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WASHINGTON -- Reconsider prayer at inaugural, pro-life leaders ask Graham.
VIRGINIA -- Court rules in FMB's favor in second Wade lawsuit.
HOUSTON -- Innovative churches seen as Southern Baptists' future.
TENNESSEE -- Charlotte Teas named editor of Brotherhood's Lad magazine.

Reconsider prayer at inaugural,
pro-life leaders ask Graham

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)--Some pro-life leaders are calling on Billy Graham to withdraw his acceptance of an invitation to pray at the Jan. 20 inauguration of Bill Clinton as president.

The well-known evangelist's participation in the inauguration "will be taken as a positive endorsement of Mr. Clinton's anti-Christian agenda," 40 pro-life leaders said in a Dec. 29 letter to Graham. "The last thing we need is for a prominent and respected Christian leader to appear publicly with him to seemingly endorse his agenda. ... never in recent history has a presidential candidate with such (an) explicitly unbiblical platform been elected to our nation's highest office."

Graham and Clinton are both Southern Baptists.

Officials of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission were not among signers of the letter, although CLC Executive Director Richard Land has written to Graham expressing similar concern.

The pro-life leaders' letter cited Clinton's support of abortion and homosexual rights as examples of such an agenda.

In a Jan. 6 response to the group letter, a Graham spokesman said the group's request was "carefully and prayerfully considered" but the spokesman seemed to indicate Graham still intended to offer both the invocation and benediction at the inauguration. Another Graham spokesman later confirmed the evangelist would participate.

The evangelist resisted pressure to endorse a candidate during the 1992 presidential campaign and his "intention has not been, and is not, to endorse any programs, policies nor positions," John Cortis, president and chief operating officer of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, said in a letter.

Beginning with President Lyndon Johnson, Graham has participated in inaugural activities for every elected president except Jimmy Carter. He has been invited to spend the night of Jan. 19, President Bush's final day in office, at the White House.

"Dr. Graham cannot divorce himself from the public policies" of Clinton, Christian Defense Coalition director Pat Mahoney said at a Jan. 6 press conference.

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Graham's participation in the inauguration will be a "cause of great embarrassment for all who call themselves evangelical Christians," said Bill Devlin, president of the Philadelphia chapter of the Christian Action Council.

The evangelist's presence will cause some Christians to think, "Well, Billy Graham's there. I guess Bill Clinton's not such a bad guy after all. We can put up with abortion on demand," Devlin said at the press conference.

"I believe (Graham's) motivation is well-intended," Mahoney said. "It is Bill Clinton who is, I think, using Dr. Graham to try" to gain some acceptance.

Mahoney and Devlin called on Christians to ask Graham not to participate.

Land wrote a private letter to Graham to express his concerns.

"I asked Dr. Graham as a brother in Christ and fellow Southern Baptists to give further prayerful consideration to not praying at the Clinton inaugural," Land said. "I asked him, however, if he discerned that praying at the Clinton inaugural is the Lord's will for him to use all of his influence with Mr. Clinton to urge him to reconsider his positions and policies" supporting abortion and homosexual rights.

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, in a Jan. 6 news release, quoted Graham as saying, "I am both humbled and honored to be invited" to pray at the inauguration. "Both President-elect Clinton and Vice President-elect Gore have been personal friends for several years.

"I intend to do all in my power to help Mr. Clinton once he is president," Graham said. "He and his wife, Hillary, will make a unique team to help lead America and the Western World at this period in history."

Among those signing the group letter to Graham were Randall Terry, founder of Operation Rescue; author George Grant, and Mahoney.

Devlin said he was not speaking on behalf of the national Christian Action Council, which sponsors the country's largest network of crisis pregnancy centers. Ironically, the CAC was founded at a meeting of evangelical leaders in Graham's home in 1975.

It is not the first time Graham has caused consternation among pro-life leaders. In the fall of 1991, he was described in newspaper accounts as saying he had no position on when life begins.

"I'm going to let the scientists sort that one out. ... I have my ideas, but I try to stay away from these things that are so emotional and I don't have clear-cut answers to," Graham was quoted as saying.

Land and 11 other members of the National Pro-life Religious Council expressed in a letter their disappointment with Graham's comments and asked him to clarify his statement.

"We understand that you are attempting to steer away from controversial issues so as to take a clear stand for the Gospel message," the NPRC members wrote. "We hope, however, that in the future you might understand that abortion is not just another social issue; it is the transcendent moral issue of our time.

"We understand that you are called to a ministry all of us deeply appreciate and support," the letter said. "Will you help support our ministry and calling by challenging the way in which American culture has devalued the life God created in His image?"

In a letter, Graham said he was "distressed" to have caused them concern. In interviews, his answers sometimes do not come out the way he intended, Graham said.

The quote was accurate, but he "should have stated it differently," Graham said. "I have always publicly stated that I am totally against abortion except when the mother's life is at stake, or in the case of rape. I am totally against 'abortion on demand.'"

Court rules in FMB's favor
in second Wade lawsuit

By Erich Bridges

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A Richmond Circuit Court judge granted a motion for summary judgment Jan. 7 filed by attorneys for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in a second lawsuit against the board brought by former missionary Diana Wade.

Unless Wade appeals within 30 days, the ruling effectively ends her legal action against the board.

Wade originally brought a \$141 million suit in circuit court against the mission board on behalf of her children in 1988. She contended board officials learned her husband, former missionary G. Thomas Wade Jr., was sexually abusing their oldest daughter on the mission field in Botswana, Africa, but did not tell her so she could stop him. The abuse continued, the suit charged, and the man also began molesting two other daughters.

The mission board had a contractual obligation to protect the family's "health, welfare and safety," according to Mrs. Wade and her attorney.

Board defense attorney Lewis Booker argued in that case that mission officials acted reasonably under the circumstances. According to testimony, the first official who learned of the abuse confronted Wade, who agreed to tell his wife and undergo counseling. When he failed to do so, the official ordered Wade to return with his family to the United States for counseling. Wade was arrested in 1985 for sexual abuse of the daughters in Alaska, where they were living, and is serving a 12-year prison sentence in that state. Mrs. Wade still lives there.

A trial jury decided in favor of the Wade children in July 1990, awarding them \$1.56 million. But The Virginia Supreme Court overturned the verdict in a unanimous decision in September 1991.

The seven-member court found no evidence the mission board had contracted with the Wades when they were appointed missionaries in 1976 "to protect one family member from the criminal actions of another family member," wrote Justice Elizabeth Lacy.

"Although Mr. Wade's actions were unconscionable and the impact on the family tragic, no reasonable person could conclude that in 1976 either Mrs. Wade or the board intended that the oral contract regarding protection of the health, safety and welfare of the Wade family encompassed the board's protection of the Wade children from the felonious acts of Mr. Wade," Lacy said.

Mrs. Wade filed a second suit in November 1990, alleging damages to herself by the board in the form of breach of contract, negligence and infliction of emotional distress. The circuit court dismissed all counts but the breach of contract allegation last June.

After an hour-long hearing Jan. 7, Richmond Circuit Court Judge Melvin R. Hughes Jr. granted the board attorneys' motion to enter summary judgment in the second suit -- thus ending a trial of the case before it began. Attorneys for the board and Mrs. Wade had been preparing for a trial scheduled to begin Jan. 25.

Hughes essentially agreed with the board attorneys' contention that the Virginia Supreme Court's ruling in the first case also applied to contractual issues raised in the second suit.

"The main issues at the hearing were what impact the prior ruling of the Supreme Court in the (first) case and some other decisions as well would have on Mrs. Wade's ability to bring her claim," said board attorney Brian Otero.

Hughes indicated no additional legitimate claim remained to be resolved.

The Foreign Mission Board's interim president, Don Kammerdiener, said he was "relieved and gratified" by the ruling.

**Innovative churches seen
as Southern Baptists' future** By Sarah Zimmerman

HOUSTON (BP)--Innovative churches will play a leading role in the future of the Southern Baptist Convention, said speakers during a conference for leaders of such congregations.

At least 1,200 people, from as far away as Georgia, California and Michigan, attended the three-day forum sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and Vision 2000, a network of innovative church leaders.

"The spirit, attendance, interest and evident presence of the Spirit of God at this meeting are far greater than any of us anticipated," said Charles Chaney, HMB vice president for extension.

Innovative churches demonstrate new ways to reach lost people, to build them up in Christ and send them into the ministry, Chaney noted. Such churches become the "research and development department of the denomination" as they test new methods, he said.

"We are in the hinge of history today, and you are leading the way," Chaney told those attending.

With more than half of Southern Baptist churches plateaued or declining, conference leaders said innovation is essential. Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church in Mission Viejo, Calif., told participants, "You are the future of the Southern Baptist Convention." Others called the conference, the first of its kind, a "historic meeting" and a "watershed event."

Churches labeled as innovative are not all alike, but typically their primary focus is attracting unchurched people. Some use drama in their services, sing more choruses than hymns and ask those making commitments to use response cards rather than walk down the aisle.

Churches that break from tradition, however, should not discount the past, said Erwin McManus, director of Global Impact in California and one of the meeting's organizers.

"Leaders of the past have given us a love for the Word and a commitment to seeing people come to know Jesus. We must not give up our heritage and our roots," McManus said.

"God is not a rigid God," he added. "He is creative. God said, 'Behold, I will do a new thing.' You were not called to live in the past but to launch from the past."

Purpose statements are essential road maps for launching into the future, several conference speakers said.

At Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago, the purpose is to bring "unchurched people to the point of being fully devoted, radical followers of Christ," said Bill Hybels, pastor of the non-denominational congregation.

Without a purpose statement, "you are inviting people to deeper levels of frustration," as church members wonder why they are asked to give more, pray more, serve more and commit more, Hybels said.

A clearly defined and effectively communicated purpose statement offers several benefits, Warren said. In addition to building morale, the statement reduces confusion. "Being without a purpose statement is like trying to drive in the fog."

A purpose statement also helps the church concentrate on fulfilling its task rather than trying to do too many activities, he said. Another benefit is cooperation. "People are more eager to join when they know where you're going," Warren said.

Churches that seek to fulfill their purpose statements with innovative methods should question their motives, Warren said.

"Some people are rebels who are mad at the system. If that is their motive, the growth never lasts," he said. "Others have a psychological hang-up, a need to be different, to get attention. Being in the spotlight all the time blinds you."

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Commitment to do whatever it takes to reach a community for Christ is the only proper motivation for being innovative, he said.

Innovative church leaders should abide by three rules, said Warren, whose church is among the fastest-growing in the Southern Baptist Convention.

First, never compare ministries. Comparison causes discouragement when leaders find people doing a better job and pride when leaders find others not doing as well.

Second, never criticize others' methods, and stay positive when being criticized. "My goal is to stand before Jesus and hear him say, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant.' Live your life for an audience of one."

Third, never give up. "Keep your eyes on the goal, and the goal is changed lives."

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Charlotte Teas named editor
of Brotherhood's Lad magazine

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MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission named Charlotte Teas, 48, editor of Lad magazine effective Jan. 4.

She replaces Tim Seanor, who was promoted to national Royal Ambassador director in October.

A native of Richmond, Va., Teas' most recent position was minister of children, singles and outreach for West End Baptist Church in Petersburg, Va.

She holds a master's degree in religious education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

Her experience in Royal Ambassadors includes organizing and developing an RA program in Anniston, Ala., which served 60 boys.

Lad magazine is a Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission publication for Lad Royal Ambassadors, ages 6-8, or grades one through three. Its circulation averaged 56,235 subscribers during 1992.

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