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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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92-82

Relief worker killed, another injured in crash

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (BP)--A Southern Baptist relief worker was killed and another injured May 11 when the taxi they were riding in collided with a minibus outside of Diyarbakir, Turkey.

Chiquita "Chickie" Hood, 29, of Birmingham, Ala., and the taxi driver died after the taxi collided at the top of a hill with an oncoming minibus that turned left in front of them. Todd Bennett, 24, of Boone, N.C., was injured and taken to the Diyarbakir State Hospital for multiple lacerations. He was released the next day.

The names of the taxi and minibus drivers were not available. The minibus driver reportedly was not seriously injured, nor were two other passengers with him. Turkish police have charged the minibus driver and are holding him in custody.

Hood, a registered nurse, and Bennett, a medical relief coordinator, both worked in Iraq with Global Partners, a London-based relief and development agency. Bennett was on his way home to the United States after working in Turkey and Iraq since early 1991. Hood, who began work in Iraq last September, reportedly was going to Diyarbakir for a rest break from the harsh work conditions in Iraq.

Cooperating with other Global Partners workers, they helped operate mobile medical clinics to aid the Kurdish people in northern Iraq. Global Partners has aided the Kurds since the end of the Persian Gulf war last year, when a Kurdish uprising against Saddam Hussein's regime brought reprisals that drove thousands of Kurds from their homes into the mountains. The relief workers are based in Zakho, a four-hour drive across the Turkey-Iraq border from Diyarbakir.

Hood was a member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham. She was a graduate of Jacksonville (Ala.) State University and had worked as a nurse for the University of Alabama in Birmingham.

Bennett, a graduate of Appalachian State University in Boone, is a member of Perkinsville Baptist Church there.

A Global Partners colleague traveled to Diyarbakir from Zakho May 11 to aid Bennett and help arrange for transporting Hood's body home to the United States. The U.S. Consulate in Adana, Turkey, which notified Global Partners of the accident, also was providing assistance.

Bennett was expected to arrive home in North Carolina within a week.

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Profile developed for next
Foreign Mission Board president

By Robert O'Brien

Baptist Press
5/12/92

DALLAS (BP)--A Foreign Mission Board search committee has developed a profile for a successor to President R. Keith Parks and invited Southern Baptists to send comments and recommendations to the committee chairman.

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Parks will retire Oct. 30 after a 38-year career in foreign missions, including nearly 13 years as president. He has cited philosophical differences with board trustees in his retirement decision.

The 15-member trustee committee, chaired by Joel Gregory, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, met May 7-8 in Dallas to draft the profile. It will meet again June 10 during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Indianapolis and June 22 during a trustee meeting in El Paso, Texas.

The search committee set no target date for naming a successor to Parks. But John Jackson, trustee chairman from Fairfield, Calif., told Baptist Press the committee may have a better idea of timing after its June 22 meeting. Jackson, an ex officio member of the committee, participated in the May 7-8 meeting. Efforts to reach Gregory for comment May 11 were unsuccessful.

In a May 8 memo to FMB trustees, staff and missionaries, the search committee requested input, said it spent much time in prayer and noted it had "no preconceived candidates or inclination toward any individual. We are committed to a spiritual quest that will result in God's person being chosen to lead the Foreign Mission Board."

Asked about rumors trustees have predetermined their selection, or at least narrowed it down to a few names, Jackson said: "Our only agenda was and is to find the will of God. One committee member indicated he had come with a name in mind but said our time of praying together brought him to the point of wanting to avoid considering names or going in with a prejudiced mind."

The memo said the committee reviewed a profile developed in 1978 by the search committee seeking a successor to the board's former chief executive, Baker James Cauthen, whom Parks succeeded on Jan. 1, 1980.

While it contains some changes, the new profile parallels the 1978 document closely -- including a statement the new president should have an "unquestioned commitment to foreign missions (and) ... a broad knowledge and understanding of missions ... preferably including missionary service."

Names circulated as possible successors to Parks have included several leaders with no missionary experience. Many, including Parks, have said missionary experience is essential for the board's president to understand the complex context and needs of missions today.

When he was elected chairman in April, Jackson said trustee opinions were divided on the subject. "About half the board feels it's mandatory to have missionary experience," he said then. "Another large bloc is looking for the man and his ability to lead and his missions heart."

"We prefer someone with missionary experience because he would relate better to missionaries and better understand missions," Jackson said after the May 7-8 meeting in Dallas. "But if God has selected someone else, we want to be open to his will whichever way it leads."

The three board chief executives since 1945 -- Theron Rankin, Cauthen and Parks -- had previous missionary experience. Six before that time had no previous missionary experience. The board has grown from 504 missionaries in 19 countries in 1945 to 3,935 missionaries in 125 countries as of May 1.

The search committee released what it called a final draft of the profile but Jackson said it was still open to change "if someone points out a valid omission."

The profile included a range of 17 spiritual and leadership qualities desirable for a new president and four church and denominational qualifications.

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The church and denominational qualifications call for someone who 1) "manifests knowledge of and consistent loyalty to our distinctive doctrines, polity and ways of cooperation as Southern Baptists;" 2) is "committed to the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering as the historic and primary sources of funding for Southern Baptist foreign missions work;" 3) "possesses the ability to initiate and sustain good working relations with the recognized agencies, boards, commissions and committees of the Southern Baptist Convention as well as appreciation for the historic relationship with the Woman's Missionary Union;" and 4) "understands and is committed to the seven adopted principles which govern the mission philosophy of the Foreign Mission Board."

The seven principles, enunciated by Parks and affirmed by the trustees, are "1) a biblical basis for all we do; 2) a primary purpose of evangelism that results in churches; 3) an incarnational approach to foreign missions, emphasizing the career missionary; 4) a conviction that every Southern Baptist is a witness and can be involved in foreign missions by giving, going and praying; 5) a commitment to the indigenous principle, which calls for churches established to be 'natural' in their environment; 6) a comprehensive approach, not only focusing on a single issue or method but also seeking to express the total scope of ministry; and 7) a responsibility for communicating foreign missions opportunities, challenges and results to Southern Baptists regarding their efforts in foreign missions."

The committee asked interested Southern Baptists to send comments, recommendations and biographical data of potential candidates to Joel Gregory, chairman, FMB Presidential Search Committee, 1707 San Jacinto, Dallas, TX 75201, or send them via fax to (214) 969-7757.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Available upon request from Baptist Press are both the profile developed in 1992 to find a successor to R. Keith Parks as Foreign Mission Board president and the profile developed in 1978 to find a successor to Baker James Cauthen, whom Parks succeeded on Jan. 1, 1980.

Gay rights group confronts
Anita Bryant at book store

Baptist Press
5/12/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Christian singer-entertainer Anita Bryant is expected to continue a national media tour to promote her new book despite being confronted by gay activists at a Houston book store.

Bryant was at the Houston Southeast Baptist Book Store May 6 to sign copies of her book, "A New Day," recently released by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Broadman Press. The book, which has sold more than 27,000 copies after only one month on the market, deals with how Bryant put her life back together after the collapse of her marriage and singing career 12 years ago.

The collapse was caused in part, she says, by a stand she took in the late 1970s against a Dade County, Fla., referendum that would have required the hiring of homosexuals as teachers in private religious schools.

Between six and eight members of the gay rights group Queer Nation showed up at the Houston store to protest Bryant's stand against homosexuality, according to Gini McIver, a sales supervisor at the downtown Houston Baptist Book Store who was at the sister store to help with the autograph party.

"One of them came up to the counter and bought one of Anita's books," McIver said. "He had on a Queer Nation T-shirt.

"He got in line with some of his friends and when he got up to her he asked her to autograph his copy. The next thing I heard was somebody yelling and later I found out he tore up the book and was throwing the pages at her."

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The Houston Chronicle quoted the man, identified as Brian Bradley, as saying to Bryant, "You're a vile person and anything but Christian," adding, "... you are getting nowhere with your hatred." He then "lightly tossed" pages of the book which landed on her arms and upper body, the newspaper said.

Bryant, who has said repeatedly she does not "hate" homosexuals but, as a Christian, cannot condone their lifestyle, reportedly told the activists she was not at the store to oppose a referendum but rather to sign copies of her book.

McIver said a customer who witnessed the event saw a police car across the street and asked for help.

"By the time the police got here (the activists) were already out on the sidewalk," she said. "The police told them they would have to leave because it was private property. One of them came back in and yelled something but they didn't come back after that."

Despite the protest, McIver said Bryant stayed at the store and continued to sign books for customers who were waiting in line. She estimated between 80-90 of Bryant's books were sold while she was at the store.

Johnnie Godwin, vice president for general publishing at the Sunday School Board, said he was "not totally surprised" by the protest but said Broadman stands behind Bryant and her book.

"The very living out of the Christian life brings about controversy," Godwin said.

Broadman publicist Sharon Wegman said Bryant has had two other "minor incidents" related to her stance on homosexuality on her national book-signing tour. She had a "tough interview" with a reporter in Philadelphia and two "hecklers" had to be escorted from the audience during the taping of a TV talk show in Boston, Wegman said.

"But the tour has really been a success," Wegman added. "Anita has said she has really felt a sense of affirmation from the people she has met on the tour. People have told her they are praying for her and standing up for her."

The day after the Houston protest, Bryant signed more than 100 copies of her book at the Baptist Book Store in Richardson, Texas, without incident. "It was one of the best autograph parties I've ever been a part of," said Mike Goff, a sales floor supervisor present for the event. "Everything went perfect. It was flawless."

Bryant also plans to be present in Los Angeles later this month for the American Booksellers Association convention and in Dallas in June for the Christian Booksellers Association convention. She will do media interviews in both cities.

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CLC member resigns after entering
politics, confronting liquor issue By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
5/12/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--A Christian Life Commission member telephoned his resignation to the Southern Baptist agency May 11 after concerns about his corporation's application for a liquor license were raised in an anonymous letter to the convention's Executive Committee.

The CLC commissioner, J.T. Williams, told Baptist Press, however, he was resigning because he has become a Democratic candidate for Georgia's state senate and wants to avoid any conflict of interest between his candidacy and his role on the CLC.

Williams acknowledged that Killearn Properties, which he leads as chief executive officer, serves alcoholic beverages at a golf course clubhouse it operates in Tallahassee, Fla., but said it is not "bar-and-saloon operation" but a "family country club."

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The anonymous letter to the SBC Executive Committee included an article from an Atlanta-area newspaper quoting Williams as saying, "We probably will ask for a mixed drink license," for a golf course clubhouse at Stockbridge, Ga., near Atlanta.

Killearn is a developer of "golf course communities," Williams said, noting its Atlanta-area subdivision, Eagle's Landing, encompasses some 3,000 acres.

"I would never want to embarrass the (Southern Baptist) Convention or the Christian Life Commission," Williams told Baptist Press. He said he is a lifelong Southern Baptist, a member of Celebration Baptist Church in Tallahassee and seeks through his business to share a witness for Christ to members of Killearn's country clubs.

Serving alcoholic beverages is "a common industry standard" in golf course community clubhouses, Williams said. Killearn is a publicly held corporation, he noted, and has been listed on the American Stock Exchange 20 years. He said he is Killearn's largest shareholder but not its majority shareholder. As chief executive officer, he said, he is able to instruct the clubhouses to discourage "heavy drinking" but has no authority to take unilateral actions regarding the sale of alcoholic beverages.

"I don't think it would be possible for me to preclude it," Williams said. "It's not something I can decide or not decide whatever I want.

"This part of our corporation (country clubs), at best, is break even," he continued. "It is not the major part of our business. It's one of the services we offer in developing large residential tracts of land."

CLC chairman Hal Lane, pastor of West Side Baptist Church in Greenwood, S.C., said he telephoned Williams May 8 to verify assertions in the anonymous letter. Lane said he also noted he would need to release a statement concerning the CLC's position on abstinence and use of alcoholic beverages.

In his formal statement, Lane noted: "... I wish to state that the official position of the Christian Life Commission does not condone the sale or use of alcoholic beverages. We maintain that abstinence is the proper choice for Christians who desire to be the most effective witnesses for Christ in a society already burdened with multiple problems stemming from the use of alcoholic beverages."

Lane said he was not aware of any effort to ask for or force Williams' resignation from the CLC.

Williams had been a member of the Southern Baptist Convention's Public Affairs Committee several years when PAC was merged with the CLC last year and he became one of CLC's 38 commissioners.

The anonymous letter to the SBC Executive Committee was dated March 30 but not postmarked until May 1, the day Williams formally qualified as an unopposed Democratic candidate for the state senate race.

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Trustees elect three
to commentary roles

Baptist Press
5/12/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--By a vote of 68-1, trustees of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board have elected a new general editor and two associate general editors for "The New American Commentary."

Ray Clendenen, chairman of the Old Testament and Hebrew department at Criswell College in Dallas, will become general editor of the 40-volume commentary being published by Broadman Press of the Sunday School Board. Clendenen will succeed David Dockery, who has been elected dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Clendenen is expected to assume his new duties Aug. 1.

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Dockery and Ken Mathews, associate professor of divinity at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Ala., will become associate general editors. Dockery will work with New Testament volumes and Mathews, Old Testament volumes. Mathews has been a consulting editor for the series.

Clendenen will become the third general editor of the commentary. Dockery replaced Mike Smith who resigned in 1990 to become pastor of a church in Hermitage, Tenn.

"I have tremendous confidence in Dr. Clendenen and I believe we have the best possible team for this significant project," said Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr.

Introduced in 1991, three New Testament volumes have been released and two more are due out this month.

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First black moderator
elected in South Carolina

Baptist Press
5/12/92

GREENVILLE, S.C. (BP)--The new moderator of the Greenville Baptist Association says he is "concerned about souls, not race."

Earl Lewers' race nevertheless is of note: He is the first black moderator of a South Carolina Baptist association.

Lewers, a Greenville native, is pastor of Open Heart Baptist Church, which he organized in 1977. He was vice moderator of the association the past year and is a member of its Christian life and public affairs committee and a consultant with its new work department.

His election, April 30, was humbling, Lewers said, adding, "It is no secret what God can do and how he works."

Open Heart is one of three black congregations in the Greenville Baptist Association.

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Methodists vote to reaffirm
20-year stance on homosexuality

By Robert Lear

Baptist Press
5/12/92

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The United Methodist General Conference May 11 reaffirmed its 20-year stance that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.

By a vote of 710-238, the denomination's top legislative assembly retained a 17-word phrase first heard in 1972 that has become the controversial keystone of the church's policy. In affirming the stance, delegates rejected the recommendation of a majority of a four-year study committee to delete the phrase because of the "lack of a common mind" in the church.

The majority margin of approximately 75 percent was about 5 percent lower than a similar majority in 1988.

Although retaining the language about the practice of homosexuality, delegates by a margin of 767-190 received the bulk of the study committee's report and recommended it for study across the denomination. Included in the report was a section saying "certain basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons ... (and) We are committed to support these rights and liberties for homosexual persons" as a "clear issue of simple justice."

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Other sections of the report list a series of points the church can and cannot responsibly teach. Also included are a series of "implications for the life and ministry of the church."

All members of the study committee endorsed all of the report except for the 17 words calling the practice of homosexuality incompatible with Christian faith. Seventeen members of the committee wanted the language stricken, four wanted it retained.

Early in the first two hours of floor debate a demonstration broke out as about 20 persons carrying a banner reading "The Stones Will Cry Out" pushed past marshals and took a position in front of the platform and remained there for the remainder of the afternoon's discussion. Various points during the debate were accompanied by stamping of feet by some of the 2,000 people in the visitors' galleries.

When the debate resumed after a dinner break the sign was removed to an empty section of the gallery.

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Robert Lear is senior news director for the United Methodist News Service.

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