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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #75C
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President:
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420.17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
NASHVILLE Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

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92-66

'Salt' and 'light' needed
on AIDS, sexuality, Land says

By Tom Strode

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (BP)--Sexuality and AIDS are issues on which Christians need to be "salt" and "light," the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's executive director recently told more than 200 students at the College of William and Mary.

Speaking to his second student audience in two nights on the campus of the country's second oldest college, Richard D. Land told an Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship meeting Christians must be "salt" by working for laws against immoral behavior and be "light" by sharing the truth and love of Jesus in order to change a person's heart.

While AIDS increasingly is becoming a heterosexual problem in the United States, Christians need to "maintain the biblical standard" on homosexuality, Land said.

"Romans chapter 1 says homosexuality is a particularly unnatural sin," he said. "God hates homosexuality. God loves homosexuals."

"I believe we have to be salt; we have to speak out against homosexuality. We must resist the attempts to make it a perfectly acceptable alternative lifestyle. We must resist attempts to provide the kind of civil rights protection for homosexuals that people have because of their ethnicity or because of the fact of their sex.

"But at the same time, we have to be light," Land said. "We have to express love and concern for homosexuals and others who have AIDS. What better way for us to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ than for us to be involved in seeking to minister to these people and to show them we love them by caring for them and taking care of them and touching them ... when they are increasingly becoming the lepers of the 20th century."

While Christians need to be salt by seeking to prevent pornography from polluting society, they must be light by sharing the truth about sexuality, Land said.

"That means we need to talk to the nation and to the young people and to our children about why it is that God created us sexual beings," he said. "God is not against sex. He created it to bring about the most loving, caring, giving union two human beings could know in this life. If you think God is against sex, you need to get yourself a good, modern translation of the Song of Solomon and read it. Sex isn't dirty; sex is holy.

"The Apostle Paul, when he was inspired by the Holy Spirit, told us there is no such thing as casual sex. He said sexual sin was the worst kind of sin because you become part of every person with whom you engage in sexual activity. You see, that's why God created sex -- to make of two people one person. ... Paul tells the Corinthians a person who has not had sexual intercourse is different from a person who has, and a person who has had sex with one person is a fundamentally different person from a person who has had sex with 10 or more people.

"A Christian sexual lifestyle is a monogamous relationship between one man and one woman within the confines of holy matrimony," Land said. "That means no premarital, extramarital or postmarital or homosexual or lesbian sex. And if we don't tell our young people that, if we don't tell our children that, who is?"

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April 2 Land spoke on the sanctity of human life to 35 people from two William and Mary organizations, the Baptist Student Union and Students for Alternatives to Abortion.

Americans are "destined to live in a society in which virtually anything can be done to a human being" unless there is a radical reaffirmation of the sanctity of life, he said. There will be tremendous pressure to ration or withhold health care in a country where grandparents outnumber grandchildren, Land said.

"The sad and tragic irony is that many people in my generation who have aborted their own children because they considered them too expensive, they considered them too inconvenient, they considered them too embarrassing or they considered them too ill will themselves die before their natural time because health care will be withheld from them because their children and their grandchildren considered them to be too expensive, too inconvenient, too embarrassing or too ill to be allowed to continue to live," Land said. "And when that happens, we shouldn't be shocked, because the Apostle Paul has told us, 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked; whatever you sow, that shall you also reap.'

"My generation is going to get a taste of it but your generation is going to get a heavy dose of what it means to honor your father and your mother."

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15 Europe missionaries resign;
possibility of others foreseen

By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press
4/15/92

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The recent resignations of 15 Southern Baptist missionaries in Europe have raised new questions among some about whether turmoil in the Foreign Mission Board's work in the region could cause still more missionary departures.

The 15 Europe resignations were among 40 recently submitted by missionaries worldwide.

"Some people are looking at their lives and whether they need to stay in missions or not," said Tom Warrington, FMB associate area director for Europe. "Suddenly they get word that the area director and vice president and president have resigned or retired and that makes their decision for them. That kicks them right over the edge. It won't surprise me if we get more of them. I think it will come."

Warrington referred to the early retirements of FMB Europe vice president Isam Ballenger and area director Keith Parker in protest of FMB trustee actions -- particularly the defunding of the Baptist seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland -- and to the announced retirement of board President R. Keith Parks.

Missionaries resign for many reasons -- personal illnesses, needs of their children or of families back home, frustration with difficulties living abroad, unmet expectations of missionary service, a sense of God's leading elsewhere and greater career mobility among the "baby boom" generation.

Missionary resignations went up and down from 1980-90, averaging 132 or 3.7 percent of the missionary force each year but rose annually from 1985-89 before dropping in 1990. The combination of fewer missionary appointments and slightly higher rates of resignations and retirements later in the decade concerned board mission planners.

However, the overall attrition rate of 3.8 percent from missionary resignations and deaths at the beginning of the '90s was still below most other missionary-sending agencies.

Missionary administrator John Deal, who himself has resigned in disagreement with trustee or board actions, said he doubts the recent spate of resignations in Europe is a direct result of the mission board's troubles.

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"I think the majority of these had other reasons," he said. "I don't think any of the others I know about really decided to resign because of the controversy. Many of them were quite upset and disturbed about it but I think many of them have genuine reasons other than this."

Board trustee Steve Hardy, chairman of the trustee committee overseeing Europe, said he had "questioned the staff very carefully concerning these resignations. The Deals are the only couple who are clearly resigning because of the controversy. At least two of the couples are resigning due to medical or personal situations that need to be resolved, and they have indicated that when those are, they would want to be reappointed to return to Europe. I'm not greatly concerned about the resignations at this time."

Of the 15 most recent Europe resignations, only Deal and his wife, Revonda, 25-year veterans of foreign mission work, publicly stated they were resigning because of disagreements. They join missionaries Charles "T" and Kathie Thomas in Romania who earlier announced their resignations for similar reasons.

"We're just tired of all that's going on" at the Foreign Mission Board and in Europe missions, said Deal, 55, of Dothan, Ala. "Good energies are being spent on other things. We feel like what we're doing is really not accomplishing what we'd like to do."

Deal manages the field office for Southern Baptist mission work in Europe, based in Thalwil, Switzerland. From 1987-91 he was the board's associate director for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, based at FMB offices in Richmond, Va. Before that, the Deals spent nearly two decades in Singapore, Malaysia and Jordan. Their resignations take effect Aug. 1.

"We hated to resign, but it's done," said Deal. "It really is time -- time for us, anyhow. It's a difficult thing when people have to leave. It's not a thing lightly done. I just think the direction (of the board) has changed from what I would like to move in. You either stay and try to change it or honestly move on . . . I don't know how (FMB turmoil) affects other areas; I just know what it's done here. Traditionally we've worked in a partnership way with these people over here. We feel like that's not the future."

In a letter to about 150 friends and colleagues, Deal spoke of his growing discouragement with administrative and philosophical changes during his years in Richmond. He and his wife returned abroad as missionaries last year only to find themselves in the midst of greater tensions after FMB trustees defunded the Ruschlikon seminary last October. The defunding action drew protests from Baptists across Europe.

"The bomb hit Ruschlikon but the fallout has spread out into Europe," Deal observed. "Many seem to think that defunding (the seminary) was just a simple matter and would soon be over but it was not. It just seemed to kind of ripple in all directions."

FMB trustees repeatedly have insisted they want to continue cooperation with the European Baptist Federation. They also stress they simply want to work with evangelistic, Bible-believing Baptists in Europe and decrease ties with people or groups they feel are theologically liberal -- such as some faculty members at the Ruschlikon seminary.

Deal has been mentioned as a possible candidate for directing Europe mission efforts of the moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. But he said he hasn't been contacted by the fellowship and isn't interested in the job. The Deals are interested, however, in continuing to be missionaries in Europe -- either with the Fellowship or some other group.

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Missionaries in Europe have been "persevering under extensive stress during these early months of 1992," wrote Winston Crawley, interim vice president for Europe, in his monthly report for March. The early retirements of Ballenger and Parker, he reported, "brought a strong sense of apprehension to a large number of mission members. Some have questioned their future with the Foreign Mission Board in light of recent events. In spite of this stress, the missionaries continue to persevere in their daily tasks of ministry. They continue to share the gospel throughout the European continent and rejoice in the blessings the Lord gives on a daily basis."

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**Humor a good companion to
ministry, professors say**

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
4/15/92

SAN FRANCISCO (BP)--Humor can play several roles in ministry, from relieving stress to opening doors for sharing the gospel, two professors told chaplains attending Home Mission Board sponsored conferences.

"I really believe that God has given us more humor than we're using," said Jack McEwen, pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tenn., and a professor of psychology at Chattanooga Technical Community College. "We have a lot of people who laugh who don't quite think they ought to be laughing as a minister."

McEwen and Thom Meigs, professor of pastoral care at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., taught six conferences for chaplains and pastoral counselors on effective uses of humor in ministry. More than 240 people attended the six conferences, held at each of the Southern Baptist Convention's seminaries.

Physiologically, God's gift of laughter is good for the body, Meigs said. "It's a form of internal jogging."

McEwen, who spoke at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., agreed. He said the release of endorphins during laughter provides a high that can last as long as 45 minutes without the corresponding low associated with caffeine or other drugs. Psychologically, humor offers a good relief from stress, Meigs said.

"Sometimes what humor is able to do is diffuse the power of crises that we experience," he said. "You cannot be stressed and laugh at the same time."

When ministering to someone after a death, Meigs said when it is appropriate he will encourage those who are grieving to talk about enjoyable memories of the deceased, including funny moments.

"Laughter gives us the ability to distance ourselves for a while from those things that pain us the most," he said.

McEwen notes, however, ministers must be careful in using humor to be certain that it will not offend.

During sermons or speeches, McEwen said, humor can improve a speaker's effectiveness. "It will recapture the attention of the audience as well as emphasize the point you are making."

Jesus provided several examples of humor in ministry through his stories that pointed out absurdities in the teachings of Jewish leaders, McEwen said.

Christians often fail to see Jesus as humorous because they are focused on the tragedy of the cross, McEwen said. Nevertheless, about 30 passages of Jesus' teachings are meant to be funny, according to the book, "The Humor of Christ," by Elton Trublood.

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Examples of Jesus' humor include his analogy of trying to remove a speck from someone's eye while having a log in your own, according to Trublood's book.

Humor used in the pulpit should demonstrate a point the sermon was already making, McEwen said. "Don't build points around the stories."

McEwen said pastors who are known to be funny often get opportunities to share the gospel when they are invited to speak before civic groups or other audiences.

"They know that the humor is going to be clean," he said. "I tell them the price of that is that I am going to let the audience know that I am a minister."

Meigs said a combination of theology with humor will ultimately depend on your view of God.

"Do you think he wants you to enjoy?" he asked. "If so, where does a sense of humor and the ability to laugh fit into that?"

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Baptist religious educators
take look at 'empowerment'

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
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INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--A past, present and future look at "empowerment" will be the focus of the 37th annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association June 7-8.

The SBREA, which will meet at Adam's Mark Hotel in Indianapolis, is among several annual meetings of ministry-oriented organizations prior to the June 9-11 Southern Baptist Convention in the Hoosier Dome.

"Empowerment -- Learning from the Past, Ministering in the Present and Forging the Future" will be the theme of the meeting. Bill Gambrell, minister of education at First Baptist Church in Jackson, Miss., is the current SBREA president.

Keener Pharr, who has been in religious education work since 1946, will speak on the "past" aspect of empowerment during the meeting's opening session at 2 p.m. Sunday, June 7. "We asked him to address, What would he say to young educators today?" Gambrell said. "What has empowered his ministry over the years? What has he learned? What would he change? What would he continue to do?"

Pharr, who received SBREA's distinguished leader award last year, is president of Church Growth Priorities, Inc., in Signal Mountain, Tenn. He was director of the Florida Baptist Convention's education division from 1969-81 and field services director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday school department 1959-69.

Ken Hemphill, pastor of First Baptist Church in Norfolk, Va., will speak on the "present" aspect of empowerment at 6:45 p.m. June 7. Hemphill has been elected to the new position of director of church growth jointly related to the Sunday School Board and Home Mission Board. Hemphill has been asked to discuss "how they do ministry today" at the Norfolk church, "what empowers his ministry and the ministry of his staff," Gambrell said. The session will include a panel discussion with other staffers from the church.

The Sunday evening session will conclude with a testimony by Jimmy Dunn, minister of education at First Baptist Church in Nashville, of people who empower his ministry there, a prayer of thanksgiving and a drama based on the song, "Thank You Lord."

"Empowerment groups" on such religious education emphases as family ministry, spiritual gifts, reaching non-Christians with Bible study and "How To Do Church with Folks Who Don't Want To Do Church Like We Used To Do Church" will be offered during the 8:30 a.m. session Monday, June 8.

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Art Criscoe, director of management of the Sunday School Board discipleship training department's support section, will speak on the "future" aspect of empowerment during the 2 p.m. session June 8. Criscoe will explore the question, "How will we be empowered for ministry in the years ahead?" Gambrell said.

Perry Langston, who died in February, will be honored posthumously with SBREA's distinguished leader award. Langston was professor of religious education at Campbell University in Buies Creek, N.C., from 1950 until retirement in 1986. The son of Southern Baptist missionaries to Brazil, Langston became a paraplegic in World War II combat as an infantry company commander.

SBREA will hold a first-ever breakfast for state and regional religious education association presidents June 8.

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Southern Baptist Religious Education Association
Annual Meeting
June 7-8, 1992
Adam's Mark Hotel, Indianapolis
Theme: Empowerment -- Learning from the Past,
Ministering in the Present, and Forging the Future

Sunday afternoon, June 7

- 1:00 Registration opens
- 2:00 Empowerment: Learning from the Past -- Keener Pharr, president, Church Growth Priorities, Inc., Signal Mountain, Tenn.
- 4:30 Adjourn

Sunday evening, June 7

- 6:45 Empowerment: Ministering in the Present -- Ken Hemphill, pastor, First Baptist Church, Norfolk, Va.
(Dialogue with Hemphill and education staff members to follow presentation.)
- 8:30 Adjourn
- 9:00 Fellowship

Monday morning, June 8

- 7:30 New Member Breakfast
Breakfast for state and regional Religious Education Association presidents
- 8:30 Morning session
- 9:00 Empowerment groups
- 10:00 Fellowship Break
- 10:30 Empowerment groups
- 11:45 SBREA luncheon -- Ken Smith, Ken Smith Ministries, Inc., Gainesville, Fla.

Monday afternoon, June 8

- 2:00 Empowerment: Forging the Future -- Art Criscoe, director of management, support section, discipleship training department, Sunday School Board, Nashville
- 5:00 Adjourn

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Kazakh believer says
'it's time to share Word'

By Beth Sammons

Baptist Press
4/15/92

ALMA-ATA, Kazakhstan (BP)--"God is not lagging behind in Central Asia," said "Paul," a young Kazakh believer in Christ. "It's not us who started this. It's all God's grace."

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It was 1990 in the sprawling Soviet Central Asian republic of Kazakhstan, home to more than 16 million people. For nearly 70 years any flicker of Christian witness had been doused by stern communist rule.

"They prevented me from thinking independently," he recalled. "(My) questions were endless. I am a dreamer, always thinking about things. I started thinking about creation. How can something come from nothing? How did this happen? Again I had no answers. But I didn't give up."

Paul was not alone. He tells how God worked in his life and the lives of many other Kazakhs before they ever met a Christian.

"It was like someone was talking to me. God was giving me questions to think about -- questions central to my life," he said. "God spoke to me for the first time . . . He said, 'I've known you from the time you were born -- every moment of your life, but I want you to know me.'"

The event was important to Paul but over the next two months he forgot about it. He returned to being the same person he was before. Then one day he saw a TV advertisement about an opportunity for English translators at the upcoming Kazakh-American Festival.

Paul was a "natural" to work in the festival, which brought many American Christians to Kazakhstan in the summer of 1991. "Many things in my life didn't happen by chance," Paul said. "For example, learning English was very easy -- my favorite thing to do. If I hadn't learned English I wouldn't have been able to help with this cultural exchange."

His fluency in English qualified him for a translation job with the festival. One of the Christians Paul worked with during the cultural exchange gave him a Bible and copy of the "Four Spiritual Laws" tract outlining the plan of Christian salvation.

"He gave me a Russian/English Bible and we studied the Four Spiritual Laws together," Paul said. "I prayed but I wasn't ready at that time. Gradually I realized I really need Christ. When I prayed again it was a different prayer."

Not only did the experience change Paul; he has seen the love of Christ change his family too. In December his wife also prayed to receive Christ.

Paul believes his testimony is an example of how God prepares the hearts and minds of those who have never heard of him.

"We have nothing to boast about," he said. "Even before we met any Christians God had been working in us who had never heard or known anything about him. The time came for God to start working with us."

Now Paul is concerned for his people and for the hurt they have experienced the last 70 years. He is anxious for others to hear the answers he has found in God.

"I believe it's God who gives me strength to stand up in the midst of the hurt," Paul said. "I can't do it without him. It's time to bring Kazakhs the Word. (Jesus Christ) is already among them and already knocking at their hearts' door."