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January 14, 1991

91-5

SSB trustee meeting called
regarding Elder's presidency

By Linda Lawson

N-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--A meeting of the 90-member board of trustees of The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention has been called for Thursday, Jan. 17, in Nashville "for the purpose of evaluating and responding to the performance" of President Lloyd Elder, according to a letter sent Jan. 11 to all trustees.

The general administration committee which has been reviewing Elder's performance will meet at 10 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 17. The full board will convene at 7 p.m. and, if needed, Friday at 9 a.m. The called meeting comes 17 days before a regularly scheduled meeting of the board Feb. 4-6 in Nashville.

Bill Anderson, chairman of trustees and pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of Clearwater, Fla., said Jan. 12 the meeting was called after he received written petitions from more than 20 trustees. He declined to name those trustees.

Sunday School Board trustee bylaws state that "special meetings of the Board may be called by or at the request of the Chairman of the Board or upon the written petition of any 15 trustees."

Anderson said a five-member workgroup of the general administration committee met in Nashville Dec. 13 to review Elder's performance as president. Members included Dan Collins, chairman of the general administration committee and an attorney from Taylors, S.C.; Gene Mims, vice chairman of trustees and pastor of First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tenn.; Bobby Welch, pastor of First Baptist Church of Daytona Beach, Fla.; Floyd Williams, president of Franchise Personnel Agency in Memphis, Tenn.; and Anderson.

"We discussed at length some issues that have arisen, particularly the McBeth book," said Anderson. The administration of the board withdrew before publication a centennial history of the Sunday School Board written by Leon McBeth, professor of church history at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, after a committee of trustees reviewed the manuscript in August 1990. The trustee committee voted unanimously to "counsel the administration not to proceed with the publishing of the book."

Anderson said the 17-member general administration committee met Jan. 4 to consider the report of the workgroup. He declined comment on whether the committee has asked Elder to resign or retire.

"The general administration committee discussed with Lloyd all kinds of options related to what many consider an impasse in leadership at the board," said Anderson. "The committee is still discussing options, all kinds of options."

Elder declined comment regarding the called meeting or issues related to his performance to "honor the executive privilege" of the general administration committee.

Anderson said the general administration committee will meet on Jan. 17 to "refine a recommendation" for presentation to the full board.

"My assumption is they will make a recommendation. I don't know at this time what that recommendation will be," said Anderson.

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In response to why a meeting was being called less than three weeks before a regularly scheduled meeting of the trustees, Anderson said the written petitions of more than 20 trustees had specified a called meeting prior to the Feb. 4-6 semi-annual meeting.

"I believe their (trustees) desire is to go ahead with this (review of Elder's performance) and not pre-empt the other business that will be dealt with in February," said Anderson. "We have no option but to call the meeting."

He said he could not anticipate trustee preference regarding a closed or open session for the called meeting.

In August 1989, a motion to fire Elder was discussed for more than one hour in an open session before the motion was withdrawn.

"I would much rather do business in an open meeting, as a general principle," said Anderson. "I don't know what the will of the trustees will be or what the preference of Lloyd Elder will be."

Anderson said the Jan. 17 meeting has been called for the single purpose "of reviewing and responding to the performance of the president."

The trustee bylaw concerning special meetings states that "only such business for which any special meeting may be called shall be acted upon; however, other business may be transacted upon unanimous consent of the trustees present and voting."

As to whether trustees are likely to review the performance of other members of the administration in the future, Anderson said he had "no information about that."

"I appreciate the spirit of the general administration committee," said Anderson. "I sense a tremendous loyalty to the institution itself."

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30 Baptist workers exit
likely war zones; 25 remain

By Art Toalston



Baptist Press
1/14/91

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Thirty Southern Baptist representatives had evacuated potential battle zones in the Middle East by Jan. 14 as the test of wills between the United States and Iraq approached a climax.

However, 25 other Southern Baptist workers have opted, for now, to stay in Israel, the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza, and the island of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf -- despite the seeming inevitability of war over Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Another 18 workers are continuing to operate a hospital in Yemen, an Arab peninsula country that has aligned itself with Iraq.

"I don't intend to be a martyr or a hero," said Sonny Rogerson of Georgetown, S.C., who is remaining in an Arab sector of Israel where Palestinian activists have stepped up their anti-Israel campaign known as the Intifada in recent months.

Rogerson said the primary reason he is staying "is just the sense that the Lord would have me here. I don't feel a peace about leaving. I never have. I'm not saying that I won't leave if it becomes evident I'm no longer an asset to the people I work with. But I feel there are going to be ministry opportunities that maybe I haven't had since I've been here."

The Jan. 14 telephone interview with Rogerson was cut short by disrupted telephone service. Rogerson's wife, Sissy, and their three children evacuated to the island of Cyprus Jan. 11.

At least six other Southern Baptist workers from Israel were scheduled to arrive in Cyprus Jan. 14. Three others were returning to the United States. Otherwise, 20 Southern Baptist workers were still in Israel Jan. 14, most in assignments relating to Arab Baptist churches or congregations of Jewish believers in Jesus.

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In Jordan, the six remaining Southern Baptist workers were planning to leave on the advice of Jordanian pastors, said Anita Thorne from Nicosia, Cyprus. Mrs. Thorne is the wife of Dale Thorne, director of Southern Baptist work in the Middle East and North Africa. Thorne was assisting the Baptist workers from Israel Jan. 14 after their arrival by ferry in Cyprus.

No flights were available for the last Jordan evacuees, Mrs. Thorne said, so they were investigating alternative transportation to Egypt. Southern Baptists operate two schools in Jordan and assist several Baptist churches of Jordanian believers. The nation is wedged between Iraq and Israel.

Nine Baptist workers evacuated Gaza by bus to Egypt Jan. 14. One other worker was remaining in Israel, reported Jack Hodges. Hodges, a Southern Baptist worker from Hildebran, N.C., is staying in Gaza with his wife, Shawn, of Hickory, N.C., and their three children.

Southern Baptist workers in Gaza operate a school of nursing and are part of a Baptist congregation in the small territory packed with Palestinian refugee camps.

"We just feel very strongly and at peace that God desired for us to stay," Hodges said in a telephone interview.

"We've taken into consideration the community we live in -- our neighbors," he continued, "and we feel we have a strong support group among our neighbors and this caused us to take a very solid look at staying ... to be a blessing to our community and have opportunities to share and witness among them."

Hodges said he and his wife also considered "what's best for our family." Dangers come with staying in Gaza, he said, but, "We didn't like the instability of moving and moving and moving -- and the uncertainty of whether we could even come back.

"We've talked with our families and they have affirmed us as we've shared how we believe we can be a blessing rather than a burden to the people here," Hodges said. "Each of our missionary colleagues affirmed us, too."

One Southern Baptist worker, Don Littlejohn of Fort Worth, Texas, is continuing to do medical technology work at a hospital in Bahrain. His wife, Peggy, of Houston, their two children and another Southern Baptist co-worker, Margaret McPherson of Midland, Texas, have returned to the United States.

In Yemen, 18 Southern Baptist workers and more than 100 Yemeni co-workers are continuing to operate the Jibla Baptist Hospital, one of three hospitals serving a region of about 2 million people. When the hospital opened in 1968, it was only the second Christian work in the country since Islam's early days there 1,300 years ago.

The hospital's normal 75-bed capacity has been scaled back because of the exodus from Yemen of skilled workers from other countries who had worked at the facility.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, Southern Baptists were remaining at their posts in Cyprus, Egypt and Morocco. Southern Baptist broadcasting and publication workers relocated to Cyprus in 1987 when American passport privileges were suspended in Lebanon. Southern Baptist representatives continue to work in tandem with Arab Baptist staffs in Beirut, Lebanon, to produce a range of radio and TV programs, books and other publications.

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Registration under way
for SBC childcare

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N-CB

ATLANTA (BP)--Registration for on-site childcare for preschool children of out-of-town messengers to the 1991 Southern Baptist Convention is now being accepted.

Registration material is available by writing to SBC Preschool Child Care, c/o WRBC, 3626 Peachtree Road, N.E., Atlanta, Ga. 30326.

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The material will include information about childcare policies, hours of operation, fees, and registration forms.

Childcare registration will be confirmed on a first-come, first-served basis. Parents are urged to write for registration materials immediately.

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New system problems
cause literature delays

By Charles Willis

NSSB

Baptist Press
1/14/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--Shipment of Southern Baptist dated church literature fell "considerably short" of a new distribution system goal to streamline order fulfillment to churches, a Sunday School Board official said.

Problems in filling 145,750 church literature orders for the January, February and March quarter had resulted in late and incorrect orders to church customers, "some of whom did not get their materials in time for the first Sunday in January," Andy Dodson, director of the board's distribution services division, said.

"We apologize to our customers for this disappointing level of service," Dodson said. "We miscalculated the time needed to retrain personnel to a completely new system, and a number of related start-up problems compounded our inability to deliver the improved service we had anticipated. We are committed to solving these problems so we can fill orders accurately and get them delivered on time."

The total order volume for the quarter included 62,318 mail orders and 83,432 telephone orders, Dodson said, adding, 53,545 of the telephone calls came in December, causing all 51 incoming lines to be busy.

"We understand many customers did not succeed in getting through to place orders or discuss order problems. We share their frustration and ask that they accept our sincere regret," Dodson continued.

More than 14,000 of the December telephone calls were related to order adjustments and complaints, he said.

When difficulties with the new system became evident, Dodson said a second shift of temporary workers was employed and that many persons worked long hours, Saturdays and even New Year's Day to help meet churches' needs. All orders entered into the computer system by Dec. 31 were filled and shipped by Jan. 3, he said.

As efforts are made to smooth the system for the future, Dodson said churches can help by honoring the order date printed at the top of the undated literature order form. For the April, May, June quarter, the suggested order date is Jan. 18. April 18 is the suggested date by which churches should order July, August and September materials.

For recent quarters, including January, February and March, slightly more than 20 percent of orders for materials arrived by the suggested order date, Dodson said.

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In Europe, Land lobbied
against RU-486 for U.S.

By Tom Strode

NCO
CLC

Baptist Press
1/14/91

WASHINGTON (BP)--Richard D. Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, recently participated in a series of meetings in Europe that could prove crucial in the ongoing effort to prevent RU-486, the French abortion pill, from being introduced in the United States.

Land was among 11 persons who traveled to Germany and France Dec. 10-14 to inform officials of the companies involved with RU-486 of the opposition to it in this country. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has not approved the importation of RU-486 for personal use. RU-486 is legal in France and is distributed widely by the French medical community.

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Land said he was greatly encouraged by the response of the companies' officials.

"I came away with a clear impression that they understood the situation in the United States was very different from the situation in France and that abortion was not 'widely accepted' in this country," he said. "They are now very much more aware of the difficulties that would arise and the controversy that would inevitably follow attempts to market RU-486 in this country."

The participants included Jack Willke, president of the National Right to Life Committee; Phyllis Schlafly, president of Eagle Forum; Tom Minnery, vice president of Focus on the Family, and representatives from Concerned Women for America, Lutheran Church/Missouri Synod, American Academy of Medical Ethics, International Right to Life Federation, Knights of Columbus as well as others from National Right to Life, which planned the trip.

The group met with officials of Roussel Uclaf, the French company that manufactures RU-486; Rhone-Poulenc, which holds 35 percent interest in Roussel Uclaf; and Hoechst, A.G., which possesses a majority share in Roussel. Hoechst is located in Frankfurt, Germany. Roussel and Rhone-Poulenc are in Paris.

"Our message was loud and clear, and I believe got through ...," Willke said. "What we can say for sure is that the myth of 'limited opposition' to RU-486 has been completely shattered."

The trip was planned to offset the lobbying efforts of pro-abortion groups from the United States that already had visited the companies' officials, Land said. Its purpose also was to make certain the corporate executives understood that this country did not meet some of the guidelines that their own corporations had drawn up in determining in which countries to seek to introduce the abortion pill, he said.

Land said the protocol established by the corporations included the following limitations: (1) abortion should be legal in any country in which RU-486 is introduced, (2) abortion should be widely accepted and (3) a sophisticated health-care system should exist to ensure proper usage of the abortion drug.

The group stressed to the officials that the United States fails these tests because abortion is "an extremely divisive issue" in this country and because many of the women and girls who would use RU-486 would not have satisfactory medical supervision, Land said.

"The reason this was laid down as one of the protocols by the companies involved is that they know that if RU-486 is not used in conjunction with a highly developed and sophisticated health-care delivery system it will result in large numbers of deaths of women who will have complications from the use of this drug," Land said.

He said the group made it clear that marketing the abortion pill in the United States "would create a firestorm of controversy."

The group also expressed its opposition to the distribution of RU-486 in Third World countries, which definitely would not have "any semblance or form of a well-developed health-care system," Land said.

He said the trip "shows that the pro-life movement can accomplish a great deal when it is pro-active rather than reactive."

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CORRECTION: In BP story titled "Despite obstructions, souls are being won in Saudi Arabia," dated 1/11/91, please change the name of the chaplain mentioned in the third paragraph to Alan Hendrickson, not Glenn as released. Also in the story titled "Chaplains to Middle East; 'excited about what God can do'" dated the same day, please change the date in paragraph five to Jan. 8, not Dec. 8. In paragraph 22, the name of Breland's wife should be spelled Kaye, not Kay.

Thanks,
Baptist Press
