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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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91-118

Chapman, former presidents,
urge prayer for Graham rally

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention President Morris Chapman and five former presidents have urged churches to set aside time for specific prayer for evangelist Billy Graham's plan for an outdoor rally in New York's Central Park.

Graham, a Southern Baptist, will speak at the rally on Sunday, Sept. 22, at 4 p.m. in the Great Lawn area of Central Park, said Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas. In a letter to Baptist Press, he called upon Southern Baptists worldwide to "pray concertededly and contiually for our brother Billy Graham in this historic evangelistic effort."

Chapman said one of every 10 Americans live in the metropolitan New York City area and a "large scale evangelistic campaign in this cultural, educational, entertainment, transportation and financial hub would have great impact not only on millions in (New York), but also in far reachins ways across America."

Joining Chapman in the call to prayer are former SBC presidents: Bailey Smith, evangelist from Atlanta; Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn.; Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Atlanta; James T. Draper Jr., pastor of First Baptsit Church, Euless, Texas; and Jerry Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.

For more information on the New York City Rally, and for updated prayer requests, individuals may call a special toll free prayer and information line at 1-800-PRAY-NYC or write Mission Metro New York, 172 Lexington Ave., New York, New York 10016.

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Annuity Board trustees
hear growth reports

By Thomas E. Miller Jr.

Baptist Press
8/7/91

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Assets of the Annuity Board grew by more than \$1 million a day for the first six months of 1991, trustees were told. At a July 29-30 meeting of the board, it also was reported the Southern Baptist agency is on track for paying \$100 million in retirement benefits this year for the first time.

The trustees continued their tradition of holding the summer meeting near a major Southern Baptist Convention agency. Forty-five of 48 trustees attended. A Monday evening dinner included guests from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, the Missouri Baptist Convention and area churches.

Annuity Board president Paul W. Powell told trustees of the gain in assets. Treasurer Harold Richardson and investment head John R. Jones told how it was done.

Member contributions continued strong, said Richardson, with more than \$92.5 million flowing into individual retirement income accounts of more than 67,000 members. The contributions represented a 4 percent increase over the first six months of 1990.

Earnings for January-June were \$164.3 million, with almost 82 percent coming in the first quarter. Richardson reported total assets of \$3.19 billion on June 30, a 9.5 percent increase since June 30, 1990.

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Earnings credited to fixed fund accounts continued on target for the estimated 8.8 percent for 1991. The balanced fund earned 6.9 percent (non-annualized) in the first six months and the variable fund earned 8.8 percent (non-annualized) for the same period. The short-term fund earned 3.01 percent (non-annualized).

Richardson reported \$52.1 million in retirement benefits paid to more than 21,000 annuitants during the first six months of 1991. He raised the possibility that this year, for the first time, the Annuity Board could dispense \$100 million to retirees.

The relief committee considered 48 requests for aid. Eleven were approved for 2-year monthly grants, 12 for one-time grants, 8 for 2-year expense grants and one for a 1-year expense grant. Sixteen applications were declined for being outside of guidelines.

In the second quarter the Annuity Board paid \$170,490 in relief to 605 retired ministers, denominational workers or their widows. Powell said the average age of relief recipients is 77 years, the average income from all sources is \$563 per month and their average expense is \$660. Most of the relief recipients receive no retirement benefits from the Annuity Board.

Relief grants are paid from about \$600,000 a year received through the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program.

In addition, the Annuity Board's Adopt An Annuitant program provides an extra \$50 each month to 841 persons whose retirement benefits are inadequate for current needs. Sixty were added for these benefits in the second quarter.

Trustees received copies of the Annuity Board's business plan containing an outline of corporate strategies for the next several years, and a new organizational chart showing changes to be phased in over the next two years.

The administrative policy committee announced two new senior vice presidents. Joel H. Mathis heads a restructured insurance division with a life and health department and a property and casualty department. William C. Lee is senior vice president, operations review.

In other action at their meeting, trustees passed a motion affirming Powell's role as "peacemaker" in a Texas Baptist controversy.

Powell, who is chairman of the board of regents at Baylor University, was a trustee of the university when he was elected president of the Annuity Board. In negotiations with the Annuity Board presidential search committee, Powell received approval to serve the remaining two years of his trustee term, which ends in November 1991.

When Baylor unilaterally amended its charter in September 1990 to provide for a self-perpetuating board of regents a controversy over control and funding erupted among Texas Baptists.

After discussion, the Annuity Board trustees found no conflict of interest on the part of the president.

In a lengthy report on the church comprehensive medical plan, Richardson and insurance division head Mathis reported continuing signs of approaching stability.

Mathis reported on negotiations and contracts with the national PruNetwork preferred provider organization and with Baptist hospitals. Participants in ten cities are already receiving enhanced benefits of lower deductibles and lower copayment limits through PruNetwork. More than 40 localities will be in the network by Jan. 1, 1992. Some Baptist hospitals are expected to offer the same enhanced benefits September 1, and negotiations are in process with all other Baptist hospitals.

The guest speaker for the trustees' Monday luncheon was Allen Haight, senior vice president, group accounts, of The Prudential Insurance Company of America. He gave a report on the Annuity Board plans and discussed the future of health insurance in America.

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Haight gave an assessment of the church comprehensive medical plan. He predicted recovery "because we have two noble institutions (Prudential and the Annuity Board) trying to do the right thing for the right reasons."

Haight praised the Annuity Board plan for having "the lowest administrative and marketing cost I've ever seen."

A memorial resolution was adopted for Arizona trustee Mark H. Daniel who died July 3.

The next meeting of the Annuity Board will be Oct. 28-29 in Dallas.

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BJC joins to ask High Court
to maintain current test

By Tom Strode

N-CLC

Baptist Press
8/7/91

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs has joined in a friend-of-the court brief asking the United States Supreme Court to maintain its current test for determining whether a government activity is an unconstitutional establishment of religion.

The action places the BJC and the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission on opposite sides in a crucial First Amendment case.

In May, the CLC filed a brief requesting the court dramatically revise its standard on the Establishment Clause. The CLC, the United States Department of Justice, other groups and the petitioners (a Providence, R.I., school principal and others) have proposed to the Supreme Court various forms of a test in which government coercion of belief or practice would be the primary basis for ruling an activity in violation of the Establishment Clause.

In a brief written by University of Texas law professor Douglas Laycock and filed July 10, the Baptist Joint Committee and other groups say the proposal by the petitioners and the Justice Department requires "the Court abandon the fundamental requirement that government be neutral toward religion, and substitute instead the requirement that government refrain from 'coercion.'"

The coercion test is inconsistent with the text, interpretation and history of the Constitution, the brief says. The doctrine of the Supreme Court and the initial understanding of the First Amendment is that "government endorsements of religion" are unconstitutional, the brief says.

"Their coercion standard would leave America's many religions exposed to the corrupting intrusions of government," the brief says. "Government could sponsor preferred churches, preferred theologies, preferred liturgies, preferred forms of worship and preferred forms of prayer.

"Government-sponsored religious observances hurt believers as well as nonbelievers," the brief says. "Such observances hurt all religions by imposing government's preferred form of religion on public occasions."

J. Brent Walker, associate general counsel of the BJC, said, "The Baptist Joint Committee believes fervently in religious liberty. Religious liberty is best served when government remains neutral toward religion.

"When it tries to give religion a helping hand, it usually hurts religion and inevitably molests the consciences of those who believe differently," said Walker, who assisted Laycock with the brief. "The proposed 'coercion' test turns government loose to do just that."

The focus of the difference of opinion over Establishment Clause doctrine is Lee v. Weisman, which involves prayers at a junior high school commencement exercise in Providence, R.I. Two lower courts ruled as unconstitutional a rabbi's invocation and benediction mentioning God at the ceremony. Oral arguments in the case will be heard sometime after October, a spokesperson in the court clerk's office said.

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At issue in the case is the Lemon test, spelled out in the 1971 Lemon v. Kurzman decision and the basis since then for determining establishment cases. The Lemon test says a government practice must pass the following requirements:

- It must have a secular, legislative purpose.
- It can neither promote nor restrain religion.
- It must avert excessive entanglement with religion.

This terminology "did not originate in Lemon" but is a "convenient formulation" of the development of Supreme Court doctrine, the brief says.

"We disagree that Lemon is the inerrant litmus test for church-state separation doctrine. We believe that the Court can develop a better verbal formula, which includes but is not limited to the principle of noncoercion, as suggested in our brief," said Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the CLC.

The CLC's proposed test, Whitehead said, is stronger than one endorsed by the Justice Department in ensuring "government neutrality, without creating government hostility toward religion."

"While not inducing, coercing, endorsing or funding religious activities, the government may accommodate the religious behavior of its private citizens, even at public school ceremonies," he said.

According to Laycock's brief, "the only way Caesar can be neutral toward religion is to be silent, and to command all in his presence to be silent," Whitehead said. "That means that, in every precinct which Caesar invades, religion must retreat."

In an appendix to Laycock's brief, the following is included: "Although the Baptist Joint Committee believes the principle of governmental neutrality embodied in Lemon should be preserved and that the instant prayers violate that standard, we do not hereby contest the constitutionality of public ceremonial prayer in general."

In explanation of the statement, Walker said the BJC did not want "to go beyond the specific facts in this case" and "didn't want to be accused of saying more than what we wanted to say." The BJC, therefore, would not comment on such hypothetical cases as prayer at college graduations or at high school athletic events, Walker said.

The BJC chose to join a coalition in a brief rather than file its own because of the importance of uniting with "groups that have a like mind on the Establishment Clause" and because of the opportunity "to come together under (Laycock's) authorship," Walker said.

Among those joining the BJC in the brief are the National Council of Churches, People for the American Way, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, American Jewish Congress and three other Jewish organizations. Others who have filed briefs supporting the current test are Americans for Religious Liberty, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the National Coalition for Public Education and Religious Liberty.

Groups filing briefs in support of graduation prayers include the National Association of Evangelicals, Christian Legal Society, Focus on the Family, National School Board Association, The Rutherford Institute and the U.S. Catholic Conference.

The Baptist Joint Committee consists of representatives from nine Baptist groups and the Religious Liberty Council. The Southern Baptist Convention voted in June to eliminate its remaining funding for the BJC. Some state conventions, associations and churches in the SBC continue to support the BJC.

Black leader praises inclusion,
outlines places for progress

By Sarah Zimmerman

F. WMB

ATLANTA (BP)--Emmanuel McCall remembers the days when Southern Baptists laughed at racial jokes. But it was no laughing matter when he needed security escorts to attend an all-white church.

In 1968, the same year Martin Luther King Jr., was assassinated, McCall became the first black elected to the staff of a Southern Baptist agency. This year the Pennsylvania native is leaving his post as Home Mission Board director of black church extension to become pastor of a new church in Atlanta.

The highlight of his 23-year-career with the Home Mission Board is "the number of Southern Baptists who have taken racial inclusiveness as a concern and have done something about it," he says. "Our agencies now shun racial retardedness.

"In the early years, people told racial jokes and everyone laughed," McCall says. In a more recent incident, a speaker made a racial slur and 40 people walked out of the banquet.

McCall, 55, acknowledges many people gave up more than a meal to take a stand against prejudice.

"A legion of pastors preached one sermon (against racism) and got fired," McCall says. "If we have anything to celebrate, it's really due to those unnamed people."

Yet Southern Baptists still have room to grow in racial acceptance, McCall says, as he notes areas where people continue to laugh at prejudice.

"There are still some associations which are not ready to receive black churches into their fellowship. We need more black people on our national programs and on our boards and committees. We need to open doors so blacks can relate to more than just black churches."

Despite those goals for Southern Baptists, McCall says, "I sense that I've made my contribution. It's time for someone else to lead with a different perspective."

This spring McCall began working with a group of black Southern Baptists in Atlanta who were forming a church. At first, his intention was to give leadership to the group until they called a pastor.

His plans changed when he awoke one night with a "very clear sense of divine direction" to be pastor of the new congregation.

McCall's resignation at the Home Mission Board was effective July 31, but he will serve as a contract consultant for the black church extension division through October or until another director is elected.

Christian Fellowship Baptist Church, where McCall is pastor, was constituted on May 26 with 448 charter members. It reached 500 members in August, and McCall plans to baptize 18 people in September.

The church attracts primarily blacks who are "looking for a different kind of church, where worship is purposeful, not traditional.

"Our members have so many skills and talents they are eager to use," McCall continues. "I haven't had to worry (about church matters.) I just turn it loose to people who are competent."

The church already has begun hunger relief and job training ministries. McCall said he expects the group to begin a prison ministry soon, and he thinks the church will plant two mission churches by the end of the year.

"I don't know of anything that has captured my imagination as this has," says McCall who began preaching at age 14.

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"This will be a meaningful way for me to conclude my ministry. I don't see myself going anywhere else."

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

NOTICE: Aug. 30, 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.

Thanks,
Baptist Press
