



February 7, 1991

91-19

SSB trustees, employees
dedicate Centennial Tower

By Charles Willis

N-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--In a Feb. 5 service of "heritage and hope," trustees and employees of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board dedicated the 100-year-old institution's new nine-story Centennial Tower to "continued ministry in the name of Jesus Christ."

Nashville employees and retirees and leaders of other denominational agencies joined a plenary session of the board of trustees to honor the vision of J.M. Frost, the agency's founder, and look to a second century of service to Southern Baptists.

The tower, constructed atop the board's Operations Building and completed in October 1990 at a cost of \$15.7 million, contains conference facilities, office space and one floor for future expansion. The added 165,000 square feet of floor space brings the board's facilities to more than one million square feet.

The building was constructed to ease crowded office conditions, eliminate the need for rented space and prepare for the needs of an anticipated 17.5 million-member denomination by the year 2000. The facility is debt-free, having been paid for with funds accumulated over many years for the purpose of expansion.

More than 400 of the board's 1,319 Nashville employees are housed in the new facility.

Speaking on the 12 memorial stones of Israel, President Lloyd Elder said: "We have not crossed Jordan River on dry ground, but nevertheless we have seen the mighty handiwork of God. And we have to ask, 'What mean these stones and steel and glass and mortar and fabric?'"

Elder said the "stones" of the Centennial Tower mean the trustees of the board have cared about the present and the future, an administration has made long-range plans to reach a larger number of persons for Christ and employees are committed to the work God has called them to do.

"These stones mean the board is committed to the building up of the Southern Baptist Convention family to at least 17.5 million members," he observed. "We are now a convention of just over 15 million members. Would that God would use that building and each one of us in the growing of this family."

James L. Sullivan, who retired as board president in 1975, said his first memory of church was as a four-year-old boy in a one-room building where his Sunday school teacher gave him a Scripture card from the board.

Through Baptist young people's union (now discipleship training), acceptance of Christ, a call to preach, teacher of a boys' Sunday school class and an associational youth leadership role, Sullivan cited points in his youth touched by the board's work.

"My hope of the future," Sullivan continued, "is that if we can reach that four-year-old boy -- I don't know where he is or what his name is or the church -- but he's reading what you produce ... then the heritage of this institution will find the fulfillment of its highest hope in all of its years."

Trustee Chairman William E. Anderson, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of Clearwater, Fla., said dedication of the new building "is an expression of our faith, because of those who have gone before and for all the tomorrows God will give us in this great place of crucially important ministry."

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The Sunday School Board was established in 1891. Its first home was office space lent rent free by E.E. Folk, editor of the Baptist and Reflector, newsjournal of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. The first permanent home of the board was constructed in 1913 and is still in use today as the Frost Building.

From its beginning, as mandated by the Southern Baptist Convention, the board has received no funds from the denomination but instead makes annual contributions to the work of state conventions and, through the Cooperative Program, to the operating budget of the SBC.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press

High court's new standard
affects free exercise cases

By Larry Chesser

N-CD
ccc

Baptist Press
2/7/91

WASHINGTON (BP)--Fears that a 1990 U.S. Supreme Court ruling would drastically alter the nation's free exercise of religion landscape are proving to be well-founded, according to a church-state attorney.

J. Brent Walker, legal counsel at the Baptist Joint Committee, recently reviewed 15 free exercise cases decided since the high court ruled that governmental entities no longer need to demonstrate a compelling interest to curb free exercise of religion rights.

The free exercise claimants won only three of the 15 cases Walker reviewed and in two of those cases, the courts in question did an end run around the high court's new free exercise test, deciding the cases on state constitutional grounds, Walker said.

In April the Supreme Court ruled in Oregon v. Smith that the free exercise clause of the First Amendment did not give members of the Native American Church the right to ingest peyote as a sacrament in worship.

"Whatever you think about that result," Walker said, "the reasoning the court used was atrocious."

"What the court did was to all but do away with the compelling state interest test that it had used for nearly 30 years to decide free exercise cases."

Under the long-standing test, before a governmental entity could limit free exercise rights, it was required to demonstrate a compelling interest that could not be accomplished by less restrictive means. But in the Smith case, the high court replaced the compelling interest test with the "much less stringent reasonableness standard," Walker said.

"All a state has to do under that test is to show that a law or action is reasonably related to a proper state purpose or activity," he said. "Clearly that is a much easier standard."

Walker noted that in the Smith ruling, Justice Antonin Scalia called the more stringent free exercise standard a luxury that society can ill afford and said that to apply the compelling interest test would be to court anarchy.

In substituting a less-stringent free exercise standard, Walker said, "The court dropped a constitutional bombshell that all but blew up and destroyed the free exercise clause. What it means is that in most cases the state is going to win."

Rulings from state and federal courts in the past 10 months have borne out concerns expressed by religious and civil liberties groups about the impact of the new test.

"What that says to me is that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act is all the more critical and the need to pass it in the 102nd Congress is all the more pressing," Walker said.

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The Religious Freedom Restoration Act, introduced late in the 101st Congress, drew broad bipartisan support and is expected to be reintroduced within the next few weeks.

"It's designed to turn the clock back," Walker said. "It is not a drug bill. It would not legalize peyote or advance anyone's particular religious practice but would restore the standard by which all free exercise cases would be judged."

Approval of the proposed act would not be a panacea, Walker said, but would "again tilt the playing field in favor of religious liberty under the First Amendment's free exercise clause."

The measure was introduced by Reps. Stephen J. Solarz, D-N.Y., and Paul B. Henry, R-Mich., and Sens. Joseph R. Biden, D-Del., and Orrin G. Hatch, R-Utah. It is supported by a diverse coalition of religious and civil liberties groups, including the Baptist Joint Committee.

Walker presented the review of free exercise cases affected by the Smith decision during a Feb. 1 session of the Committee on Religious Liberty of the National Council of Churches.

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Ministry draws new life
into nearly dead church

By Mark Wingfield

F-AMB

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SAN FERNANDO, Calif. (BP)--Gene Richardson could be accused of coloring outside traditional lines, but he has sketched a bright future for a church that was nearly erased from existence six years ago.

The pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in San Fernando, Calif., has drawn from a palette including celery green, tomato red, banana yellow and potato brown.

Food has become the staple of ministry for this church located on the northern edge of the Los Angeles mosaic. Pallets of fruits, vegetables, meats and packaged goods arrive at the church by the semi-truck load every week. All the food is received free and given away for free.

Last year the church gave out 1.4 million sack lunches, in addition to 50,000 hot meals and thousands of sacks of groceries.

As a result, the church that just six years ago had declined to two families in attendance now touches more than 400 people weekly through five preaching points. Last year the church recorded 276 baptisms, the second highest number of any Southern Baptist church in the state.

"The whole church was born again," Richardson says. "It was truly redeemed and revived from the dead. Our church turned around."

Because this church colors outside traditional lines, describing its growth in standard terms such as attendance and baptisms does not paint a complete picture.

Counting attendance is difficult because the church operates five preaching points and ministers to five different ethnic groups. "We're probably a church of 300 to 400 people, but there's never more than 200 people in any service," Richardson explains.

Also, the 276 baptisms recorded last year represent less than a fourth of the 1,200 professions of faith made through various ministries. Those who were baptized completed a six-week discipleship training course first.

In this highly transient area, many of the people whose lives are changed aren't around six weeks later to be baptized.

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The local food ministry is merely the front edge of a larger movement. Two years ago, the congregation shipped 171 tons of wheat to the Philippines at a total cost of \$100. Church members have started and staffed seven accredited, tuition-free schools for needy children. Members also regularly take food to a city park where thousands of homeless people live in a crime-ridden environment.

In evangelism the church has done everything from preaching through a blowhorn in the parking lot to passing out tracts and preaching on street corners. While some church members distribute food, others talk one-on-one with people in line and present the gospel. While street preachers proclaim the gospel, other church members provide information on how to get food and clothing from the church.

Richardson admits not every declining church will experience a turnaround by doing the same things his church has done. But the attitude that changed this dying church could change others, he says.

"The way we arrived at it would work anywhere. We just saw a need and met it."

The story of First Southern Baptist Church in San Fernando was the story of thousands of other Baptist churches across America -- a once thriving Anglo congregation hit hard by white flight and unable to attract the community's new residents.

Ironically, Richardson grew up in this church. What he found upon returning after a 14-year absence was completely different, he says.

When Richardson went to high school in San Fernando, the street in front of the church wasn't paved, there were olive groves interspersed among the two- and three-acre lots where mostly Anglo families lived.

San Fernando's population is now 90 percent Hispanic. Last year a 9- and 11-year-old duo of drug dealers shot and killed a policeman attempting to arrest them at a street corner near the church.

Because of what this church had meant to him and because he saw potential, Richardson and his family moved back to San Fernando from a successful pastorate in Colorado. He came on the condition that the church would not pay him a salary and his family could share the parsonage with another family already living there.

"We started a backyard Bible club and saw the kids couldn't read. So we began to teach them and help with their homework. When we visited their homes we found out the kids were hungry. We found families living in garages and backyards, using ice chests for refrigerators. So we began to feed them.

"One need revealed another need. We just ministered to each need as it materialized," he says.

As a result, the church grew to 50 people in the first year.

But the second year is "when war broke out," Richardson says. Older members were pleased with the growth but not with the people bringing the growth.

"They had people coming to church they didn't want," he explains. "It was becoming uncomfortable." The two families remaining from the old church left.

"The thing is, most people don't want the kind of church we have. They want to define how the turnaround will happen. They're not willing to let God do it.

"We decided whatever God wants to make us into, that's OK. Our church is more excited about what we're doing than who we are."

Despite continuous efforts, the pastor could not sustain a strong Anglo congregation on the site. Meanwhile, the church grew rapidly with Spanish-speaking members and expanded to reach other ethnic groups such as Soviets, Koreans and Chinese.

The secret of this success story, Richardson says, is that he did not scheme to grow a church. Instead, he attempted to lead his congregation in meeting the needs of the community.

"The Lord said to us, 'You don't need to grow a church; I'll grow the church. You need to be a church.'"

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press

Resources available for church food ministries

F-HMB

Baptist Press 2/7/91

ATLANTA (BP)--Denominational and community resources are available to any church desiring to start a food ministry, says Nathan Porter, a home missionary who specializes in domestic hunger ministries.

"Hundreds of communities have people who are hungry," he explains. "Starting a food pantry is so simple once a church gets started."

Porter recommends churches start by contacting the church and community ministries director for their association or state convention. Additionally, churches should contact local community service agencies to discover what already is being done to meet hunger needs, he says.

The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board offers a \$500 start-up grant to any Southern Baptist church beginning a food pantry. The grant must be requested through the state missions office.

In addition to buying food, there are other sources to supply church food ministries, Porter says:

- Food banks in many communities offer quantities of food at low cost to religious and social service groups;
- Local grocery stores and restaurants often will provide overstocks or outdated food to churches;
- Community food drives can stock a food pantry; and
- Gleaning, the biblical practice of gathering excess produce left by harvesters, is still practiced in many agricultural communities and can be done by church groups to supply their food ministries.

Churches unable to start a food ministry on their own should consider joining forces with other churches in the community, Porter suggests.

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Southwestern December graduate takes up cross to follow Christ

By Matthew Brady

F-CO SUBTS

Baptist Press 2/7/91

DALLAS (BP)--It's not hard to find Brian Chepey among the crowd in Dallas' West End Marketplace.

Although he dresses like everyone else on the streets of the city's weekend hotspot, Chepey can be identified by the cross he bears.

That cross, slung over his shoulder, is made of wood and stands eight-feet tall. Like a magnet, the cross draws passers-by to look and look again at Chepey and his unusual burden.

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A December graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chepey has been carrying the cross on Saturday nights in the West End for nearly two years.

His goal is to peak curiosity so people will want to talk with him. Some nights he talks to only one person, he said, while at other times he has an audience of more than 50 people.

"I'm not radical," Chepey said, "I just want to be a normal Christian. A radical Christian does not share the gospel."

West End security guard Brian Hughes said Chepey's ministry makes him feel good.

"There are a lot of lost souls out here," Hughes said. "I stand here every night. You can look in people's eyes and tell. If you don't get anybody but one person, that's good.

"You go back to their basic needs, all the way back. People are down here for the same thing -- it's for companionship. He's telling them a way to go and what to do."

Chepey said his ministry in the West End involves mostly planting seeds and plowing soil. And while he seldom sees people commit to Christ, he has provided "mini-counseling sessions" for discouraged Christians.

While graduation from Southwestern may mean the end of Chepey's ministry in Dallas, he plans to take his cross with him wherever he goes next. He is hoping that will be as a chaplain in the armed services, where he served for two years after high school.

Chepey doesn't know where he is going next, but he knows what he wants to do when he gets there -- share Jesus.

His inspiration is an old street evangelist, called 'Crazy Mel' he met two years ago in Pennsylvania during Southwestern's Spring Evangelism Practicum.

Chepey said some people think the old man is crazy. "But, when it's all said and done, he's 80, he's about to die, and he's still sharing and communicating the gospel. I said, 'There is a happy and content man. There is someone who knows what he wants to do.'

"I could hardly keep from crying. We got together and just prayed and said, 'Lord Jesus, give me that kind of faith.'"

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary

Trustees elect
search committee

By Linda Lawson

N-SSB

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NASHVILLE (BP)--A 10-member presidential search committee was elected by trustees of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board during their Feb. 4-6 semiannual meeting in Nashville.

Trustees also heard a report from President Lloyd Elder who reached agreement with trustees in January to take early retirement, received a progress report on "The New American Commentary" and learned that income for the first quarter of 1990-91 was above budget and above last year.

Wayne Dubose, pastor of Summer Grove Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., was elected to chair the search committee. Bobby Welch, pastor of First Baptist Church of Daytona Beach, Fla., will be vice chairman.

After his election, Dubose told trustees: "We are going to work with an open mind. We are going to receive input from all Southern Baptists. We are going to be sensitive to the needs of the Sunday School Board."

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Other committee members include: Mark Brooks, pastor of Elmdale Baptist Church in Springdale, Ark.; Kirk Humphreys, businessman from Oklahoma City, Okla.; Frank Palmer, pastor of Forest Avenue Baptist Church in Redmond, Ore.; Iris White, businesswoman from Columbia, Md.; and Bill Wilson, director of the mission ministries division of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

Three ex-officio members are: Bill Anderson, chairman of trustees and pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of Clearwater, Fla.; Gene Mims, vice chairman and pastor of First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tenn.; and Southern Baptist Convention President Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas.

Alternates who would assume voting membership privileges if committee members could not serve are: Gene Swinson, pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church of Augusta, Ga.; James Hume, pharmacist from Jeffersontown, Ky.; and Danny Strickland, pastor of Parkway Baptist Church in Orlando, Fla.

The committee held an organizational meeting Feb. 5, and Dubose told trustees Feb. 6 he was issuing a statement inviting nominations from any Southern Baptist. He said trustees would receive within two weeks a letter requesting trustee input and outlining protocol for communicating with the search committee.

"We want to communicate with the board of trustees," said Dubose. "However, we need a high level of confidentiality. I hope you will respect our right to privacy. I hope you will trust us."

In his report, Elder described an early January conversation with his 85-year-old mother in Lubbock, Texas, in which he had outlined mounting differences with trustees.

She listened and then responded, "Son, remember Romans 8:28." The verse states, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Elder said he had been encouraged by his mother's response and offered the same admonition to trustees and to Southern Baptists.

"An agreement (between the president and trustees) to disagree and to separate does not need to mean the end of our kingdom work because we are kingdom people," said Elder. "We are the kind of people who will keep our eyes upon Jesus Christ and his mission in this world."

In celebrating the centennial of the board's establishment in 1891 and in preparing for a smooth transition of administrations, Elder said, "We're going to ask God to be working in our lives and in the life of the Baptist Sunday School Board."

In another matter, trustees learned release of the first volume of "The New American Commentary" is on schedule for June. Trustees also debated a motion that would have required the word "inerrancy" to be in all advertising of the commentary in Baptist periodicals. The motion was tabled.

After learning two alternate consulting editors for the commentary had been activated to editor status, trustees adopted a motion that the two appear at the August 1991 trustee meeting to be questioned by trustees as the other six editors had been. The alternate editors had been approved by trustees but had not been questioned.

The two are Richard Melick, professor and chairman of the New Testament and Greek departments at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn., and Duane A. Garrett, professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at Canadian Baptist Seminary in Cochrane, Alberta, Canada.

Roland Maddox, a real estate developer in Memphis, said: "I don't want us to slide into laxness. I think we should hold to procedure."

For the first three months of 1990-91, the board generated revenue of \$43.6 million, approximately \$500,000 above the budget of \$43.1 million.

Real revenue growth was registered by Holman Bible publishing, Broadman products and Church Information Systems computer hardware and software. Areas of decline included Convention Press, Genevox music publishing and church literature.

E.V. King, vice president for business and finance, said church literature sales might have met or exceeded budget except that distribution problems in December caused about 4 percent of orders to be delivered late.

"We don't record a sale until it is shipped," said King.

In other business, Anderson announced formation of a five-man committee to develop a process for facilitating relationships between trustees and employees "to enhance the work of the BSSB." The committee will be chaired by Billie Friel, pastor of First Baptist Church of Mount Juliet, Tenn.

Trustees approved changing "La Fe Bautista," an adult discipleship training periodical in Spanish from a translation of the English periodical to one that is originally written in Spanish, effective Oct. 1, 1992.

Anderson and Mims were re-elected to a second term as chairman and vice chairman. Burgess Guinn, deputy state statistician in Cornersville, Tenn., was elected recording secretary.

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Search committee chair
calls for nominations

By Linda Lawson

N-SSB

Baptist Press
2/7/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--A call for nominations has been issued by the chairman of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's presidential search committee.

Wayne Dubose, pastor of Summer Grove Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., said the committee held an organizational meeting Feb. 5 after being elected one day earlier by the board of trustees.

Dubose issued the following statement:

"The presidential search committee of the Baptist Sunday School Board is now organized and preparing itself to begin work. We invite any Southern Baptist to make a recommendation to the committee.

"Those wishing to make recommendations must do so in writing by sending a complete biographical sketch of their nominee, along with a concise statement as to the reason for nominating their candidate."

Dubose said all nominations and supporting information should be sent to: BSSB Search Committee P.O. Drawer L, Springdale, Ark. 72765.

"Our committee solicits the prayer support of all Southern Baptists as we undertake this enormously important assignment," said Dubose.

The committee will be seeking a successor to President Lloyd Elder who reached agreement with trustees in January to take early retirement Feb. 1, 1992, or 30 days after a successor is named, whichever comes first.

Committee members include: Bobby Welch, pastor of First Baptist Church of Daytona Beach, Fla., vice chairman; Mark Brooks, pastor of Elmdale Baptist Church of Springdale, Ark.; Kirk Humphreys, businessman from Oklahoma City, Okla.; Frank Palmer, pastor of Forest Avenue Baptist Church of Redmond, Ore.; Iris White, businesswoman from Columbia, Md.; and Bill Wilson, director of the mission ministries division of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

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Three voting ex-officio members were elected to the committee. They are: William Anderson, chairman of trustees and pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Clearwater, Fla.; Gene Mims, vice chairman of trustees and pastor of First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tenn.; and Southern Baptist Convention President Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas.

Elected as alternates in case any committee member becomes unable to serve were: Gene Swinson, pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church of Augusta, Ga.; James Hume, pharmacist from Jeffersontown, Ky.; and Danny Strickland, pastor of Parkway Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla.

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BP photo will be mailed separately to Baptist state paper editors

Southern remembers
music school professor

By Pat Cole

N-CO
SBTC

Baptist Press
2/7/91

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Church musician Donald Winters was remembered during a Founders' Day service at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary as an early advocate for comprehensive music ministry in Southern Baptist churches.

Winters, a founding faculty member of the School of Church Music at the Louisville, Ky., seminary, was "prophetically ahead of his time," said Hugh T. McElrath, V.V. Cooke professor of church music at Southern Seminary. Winters, who left the seminary in 1952 after seven years of service, died in 1989 in Hattiesburg, Miss.

"Some of his counterparts in other music and church circles judged in the early '50s that Winters at that time was at least 25 years ahead of Southern Baptists," said McElrath, who was both Winters' student and teaching colleague. "Consequently, he was not able to see his plans and dreams come to fruition here at that time. But the subsequent history of this school and of the music ministry in the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention would seem to vindicate the wisdom of his viewpoints and the lasting value of the goals toward which he struggled during those pioneering days."

Winters espoused a "church-centered viewpoint of comprehensive music ministry" which, though modified and expanded, now flourishes in Southern Baptist churches, McElrath said.

After he left Southern, Winters did doctoral study at Indiana University in Bloomington. In 1956, he was named head of the Division of Fine Arts at William Carey College in Hattiesburg, Miss. He became dean of the college's School of Music in 1969 and retired from the deanship in 1979. The college in 1984 named its music school in honor of Winters and his wife, Frances, a music faculty colleague at both Southern and William Carey.

As a teacher, Winters could "teach by precept," but he taught most effectively by example, said McElrath: "He was gifted with musical insight -- with the quick intuitive perception of the music truth that lies between and beyond the musical symbols on the musical score and as a conductor he was able by the merest gesture of the hand or the slightest nod of the head to communicate those insights with convincing power."

Winters was determined that no music ever be performed in a "slipshod fashion," McElrath noted. He recalled that one day he saw Winters rehearsing alone for a choral performance by singing each part without accompaniment and conducting himself as he sang.

Though Winters' musicianship contributed much to Southern Seminary, his "most enduring contribution" was his influence on his students and music faculty colleagues, he said. Students taught by Winters during the early days of Southern's music school went on to serve in music leadership positions in Southern Baptist churches, institutions and mission settings, McElrath said.

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