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Lewis Drummond announces
retirement; search begins

By Herb Hollinger

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary President Lewis A. Drummond announced his retirement, effective June 30, following a four-hour, closed meeting of the seminary trustees' executive committee at the Wake Forest, N.C., campus Jan. 30.

Drummond, 65, made his announcement after the closed session but trustees refused to disclose terms of his retirement package until the full 30-member trustee board, in a regular meeting, votes on it Mar. 10-11. The announcement came amid concern about a worsening financial condition and the placing of the school on probation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools last December.

But both Drummond and trustee chairman Roger Ellsworth, a Benton, Ill., pastor, denied there was discord among trustees leading to the retirement. One trustee, however, said privately some trustees urged Drummond to retire two years ago and again last year.

Drummond refused to divulge any retirement plans but Beeson School of Divinity at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., has indicated interest in Drummond teaching at the school.

In his prepared statement, given to the press following the special called executive committee meeting, Drummond acknowledged the seminary "has experienced difficult days and quite climatic change during these past four years (during his presidency)."

Drummond hinted at these difficulties in his decision to retire.

"In light of the task before SEBTS in rebuilding faculty, administration, student body, etc., it has become increasingly a clear conviction that I must leave that rebuilding to another. I have made my contribution, under God, in a turbulent, transition time. Now I lay down the mantle in retirement for another to pick up and move forward," Drummond said in his statement.

Drummond later said he felt the seminary is "meeting all the criteria" required in the notations by SACS which resulted in the probation.

"And our financial problems are essentially solved," he added. Declining enrollment and denominational financial support have been pressure points since Drummond took office April 1, 1988.

Ellsworth said Drummond voluntarily retired and had talked to him about it three or four times the past year.

The search for a new president began immediately with the 12-member executive committee, which will serve as the presidential search committee, returning to a closed session later that night.

"We have begun a process to work through," Ellsworth said. He would offer no speculation but, privately, several trustees said Paige Patterson likely would be the leading candidate. Patterson is president of Criswell College in Dallas and was high on the lists for agency executive vacancies at the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee and Baptist Sunday School Board.

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The seminary executive committee also spent time discussing steps the seminary is taking to meet notations by SACS which resulted in the probation. Administration officials said a financial urgency plan is now in effect and a self-study, with some 18 recommendations, is now being examined by faculty.

The seminary's second accrediting agency, Association of Theological Schools, will visit the campus Feb. 23-25. The seminary has been asked by ATS to show cause why the seminary should not be placed on probation.

Drummond came to Southeastern from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., where he was Billy Graham professor of evangelism and director of the Billy Graham Chair of Evangelism. He was pastor of churches in Alabama, Texas and Kentucky.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University, Birmingham, Ala.; bachelor of divinity and master of theology degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; and a doctor of philosophy degree from King's College, University of London, London, England.

He is married to the former Betty Rae Love of Dothan, Ala.

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Missionaries say Lebanon
is safest place to be

By Lydia Murphy

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Lebanon is the safest place in the world for Carol Ghattas.

It is so safe that she and her husband, Raouf, are determined to live there.

"I feel that when you are in the center of God's will, then that's the safest place on earth you can be," the Southern Baptist missionary appointee said.

For Raouf, the move to Lebanon is a homecoming of sorts. A nuclear engineer, he came to the United States 15 years ago. Ghattas, an Egyptian, is the first Arab national appointed to the Middle East by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. That is a trend he says is vital to the FMB's future.

"The Foreign Mission Board and Southern Baptists in general are more aware of the good use that ethnic groups can be on the mission field," Ghattas said.

The Ghattases will begin their work in Lebanon as soon as American missionaries are allowed back into the country. Two dozen Southern Baptist missionaries left the country in early 1987 when The U.S. State Department suspended passport privileges for Americans there. In the meantime, they will work with other missionaries assigned to Lebanon but based on the island of Cyprus. With the release of foreign hostages, the Ghattases say they are ready to head to Lebanon.

In fact, they have spent the last four years getting ready. Raouf has been pastor of the Arabic Baptist Church of Fort Worth since 1987. He started there while attending Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he earned a master of divinity degree in 1990. He is currently working on a doctor of ministry degree at Southwestern.

Ghattas came to the United States from Cairo in 1976. A job at the Comanche Peak nuclear power plant south of Fort Worth brought him to Texas in 1985. That's when he felt God's call into the ministry.

"The decision to change careers was not difficult, but to actually do the Lord's will was not easy," Ghattas says. "It was difficult to switch from the engineer Greek mind to the theological Hebrew mind." But Ghattas said his professors at Southwestern were helpful with his mental transition.

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Raised a Presbyterian, Ghattas became a Baptist after moving to Fort Worth because he considered Baptists of like mind and very missions oriented. It was through the recommendation of another nuclear engineer that Ghattas chose Southwestern.

Having served as a Southern Baptist two-year journeyman in Ivory Coast, Carol was familiar with other cultures and languages, including Arabic culture. She came to the seminary feeling called as a missionary to an Arab country and graduated with a master of divinity degree in 1991.

Carol attended the Arabic church to develop her ministry skills. She met Raouf and they were married in 1990.

The Ghattases anticipate culture shock, even for Raouf who has lived in the United States 17 years.

"I know what I'm going into," Raouf said. "The whole society is different and male-dominated. The most difficult part of all is to go back to a country with less freedom. We take our freedom for granted."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary

Polhill: early biblical love
helped commentary writer

By Pat Cole

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A groundbreaking new Baptist commentary on Acts is the product of a "simple biblicist" whose love for the Bible was instilled at an early age.

In fact, New Testament scholar John Polhill learned the Greek alphabet as a child before he could write the English alphabet. "I got a poor grade in penmanship in the first grade because I formed my letters like Greek letters," said Polhill, professor of New Testament at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

His ongoing love of Scripture helped him produce a commentary that combines traditional exegetical methods of interpretation with techniques borrowed from literary study. The commentary, released in January as part of Broadman's New American Commentary series, is the first traditionally formatted commentary on Acts to use the literary approach.

Polhill grew up around people who taught him to appreciate both the Bible and biblical scholarship. His "pre-school Greek instructor" was Hersey Davis, the late professor of New Testament at Southern Seminary. Davis was a friend and former professor of Polhill's father and attended the Louisville church where Polhill's father was pastor. Davis and his wife would often baby-sit the younger Polhill whose interest in biblical studies also was heavily influenced by his father.

"My father was quite a Greek scholar," he said. "After he died, I found a Greek New Testament and a copy of A.T. Robertson's big Greek grammar still opened on his desk."

Polhill's work with literary methods represents another step in his lifelong study of the Bible. Insights from the study of literature have only in recent years been consistently applied to biblical studies. The literary approach, he explained, considers matters like plot, narrative and genre. It "makes the theme and message stand out stronger," he said. "You see the work in its whole context. I think you get the overall message of the book and see how it develops."

Polhill, a Southern professor since 1969, has taught a course on Acts for the past 15 years. He was invited to write the volume by the series' former general editor Michael Smith, a Southern alumnus who had taken Polhill's Acts class. Polhill used a year-long sabbatical leave in 1990 to complete his most ambitious writing project. His first draft was written at a small desk at his home on numerous yellow legal pads.

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While much of the material in his commentary came from his class lectures, Polhill also incorporated recent articles, books and commentaries on Acts. His reading list included several German commentaries that have not been translated into English.

The commentary's editors encouraged him to discuss the multiple perspectives of interpreting Acts, he said: "I gave a full discussion of all the problems and the various viewpoints. My editors said, 'Don't avoid the difficulties. Deal with them.'" Nevertheless, Polhill noted his personal perspective is usually conservative and "that comes out in the commentary."

His material received minimal editing from the publisher, he said: "There wasn't a single editorial change made on anything except for style. There was no content altered at all."

The series' official doctrinal guidelines, the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message Statement and the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, posed no problem for him, he said: "If I were asked to write (for another series), I wouldn't do it any differently. My commentary represents where I am."

Even so, Polhill rejects "inerrancy" as an accurate description of his view of biblical inspiration. "In the broad Chicago (statement) sense, it fits me," he said. "A lot of people who describe themselves as inerrantists I am compatible with. The problem is that it has become a political watchword used for political ends in our context. I'll have no part of it."

Polhill would rather abide by a "simple biblicist" philosophy of inspiration and "just trust the text," he said.

Polhill's volume on Acts has caught the attention of reviewers, said David Dockery, general editor of the series. "Everybody who has read it has raved about it," he said. "He has done a masterful job." The commentary has been chosen as the Evangelical Book Club's main selection of the month for March -- a first for a Broadman book.

Broadman has enlisted another Southern Seminary faculty member, Gerald Borchert, to write the New American Commentary's volume on John. Two other writers -- Timothy George and Dockery -- were Southern faculty members when they accepted assignments for the New American series.

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(BP) photo available upon request from Southern Seminary

Professor offers suggestions
on reaching baby boomers By Breena Kent Paine & Debbie Moore

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--To reach baby boomers, churches will have to wake up to boomers' specific needs, Chuck Kelley told participants in a recent "Reaching Baby Boomers" conference at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

The seminary's associate professor of evangelism said ministers cannot expect boomers to attend church because of loyalty to their parents' religion, the nature of the denomination, a lack of anything to do, proximity or even the fact that it is Sunday.

Most boomers have different standards than their parents, Kelley said. Many would rather give money than their time because their time is precious to them. They look for quality in a worship service to justify making time to go. Whereas many boomer parents were committed to their religion "through thick and thin," boomers tend to evaluate the worth of the worship experience in deciding whether to be faithful.

Born between 1946 and 1964, boomers have enjoyed experience-oriented entertainment not related to the socio-economics of their families, mainly because of televisions, theme parks, and other easily accessible forms of amusement.

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Brought up on Christmas lists and family vacations with parents who "pour out everything" on their kids, boomers generally have great expectations for fulfillment in life. But, Kelley said, experts have predicted they will be the first generation who will have less than their parents at death.

Many boomers also suffer from dysfunctional family systems brought on by divorces, child abuse and other problems. An estimated 50 percent of their children will live with a single parent by the time they graduate from high school.

The rapid changes in society during the boomer era have caused them to be non-committed to personal relationships, churches or political parties, Kelley continued. "Baby boomers are frustrated with their options," he said, "and their expectations are not being met."

For many boomers, the most important room in the church is the nursery, said Kelley, a native of Beaumont, Texas. Having started their families later in life, they tend to be more protective of their children, checking to make sure the nursery colors are bright, the room is clean, the toys in good shape, the adult-child ratio is acceptable and interaction occurs between teachers and children.

Also, boomers are looking for marriage helps, such as workshops on divorce recovery, keeping marriages together, money management or finding joy in the midst of stress.

They prefer a transcendent form of worship, with dynamic preaching, dynamic music and dynamic people. "Boomers enjoy upbeat music," Kelley said, "and after listening to pros all week (on radio and TV), they expect the best."

Churches also need to provide answers to their questions, especially in areas where they are hurting.

"Baby boomer parents want a better life for their children but baby boomers want a better life for themselves," Kelley said. "They have been striking out in the area of personal relationships. If money could fix it, they could." Some congregations may want to connect boomers with Christian friends with common needs.

Also, churches need to "offer alternatives, not attacks, on something that's wrong," he continued. For example, a Halloween alternative could be a fall festival, with games for adults and children alike. If small churches have difficulty planning such an event, it could be done association-wide.

In addition, churches need to be flexible to meet the boomers' schedules. Because many boomers work on Sundays, some churches now offer Saturday night worship services as well as Sunday services.

"Boomers like to experience things," Kelley said. "Don't just talk about missions; offer them mission trips ... or other mission projects they can get involved in."

Furthermore, because many must dress up all week for their jobs, some may be looking for a church that allows informality in attire.

However, a church's first step to reach boomers is to educate its leaders to boomer needs through workshops and conferences. Second, a personal, church and community assessment should be done, asking questions about gifts, abilities, God's calling and likes and dislikes. Third, churches should offer alternatives such as a "come as you are" event or a Saturday evening service in addition to the church's normal activities.

Kelley advised against changing the central worship on Sunday mornings so those being reached by the current program will not be left out. However, "repackaging" could be done through Sunday school, an adjustment in preaching style, ruthless evaluation (eliminating what is not working) and a user-friendly mentality (signs to help newcomers find their way easily around the church).

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For example, a pastor could offer a series on Proverbs, focusing on how to reduce one's chance of being fired, increasing one's marketability for finding a better job, increasing one's chance of getting a raise and enjoying one's current job more.

But there are dangers which should be avoided as churches move to reach boomers. First, "Don't let your church be seduced into thinking baby boomers are the end of the church's trouble. Baby boomers are people. As a group, they're exciting, young, optimistic, but they have lots of problems as well," Kelley said.

Second, beware of the pace of acceleration; moving too fast could hurt some people, he said.

Third, churches may need to deal with new questions such as leadership roles for divorced people, marital problems, drug abuse or wife or child abuse.

Last, because boomers "don't like to hear doctrine," ministers may tend to say what they think boomers want to hear rather than offering biblical instruction.

The boomer generation makes population's line of history look "like a python that swallowed a pig," Kelley said, because they far outnumber their neighboring generations. As a result, "they've been pitched to commercially all their lives and are used to being the center of attention."

"Baby boomers are and will be the most educated generation in history," Kelley said, even though only 25 percent have graduated from college. "Because of a higher degree of education, there is a higher tolerance for the beliefs, lifestyles and cultures of others." However, if baby boomers are to be reached today, he said, churches must be willing to meet their needs.

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Home Mission Board offers
summer missions opportunities

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ATLANTA (BP)--March 10 is the deadline for applications for student missions and Innovators, two summer missions programs offered to college and seminary students by the Home Mission Board.

Serving in all 50 states, summer missionaries assist home missionaries. More than 1,500 positions are available in such outreach as resort ministry, church starting and language missions. These positions are in addition to opportunities offered by local Baptist Student Unions.

To qualify as a HMB summer missionary, a student must be enrolled in college or seminary, have completed one year of college, be a member of a Baptist church and have good health. Applicants will be placed in ministries according to need and ability.

During the 10-week term of service, travel, housing, meals and insurance are provided by the Home Mission Board or local supervisors. A \$60 per week stipend is provided for each summer missionary.

Innovators are college students who serve in short-term missions while working at secular jobs to support themselves. Although Innovators do not have to be Baptists, they must be committed to missions and endorsed by their local churches or Baptist Student Unions.

Innovators are responsible for securing secular jobs near their place of service, usually campgrounds, hotel or resort facilities. Participation in mission service is during off-hours and in conjunction with local ministries.

The term of service for Innovators is flexible. However, some employers prefer students to work from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Year-round work is possible, as are other short-term assignments during the year.

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While the Home Mission Board provides limited accident insurance, Innovators are responsible for all expenses, including travel, room and board. Local supervisors will aid in locating low-cost residences for Innovators.

To receive an application and sample list of available student missions and Innovator positions, call 1-800-HMB-VOLS.