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90-101

RTVC, BSSB discuss mutual  
telecommunications concerns By Dick McCartney & Linda Lawson N-00

NASHVILLE (BP)--Leaders of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and the Radio and Television Commission have re-opened discussions on ways the two agencies can work together in a telecommunications ministry for Southern Baptists.

RTVC President Jack Johnson and BSSB President Lloyd Elder have met twice since the June 21 decision by Sunday School Board trustees to terminate the Baptist Telecommunication Network on Oct. 1. Elder said earlier discussions between the agencies have been held beginning with the start-up of BTN and ACTS.

In a joint statement released Aug. 2, they said, "Our mutual objective is to explore options for working cooperatively within our respective program assignments to enhance one telecommunications system for the benefit of Southern Baptist churches and the entire denomination and to offer customer-supported video products."

Areas of discussion include "joint research, relationships with state conventions, joint productions, the possible marketing of RTVC programs and services through BSSB channels and marketing of BSSB products and services through the ACTS Network," the statement continued.

However, they emphasized, "As these discussions proceed, we may eliminate some of these areas and discover others with greater potential."

Elder and Johnson said they have not set a date for completing their talks.

"Our stewardship demands both careful deliberation and appropriate speed," the statement said. "We want to find out what Southern Baptists want and need from our two agencies."

As discussions proceed, Elder said a Sunday School Board video marketing task force has been named to study Southern Baptist needs in video and other audiovisual products.

The task force, to be chaired by Joe Denney, director of the BTN/audiovisuals department, also will consider organizational and personnel needs for producing and marketing video and other audiovisual products, Elder said.

Conversations with the RTVC are crucial to the board's overall research and service commitment to the churches, he said.

Johnson said the discussions could open up new ways the two agencies can work together for the benefit of local churches.

"The Radio-TV Commission is committed to helping churches take full advantage of the television and video opportunities. These discussions may prove to be the beginning of a new cooperative relationship with very positive implications for our churches and associations," Johnson said.

In their joint statement, Johnson and Elder concluded: "We believe Southern Baptists must use television, video tapes and other media to share the gospel with every person in the world by the year 2000 and beyond. Our commitment is finding ways we can work together most effectively and efficiently to support Southern Baptists in our common mission."

Bush signs rights law  
for nation's disabled

By Kathy Palen

*N-BJC*

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Bush has signed into law legislation that bans discrimination against the disabled.

As 2,000 disabled individuals and their families watched during a White House ceremony July 26, the president signed the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"Every man, woman and child with a disability can now pass through once-closed doors into a bright new era of equality, independence and freedom," Bush said.

"America welcomes into the mainstream of life all of our fellow citizens with disabilities," he added. "We embrace you for your abilities and for your disabilities, for our similarities and, indeed, for our differences."

The legislation was cleared by the Senate July 13 by a vote of 91-6. The House of Representatives a day earlier gave its approval to the bill by a 377-28 vote.

The law provides the disabled with the same civil rights protections given to women and minorities under the 1964 Civil Rights Act. It bans discrimination in employment, public accommodations, and transportation and communication systems.

The Americans with Disabilities Act includes two major exemptions for churches and related institutions.

The law excludes religious institutions or entities controlled by religious institutions from a list of categories of establishments -- ranging from stores to restaurants to office buildings -- considered to be public accommodations.

Also under the law, religious organizations are allowed to exercise religious preference in hiring, as well as to require all job applicants and employees to conform to the organizations' religious tenets.

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Land expresses outrage at Bush's  
2nd homosexual lobby invitation

By Louis Moore

*N-CLC*

Baptist Press  
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NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission Executive Director Richard D. Land says he is outraged and distressed that the Bush administration has again invited representatives of the homosexual lobby to a White House ceremony.

Land said news of the presence of the homosexual lobbyists for a second time at the White House will further anger many Southern Baptists. "Large numbers of Southern Baptists want to know why you are giving such official recognition to a homosexual-lesbian lifestyle they find abhorrent," Land said in a letter to Bush August 1.

"This second invitation to the homosexual lobby has grievously damaged your administration's standing among many of my constituents and has led many of us to ask, 'Does the White House no longer care about our concerns?' " Land said .

Land asked President Bush to arrange a meeting with him and other representatives of religious and pro-family organizations at the earliest possible date to discuss how "Bush's policies coincide with the agenda of the homosexual lobby and what we may expect in this regard from your administration in the future."

According to the Washington Post, on July 26 five representatives of homosexual organizations were present as invited guests at Bush's signing of the new disabilities act. The Post said on July 27 the presence of the homosexuals at the White House ceremony seemed to refute earlier White House explanations that a previous invitation to homosexual activists was a mistake.

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"This active courting of the homosexual lobby by your administration goes far beyond any argument of being 'president of all the people,'" Land said. "Hopefully, you are the president of many people you would not officially invite to the White House as representatives of groups whose views and lifestyles you disdain. For example, I am certain you would not knowingly invite representatives of a drug dealers association to the White House because, as your long-standing record indicates, you abhor their values and would not want to give them the acceptance and approbation such an invitation inevitably conveys."

Land said he recognizes that homosexuals who are successful in different professions have long been invited to the White House for various functions and honors. But he said the difference between those invitations and the current ones is that the homosexual activists are being invited specifically because they are homosexuals. Previously, individuals were invited to the White House from time to time in spite of their homosexuality and because of their achievements in various sectors of our society, he said.

"It must be clearly understood that the essential issue here, as I said in my letter, is the acceptance and approbation such an invitation conveys for what large numbers of Americans strongly believe to be a deviant lifestyle," Land said.

Land urged concerned Southern Baptists to call and write the White House to express their feelings regarding this latest invitation. Southern Baptists wanting to express their opinions to President Bush should write him at The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; or call (202) 456-7639.

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Women's issue is 'the big question'  
for Southern Baptists, pastor says

By Mark Wingfield

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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--The biggest decision facing Southern Baptists concerns the role of women in the church, a pastor and acclaimed author said.

Calvin Miller, pastor of Westside Baptist Church in Omaha, Neb., made the statement during home missions week at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center. Miller is known among Southern Baptists as author of a trilogy including "The Singer," "The Song" and "The Finale."

In a message on decisions, Miller said: "I think the big one for Southern Baptists is going to be the issue of women. We're all going to have to decide."

Modern society demands answers to tough questions, Miller said. "We must come out of our prayer closets, out of our time of looking at the Bible ready to answer some pretty heavy questions."

In addition to questions about women, the church must face the issues of AIDS and abortion, he said, citing his church's strong stance against abortion.

"Dealing with these kinds of questions calls for making a decision that doesn't make you popular with everybody," he explained. "That's OK; you only need to be popular with God."

Miller called on Southern Baptists to take a new look at the theological basis for their position on women's roles. "I know that a hundred years ago Southern Baptist pastors ... would always point to Genesis 9, verse 25 and the Mark of Canaan and say that black people were engineered at Eden to serve the whites.

"That was a theological doctrine, even though now we're embarrassed. None of us here would ever feel that any race was created to serve another race."

One hundred years from now, Christians could be equally embarrassed by their position on what has been termed the Mark of Eve, Miller warned. This concept emphasizes that Eve was told she would bring forth children in pain and be servant to her husband.

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"I would like to see us get honest with an exegesis so that in a hundred years we don't feel about the Mark of Eve as our forebears felt about the Mark of Cain," Miller said. "I'd like to see us when we start quoting I Timothy 3 try to reckon alongside that, that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female.

"I'd like to hear us quit talking about submission and lordship in the home and start talking more about mutual servanthood," he said. "I have never for the life of me understood in Ephesians 5:25, when the Bible says husbands love your wives, how you can love her without serving her.

"Servitude and love, if I read the life of Jesus Christ and the incarnation right, are one single doctrine."

In reconciling Scripture, Miller said Christians also must deal with the New Testament declaration that in the last days God will pour out his Spirit on all people and "your sons and daughters will prophesy."

Miller questioned how Southern Baptists would have regarded Lottie Moon had she lived 100 years later and won a Nobel Peace Prize. Moon, an early missionary to China, is the namesake of the denomination's annual offering for foreign missions.

"How do we feel about her now?" he asked. "Are we willing to put her name up alongside Hudson Taylor's (also a pioneer missionary to China) and say they were exactly equal in the sight of God, not only in what they achieved with their servitude to Jesus Christ, but in the fact that both were equally filled with the Spirit?"

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Linking pastors suggested to solve  
problem of baptismless churches

By Mark Wingfield

F-NMS

Baptist Press  
8/3/90

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--The problem of baptismless churches could be solved by linking pastors of those churches with pastors of growing churches in the same association, a Home Mission Board leader suggested.

Baptismless churches are those that record no baptisms during the course of a year. In 1989 there were 7,269 such churches in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Bob Campbell of the HMB's associational evangelism department addressed the topic during the annual meeting of state evangelism directors at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

"This is a problem we're going to have to deal with," Campbell told the group.

He offered what he labeled "the simplest strategy anyone at the Home Mission Board has ever given. You don't even have to have a manual to do this," he said.

Campbell's strategy is for pastors of growing churches to develop relationships with pastors of baptismless churches in order to encourage them.

He noted that pastors of baptismless churches often feel a heavy load of guilt and shame that prevents them from seeking assistance. Some pastors have stopped attending their state evangelism conferences because they leave feeling only more guilt, he said.

State and associational evangelism directors could foster the link-ups by hosting dinner meetings to explain the strategy and call for voluntary commitments, Campbell suggested.

In addition to dialogue between the pastors, the two churches could trade pastors for one Sunday and cooperate in a one-day soul winning workshop or lay evangelism weekend, he said.

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Campbell noted there might be some isolated areas where an evangelistic church could justifiably go 12 months without a baptism. Other reasons for a lack of baptisms could be church splits or the lack of a pastor, he said.

In 1988, the 6,210 churches which reported no baptisms ranged in membership from less than 50 to more than 1,500. However, the majority of baptismless churches (92 percent) had less than 300 members. Nearly 73 percent were in open country or villages of less than 500 population. Another 14 percent were in cities of more than 10,000 people.

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Rural churches will change  
to survive, DOMs predict

By Mark Wingfield

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8/3/90

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--If about two dozen directors of missions from rural associations are right, the rural church of the future may look considerably different than it does today.

The DOMs from across the western and north central United States participated in a conference on rural America during home missions week at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center. They were asked to project what rural Southern Baptist churches will be like in the year 2020.

They predict fewer rural churches, due to consolidation and disbanding of dwindling congregations. Churches that survive will feature streamlined programs, smaller facilities, greater use of technology and more ethnic ministries, the DOMs said.

For example, the FAX machine could become the primary means of communication between rural churches and denominational offices, several participants suggested. "The associational office that doesn't modernize will be bypassed," one DOM commented.

The group also predicted an increasing number of non-denominational or community churches as no one denomination is able to sustain work in some areas.

Gary Goreham, a sociology professor from North Dakota State University, led the three-day session that explored trends and issues facing rural America, the impact of the farm crisis on rural churches and the future of the rural church.

Despite a dwindling population in many areas and the financial devastation of the farm crisis, the rural church will endure as an institution, participants said. However, the churches that survive will be the churches that change, they agreed.

After a day of looking at trends in rural America, one DOM commented: "If all these changes are going on, we can't do what we've always done. We've got to change."

Those trends include rapid technological change, a transitional population, changing labor sources, intrusion of urbanites and retirees, an increasing ethnic population, the influence of television and the arrival of national chain stores such as Wal-Mart.

Even though technological change has impacted farming, it often stops at the church door, the DOMs said. "People may be using the latest technology in their farms, but they are still 45 years behind in the churches," one participant noted.

Goreham suggested that rural churches must learn to look beyond their programs to see ways to impact community development. Since churches are accustomed to training leadership, they naturally could provide leaders for rural development, he said.

Christians should not forget rural areas in the quest to reach urban areas, Goreham said. "There still will be people out there. If we have a commitment to the Great Commission, we have a commitment to rural areas.

"The future is largely dependent upon us," he said. "The real challenge for churches in rural America is to ask, 'What do we want to be and what steps are needed to get there?'"