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EDITORS' NOTE: Following is an updated version of a story posted on CompuServe 1-4-92.

Executive Committee search
narrows, Chapman leads field

By Herb Hollinger

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention President Morris Chapman is the leading candidate to succeed Harold C. Bennett as president/treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, according to sources close to the search committee.

However, Julian Motley, a pastor from Durham, N.C., and chairman of the Executive Committee's search committee, said a final decision is not expected until later this month. Asked by Baptist Press if Chapman is the committee's choice, Motley said the committee has looked at a number of people but is not ready to make a decision public.

"It is my hope, by the end of the month, we will be able to officially identify the recommendation of the committee," Motley said. The 10-member search committee will make a recommendation to the Feb. 17-19 regular meeting of the Executive Committee.

However, several Executive Committee members, who do not want to be identified, have said Chapman will be the committee's recommendation. Motley said he has been called by a number of reporters regarding the speculation but would neither confirm nor deny the report.

Bennett announced at an Executive Committee meeting in Atlanta in June he would retire Oct. 1, 1992. He would continue as a consultant until Oct. 1, 1993. Bennett, 67, has held the executive position since 1979, only the fourth person to hold that position.

The president/treasurer of the Executive Committee heads a small staff but, as chief executive, helps guide the committee which distributes funds received from state conventions and churches to 19 various SBC agencies and entities. For the 1991-92 budget year the committee expects to distribute more than \$140 million in Cooperative Program funds. The committee also acts for the SBC "ad interim" in all matters "not otherwise provided for."

One area which the Executive Committee would need to resolve if Chapman is the recommendation would be the effective date of his employment. The SBC constitution and several bylaws would indicate he could not serve in both offices, as president of the SBC and the Executive Committee.

Chapman's tenure as SBC president ends following the Indianapolis meeting in June so presumably the earliest employment date would be in mid-June. However, if he resigned as SBC president prior to that date, Nelson Price, a pastor from Marietta, Ga., and first vice president, would assume the presidency under the SBC constitution.

Chapman, 51, has been pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, nearly 13 years. He was elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans in June of 1990 and re-elected at Atlanta in June of 1991.

A native of Kosciusko, Miss., Chapman is a graduate of Mississippi College and has master of divinity and doctor of ministries degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Prior to Wichita Falls, Chapman was a pastor in Albuquerque, N.M., Waco and Rogers, Texas.

His wife, Jodi, was a member of the SBC Peace Committee and a trustee of the Baptist Sunday School Board. They have two children, Chris and Stephanie.

Second American aid worker
freed in Afghanistan

LONDON (BP)--Joel DeHart, an American aid worker detained for nearly six months in a rebel-controlled part of Afghanistan, was escorted to Pakistan and freed Jan. 4.

The release was announced by Global Partners, the relief agency that sent DeHart and another American to the area. DeHart, 34, reportedly was in good condition after reaching the Pakistani border town of Peshawar.

"I am healthy," DeHart wrote in a letter shortly before his release. "People are being kind to me. I look forward to being free."

Global Partners, a private humanitarian and development agency based in the United Kingdom, sent DeHart into Afghanistan in June as a translator for veterinarian William Lewis, a Southern Baptist veterinarian from Decatur, Texas. The two Americans were training Afghans in animal inoculation in the isolated Ghazni province of central Afghanistan, the agency said.

Global Partners reported the two men encountered unrest in the area July 7, shortly before their scheduled departure. They were detained by several Afghan rebels and kept in local homes. They reported being treated well and continued to inoculate animals despite the dangerous situation.

Lewis was released and escorted to Pakistan Oct. 20 through the assistance of the Pir Gailani party, an Afghan resistance group. However, DeHart continued to be held and was taken for a time to a rebel stronghold high in the mountains of the region. DeHart's family asked he not be identified by name until his safe return to Pakistan.

Relief workers often enter such areas of Afghanistan -- controlled by mujahideen forces fighting the government in Kabul -- to help people ravaged by war and hunger. Several Western aid workers have been detained in the country in recent months.

After the two Americans were detained, humanitarian agencies working in Afghanistan met in Pakistan to discuss the situation and other similar incidents that have occurred recently in rebel-held regions. They subsequently suspended aid projects.

Intensive negotiations by several parties, including the United Nations, helped obtain DeHart's release. However, no ransom was paid for his release, an agency official confirmed. Global Partners expressed gratitude he was not mistreated.

The agency official also thanked the Pakistani and United States governments and the Afghan party of the Hesbi-Islami (Hekmatyar) for help with DeHart's release.

Despite the dangerous conditions in Afghanistan, Global Partners hopes to continue aid efforts.

"We are committed to the welfare of the Afghan people," said an agency spokesman. "We hope to continue to work there."

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N.C. gives direct to Ruschlikon;
Europe missionaries 'on hold'

Baptist Press
1/6/92

RUSCHLIKON, Switzerland (BP)--North Carolina became the first Southern Baptist state convention to allocate funds directly to the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, according to European Baptist Press Service.

EBPS said Ed Vick, second vice president of the North Carolina Baptist Convention, presented the seminary a check Dec. 21 for \$28,750, the first payment on \$30,000 promised to the international seminary by North Carolina Baptists at their annual meeting last November.

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North Carolina Baptists, one of 10 state Baptist conventions to pass actions on the international seminary, approved two motions. One set aside the \$30,000. The other asked the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to rescind a 35-28 vote on Oct. 9 by its trustees to defund \$365,000 promised to the seminary's 1992 budget. On Dec. 11, the trustees voted 54-27 to take no further action on the seminary matter.

Meanwhile, Keith Parker, the FMB's area director for Europe, said in a letter to more than 290 missionaries in Europe that he has put a "temporary hold" on all missionary personnel requests for Europe after February "so we can renegotiate with each (European Baptist) union about its desires."

Leaders of many of the 33 Baptists unions in the 750,000-member European Baptist Federation have expressed alarm over the defunding action and indicated it could rupture future relationships. Leaders of the Baptist Union of Romania, however, expressed support for it.

It is likely, according to EBPS, the Ruschlikon matter will be discussed by leaders of the European Baptist Federation when they meet Jan. 26-29 in Dorfweil, Germany, for a previously scheduled consultation on the role of Baptist churches in Europe.

Karl-Heinz Walter, the federation's general secretary, said each union will decide for itself what future relationship to have with the FMB and its missionaries.

Vick, a layman from Raleigh, N.C., said the \$30,000 North Carolina Baptist gift, which would have gone originally to the FMB, comes from an "optional budget" set up by the North Carolina convention for churches who are unhappy with Southern Baptist Convention leadership, according to EBPS.

Besides North Carolina, nine other state conventions passed motions or resolutions in their annual meetings asking either the FMB rescind or give further consideration to its action.

Only Virginia and North Carolina specifically voted funds for the seminary. Virginia voted to give \$100,000 to the seminary out of 1992 funds unless the FMB rescinded its action. Virginia Baptist officials said the money, which otherwise would have gone undesignated directly from Virginia to the FMB's budget, now will be designated for the Ruschlikon seminary through the FMB.

In Texas, the executive board of Baptist General Convention urged on Dec. 3 the FMB restore the defunded amount. It asked its administrative committee to explore the possibility of finding funds to send to the seminary in case the decision to defund it was not overturned. The executive board meets again March 10.

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Bush thanked for
pro-life stance

Baptist Press
1/6/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--Evangelical Christian leaders, including the executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, thanked President George Bush during a recent pro-life ceremony for using his authority to protect federal pro-life policies.

Richard D. Land, executive director of the CLC, was among six evangelical representatives present in the oval office when the President signed a proclamation designating Jan. 19 as National Sanctity of Human Life Day.

"This is an excellent example of the President's prerogative to use his office as the 'bully-pulpit' to define issues, set priorities and focus agendas, all of which are such a crucial part of presidential leadership," Land said.

"I want to express my appreciation on behalf of Southern Baptists for the President's declaring National Sanctity of Human Life Day," Land said. "Having a signing ceremony in the oval office gives the kind of high-profile, focused leadership on this issue from the President that is so important in defining the critical nature of the right-to-life issue in our nation."

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The group expressed appreciation to President Bush for blocking congressional attempts to overturn anti-abortion regulations, Land said. During 1991, the President again kept his commitment to veto efforts to weaken pro-life policies.

Also attending the Dec. 19 ceremony were staff members from the Christian Action Council, a pro-life group which sponsors Sanctity of Human Life Sunday in evangelical churches; the National Association of Evangelicals, and a Washington crisis pregnancy center.

Jan. 19 is recognized as 1992 Sanctity of Human Life Sunday in the Southern Baptist Convention as well as by the Christian Action Council. Jan. 22 is the anniversary of the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, which legalized abortion.

In the proclamation, President Bush referred to the Declaration of Independence, calling the right to life the "first and most fundamental right enumerated by our nation's founders." He praised volunteers at crisis pregnancy centers and women who choose to give birth to their unborn children. The President called on the country to renew its "determination to ensure that all, born and unborn, receive the protection and care they deserve."

Others attending the signing ceremony were Thomas Glessner, president of the Christian Action Council; Robert Dugan, director of the National Association of Evangelicals' office of public affairs; Doug Scott, CAC's vice president for public policy; Harriet Lewis, CAC's vice president for crisis pregnancy center ministries, and Robin McDonald, executive director of the Capitol Hill Crisis Pregnancy Center.

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Self defense propels pastor
into life-long study of Mormonism By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
1/6/92

MARLOW, Okla. (BP)--Out of self defense, John L. Smith began a study of Mormonism that changed the direction of his life and ministry.

Forty years ago the Oklahoma native moved to Clearfield, Utah, to become pastor of a 'new Southern Baptist church and found himself in the midst of a Mormon stronghold.

As Mormon missionaries tried to convert him to their faith, Smith started an intensive study of Mormon beliefs that prompted him to dedicate the rest of his career to exposing the theology of the cult.

Last year as he faced plans for retirement, Smith transferred his ministry to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, trusting it to continue his career objective.

One of Smith's first attempts to reveal beliefs of Mormonism was in 1954 when he and his late wife, Inez, began publishing a newspaper with a mimeograph machine from the basement of their home. "The Evangel" is now printed nine times a year with a circulation of 33,000 to all 50 states and 60 countries.

After being a pastor in Utah for 17 years, Smith began traveling across the nation to educate people about Mormonism. Smith said he quit counting his speaking engagements when he had spoken 6,000 times in 43 states.

In 1972, Smith returned to Marlow, Okla., and founded the non-profit Utah Missions Inc. The organization became the base of his ministry which now includes one of the most extensive libraries about Mormonism outside of Utah.

In addition to "The Evangel," Utah Missions Inc. publishes "The Inner Circle." The monthly newspaper for the ministry's supporters has a circulation of 7,800.

Informing people about Mormonism is Utah Missions' main objective, Smith said. Mormons gain 300,000 converts a year, but Smith is convinced that people who know what Mormons believe are not likely to join the cult.

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Smith, age 71, decided to transfer Utah Missions to the Home Mission Board because he realized few independent works outlive their founders.

"We appreciate John L. Smith's generous gift of Utah Missions," said Gary Leazer, director of the HMB interfaith witness department. "Utah Missions is one of the best resources for help to understand and witness effectively to Mormons."

Though Smith continues to speak and write about Mormonism, he retired from Utah Missions Inc. when the ministry became a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Home Mission Board.

Utah Missions Inc. will continue to operate from Marlow, where Mike Reynolds is director. Reynolds left Hilo, Hawaii, where he was pastor of Kinoole Baptist Church to work with Utah Missions Inc.

Reynolds said he became interested in studying other faiths while he was a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He developed an interest in Mormonism when a member of a Texas church where he was pastor became a Mormon. His interest peaked when the same thing happened in Hawaii.

Reynolds said Utah Missions will continue to educate people about Mormonism, which he described as organized, wealthy and powerful. Yet Reynolds emphasized the false doctrines of the Mormon church.

"I liken Mormonism to telling a lie, then having to tell another lie to cover it up," Reynolds said. "The oldest lie in the world is that you will become a god, and that is the lie of Mormons."

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

Church workers generally approve
improved Sunday school material By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
1/6/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--After six years of planning and development, improved Southern Baptist Sunday school literature introduced by the Sunday School Board in October 1991 has been subjected to its final test -- use in local churches.

Sunday school workers in various age groups and from several states reported general pleasure with the improvements during the first quarter of use.

Workers praised activities for preschoolers and children, spiritually grounded adult materials, colorfulness and general ease of use for teachers materials. Many, especially children's workers, said the enlarged size of the pupil pieces was a problem.

The unquestioned star, based on user comments, is the improved literature for youth. Optional WorData notebooks and the "Youth Sunday School Workers Notebook," along with a Bible study system that includes new Bible study cards represent major changes in youth materials.

The materials have sparked interest among youth at First Baptist Church of Tupelo, Miss., according to Bill Bustin, youth minister.

"The kids pay \$5 for the notebook. They love it. We even have some college students buying them," he said.

Bustin said youth like the notebook as a way to organize Bible study materials and are finding the journal, study guides and word dictionary useful.

After trying for two years to develop a regular, on-going workers meeting, Bustin said the new materials have stimulated worker interest in planning sessions.

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Laura Murphy, who teaches high school seniors at the Tupelo church, said she tries to prepare teens for "the roughness of the world.

"I feel like someone has gone to a lot of effort to apply the Bible materials to their situations. I haven't had to supplement any material this year," she said.

Tupelo teachers Gerald Pittman and Julia Bethay noted their own teens have initiated daily quiet times and are studying Sunday school materials during the week.

The notebook for youth workers is not flashy but functional, said Brenda Harris, education director at North Cleveland Baptist Church in Cleveland, Tenn.

Harris has been a writer for youth materials since 1986 and is Associational Sunday School Improvement Support Team director for the Bradley Baptist Association.

The workers notebook "has everything you need to know about youth Sunday school," Harris said. "It's an invaluable tool."

Children's and preschool materials provide a more organized plan for preparation, said Debra Neyland, minister to children at First Baptist Church of Smyrna, Ga.

"For a brand new teacher walking in to teach, it is all laid out for them," Neyland said. "The materials tell them step by step what to do."

Neyland said she is seeing an increase in department worker meetings because the material outlines what to do in planning sessions.

For the children and preschoolers, projects and activities are geared more on the right age level, Neyland said.

"I push for teachers to use a variety of basic and expanded plans. The basic meets our needs with children who can't be here every week," she said.

Children and preschool teachers at the Smyrna church expressed varying views on the improvements, but many noted the larger size of children's quarterlies is cumbersome and difficult for children to keep up with.

"The books are too big. They roll them up or fold them up and then we find them on the floor after Sunday school," said Margaret Sinclair, a third-grade department director at Smyrna.

Rita Ponder, director of a fourth-grade department at Smyrna, said independent Bible study activities -- called study stops -- have been useful for children who arrive early before a teacher starts a group activity or too late to enter in a group activity.

Preschool teacher materials now provide more material to help teachers with their own Bible study, said Joyce New, a teacher in a four-year-old class and preschool division leader at Colgate Baptist Church in Clarksville, Ind.

The new materials "have some of the most beautiful pictures" said June Knowland, who teaches three year olds at Colgate. "When I tell Bible stories, I like to have good pictures. They remember the stories because of the pictures," she said.

The teacher materials make planning easier with daily steps to planning, Knowland added.

Youth, young married and single adult classes at Graceland Baptist Church in Clarksville, Ind., made a transition this year to Life and Work Series materials after using curriculum from another publisher. Other adult classes are now using Bible Book Series materials.

The improved curriculum was attractive because it had a stronger scriptural base than the literature the church had been using, said Jim Carter, pastor for family ministry at Graceland.

"Youth teachers fell in love with the new material. Attendance doubled in a month after the change," said Jeff Barbour, Graceland's pastor of education and counseling.

In an informal survey of state Sunday school directors and associates during the December Sunday school annual planning meeting, respondents indicated general satisfaction with curriculum improvements among Sunday school workers in their states.

Of the 97 respondents, 83 percent said comments from users indicate they are satisfied or very satisfied with the attractiveness of the improved curriculum.

Quality of Bible content also was rated high with 81 percent saying people in their states were satisfied or very satisfied while 76 percent said users were satisfied or very satisfied with the quantity of Bible study material.

Price received the lowest rating with 51 percent saying that users in their state were satisfied or very satisfied with the price. In a discussion group during the meeting, respondents indicated concern with price was related to the new, optional WordData notebooks for youth rather than with curriculum costs in general. State leaders indicated church workers had not been able to plan adequately for the additional cost of an optional notebook.

Speaking to participants in an associational curriculum workshop in Cleveland, Tenn., Harry Piland, director of the board's Sunday school division, said early reception of the improvements has been good.

"We have heard a lot. Much of what we have heard has been encouraging. Some have said they don't like it, but we want to hear from them," Piland said.

He said some changes will be incorporated later based on suggestions from users. An adult workers notebook similar to the notebook available for youth workers has been proposed for April 1993. A color cover for Bible Book Series materials to replace the traditional white cover will appear in April 1992.

Piland said many publications were changed to a larger format to provide more Bible commentary while developing a more attractive appearance.

"We are listening to see how much dissatisfaction there is (with the size). We are looking at other ways to print and bind the book so that we can meet the request for a smaller format," he said.

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

South Carolina native takes
Home Mission Board post

Baptist Press
1/6/92

ATLANTA (BP)--David Winfrey, religion news reporter for a daily newspaper in Greenville, S.C., has been named associate director of news and information for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Since 1988 Winfrey has been a reporter for the Greenville Piedmont. His assignments have included crime and city government in addition to religion.

Winfrey, 25, succeeds Mark Wingfield who resigned in July to become news director of the Western Recorder, newsjournal of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Winfrey is a native of Lyman, S.C. He is a 1988 graduate of the University of Georgia with a major in journalism and minor in political science.

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