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June 21, 1991

91-92

Draper nominated
for SSB president

By Linda Lawson

N-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--James T. Draper Jr. will be nominated to become the eighth president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

A special meeting of the 93-member board of trustees will be called for 1 p.m. Thursday, July 18, in Nashville to consider the nomination of Draper, 55, pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, and 1982-84 president of the Southern Baptist Convention. The meeting will continue Friday morning, July 19, if needed.

Wayne Dubose, chairman of the search committee and pastor of Summer Grove Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., said Draper was the unanimous choice of the 10-member committee.

If elected, Draper will succeed Lloyd Elder, who has been president since 1984 and who reached agreement with trustees Jan. 17 to retire by Jan. 31, 1992, or 30 days after election of a successor. The agreement was reached after a lengthy dispute between Elder and trustees about Elder's leadership at the board.

The search committee was formed Feb. 4 during a regularly scheduled trustee meeting.

Dubose said June 21 the search committee received nominations from about 70 Southern Baptists. They also received other kinds of suggestions from many, including about 170 employees of the board.

In late April, Dubose said the committee conducted a telephone poll of a cross-section of about 100 Southern Baptists.

"We shared the names of the seven or eight persons most recommended to the committee and asked them to give their first, second and third choices among these eight," Dubose continued. "It was significant to our committee that our nominee was the one most desired for the job."

"Jimmy Draper is well thought of by Southern Baptists across this land and is recognized as a person of integrity. Dr. Draper possesses many outstanding qualities that will enable him to give us dynamic leadership as we enter the 21st century," he added.

Draper told Baptist Press he and his wife, Carol Ann, reached a decision June 14 to allow his nomination.

After an initial meeting with the search committee in early May, Draper said he began to see "tremendous possibilities and the potential of impacting Bible teaching and ministries of the board into the future. We began to pray, and God gave us peace. We had a growing awareness of God's leadership in this possibility."

Draper said church literature produced by the board "is the best there is." Meeting the challenge of competition from other publishers "is a matter of working our strengths and aggressively going out after the market."

He said he believes the 100-year-old church programs and publishing institution with more than 1,800 employees and 17 SBC-assigned programs of work can meet the needs of churches aligned with both sides in the denominational controversy.

"If we stay true to giving adequate exposition of the word of God, I think we will meet the needs of all factions (in the denomination). If we stay true to the assignment of the board to produce the best possible teaching material, I think that will meet the needs of the churches," said Draper.

If elected, Draper, who has been characterized as a reconciler, said he would like to be a unifying force in the denomination.

"I like to think I can help people find common ground and do it without compromise of anyone's convictions. We can find ways to work together, to magnify things to keep us together," he added.

Trustee Chairman Bill Anderson, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of Clearwater, Fla., said he will officially notify trustees about July 5 of his intention to call a meeting for July 18-19. Bylaws specify a called meeting must be held within 15 days of notification. However, Anderson, who served as an ex officio member of the search committee, said Dubose gave trustees informal information in his letter about meeting dates to enable them to make plans to attend.

Anderson said the called meeting also will include a recommendation to move the Aug. 19-21 scheduled meeting of trustees from Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center to Nashville. That meeting would include an installation service for Draper, if he is elected.

Draper, who has been pastor of the 8,200-member Eules congregation since 1975, earlier was associate pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, and pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., Red Bridge Baptist Church in Kansas City, Mo., and four other Texas churches.

A Texas native, he is a graduate of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and holds the B.D. and M.Div. degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, where he currently serves as chairman of the board of trustees. He holds honorary doctorates from three Baptist schools.

He has held numerous leadership posts at association, state and SBC levels and has written 17 books.

If elected, Draper is expected to assume presidency of the board in about 30 days. Elder's retirement agreement specifies that he would be available to serve as a consultant/adviser to the new president until April 1, 1993.

In addition to Dubose and Anderson, the search committee included: Bobby Welch, vice chairman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Daytona Beach, Fla.; 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.; Bill Wilson, director of the convention ministries division of the Tennessee Baptist Convention; Gene Mims, vice chairman of trustees and pastor of First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tenn.; and SBC President Morris Chapman.

Three alternates elected to serve if any committee members could not serve included: 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.

Chief executives of the board during its first century of service were: J.M. Frost (1891-93, 1896-1916), T.P. Bell (1893-96), I.J. Van Ness (1916-35), T.L. Holcomb (1935-53), James L. Sullivan (1953-75), Grady C. Cothen (1975-84) and Elder (1984-91).

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A biographical sketch of James T. Draper Jr. will be mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the SSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Christian action urged
for children with AIDS

By Tom Strode

N-CLC

WASHINGTON (BP)--Christians, who generally have been reluctant to minister amid the AIDS crisis, should lead the way in holding programs like the National Children With HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, a father who has watched two offspring die of the disease said recently at the inaugural event.

"This should be done by Christians, Christian organizations, Christian churches," Jeff Monforti said. "The church needs to wake up ... we need to wake up and take our position in this, which is the lead."

Monforti, a member of a nondenominational church in Atlanta, spoke while singers, dancers and speakers shared time on a stage nearby on the Mall between the Capitol and the Washington Monument. In the last four years, his wife and he have lost a son and daughter to AIDS and have learned they are HIV positive.

While he says his church has been supportive both spiritually and financially, Monforti is disturbed by the response of most Christians to AIDS.

"I'm a person first, and my disease comes second," said Monforti. "And my disease does not stop me from loving the Lord and serving the Lord with all my heart ... and that's what the church needs to realize."

"There are people out there who are very much infected that are petrified to come out because of the ignorance that's in the church, and (the churches) say, 'We don't want you. Get out of here.'"

"We have to take care of one another," he said, "and I don't see the church doing that. I see the church pulling inside and saying, 'It doesn't happen here.'"

"I want the church community to know that there are people like me who need to have the support of the church. We shouldn't have to be turning to the federal government."

AIDS was not a part of the Monfortis' lives until less than four years ago. Only after their 20-month-old son, Joshua Paul, died in July 1987 did they learn he had AIDS. Monforti's wife, Marianne, was six months pregnant at the time. Both parents tested positive for HIV. Annalisa, the daughter Marianne was carrying, died of AIDS in 1989, when she was 17 months old.

Monforti said his wife and he do not know how they acquired the virus. Neither were drug users or homosexuals, he said.

"We have no idea," Monforti said. "It could have been from when I was in the military ... or just being young and free and dumb in the '70s."

Monforti has been a Christian for nearly 11 years. Marianne and he recently celebrated their 10th wedding anniversary. Jeff, who has been unemployed since March, says he has no energy and is losing motor control in his feet. Marianne is doing well, he said.

Another element in the tragedy is their 8-year-old son, Jonathan, who is not HIV positive.

"That's what the church needs to see ... there are going to be families that are going to be leaving young children," Monforti said. "I mean, I could die next year, and my son is not going to have a father for the rest of his life. ... We need to take care of the widows and children, and we're not doing that ... as a whole body."

Shepherd Smith, director of Americans for a Sound AIDS/HIV Policy, said there are positive changes in Christians' response to the disease, but his ministry hears of "too many terrible situations ... to say we're anywhere near having won the battle."

A staff member with Love and Action, an AIDS/HIV ministry based in Annapolis, Md., said she is "tremendously encouraged," however.

"I've been in this ministry only a year," said Martha Wright, Love and Action's office administrator, "and in one year the opening up of the churches and people and the entire world at large is just amazing to me."

Both Wright and Smith say love is the key to ministering to people with HIV or AIDS.

"I get calls day after day after day from people who are HIV positive or have full-blown AIDS who are looking for Christian understanding," said Smith, whose group was one of the supporting organizations at the event.

"They get a lot of the viewpoint of the world, but they go to those groups and they are grieved.

"And so they're looking for love, and they're looking for help, and they're looking for attention physically, as Jesus would (provide), without any condemnation," Wright said.

"I think Christians who respond to a call to ministry in this area have to realize that they won't compromise their belief systems at all to work in the issue," said Smith, who was observing the activities, "but they can be a light in darkness. ...

"The first challenge is to roll up your sleeves and get out there and help. And again, it's not condoning any lifestyle. It's simply, I think, challenging Christians to give unconditional love."

The National Children With HIV/AIDS Awareness Day was held to enlighten the public about the spread of the virus and disease in youth and children.

The number of children with HIV/AIDS and their family members attending the event June 11 was estimated at 600. About 600 more persons, including students from three or four schools in the area, also participated, a spokesman for the project said.

The day's activities included appearances by pop singer Tiffany and by several television actors and actresses. One of the co-hosts was Suzi Landolphi, creator of "Hot, Sexy and Safer," an AIDS education program for high school and college students. Several groups, including the AIDS Caucus of ACT UP (a homosexual activist group), had information tables on the Mall. Staff and volunteers with Love and Action held a banner reading "Jesus Loves the Little Children With HIV/AIDS."

Both Smith and Wright said it is important to be involved in such events even when other groups participating espouse ideas with which they disagree.

Smith said, "If you don't work with them, then they'll do exactly what you don't want them to do."

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Prayer effort leads to ambitious
church starting strategy in Miami

By Sarah Zimmerman

N - HMB

Baptist Press
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MIAMI (BP)--With the help of Southern Baptists nationwide, Miami Baptists hope to start 50 churches on Palm Sunday 1993.

Missions personnel in Miami believe they can count on fellow Baptists to help reach their goal because of the overwhelming prayer support they received from across the country last year.

Franklin Beam, church planter strategist in south Florida, was featured in the 1990 Week of Prayer for Home Missions. People were asked to send postcards to the featured missionaries, telling the missionaries of their prayer support.

Beam received more than 51,000 postcards. He keeps one of the notes in his billfold as a reminder of the prayer effort.

"We have felt your prayers in south Florida," Beams says. "They've changed our attitude to see things as opportunities rather than obstacles.

"We've just asked the Lord, 'What do you want us to do down here?' Now we're trusting the Lord to do more than what we can do ourselves."

The Miami Baptist Association has tagged the church starting endeavor "Calling Miami to Christ." Of the 2 million documented residents of Dade County, at least 80 percent are unchurched, Beam says. In some places the unchurched community is as high as 95 percent.

The strategy calls for starting 20 English-speaking churches, 20 Hispanic churches, five Haitian churches and five churches for other ethnic groups.

The English-speaking churches will not necessarily be Anglo churches, Beam says. For example, they may include congregations for American blacks or third-generation Cubans.

However, in the midst of Miami's ethnic diversity, there is a need for Anglo churches. Beam said when he started dreaming about starting churches in Miami, there had only been one intentional Anglo church start in the city in 20 years.

Beam knows of newly developed residential neighborhoods where as many as 100,000 people live but there is no church of any kind.

To prepare for the church starts, Beam is enlisting sponsoring churches and discovering church sites this summer. Many times, he is forced to look beyond Miami for sponsoring churches.

The first partnership church enlisted in the program is Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, La.

Partnership churches can help in a number of ways, from supplying volunteers to making phone calls about the new churches to doing construction work. Partnership churches are also needed, Beam says, in cases where a local pastor is willing to supervise a church start, but his congregation cannot afford to support the mission financially.

Many of the ministers who will lead the new churches will be bi-vocational, Beam says. Associational leaders are developing a job bank to help pastors find jobs in addition to leading the church.

People interested in the program can contact Miami Baptist Association at 3520 SW 97th Avenue, Miami, Fla. 33165. Also, people who know someone in Miami without a church home are asked to send the person's name, address and telephone number to the associational office so he may be contacted about a new church.

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Ethnic diversity main ingredient
for growth in Miami Association

By Sarah Zimmerman

F-NMB

Baptist Press
6/21/91

MIAMI (BP)--If America is a melting pot of people from other nations, Miami is the kitchen where the pot boils.

Occasionally the pot boils over into racial riots, but for Miami Baptist Association, ethnic diversity is the recipe for growth.

Without ethnic church development, the association's statistics would be shrinking. Since 1970, the association has experienced a net loss of more than 189,000 Caucasian residents, says Doyle Wetherington, associational director of missions. In the past 25 years, 28 English-speaking congregations in the association dissolved or merged.

"However, the great growth among the ethnic work has overcome that loss and has been the major reason we have almost tripled the total number of congregations in the association in the same period," Wetherington says.

More than half of the 116 churches in the association are ethnic congregations, though they do not represent half of the association's membership. The ethnic churches include 58 Hispanic, 16 black and 28 Haitian plus Russian, Chinese, Jamaican and deaf congregations. The association includes churches in 12 languages representing 36 nations.

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In addition, Wetherington says most of the predominantly Anglo congregations have ethnic members and are "integrated racially, nationally and culturally on multiple levels."

The church diversity is reflective of the community. Children in Dade County schools represent 117 nations, only four less than the number of countries where Southern Baptists have foreign missionaries.

Hispanics account for at least 49 percent of the population. The largest Hispanic church in the Southern Baptist Convention is Primera Iglesia Bautista de Coral Park in Miami Association. It has more than 1,000 members.

Among the newest works in Miami is a Filipino ministry. Six Filipino adults and two children met in May to lay the groundwork for a future church. Jaime Prieto, Home Mission Board assistant director for Filipino church growth, says there are 15,000 to 20,000 Filipinos in Miami. Yet there is no evangelistic Filipino congregation in the city.

Since 1984, Miami Baptist Association has started an average of 10 ethnic congregations a year, says Ray Carvajal, associational language mission associate. Last year, 12 ethnic churches started in the association.

"In the year 2000, we will have 200 ethnic works in Miami if we continue at this pace," Carvajal claims.

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Tri-lingual seminary branch
caters to ethnic students

By Sarah Zimmerman

F-NMB

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6/21/91

MIAMI (BP)--At first glance, the library in the converted Sunday school classroom looks like any collection of books. But the dime-size dots on each book's spine indicate that something other than the Dewey decimal system is in control.

Books with green dots are in Spanish, books with yellow dots are in French and books with white dots are in English. The color-coded system is essential at Southern Baptists' only seminary offering classes in three languages.

The Miami branch of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary began 14 years ago as a Home Mission Board sponsored ethnic training center. With support from the Florida Baptist Convention, it is now a fully accredited seminary program which continues to cater to the needs of the ethnic community.

"We're unique in that we're always trying to contextualize, not standardize," says Raul Vazquez, program director.

To contextualize theological education is to study in the context of one's language and culture. It may mean something as simple as changing test styles. For example, Vazquez's wife, Mirta, says she had no idea what a multiple choice test was until she came to the United States.

"We can't change their mentality because then they would be ineffective back in their community," Mrs. Vazquez says. "Our goal is to communicate the gospel, not the American way of life."

Principles of church growth often vary in each culture, Vazquez says. Rengud Balzora, Haitian consultant for the Florida Baptist Convention, says, "The way we do evangelism is different. It is through experience.

Balzora, who also teaches at the school, says "When a Haitian becomes a Christian and Christ is good for him, he tells others. When you win one Haitian, you win the masses. Our only problem is that the church is growing so fast."

As churches grow, they turn to the seminary branch to provide leadership.

Ray Carvajal, language missions associate for Miami Baptist Association, says Miami has not experienced a leadership vacuum in ethnic ministries because of the tri-lingual school.

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Carvajal moved to Miami from Cuba in 1955 and became involved in what was then Miami's only Hispanic church. As he assumed more leadership roles, "I told the Lord if you ever call me to preach, I want an education."

At the time, Carvajal was a buyer and quality control specialist for an American company which did business in Central and South America. He did not see how he could support his family if he left his job to attend seminary.

When the Miami school opened, he was one of the first students. He received his associate degree in divinity in 1982.

"My only regret is not answering the call earlier," Carvajal says. "My hesitation was in how God was going to provide for me."

The seminary branch meets in classroom space provided by Tamiami Baptist Church. Classes meet in the evenings so students can work day jobs while they attend school.

Beginning this fall, the school will offer three programs, a certificate in Christian studies, a diploma in pastoral ministry and an associate degree in divinity. One hundred students have received associate degrees from the seminary branch, most of whom continue their ministry in south Florida after graduating.

This spring 158 students took classes through the center, which includes satellite facilities in West Palm Beach, Fort Myers and Orlando.

"Our goal is to bring education where the people are, to have education within a one hour drive," Vazquez says.

Vazquez's goals for the school don't stop there. He's working toward establishing a program for Spanish-speaking people to receive bachelor's degrees in pastoral ministries. Another of his dreams is to offer a master's program in Spanish.

"Miami is the gateway to all of Central and South America," Vazquez says. "We can impact Spanish work throughout the world here."

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