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92-86

**Hoosier Baptists face challenge
of witness in 'pioneer' Midwest**

By Mark Baggett

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Brethren, start your engines!

Just two weeks after the checkered flag drops on the Indianapolis 500, Southern Baptists will motor into town, veering out of the Bible Belt for their annual convention for the first time since going to Las Vegas in 1989, trading Richard Petty for Mario Andretti.

Still, SBC observers expect the same kind of smoothly-run event as last year's Atlanta convention, free of collisions, mechanical troubles and unscheduled pit stops.

Politically speaking, Southern Baptists should feel at home in conservative Indiana. Having a Dan Quayle in hand to greet them may be worth the George Bush who spoke last year in Atlanta.

But most Baptists from the South cannot fully understand the differences in religious climate in the region designated by the Home Mission Board as the "North Central States." Who, then, are the Hoosiers, the Buckeyes and the Illini who call themselves Southern Baptists?

"We are a group of persons who are native Southerners by and large, especially the white members of our churches," says Ted Wilson, an attorney in Indianapolis who has been a member of Sunny Side Road Baptist Church 20 years.

Wilson, a native of Fairfield, Ala., near Birmingham, describes the region as a pioneer area still: "We have been isolated somewhat, shy in venturing out and doing what we ought to be doing for the kingdom of God.

"But with a new injection of leadership we have been growing and in many ways experiencing a spiritual revival."

Charles Sullivan, the former chairman of the SBC's Executive Committee when he was pastor of First Baptist Church in Lenoir City, Tenn. (a suburb of Knoxville), now leads the Indiana Baptist Convention which was formed in December 1958. His office oversees a membership of 90,757 in 311 Southern Baptist churches and 55 missions across the state.

There is no "typical" Southern Baptist church but Wilson's is somewhat representative with an average Sunday school attendance of 140 and worship of 175.

"I'm a member of a church with four black families who are indigenous to the area, associated with National Baptists and with the military (Fort Benjamin Harrison is nearby)," he says. "We have started a Korean mission and attract other ethnic groups."

But Wilson says Southern Baptist progress is slow: "We're not as bold as we should be. We're not doing as much as we could in terms of missionary zeal. In the climate of the area, the Presbyterians, Methodists, evangelicals, American Baptists may be more zealous. But we are improving.

"Most Hoosiers have the perception of Southern Baptists as very fundamental and conservative, practicing religion in ways that are sometimes even fanatical. But this is not all so bad in view of the world today. I think we need more fanatics of religion."

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Tammi Ledbetter, managing editor of the Indiana Baptist (her husband, G is the newsjournal's executive editor), agrees Indiana Baptists are renewing themselves.

"Having grown up in Southern Baptist churches in Arkansas and Texas, I find our churches here to be refreshingly excited about the Lord. Because we're so scarce, our members tend to work twice as hard in winning people."

Bill Webb, editor of the Illinois Baptist, says Southern Baptists in the Midwest may feel a bit overwhelmed. "The challenge of being a Baptist and making an impact in a state with 11.5 million people and only 1,000 Baptist congregations -- this preoccupies the leaders and lay people more than the controversy in the SBC."

Webb says most Midwest Baptists would see themselves as conservative evangelicals, and that evangelical roots run deep because of the strong influence of Moody Institute in Chicago and nearby Wheaton College. Trinity Theological Seminary in Deerfield (suburban Chicago) trains many Southern Baptist pastors, he says, and helps "shape who we are" in a region without any Southern Baptist college.

Webb's description of Illinois Baptists matches Wilson's of Indiana's Baptists: small "open-country" congregations (by SBC standards), with many transplanted southerners but with more ethnic diversity and inner-city challenges (Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis) than down South.

"One stigma is that we are regarded by many as a regional denomination," Webb says. "Some pastors and leaders in the metropolitan areas particularly feel the regional connotations limit our work."

"Outside the inner city, however, the largest number of churches tend to be somewhat traditional. You might find a great deal of difference in terms of music. Not every church has a pipe organ, for instance, and the use of the Baptist Hymnal would vary."

"But overall, many churches, such as my own, are like churches down your way: strongly missions-oriented but with more ethnic and cultural diversity."

Indiana also has its share of small rural congregations but Ledbetter finds a dramatic difference in many of the newer works: "The new missions and churches are very contemporary, very informal, very much on the cutting edge in terms of style in worship, trying to reach the uncommitted resident."

Just as they do in the South, people join churches here for reasons other than denominational loyalty, Wilson says.

"I happened to become a Southern Baptist by accident," he says. "My wife and family belonged to the biggest, wealthiest black church in the city, with a congregation of 3,500. I left that congregation and went to a new area where we built a house. I wanted a church close to home and when we visited the Baptist church we immediately encountered such a generous outpouring of love."

"My wife (who died 18 months ago) had cancer at the time and even after we joined I wasn't disposed to tell them my wife was in the hospital. But a lady in the church saw us there and from that moment on people came in droves to see her. We've been in love with our church and our denomination since, although some of the black ministers criticized me for going to a Southern Baptist church. It's not so much which church you go to but what that church does for you and others in the name of Christ our Lord."

Webb admits Southern Baptists in the Midwest can't afford to be exclusive: "We can disagree but we are so small in number we realize we are vitally important to each other."

Land: Evangelicals helpful
at environmental meeting

By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP)--A recent meeting of religious leaders and scientists concerning the environment benefited from participation by evangelical Christians, said Southern Baptist Convention agency head Richard D. Land.

About 150 leaders from religion and science gathered for "Mission to Washington: Religion and Science in Partnership for the Environment." The three-day conference produced a four-page statement signed by 115 participants calling on the United States to lead the way in protecting the environment.

"This is not everything we would want and not everything is said the way we would want it but this is a better statement than it would have been had not evangelicals participated in the process," said Land, executive director of the Christian Life Commission. "We didn't win every discussion but we didn't lose every one either.

"The statement is sort of a lowest common denominator. The scientists will want to spell out more specifics in their own statements, as will the different faith groups. The evangelicals, for instance, will want to come down much more strongly on the concept of stewardship of God's creation and emphasize biblical mandates about tilling and keeping the earth."

Another evangelical signer, Calvin DeWitt, called it a "very good statement" considering the group's diversity. Evangelicals "have to bring it much further" by "honoring God as creator," as an example, said DeWitt, director of Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies, which serves 80 Christian colleges.

Noted scientist and evolutionist Carl Sagan called it a strong statement "given the immense diversity not only in the religious community but between religion and science."

In addition to Land, Southern Baptists who signed the statement are Cecil Sherman, coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and Foy Valentine, former CLC executive director. Patricia Ayres, the CBF's moderator, also attended the meeting.

Few among the religious leaders participating would be categorized as evangelical. One of the discussions evangelicals won involved the final sentence of the statement, which reads as adopted: "Understanding that the world does not belong to any one nation or generation, and sharing a spirit of utmost urgency, we dedicate ourselves to undertake bold action to cherish and protect the environment of our planetary home."

A preliminary draft concluded with the following phrase: "on which all life depends." Land and other religious leaders told a conference leader they could not sign the document unless the phrase was deleted. Life depends on God, Land explained later as his reason for opposing the phrase. The next day, the final draft was approved without the closing phrase.

"It would have needlessly kept many evangelicals from taking the document as seriously as they should," Land said of the deleted phrase.

"As (National Association of Evangelicals public affairs director) Bob Dugan said, 'Evangelicals have had to learn a political coalition is different from an ecclesiastical coalition,'" Land said. "One of the most important statements is we don't have to agree on how the earth came to be in order to be concerned about how it is and how it may be.

"I think it is indicative of what I said in our CLC seminar on the environment last year, which was: 'There's going to be an intensive, comprehensive debate on questions of the environment and ecology in the remaining years of the 20th century. That's not debatable. The only question is whether we're going to be part of it. I think we must.'"

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A section on world population could have been a problem but pro-lifers agreed the statement was acceptable. The statement reads, "We believe there is a need for concerted efforts to stabilize world population by humane, responsible and voluntary means consistent with our differing values."

"Obviously any statement that Bishop [William] Friend and I can sign is a statement that leaves room for people who are pro-life to have their concerns and sensitivities protected," Land said. "Obviously, we will express our 'differing values' in our attempts to educate people about the need to alleviate the burden of the burgeoning population in underdeveloped countries." Friend is bishop of the Diocese of Shreveport and chairman of the Committee on Science and Human Values for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"The key words in the statement," Land said, "are 'stabilize' and not reduce and to do so by 'humane, responsible and voluntary means.' Obviously for evangelicals, 'humane' and 'responsible' does not include the killing of the unborn."

Evangelical participation may have helped scientists decide, possibly for the first time, "that we, as disciples of Christ, are part of the solution" rather than part of the problem, DeWitt said. "We have lived a very self-centered life and our theology has been self-centered." Christians have "trampled the works" of the creator, he said, "while saying we honor the creator."

The meeting was cosponsored by four United States senators and The Joint Appeal by Religion and Science for the Environment. James Morton, dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, and Sagan are co-chairmen for The Joint Appeal. Sen. Al Gore, D.-Tenn., was joined as a sponsor by Sen. Tim Wirth, D.-Colo.; Sen. John Chafee, R.-R.I., and Sen. James Jeffords, R.-Vt.

Gore, a Southern Baptist, called the meeting "extremely successful in solidifying a true partnership between leaders of religion and science" in appealing to world leaders to protect the environment.

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WMU study committee invites
CBF, SBC leaders to talk

By Susan Todd Doyle

Baptist Press
5/19/92

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Leaders of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship met May 18 with 14 leaders of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union to discuss changing roles in world missions.

The group did not issue a report on the dialogue nor did it indicate recommendations stemming from the meeting would follow.

The WMU leaders have also issued an invitation to SBC leadership. These two invitations are part of a series of meetings WMU plans to have with leaders across the convention.

Representing the Fellowship were John Hewett, past moderator; Cecil Sherman, coordinator; and Pat Ayres, newly elected moderator.

The meeting at the national WMU headquarters was the first between the Fellowship leaders and members of a WMU special long-range study committee.

The WMU long-range study committee was named by national WMU President Carolyn Miller during the January 1992 WMU executive board meeting. Miller asked the group to explore action plans and strategies to enable WMU to strengthen its involvement in missions. The committee is made up of representatives from the national WMU staff, current and former national WMU executive board members, state WMU staffs and current and former national WMU officers.

"We feel it is important to talk with representatives of all groups of Southern Baptists about missions," said Dellanna O'Brien, national WMU executive director and a member of the study committee.

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The most important thing for WMU to do at this point in Southern Baptist life is to serve all churches as they educate about and involve their members in missions, she said. "The best way for us to accomplish this is to listen and be informed."

The study committee is expected to make its first report to the WMU executive board in June.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The Richmond bureau of Baptist Press has sent a special graphic to state Baptist editors which may be used with either or both of the following two stories on the Foreign Mission Board's "Green Alert" efforts in the former Soviet Union.

Green Alert shapes new strategies
for evangelism in former U.S.S.R. By David Williard

Baptist Press
5/19/92

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--In the summer of 1991, the Soviet Union opened up to outside Christian witness. Trumpeted one Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board representative: Its doors, shut for seven decades, were "blown off their hinges."

Southern Baptists, perceiving the event as the dissolution of the "Evil Empire," began flooding the mission board with calls. They were packing their bags for Moscow. "Pages and pages of names" mounted up, said Ron Boswell, director of the board's volunteer effort. They were "like sprinters waiting for the gun to go off."

But there was no race to run. Baptist bodies in the Soviet Union, in many ways strengthened by years of persecution, were not asking for volunteer street witnesses. In fact, overwhelmed by the initial onrush of evangelical help, they were begging for time to define their needs.

While others rushed in with their own plans, the FMB was waiting and told prospective volunteers to wait. "The FMB is focused overseas" to serve needs there, not just on the desires of people to serve overseas, said board President R. Keith Parks.

Today, the board directs, through a Green Alert initiative, personnel and material resources into the former Soviet republics at an unprecedented pace, said Lewis Myers, director of the Green Alert task force formed just weeks after the Soviet Union's breakup. Green Alert cuts through normal work procedures to seize timely mission opportunities in response to fast-moving world events.

The result of the Green Alert, the denomination's first, will be a "compression into one year of what normally could have been accomplished in 10 years," Myers said.

Green Alert planners have begun distributing funds for translating Scriptures, for example, into the Kazakh, Azeri, Kirghiz and Uzbek languages of central Asia. And government authorities have cleared the way for translating and publishing Survival Kit discipleship materials into every major language spoken in central Asia.

The board also has received personnel requests for 27 career positions in four of the central Asian republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. Planners also have in hand requests for 152 volunteers through the board's international service department. And the board has reassigned five career missionary couples from their work in other parts of the world to tasks in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Planners have appropriated \$10,000 for radio broadcasting to the Azeris and \$10,000 for a human needs project to provide wheelchairs for handicapped people in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. They have set up conferences on how expatriates and local Christians can use the film, "Jesus," as an evangelistic tool throughout central Asia.

Medical survey teams have traveled into Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, delivering supplies and developing plans for future involvement. And in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Green Alert funds have seeded an English-language institute to which Southern Baptists eventually will supply about 100 teachers.

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The board has committed to placing more than 100 career missionaries in the former Soviet republics, a process that involves identification of needs and drawing up of job classifications. It has worked within the republics to identify opportunities for several hundred International Service Corps volunteers. The major focus of Green Alert is on long-term results, Myers explained.

Still, some Southern Baptists are critical of the board, saying significant opportunities for witness in the short term are being missed while the long-term plan is pursued. Some suggest the board overlooks the impact of volunteers because of their short-term nature.

Others disagree. Parks pointed out that in 1980 only about 1,000 volunteers a year went out through the board. Last year more than 9,000 went. In recent years the board has presented many opportunities for volunteer service that have gone unfilled.

Last year in the Soviet Union, the board needed 700 volunteers to go to Kazakhstan, yet only 330 signed up, Parks said. "At the same time there were many volunteers who said, 'We want to go (to the Soviet Union).' When I would suggest Kazakhstan, they'd say, 'No, that's not where we want to go.'"

"Part of the problem is ... some people fix their minds on what they want to do to help rather than being open to responding to the needs as the missionaries and the local Baptists define those needs," Parks said. As far as accommodating volunteers, "We continue to work together to modify their desires and our needs to come together as often as possible."

But in terms of people wanting to get into that part of the former Soviet Union identified with Europe, the board has actively discouraged volunteer groups. This has occurred at the request of Soviet Baptist leaders who say they have been overwhelmed with volunteers.

Yet the board should be more competitive with parachurch organizations in terms of accommodating volunteers, said Ron Boswell, director of the volunteers in missions department.

"I think we may have been slow in responding, but in many cases (other mission groups) rushed in before the needs were identified," he said. "Much of their work is legitimate but we've heard of situations where three parachurch groups were at one church at the same time. Some are seeking exposure; some want pulpit time. All too many, it appears, just want a good story to tell."

The Foreign Mission Board does not want to repeat these mistakes, said Isam Ballenger, former vice president of Europe, Middle East and North Africa, who headed the Green Alert task force until he announced his early retirement last January. "When these changes first came to the area, all Christendom was focused on the U.S.S.R. (Soviet Christians) felt they were being exploited."

While U.S. groups wanted to go to Moscow or Kiev, Soviet leadership said needs existed in relatively inaccessible outlying areas. "These were factors that caused us not to open the floodgates," Ballenger said. "The Baptist church is the major non-Orthodox church in the U.S.S.R. Every group in America went there knocking on Baptist doors. The Soviet leadership was, and continues to be, overwhelmed."

There's little doubt the board will continue to explore means of placing volunteers. One relatively new plan is designed especially for the denomination's largest churches. It seeks to link them into partnership with unreached people groups.

As for Green Alert in the former Soviet Union, the board encourages would-be volunteers to be patient, to give, to pray and to monitor the situation.

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At this point board officials feel it's probably only a matter of waiting a few months before volunteer opportunities proliferate, and the board will be eager to help Southern Baptists go.

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This article was adapted from the May issue of The Commission, the Foreign Mission Board magazine.

Risks remain high for
Green Alert goals

By Donald D. Martin

Baptist Press
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HILLTOP LAKES, Texas (BP)--Kevin Buss knows the dangers of front-line missions.

Last June in a former Soviet republic, Buss, a Southern Baptist International Service Corps worker, felt the force of ethnic hatred threatening many of the republics.

Without warning, two drunk men attacked the 25-year-old from Hilltop Lakes, Texas, as he sat near his apartment building in the afternoon sun at the end of a late lunch.

In seconds, as the men struck violent blows to his head, searing pain replaced sunlight. Then came darkness and finally waves of delirium and confusion.

Buss never saw his attackers, who had mistaken him for Russian, according to a Russian man who saw the attack and rushed to his aid.

"All I kept saying to the man was, 'Why? Why?' But he didn't know what I was saying. Then he said something about (the local people), and I thought, 'Why them? I like these people.' If they'd known I was an American and could speak their language, they wouldn't have done that. They thought I was Russian," Buss recalls.

Buss endured painful attempts to reset bones in his face locally and later reconstructive surgery in London. But he and his wife, Kristina, 23, never felt resentment or anger for the people they traveled halfway around the world to serve.

Some would say Buss was an innocent victim in the wrong place at the wrong time. The Busses and Southern Baptist planners differ.

"Satan meant this as an attack -- to ruin what Christians are doing there," Mrs. Buss says. "Yet God was able to turn this around even through all the ugliness ... God used this situation for good."

Administrators developing Green Alert plans hope to place hundreds more like the Busses throughout the former Soviet republics.

The risks are high, warns David Garrison, who directs the Southern Baptists' nonresidential missions program. When empires crumble, taking with them social and economic security, people get hurt. Yet in the past year, even before the dust from the former Soviet empire settled, new opportunities began to emerge.

"This is the first century in salvation history for many parts of this world," Garrison says. "What an awesome opportunity. But there have always been risks for those who are part of the first century of God's salvation history," he reminds. "It's about as safe and about as easy as it was in the first century that you read about in the New Testament."

In this environment mission planners scramble to juggle a host of competing demands: Southern Baptists' desires to participate in outreach efforts in the republics; mission workers' needs to build a mission infrastructure within a defunct economy; and the board's mandate to focus on church planting.

As each republic declared its independence, pressure mounted for the Foreign Mission Board to become the republic's gateway for countless Southern Baptists.

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Mission planners and Southern Baptists have expressed frustrations in not placing larger numbers of people in the various republics, President R. Keith Parks notes.

"The immediate response is that we need to send hundreds of thousands of volunteers," Parks says. "We feel that some preliminary work has to be done if the utilization of most volunteers is to be effective.

"There's a place for some. We're trying to use as many as can be effectively used, given the conditions there."

Mike Stroope, a Southern Baptist who helps coordinate Green Alert strategies for central Asian republics, says it's a full-time job just to find the right government officials to deal with.

"We will deal with the people who are in office and in two weeks they fall out of grace and out of office. It's a very fluid situation," he explains.

Just getting people out of the Moscow airport is a significant accomplishment, he continues. International flights make it easy to get to Moscow but catching a domestic flight can take days.

"Aeroflot (the former Soviet airline) is falling apart right before our eyes," Stroope says. "We've had people stranded for days in Moscow's domestic airport lounge. We've dubbed it the 'Indiana Jones lounge of doom.'"

Mission administrators hope the austere realities of daily life in the republics don't dampen Southern Baptists' enthusiasm for going but they want workers to go with their eyes open.

"We need people who can deal with ambiguity," Stroope says, "because the situation (in the republics) isn't clear."

To help smooth out some of the difficulties, Green Alert planners made it a top priority to place full-time liaison people in each of the 15 republics, says Lewis Myers, vice president for Cooperative Services International who heads Southern Baptists' Green Alert task force.

"These people are key to all we hope to accomplish," he says. "That's not to say the work can't go on without them in place but they will have delicate roles which are paramount to the success of Green Alert."

Myers expects to fill these positions with people transferred from other areas. Transfers will save time because they already know how to adapt to a new culture and make contact with local Baptist groups as well as how to learn to function in a new society.

Yet this process will take time, Myers concedes. "There are things we're doing right now but we're looking at this from a long-term approach."

For the Busses, a long-term approach has led back to home in Hilltop Lakes and studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

When they reflect on their time in the former Soviet Union, they often recall the urging of a young Muslim co-worker hundreds of miles away from her home in Azerbaijan. She was impressed with the work of the Christians she had met.

"Though she was Muslim," Kristina Buss recounts, "she said to us one day, 'When you're finished with your work here, would you go to my people and do the same thing? Please go and work with my people.' That's played and replayed in our minds. We've started to learn more about Azerbaijan. Again our hearts have just gone out. We've started to ask, 'How can we get there and how soon?'"

A chorus of Southern Baptists join them in these questions.

EDITORS' NOTE: This story replaces a story by the same name which appeared in Baptist Press May 15.

Although urged to withdraw,
Pressler says he has support

By Herb Hollinger

HOUSTON (BP)--Although urged to withdraw as a nominee for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board by a number of SBC leaders, Judge Paul Pressler insists he has a lot of supporters and is still a nominee.

In an interview with Baptist Press, Pressler responded to an Associated Baptist Press May 14 story which said a number of SBC leaders had urged him to voluntarily withdraw as a nominee before the SBC annual meeting in Indianapolis, June 9-11.

"I have received two letters asking me to withdraw, one letter supporting my nomination," Pressler, of Houston, said. "I have received four negative calls (on the nomination) but 50 calls which were supportive."

Pressler said he is always "subject to the Lord's leadership, nothing is set in concrete," but at this point is still a nominee. He reportedly told the SBC leaders he would pray about their request but told Baptist Press "I always pray about these matters."

Former SBC presidents Adrian Rogers, Jerry Vines, Jimmy Draper, Morris Chapman, presidential candidate Ed Young and SBC Executive Committee member Fred Wolfe, according to the ABP story, held a conference call with Pressler in which they asked him to consider withdrawing his nomination.

On May 19, Draper, president of the Sunday School Board, told Baptist Press he had been in contact with three former SBC presidents -- Rogers, Memphis, Tenn., area pastor; Vines, Jacksonville, Fla., pastor; Bailey Smith, Atlanta evangelist -- and Chapman, present SBC president and Wichita Falls, Texas pastor, the previous day to confirm they were in agreement in publicly supporting a request for Pressler to withdraw his nomination.

Draper stressed the men were supporting that request because they felt rotating the same people from board to board was not a good policy and, in fact, was what they had criticized previous leadership for doing. He emphasized the men did not have an alternate nominee in mind. Draper said they also did not want to usurp the business of the convention by publicly supporting any move to replace Pressler at the convention.

Also, Bill Hancock, Kentucky pastor and recent chairman of the FMB board of trustees, said he called Pressler and expressed his concern Pressler's nomination would be a "poor action."

"It distresses me that those of us, leaders of the conservative resurgence, would try to extend authority and control (of the SBC) by rotating from board to board," Hancock told Baptist Press. There are many strong leaders from the various state conventions who could serve and the SBC would profit, Hancock said.

"I'm not opposed to Pressler, I'm opposed to the image of a few people controlling the boards and agencies," Hancock said.

Hancock said he was considering making a motion in Indianapolis to nominate an alternate to Pressler for the FMB but hadn't yet made a final decision. He said he felt a Texas Baptist ought to make the motion since it concerns a Texas Baptist position.

But Pressler said it is ironic charges of "cronism" were being made against his nomination when he could remember several husband-and-wife combinations on SBC boards prior to 1979, the start of the "conservative resurgence." Pressler is given credit for being one of the architects of that movement which gained control of SBC leadership over the past decade.

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Pressler, 61, served seven years on the powerful SBC Executive Committee before rotating off last year.

Baptist Press called a number of SBC leaders and high-profile conservative pastors in Texas and most of them were sympathetic to the withdrawal of Pressler's nomination. However, all asked not to be quoted and said they would not publicly support any movement to provide an alternate nomination.

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Draper announces restructure
of BSSB senior executive team

By Linda Lawson

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5/19/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--A restructuring of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's senior executive team and formation of a transition team to implement further changes were announced May 18 by President James T. Draper Jr.

The changes are part of recommendations from four employee teams who conducted research and developed reports and proposals presented May 5-6 to the senior executive team.

Instead of a president and three executive vice presidents overseeing operations, finance and administration, and corporate planning, research and denominational relations, Draper said he will recommend to trustees in August a restructured senior executive team including himself and four others with titles yet to be decided.

Gene Mims, executive vice president for corporate planning, research and denominational relations, will lead the church growth and programs area. Michael Arrington, executive vice president for operations, will head corporate services. E.V. King, executive vice president for finance and administration, will lead finance and administration.

Charles Wilson, assistant vice president for business, will become a member of the senior executive team and will head trade and retail markets.

"We told trustees when they approved the senior executive team level we might expand that. What we're actually doing is expanding it by one," Draper said.

"We also are putting people in those positions who already have been approved by the trustees. While we will begin to share responsibilities and move toward transition, the full implementation of this will not take place until after the trustee meeting in August," Draper said.

Decisions about what components will be located in each of the four areas are being finalized and will be announced in coming weeks, he said.

Division of the board into four major areas, Draper said, was the recommendation of the organization options team made up of eight employees and chaired by Billie Pate, associate director of the Sunday school division.

Other teams were people resource, chaired by Doug Anderson, director of the family ministry department; external customer, chaired by Aubrey House, marketing specialist in the marketing planning and promotion department; and communications strategy, chaired by Joe Denney, director of the video/audiovisuals department.

The process was carried out under the theme "Building Our Future." More than 30 employees were involved in the four teams.

Draper said additional employee team recommendations for completing a restructuring of the board, profiling leadership qualities needed in personnel and better serving customers are being considered.

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A four-person transition team to recommend implementation actions will be Don Early, director of the financial and technical services department, chairman; Bruce Munns, director of the eastern region of the book store division; and Steve Lawrence, director of the human resources department; and Pate.

"By this process we're hoping to model the kind of work we hope will take place throughout the organization," Draper said. "We ought to cut out red tape. We ought to make it easier to make decisions. We ought to free people up to do their work. These teams not only help us do our work, but they also are involving people all through the organization in the decisions and in the recommendations."

All actions are being taken in light of a new vision statement of the Sunday School Board which was completed in February, Draper said.

It states, "We will assist local churches and believers to evangelize the world to Christ, develop believers, and grow churches by being the best worldwide provider of relevant, high-quality, high-value Christian products and services."

In his column in the April issue of "Facts and Trends," a board newsletter, Draper said the vision statement points the board toward even greater involvement around the world. It currently provides products and services in 122 countries.

Also, Draper said leadership will give greater emphasis to providing products and services, not necessarily always being the producer. "We must join hands with others to provide for our constituency the best possible materials and services."

In addition, six core values of the board have been developed to assist in achievement of the vision. They emphasize leadership, quality, people, performance, integrity and growth.

"What I'm trying to tell employees is that, hopefully, this is going to help us create a culture where nobody fails when the Sunday School Board succeeds and nobody succeeds when the Sunday School Board fails," Draper said.

"I think this new structure will give us increased accountability and, hopefully, efficiency. When we are through this, I believe we will have a greater sense of job security for our families and of meaningful work for ourselves. I feel this will help employees be more of a continuing part of decision-making," he said.

Review of the board's structure and operations was necessitated both by hard financial realities and the need of every large institution to evaluate itself amid changes in society and technology, he said.

The 10-year trend in total sales of board products and services has been flat, Draper said. In the last five years, unit sales of all church literature periodicals combined have declined 4.43 percent.

"There have to be changes in every organization and institution to survive in the kind of times we are in," Draper said. "The church that does not adapt and change is going to be left behind. I think the Sunday School Board has a wonderful constituency, some wonderful people working here. We have the best products in the world."

"We are going to see the greatest changes in technology, in publishing and electronic communication in the history of the world in the next 10 years. We have got to be ready to respond to that and to move within those changes," he said.

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Editorials by Draper on the Sunday School Board vision statement and core values are available on SBCNet to editors of Baptist state papers. Copies also are available from the Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press.

Renewed Muslim-Christian clashes
leave Baptists dead in Nigeria By Erich Bridges

KADUNA, Nigeria (BP)--Renewed battles between Muslims and Christians in northern Nigeria reportedly have killed dozens of people, including some Baptists.

"(Missionaries) have word of individual pastors and Baptists they knew and Christians from other denominations who have been killed," said Betty Kay Yamaoka of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. "Some churches have been burned."

Yamaoka, associate area director for mission work in west Africa, spoke to missionary Ray Davidson in Kaduna by phone May 18. No missionaries were harmed, Davidson said, but a number of Nigerian Christians were killed.

The rioting began in two northern towns May 17 when anger over the moving of a market from a Christian to a Muslim area exploded into violence, according to the Associated Press.

The fighting spread the next day to the cities of Kaduna and Zaria, where Southern Baptist missionaries work. Muslim rioters also approached the Baptist pastors' school in the area several times threatening violence, Davidson reported. They were turned away, first by police and later by students on campus.

Reported deaths in the area varied from 12 to 100; several sources put confirmed deaths at 24. A hospital in Kaduna was said to be overflowing with people wounded in attacks. The government reported a "huge loss of lives" in Kaduna and said several churches had been burned, according to AP reports.

Thousands of Christians reportedly sought shelter at police stations and a military academy. A dusk-to-dawn curfew was put into effect May 18 in Kaduna. Soldiers were deployed in Kaduna state to help overwhelmed police restore order. "Things are still quite tense. It may erupt again but it's calm right now," Yamaoka said.

Riots in 1987 left more than 20 people dead, 152 church buildings and three mosques burned, a number of pastors homeless and Christian businesses destroyed.

Islam dominates northern Nigeria and many young Muslims have joined fundamentalist Muslim groups. Meanwhile, more people from the Christian south have moved into the area. "It's a powder keg situation waiting for someone to throw a match," Yamaoka observed.

Besides Davidson, of Valdosta, Ga., and his wife, Ginny, of Lyons, Kan., Southern Baptist missionaries in Kaduna and Zaria include Bob and Martha Hall of Springfield, Mo.; Charles and Carrie Hedrick of Mount Vernon and Maysville, Ky., respectively; Payton and Helen Myers of West Point, Miss.; Clint and Harriet Bowman of Waycross, Ga., and Mendenhall, Miss., respectively; and D'Anna Shotts of Martinsville, Ill.

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Lowrie accepts Texas church
after three years in Tennessee By Wm. Fletcher Allen

Baptist Press
5/19/92

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (BP)--D.L. Lowrie, executive director/treasurer of the Tennessee Baptist Convention for three and a half years, will become pastor of First Baptist Church in Lubbock, Texas, in September.

Lowrie, a Tennessee native, joined the Tennessee Baptist Convention Jan. 1, 1989. He worked with Tom Madden for four months and succeeded Madden when he retired as executive director April 30 of that year.

Lowrie, 57, will take the Lubbock pastorate after the Sept. 4 meeting of the Tennessee convention's executive board.

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The chief executive is returning to the church he led as pastor from 1980-86. He was director of the State Missions Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas prior to joining the Tennessee convention.

Much of Lowrie's ministry has been spent in Texas where he served as pastor of five other churches. He was president of the BGCT in 1982-83 and was chairman of the state's executive board.

The Lubbock church voted by ballot Sunday night, May 17, after Lowrie preached in the morning service. He accepted the call after an almost unanimous vote.

Lowrie had informed the TBC executive board of his planned Lubbock trip during its regular May 15 meeting at the Baptist Center in Brentwood. A search committee will be named by the TBC board's executive committee.