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-- BAPTIST PRESS

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October 7, 1992

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Gregory resignation 'firm'
from First Baptist, Dallas

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
10/7/92

DALLAS (BP)--First Baptist Church of Dallas, the Southern Baptist Convention's largest congregation, will begin searching for a new pastor, according to a church spokesman, after an Oct. 7 meeting between Joel Gregory, who unexpectedly resigned the pulpit a week earlier, and two deacon officials.

Gregory, who indicated his resignation was "firm," was called two years ago as successor to W.A. Criswell, whose 48th year as pastor of the 28,000-member congregation will be marked in special Oct. 11 services at the church. Gregory in his resignation cited difficulties with the transition period from Criswell, who has remained at the church as senior pastor and has shared preaching duties with Gregory.

"He (Gregory) did not ask that his resignation be reconsidered, nor did the deacon leadership ask Dr. Gregory to reconsider or return as pastor," said church spokesman Ron Harris in a press release about the Oct. 7 meeting with Gregory and his wife, Linda, and Bo Sexton, chairman of First Baptist's deacons, and David Wicker, vice chairman.

"In the meeting, Mr. Sexton and Mr. Wicker expressed love for Dr. and Mrs. Gregory and their family, as did the Gregorys for the church family. All parties considered the meeting to be one of closure."

Thus the church will embark on the same process that led it through a 27-month search for Gregory, who came to the congregation from the pastorate of Fort Worth's Travis Avenue Baptist Church.

"The vast majority of the (church's) people are really seeking God's direction, openly, honestly, prayerfully," Harris told Baptist Press when asked about a Dallas Morning News story Oct. 3 quoting several First Baptist church members as saying Gregory was in a power struggle with Criswell.

Harris continued, "There is a spirit among the people looking forward to and anticipating what God is doing in our midst."

Gregory stunned the church during a Sept. 30 prayer meeting with his resignation "immediately and irrevocably" and departure from the downtown Dallas facility.

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In a written statement the next day, Gregory cited concern over Criswell's intention to remain as senior pastor until his 50th anniversary with the church -- a "prolonging of the incumbent's ministry rather than the enabling of the new pastor's." Gregory said that was not part of his initial understanding search committee members and Criswell of "the nature and brevity of time" of the transition.

"For me to force the issue and make demands for myself neither honors God nor conforms to my personality," Gregory said.

Meanwhile, Gregory, who was unavailable for comment, has not indicated his intentions regarding the search committee he chairs seeking a successor to Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks, who retires Oct. 30.

"I'm planning on seeing him at the board meeting next Monday," said FMB trustee chairman John Jackson, a Fairfield, Calif., pastor. "He hasn't notified me he's not coming and he probably would have in that case."

Jackson said he has tried unsuccessfully to contact Gregory.

"We just assume he's still a (trustee of the Foreign Mission Board) as long as he's a Texas resident," said Nellie Walters, FMB assistant recording secretary. "He represents the state, not the church," she said.

The search committee is scheduled to meet during the Oct. 12-14 meeting of FMB trustees at the agency's headquarters in Richmond, Va.

Gregory's resignation was rejected unanimously in an Oct. 1 meeting of about 25 men in church leadership positions, however no further action was taken during Oct. 4 Sunday worship services and a deacons meeting.

That Sunday, Criswell told church members he planned to devote full time to Criswell College but deferred to the will of the congregation concerning his role as senior pastor.

Harris confirmed Oct. 5 that Criswell will move his office from First Baptist Church to the east Dallas college campus.

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Erich Bridges contributed to this story.

SBC, BJC agree to discuss
\$300,000 in disputed funds

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
10/7/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--The fate of a \$300,000 building fund will hang in limbo while representatives from the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs engage in talks aiming to sidestep a court spectacle.

Messengers at the 1992 Southern Baptist Convention in June voted to eliminate the building account bearing the BJC's name and give the SBC Executive Committee authority to disburse the money.

During their annual meeting Oct. 5 in Washington, BJC members agreed to postpone deciding how to recover the money from the SBC -- or whether to try. They also voted to allow their executive committee to accept or reject the outcome of any dialogue with the SBC about the money.

Oliver S. Thomas, general counsel for the Washington-based religious liberty organization of nine Baptist bodies, had threatened to sue for the money. But Thomas said just before the meeting that such talk is premature for now because he and the BJC's board chairman have been invited by SBC representatives to "sit down with them ... look one another in the eye and talk."

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The messengers' vote decided who owns the money, stressed Executive Committee attorney Jim Guenther in a phone interview after the BJC meeting. Still, the Executive Committee wants to "do anything appropriate" that would prevent one religious entity from forcing another to act against its will. "That kind of intervention would be disturbing," he said.

Questioned whether the messengers' vote gave the Executive Committee authority to disburse money back to the BJC, Guenther replied: "That would be a matter the Executive Committee could consider, but whether they will or not, I don't know."

Thomas made a "strong pitch" to the convention to settle the dispute out of court through Christian reconciliation led by a facilitator -- a simple, inexpensive, scriptural approach that the SBC so far has rejected, he said. About the invitation to talk, Thomas said: "I am very pleased I hope we will come to a meeting of the minds."

Thomas describes the account as the only significant financial asset the BJC has owned. To the BJC, he said, it's a matter of survival.

The BJC has earned some \$600,000 in interest from the \$300,000 set aside by a vote of 1964 SBC messengers. Over the years, the BJC made investment decisions concerning the funds while they were held by the Southern Baptist Foundation, Thomas said.

The money was earmarked from the start for sharing the cost of an office building with the Baptist World Alliance and the District of Columbia Baptist Convention in Washington. But the offices were never built.

When the BJC tried to withdraw the money to buy offices last year, trustees of Southern Baptists' Christian Life Commission laid claim to it. They said it belonged to the SBC's nine-member Public Affairs Committee (PAC).

Historically, the PAC represented Southern Baptist interests on the BJC. But in its recent internal strife, the SBC shifted responsibility for religious liberty concern to the Christian Life Commission, whose portfolio had been limited to Christian morality and ethics. The CLC opened an office in Washington on Capitol Hill and the Public Affairs Committee was merged into the CLC.

Continuing to distance itself from the BJC, the SBC dropped its financial support by nearly 90 percent for 1990-91. At their 1992 convention, messengers severed all ties with the BJC.

The BJC responded to the SBC's defunding by launching an aggressive money-raising effort. To direct financial development, the BJC hired John Womble, who had spent most of his career in university development.

Without its dependence on SBC support, once 50 to 60 percent of its income, the BJC is financially healthier than ever, Womble said. He likened the BJC at his arrival two years ago to a small business catering to one large sales account for the majority of its revenue.

Still, Southern Baptists are giving more to the BJC than ever before even without using their own convention as a channel. During the past fiscal year, Womble has identified more than \$440,000 in receipts from Southern Baptist sources. In the past, the most given through the SBC in one year amounted to about \$390,000, he said.

In other action, the BJC approved a budget of \$776,000 and elected a slate of officers for the next year. They are: chairman, Tyrone Pitts of the Progressive National Baptist Convention; first vice chair, Sarah Frances Anders of the Religious Liberty Council; second vice chair, Bob Ricker of the Baptist General Conference; and secretary, Bob Tiller of the American Baptist Churches U.S.A.

The BJC also adopted a position statement decrying the abuse of religion as a campaign issue, saying God transcends national and political affiliations. The statement calls on candidates to stop making attacks against each other based on religion. "God's precinct is the universe," it states. "Identifying the Kingdom of God with any political party or candidate is presumptuous. ... Tomorrow's prophets will expose today's blind spots."

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Supreme Court rehears
Operations Rescue case

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
10/7/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--Operation Rescue-type blockades do not discriminate against women and no longer should be forbidden by federal courts, an attorney for pro-life activists told the Supreme Court in rearguments of a case possessing wide-ranging implications for the abortion issue.

An attorney for the National Organization for Women and several abortion clinics argued such blockading is discriminatory because it prevents the exercise of a right belonging to women.

The case, Bray vs. Alexandria Women's Health Clinic, was heard by the court Oct. 6, the second day of the new term.

Eight of the justices heard arguments in the case last October, two days before Clarence Thomas was sworn in as the newest member of the court. The court announced in the spring it would rehear the case. It has been speculated the eight justices were evenly divided.

Not only do rescue-type tactics, which involve persons nonviolently blocking access to abortion clinics, and large fines against rescuers hang in the balance, but a favorable decision for NOW could result in sex discrimination becoming a "new constitutional weapon" for the pro-choice movement, a pro-life attorney said.

If the pro-choice side wins the case, it "will go back into court and challenge not only those regulations, but also funding of abortions, where states refuse to do that," said James Bopp Jr., counsel for the National Right to Life Committee and an observer of the proceedings. Also affected would "conscience clauses that protect Christians and other health-care providers from being forced to provide abortions," he said.

The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission joined NRLC in a friend-of-the-court brief arguing an 1871 law cited by a federal judge in the case should not be used to protect the rights of women seeking abortions.

In November 1989, Jayne Bray, a Bowie, Md., pastor's wife and mother of five children, and other members of Operation Rescue were enjoined by a federal judge in the Eastern District of Virginia from blocking access to Alexandria Women's Clinic and other abortion clinics in northern Virginia. The judge found the Civil Rights Act of 1871, also known as the Ku Klux Klan Act, applied because rescuers deprived a class of persons, women, of their right to interstate travel to obtain abortions.

The 1871 law was passed to protect blacks, who recently had received their constitutional rights, from harassment by KKK members. Under the act, victims were granted the right to sue private offenders in federal court. Federal courts have used the same law in issuing injunctions against and fining Operation Rescue and similar groups in several other cases.

The judge's ruling was upheld by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. The decision was appealed to the Supreme Court by Bray and her co-petitioners, including Operation Rescue founder Randall Terry.

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Class should be determined "by who people are, not by something they would like to do," Jay Sekulow, attorney for Operation Rescue, told the court. Rescuers are "not using opposition to abortion" for gender discrimination.

The scope of such anti-abortion blockades is "all who participate in the abortion process," not just women seeking abortions, Sekulow said.

It is class-based discrimination because rescuers' conduct "denies a right available only to a class," said NOW attorney Deborah Ellis. Such activity constitutes a "nationwide, systematic conspiracy" to prevent women from exercising their constitutional rights, she said.

NOW's contention -- "from discriminatory impact you can infer discriminatory purpose" -- is invalid, argued John Roberts Jr., deputy solicitor general of the Department of Justice. Roberts said the United States was not defending the rescuers' conduct but seeking to uphold the correct interpretation of the law. Under questioning by associate justice Antonin Scalia, Ellis agreed the lower court had not ruled the purpose of rescues and the effect of such activities were the same. Rescuers do not discriminate against out-of-state women seeking abortions as opposed to in-state women, Sekulow argued. He also said redress is available in state courts.

Women's rights of interstate travel are "violated in the most blatant way possible by obstruction of freedom of movement" when they seek to enter abortion clinics, Ellis said.

Among analogies used by Roberts was one of union pickets seeking to keep customers out of a business establishment. Even though they know some customers are black, it would be incorrect to say they were discriminating against blacks, Roberts said.

Rescues are similar, Ellis argued, to the actions of mobs who blocked the doors of the high school in Little Rock in 1957 to prevent black students from attending. The segregationists' acts were in opposition to integration, not blacks, she said.

"In one case, (the opposition is) because of race," Scalia said. "In this case, it remains to be" established it is because of gender.

Scalia challenged Ellis several times. Associate justices Anthony Kennedy, Byron White and John Paul Stevens also questioned her. Together, Sekulow and Roberts received only three questions.

"I was very encouraged," Bopp said afterward. "I think that the pro-abortion side took a very extreme position in terms of interpreting the law. They asked this court to make any actions that would be in opposition to abortion tantamount to a federal crime.

"By pushing it that far, I think you could see certain justices, even ones that we did not get in the Casey decision, such as justice Kennedy, pull back from that radical position."

In the June Planned Parenthood v. Casey opinion, the court upheld the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion but allowed state restrictions such as parental consent for minors, informed consent for women and a waiting period. The attorneys disagreed about the impact of the Casey decision on Bray.

The court's "decision last term in Casey, which for the first time said that the exercise of reproductive rights is important for women to be equal and autonomous citizens in our society, shows that the court understands that women need to have this right in order to (be) equal citizens," Ellis said afterward.

"The Supreme Court in Casey recognized that the issue of abortion is one of profound national debate," Sekulow told reporters in a statement similar to one he made in the courtroom, "that men and women of good conscience will disagree on the issue, and, because of that, opposition to abortion cannot constitute discrimination against women if men and women of good conscience can disagree over the issue."

Criticizing Department of Justice participation on the Operation Rescue side, NOW President Patricia Ireland told reporters, "Having checked his kinder, gentler facade at the courthouse door today, George Bush stood on the side of Operation Rescue and the vigilante mobs at the clinics. ... we see again how far he's willing to go in promoting lawlessness and violence and mob action against women."

Jayne Bray told reporters, "No one in their right mind believes that we are there because we hate women and because we want to discriminate against them. Everyone knows that we are there because we want to help women; we want to give them a positive alternative to killing their baby; we want to help them through their crisis situation."

"The only ones discriminating against women are the abortionists and their bloody cohorts who take a woman in a crisis situation, exploit her fears, violate her body, kill her baby and demand cold cash for it, and then tell her she'll feel better about it in the morning," Bray said.

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Louisiana abortion law
ruled unconstitutional

By C. Lacy Thompson

Baptist Press
10/7/92

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Louisiana appears to have failed in its bid to provide a means for overturning the Roe vs. Wade ruling that legalized abortion in this nation.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans wrote what may have been the final chapter in an ongoing saga Sept. 22 by ruling the state's tough anti-abortion law unconstitutional. Both supporters and opponents of the measure agree the ruling may have signaled the end of the line for the effort to overturn the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe vs. Wade ruling.

"It appears from the decisions we have had from the (courts) that a successful defense of the abortion statute will have some serious difficulties," Louisiana Attorney General Richard Ieyoub said. "Let's be honest about that."

However, no one expected the fight to end like this, not three years ago, when the Supreme Court first opened the door to greater state regulation of abortion and Louisiana scrambled to rush through it, not two years ago when the state legislature saw its tough no-exceptions abortion bill vetoed by the governor, not last year when the same legislators overrode a gubernatorial veto in historic style to pass what many call the nation's toughest abortion law.

At all such points, abortion opponents thought they had the inside track to dismantling the Roe vs. Wade ruling. The nation's high court certainly seemed willing to move in that direction, with a series of decisions that chipped away at abortion protection.

The rush to force the issue began in the summer of 1989, when the Supreme Court ruled states could take more control in regulating abortions. Louisiana officials immediately moved to revive the state's existing laws prohibiting abortion. However, the courts declined to reinstate the strict measures, throwing the matter into the legislative arena.

During the 1990 state legislative session, the issue drew national attention during what often was characterized as "circus-type" proceedings. Eventually legislators passed a measure outlawing abortions except to save the life of the mother. However, then-Gov. Buddy Roemer vetoed the bill. An override attempt barely failed -- and legislators scrambled to pass an abortion bill with more exceptions. However, the governor vetoed it also, citing problems with how it was constructed. A bid to call a veto session to reconsider the issue failed.

From that point on, pro-life advocates signaled their intent to tackle the issue head-on in 1991. Louisiana Baptists waded into the arena, passing their strongest-ever abortion resolution and urging their Committee on Moral and Social Concerns to make abortion a top priority.

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At times during the ensuing legislative session, pro-life ranks were divided over whether the abortion measure should include exceptions. Eventually, legislators passed a measure that prohibited abortion except in cases of rape, incest and to save the life of the mother. The measure set stiff penalties for physicians who violated the law.

For the third time, however, Roemer vetoed the measure, insisting the exceptions were too tightly drawn. For the first time this century, however, legislators overrode a Louisiana governor's veto -- and the battle was set.

The court process began immediately. A district judge immediately ruled the new measure unconstitutional. The date for it to become law came and went. The appeals process was launched -- and pro-life advocates were optimistic about the Louisiana law being used by the Supreme Court to reverse Roe vs. Wade.

However, none of them anticipated the court's ruling this June. In a massive, mixed decision, a split court voted in June to reaffirm Roe v. Wade but reinterpret the landmark decision to allow states added power to regulate abortion. Under the new ruling, abortion remains legal in the United States. But states now have the power to ensure thoughtful, informed decisions regarding abortion in the early months of pregnancy as long as the actions do not place "undue burdens" on women.

Neither side of the abortion argument was happy with a decision that they said settled nothing and apparently moved the issue firmly into the political arena.

Louisiana pro-life advocates certainly found little to cheer about in the ruling. They immediately saw that the decision cast a long shadow on hopes of bringing a successful challenge to Roe vs. Wade.

In September, that shadow deepened as the court of appeals acknowledged the Louisiana law is unconstitutional based on the June decision.

"The Louisiana statute, on its face, is plainly unconstitutional under (the June 1992) Casey (decision) because it imposes an undue burden on women seeking an abortion," the three-judge appeals court panel wrote in its decision.

One of the judges said he has personal reservations about the Supreme Court's reasoning in its June decision. But he acknowledged the court's summer ruling means the Louisiana law cannot stand.

State leaders said they were not surprised by the ruling and were not sure what the next step would be. Ieyoub said he would watch what the Supreme Court did concerning a restrictive Guam abortion law, which is farther along in the court process. If the Supreme Court refuses to hear arguments in that case, there is virtually no hope of having the Louisiana law heard at that level, he said.

In other words, all lies with the Supreme Court. State Sen. Allen Bares of Lafayette summed up the dilemma. "We knew when we wrote the (Louisiana) law that the only way it could be upheld would be if the Supreme Court was ready to overturn Roe vs. Wade. So far, they have not done that."

That means the issue remains unsettled. It also means abortion is likely to be a headline issue in 1993 as well, as legislators struggle once more with how to address the volatile issue. Instead of the fight nearing its end, apparently it is beginning all over again.

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Interracial coalition fighting
Mississippi lottery proposal

By William H. Perkins Jr.

Baptist Press
10/7/92

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--An unprecedented interracial coalition of key religious denominations in Mississippi has formed to fight a Nov. 3 vote on a state lottery.

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Gov. Kirk Fordice, a pair of former governors, the state's largest farm organization and the head of the state bankers' group also have publicly denounced the money-raising scheme.

Citizens Advocating Responsible Economics (CARE), an anti-lottery group chaired by former state senate president William B. Alexander, has assembled an array of civic, political and religious leaders to campaign against the lottery. CARE also is sponsoring a series of nine regional anti-lottery rallies around the state.

At issue is a proposal on the Nov. 3 ballot to lift the ban on lotteries in the state's 1890 constitution. The proposal does not specify ground rules for the lottery and does not mandate how proceeds will be spent.

"It is completely erroneous for people to be told that they are voting to legalize a state lottery in order to raise tax revenue for education or some other worthy cause," warned Paul Griffin Jones II, executive director of the Christian Action Commission of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

Denominational leaders involved with CARE include Southern Baptist, African Methodist Episcopal, United Methodist, Church of Christ, Presbyterian Church in America, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Missionary Baptist, Assemblies of God, United Pentecostal and Apostolic.

Former Govs. Bill Waller, a Baptist layman, and Bill Allain called for the defeat of the lottery proposal at a press conference Sept. 22 on the steps of the state capitol, describing how the game of chance will hit hard at the most vulnerable segments of the state's population without making a major contribution to education.

Don Waller, president of Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation and brother of Bill Waller, told reporters at the press conference his organization stands "shoulder to shoulder" with CARE in working to defeat the lottery.

Bobby Martin, president of the Mississippi Bankers Association, also delivered a strong anti-lottery message at the press conference. "Gambling in any form is not economically feasible for the state," he said.

CARE chairman Alexander expressed the reasoning that led to the formation of the anti-lottery group.

"More and more, Mississippi is depending on gambling to fund essential services of state and local governments. If we do not defeat the lottery and show the legislature that we care about the future of our state, then I predict the legislature will push for other forms of gambling," he said.

Alexander, a 23-year veteran of legislative wars, believes the grass-roots defeat of the well-funded lottery lobby will send a signal that will be difficult to miss.

"(The pro-lottery forces) are pouring millions into the state to win this vote. If the lottery is defeated, it won't come up again in the legislature for another 20 years. I've been in the legislature; I know," he said.

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Southeastern to inaugurate
Patterson as 5th president

By Jon Walker & Norman Miller

Baptist Press
10/7/92

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Some of the best-known names in the Southern Baptist Convention will be in Wake Forest, N.C., for the Oct. 13 inauguration of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's fifth president, Paige Patterson, who has been leading the institution since June 15.

Southern Baptist Convention President Ed Young described Patterson as "a sterling leader." Young, a Southeastern alumnus, is scheduled to present the inaugural address.

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Patterson comes to Southeastern from Criswell College in Dallas, where he had been president since 1975. Beginning with a student population of 12 and a faculty of four, the college grew to nearly 400 students and a faculty of 22.

Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission Executive Director Richard Land, who worked under Patterson as Criswell College's academic dean, said, "Paige Patterson is a devoted churchman, committed to the Southern Baptist Convention and her churches. He brings to Southeastern a strong commitment to biblical scholarship, merged with devotion to God's Holy Word."

Land said Patterson has a "passion for ministry and that passion is contagious. Students will soon discover that Patterson will be a student's president."

Patterson said his vision for Southeastern is that it will be "the launch deck for beginning a spiritual awakening on the eastern seaboard."

Patterson is best-known for his prominent role in the conservative resurgence within the Southern Baptist Convention. However, he earlier was pastor of four different Southern Baptist churches and more recently a Foreign Mission Board trustee.

Patterson received his master of theology and doctor of theology degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and his bachelor of arts degree from Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas.

He has written numerous books, articles and essays including one book while a seminary student: "Living in Hope of Eternal Life, An Exposition of Titus."

Patterson currently serves Broadman Press, the Sunday School Board's publishing house, as a consulting editor for The New American Commentary and as a writer for the commentary on Revelation.

Patterson was born in Fort Worth, Texas, Oct. 19, 1942. He was born again and answered God's call to ministry at age 9 under the preaching of his father, the late T.A. Patterson, at First Baptist Church in Beaumont, Texas. As a 15 year-old boy, Patterson preached his first sermon at a rescue mission in Beaumont.

He married his childhood sweetheart, the former Dorothy Jean Kelly of San Antonio, Texas, on June 22, 1963. Mrs. Patterson has a doctor of ministry degree from Luther Rice Theological Seminary in Atlanta; a master of theology degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary; and a bachelor of arts degree from Hardin-Simmons University. She is currently working on a doctor of theology degree at the University of South Africa.

The Pattersons have two children: Armour Paige, youth pastor at Valley Heights Baptist Church in Phoenix, Ariz., and Carmen Leigh (Patterson) Howell who is married to Mark Anthony Howell, a master of divinity student at Southeastern.

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National volunteer network
aids truckers in crisis

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
10/7/92

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Every 15 minutes an 18 wheeler is in an accident on the nation's highways. A truck driver is hospitalized every 45 minutes. A truck driver is killed every 18 hours.

The statistics Bob Hataway quotes are compelling but it was a personal experience that motivated him to start a nationwide ministry for people who transport America's goods.

Hataway was a pastor in Hillsboro, Texas, when he heard that a trucker named Joe Taylor was involved in a serious accident. He visited the hospital and developed a relationship with Taylor who required three operations and was hospitalized eight weeks.

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Hataway led Taylor to make a profession of faith. When he left the Texas hospital to return to Indiana, Taylor told Hataway, "I don't want to go home. All my friends are here."

Through that experience, Hataway says, "God began to lay on me what could be done if pastors only knew about the need."

Hataway, who is now endorsed by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's chaplaincy commission, began Trans Alive ministry in 1984 to provide assistance to truckers.

Long hours on the road, prolonged trips away from home and pressure to meet deadlines make driving a truck a high-stress career, Hataway says.

The ministry works through a network of 100,000 pastors who serve as volunteers in every zip code in the nation plus parts of Canada. When an accident is reported to Trans Alive, a volunteer is assigned to the trucker and another volunteer is assigned to the trucker's family.

Some contacts are as simple as getting a driver to another location after his truck has been wrecked. Other contacts are as intense as notifying the family when a trucker dies on the road.

After Trans Alive matches a volunteer with the need, the ministry is up to the local church. "We're just a coordinator," Hataway says.

Some trucking companies pay travel expenses, but not living expenses, for the trucker's spouse to visit him if he is hospitalized away from home. Hataway says some churches have provided the spouse with a car and living accommodations.

The ministry is a benefit to the trucking industry as well, Hataway says.

"A lot of drivers consider themselves second-class citizens," he notes. "When drivers see that people do care about them, they have a more positive attitude and become more responsible, productive drivers.

"But we're doing all this to reach a spiritual need," Hataway says. "Delivering a cup of cold water in their time of need presents an open door."

In addition to pastors willing to minister to truckers or their family members, Hataway says he needs people to notify him when they become aware of accidents involving truckers. With the driver's name, the name of the trucking company he represents and the hospital where he might have been taken, Trans Alive can begin its network of ministry.

People with information about a trucking accident can call Trans Alive at 1-800 USA HURT.

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Geriatric chaplain helps
elderly prepare for death

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
10/7/92

CHICAGO (BP)--At The Moorings retirement center in northwest Chicago, chaplain Graham Ross has a special duty to the facility's residents: "I'm helping them pack their bags for death."

Ross, one of about a dozen Southern Baptist Home Mission Board-endorsed geriatric chaplains, counsels residents and families on their losses while trying to promote a sense of community to those experiencing pain, physical deterioration or even dementia.

Calling each person by his or her first name, Ross may be the one staff member who offers friendship with no strings attached. His unique relationship allows him to be both a confidant and a liaison between residents and the facility, their churches and families.

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"I'm not there to do something to them," he said, referring to doctors who may run tests or nurses who may draw blood. "I'm there for them."

Ross, who lives on the 42-acre campus, works with more than 400 residents. His ministry is as structured as an evening Bible study or as spontaneous as a morning hug.

"We are a Christian community here and it's a beautiful experience," said resident Ruth Pelcher, who credits Ross for such an atmosphere. "It's all the difference between this place and other places."

Ross said geriatric chaplaincy is a wide-open field, but few paid positions exist. "You almost have to aggressively go for it and find an association that would, at least, be willing to sponsor you."

The lack of paid positions, however, should not prevent local churches from being more attentive to the needs of the elderly in their community, he said. Ross often speaks at area churches, encouraging them to get involved in ministries to the aging.

On Ross' desk sits a portfolio of pencil sketches he's drawn of residents. On the back of each is a short biography of the person and a special memory about his or her life.

"Helen. Always in pain," he said picking up one and reading. "If she can come out of her pain to smile at me, it will be a good day."

Another sketch includes the tale of Ross spoon feeding a resident. Each time she would take a bite to eat only after he answered her question, "Do you love me?"

"It suddenly dawned on me that she was eating only because she loved me," he said. "My response to Alice was cognitive, just as Peter's response to Jesus was. My Lord calls me to more than this."

Many of the subjects in Ross' sketches have died. Death and loss are a constant factor in his ministry, he said.

Residents lose much of their freedom when they move from their homes into an apartment at the center, he said. Added to that is the loss of physical health as they grow older.

"I think the challenge is to be with them in their losses and their pain and to be there, present with them in the Lord," said Ross, who was a bivocational pastor and church planter before becoming a chaplain.

In the cases of those with Alzheimer's Disease and other illnesses, denial of the condition can be more harmful than the actual disease, he said. "As long as you say you're going to beat it, it's going to rip you to shreds."

Also harmful, he said, is the stress of caring for a loved one who can no longer take care of himself or herself. One woman had recently suffered a heart attack while caring for her invalid husband, he said.

"I don't know who's going to outlive who," he said. "No study has been done on how many care givers give out before the receivers of the care."

For that reason Ross often counsels family members who must come to terms with placing their relative in a retirement home. He also counsels families as they adjust to drastic changes they see taking place as the relative ages.

As residents approach the end of their lives, Ross often conducts "life reviews," a series of interviews that give residents a chance to fully reflect on the important times of their lives.

It is a delicate process, he said. "You can't kick the door in to anyone's inner sanctum." Such reviews often reveal feelings or memories that had been repressed for a lifetime, he said, and many residents are receptive to the ministry opportunities they provide.

"We are no longer looking forward, we are looking backward and validating our lives that we've spent," he said. "That's where the possibility of pastoral care exists, to help them resolve the unresolved issues so they can go on and die in the Lord."

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BSSB names Florida man
to ethnic ministry post

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
10/7/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Ramon Martinez has been employed by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board to coordinate church development work among ethnic groups.

Martinez, director of the Florida Baptist Convention's ethnic education department since 1983, will become ethnic and black coordinator for the board Nov. 15.

In his new role, Martinez will coordinate the work of three sections: Hispanic church development, language church development (which includes Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese and several other language groups) and black church development. He also will serve as a liaison for ethnic work between the Sunday School Board and other SBC agencies, state conventions, associations and churches.

Previously, the Sunday School Board's three ethnic and language sections were grouped together, along with special education ministry, as the special ministries department. But as part of the current restructuring at the board, the black, Hispanic and language church development sections became stand-alone units reporting directly to Gene Mims, vice president for church growth and programs. Special education ministry was transferred to the church growth-Sunday school division.

Mims said Martinez' role as coordinator will be to integrate the expertise of workers in the ethnic and language sections with other Sunday School Board programs and ministries.

"We have made ethnic ministry a priority at the Sunday School Board and Ramon Martinez will help us accomplish that goal," Mims said. "We believe he will be instrumental in promoting ethnic ministry not only within the board but across the convention and around the world."

A native of Cuba, Martinez came to the United States in 1962 and later earned a bachelor's degree from California Baptist College in Riverside, Calif, and a master of divinity degree from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif. He is married to Rosa Martinez, a frequent contributing writer to Sunday School Board publications such as "Open Windows" and "Quietud", the new Spanish devotional guide.

Prior to joining the Florida Baptist Convention staff, Martinez held several jobs at the Home Mission Board, including language missions coordinator for the Miami Baptist Association, field consultant for language materials, assistant director of the language missions division and director of the ethnic resource correlation department. He also has been pastor of three different Hispanic churches in California.

While he is encouraged by the number of ethnic church starts in the SBC in the last decade, Martinez said he views his new role as promoting development of those churches through education and discipleship.

"The Home Mission Board has done a good job in starting new (ethnic) churches. Now we have to do our part by helping the congregations grow stronger through education," he said.

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