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90-78

SBC Forum participants
'recapture' frustrations

By Art Toalston

A-JMB

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The theme of the Southern Baptist Convention Forum, "Recapturing the Future," became one of recalling frustrations during the six sermons that headlined the meeting June 11 in New Orleans.

Attendance stretched beyond 2,000 for afternoon addresses by Randall Lolley and Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler. Lolley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Greensboro, N.C., was the target of SBC conservatives before his resignation as president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., in 1988. Crumpler, retired executive director of the denomination's Woman's Missionary Union and wife of a Cincinnati Baptist pastor, is a candidate for first vice president of the convention in behalf of SBC moderates.

David Montoya, a Gravette, Ark., pastor who broke ranks with conservatives last year, also addressed the meeting of SBC moderates. Montoya announced his intention to challenge some 30 nominations to SBC entities.

He urged the forum audience to pray for "other misguided zealots like myself."

Lolley likened leaders of the conservative faction controlling the SBC to cowboys. "They rule from their saddles," he said. "Never expect a cowboy to do a shepherd's job. Jesus said, 'I am the good shepherd.' Shepherds lead sheep and die for them if they have to."

Crumpler warned that Southern Baptists are losing their credibility because of their longstanding controversy. The effort that Southern Baptists are putting into debating the Bible should be redirected toward "hiding it in our hearts," she said, "and following its commands."

Frank Pollard, pastor of First Baptist Church in Jackson, Miss., echoed Crumpler's sentiments. News accounts focusing on Southern Baptists before the onset of the controversy in 1979 "reflected in one way or another 'these people are fools for Christ's sake,'" Pollard said. "Now media reports declare us only to be fools who have lost our purpose and turned on each other."

Once the denomination was growing by 200,000 people a year, Pollard said. "Now we're almost losing more people than we're gaining." And, he recounted, a key convention rally in 1979 in the Houston Astrodome to boost the denomination's "Bold Mission Thrust" goal of sharing the gospel worldwide by the year 2000 was undercut "before 24 hours had elapsed" by the start of the controversy.

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Other speakers during the forum were Gene Garrison, pastor of First Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, Okla.; John Killinger, distinguished professor of religion and culture at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.; and Herbert Reynolds, president of Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Garrison reminded that Christ calls his followers "not necessarily to win but to be faithful. Not every battle is Armageddon." Through their faithfulness, he said, moderates someday may see the convention return to peace.

Killinger observed that Baptists have faltered by "trying to use Christ instead of falling down and worshipping him. That's where all the problems in the SBC are coming from -- people who don't know what Christianity is all about ... people forgetting that Jesus is Lord."

Reynolds, focusing on the "historical and psychological context" of the denomination's "fundamentalists," charged that they have used "The Big Lie" as part of a mass movement strategy to take control of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Voted onto the forum's nine-member steering committee were Jan Aldredge Clanton, chaplain at Hillcrest Baptist Hospital in Waco, Texas; John Hewett, pastor of First Baptist Church in Asheville, N.C.; and Richard Groves, pastor of Wake Forest Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C.

Cecil Sherman, pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, and a longtime foe of the conservative movement, was named the forum's "Prophet of the Year." First Baptist Church in Jackson, Miss., received the forum's "Church of the Year Award." The church was cited as a "flagship church ... not only in size but in mission and ministry."

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More missionaries leave Liberia
as plans for peace talks begin

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F-FMB

MONROVIA, Liberia (BP)--Six more Southern Baptist missionaries left Liberia June 10 as Liberian religious leaders called for peace between battling government and rebel leaders.

The missionaries flew from the Liberian capital, Monrovia, to Abidjan, Ivory Coast, on one of several U.S. Embassy-chartered flights.

The six missionaries are Robert and Pat Bellinger of Carbondale, Ill.; Jim and Jane Park of Paducah, Ky.; and Fred and Mary Lou Levrets of Abilene, Texas. The Bellingers and the Parks planned to temporarily return to the United States. The Levretses planned to travel on to Nigeria. More than 50 Southern Baptist missionaries were in Liberia in early May, before the rebel offensive gained momentum. They hope to return when the fighting ends.

Six Southern Baptist missionaries remained in Liberia June 11 in towns outside Monrovia. They are Ed Laughridge of Rock Hill, S.C., who remained in Mano River; Kenneth Nicholson of Magdalena, N.M., and Joyce Nicholson of Seaside Calif., in Voinjama; and Chris Wilkinson of Gainesville, Fla., and Gwen Wilkinson of Ardmore, Tenn., also in Voinjama.

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Liberian religious leaders and government officials said the rebels of the National Patriotic Front have agreed to peace talks, according to press reports. The talks could begin in mid-June in Freetown, capital of Sierra Leone. The Liberian Council of Churches, made up of Christian and Muslim leaders, would mediate the talks. Levee Moulton, president of the Liberian Baptist convention, is a member of the church council calling for peace.

Religious leaders hoped the peace talks would end the fighting, which began last December when rebel troops led by Charles Taylor, a former civil servant accused of embezzlement, invaded Liberia's Nimba County from Ivory Coast. The fighting has killed more than 1,000 civilians and forced more than 200,000 people to flee to neighboring Guinea and Ivory Coast.

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Religious educators told
to demand quality

By Pat Cole

N-EO

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The Southern Baptist Religious Education Association focused on preparing for the future and building relationships during its 35th annual meeting June 10-11 in New Orleans.

The 1990s will require Southern Baptist religious educators to become infected with "an epidemic of quality," said Bill Taylor, associate pastor/minister of education at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas.

Religious educators will have to be "unmerciful" in demanding church ministries function with a high degree of quality, he said. But, he insisted that educators also must be unyielding in their insistence that church programming reflect sound principles of religious education.

Ralph Smith, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church, pointed out staff members have a unique calling which they bring to their positions. Ministers serve best in an environment of mutual respect for the role of each staff member, he said, noting ministers should "take the calling you have and use it to the best of your ability and don't compete" with other staff members.

Gary Hauk, manager of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family enrichment section, said ministers must be able to differentiate between their God-given vision of ministry and the expectations of other people.

For a minister, vision is "permission to live out a calling higher than myself," he explained.

During their meeting, the religious educators elected as officers for 1990-91: Katie Grogan, director of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware's department of church administration and family ministry, Columbia, Md., president; Bill Gambrell, minister of education, First Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss., president-elect; Robert L. Lamb, professor of Christian education, Gardner-Webb College, Boiling Springs, N.C., vice president; Hoyt R. Wilson, minister of education and administration, Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala., eastern vice president; R.W. Bobby Martin, minister of education, First Baptist Church, Carrollton, Texas, central vice president; Larry Burrow, minister of education and administration, Magnolia Avenue Baptist Church, Riverside, Calif., west rn vice president; and Joe Haynes, growth/administration consultant, Sunday School Board, secretary/treasurer.

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Drug czar says abuse
moral, spiritual problem

By Kay Moore

F-CD

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--National drug czar William J. Bennett told about 3,000 Southern Baptists that America's drug problem is "fundamentally a moral and spiritual problem" and praised a comprehensive program unveiled June 11 to help local Southern Baptist churches deal with drug abuse prevention and recovery in their congregations.

The program, called "Drug Free For Good!", helps churches start support groups for drug and alcohol abusers as well as for their family members. It also teaches churches how to help people recovering from drug abuse.

Bennett thanked Rapha (Hebrew for healing), a Houston-based organization offering Christian-oriented psychiatric and substance-abuse hospital care nationwide, for being "allies in this all-important effort" to fight drug abuse.

In presenting an appreciation plaque to Bennett, director of National Drug Control Policy, Southern Baptist Convention President Jerry Vines of Jacksonville, Fla., urged churches to address the drug abuse problem by caring about the pain of the person in the pew.

"A church is to be a place where hurting people are healed," Vines said. "Somehow in our minds, we have believed that if people walked within the door of the household of God, all their pains and all their hurts are excluded."

After 15 months on the job, Bennett said he is encouraged because he sees less drug abuse in America than he did five years ago.

However, he said he also continues to see the "face of evil" in drug abuse. As examples, he mentioned a police report about a mother who for three days left her 1-year-old child in the care of her 4-year-old child so the mother could procure money to support her drug habit. He also cited a police report of a mother who handed over her teen-age daughter to a drug dealer as payment for the mother's drug debt.

"For those who, because of modernity, believe that issues of right and wrong don't apply in society, one needs only to take a closer look at the drug problem," Bennett said.

"Maybe the decade of the '90s will be a time when we talk directly about right and wrong," he said.

"The most important thing as to whether people will or will not use drugs is their family values," he said. "It's important for churches to recognize their critical role toward prevention, then when that fails, (toward) treatment and recovery."

He said he has heard many people undergoing drug abuse treatment refer to crack as "the devil." "This comes up too many times to be ignored," he said.

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Rapha founder and president Robert McGee, in discussing the program which Rapha has piloted in various Southern Baptist churches around the country before unveiling it formally at the Monday luncheon, said drug abuse primarily is "a pain problem. They (drug abusers) use chemicals to deal with the pain in their lives." Rapha drafted the program after meeting with 80 Southern Baptist pastors last October.

"In God's eyes, the local church is not to be the secondary solution to the drug problem but to be the primary vehicle for the drug problem to be addressed," McGee said.

"We need not have a surface solution but something that deals with real life in a real way." He advocated churches starting support groups for codependent persons, for families that must deal with addiction, and for fathers who are grappling with parenting issues.

McGee said when communities introduce programs to deal with the drug problem, "tragically local churches are conspicuously absent when it is our territory."

Edwin Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Houston and a key leader in Rapha, said more than 500 people in his church are involved in various support groups dealing with everything from eating disorders to drug abuse-related matters.

He urged Southern Baptists not to just shoot people "with the gospel gun" and tell them they must be saved before the church can help them with their hurting.

Nelson Price, pastor of Roswell Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., said five percent of all addicts live on Skid Row and "the rest are in your pews." He said his church on Sunday nights conducts a 15-week program addressing substance abuse as well as codependency.

Randy Rial, son of Dickson Rial, pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church of Dallas, told the group that Rapha helped cure him of his cocaine problem.

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Candidates address
Hispanic ministers

By Ken Camp

F-CD

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention's two principal presidential candidates offered Hispanic Baptist ministers at their annual fellowship meeting the chance either to "make complete the course correction" or "turn attention away from an internal power struggle" in the nation's largest non-Catholic denomination.

Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, and Daniel Vestal, pastor of Dunwoody Baptist Church in suburban Atlanta, addressed the Southern Baptist Hispanic Ministers Conference in New Orleans, June 10-11.

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Other speakers challenged the Hispanic ministers to "become an integral part of Southern Baptist life" and accept the responsibility to evangelize unchurched Hispanics.

Chapman underscored his belief in the "inspired, infallible, inerrant word of God," and he expressed his desire to "enlarge the tent" to include all southern Baptists who share his convictions on the inspiration and authority of the Bible. "I want to encompass all Southern Baptists who believe in our perpetuation of allegiance to God's perfect word," he said.

Vestal said the 11-year controversy within the SBC has diverted Southern Baptists' attention from their need to evangelize the United States' growing ethnic population. "While we as a denomination have been embroiled in an internal struggle, America has been changing, and we are losing touch with the character and nature of our country," he said.

Daniel Sotelo, pastor of Templo Bautista in Fresno, Calif., and president of the conference, encouraged the Hispanic ministers to remain faithful in running toward the goal of equal rights, respect and responsibility within the Southern Baptist Convention.

Larry Lewis, president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, challenged Hispanic Baptists to double both their membership and their number of churches by the turn of the century. Southern Baptists should have at least 5,000 Hispanic churches with a total membership of about 1 million by the year 2000.

The fellowship elected Yamile Fernandez, pastor of Community Baptist Church in Santa Anna, Calif., as president. Other officers are: first vice president, Ray Carbajal, associational director of ethnic missions in Miami; second vice president, Lionel Reyes, pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispano Americano in New Orleans; and Sotelo, secretary-treasurer.

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Compassion, not demand
reaches people, DOMs told

By Mark Wingfield

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--More unchurched people will be reached by the compassion of cooperating churches than by demanding a strict loyalty to the Bible, an associational director of missions told his peers in their two-day annual meeting.

Russell Bennett of Louisville, Ky., made that statement in his president's address to the Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Directors of Missions in Metairie, La., preceding the Southern Baptist Convention.

"I don't think people go to hell because of brothels and gambling dens," said Bennett, director of missions for Long Run Baptist Association. "They go to hell because Christians don't love.

"People seldom enter the kingdom of God because of some eloquent speaker, but because some loving soul has cared for them. We do not need high pressure preaching to increase guilt so that people are immersed again and again. Rather we need churches that extend love to outsiders."

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Charles Carter, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., echoed that theme by encouraging directors of missions not to become so caught up in doing good that they forget to do the greatest good.

"The greatest enemy most of us confront in doing the best is not doing the worst; it's doing good. Our greatest enemy is doing good but secondary things," he said. "God forbid we go down in history as the denomination that fought over who believes the Bible while the world went to hell."

Jerry Clower, a star of the Grand Ole Opry and Southern Baptist layman, used humor to address issues in the denomination's 11-year-old internal fight.

"Watch my lips: I do not worship the Bible," Clower declared. "I had a personal experience with Jesus Christ when I was 13 years of age. I am in love with and worship Jesus.

"Let's not take our focus off Jesus. Folks are going to die and go to hell while we decide who believes the Bible."

In business sessions, the directors of missions approved the reports of a stewardship committee, presented by Everett Anthony, director of missions for Chicago Metro Association.

Anthony noted associations have faced a "growing shortfall" of money available for missions. "We felt we were not securing the kinds of resources that were needed," he said. The recommendation affirms the role of the association in missions and requests agencies and state conventions to "recognize the Baptist association as a full partner in missions and assist in developing creative financial strategies."

Bennett was re-elected to a second one-year term as president. Other officers elected are Glenn Hickey, Little Rock, Ark.; first vice president; Larry Martin, Boston, second vice president; Lawrence Clegg, Ponchatoula, La., secretary; Phil Hall, Albia, Iowa, treasurer; and Grayson Glass, La Marque, Texas, newsletter editor.

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Pray for enemies,
Hinson exhorts

By Sarah Zimmerman

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Seminarian Glenn Hinson confided to the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America Monday that he is angry but determined to love his enemies.

Hinson, professor of history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said he is angry about a number of events, including the "misrepresentation and abuse of my colleagues," the "control imposed on the Sunday School Board," the "blocking of the appointment of an outstanding couple to the mission field because the woman is ordained" and the appointment of trustees who "literally hate the institution they are appointed to serve."

To deal with the anger, Hinson said, Christians must acknowledge it and then admit they are powerless and helpless in dealing with "what is probably our most powerful emotion -- anger." Rather than seeking revenge, Hinson said to "unload on God who can handle it."

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"Prayer is the way, the only way, to love enemies," he said. "This is not praying for ourselves and against our enemies. It is bringing the person with ourselves before God."

The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America is a network of Baptists committed to justice and peace. The group's board of directors includes representatives from 11 Baptist conventions. Ken Sehested of Memphis, Tenn., is its executive director.

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WMU approves
record budget

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WMU*

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The executive board of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union approved a record \$12.5 million budget, seven new staff positions and reorganization plans for its program division June 11.

The board of the women's auxiliary also set goals for the 1991 and 1992 missions offerings.

The board adopted a budget of \$12,582,676 for 1990-91. The new budget represents an almost 10 percent increase from the current budget of \$11.4 million. The budget increase will pay primarily for new staff positions and the renovation required to provide office space for them, said board officials.

Seven new staff positions were approved -- photographer, financial secretary and five professional and support personnel for editorial and field servicing work.

The board also approved a reorganization of the Missions Program System, the division charged with the responsibility for field servicing, publications and language work.

Under the reorganization, three new sections will replace the current Publications Section and Interpretation Section. The new sections are the Age-Level Involvement Section, the Churchwide Involvement Section and the Associational Relations Unit.

Staff members who work with a particular target audience, such as children or the entire church, will be more closely grouped together.

The WMU board also set mission offering goals. The 1991 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal for 1991 is \$88 million. This represents a \$2 million increase over the 1990 foreign missions offering goal.

The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering goal for 1992 is \$41 million. This goal reflects no increase over the 1991 home missions offering goal.

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