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January 12, 1993

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ALABAMA -- FMB leaders affirm to WMU need for bridge-building.
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FMB search committee
reportedly taps nominee

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
1/12/93

TALLADEGA, Ala. (BP)--The search committee for a new president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has selected a nominee but has agreed not to disclose the individual's name, according to the FMB trustee chairman, who made the statement in a public meeting Jan. 11.

John Jackson, a California pastor who chairs the FMB trustees and is an ex-officio member of the trustee search committee, said the individual was selected during a search committee prayer retreat Jan. 7-9 in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Jackson made the statement during a general session of the Woman's Missionary Union Executive Board the morning of Jan. 11. Jackson and several other FMB representatives were on hand for a dialogue session with WMU leaders.

The 15-member search committee prayed until God revealed to them who should be the next FMB president, Jackson told the WMU Executive Board general session. He said committee members felt that had happened.

The committee plans to present the nominee's name to fellow trustees during their Feb. 8-10 meeting in Richmond or April 19-21 meeting in Columbus, Ohio, Jackson said.

The committee agreed to secrecy concerning the nominee, not even to tell their spouses, said Jackson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Fairfield, Calif. Jackson was out of the city Jan. 12 and unavailable for further comment.

Search committee chairman Joel Gregory of Dallas was contacted, and said, "I don't have any comment at all" on Jackson's statements at the WMU meeting. "Not a bit."

Concerning the prayer meeting, however, Gregory said, "At this point, no comment, beyond the fact that it was a productive time of prayer for 48 hours there at Glen Eyrie (Christian Conference Center) in Colorado Springs." Gregory is former pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas.

The WMU Executive Board general session Jackson addressed was attended by WMU national staff as well as the presidents, executive directors and other staff members of state WMU organizations and other visitors at Shocco Springs Baptist Assembly in Talladega. Jackson's comments were reported by Karen Benson, WMU communications group manager, and memoed to state Baptist paper editors by Susan Doyle, WMU news and information specialist.

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If approved by FMB trustees, the nominee will succeed R. Keith Parks, who retired Oct. 31 last year after 11 years as president of the Southern Baptist Convention's overseas missionary-sending agency.

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Erich Bridges contributed to this report.

Former national WMU leaders
affirm Executive Board changes By Karen Benson

Baptist Press
1/12/93

TALLADEGA, Ala. (BP)--Five of six living national leaders of Woman's Missionary Union offered immediate affirmation Jan. 10 of decisions made earlier that evening by the current WMU Executive Board.

Present during the historic meeting were the two living former national executive directors, Alma Hunt and Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, and the four living former national WMU presidents, Helen Fling, Christine Gregory, Dorothy Sample and Marjorie McCullough. Sample was notified of a death in her family Sunday morning and left the meeting early.

Of the six, McCullough was the only one who served on the 17-member committee that brought the recommendations to the WMU Executive Board.

"I am thrilled to have been a part of the committee," McCullough said. "I'm thrilled for what this means for WMU. ... I hope it will mean an enriched program for missions. We're creative enough. We can make it that way."

It was evident that "nothing but the Holy Spirit" was at work during the meeting, said Hunt. "I know that nothing but the Holy Spirit could have enabled the people in that room to share that vision for the future and to exhibit so little fear or concern for their own selves.

"I felt the strength of commitment of today's leadership," Hunt said. "They were so courageous. I think WMU expanded our view of missions and opportunities to support missions. I shared in the feeling of excitement during the discussion as leaders today faced up to the opportunities and responsibilities incumbent upon us in these times."

"I am convinced that God will never forsake us as long as we stick to our purpose -- which we have affirmed," Hunt said.

Fling agreed: "It has been fun for me to watch the women -- to see them in action, to see the new thinking with the same kind of commitment to missions that there has always been."

When it comes to the "how-to questions" of how the recommendations will be fleshed out, Fling said she isn't worried.

"I have a great recognition of the creativity of the Holy Spirit, and I have a great appreciation of the creativity of women. I believe there is no reason to be fearful.

"We'll find new opportunities and new excitement in our future, because God did lead in our organization. He is in charge," Fling said.

The decisions made at this meeting continue almost 105 years of "working toward this inclusiveness -- to broadening the tent," said Crumpler.

"It seems to me, that even though we had dynamite thrown into our laps, this is not just something we've decided to do overnight. We've been working toward this for almost 105 years," she said.

It was meaningful and significant to her, Crumpler said, that the current leadership wanted the former national leaders present for the meeting. "There has been such an orderly transition of leadership in WMU through the years that is really a unique thing -- something you don't find at other agencies," she said.

The actions taken by the board have "not changed a single principle" of WMU, Crumpler said. "We've just updated and expanded what we've always done." Women involved in WMU in the churches "will find in WMU their finest hour for impacting missions" as a result of these actions, Crumpler predicted.

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Gregory agreed. "I am just thrilled to death to be a part of this," she said. "This says we're Woman's Missionary Union and we're going to continue to be Woman's Missionary Union."

"I don't think the future has been stated in this. It just opens the door for the future," she predicted. "But I believe in humanity. And I think people will realize the seriousness with which WMU goes about its business."

Even though she is retired from WMU, Hunt said she is more committed than ever to Woman's Missionary Union.

"You can retire from a position or office, but you can never retire from a commitment," she said. "My commitment today to Woman's Missionary Union is as deep today as it has ever been."

On reflection, Fling said, Yogi Berra, the Hall-of-Fame New York Yankee player and manager, probably said it better than she could when he said:

"The future ain't what it used to be!"

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FMB leaders affirm to WMU
need for bridge-building

By Karen Benson

Baptist Press
1/12/93

TALLADEGA, Ala. (BP)--During several sessions with the national Executive Board of Woman's Missionary Union Jan. 11, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees and administrators called for bridge-building efforts on the part of Southern Baptists.

During a morning session, FMB trustee chairman John Jackson and trustees Karen Gilbert, Phyllis Randall and Bill Blanchard brought greetings to the WMU leaders. The invitation to the trustees to join the WMU board meeting resulted from earlier dialogues with WMU leaders. WMU leaders have been invited, in turn, to the FMB trustee meeting in February in Richmond.

Jackson said he already has put a dialogue session with WMU leaders on the agenda for that meeting. "I think we will need that to clarify and alleviate any misperceptions there might be" as a result of WMU board action during the week, he said.

"Perceptions, whether valid or not, can be very traumatic," Jackson said. "I tend to be a peacemaker. I like to throw water, not gasoline, on a fire."

Jackson told the board he wants to see a continuation and a strengthening of the WMU-FMB relationship -- not a deterioration.

Although that relationship has been "damaged some," he said, "just because it has been damaged doesn't mean you should keep jabbing the wound. Our desire is to heal any damaged relationships and to heal the wounds.

"We trust that as we look forward ... that five years from now we will look back and say that had we not joined together in a cooperative spirit, we would be very far apart. I think there are great things ahead."

During an afternoon FMB report, Don Kammerdiener, interim FMB president, asserted Southern Baptists are at a critical juncture and stand in need of a "new bridge for a new era" to span the centuries.

"We stand in need of a bridge firmly anchored in the past and firmly anchored in the future," he said. "We need a bridge that is loyal to our heritage as Southern Baptists."

In the process of building bridges, "We must make certain that the place of anchorage is secure ... Missions is the foundation of the bridge."

Bridges need a structure "adequate to the task," Kammerdiener said. "We at the Foreign Mission Board need to be administratively effective. We must liberate energy so that the structure becomes a funnel, and not a bottleneck."

Bridges also must be wide enough to accommodate "very heavy traffic," he said. "It could be said that we've not had a bridge that was wide enough. I'd like to see us provide a bridge that is more user-friendly," Kammerdiener said.

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He offered four suggestions for Southern Baptists' missions bridges to be pointed in the right direction:

1) A "fruitful encounter with Islam." Most of Christianity's advances, Kammerdiener said, have come from among primitive peoples, not from among the great religious systems of the world. "Our challenge is to learn to communicate in terms the Islamic people can understand so that they can come to see in the person of Jesus Christ the solution to their salvation needs."

A fruitful encounter with Islam will likely involve a "power encounter," Kammerdiener said. "We must not make the mistake of thinking that we're going to people without a great cultural heritage," he said. Islamic peoples have a wealth of history, culture and ethical commitment, a heritage "that in many ways is superior to the same period of our own Christian background," he said. "We will have to be at our best when we confront them with the gospel."

Backing such efforts will be a "viable prayer ministry" already in place, Kammerdiener said. "During the last 10 years, we've come through the best praying for missions that we've had in history," he said.

"We've come to intercede for peoples of the world. We must continue to pray knowledgeably. We must continue to pray for those points for which we have contacts. That includes the periphery of the Islamic empire, including those who have left their territories and have come to live here with us."

2) Southern Baptists must finish the job of "nationalization of institutions we have established around the world," Kammerdiener said.

"There is something about us that feels good when we say we support this hospital, or that seminary, or some institution." But there comes a time when Southern Baptists need to relinquish control of these institutions to the national Christians, he asserted.

"It's similar to me standing up here and bragging about still supporting my 35-year-old child," Kammerdiener said. "There comes a time when you need to let go."

3) Bridges must also point in the direction of an "appropriate focus on the former Marxist countries," Kammerdiener said.

For example, there are at least 250,000 Baptists or Christians in the republics of the former Soviet Union, he said. "And they have been there for 60 and 70 years. They not only have survived, but have triumphed during the most difficult trials of their lives. Those of us who have not learned how to resist the negative and evil influences ... of our culture won't do anything of long-lasting value unless we go first to them as learners."

4) Southern Baptists need bridges pointing "toward a reaffirmation that our mandate is to the whole world," Kammerdiener said.

"I think the Foreign Mission Board will find the mind of Christ if we reaffirm the mandate to the whole world," he said. That world encompasses areas ready for "harvesting" the gospel, areas considered "traditional" Christian or evangelized areas and areas of the world where people have never heard the gospel.

Recalling the movie "The Bridge Over the River Kwai" in which those who built the bridge for one purpose later blew up the bridge they had just built, Kammerdiener said, "God forbid that we be bridge-builders, and then turn around and destroy the bridge that was built for a greater purpose."

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Movement and change are key
to following God, WMU told

By Susan Doyle

Baptist Press
1/12/93

TALLADEGA, Ala. (BP)--In following God's leadership, Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union should expect movement and change, said the national WMU president.

Carolyn Miller addressed the national WMU Executive Board during its Jan. 9-13 meeting at Shocco Springs Baptist Assembly.

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"We as WMU need to be on a journey with God, and while we don't (always) know exactly where we are going, we need to be moving," Miller said.

Miller cited examples from the Bible such as Abram's obedience to God when told to pick up his possessions and move. God didn't give Abram the details in the beginning, but because Abram was obedient the end result was an even better land, she said.

As it was for Abram, the key ingredient to following God for WMU must be faith, Miller said.

"To have faith in the one who is making decisions about the road we are to travel means we need to have faith in the Lord who is giving us directions," Miller said.

Having faith will mean that WMU will journey forward, Miller said, but without forsaking some age-old traditions.

"Our purpose in WMU is never going to change, but the way we go about doing missions -- when we do it, how we do it -- may change," Miller said.

WMU may have to make some creative changes in how it does missions if it is to impact the local church to keep missions alive as well as impact a lost and hurting world, she said.

"Clearly doors are opening at an astounding rate for missions responses," she said. WMU must make the most of opportunities to share the gospel with everyone in the world, she said.

"I believe the task of winning this world to Christ is too great to draw parameters -- 'we will do this, and you can do that.'

"I challenge WMU to not draw lines. I challenge the Southern Baptist Convention to not draw lines."

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Former Missouri politician
takes Southwest Baptist helm

Baptist Press
1/12/93

BOLIVAR, Mo. (BP)--Roy Blunt, who has finished eight years as Missouri secretary of state, has assumed the presidency of Missouri Baptists' largest college, Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar.

Blunt, a 1970 SBU graduate, began full-time duties at the college Jan. 12, the day after leaving his office in state government. The Baptist layman was an unsuccessful candidate for governor in last August's Republican primary.

Blunt, an SBU trustee since 1985, was unanimously elected as SBU's 23rd president by trustees in a special meeting Dec. 30 and given a three-year contract.

SBU, with 2,000 students on its Bolivar campus, has weathered difficult times in recent years. It has been without a president since October 1990. And, last August, trustees voted 31-1 to dismiss Chancellor James L. Sells, alleging he had made "a deliberate attempt ... to interfere" with the selection of a new university president. Three other university employees were dismissed for the same reason.

At the time, the search committee was recommending another individual, and Blunt discounted immediate interest in the university's presidency.

After his election, Blunt voiced confidence in taking SBU's helm, saying, "I'm used to dealing in a very public atmosphere. I'm used to people asking difficult questions and expecting answers."

Blunt also is a current trustee at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City. He holds honorary doctorates from SBU and Missouri Valley College and a master's degree in history from Southwest Missouri State University. Before entering political life in 1973, Blunt had taught history at Drury College in Springfield, Mo.

He and his wife, Roseann, have three children.

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Search committee chairman, Walter Rarrick, a lay member of First Baptist Church in Springfield, said, "We believe with Roy Blunt being a young, bright, excellent leader, a good administrator with strong ties with Southern Baptists throughout the state, the next decade could be the best yet for SBU."

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Art Toalston, Bob Terry and Tamara Heitz-Peek contributed to this report.

Church dies to give new life
to its inner-city ministries

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
1/12/93

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--East Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., died in order to keep its ministries alive.

The 151-year-old congregation held its final worship service the last Sunday of December. But its ministries to poor residents of downtown Louisville's medical district will grow.

That's because the congregation put its assets into an endowment to support East Louisville Ministries, a new coalition of six churches to serve the spiritual and physical needs of people whose run-down homes and housing projects sit in the shadow of some of the region's finest hospitals.

The new organization stands in a long line of the church's ministries in inner-city Louisville, said longtime members.

The church began on Chestnut Street in 1842, amidst a bustling community of German and Irish immigrants -- laboring folk and among the city's poorest.

Through the generations, the church maintained physical ministries as well as worship and spiritual training. Many of East's pastors were synonymous with community ministry.

The church's final era -- marked by unprecedented ministry activity and membership decline -- began in the late 1950s, recalled member Charles Barnes.

"Urban renewal moved into the medical center area," he said. "If buildings couldn't be brought up to codes, they had to be torn down."

The church couldn't afford to refurbish its old building, but it teamed up with Long Run Baptist Association to maintain a ministry outpost on the same corner.

"The church made a key decision to remain in the inner city, as opposed to moving out, as other churches had done," Barnes noted.

The association constructed an office building, and the church rented space. Part of the building was used for a ministry center. Through the years, the church, association, Kentucky Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist Home Mission Board helped support a model program of ministry, explained Bill Kaufman, the church's final interim pastor and a former home missionary who was pastor/director there in the 1970s.

The ministries the small church sponsored include:

- Day care for children of medical workers.
- A Baptist Student Union at the University of Louisville's medical and dental schools.
- Teen clubs in the Clarksdale housing project.
- Food and clothing closets.
- A chaplaincy program at nearby hospitals.
- Work with a substance abuse detention center.
- An Alcoholics Anonymous chapter.
- Vacation Bible Schools, backyard Bible clubs and Big A clubs.
- An infant resource center, which last year served 1,500 families.
- A ministry to senior citizens in Dosker Manor, three high-rise buildings with 703 total apartments, that still continues.

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Despite the high level of ministry through the era, East's membership continued to decline as the number of homes in the community dwindled.

"Urban renewal -- houses were bought up and bulldozed down" to make way for medical buildings, Kaufman recalled. "Children who went to school came home to find houses next door literally bulldozed down."

The church managed to hold on until a couple of years ago, when Long Run Association decided its property was more valuable than its space in the building.

The association decided to move its offices and felt it needed to charge the church commercial rates for rent or sell the building, Barnes said. The church couldn't afford \$6,000 a month in rent, so it decided to sell the parking lot it owned adjacent to the building and move on.

Beginning in August 1991, it held its Sunday morning and Wednesday evening services in First Lutheran Church, rent-free. It held its Sunday evening services and conducted its community ministries out of a house it bought nearby.

Along the way, the church had to determine its future, Barnes noted. It could spend its \$300,000 from the sale of the parking lot on a new building and struggle to grow a church in a neighborhood whose population still is declining. Or it could move its membership and invest the money in ministries in its old neighborhood.

The church worked through that issue last year with former pastor Jim Holladay and decided to separate the ministries from the church and try to maintain the ministries.

That spawned creation of East Louisville Ministries, a Christian service coalition through which East members will work with five churches that remain in the community. The \$300,000 is being invested as seed money for the project, and the old home East owns is the first headquarters building.

Meanwhile, Holladay became pastor of Clifton Baptist Church, a congregation several miles away founded by East 100 years ago. Late this fall, the East members decided to disband and move their memberships to Clifton.

They stressed they weren't driven merely by Holladay's decision to move, noting they already had confronted the decision to build a building or continue the ministries.

But the decision to join with Clifton also was natural, they added. Holladay, who served East in one capacity or another for 19 years, was the natural choice to continue ministry to East's many aged homebound members. In addition, Clifton already had worked alongside East in its ministry to senior citizens. "They know us, and we know them," Barnes said. "And there is a legacy of commitment to the inner city that will stand."

Still, the final act of discontinuing their own services was difficult, the members said.

"It was one of the hardest things I've ever done as a pastor," Kaufman noted. "But this transition was a lot easier because of the harmony of the people than it would have been in a big church with a split," added Elmo Martin, chairman of East's deacons.

Holladay praised East's maturity and commitment. "This is a very positive response to the church's ongoing sense of call to a ministry in the downtown area," he said. "For the congregation to be willing to look at an alternative, such as the consortium of churches, is both creative and bold.

"East began to realize the wisest thing to do was to be a catalyst for other churches to be involved and connected with the neighborhood in a way East could not have done on its own. In a sense, the legacy continues."

And that pleases members of Clifton, said Harold Omer, the church's deacon chairman. "Clifton is looking forward to the membership coming in to join us," he said. "The numbers are not that great to cause any big change. We're treating them like any members coming in to join us.

"East was our mother church. It's like a mother coming home to her children."

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Chapman: SBC needs clarification from WMU of its new directions," dated 1/11/93, please replace the last paragraph with the following paragraph:

Williams, meanwhile, commended WMU leaders "for their willingness to deal with their future directions and affirmed that Brotherhood's future focus will continue to be on encouraging every Southern Baptist believer to be involved in sharing the gospel of Christ with everybody, everywhere."

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Charlotte Teas named editor of Brotherhood's Lad magazine," dated 1/8/93, please make the following correction:

In paragraph two, note she is a native of Russellville, Ala., not Richmond, Va.

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