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NEW ORLEANS -- NOBTS names vice president, two faculty, other changes.
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BWA team declares Cuba
wide open to the gospel

By Wendy Ryan

Baptist Press
12/18/92

WASHINGTON, (BP)--While life seems harder in Cuba, and the political situation more tense, "openness to the gospel seems even more apparent now than 12 months ago," according to Tony Cupit, director of evangelism for the Baptist World Alliance.

Cupit led a seven-member BWA evangelistic team of British and American Baptist pastors and denominational leaders to Cuba, Dec. 1-6, that visited not only churches, but hospitals, factories, house churches and government officials.

"We also engaged in extensive pastoral visitation with Cuban pastors," said Cupit, who also led a BWA evangelistic team to Cuba in the fall of 1991.

But before the most recent visit could start, political tensions between Cuba and the United States took a toll on the team -- only seven of 14 requested visas were granted.

The seven visas granted were those requested by the Baptist Convention of Eastern Cuba, the group to which American Baptists relate. The Baptist Convention of Western Cuba, which Southern Baptists relate to, was denied all requested visas.

In late October visas requested by the western convention also were denied for 24 Latin American Baptist pastors scheduled to lead evangelistic campaigns in Baptist churches in western Cuba. When the visas were denied, western convention pastors continued with the November campaigns as planned, leading the services themselves.

"The leaders are suddenly feeling vulnerable," Cupit said. "We are alone," some of the western convention leaders told him.

"While failure to secure all the visas for the BWA trip was disappointing, the group that went was outstanding," Cupit said, "and we saw such an openness to the gospel," evidenced by some 400 first-time decisions for Christ as a result of the team's preaching.

It was also seen in how the Cubans refused to let blackouts and transportation problems (horse and cart, tractors and fuel shortages for those with cars) keep them from the evangelistic meetings.

"It was unusual to have a service or a meeting without a response to the gospel," Cupit said. "Generally the responses were immediate; there was no need to prolong the appeal."

"The most exciting time for an evangelism impact in Cuba is now," said team member Isaac Torres, Hispanic consultant for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

"What we have heard and what we have seen is 'you have been sent from God,'" even from some Community Party members, Torres said.

"Not knowing, I witnessed to a man who was the head man of the party in the Granma province where I preached," Torres recounted.

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"I was invited to eat at his home. He and his wife are medical doctors and his wife, a leader in the party, gave evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work in their lives.

"The man gave me his personal card and said, 'I am sorry but we are not allowed to go to any church,' but I was invited to speak at the medical center, at the human resources office where all the employees were asked by the supervisor to be present during the preaching.

"When an invitation was given to give public evidence of their faith in Jesus Christ by raising their hands, 10 made it public in that particular place." In another setting, Torres said, a teacher brought her children to the place where I was staying so I could speak to them.

"A university professor brought one of his students to church one evening," Torres said. "Prior to the service, the professor made an appointment so I could speak with his student. The student made a profession of faith that night and had many questions on how to follow up his decision to receive Christ."

Cupit said he will never forget "the sight of Pablo Calzoncit, director of personal evangelism strategies in the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., and Torres kneeling on the footpath of the Hilton Hotel praying with two guys who had tried to sell them drugs. "The two guys were apparently genuine, deeply moved and appreciative of being witnessed to."

"Seeing an entire family come to Christ, including aunts and uncles was a highlight," said Daniel Sanchez, professor of missions and evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

"As soon as the invitation was given, one by one, in quick succession, they raised their hands and then made their way to the front to make a public profession of faith. The delight reflected in their faces when they received a Bible was something to behold."

Sanchez spent much of his time teaching a course on evangelism and church growth at the Baptist Seminary in Santiago de Cuba. The seminary is affiliated with the eastern convention.

According to Betty Law (who just returned from Cuba), some seminary profs recently have been allowed to study abroad.

Because of limited training opportunities for seminary faculty and the extreme difficulty in securing good texts in Spanish, the seminary struggles to maintain a good teaching standard.

"The students were so eager to learn that every free moment was spent answering their questions and hearing their marvelous testimonies of conversion," Sanchez said.

"Even though transportation is very difficult, these students look forward to the weekend where they can put into practice what they have learned," Sanchez noted.

The team preached in seven centers of the Baptist Convention of Eastern Cuba, Bayamo, Las Tunas, Jiguaní, Masinilla, Guantanamo and two areas of Santiago de Cuba.

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Christian activists to begin
resistance at inauguration

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
12/18/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--Randall Terry, the controversial founder of Operation Rescue, and other Christian activists plan to protest publicly President-elect Bill Clinton's policies from the first day of his administration.

Activists are targeting Clinton's Jan. 20 inauguration and his first full day in office, Jan. 21, for public demonstration and prayer. Organizers are expecting about 500 persons to participate in demonstrations and prayer on inaugural day and are calling on Christian leaders to pray in front of the White House on Clinton's first morning in residence, an action which could result in their arrest.

"We want to set the tone on the very first day of Mr. Clinton's presidency: 'Here we are; we're not going to compromise,'" said Patrick Mahoney, director of the Christian Defense Coalition, at a recent press conference.

They are saying to Clinton, "read our lips," Terry said. "We will be there to confront you. We will be there to resist you every step of the way as you resist and rebel against the commands of almighty God."

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Other activities planned include prayer in front of a Washington, D.C., abortion clinic Jan. 22, the 20th anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, and a rescue at an abortion clinic Jan. 23.

While the activities will be public, the activists will not block roads for such events as the inaugural parade and will not seek to prevent persons from speaking, Mahoney said.

A challenge to the president-elect not to be sworn in on the Bible can be expected, Terry said.

Their message will be, Terry said, "Gov. Clinton, do not mock God, do not put your hand on the sacred Bible that condemns homosexuality, that says no to fornication, that says no to adultery, that says no to homosexuality."

It has been announced Billy Graham will deliver the invocation and benediction at the inauguration. The world-famous evangelist is a member of First Baptist Church in Dallas.

Clinton is a member of Immanuel Baptist Church, a Southern Baptist congregation in Little Rock, Ark.

Mahoney and Terry hope "A Call to Resistance," the title of the Jan. 19-23 campaign, signals the start of a new resistance movement which will lead to spiritual and cultural reformation. Though both remain identified closely with the rescue movement, they are not officially leaders in Operation Rescue National, which is conducting the Jan. 23 rescue.

The plans to protest Clinton's support of abortion and homosexual rights were made in spite of the president-elect's threat to use the authority of his office against Operation Rescue and others who practice civil disobedience to prevent abortions. In a fund-raising letter during the campaign, Clinton said as president he would "move against the anti-choice extremists who have blockaded family planning clinics." He specifically mentioned Operation Rescue.

Mahoney agreed he and other activists are radical but said, "What happens to us today will happen to mainstream Christendom three to five years down the road. Clinton will not just move against us. He'll move against all free religious expression."

When Christian leaders pray in front of the White House on a Pennsylvania Avenue sidewalk Jan. 21, they will do so in an area in which such stationary acts supposedly are prohibited. Mahoney has said they expect to be arrested.

The resistance movement will not limit itself to the issue of abortion, Terry said. At the Dec. 10 press conference, Terry announced a Jan. 8 campaign, "Just Say No to Homosexuals in the Military." Groups in about 100 cities are expected to hold press conferences and public times of prayer to protest Clinton's plan to lift the ban on homosexuals in the armed services, Terry said.

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'Reverence for life' ethic guides
Texas CLC abortion position paper

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
12/18/92

DALLAS (BP)--Reverence for life -- especially the lives of those who are most vulnerable -- and recognition of the sometimes competing claims of one life over another should shape the Christian's views on abortion, according to a position paper recently adopted by the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

The four-page document examines biblical teachings on reverence for life and the ethical implications for Christians, focuses on underlying responsibilities for teaching the Christian view of human sexuality, and explores public policy implications of the abortion issue.

"Aborting the life of the fetus should be regarded as an extreme act undertaken under extreme circumstances," according to the statement released by the moral concerns and public policy agency of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Abortion might be chosen "as the lesser of evils" only in such cases as rape or incest, pregnancies which severely threaten the mother's physical or emotional survival, or in pregnancies involving severe fetal deformity and disease incompatible with life, according to the Texas CLC position paper.

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"Every instance in which reverence for fetal life is set aside in behalf of reverence for the life of the mother is intended as an urgent exception to the basic aversion to abortion," the commission paper stated.

The Christian responsibility is to teach by word and example a sexual ethic characterized by fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, to encourage conception control in society at large through such methods as responsible, age-appropriate, abstinence-based sex education in public schools, and to shape public policy on abortion restrictions, according to the CLC paper.

"It is right for Christians to promote reverence for life in the public forum, and the routine destruction of fetal life in contemporary society denegrates that sense of reverence," the commission paper states. "The Christian Life Commission supports legislative remedies which serve to limit abortion except in extreme circumstances."

However, the statement acknowledges "the difficulty of drafting fair, constitutionally acceptable and politically viable legislation" and places greatest emphasis upon addressing the abortion issue within the church.

"Here we are most clearly challenged by Scripture and Christian practice to reverence life, to welcome children, and to care for brothers and sisters," according to the CLC statement.

"While it is urgent that we work in the legislative arena toward public policies which promote reverence for life, we must also face the reality that Christians are called to an abortion ethic more rigorous than can be realistically imposed on the larger, pluralistic society. The faithful practice of this ethic within our own community may be our greatest witness concerning the issue of abortion."

Before drafting the position paper, the commission called together a special committee of Texas Baptists representing a diversity of views on the abortion issue for a full day of wide-ranging discussion, according to Phil Strickland, CLC director.

"We discussed how the Christian Life Commission could be most redemptive on this issue, and the clear feeling of the committee was that our most redemptive work will be done in helping churches to understand the issue and to implement programs to teach Christian sexual values," Strickland said.

An initial draft of the document was prepared following that committee meeting, and the special committee joined members of the commission and its board of consultants at a two-day retreat in April for further discussion of the issue and the proposed paper.

The Texas CLC staff incorporated changes suggested at that meeting, the commission reviewed yet another draft at its October meeting and offered a few additional revisions. A final draft was then sent to commission members who voted by mail to approve the position paper.

The document's purpose is to help churches grapple with the abortion issue redemptively and deal with the problem proactively by teaching Christian views on human sexuality, according to Strickland.

"The answer to abortion primarily is not found in changing public policy, though we would support efforts to restrict abortions. The answer lies deeper than that, resting in the attitudes and behavior of individuals. That is where the church must play a crucial role," Strickland said.

"It is not enough for the church just to talk about public policy. If we fail to do more than that, we abdicate our responsibility to teach and incarnate a Christian understanding of human sexuality."

A consistent and comprehensive understanding of reverence for life also will lead churches to respond compassionately to all of society's most vulnerable members, including abused and neglected children, Strickland said.

The position paper was released for churches to utilize in preparing for Sanctity of Life Sunday, observed Jan. 17 in many Southern Baptist churches, Strickland said.

The Texas CLC is making the position paper on abortion available to churches upon request. The document is one part of a projected literature series on reverence for life that will include resources on decision-making and counseling, legal background and views on abortion from the perspective of church history.

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To obtain a copy of "Abortion and the Christian Life," contact the Christian Life Commission, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, TX 75246-1798; (214) 828-5190.

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NOBTS names vice president,
two faculty, other changes

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press
12/18/92

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary trustees elected a new vice president and two new faculty members during the December meeting of the executive committee.

Each position is effective Jan. 1. Three administrative changes were also formally announced.

Asa R. Sphar III was named assistant professor of psychology and counseling in the division of pastoral ministries. Founder of Abundant Resources Counseling Center in New Orleans and Houma, La., Sphar has been active in individual, marriage and family counseling in the New Orleans area since 1987. He has been a contract teacher for the seminary since the beginning of the 1992-93 academic year.

A native of Winchester, Ky. Sphar received a bachelor of science degree from the University of Kentucky in 1980; he earned his master of divinity (1988) and doctor of philosophy in psychology and counseling (1992) degrees from New Orleans Seminary. He is a licensed and nationally certified counselor and a member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, the Fellowship of Christian Counselors and Therapists, and American Association of Counseling and Development.

Sphar is married to the former Donna Cates, also of Winchester, Ky. They have two daughters, Anna and Bethany.

Argile A. Smith, pastor of Trinity Heights Baptist Church, Shreveport, La. was named assistant professor of preaching, also in the division of pastoral ministries.

A native of Poplarville, Miss. Smith received the bachelor of arts degree from William Carey College in 1977; he earned the master of divinity (1980) and doctor of theology (1984) degrees from New Orleans Seminary. He has been an adjunct professor at the seminary's Shreveport extension center since 1989.

Smith was also pastor of three Mississippi churches: Pachuta Baptist, Pachuta; Summerland Baptist, Taylorsville; and First Baptist of Lyman, Gulfport. Smith is married to the former Connie Saucier, also of Poplarville. They have three sons: Joshua, David, and Dustin.

Mark R. Foley was named vice president for student development and director of testing. A member of the seminary staff since 1987, Foley began service as a development officer. In 1988 he was named director of the office of financial aid and student development; in 1991 he was named director of the student relations office.

A native of Wichita Falls, Texas Foley received the bachelor of business administration degree in 1972 from Hardin-Simmons University; he earned his master of divinity (1989) and doctor of philosophy in psychology and counseling (1992) degrees from New Orleans Seminary. He has been active in marriage and family therapy in the New Orleans area since 1989. Foley is married to the former Marilyn Hardeman, also of Wichita Falls. They have two children, Molly and Rob.

Because of its rapidly expanding undergraduate and graduate degree programs, New Orleans Seminary also announced three administrative changes. Jimmy W. Dukes was named assistant provost and Don H. Stewart as full-time director of the doctor of ministry degree program, both effective immediately. Paul E. Gregoire Jr. assumes the responsibilities of registrar and director of admissions Jan. 1.

Dukes, who was appointed academic dean of the undergraduate faculty in July, was named registrar and director of admissions in 1991. He has been an associate professor of New Testament and Greek at New Orleans Seminary since 1984. A native of Jackson, Miss. he was named director of the seminary's School of Christian Training in 1990. All of the seminary's undergraduate-level work has been conducted through the School of Christian Training since its founding in 1976.

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Dukes received a bachelor of arts degree from Delta State University in 1969; he earned master of divinity (1979) and doctor of theology (1983) degrees from New Orleans Seminary. He has over 30 years of pastoral experience with churches in Mississippi and Louisiana. Dukes is married to the former Retia James of Vardaman, Miss. administrative assistant to the president. They have two sons, Erik and Jason.

Stewart has been director of the seminary's doctor of ministry and extension center master of divinity degree programs since 1991; since that time enrollment in the doctor of ministry degree program has risen over 50 percent.

Stewart came to NOBTS as executive vice president in 1978 after serving 15 years at William Carey College, first as associate professor of religion and dean of men, and then as professor of Bible and head of the religion department.

A native of Hattiesburg, Miss. Stewart has over 30 years of pastoral experience. He received a bachelor of arts degree from William Carey College in 1957; he earned bachelor of divinity (1960) and doctor of theology (1965) degrees from New Orleans Seminary. Stewart is married to the former Mona Daughdrill of Lumberton, Miss. They have three children: James, Sandra, and Donna.

Gregoire has served as office manager and assistant director of the registry office since 1987. A native of New Orleans, he received the associate of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary in 1983, the bachelor of science degree from the University of the State of New York in 1985, and the master of religious education (1986), and doctor of education (1992) degrees from New Orleans Seminary. He is the pastor of St. Bernard Baptist Church, Chalmette, La. He is married to the former Marilyn Porte, also of New Orleans. They have two sons, Ryan and Chad.

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Southeastern Seminary taps
Bethel education professor

By Norman Miller

Baptist Press
12/18/92

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Trustees of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary named Edward A. Buchanan of Bethel Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich. to become the second of two education professors at Southeastern.

Elected by trustees in March of 1991, Buchanan will join Southeastern's faculty as the sixth professor hired during President Paige Patterson's administration.

"We are elated that Dr. Buchanan is coming to Southeastern," Patterson said, "because he brings to the task a rare mixture of seasoned experience and aggressive ingenuity for putting new ideas to work in constructive ways."

Patterson said Buchanan declined to accept the position in 1991 due to "personal reasons involving his children's education. But since he was already elected, we felt it appropriate to ask him to reconsider the trustees' offer; and we are delighted that God has given Dr. Buchanan the freedom to minister at Southeastern."

Buchanan has been professor of education/director of continuing education at Bethel Seminary since 1978 and will begin teaching at Southeastern in August of 1993.

Buchanan said he is "challenged by the opportunity to train Southeastern's men and women in service to God in the local church."

When responding to a question concerning Southeastern's struggles over the last few years, Buchanan said he believes "what is happening at Southeastern is important to the SBC, because I believe both are moving in the direction God has appointed."

A native of Newark, N.J., Buchanan, 55, is no stranger to Southern Baptist work. He is the author of more than a dozen titles published by the (SBC) Convention Press, including titles in evangelism, education, church growth, administrative and leadership skills, curriculum materials for adult church training, and a workbook on how to study the Bible.

He wrote virtually all of the first three years' lessons in the Sunday School Board's "Home Bible Study Guide." He has also written for the Seminary Extension Department.

Buchanan holds three earned degrees: doctor of education, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; master of religious education, New York Theological Seminary; and a bachelor of arts from Rutgers University. His post-graduate work includes a stint as visiting scholar at the University of Minnesota and studies at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education.

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Among his numerous affiliations Buchanan is chairman of the examination team for the Conservative Baptist Seminary of the East in Philadelphia, Penn. and a member of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, the Religious Education Association, and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion. He is also a member of the Science Museum of Minnesota and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York.

Buchanan is married to Gladys Heichel, and they have two children: Roger Edward, 22, and Becky Jean, 19.

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Maternity benefits boosted
in AB Church Medical Plan

Baptist Press
12/18/92

DALLAS (BP)--Maternity benefits in the Church and Seminarian Comprehensive Medical Plans will be raised effective Jan. 1, the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention announced today.

The new fixed benefit will be \$5,000 for normal delivery and \$7,500 for cesarean section, said Joel H. Mathis, senior vice president for insurance. Present benefits are \$3,000 and \$5,000 respectively.

Complications of pregnancy are treated as any other illness, as defined within the parameters of the plan.

Mathis said there will be no waiting period for the new benefit. Any delivery on or after Jan. 1, will qualify.

"We are delighted to pass on to our participants the benefit of better claims experience in the Church Comprehensive Plan," said Mathis. "We announced several weeks ago there would be no increase in rates for the period January through June. It is an added pleasure to announce the larger maternity benefit," he added.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: (BP) Richmond bureau of Baptist Press is mailing a photo-graphic package on Somalia (7 photos and 1 graphic map) to state Baptist newspapers today. It is available by request to others.

CORRECTION: In the 12-16 (BP) article titled "Bivocational ministries highlighted in conference," please correct the first paragraph to read, "Second Baptist Church in Ashland, Ky., ... "

Thanks,
Baptist Press
