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92-154

NASHVILLE -- CLC trustees approve sanctity of life video.
KENTUCKY -- 2,600 Kentuckians hear Parks address his last MissionsFest, with photos.
KENTUCKY -- Parks explains he didn't want his job to hinder missions.
KENTUCKY -- Panel says missions is a family affair.
ATLANTA -- Masonic opponent meets with HMB interfaith witness staff.
NORTH CAROLINA -- 'Sons of God' bikers witness for Christ, with photo.

CLC trustees see
new Sanctity video

By Louis Moore

Baptist Press
9/18/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission trustees gave the green light to the CLC's new video on sanctity of human life issues, elected new trustee officers and approved a record budget of \$1,584,131 for the 1992-93 fiscal year.

The new 18-minute video is entitled "The Sanctity of Human Life." It explores the attitudes and actions that have led the Southern Baptist Convention from the outskirts of the abortion debate two decades ago to the central role it now plays in Sanctity of Human Life issues nationwide.

At one point in the video CLC Executive Director Richard Land describes the Southern Baptist Convention as perhaps the most pro-life denomination in the country today. Included on the video are comments by Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis and Baptist Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr. Sylvia Boothe, director of the Alternatives to Abortion Ministry at the Home Mission Board, and C. Ben Mitchell, director of life and biomedical issues at the Christian Life Commission, also are featured on the video.

In their Sept. 14-16 semi-annual meeting, the trustees elected James W. Richards, pastor of Southminster Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, La., new board chairman. He replaces Harry A. "Hal" Lane, pastor of West Side Baptist Church in Greenwood, S.C., who has been board chairman for the past year.

Richards was elected over Roy R. Gean, an attorney from Fort Smith, Ark. Richards previously was CLC vice chairman.

Trustees also elected Nancy Schaefer of Atlanta as vice chairman. Schaefer becomes the second woman in the CLC's history to hold the post. The first was Sarah Frances Anders, chair of the psychology department at Louisiana College, who was CLC vice chairman in 1975-76. Schaefer is President of Family Concerns, Inc., and is first vice president of the Georgia Baptist Convention.

Schaefer was elected over Liz Minnick, a homemaker from Austin, Texas.

A. Lee McGehee, chief of police in Ocala, Fla., was re-elected without opposition as recording secretary.

The 1992-93 budget anticipates a decline of \$5,000 in Cooperative Program receipts but an increase of \$15,000 in sales of CLC literature and an increase of nearly \$1,000 in designated gifts to the agency.

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In other action, trustees:

-- voted to retain the services of Michael Whitehead as General Counsel on a three-quarters time basis for another two years, with six month reviews, and allow Whitehead to remain in Kansas City, Mo. Whitehead's 15-year-old son Jonathan, is receiving medical treatment for leukemia and his doctors have advised against the family moving from Kansas City to Washington at this time.

-- empathized with motions presented at the 1992 Southern Baptist Convention in Indianapolis setting ceilings on salary and severance packages but said agency trustee boards are the best place to exercise such stewardship responsibly.

-- voted unanimously to present the CLC's annual Distinguished Service Award to Draper for his record of leadership in the convention, particularly his strong stand again abortion.

-- approved a 4 percent raise for the CLC's executive director and an average of 2.5 percent raise for all other employees.

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2,600 Kentuckians hear Parks
address his last MissionsFest By Marv Knox & Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
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LEXINGTON, Ky. (BP)--If Baptists really believe missions is the central theme of the Bible, they ought to do more about it, R. Keith Parks said in one of his last appearances as president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Parks, who will retire as FMB president Oct. 31, addressed Kentucky Baptists several times during MissionsFest, a foreign missions extravaganza in Lexington, Ky., Sept. 11-12.

More than 2,600 people attended the meeting, making it the second-largest MissionsFest ever. The FMB sponsors four of the festivals per year.

"If someone who had never read Scripture came to your church and listened for a month to all that was said and taught, and they examined your budget ... do you think they would come out saying the most important thing for these people is sharing Jesus with all the world?" Parks asked. "Or would they find that hard to believe?"

He called for Baptists to get a "vision for going" in response to God's teaching through the Bible and through Jesus Christ.

"The central teaching of Scripture is the concept that God is the God of all people and his message is for all people," Parks said. "If this is the primary theme of the Bible, then we ought to do something about it."

But both the Jewish people and many who claim to be Christians have missed this basic concept, he said. "We have the feeling that somehow God loves some people more than others. This is not true."

Americans have a responsibility to share not only their material wealth but their spiritual wealth with a needy world, Parks said. "Christians in America ... need to carefully examine our relationship to our Lord and our responsibility to share our spiritual blessings. If we turn inward and fail to share that message, God will move on and find someone who is usable."

But the needs of the world -- even though they are great -- should not be the primary motivation for going, Parks said.

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"The need is a valid consideration, but that is not where the call to missions originates," he said, noting the city of Lexington contained enough needs to keep every Baptist at MissionsFest busy.

"The vision for going begins with God's call," Parks stressed. "My prayer is we can be open and look in God's face and say, 'Lord, for what purpose did you create me?'"

Finding that answer is the key to Christian success, he added: "God speaks. God reveals what he wants us to do. And if we fail to respond to the vision God has set for us, we are abject failures."

However, most Americans take a "purely human" view of the world and do not feel compelled to spread the gospel overseas, Parks reported.

"Unless we as God's people look into the face of God and see God's vision for us, we are going to refuse to go," he predicted. "But when one looks in God's face and begins to see the world as God sees it, he rises up and goes."

"God's nature is always one of going and human nature is always one of drawing to itself. That's why more have not responded to the call to go."

Consequently, the Christian's task is to see the world as God sees it, Parks said.

When people see and follow that vision, they will be changed as much as the people who receive their ministry, he explained.

He quoted the late B.H. Carroll, a Baptist theologian and educator, who said missions is the force that keeps Baptists together, against the centrifugal force of church sovereignty that pulls them apart.

"Missions may be our last hope for ourselves," Parks declared.

"What does God say to you?" he asked. "Look at it from God's eyes. ... Why did God save you? What good works did he have in mind for you? Without that vision, you'll perish, you'll wither away, you'll die."

Parks said he knows God is saying "go" to many Christians.

"I believe with all my heart God still calls people with an open-ended, no-limitations calling," he insisted.

Parks cited three reasons God still calls people to missions:

-- "God is the god of all people," he said. "He created all people; he is not a tribal deity of a bunch of white Southern Baptists. He loves spindly-legged, bloated-bellied babies in Somalia in what may be the most neglected place on earth. God intended all people should know him."

-- "All have sinned," he stressed. That means all people have been separated from God and need to hear that God wants to be reconciled to them.

-- In the "fullness of time," Jesus came to people on earth, Parks said. "When it came time, God didn't send a videocassette. ... He sent a person, a God-man."

God still wants to come to people in human form, but Christians must be willing to go, he said, explaining "God will incarnate himself" in the lives of missionaries who go to tell his story.

Those who would follow the example of Jesus will be drawn beyond their homeland to places where millions have never heard God's message, Parks said.

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Consider this, he suggested: "If Jesus Christ were here today incarnated in a human body, where do you think he would go to preach the gospel?"

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(BP) photos available upon request from the Western Recorder, Kentucky Baptist newsjournal.

Parks explains he didn't want
his job to hinder missions

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
9/18/92

LEXINGTON, Ky. (BP)--Keith Parks chose to retire rather than get in the way of progress, he told a gathering of Kentucky Baptists.

Parks, a veteran missionary who has been president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board since 1980, will retire Oct. 31. He visited Kentucky during MissionsFest, a foreign missions extravaganza held this month in Lexington.

And even though his departure is little more than a month away, Parks said he does not know what his plans will be for the future.

"I honestly don't know," he said when asked about future plans during a dialogue session with Kentucky pastors. "I would be delighted to tell you if I knew."

Parks requested prayer as he considers several options after getting free of his current hectic schedule. "It has been difficult to get alone enough to pray through and think through what God wants me to do," he explained.

His decision to retire was an abrupt about-face and conflicted with previous feelings of God's will for his life, Parks admitted.

In August 1991, following one of the deepest spiritual experiences of his life, Parks told FMB trustees he felt God wanted him to stay on as president until 1995.

"The Lord seemed to be saying, 'This is the moment when Southern Baptists can rise above their differences and recapture the spirit of Bold Mission Thrust,'" he recalled. Bold Mission Thrust is Southern Baptists' campaign to share the gospel with the whole world by the year 2000.

Parks announced his decision to stay until '95 amid global change. The Soviet Union was crumbling and Eastern Europe was opening up to the gospel. Revivals were breaking out in other parts of the globe. "We were witnessing an openness in the world," he said.

At the time, Parks believed his decision to stay at the board would give Southern Baptist missions efforts continuity and would maintain the momentum of missions progress.

"I hoped it would galvanize the board," Parks said of his decision to stay, which he presented with a list of his missions dreams for the future. "I hoped to move together in harmony."

That hope for harmony was drowned out by discord two months later when trustees voted to defund the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, against the recommendation of Parks and FMB administrators.

"By the October board meeting, although many trustees felt as I did, as a whole they did not," Parks said. "There was concern about my leadership for three more years.

"I felt if we could move ahead as one, we could capture the moment in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. But we faced continuing differences over leadership style and philosophy. I felt if I stayed, I would be a distraction. ... If my leadership was not something (board members) could trust, I should get out of the way. Month by month, we were losing that momentum."

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Parks shocked board members and staff in March when he announced plans to retire next month, when he turns 65.

Although he felt his vision of August 1991 reflected "a better will of God" for himself and the board, he gradually began to feel "God's will to step aside rather than let the Foreign Mission Board get bogged down in what I felt were personal matters" over leadership and direction.

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Mark Wingfield contributed to this story.

Panel says missions
is a family affair

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
9/18/92

LEXINGTON, Ky. (BP)--Foreign missions is a family affair, a panel of missionaries said during MissionsFest at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, Ky.

Even though the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board only appoints adults to missions service, the entire family becomes involved in the work, said Gerald McNeely, retired missionary to Spain.

"Our two daughters considered themselves missionaries as much as we did," he explained. "When one of our girls found out she wasn't appointed by the board like we were, she was very upset."

That daughter, he said, carried on evangelistic conversations across their balcony with children of a neighboring family -- a family the adult missionaries could never reach because of social barriers.

The natural love for children shared by many people worldwide also can be helpful in foreign missions, said Marie Harris, missionary to Hong Kong. Her two blond-headed boys opened many opportunities to share the gospel in a land dominated by dark-haired children, she explained.

And children have a natural ability to adapt to new settings that adults don't come by as easily, the panel agreed.

When Harris and her husband, Larry, first moved to Hong Kong, she was fearful her children would have no one to play with because of the language barrier. But the family had barely begun to unpack before the American children had made new friends and begun playing with some of the local children, she said.

"Children are children everywhere," Harris said. "They seem to have their own language."

Lisa Morgan, who as a 7-year-old moved to Indonesia with her family, said she easily found new friends there and learned enough of the language to get by: "I either had to play with my brother or with the Indonesians, so I learned Indonesian."

But despite their adaptability and the many ways children find to serve God on the mission field, foreign missions service puts other strains on children that influence the entire family, the panel said.

Children often must travel long distances to attend schools, attend boarding schools or be home-schooled by a parent. And sometimes children become so immersed in their adoptive culture they have a difficult time returning to America.

Living in Indonesia was "like living in a fishbowl," Morgan said, explaining she was one of very few white-skinned people in a country full of brown-skinned people. "People watch everything you do," she said.

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After serving several years in Hong Kong, the Harris family moved to another island where they were the only white family living among 150,000 people. And because of the remote location, their young children traveled nearly two hours each direction to go to school.

Beyond the concerns of finding friends and schools for their children, some missionary families also face daily challenges as simple as finding the food desired for that day's meals.

"You can't really plan a day in Brazil," said Angela Finley. "You can count on whatever you plan to have for dinner, the store won't have it that day. ... If you decide you're going to have baked potatoes for dinner, you may have to go to five stores to find any larger than a walnut."

Despite these trials, Americans serving as missionaries overseas find new families in their relationships with fellow missionaries, the panel said. And children especially get a world perspective few others are privileged to know.

Doubts about the hardships fade "when I think how wise my children are in comparison to what I was at their ages," Harris said.

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Masonic opponent meets with
HMB interfaith witness staff

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
9/18/92

ATLANTA (BP)--The man who prompted the Southern Baptist Convention's latest struggle with Freemasonry met Sept. 17 with the Home Mission Board group assigned to determine whether Masonic teachings are compatible with Christian doctrine.

Larry Holly, a Beaumont, Texas, physician, met for more than three hours with six members of the HMB interfaith witness department, HMB President Larry Lewis and Vice President for Evangelism Darrell Robinson and trustee Brad Allen of Duncan, Okla., who chairs the trustees' evangelism committee. Joining Holly in his presentation was Charles Burchett, pastor of First Baptist Church in Kirbyville, Texas.

"It was a very good and congenial meeting," Lewis said. "Dr. Holly did an excellent job of sharing his perspective and pertinent information."

Robinson said Holly "presented the material with openness and cordiality."

The HMB interfaith witness department was directed to compare Freemasonry with Christian doctrine during the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting in Indianapolis. The final report is expected to be brought to Home Mission Board trustees before next year's convention June 15-17 in Houston.

During the Sept. 17 meeting, Holly reviewed a 628-page notebook he prepared for the group. The notebook included Holly's writings about Freemasonry and passages from books by Masons about their beliefs. Also included in the 13-section notebook were:

-- writings from 16 denominations about Freemasonry, including the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Presbyterian Church in America, Assemblies of God and Roman Catholic Church which, Holly said, "have taken a public and official stand against the Masonic Lodge."

-- personal testimonies of former Masons and pastors who have dealt with Freemasonry in their church.

-- a biographical section about Holly, including his relationship with his dad, who is a Mason.

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-- a list of 12 questions posed to Lewis and the study group. Among those were a request to meet again with the research group before the final report is prepared and a request to see the report before it is presented to the convention in Houston.

Another question asked, "What credibility can you give to the statements of men who have taken blood oaths not to reveal anything about the Masonic Lodge?"

Masons have been invited to discuss their teachings and writings with the interfaith witness department, Lewis said.

The meeting with Holly was among the department's first dialogues as it begins the study, said Gary Leazer, director of the interfaith witness department.

"Dr. Leazer and his staff were gracious and attentive," Holly said after the meeting. "They interacted with us well. Dr. Leazer went to every length necessary to give us the opportunity to state our case against the Masonic Lodge, and I was appreciative of his efforts to make this a maximally productive meeting.

"This meeting was a positive step in ... fulfilling the responsibility given to the interfaith witness department by the SBC," Holly said.

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Art Toalston contributed to this report.

'Sons of God' bikers
witness for Christ

By R.G. Puckett

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MT. GILEAD, N.C. (BP)--"You people are disgusting. Jesus would never have ridden a Harley," the angry woman said.

But the "Sons of God" motorcycle group disagrees.

In fact, they have a little witnessing tract which they hand out which says on the cover, "He would have ridden a Harley."

Inside, the tract reads: "Jesus the Biker. He was a lot like you and me. The government didn't like him. The church thought he was weird. His friends were few. What friends he had, denied him. He was persecuted by hypocrites. He hung around people like you and me, not the goody-two-shoes Pharisees. Yes, if Jesus were on this earth in the flesh, he would be next to you on his Harley telling you he loved you ... enough to die for you."

"The main reason for being a Christian is to share Jesus," says "Brother Zack," one of the bikers. "We go to bars and wait outside until the bikers come out and then we witness to them, giving them tracts."

Zack and several of his friends talked freely about their faith and the ways they share it during a recent evening of food and fellowship arranged by Frank Ingram, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Mt. Gilead, N.C., and his wife, Linda.

The Ingrams joke about how they met and became friends with the bikers. They operate a Christian craft shop and one day some of the motorcyclists came in to browse.

Ingram readily admits he was uncomfortable. What were these people up to? Would he be robbed and assaulted?

His fears were soon put to rest when he discovered they were believers -- and meant no harm.

None of the bikers is a member of the church Ingram serves but some have attended. The friendship has been steadily growing.

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The Christian motorcycle group talks about how they abandoned the old life of drugs, alcohol and womanizing when they were saved. They admit they still dress the same (except for the signs on their clothing and motorcycles) but they don't frequent the same places any more. The Christian motorcycle group is the direct opposite of the infamous "Hell's Angels" motorcycle gangs.

"We go to a lot of different churches," Brother Bird explains. "If people will accept us and let us in the services, we want to be there."

"But," Zack interrupts, "I praise the Lord in services. I can't keep quiet about Jesus and if a church doesn't like that, it's not for me."

The style of witnessing and Christian expression does have Pentecostal overtones, for which there is no apology. To a person, the bikers talk about how their lives have been changed since they became Christians.

They meet with other Christian motorcycle groups and the North Carolina chapter is identified with the national Christian Motorcycle Association (CMA) which holds rallies in different parts of the country.

"God uses us to witness to our kind of people," they agree, "and God can use a man in shirt, tie and pin stripe suit to witness to those we can't, but the important thing is that we all witness for Jesus."

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(BP) photo available upon request from the Biblical Recorder, North Carolina Baptist newsjournal.