than any other evangelistic service in the history of the nation."

Fanini said the television broadcast fulfilled a dream of the late Southern Baptist missionary to Brazil, W. E. Entzminger, who lived from 1859 to 1930. Entzminger, who was pastor of First Baptist Church in Niteroi, wrote a Brazilian hymn. Its first line reads, "If I had a thousand voices to fill Brazil with the praise of Christ, what a pleasure that would be."

Through the broadcast of the crusade, "The gospel covered all of Brazil in one single day," Fanini said.

The crusade's musical soloist was Kellye Cash Sheppard, Miss America 1987, who is a Southern Baptist.

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Texas Baptist hospital to purchase  
FBC, Amarillo retirement facility

By Terry Barone

N- CO  
(Texas)

Baptist Press  
8/30/89

DALLAS (BP)--High Plains Baptist Health Systems in Amarillo, Texas, has been given permission by the Texas Baptist Human Welfare Coordinating Board to purchase Park Place Towers Retirement Community for \$6.255 million.

The 10-story retirement facility consisting of 119 apartments and a 56-bed nursing unit is owned by the First Baptist/Amarillo Foundation, a non-profit corporation governed by a 15-member board of trustees, all of whom are members of and elected by First Baptist Church of Amarillo.

Pending further study and review, the coordinating board delayed action on the proposal at its July 14 quarterly meeting. In a poll of the 14-member board in August, members approved the proposal, which also has been approved by the administrative committee of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

The proposal still must be approved by the 193-member Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board at its quarterly meeting, Sept. 12, in Dallas.

In addition to purchasing the high-rise retirement center, High Plains Baptist Health Systems also assumes all existing resident agreements and the required entrance fee refunds. The present unamortized entrance fees for all 119 units of the center total about \$6 million.

The \$6 million in entrance fees are "self liquidating," said Tim Holloway, president of High Plains Baptist Health Systems. "We do not have to pay the money back until the units are sold according to terms and agreements of the lease facility and residents."

Acie Cates, chairman of the board of trustees of First Baptist/Amarillo Foundation, in a prepared statement said: "When Park Place Towers was originally financed, funding was provided by local lenders on the basis that refinancing would occur sometime with five years of initial closing, that is sometime before June 1991. This period of time was assumed to be sufficient to stabilize operations and to successfully secure alternative sources of permanent financing."

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"After three and one-half years of operation and a careful, intense and lengthy study, the board of trustees of First Baptist/Amarillo Foundation has determined that the best option to pursue, but not the exclusive option, is to secure a buyer for Park Place Towers."

The search for potential buyers "has been reduced to a limited number of organizations," Cates' statement said. "One such business, High Plains Baptist Hospital, has been approached as to its potential interest in the acquisition of Park Place Towers."

High Plains had shown an interest in the property, and that transaction is "being pursued with due diligence," he added.

Holloway said the hospital's board of trustees seriously considered the possibility of building a retirement facility in the early 1980s.

About that time, the foundation announced that it would build a high-rise retirement facility, and the hospital decided "it did not want to be viewed as going into competition for potential residents of such a facility," he said. "Also, with the addition of more than 100 apartments in the Park Place Tower facility, there did not appear to be sufficient demand to plan, build and operate another retirement facility in this geographic area."

When the hospital learned of the availability of Park Place Towers, both hospital management and the board of trustees "re-evaluated the situation of being in the retirement community ministry," Holloway explained.

The purchase of Park Place Towers is an "excellent opportunity" for High Plains to enter into the retirement facility business, he said, adding that this type of ministry to the elderly is consistent with the goals and objectives of the charter and statement of purpose of the hospital.

Reasons Holloway gave for purchasing the facility included the price of \$6.255 million, considering the cost to build the facility was \$11 million; the excellent reputation of the facility which is five years old; the occupancy rate history of the facility; the need for more retirement facilities as the percentage of the population over age 65 increases; and the opportunity to offer a needed ministry to the Amarillo community.

The \$6.255 million would be paid in cash out of hospital reserves, and High Plains will assume no debts of Park Place Towers, Holloway said.

"This transaction is attractive to us because it will not create increased debt for the hospital," Holloway said.

Currently, 99 -- or 83 percent -- of the 119 units at Park Place Towers are occupied.

This is a "real selling point knowing you don't have to start at ground zero in marketing and filling space in this type of facility which has an excellent reputation" as that of Park Place Towers, Holloway said.