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Campaigns address homosexual rights;
CLC's Land flunks Clinton, platform By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
10/5/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--Responses by the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates to the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's requests for clarification of their positions on homosexual rights varied widely. As a result of the answer by Bill Clinton, CLC Executive Director Richard Land gave the Democratic challenger and his party's platform a failing grade on the issue.

In Aug. 4 letters to both President George Bush and Clinton, Land asked them to specify their public policy intentions on homosexual rights.

Clinton's letter thanked Land for expressing his concerns and enclosed a position paper in which Clinton and vice presidential running mate Al Gore support a federal homosexual rights bill, the repeal of the ban on homosexuals in the military and a promise to issue an executive order prohibiting discrimination against homosexuals in federal employment. The paper was titled "Clinton-Gore on Issues of Concern to Gays and Lesbians."

The White House's response, which came in the form of a letter from a senior staff member in behalf of the president, said Bush still supports the ban on homosexuals in the armed forces and opposes "legislation that would provide 'special status' for homosexuals."

The CLC is "appreciative of Gov. Clinton's direct answer to us, but we are not encouraged by what he said ...," Land said. "He made it clear that he supports homosexual rights and equates those rights with the civil rights of bona fide minorities."

The White House's letter, as well as similar public comments from Bush in mid-August, are "helpful and instructive," Land said.

"We are also delighted by the specific policy statements in the Republican platform against making 'sexual preference ... a protected minority receiving preferential status under civil rights statutes at the federal, state, and local level' and opposing legislation which legalizes 'same-sex marriages and allows such couples to adopt children or provide foster care,'" Land said.

"At this point, I would give the Republican platform and George Bush a B on this issue and the Democratic platform and Bill Clinton an F. Being an optimist, I'm always open to the possibility that either or both candidates will do better before the final test on the first Tuesday in November."

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The Democrats' platform, adopted in mid-July, endorses civil rights protection based on homosexuality and opposes the military's ban on homosexuals. The Republican platform was adopted in mid-August.

In an interview with James Dobson broadcast Aug. 11 and 12 on the "Focus on the Family" radio program, the president said he was opposed to legislation giving civil rights to homosexuals, did not support same-sex marriages and favored the ban on homosexuals in the military. In an interview with NBC's Stone Phillips telecast Aug. 11, Bush indicated he did not condone homosexuality and same-sex marriages as normal lifestyles.

In early July, Land and Morris Chapman, new president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, wrote the president strong letters of protest after Bush said on ABC's "20/20" he would not have a "litmus test" preventing known homosexuals from serving in his cabinet.

On July 24, the president responded with a letter to Land affirming his commitment to "family values" but failing to address a request for an executive order from Bush upholding the traditional family and opposing homosexual rights.

Land followed with letters to both candidates.

Of Bush, Land asked:

-- Will you veto any bill granting civil rights protection to homosexuals or having the same effect, including lifting the prohibition against homosexuals in the military?

-- Will you implement the executive order on the family issued by President Reagan in September 1987? If so, provide your definition of the family for policy purposes.

Land asked Clinton questions nearly identical to those asked Bush:

-- Will you, as the 1992 Democratic platform says, sign a bill giving civil rights protection to homosexuals or having the same effect, including lifting the ban on homosexuals in the military?

-- Will you enforce or rescind President Reagan's executive order on the family? If you plan to implement it, define family for policy purposes.

President Reagan's 1987 executive order on the family requires agencies and departments to consider "the autonomy and rights of the family" in drafting and implementing policies. The order mandates an annual report be submitted including recommendations to guard the interests of the family.

Such a report has never been issued during the Bush administration, the Family Research Council said in a recent document. Gary Bauer, president of FRC, was largely responsible for drafting the 1987 executive order while domestic policy advisor in the White House.

The White House's Sept. 8 response came from Leigh Ann Metzger, deputy assistant to the president for public liaison. Clinton's response was dated Sept. 1.

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European Baptists OK statement
on work with SBC mission board

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press
10/5/92

HODDESDON, England (BP)--European Baptists have approved an agreement that restores a working relationship with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

The executive council of the European Baptist Federation (EBF) voted almost unanimously during its annual meeting Sept. 28-Oct. 1 near London to accept the "Hamburg Agreement." That ended a year-long break in fellowship following the Foreign Mission Board's defunding of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

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In accepting the agreement, about 100 council members from 38 European Baptist unions were trying to assure that the board does not break future agreements as they said it did in the defunding. Despite the positive vote, fallout from the defunding was apparent at the meeting.

EBF leaders also voted to partner with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the group of moderate Southern Baptists who have objected to what they perceive is a "fundamentalist takeover" of the Southern Baptist Convention. This was the first major meeting in Europe which representatives from both the FMB and CBF have attended.

Ironically, one of the seminary's new trustees approved by the council for next year will be Keith Parker, who now directs CBF work in Europe. Parker left the Foreign Mission Board earlier this year as a protest against what he said was a plan by FMB trustees to impose a global theological agenda, a charge later denied by trustees.

In the discussions at Hamburg, FMB trustee chairman John Jackson told European Baptists repeatedly that trustees do not have a global theological agenda to impose on others. The agreement said the mission board's principal objective "continues to be evangelism which results in indigenous Baptist churches."

The "Hamburg Agreement" is a formal statement of Christian protocol established by FMB and EBF representatives Sept. 11-12 in Hamburg, Germany. Included in that earlier meeting were three top FMB administrators, three FMB trustees and seven EBF leaders from several countries. The agreement is intended to guide how the two groups relate on shared ministries, such as the placing of missionaries, funding of projects and other work.

FMB trustees will vote on the agreement when they meet Oct. 12-14. Trustee chairman Jackson said after the Hamburg meeting he expects the agreement to win easy approval.

Also, leaders of the Foreign Mission Board and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship will meet for a dialogue Oct. 15 in Charlotte, N.C. The dialogue grew out of a July 27 dialogue between FMB leaders and the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union. At that time, WMU leaders asked Jackson to arrange a meeting with the CBF to discuss matters of concern and relationships.

In a related discussion, administrators of both the board and fellowship assured European Baptists that both groups can maintain peace between them as they work in Europe. But both sides urged caution because of future unknowns in developments in the United States and Europe.

Parker and Sam James, FMB vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, both long-time friends, told European leaders they could work together in harmony without undercutting each other.

But "while I can say something about this work (in Europe), I can't say something about what happens back there," James added, gesturing over his shoulder to indicate the United States.

James said five FMB trustees had called him to pledge they would dedicate themselves to trying to see peace and harmony in what they do. "I'm going to take them at their word and work with them and do everything I can to see us work together for the glory of the Lord."

CBF coordinator Cecil Sherman said European Baptists did the right thing in accepting the Hamburg Agreement. "But I'd also suggest you'd better go into this with your eyes wide open," he said, noting he couldn't control actions of all parties. "Lots of people are interested in missions and some of these are going to do missions in Baptist ways and some of them will do it in aggressive, colonial ways. Only time will tell which is which."

Basic to the Hamburg Agreement are five statements on Christian protocol, including respect, spiritual freedom, moral integrity, consultation and reciprocal sharing. European Baptists adopted those standards Jan. 28 as ones they would expect from any missions agency because of the seminary's defunding. FMB trustees and CBF leaders have approved them.

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The Hamburg Agreement includes a commitment to "continuous communication, ongoing dialogue and regular review regarding work and common concerns." It also pledges commitment to Baptist unity in Europe and states "Baptists are a people who believe in the complete trustworthiness of the Bible, are committed to Jesus Christ as Lord," yet "are a people of a confessional faith rather than of a creedal faith."

Foreign Mission Board leaders said in the Hamburg Agreement that the European Baptist Fellowship's work with the Cooperative Baptists "would not adversely affect" the FMB's relationships with European Baptists. Cooperative Baptists now support at least eight "missioners" in Europe, all of them former FMB personnel.

It's likely Southern Baptist personnel and Cooperative Baptist personnel will rub shoulders in many places across Europe. The EBF council heard a report on its new work in Albania, for example, through a missionary couple assigned to EBF by the Baptist Missionary Society of Great Britain. Plans call for the couple, Chris and Mairi Burnett, to coordinate all Baptist work in Albania. An FMB couple, David and Mary Carpenter, began serving in Albania earlier this year. The CBF also is expected to place personnel there.

The council adopted the Hamburg Agreement almost unanimously, but several speakers said they wanted to be sure European Baptists understand FMB trustees had indeed apologized for the grief the seminary defunding caused. The council instructed copies of an introductory statement by Scottish Baptist leader Peter Barber be distributed to unions along with copies of the agreement. Barber's statement introducing the agreement stated more plainly the fact that FMB trustees attending the Hamburg meeting had apologized.

Reg Harvey, general secretary for the Baptist Missionary Society of Great Britain, called for the repentance and forgiveness expressed in the Hamburg meeting to be emphasized more. "Without that, it's rather like putting the filling on the tooth without dealing with the decay down below," he said.

"Many people around in Europe who are not here have been hurt very much by the decision taken by the Foreign Mission Board last fall," said Per Midteide, general secretary for Norwegian Baptists. "I would also like that we as a council express thanks especially to those who suffered most."

Former FMB missionary John David Hopper, Ruschlikon Seminary president, urged adoption of the Hamburg Agreement but said the seminary faculty and student body feel hurt by the FMB action and would also appreciate an apology.

Hopper said it "would be a healing act and open the way towards partnership of the Foreign Mission Board in Europe. In my own heart I, too, wish there could be an act of healing between trustees and the seminary community."

Polish Baptist leader Konstanty Wiazowski said he had been "moved to tears" upon hearing of the seminary's defunding last year. "I would ask everybody to accept it (the agreement) as God's way for us."

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Increased ACTS viewership evident
on first day of shared channel

By Doug Dillard

Baptist Press
10/5/92

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Viewers in nine states got their first look at ACTS programming Oct. 1 when "COPE," hosted by psychologist Karen Hayter, came on live at 10 a.m. Eastern Standard Time. "Calls came in from coast to coast," according to director Bruce Grinstead.

This was repeated the following hour when callers responded to the 800 number while watching "The Baptist Hour" in such places as Hawaii, Idaho, Maryland, Montana, North Dakota, New Mexico, Utah, Vermont and Wisconsin, according to Mike Wright, vice president for network operations.

"Our COPE phone lines are always jammed," said Grinstead, who estimated Hayter takes from "six to eight calls an hour at the outside." But COPE's first day in new markets such as San Diego, Salt Lake City, Reno and Manhattan -- all as a result of ACTS new channel-sharing agreement with VGI, Inc. -- yielded the immediate impact expected by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, which operates ACTS.

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Under the agreement, the commission's ACTS network broadcasts eight hours of programming daily in alternative time blocks with 16 hours of programming by VISN, an interfaith network.

"Practically all of our Baptist Hour counselors commented about receiving calls from new areas," noted Pat Wooley, RTVC director of counseling services. "We spoke to Janette and Beverly (not their real names) from Wisconsin, one the victim of child and sexual abuse, the other with a daughter who has been stealing things since the death of her grandmother and great-grandmother just four days apart. And, we prayed with Rodie in Maryland about his marriage." First Baptist Church of Springdale, Ark., provides a similar counseling ministry on Daystar, which features their pastor, Ronnie Floyd.

"We have eight incoming lines and we field about 110 calls a night," Floyd reported to RTVC President Jack Johnson on Friday. "Last night we received 115 calls, but instead of coming from 20 states, they came from 32 states."

"We won't know until next week how many additional calls could not get through," Floyd said, "but we do know that four were saved last night."

One of those professions of faith, he added, was from a troubled Baptist preacher who shared with the counselor his agonies over the fact that he had never had peace about his salvation.

An added confirmation, Floyd said, were calls the next morning from friends across the nation who commented how pleased they were that they could get the program for the first time.

Johnson agrees. "In the excitement over new mission fields reached by ACTS programming on the VISN/ACTS channel, one should not overlook the increased potential viewing audience in 'Bible belt' states, such as Arkansas, which added over a half million; Kentucky, which added nearly 1.8 million; Louisiana, which added over 1.6 million; North Carolina, with more than 1.7 million; and Texas, with more than 3.6 million."

In addition to the telephone calls, ACTS also is receiving as many as 200 requests a day for program schedules, according to Deborah Key, marketing director. "We anticipated some increase in demand. We printed twice the usual number of program schedules, but we've already run out. We're now into our second printing.

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Dillard is RTVC vice president for external relations.

Criswell sermon sparks confusion;
deacons seek meeting with Gregory By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
10/5/92

DALLAS (BP)--Following an emotional Sunday service Oct. 4 at First Baptist Church in Dallas, it was still unclear whether longtime senior pastor W.A. Criswell plans to relinquish his leadership position.

But church deacons, hopeful of working out a settlement with pastor Joel Gregory who resigned Sept. 30, pressed for a meeting with Gregory. He has gone into seclusion since his stunning announcement at a Wednesday night service shook the 28,000-member church.

Frustration with the lack of progress in the transition of leadership at the largest church in the Southern Baptist Convention was cited by Gregory in his resignation. Gregory, 44, has been pastor of the Dallas church about two years. Indications by Criswell that he planned to continue for another two years to his 50th anniversary with the church were not indicative of what Gregory thought would be a short transition period of leadership.

In the Oct. 4 morning service Criswell sat in a front church pew, not on the podium. His remarks at the close of the service -- indicating he would step down immediately, if that was what the church leadership wanted -- were interpreted by some to indicate he would retire Jan. 1 and spend full time as chancellor at Criswell College.

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"I will pour my life and strength and prayers into the building of that wonderful school," Criswell, 82, told the congregation. "I'll be teaching. I'll be all over the nation inviting preachers to send their wonderful young men to that school ... That's where I shall be."

Later, talking to news media, he clarified his statement.

"It all depends on what the church wants me to do," Criswell said. "I am a fellow member of the church and if they want me to sweep the floor or raise the windows ... anything. I want the church to be blessed by God."

Criswell's future role at the church is not yet certain, according to a church spokesman, Ron Harris.

"I think our understanding now is that day-to-day he will be at the college. Whether he preaches at all or preaches a lot, that will be what the leadership decides," Harris said. "I think that will come out in the next few days, as to what his exact role with the church will be."

Although Gregory indicated his resignation was "irrevocable" there has been some communication between Gregory and church leadership. Bo Sexton, chairman of the church's 250-member Fellowship of Deacons, was hopeful that remarks of Criswell's intent to spend full time at Criswell College were encouraging to Gregory, if he heard them.

"Dr. Criswell said his intention was to move to the school and I think what he said today was he was going to be spending full time at the school," Sexton said. Sexton said he hoped Criswell's remarks would encourage Gregory to reconsider his resignation.

Although a group of 25 church leaders voted Oct. 1 to reject Gregory's resignation, the full deacon board discussed the matter for two hours in a closed meeting on the afternoon of Oct. 4 without voting on the matter. At that meeting Sexton and David Minick, vice chairman of the deacons, were asked to arrange a meeting with Gregory.

"We aren't going to him (Gregory) with an agenda," Sexton said. "We don't know if he will come to us with an agenda. We just want to see where to go from here."

Criswell's mention of a Jan. 1 date, he said, referred to the date the new president of Criswell College, Richard Milick of Memphis, Tenn., would arrive.

"And by his side and as his chancellor, I will pour my life and strength and breath into building that beautiful seminary," Criswell said.

Criswell said he also saw no problem with the church having two pastors. He cited First Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Fla., which has co-pastors.

"They've carried the church to glory," Criswell said. "It's glorious and I thought the same thing here. I thought it'd go to heaven."

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Home run leads player
to new life in Christ

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
10/5/92

CARACAS, Venezuela (BP)--Carlos Bermudez hit a home run that changed his life.

When he popped the ball outside the stadium, it almost hit a parked car. The car belonged to Bill Cashion, a Southern Baptist missionary in Caracas, Venezuela's capital.

After the game, the missionary approached Bermudez. "Your home run was very nice," Cashion said, laughing, "but that was my car."

That week Bermudez smacked homers in four consecutive games in a Caracas amateur league. Like many Venezuelan boys, Bermudez -- then 17 -- dreamed of the big leagues. But already he had failed several tryouts for the New York Yankees Baseball Academy in Caracas. The academy, now affiliated with the Cincinnati Reds, trains promising young baseball players. Several other professional baseball teams operate academies in Venezuela, where baseball is the most popular sport.

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Away from the ballpark, nothing else seemed to be working for Bermudez, either. He was confused about his life's direction. From a poor family, he was abandoned by his father when he was 2 years old. By the time he was a teen, Bermudez had developed a drinking problem. He spent several nights in jail after getting into street fights.

"The first time I thought seriously about God changing my life was in jail," he remembered. "I found myself at the point that I felt I was nothing. I wasn't using my talents for anything good... I thought, 'If there is a God, I want that God to use what I've got.'"

By the time he met Cashion, "Even though I wasn't a Christian, I knew that God existed," Bermudez said. "For two years I had been praying that God would send someone who could help me understand what I needed to do with my life."

A couple of days after his homer, Bermudez decided to try out again for the Yankees' academy. This time "the coach told me he was going to give me a chance," he recalled.

Several days later Bermudez saw Cashion at the Yankees' stadium in Caracas. A former baseball coach, the missionary from Slater, S.C., was leading Baseball Chapel services for the academy players. Baseball Chapel is a Christian organization sponsoring clubhouse chapels for professional baseball teams.

Cashion told Bermudez about his role as a chaplain and invited him to come to his home. "I told (Cashion), 'I'm looking for something,'" Bermudez recounted. "He told me, 'I know how you can find peace.'"

Bermudez later accepted Christ as Savior during a Baseball Chapel service led by Cashion. "God has done beautiful things in my life," said Bermudez, who now attends Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee on a baseball scholarship. "The most important thing is God's love. Before, I couldn't say 'I love you' to anyone because my whole life was fighting and alcohol."

His family noticed the difference. "My mom saw how the Lord was changing my heart," he said. "She saw that some of the anger that I had inside was being removed. She saw something going on in me. And she was looking for something, too."

She found it after reading a Bible Bermudez sent her after he left home. Later Cashion and his wife, Kathy, answered her spiritual questions and prayed with her when she also became a Christian.

Since then, Bermudez' stepfather, sister, cousin and several friends of the family also have become Christians and members of a Baptist church. In their home his parents have started a Baptist Bible study led by missionaries Cheryl and Dennis Jones, from North Hollywood and Northridge, Calif., respectively. They hope it will grow into a church.

Recently Bermudez preached in his parents' home in Caracas. He was among about 84 volunteers involved in a partnership evangelism project sponsored by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. He also preached during evangelistic services held at an outdoor plaza near his home.

Every afternoon Bermudez and volunteer Margie Dennis of Lexington, S.C., shared their faith with people gathered in the plaza. Dennis said Bermudez had an obvious impact on the Venezuelans they met. "He has a great testimony... To see him, his personality and how he loves his people impressed me so much."

In about 20 more locations in the Caracas area, other volunteers led similar evangelistic activities during their stay. About 1,800 people accepted Christ as Savior during the project.

While in Caracas Bermudez also spoke several times to boys attending a baseball academy there. On other occasions he's also helped Cashion and some Christian professional baseball players lead evangelistic baseball clinics for Venezuelan young people.

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"I know there are many kids in Venezuela who, like me, have many dreams. They have talent. They just need the Savior. They just need somebody who will guide them," said Bermudez, whom Cashion has called "a product of the prayers of Southern Baptists."

A junior political science major at Oklahoma Baptist, Bermudez is an outfielder and first baseman for the university team. He preaches frequently in Oklahoma Baptist churches and volunteers in a jail ministry. Last summer he taught English in China through a program offered by the university. The summer before he was a student summer missionary in New York state.

"I never thought that the things going on in my life would ever happen," Bermudez said. "When I received the Lord, everything changed."

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NOTE: To learn more about how to get involved in Southern Baptist sports evangelism, contact James Cecil, Athletes in Missions, c/o Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, Va. 23230-0767, or Frank Drinkard, coordinator for the National Fellowship of Baptists in Sports, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104-2493. (BP) photo (vertical) mailed Sept. 30 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

A 'dog' of a sermon:
the parable of 'Wink'

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
10/5/92

PRESTONSBURG, Ky. (BP)--It was a "dog" of a sermon, but Dale Holloway used the bite of dry humor to make a serious point about God's love.

Holloway, national consultant for bivocational ministries in the Southern Baptist Convention, spoke about "My Dog Wink" during one session of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's fall evangelism conference.

Holloway told the story of finding a stray dog to illustrate the biblical parable of the lost sheep recorded in Luke 15. Jesus told the parable to explain his love for every person.

Wink, Holloway explained, was a stray dog with an odd coloring and one eye that always looked like he was winking. Just as Jesus cares for people who have strayed, Holloway cared for his newfound dog, he said.

And just as Holloway washed the dog to make him as clean as possible, Jesus washes his lost sheep completely of their sins, he said.

Holloway said he quickly wanted to feed Wink, and that's the way God treats those in his care. "God loves me and feeds me a lot more food than I need."

Further, Wink soon knew his master's voice and responded to it, Holloway said. And Christians should be the same way toward Jesus, he added. "Does your voice sound like you belong to Jesus? Do people look at you and say, 'He belongs to Jesus'?"

Wink was always faithful to his master, which is more than Jesus can say for most Christians, Holloway continued. "Most dogs are more faithful to their masters than most Christians are to their Lord."

Wink didn't have many gifts, but what he could do -- chase chickens -- he did very well, Holloway said.

But Wink had one fatal flaw, he said. Wink liked to chase cars.

One day Wink saw a '38 Chevy, chased it and caught it, Holloway related. "Wink didn't need a car. He didn't know what to do with one."

But that desire to catch something he didn't need led to catastrophe, as the '38 Chevy hit Wink and critically injured him.

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That's another lesson Christians should learn from Wink, Holloway said. "What are you chasing today? Sometimes the things we chase may be fatal -- fatal to our Christian witness or to our marriage."

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Commentary's writer to retire
after 20 years of making 'Points'

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
10/5/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--For 20 years, William Fallis has been making points both for and with his readers.

The 78-year-old Virginia native recently retired as author of "Points for Emphasis" -- the commentary annual published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board for Bible students of the International Uniform Lessons (Convention Uniform Series for Southern Baptists).

Thousands of churches in the Southern Baptist Convention and many other denominations use the international lessons each week and thousands of Sunday school teachers depend on Fallis' concise commentary to make their jobs a little easier.

"One of the things people like most about Points is its brevity," Fallis said, adding only four pages of text is devoted to each of the year's 52 Sunday school lessons for both application and interpretation. "The goal of the publication is to provide the lesson in a nutshell, so to speak," he said.

The format for each lesson is the same: The text is printed first (in the King James Version), followed by an expository section called "The Lesson Explained" and then a section of application called "Truths to Live By." "Verses to Remember" and "Daily Bible Readings" also are included for each week.

First published in 1918, Points for Emphasis is the oldest annual pocket commentary on the IUL and the Sunday School Board's longest-running product. But despite its longevity, Points has had only three contributing authors: Hight C Moore and Clifton J. Allen, both former editorial secretaries at the Sunday School Board, and Fallis.

Trent Butler, named as Fallis's successor, is an editorial director in the BSSB's trade publishing division.

In a short history printed in the 1991-1992 edition, Fallis said Points began as a 140-page commentary less than 3 inches wide.

It was designed to be small enough to "fit easily into a man's vest pocket, available for a quick review after lunch, on the train or waiting in a doctor's office," he said.

Today, the 200-plus page product is printed in two formats, a 3 1/2- x 5-inch pocket edition and 5- x 7-inch larger-print edition.

In the past, as many as six state Baptist newspapers carried Points' weekly lesson commentaries as helps to teachers, and the Baptist Courier, newsjournal for South Carolina Baptists, continues the practice today. Fallis said some missionaries have even translated Points for use overseas in Bible studies and devotions.

Fallis, who retired from the Sunday School Board as senior editor of general books in 1979 after 35 years of service, decided to stop writing the commentary after recently completing his 20th edition of the publication which will be published in 1993-94.

"I felt like 20 was a good round number to end it on," he said. "I'll miss it, I'm sure, but it was a lot of hard work."

Fallis spent about six or seven months a year working on the commentary lessons, hammering out 13 lessons every eight or nine weeks on his electric typewriter.

"I think the most significant thing writing Points did for me was it kept me studying the Bible," Fallis said, laughingly admitting he had to study two different Sunday school lessons while working on the commentary.

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"I've been teaching a men's Sunday school class for several years at my church," he said, "but we use the Life and Work Series."

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

Catholic hospital staff
includes 'Baptist priest'

By Melanie Childers

Baptist Press
10/5/92

LEXINGTON, Ky. (BP)--Hospital chaplain Ron Ewell is a Baptist in priests' clothing -- the first Southern Baptist chaplain at St. Joseph's Catholic Hospital in Lexington.

Ewell's work occasionally calls for the formal dress of robe and stole, but -- careful to avoid confusion with the predominantly Roman Catholic staff -- he had his stole custom-designed to display the Southern Baptist logo on the front.

"I am known around here as the 'Baptist priest,'" Ewell said. "When I was first hired, the staff thought I was a priest in training or something. Even now, lots of patients call me Father."

Ewell said a more appropriate title for his work might be hospital pastor. "I am a Southern Baptist chaplain, placed in a Roman Catholic hospital, ministering to people in transit," he said.

Ewell and his wife, Samantha, who is a nurse at St. Joseph's, are members of Rosemont Baptist Church in Lexington. He is endorsed by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board for his chaplaincy work. A full-time employee of the hospital, he works as one of eight chaplains in the pastoral care department.

He said there were two reasons the hospital hired him.

"I have experience in handling high-risk and trauma situations," he explained, noting he is the only chaplain assigned to the hospital's critical care unit.

"The other reason I was hired is that I am a Southern Baptist," he continued. Although St. Joseph's is a Roman Catholic institution, less than 5 percent of the patients who use the facilities are Catholic.

By contrast, Southern Baptists make up the largest percentage of patients, with an average of 30-33 percent.

More and more, Southern Baptist chaplains are finding positions of ministry in Catholic hospitals -- a trend Ewell said is positive.

Nationwide, 42 Southern Baptist chaplains serve in Catholic hospitals, according to Huey Perry, HMB chaplaincy division director.

Ewell defines his mission as a ministry to strangers, mostly in the waiting room with patients' families.

His responsibilities include everything from counseling with critically or terminally ill patients to officiating at family disputes, he said.

He advises families and physicians about ethical issues. He reads Scripture at mass. And as chair of the worship committee, he plans an interdenominational worship service for Sunday mornings.

Working in high-risk management in the critical care unit, Ewell said, he faces death everyday.

"I hear a lot of personal testimonies and life stories from patients and families" forced to deal with death, he said.

Ewell's response is to emphasize God's grace and to pray with them. He has baptized 16 people in the two years he has worked at the hospital.

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The reason Baptists are being welcomed in this area, Ewell said, lies in the changing structure of some Catholic institutions like St. Joseph's. Most of the current members of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, the order that established the hospital 115 years ago, are in their 60s and 70s. Because the order is dying out, the sisters are hard to replace when they leave.

"In order to carry out the mission they started, they're having to pass it along to me," Ewell added. "It's a nice feeling that they trust me to do that."

But a job isn't the only thing the seasoned Catholic ministers have offered 27-year-old Ewell. The recent graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary said he has learned a lot from his Catholic counterparts.

"At seminary, the emphasis was on doing. I came in here a doer, but the priests and nuns who have been in ministry here a long time emphasize the spiritual life. They've taught me how to be a 'be-er.'"

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James Jordan resigns
from Shorter College

Baptist Press
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ROME, Ga. (BP)--James Jordan, president of Shorter College the past five years, resigned Oct. 2, citing differences in administrative philosophy and style and other personal reasons.

Jordan is president of the Southern Baptist Association of Colleges and Schools, vice president of the Association of Private Colleges and Universities in Georgia and president-elect of the Georgia Association of Colleges.

"We are grateful," Moses states, "for these five good years, and wish for Dr. Jordan the very best in the future."

In reading the announcement at the regular October meeting of Shorter's board of trustees, chairman Austin Moses pointed to the many significant accomplishments of Jordan's administration. These include record gifts received, a new residence hall, a \$4 million activities complex now under construction and extensive renovations and updating of existing facilities.

A graduate program has been instituted, extension centers started in Pennville and Atlanta and cooperative student and faculty exchange programs with Yantai University in China have been initiated.

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EDITORS' NOTE: Follow-up stories by Baptist Press are anticipated.