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91-108

Home Mission Board approves
move to Alpharetta in 1995

By Jim Newton

N-NMB

ATLANTA (BP)--Directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board voted July 17 to move their national headquarters from midtown Atlanta to a new location 22 miles north in Alpharetta, Ga.

Plans call for the new building to be completed in 1995 before the agency's 150th anniversary and the Southern Baptist Convention which meets in Atlanta, June 20-22, 1995.

The 90-member board agreed to buy 34 acres of property for \$1.3 million from the Hillwood Development Corp., a division of the Perot Group headed by Ross Perot Jr., of Dallas.

Known as the Preston Ridge development, the land is located near the intersection of Georgia 400 and State Bridge Road in a booming area of north Fulton County. Ground was broken one week earlier on a major new shopping mall one mile from the Preston Ridge site.

Ralph Smith of Austin, Texas, chairman of the board's site and building committee, said the location was the unanimous recommendation of the site committee which considered more than 150 locations in metro Atlanta. The recommendation was adopted without debate.

Smith, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, said the site met all of the 14 criteria established by the committee.

The 11-member committee narrowed the choice from 10 locations to three, and did detailed analyses of two potential sites before making the recommendation.

Home Mission Board President Larry L. Lewis said the proposed location was also the unanimous choice of the agency's administration and a staff task force. A poll of the board's 396 Atlanta employees indicated most favored a north or northeast location.

Lewis said he first preferred a location closer to downtown and nearer the Interstate 285 loop which circles Atlanta, but the cost of land, averaging \$300,000 per acre, was prohibitive.

Lewis said he was deeply concerned the new building be located in an area where there is good, affordable housing nearby. A survey showed more current staff members live in the north-northeast area than in all other sections of the city combined.

Smith displayed an architectural model of how the proposed five-story building might look, and how the 34-acre site might be landscaped. Initial plans call for an office building with about 175,000 square feet.

During a press conference following the board meeting, Smith listed 10 key reasons why the site committee recommended the Alpharetta location. They included:

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(1) The quality of life in the area including good schools, churches, parks, recreation facilities, availability of jobs, and infrastructure; (2) the location adjacent to Georgia 400, a limited access freeway which provides a direct route 25 miles to downtown Atlanta and 32 miles to the airport; (3) projected plans for public transportation bus and rapid rail to the area; (5) proximity to a new major shopping mall; (6) availability of nearby hotels and restaurants, (7) value of property due to nearby location of other major office buildings and corporate headquarters, (8) the financial stability and commitment of the developer, Ross Perot, to long-term value and quality; (9) research which shows the area will increase in property value in the future, and (10) convenience to the majority of employees of the HMB.

Since 1968, the board has occupied offices at 1350 Spring Street NW in the midtown area of Atlanta. The board hopes to maintain an Atlanta post office box and mailing address, Lewis said.

In July 1990 the board sold its five buildings and 6.3 acres of land to AmProp Georgia I Limited Partnership of Chicago for \$14.5 million and voted to lease the buildings until a new headquarters is completed in 1995.

Income from the sale of the property has been designated to buy the land and build the headquarters office, said Lewis.

The Atlanta-based Home Mission Board is a national agency of the Southern Baptist Convention. The Home Mission Board supports 4,573 missionaries involved in evangelism, ministry and starting and strengthening Southern Baptist churches throughout the nation.

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

HMB adopts resolution
thanking Morris Chapman

By Jim Newton

Baptist Press
7/18/91

N. NMB

ATLANTA (BP)--A resolution expressing "grateful appreciation" to Southern Baptist Convention President Morris Chapman for his challenge to support home missions was adopted by directors of the SBC Home Mission Board.

The resolution, recommended by the board's administrative committee, urged Southern Baptists to "prayerfully consider" Chapman's appeal for churches to double their goal for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions next year, and to work toward establishing 1,000 new congregations on Easter Sunday in 1992.

Chapman issued the challenge during his presidential address at the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta June 4.

Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis described Chapman's challenge as "unprecedented," and said he and the staff at the Home Mission Board are taking that challenge "very seriously."

"Never in the history of the Southern Baptist Convention has a convention president challenged us to start 1,000 new churches in one day," Lewis said.

He added the Home Mission Board will not be able to respond effectively to the pleas for assistance in starting these 1,000 new churches unless Southern Baptists also heed Chapman's appeal for churches to double their gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

In his report to the directors, Lewis quoted verbatim from Chapman's presidential address to the convention, adding his only disappointment was that news of Chapman's challenge was "buried" in the huge volume of press releases coming out of the convention.

"Most people have ignored it," said Lewis concerning the challenge.

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Chapman, Lewis said, is writing a personal letter to every pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention urging support of his challenge to start a thousand new churches and double local church goals for the Annie Armstrong Offering.

In addition to the resolution commending Chapman, the board approved another recommendation from the administrative committee that all Annie Armstrong Easter Offering income above the 1992 goal of \$41 million be used to fund the board's campaign to start 15,000 new churches by the end of 2000.

Chapman's proposal to start 1,000 new congregations on Easter Sunday would kick off the 15,000 campaign with a powerful thrust making it much easier to reach the goal of starting 15,000 churches by the end of this millennium, Lewis said.

Lewis also expressed appreciation for Chapman's support of Crossover Atlanta, an evangelistic thrust coordinated by the Home Mission Board during the convention in Atlanta which resulted in more than 400 professions of faith.

Lewis said he personally had been blessed by participating in the evangelistic effort, and read a letter from an Atlanta lay man thanking Southern Baptists for "leading us in witnessing in the cities where our convention is being held."

In other actions, the board elected four new staff members, promoted two other staff to other positions, appointed 11 new missionaries, approved the purchase of 34 acres of land in Alpharetta as the site for a new national headquarters building in 1995, and presented a plaque and resolution expressing appreciation to Emmanuel McCall who has resigned to become pastor of Christian Fellowship Baptist Church in Atlanta.

McCall, the first black staff member of the Home Mission Board, is director of the black church extension division. He joined the HMB staff in 1975 and previously was director of the black church relations department.

H. Everett Anthony, director of missions for Chicago Baptist Association, was elected associate director of the HMB metropolitan missions department, effective Sept. 1. Anthony, a native of Oklahoma, is a former pastor of churches in Illinois and Missouri.

Joe L. Westbury, public relations director at Union University in Jackson, Tenn., was elected editor of the home mission study materials, effective Aug. 1. Westbury, a native of Florida, is a former editor of World Mission Journal published by the Brotherhood Commission, and former associate director of news and information at the Home Mission Board.

Steve Whitten, pastor of University Baptist Church in Amherst, N.Y., was elected associate director of the HMB program research department, effective Sept. 1. Whitten, a native of Alabama, has been a church starter with the Home Mission Board since 1988.

Eliu Camacho-Vazquez, language missions director for the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio, was elected executive director of the HMB's Caribbean office in San Juan, Puerto Rico, effective Sept. 1. A native of Puerto Rico, he previously has done home missions work in Florida and in California where he was associate director of evangelism.

The board also voted to promote Bob Campbell from associate director to director of the associational evangelism department, effective immediately. Campbell, a native of Tennessee, has been on the HMB staff in Atlanta since 1983, after serving previously as evangelism director for the Baptist Convention of New England.

Thomas Wright, previously director of the HMB language church development department, was named editor of evangelism materials, effective immediately. Wright, a native of Atlanta, is a former missionary journeyman in Thailand, former national missionary of the HMB, and former pastor of language churches in Texas.

PrayerLife course changes
name effective in October

NASHVILLE (BP)--Due to trademark infringement upon an already existing name, PrayerLife: Walking in Fellowship with God will change its name effective in October. N-SSB

The 13-week Lay Institute for Equipping Course, published through the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship training department, will become Disciple's Prayer Life: Walking in Fellowship with God.

Avery Willis, manager of the adult section of the discipleship training department, said he received a call early this year from Glaphrey Gilliland, owner of a corporation in Bethany, Okla., that had received trademark rights on the name Prayerlife in 1978.

Officials at the firm had just learned the Sunday School Board had a product with the same name as their company, he said. PrayerLife, written by T.W. Hunt, was first released in 1988, Willis said.

Gilliland agreed to let the discipleship training department use the new name and did not require them to change the name on the current stock of PrayerLife notebooks and videos, Willis said.

"They required us to attach a hard-to-remove sticker on the 8,000 notebooks in stock with our apologies to the company," Willis said. They also required apologies on each of the 13 sessions in the four-set videotaped PrayerLife lesson, he added.

"They were real nice about everything," he said.

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Czech Baptists renewing
heritage after repression

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
7/18/91

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--To survive communist repression, Czechoslovakia's Baptists sacrificed their heritage. N.FMB

Now, "We are restoring Baptist identity," declared a Czech Baptist official.

"We have to show our people what it is to be a Baptist," said Pavel Vychopan, general secretary of the Baptist Union in Czechoslovakia, during a July 15-17 visit to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va.

Czech Baptists count about 4,000 members in 33 churches and 100 preaching stations. To replant Baptist roots, the union will open a college-level school in September offering courses in biblical and Baptist studies, youth and children's ministry and social work to about 30 students. The Foreign Mission Board provided \$85,000 of the \$95,000 purchase price for a building for the school in the city of Olomouc.

The union also is organizing courses and lectures across the country on evangelism, church planting and other topics important to Baptists in today's Czechoslovakia, Vychopan said.

Southern Baptists were "the first to offer effective help immediately after the revolution" that swept communists from power two years ago, Vychopan said. He praised the Foreign Mission Board for "asking what we need -- personnel, assistance in various projects, finances. From the very beginning the relationship has been built on an equal basis."

Southern Baptists' first workers in Czechoslovakia, Robert and Marsha Ford, will transfer there in late July. Ford, of St. Augustine, Fla., and his wife, of Holly Springs, Miss., have spent eight years in Scotland.

Czechoslovakia is a union of two nationalities, the Czechs and Slovaks, and some separatist groups are emerging among Slovaks. But Baptists remain united, Vychopan said, compared to Yugoslavia, where the Baptist union has split into smaller republic-level unions.

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"There were always links between Czech and Slovak Baptists, even before Czechoslovakia was created," he explained, noting the first Baptist churches in each region were established more than 100 years ago.

In 1948 atheism took aim at Christianity when the communists rose to power. They soon enacted a sweeping and repressive law against churches.

"Baptists were one of the few churches that refused the law," Vychopan recounted, "because it did not reflect some of our key principles" such as separation of church and state and democratic rule within congregations.

"We were heavily attacked by the communists," he said. "Almost half of our pastors were imprisoned. Some even died in prison. And we realized that we would not survive. Therefore we sacrificed these principles and accepted the law in 1953." Counting the onslaught of World War II followed by communism, he added, "Our union has been almost five decades in isolation."

Of the sweep of freedom across Eastern Europe in 1989, Vychopan noted, "Freedom is a wonderful thing, but freedom brings also problems." The most acute problem -- underscoring the need to educate Baptists about their heritage -- "is the invasion of various spiritual streams into our country and into our churches," namely parachurch charismatic groups from America, Sweden and Australia, he said.

Such groups begin visiting a congregation, claim it is "dead," offer help for spiritual renewal and finally propose changing the name of the church, Vychopan said. "They say, 'Why should we call ourselves Baptists? Why don't we call our group just a Christian community?'"

Baptists haven't "lost" any churches so far, Vychopan said, but he estimated a third of the Baptist congregations have faced the threat of a charismatic takeover.

Another problem involves stewardship, Vychopan said. Under the communist system the government paid pastors, but that will end next year. Baptists and other Christians must grapple with their use of money as "a spiritual question ... part of our understanding of the gospel."

Baptist heritage is worth preserving, Vychopan said, citing belief in:

-- the Bible as the highest authority, "the only authority."

-- proclamation of the new birth in Christ and mission outreach. For Czech Baptists, the challenge now is "to come out of the isolation, to get rid of the fears we collected in so many decades, to preach the gospel outside our buildings."

-- freedom of conscience "to seek truth directly from Jesus Christ. You don't need a mediator for it. Even the church is not a mediator."

-- churches with members "who have heard God's calling and responded. In the Baptist concept of church, the whole church is deciding about the crucial things, not one leader or a few people."

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Foreign Mission Board begins
toll-free information line

N-FMB

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptists now can dial a toll-free telephone number, 1-800-866 FMB1, for information about foreign missions.

Besides being free, the new line's purpose is to be "more user-friendly, to provide easier access for Southern Baptists who want general information or information about mission resources," said Irma Duke, associate vice president for communications support at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

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The 800 line will offer information about missionaries, their addresses and countries where they work, mission service opportunities and mission products for use in churches. It also will feature seasonal or topical information, such as mission emphases during the fall when churches highlight the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions.

Callers will hear a recorded voice giving them a choice between general mission information or product ordering. Those who choose general information then can pick what kind of data they want: missionary count and addresses, missionary service opportunities or other information. "Other" calls will be transferred to the mission board's public affairs office.

At night and on weekends, calls will be answered by a recorded tape asking callers to leave messages that staff members can respond to during business hours.

The toll-free line is reserved for people calling for general information and product ordering, Duke stressed. Callers needing to talk to specific staff members should continue to call the agency's switchboard.

Southern Baptists wanting current mission prayer requests should continue to call the board's toll-free PrayerLine, 1-800-395-PRAY.

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NOTICE: Aug. 31, 1991 will be the last day for use of the Jacquard computer in the Baptist Press office. After that date, Baptist Press will be available electronically only on the CompuServe system. We will, of course, continue to mail Baptist Press to all our subscribers. Contact David Haywood at the Baptist Sunday School Board for more information.

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