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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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March 20, 1992

92-51

**Parks to retire in October  
as Foreign Board president**

By Robert O'Brien

BEDFORD, Texas (BP)--R. Keith Parks emerged from a spiritual retreat with trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board announcing he will retire as FMB president in October.

Seventy-eight trustees and 12 FMB executive staff met for the retreat March 19-20 after Parks asked trustees, in his address at their February meeting in Richmond, Va., to resolve the issue of his tenure.

Parks, a 38-year veteran of foreign missions who will turn 65 in October, asked trustees last August to allow him to serve until 1995 through the time of the board's sesquicentennial. The time, he said, would enable him to lay groundwork for his 10-point vision for global evangelization now under study by a trustee subcommittee.

Although he received public affirmations by trustees, Parks said in February that actions and undercurrents were occurring behind the scenes which undercut his role and leadership.

At the conclusion of the retreat, Parks said he felt God was leading him to retire. Parks will announce his decision officially at the trustees' meeting April 6-8 in Clemson, S.C. At that time, trustees will decide how long he will continue to carry his full responsibilities as president and the process for seeking a successor.

A joint statement released by Parks and trustees at a press conference said trustees affirmed Parks and repeatedly requested he continue his leadership. It said Parks alone made the decision that he retire.

"The trustees expressed that they felt, and still feel, a strong desire to the contrary," the statement said. "They emphatically urged that Dr. Parks continue his leadership role, but submitted to his sense of God's leadership."

The statement, read to the press by FMB trustee chairman Bill Hancock of Louisville, Ky., acknowledged Parks' "superior leadership as president since 1980" and expressed trustee "concern for continuity in the ongoing mission enterprise."

It also said "trustees affirmed to the missionaries, (FMB) staff and Southern Baptists their commitment to the historic principles which have characteristically guided Southern Baptist foreign mission work."

In a question-and-answer time with reporters, Parks said his decision to retire in 1992, rather than in 1995, was made after he arrived at the retreat, although he had considered making it at the board's February meeting.

Parks said his decision became clear finally during a spiritual emphasis led by Henry Blackaby, whom trustees invited to set the spiritual tone for their meeting with Parks and his staff. Blackaby, director of prayer and spiritual awakening at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, commended the retreat participants for their openness to the leading of God's spirit.

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Asked to reconcile his decision to retire with his earlier feeling God was leading him to stay until 1995, Parks said: "In my own mind I've tried to reconcile that. Since that time there has not come the sense of certainty and affirmation that what I felt could be done then actually can be carried out."

Parks said he could sense "no apparent way" for trustees to make a commitment to him through 1995. "If I'd stayed, I think it would have ... strung out the indefiniteness of tenure to the point that it would have created this uneasiness that has plagued all of us."

In a later interview, he explained that, although trustees had affirmed him during the retreat, he "never did get the feeling it (his tenure as president) would not come up again." He said a motion was made during the retreat to affirm him until then but it remained "open ended."

"In the interest of resolving the continuing uncertainty among missionaries, and among Southern Baptists, it's really just going to be better to go ahead and make the transition as soon as possible. I think my staying would have continued that uncertainty. We don't need continuing uncertainty."

Trustees, asked later to respond to that reaction by Parks, reiterated the joint statement from Parks and trustees indicated their support for Parks' leadership.

Parks admitted some of the philosophical differences he has with trustees which he expressed in his February address still remain, such as the feeling there has been a shift in the board's basic approach to missions. But he said he felt during the retreat many of the trustees were beginning to understand his feelings and trying to take steps to move in the right direction.

Relationships between Parks and the trustees had become tense since the board's decision in October to remove \$365,000 budgeted for 1992 for the international Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, which many trustees consider to be "liberal."

Parks said in his February address he disagreed with the approach of using money to enforce theological conformity on those who receive Baptist money overseas.

Hancock said at the press conference he feels trustees and staff had pushed that issue behind them and were moving together in unity.

However, Parks said he doesn't feel his style of leadership matches what some trustees would expect and he doesn't exert control over the theological positions of staff and missionaries that some desire.

Trustee Joel Gregory of Texas said in an interview later he feels trustees have confidence in staff and missionaries and no effort will be made to get them to sign theological statements.

Hancock said trustees came to the retreat to demonstrate unity and togetherness and had affirmed Parks' leadership. But, he said, they had to honor his feeling God was leading him in another direction.

Asked if he would continue missions through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Parks said he will continue to follow his calling to missions wherever God leads but he's not sure where that will be. The CBF is an organization of Southern Baptist churches formed in protest to the conservative majority in the Southern Baptist controversy.

On the question of philosophical differences, Hancock noted boards of trustees will have differences with anyone in the role of president and they must work together under God's leadership.

Churches need preachers to listen,  
Lloyd Ogilvie tells GGBTS students By Cameron Grabtree

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Preachers must start listening more and talking less to help renew churches today, one of America's premiere pulpiteers told students and faculty at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary.

"My whole life was transformed when I realized the first role of the preacher is to listen," Lloyd John Ogilvie said. "Open your heart to listen and stop the one-way monologue in your preaching."

Ogilvie, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Hollywood, Calif., and nationally known TV minister, delivered Golden Gate's annual Hester Lectureship on Preaching March 17-19.

After listening to the needs of people, preachers must take time to hear God reveal the message that is needed, Ogilvie said. Sermons should take about a year to become properly nurtured and anointed by God's grace and power, he said.

"Worship should be the most exciting thing that happens in the life of God's people," he stated. "Preach as if never to preach again. Let them know right from the start they are in for exciting communication that will change their lives."

Ogilvie suggested a church give their pastor prolonged study leave each year to prepare for an in-depth season of preaching. Without it written into a contract, he urged, a pastor shouldn't accept a call to a church.

"God calls us to preach with all the intentionality and inspiration of our time," Ogilvie stressed. "It is absolutely imperative to be able to spend time in solitary liberation with him."

Preachers also must display the right amount of vulnerability and audacity from the pulpit, he said.

"Vulnerability is a lost art in the leadership of churches in our time," Ogilvie noted. It only comes, he indicated, from close reckoning with other Christians.

"The eccentric overage of leaders who cause embarrassment to the church today occurs because there is too little accountability," he said. Ogilvie suggested meeting with other Christians at least monthly to discuss each other's personal walk with God and what each individual is doing to fulfill God's purpose.

Preaching also demands audacity, he said, and too often preachers are afraid to offend people because of job insecurity or fear of failure.

"We've raised up a very cautious group of clergy in our society," Ogilvie said. "The tragedy of American churches is that the clergy has become the 'gigolo' of the people of God. We have become the 'lovers' of people who won't love each other or themselves."

Preachers, however, should call people to an unreserved commitment to Christ, to an infilling of God's Spirit, a commitment to evangelism and missions, and ministry involvement in at least one of the tragedies of our day, Ogilvie said.

Above all, he said, preachers must maintain humility and a sense of service as they demand the full gospel from the people of God.

"Those called into the ministry of Jesus Christ are called into servanthood," he told Golden Gate students. "You cannot take on the multiplicities of the human condition apart from a servant's heart."

Bill allowing gambling  
on U.S. ships approved

By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP)--President George Bush has signed into law a bill allowing gambling on United States cruise ships for the first time.

The provision, passed as part of a bill establishing a marine sanctuary off the Texas coast, allows cruise ships flying the U.S. flag to have gambling on board if the vessel's principal source of income is not gaming. Cruise ships operating under foreign flags in U.S. waters already are allowed to have gambling on board.

States still will be able to prohibit gambling on cruise ships sailing from ports on their coast.

The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission decried the spread of gambling while supporters of the bill said it was a step toward fair play and stimulation of the economy.

"The fact that this legislation could pass so easily without dissent demonstrates how far our society has gone to sanction gambling without regard for the moral implications of this enterprise," said James A. Smith, CLC director of government relations.

The bill passed both the House of Representatives and Senate by voice vote.

"The only thing this law does is allow Americans to do what foreign ships have been doing for decades," Rep. Gene Taylor, D.-Miss., said in a written statement. "This is solely a jobs issue, a fairness issue."

The bill will create new jobs in such areas as ship building, ship operation, tourism and travel as well as generate tax revenue, said Taylor, chief sponsor of the legislation.

More than 120 cruise ships operate from U.S. ports, but only two fly the American flag. One set of witnesses told a House of Representatives subcommittee they hope to begin overnight ship service between San Francisco and Los Angeles for 2,500 passengers but must have gambling on board to succeed.

President Bush signed the legislation March 9. The bill, which established the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, passed the Senate just before adjournment of the 1991 session of Congress. The House approved the bill, H.R. 3866, Jan. 28.

Prior to inclusion in the marine sanctuary legislation, the cruise-ship gambling provision had passed the House in November as both a free-standing bill and part of a crime bill. The crime bill faltered in the Senate, which placed the cruise-ship gambling language in the marine sanctuary measure prior to adjournment for 1991.

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Crossover Indianapolis volunteers  
asked to register by April 15

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press  
3/20/92

ATLANTA (BP)--As the April 15 tax deadline approaches, Alvin Reid would like for Southern Baptists to keep another deadline in mind.

Mid-April is when registration is needed for people who plan to participate in Crossover Indianapolis, said Reid, director of evangelism for the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana.

Crossover Indianapolis is the evangelistic thrust to precede the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Indianapolis June 9-11. Last year's Crossover activities in Atlanta resulted in 203 professions of faith.

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This year events will include door-to-door gospel presentations and an evangelistic rally Saturday, June 6. Church starting efforts such as telephone surveys and Backyard Bible Clubs will precede and follow the convention.

On Tuesday, June 2, volunteers will be trained to share their faith in settings such as parks and busy pedestrian areas. The volunteers will use skills such as mime, singing and street preaching to witness in high traffic areas June 3-5.

An added dimension to this year's Crossover activities will be four block parties at Indianapolis area churches June 6. The parties will include food, entertainment and gospel presentations.

"Our state has really picked up the ball on this," Reid said. He noted that more than 50 of 70 churches in the Metropolitan Baptist Association of Central Indiana plan to participate in the activities.

Bill Cox, volunteer and local coordinator of Crossover Indianapolis, said several hundred people from Indiana already have committed to being part of Crossover Indianapolis. He said the greatest need now is for people who will attend the convention to come early to participate.

Freddie Gage, evangelist from Euliss, Texas, said, "A lot of messengers come to the convention to shop and meet old friends. If we would come to go soul-winning, it would spill over into our churches."

Gage and James Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church in Snellville, Ga., are co-chairman of Crossover Indianapolis.

During a rally in Indianapolis in March, Merritt said this pre-convention effort could easily surpass other efforts.

Merritt said three things contribute to his prediction: People in Indiana are open to the gospel, Indiana Southern Baptists have a great desire to see God work and "the devil has fought this Crossover more than any other."

Crossover participants are asked to register by mid-April because assignments will be made later in the month. Participants will be notified of their assignments in May. People may register for Crossover Indianapolis after April 15 but coordinators would prefer making the assignments early.

Crossover volunteers may register by sending their names, addresses, telephone numbers and church names to the Metropolitan Baptist Association of Central Indiana, 952 N. Pennsylvania Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46204. They also should indicate which part of Crossover Indianapolis interests them. For more information, call the associational office at (317) 636-7121.

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Churches find evangelism coordinator  
facilitates comprehensive program By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press  
3/20/92

ATLANTA (BP)--Rather than assuming that evangelism is taking place, Southern Baptist churches are assigning a coordinator to make sure evangelism happens.

Keith Walker, Home Mission Board associate director of evangelism and church growth, surveyed 1,200 churches last year and found more than 500 had a minister of evangelism.

"Without someone with that particular responsibility, a comprehensive program for evangelism generally does not take place," Walker said.

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Walker has organized a network of ministers of evangelism that will have its first meeting during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Indianapolis. Walker said the June 10 breakfast is open to people who have responsibility for their church's evangelism program whether they are a paid staff member or laity.

For more information about the group or to register for the meeting, contact Walker at 1350 Spring Street NW, Atlanta, Ga. 30367-5601 or (404) 898-7736.

A number of Southern Baptist churches combine staff evangelism duties with other areas of responsibility. For example, David Rice is minister of evangelism and single adults at Bell Shoals Baptist Church in Brandon, Fla. The church has had someone in that position for only 16 months.

Rice said his evangelism responsibilities are two-fold. First, he develops and oversees programs such as Continuing Witness Training for church members. Secondly, he develops new strategies for evangelism, such as community cook-outs and apartment ministries.

Layman Bobby Heath coordinates the evangelism program for Adamsville Baptist Church in Goldsboro, N.C.

Heath receives all of the church's prospect cards and assigns them to people trained in Evangelism Explosion, another tool to equip lay people to share their faith. For prospects who make a profession of faith, Heath makes sure they receive a Survival Kit for discipleship training.

Heath has also enlisted prayer teams for the evangelistic effort and phone teams to contact prospects. This spring the church did a survey of neighborhoods, including seven mobile home parks where church members led 48 people to make professions of faith.

Heath said he is sold on the need for personal visits because of his experience. "I was saved in my home on a Tuesday night because somebody cared enough to come knock on my door," Heath said.

Rice said one drawback to having a paid evangelism coordinator is that church members may think the church has a "hired gun" to relieve them of responsibility for evangelism.

"I'm not hired to do the work of an evangelist," Rice said. "That is a mandate and responsibility all of us have."

Walt DeJager, minister of evangelism at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Duluth, Ga., said one of his main responsibilities is reminding fellow church staff members that evangelism should be an aspect of everything they do.

Sunday school has long been called the church's outreach arm and Rice and DeJager both stress the need for Sunday school leaders to be trained in sharing their faith.

Debby Murrell, associate minister in adults and evangelism at First Baptist Church of Taylors, S.C., said, "I let Sunday school be my hub and everything else spin off that."

She also stresses "creative ministry programming" such as marriage readiness classes, welcome ministries to the community's newcomers, seminars for people who are unemployed and a support group for people whose spouse is unemployed.

"We try to find a need and meet it, find a hurt and heal it," Murrell said.

One reason Rice and DeJager said an evangelism coordinator is important is that people do not habitually attend church or revival meetings like they once did.

"Evangelism in the 1990s is much more relational," Rice said. "The day of putting an ad in the paper and saying 'ya'll come' won't work anymore."

Dejager's suburban Atlanta church is in an ideal location to capitalize on the community's growth; it's visible from a busy interstate and next to a Wal-Mart. Yet Dejager said, "You still have to do your work if you expect people to come."

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New Orleans seminary begins  
baccalaureate degree program

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press  
3/20/92

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Having received unanimous approval from its board of trustees, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary will add two baccalaureate degree programs to existing baccalaureate-level studies this fall. Baccalaureate work continues to be restricted to students 25 years old and older.

The objective of the seminary regarding undergraduate theological education, as set forth in The Organizational Manual of the Southern Baptist Convention, is as follows: "To provide for students who have at least the equivalent of high school education biblical, theological, historical, and practical studies, designed to develop ministerial competencies in such roles as pastor, minister of education, or minister of church music, leading to certificates, diplomas, or degrees."

Offering baccalaureate-level work is not a new development at New Orleans Seminary. "We have offered baccalaureate-level classes through our three associate degree programs since 1980," said Jimmy Dukes, registrar and director of the seminary's school of Christian training. "And, like the other five SBC seminaries, we have offered undergraduate study for many years to students who did not hold a baccalaureate degree," Dukes said.

In 1991 the NOBTS faculty and trustees approved a bachelor's equivalency program, allowing students 25 and older with no bachelor's degree to gain its equivalent through credit earned at the seminary and then proceed into master's-level work. This equivalency program was the first step in the movement toward offering a bachelor's degree.

"Now we are applying the bachelor's degree nomenclature on what we have been in the process of offering for the past 12 years," Dukes said. "We're filling that void between associate's- and master's-level work for older, non-traditional students who are involved in ministry."

The 126 credit-hour program is not designed for young students coming straight out of high school, Dukes said. And it is not designed to compete with established Baptist colleges, said seminary President Landrum P. Leavell II. "This will be designed primarily for those people already in the pastorate who want to further their education but lack a baccalaureate degree," Leavell said.

"Even if a student is in that 25 to 26 age range, we recommend that he go to college instead of coming here if he is able to attend college. We are not encouraging those already enrolled in Baptist colleges to attend here," Dukes emphasized.

"We are looking for those students who are not able to work on a bachelor's degree in a traditional college setting because of money, family, etc., but who need and want a college background to prepare themselves for ministry," Dukes said. "The educational level in Southern Baptist churches has risen dramatically in recent years, so pastors and other staff members of our churches need more educational preparation, especially theological training.

"It is neither our motivation nor our desire to compete with the colleges," he added. "But there are literally thousands of pastors and staff members of Southern Baptist churches who do not have college backgrounds. It is that group of people we are trying to reach and whose needs we seek to meet."

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The proposal for a baccalaureate degree program, with bachelor of arts and bachelor of general studies degrees available, will be the first of its kind offered by any Southern Baptist seminary and will be available during the coming fall term, beginning Aug. 25, 1992, contingent on approval of the curriculum by the seminary's academic affairs committee and faculty this spring. The seminary currently offers accredited associate's, master's and doctoral degree programs.

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ADDITION: In the (BP) story titled "Florida Baptist Witness adds eternal dimension," dated 3/13/92, please add the following two paragraphs at the end:

The Ohio Baptist Messenger has been carrying the plan of salvation twice a year for the past four years, said Theo Sommerkamp, editor of the newsjournal of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio.

By carrying the plan of salvation, Sommerkamp said the paper seeks to provide church members with one added reminder of and access to the plan of salvation "so they will be able to explain it to other people."

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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Also available upon request:

-- First-person piece on the "other victims of sexual abuse."