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91-78

President Bush to address
Atlanta SBC on Thursday

By Herb Hollinger

N-CO

ATLANTA (BP)--Invited by Southern Baptist Convention officials, President George Bush has agreed to address the closing session of the Atlanta annual meeting June 6 at the Georgia World Congress Center.

President Bush will arrive in Atlanta Thursday morning and speak at 11:45 for about 15 minutes, SBC and White House officials confirmed.

"I am extremely pleased that President Bush has accepted our invitation to address the convention," said Morris H. Chapman, SBC president. "I am confident he will receive a thunderous welcome and will be made to feel at home among Southern Baptists."

Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church, Wichita Falls, Texas; Danny E. Watters, pastor of Beulah Baptist Church, Douglasville, Ga.; and Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee signed the formal letter of invitation to the president. Watters is chairman of the convention's order of business committee.

The SBC letter was dated Feb. 28 but official confirmation of Bush's acceptance was delayed until this week, apparently due to security reasons.

"The President is a man of faith and a man of prayer. Under his leadership a new wave of patriotism has engulfed this nation," said Chapman. "Southern Baptists have prayed often for President Bush. Now we have the extraordinary opportunity to hear him during our convention," said Chapman.

The president will meet for about 20 minutes with about 30 "key Southern Baptist leaders" prior to his convention address. Those key leaders will be invited to the session by Chapman.

The invitation did not include a topic for the president but did indicate the Wednesday evening session will focus on a "Call to Prayer for Spiritual Awakening in America."

"With your coming the following morning, we would anticipate the most dynamic back to back sessions in Southern Baptist history," the invitation said.

The last time a sitting U.S. president spoke to the Southern Baptist Convention was in Norfolk, Va., in 1976. Also a Republican, Gerald Ford spoke at Norfolk, having succeeded to the presidency following Richard Nixon's resignation.

SBC officials already have met with an advance team from the White House in Atlanta. As expected, security precautions are expected to be heavy for the Thursday morning session.

The SBC Radio and Television Commission will telecast the president's message live on the ACTS network that morning.

Call to Spiritual Awakening
to be broadcast on ACTS

N-CO

ATLANTA (BP)--The Call to Spiritual Awakening will be broadcast on the ACTS network Wednesday, June 5, from the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

The program will be shown live beginning at 6:40 p.m., Eastern Daylight Time. The event is scheduled to last 2 hours and 40 minutes.

"This will provide churches the opportunity to participate in the service with their own prayer groups and to hear the messages and the music," said Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla., and chairman of the group planning the spiritual awakening. "Time will be given along the way for prayer periods," Henry said.

"We only just found out yesterday (May 21) that the money was available for the broadcast," Henry said. "The Lord just provided the money for us."

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Ralph Bethea resigns
as Kenya missionary

N-FMB

Baptist Press
5/23/91

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Ralph Bethea Jr., whose wife, Lynda, was murdered March 27 by highway robbers in Kenya, has resigned as a Southern Baptist foreign missionary. His resignation will be effective July 1.

In a letter to John Faulkner, director for Southern Baptist mission work in eastern and southern Africa, Bethea said he was resigning for family reasons. He said his four children "need to be with my family here in America for the coming years," adding: "I need to be close with them. I need the time personally for grieving and healing."

He expressed appreciation for the support of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and the Baptist Mission of Kenya during the family's bereavement.

Bethea, of Memphis, Tenn., told Kenyan police he and his wife were ambushed as they stopped to aid a man lying in the road, apparently injured, on a rural highway northwest of Nairobi near Kijabe, Kenya. They were en route to Kijabe to pick up their two older sons, students at Rift Valley Academy, for the Easter holidays. Their two younger children had remained with friends in the coastal city of Mombasa, where the family lived.

Mrs. Bethea died of severe head wounds and her husband was badly beaten as he tried to fight off the attackers. Local police initially reported the arrest of four suspects, but national police have since declined to comment.

The Betheas were appointed as missionaries to Kenya in 1984. They worked in personal evangelism and church starting in the Mombasa area, where a major evangelistic crusade last summer resulted in more than 56,000 people professing faith in Christ and the organization of 84 new congregations. Bethea described recent evangelistic results as "the fruit of 35 years of faithful Southern Baptist teamwork."

The two older sons, Ralph III, 17, and Joshua, 13, returned to Kenya after their mother's burial in the United States to complete school, which ends in July. The younger children, Luke, 12, and Lizette, 9, and their father remained in Claremore, Okla., with his parents, Lizette and Ralph Bethea Sr., former Southern Baptist missionaries to Kenya, Tanzania, Indonesia and India.

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Vice President Worrell
resigns from SEBTS

N-60
(SEBTS)

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WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Saying "life is too short not to do the will of God," George E. Worrell resigned as vice president of external affairs for Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He will be pastor of the Lawndale Baptist Church in Greensboro, N.C. Worrell has been the church's interim pastor since January 1991.

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In a statement May 20 Lewis A. Drummond, Southeastern president said, "It is with real regret that we see Dr. Worrell leave Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. For three years he has developed the external affairs division of the seminary into an efficient, effective, and well-functioning segment of seminary life. His Christian dedication, his commitment to the Southern Baptist Convention, and his personal friendship are deeply appreciated. God will continue to use him profoundly in his new field of ministry. We pray God's blessings on Dr. Worrell and his lovely family."

In a departmental meeting May 20, Worrell told the external affairs division leaving Southeastern had been an extremely difficult decision for him.

"For 21 years I have served in various convention posts. I felt that I was expanding my ministry beyond the local church. It is evident now that God has called me back to my roots. It has been my privilege to serve with Dr. Drummond. The new Center for Great Commission Studies, established under his leadership, will make Southeastern a premier seminary on the East Coast," Worrell said.

Lawndale Baptist Church is a part of the Piedmont Baptist Association, which has 50 churches and three missions. Lawndale has about 1,200 members, and was 26th among 3,000 churches in North Carolina in Cooperative Program giving in 1990.

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Land opposes research on
fetal tissue from abortions

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
5/23/91

WASHINGTON (BP)--Richard D. Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, has written a letter imploring selected members of a House of Representatives committee to maintain the ban on federally funded research on fetal tissue transplantation from aborted babies.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee is expected to vote soon on a reauthorization bill for the National Institutes of Health that would lift the present moratorium on research on tissue from induced abortions. Rep. William Dannemeyer, R.-Ca., plans to offer an amendment preserving the prohibition.

Dannemeyer attempted to amend the bill in the subcommittee on health and the environment but failed. The subcommittee sent the legislation to the full committee with the controversial section included.

The committee is expected to vote on the measure shortly after the Memorial Day recess. Congress will reconvene May 28. The House probably will consider the NIH bill in June or July.

"This 'Brave New World' of fetal tissue experimentation will result in a significant increase in the harvesting of fetal life for speculative scientific, experimental purposes," Land said in the letter. "An approval of this bill with the fetal tissue transplantation provision would lower the United States Congress to the level of Dr. Joseph Mengele and his experiments in the Nazi death camps."

The letter continued, "In fact, the 'Brave New World' we fear is already occurring in Sweden. Proponents of fetal tissue transplantation often cite Swedish research in this area as a model the United States should replicate. Scientists in that nation are extracting the brain cells of unborn babies before they abort the fetus."

Among the reasons cited in the letter for CLC opposition to government funding of fetal tissue transplantation are the ability of parents to make a decision for a child they are about to destroy; the concerns of many taxpayers who consider "unborn life as sacred," and the possibility of providing justification for an abortion to a woman who has doubts about it.

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"Our fears that lifting the moratorium would result in an eased number of abortions for the sole purpose of fetal tissue experimentation are confirmed by the opinions of most of the members of the NIH advisory board who concluded that the federal government should consider having abortions performed for the sole purpose of obtaining viable fetal tissue, if sufficient donors are not otherwise available," Land's letter said.

The NIH panel released its report in December 1988.

The current moratorium does not prevent the use of tissue from ectopic pregnancies and miscarriages. The transplantation of tissue from induced abortions into animals is not prohibited either, a policy James A. Smith, the CLC's director of government relations, says the commission opposes but is not able to address in the current debate. Privately funded research using tissue from induced abortions also is not affected.

"The lifting of this ban is a frontal assault on the sanctity of human life," Smith said. "All Southern Baptists who are concerned about this issue must contact their congressmen immediately to register their opinion so that the ban may be maintained."

Representatives may be contacted by writing The Honorable (name of congressman), United States House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515, Smith said.

President George Bush would be advised to veto the bill if it is not amended, said Louis Sullivan, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

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Wave of disasters washes
away mission relief fund

By Donald D. Martin

Baptist Press
5/23/91

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Response to a wave of world disasters has depleted the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's general relief fund.

"This is the first time in the 14 years I have been here that we've found ourselves totally depleted," said John Cheyne, who directs the Foreign Mission Board's relief efforts.

World disasters dropped the general relief fund from \$297,000 in January to zero in May, when the board sought to respond to needs of cyclone victims in Bangladesh. Administrators had to pull \$225,000 for Bangladesh from a special \$1 million contingency fund originally set aside for relief response to the Persian Gulf war's aftermath.

Only the mission agency's general relief fund is empty. The board has two relief accounts: general (or non-hunger-related) and hunger relief. The hunger relief account still has funds but is 10 percent below last year's total, Cheyne said.

Most U.S. relief groups are spread thin as they struggle to supply food, shelter and medicine to Kurdish refugees in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf war, cholera victims in South America, cyclone survivors in Bangladesh and war and famine victims in Africa. Responding to the wave of natural and man-made disasters has been made even more difficult by the U.S. economic recession, which had already reduced the board's relief revenues, Cheyne said.

Complying with donors' gift designations also has affected the general relief fund. "If our folks designate for relief we can use it either way (hunger or general relief). But if they designate for hunger, we can only use it for hunger-related matters," Cheyne said.

Because of this, the board has had to turn down several requests for emergency relief funds to rebuild damaged buildings and churches overseas.

"We simply could not replace buildings or churches that had been damaged in conflicts or storms. There have been several like this, and we simply had to turn them down," Cheyne said.

Donations to the hunger or general relief fund may be sent to the Foreign Mission Board through local Southern Baptist churches or directly to P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, Va. 23230.

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The relief squeeze also has affected other groups. The Baptist World Alliance's relief work feels the effects of the recession, said Lee Hickman, secretary of the organization's Baptist World Aid office in McLean, Va.

"Income is down and it comes when we have a special commitment to helping Baptists in Eastern Europe. This has affected our general or undesignated fund the most," she said.

Other denominations' relief fund revenues are lagging behind past years, added Bucky Sydnor, manager of the world relief office of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., Inc., in Valley Forge, Pa. In meeting with other church relief groups, he found some denominations have seen relief revenues decline by 1 to 2 percent, he said.

However, the recession has not yet affected American Baptist relief giving. "We're tight this year, but we're not strapped to the wall yet," Sydnor said. Timing of the recent disasters may actually help the American Baptists' relief fund raising, which occurs each year in June, he said.

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New churches more efficient
in evangelism, study shows

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
5/23/91

ATLANTA (BP)--New Southern Baptist churches are more efficient than older churches in evangelism and per capita giving, but older churches provide more of the denomination's financial base, a Home Mission Board study reveals.

Additionally, the 1980s could be the second-greatest decade of church starting in the Southern Baptist Convention's history, the study says.

The study on the contribution of new churches to the SBC was compiled by Clay Price of the HMB's program research department. Price analyzed data from 1989 Uniform Church Letters to compare the influence of churches constituted in the 1980s with that of churches started in other decades.

Southern Baptists added an estimated 3,300 new churches during the 1980s, Price says. That number is second only to the 1950s, when more than 4,800 churches were added.

Statistics for the 1980s still include some projections because there is often a lag between the time a church constitutes and begins reporting on the Uniform Church Letter.

For the purpose of this study, new churches are defined as those started in the 1980s.

New churches are more efficient than older churches in reaching people through baptisms, the study says. New churches baptize 7.5 people for every 100 people enrolled in Sunday school. The national SBC average is 4.5 baptisms per 100 enrolled in Sunday school.

The ratio of baptisms to Sunday school enrollment declines as churches grow older. The convention's oldest churches, those organized before 1940, average 3.8 baptisms per 100 enrolled in Sunday school.

New churches are also more efficient in adding members by letter, the study reveals. The SBC average is 6.2 additions per 100 Sunday school members, but new churches average 13 additions per 100 Sunday school members.

New churches report the highest per capita giving, but older churches pass more of their money on to associational, state and national causes, the study shows.

In 1989, new churches reported receipts of \$510 per person. The SBC average was \$310 per person.

However, new churches require more money for local expenses than older churches.

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The study found new churches giving an average of 5.1 percent of total receipts to the SBC Cooperative Program, 11.7 percent to mission expenditures, 1.7 percent to associational missions and 0.4 percent to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

In comparison, the national SBC average was 7.6 percent to the Cooperative Program, 15.6 percent to mission expenditures, 1.7 percent to associational missions and 0.7 percent to Annie Armstrong.

The overall contribution of these new churches to the SBC will increase as they age, Price concludes. "If churches started in the 1980s follow the growth trends of their older sister churches, they will add another 100 members during their second decade," he says. "In 40 years, much of the strength of Southern Baptists will come from the churches started in the 1980s."

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Southern Baptist churches
failing at reaching boomers

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
5/23/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--Baby boomers expect options, convenience and promptness, and Southern Baptist churches without these items on their menu risk losing 27- to 45-year-olds to organizations that deliver them, a leader in single adult work said.

"Baby boomers are used to options, choices. They have a quest for immediate gratification, and they are used to getting what they want. They expect all these things when they come to church," said Ken Jordan, manager of the single/senior adult section of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry department. He spoke in mid-May at a conference for single adult leaders, sponsored by his section.

Baby boomers, born between 1946-64, make up 75-77 million of the American population. Thirty-five million of those are single adults, Jordan said.

"We (Southern Baptists) are doing a great job of reaching older adults, but we are barely holding our own with baby boomers," he said. "We have to figure out how to present the gospel to people with an entirely different value system."

According to a report by the board's corporate planning and research department, some baby boomer characteristics include:

- a need for personal development and richer experiences;
- skeptic of authority;
- more risk taking;
- desire for truth, directness and candor;
- need to be treated as individuals;
- desire for fuller lives (Boomers are not content with what satisfied their parents. They want more materially, socially and psychologically. They ask more from life regarding fulfillment, intimacy and pleasure.);
- well educated (one-fourth are college graduates);
- non-joiners (Boomers may be attenders, but they do not become official members.);
- spiritual concerns (While boomers have spiritual concerns, these concerns may not be expressed in traditional religious terms or ways. Boomers are interested in the meaning of life and facing life's problems, but they seek help from a variety of sources.)

According to the research report, boomers are not interested in church or denominational names, Jordan said.

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"They want their needs met and will go to churches that meet their needs. They may be seen as consumers looking for religious goods or services. They might attend multiple churches to have their needs met."

Baby boomers desire life-related preaching and teaching, he said.

One way churches might minister to single adult baby boomers is by offering single parenting and divorce recovery resources, Jordan said.

"Over 50 percent of boomer marriages end in divorce creating a baby boomer phenomenon of single parenting," he said. "The average length of marriage now is seven years. That is being called serial monogamy".

The family ministry department has compiled a list of recommended resources that could help churches draw single parent or divorced baby boomers into the church fellowship, Jordan said.

Meanwhile, Jordan said, churches also might "empower single adults for roles, responsibilities, stresses and growth that go with life in the 90s. We add 10 percent more responsibility to our lives with every year that we live."

"In short," Jordan added, "one task of the church is to empower single adults for all challenges and changes bundled up in this thing we call life."

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List of resources mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press

Jesus demonstrated how
to do lay ministry, prof says

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
5/23/91

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The ministry of Jesus Christ is the prime example of a lay person totally committed to serving God, a seminary professor told a gathering of Southern Baptist laity.

Jesus did not have ordination, formal theological training or sanction from the religious leaders of his day, said Raymond Bailey at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's annual Lay Bible Conference. The conference, sponsored by the Southern Seminary Foundation, drew 49 lay persons from nine states.

"When he was called rabbi it was because he taught so wisely and because of what he did, not because of any formal authority that had been put on him," said Bailey, professor of Christian preaching. "Jesus was a carpenter. He was a layman. He was part of the people who were on the outer edges who were not a part of the (religious) group."

Jesus, he said, gained his authority by his words, deeds and relationships with people. "Your authority comes from God in the same way his authority came from God," added Bailey.

Christians need to keep in mind Jesus was fully human as well as fully divine, he said. Most, he noted, have more difficulty acknowledging Jesus' humanity than affirming his divinity.

"It is the humanity of Christ that places the greatest demand on us," he said, stressing the human Jesus experienced the full range of temptations. Jesus also lived in a family that did not understand him and in a society that rejected him, he reminded.

The humanity of Jesus causes Christians discomfort because they often use their humanity as an excuse for moral and spiritual shortcomings, said Bailey.

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