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Clinton meets with ministers;
nation's moral issues discussed By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
1/15/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--Fifteen ministers, most of whom were Southern Baptists, met with President-elect Bill Clinton eight days before his inauguration at a luncheon which included a "forthright exchange" on moral issues, one participant said later.

The two-hour meeting Jan. 12 at the Governor's Mansion in Little Rock was organized by Clinton's pastor, Rex Horne of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock.

Among the 11 Southern Baptist participants were Adrian Rogers, a former Southern Baptist Convention president. Others who attended included popular author and preacher Chuck Swindoll and super-church pastor Bill Hybels.

In initiating the meeting, Horne said he had "no agenda, no motive other than to have (Clinton) meet some of these people and have some of them meet him." Some of the participants, however, openly expressed their disagreement with Clinton on some of his positions.

There was "some good, forthright exchange in which the participants shared with Mr. Clinton our concerns on moral issues, in which he gave expression to his own perspective on those same issues," said Bill Merrell, director of the Comanche-Cotton Baptist Association in Lawton, Okla.

Abortion and homosexual rights, Merrell said, were "probably the two big-ticket items" but tax exemptions, the family and the necessity for spiritual guidance and direction also were discussed.

Clinton has expressed his support for abortion and homosexual rights, positions opposed by resolutions at recent Southern Baptist annual meetings and by most evangelical Christians. About a dozen state Southern Baptist conventions last fall adopted resolutions voicing opposition to Clinton's positions on the two issues.

"I felt that Mr. Clinton was generally open and willing to speak candidly and listen attentively to our concerns on the issues," Merrell said. "I believe that evangelical Christians should come together and pray devotedly as we're commanded in Scripture for our president and our country.

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"I believe we need to get beyond the campaign mode and use those resources, both spiritual and civic, which God has made available to us.

"We, in fact, agreed and did pray for his safety, his character and the character of those who lead, for his family and for his leadership as president," Merrell said.

Horne had suggested the meeting to Clinton shortly after the election but it was not set until two evenings before the luncheon.

If Clinton "had not pushed for it being done, it would not have happened this last week" before the Jan. 20 inauguration, Horne said.

The purpose of the meeting was not to try to "change (Clinton's) mind on any issue," Horne said. In arranging the meeting, Horne said he did not "draw limits on what was to be discussed." It was a step in "developing some kind of relationship" between Clinton and these ministers, Horne said. "The main thing that I wanted to come out of (the meeting) was that these men (would) know a little bit more" about Clinton.

It also was to "let him know these folks out here were going to be praying for him," Horne said.

Southern Baptist participants included some who have been identified with the conservative resurgence in the convention and some who have not. In addition to Horne, Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in suburban Memphis, and Merrell, the Southern Baptists attending were Ron Lewis, pastor of Richardson Heights Baptist Church in Richardson, Tex.; James Pleitz, pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas; Roger Freeman, pastor of First Baptist Church in New Orleans; Wendell Estep, pastor of First Baptist Church in Columbia, S.C.; Randel Everett, pastor of First Baptist Church in Pensacola, Fla.; Ken Branam, pastor of Plymouth Park Baptist Church in Irving, Tex.; Stan Paris, pastor of First Baptist Church in Hope, Ark., (Clinton's childhood home); and David Napier, associate pastor at Immanuel.

Others attending were Max Lucado, author and pastor of a Church of Christ congregation in San Antonio; Ed Matthews, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Little Rock; Hybels and Swindoll. Hillary and Chelsea Clinton are members of First Methodist.

Hybels is pastor of the innovative Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago. Swindoll is pastor of First Evangelical Free Church in Fullerton, Cal.

The people he invited are "friends and people I respected," Horne said.

He tried to invite current SBC President Ed Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston, but was unable to reach him after the meeting was scheduled, Horne said.

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EDITORS' NOTE: At the outset of the Clinton-Gore administration, Baptist Press offers a five-part look at what the next four years may hold for America: spiritually, on the international front, economically, on the abortion issue and the issue of homosexual rights.

HMB's Blackaby: America's future
depends more on prayer than Clinton

By Tammi Ledbetter

Baptist Press
1/15/93

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Beyond many Southern Baptists' qualms about Bill Clinton's views on abortion and homosexual rights, another issue will be far more crucial to America's well-being, a Southern Baptist home missions leader said.

It's the prayer life of Southern Baptists and fellow evangelicals.

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Henry Blackaby, Home Mission Board spiritual awakening director, said the affiliation of the president-elect and Vice President-elect Al Gore with Southern Baptist churches will keep the eyes of America on the denomination.

"I am convinced," Blackaby said, "that America is about to see clearly and unmistakably the prayer life of Southern Baptists and evangelicals more than the integrity of the recently elected politicians."

Home missions also will take on a more urgent role in America's future, said Blackaby, who has voiced his concerns in a number of settings since Clinton's election.

Reviewing the campaign's political rhetoric, Blackaby said no one came close "to giving answers to any of the problems we are facing as a nation."

"Our nation without question is morally bankrupt and we're in an absolute spiritual emergency. Nothing short of a mighty, mighty sweeping of the breath of God in revival will ever turn our nation around."

Blackaby reminded Southern Baptists and other evangelicals bemoaning the election results that "the God we serve is the God of history. He is not a God outside of history. He is the one who is shaping history."

Blackaby noted, "During these days and weeks many have had occasion to wonder about God's involvement. But let me suggest to you, very firmly, that the Scriptures indicate clearly that those who rule over us are there by divine appointment. It has nothing to do with whether you agree or don't agree. It has to do with your understanding of God's relationship to history. It may well be that God is giving us an opportunity as a people to shape history."

In order to assume that role, Blackaby said Southern Baptists must recover a sense of eternity and recognize their own accountability before God.

"We no longer make decisions with time in mind," Blackaby stated, referring to Jesus' admonition to invest in eternal treasure, instead of making decisions based on present circumstances.

"Are you watching the events of these days with a clear awareness of the orchestrating hand and activity of God -- especially toward his people?" Blackaby asked.

He said Christians get too caught up in a political focus, thinking God is merely a passive observer. "From Scripture, let me assure you, he is not! He has always been the one orchestrating history, from the beginning right up to our day."

By rediscovering a sense of accountability to God, Blackaby said, Baptists can become intercessors in the context of present-day history. As God reveals his plan for America, Blackaby asked, "Could he trust you in his presence with what he is about to do? Do you already have a base of confident expectation in what you pray? Or have you been reacting and responding 'politically' rather than as a child of God in kingdom activity?"

Blackaby urged Christians to pray "with a sense of mission and expectation that what we do next in the most holy place in prayer will make a bigger difference in America and my world than all the politicians elected to office." He added that "one person God has access to could make a bigger difference in America through intercession than any other factor."

"Prayer is not merely a spiritual discipline," Blackaby insisted. "It is a crucial necessity for the shaping of our future. If we will not pray, America will not survive."

As Southern Baptists watch the new administration, Blackaby urged them to lay aside political preferences and be reminded by Romans 13 that "everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except which God has established ..."

Blackaby also cited the command for all the earth to fear and revere the Lord in Psalm 33:8-22.

"I see anger at the election," he said, "but not fear of God."

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The psalmist also tells how the Lord "foils the plans of the nation" and "thwarts the purpose of the people," Blackaby recounted. But soon the psalmist adds, "The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations."

"If you do not believe this Scripture was true in the elections, you will be angry and frustrated and bewildered," Blackaby said. By reading a few verses further, he said, Christians can find hope and confidence in God's unfailing love.

Blackaby insisted Southern Baptists "can have any president we're willing to pray him to become."

He said he draws encouragement from knowing that Clinton called his pastor, Rex Horne of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, Ark., following the election to request prayer. "He put everybody out of the room and for the next 35 minutes they went before God on their faces in intercession and prayer.

"God has given Southern Baptists access and an opportunity to let God work through his people to change a nation," Blackaby said. "This is not a time for sitting aside and being a critic. It is a time to say, 'Heavenly Father, show me how to be involved, what you need and want to do in our lives.'"

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Bill Clinton's foreign policy:
Will it help or hurt missions? By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press
1/15/93

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The world is too much with us, said the poet.

Bill Clinton probably agrees.

The polls say Clinton was elected president partly because he pledged to spend more time -- a lot more time -- on U.S. domestic problems than did foreign policy specialist George Bush. But he might not have the luxury to keep his promise in a world still reeling from cataclysmic change.

American troops in Somalia. Allied jets bombing a defiant Iraq. Atrocities in Bosnia and the threat of a regional Balkan war. Near-chaos in big chunks of the former Soviet Union, and the danger of nuclear weapons falling through the cracks into the hands of terrorists. Thirty-eight religious wars in progress worldwide, by one estimate.

All await the attention of the new leader of the only remaining superpower.

How Clinton responds might affect how Southern Baptists and other American Christians carry out their ministries around the world -- and how they are received.

What Clinton will do in any number of key foreign policy areas is almost anyone's guess. Beyond "standing foursquare" with Bush on Somalia and Iraq, and backpedaling on his campaign pledge to open the U.S. door wider to Haitian boat people, he hasn't revealed many specifics.

"I don't know what Clinton's going to do" abroad, admitted Tom Warrington, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's associate director for Europe. "I don't think anybody does. I'm not sure he knows. Give him six months."

The current flurry of military activity, the U.S. budget deficit and the American public's cry of "let's concentrate on our own problems for awhile" may prevent Clinton politically from doing much overseas. The United States may continue to be the muscle behind certain United Nations resolutions, but Americans are displaying little enthusiasm for being the "world's cop."

For example, Clinton probably will heed Bush's reluctance to get directly involved militarily in Bosnia or other parts of former Yugoslavia, Warrington predicted -- despite the terrible brutality unfolding there and the real threat of a wider conflict that could involve Albania, Greece and Turkey.

"(Bush) had trouble getting support just to go in and distribute food in Somalia," Warrington observed. "To actively involve ourselves in a military conflict in Yugoslavia that could end up like Vietnam ... Clinton would think long and hard before he did it. He could embed himself in something he couldn't get out of for his whole term."

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But the reluctance of America and its allies to save Muslims in Bosnia from being murdered and raped by so-called "Christian" Serbs already has infuriated Muslims in many countries. Why, they ask, does the West enforce United Nations sanctions and "no fly" zones in Iraq but not in Bosnia?

Meanwhile, Muslim fighters from Iran, Afghanistan and elsewhere have descended on Bosnia to protect Muslims there. And they bring bullets, not sympathetic platitudes.

Muslim anger over what they see as a hypocritical double standard could fuel more attacks on Christians and Christian work in many Islamic areas -- primarily in the Mideast and Asia but also eventually in Bosnia itself.

"The people who are doing the slaughtering and raping of (Bosnian) women in these (Serbian prison) camps are basically of Christian background, and the women being raped are Muslim," explained Jim Maroney, director of the Foreign Mission Board's Global Desk information arm. "It doesn't take a brilliant person to realize what kind of reception Christians are going to get when all this is over with and they go in there and try to witness to Muslims."

Islamic influence also grows stronger daily in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, which was a Muslim bastion before communism.

"As these republics and new countries are emerging, Muslim forces are going to assert themselves even more," said Mike Stroope of Cooperative Services International, the Southern Baptist aid organization. "Especially throughout Central Asia, they are vying for this territory which has come up for grabs."

Southern Baptist workers in several Central Asian republics have been directly threatened. Elsewhere their presence has been challenged as Muslim interests gain political influence.

Clinton's "look homeward" emphasis also could bring "the danger of neo-isolationism that would be very attractive with a staggering debt," added Clark Scanlon, who directs Foreign Mission Board research and planning. "That could bring a mood in the country that would make the climate for foreign missions more difficult."

But Clinton also is expected to renew the call for human rights championed by Jimmy Carter in countries with dictatorial regimes. He's bringing many former Carter aides aboard, including Warren Christopher, his secretary of state-designate.

Some nations and leaders would applaud a foreign policy based on clear human rights ideals, foreign mission specialists agree. And religious believers being persecuted for their faith would rejoice. Their plight "won't be an issue if our government and others choose not to make it an issue," said Stroope.

Other nations -- China among them -- will react with anger if the United States holds them accountable for what they see as internal matters. How such reactions might affect American Christian workers in those nations remains to be seen.

Carter's human rights policy "pleased some folks very much who focus on civil liberties, especially in countries that have right-wing governments," observed Don Kammerdiener, interim Foreign Mission Board president. "His approach did little or nothing to focus on human rights and civil liberties under left-wing tyranny. That washes out, frankly. And because of our stance as a mission board to try to distance ourselves from policies of the U.S. government, we tried to continue our work in both extremes."

Clinton has something else in common with Carter: Both are Southern Baptists, as is Al Gore. With his open testimony of being a "born-again" Christian, Carter raised national and international awareness of evangelicals and Southern Baptists as perhaps no one else has besides Billy Graham. That alone aided Southern Baptists' efforts abroad, missions leaders say.

The new president doesn't seem to be quite as vocal about his faith, but foreign leaders will be well aware of his religion.

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"It will be recognized that (Clinton and Gore) are Southern Baptists and members of churches," Scanlon said. "As they go on visits and so forth that will be known fact and there will be some interest in that faith because there are local representatives of the religion of these men."

But such recognition can be a two-edged sword, Scanlon cautioned, in places where anti-Americanism is on the rise.

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Clinton's economic initiatives
have implications for Christians By James Dotson

Baptist Press
1/15/93

ATLANTA (BP)--The sign in the Clinton/Gore headquarters became near legend during and after the 1992 presidential campaign. The words, "The economy, stupid," were a constant reminder of what the campaign had determined was of most importance in their quest for the presidency.

They were right. The deteriorating state of the economy indeed was foremost in the minds of the American populace. And although the months since the election have brought the fresh assurance that recovery is in fact well under way, economic issues remain at the fore.

Short term, President-elect Bill Clinton faces a mandate to shore up what remains a lackluster recovery. Long-term, the stresses of the rising deficit -- as Clinton has realized increasingly since the election -- leaves little room for government to spur growth through spending.

The solutions to the economic malaise have kept economists and fiscal strategists busy for months, and on the eve of inauguration the details of the action plan continue to shift. Regardless of what is done, the issues involved touch not only the pocketbook but the heart of the Christian mission -- concern for one's neighbor and wise stewardship of resources provided by God.

"All Americans should be concerned about the economy because it is the economy and its growth that allows us to as a society to take care of those who are unable to take care of themselves and invest in human capital, both in our children and other people's children," said Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Clinton's approach to fixing the economy has been a holistic one encompassing almost every area of the administration, with goals of cutting unnecessary spending and increasing "investment" in areas that would produce long-term growth.

The overriding concern for many Americans has been the long-term drag on any hope for economic recovery: an annual federal deficit approaching \$400 million and an accumulated debt near \$4 trillion. Some conservative voices, including Southern Baptist author Larry Burkett, have predicted an economic collapse as inevitable as a result of the strain.

R. Albert Mohler Jr., theologian and editor of the Georgia Baptist newsjournal The Christian Index, said the deficit issue is but one example of how the economy serves as a "moral barometer" of the nation, noting that Scripture speaks often of money in relation to stewardship, greed and other issues.

"Debt was once seen as a national evil, something to be avoided at all costs except during an emergency such as wartime. Now, America has become accustomed to a deficit economy, without taking into consideration the morality that is involved in borrowing from successive generations, and in fact impoverishing successive generations with a debt load."

Robert Parham, director of the Nashville-based Baptist Center for Ethics, agreed: "Who will pay the debt off? Will it be the present generation, or our children? So that's why it's a justice issue," he said.

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Clinton's early choices of leadership, particularly deficit-hawk Leon Panetta to run the Office of Management and Budget, have signaled a renewed emphasis on deficit reduction as a key component of his economic policy. But that emphasis also has meant some rethinking of other components targeting an "investment deficit" that Clinton and his advisors feel has left the country with an insufficient foundation to shift economic resources and produce growth.

Targeted are such infrastructure improvements as transportation, a national information network, development of new environmental technology and conversion of manufacturing ability from defense to commercial industry.

Also included are programs aimed at "Putting People First," the title of his national economic strategy released during the campaign. These especially target inner cities, making them eligible for grants, tax incentives and other means of spurring investment. Such programs as a National Police Corps also are promised, allowing as many as 100,000 unemployed veterans and active military personnel to put in time helping curb the nation's crime problems. Reduced crime, it is believed in Clinton's broad-based approach, would contribute to the overall goal of boosting economic growth.

Parham said such investment is a part of an economic ethic espoused by John Wesley, that Christians should "earn all they can, save all they can and give all they can."

Investing in the people, he said, helps them "earn all they can."

"A Christian ethic at this point is one that underscores the need to meet human need and to enable human beings to help themselves rather than pouring resources into things that are not productive or constructive," he said.

The other two areas of Wesley's ethic, Parham said, can be boosted by government encouragement of saving through such programs as tax-deferred savings plans and encouragement of giving through continuing tax incentives for charitable contributions.

Another part of Clinton's package is welfare reform -- providing incentives for individuals receiving government assistance to work.

Land said one of his concerns is that this strategy -- a recommendation of the policy-making arm of the Democratic Leadership Council -- is not demonstrated in his appointment to the office of secretary of Health and Human Services. That appointee is Donna Shalala, a health official from Clinton's home state who Land said is part of the Democratic establishment that has supported the traditional approach to welfare.

"What I'm saying is we as a society have been promoting a system through the inner city through welfare that is a socialist system that has been shown to fail; it makes people dependent on bureaucrats," he said. "Not only do we have an obligation to people who need help, but we as a nation cannot continue to lose the human resources that are wasting away in ... a welfare system that penalizes people for taking responsibility and for not working."

The theological premise that humans are sinful by nature has a lot to do with the role of government, Land said, and it is one reason why free market capitalism has been the most successful economic system. It acknowledges that mankind will look out for his own interests by providing checks and balances between labor and capitalists, with government regulating the activities of the two.

Another area of Clinton's economic plan that relates to Christian stewardship is Clinton's environmental agenda, according to Parham.

"We've got to figure out somewhere when we measure the health of the economy what role environmental problems play," he said, adding that the correct balance must be found.

"Christians must contribute to the effort to get beyond the logjam created by those who say that pro-growth is anti-environmental and pro-environment is anti-business," he said. "There's been a debate in this country that the two are mutually exclusive. What we've got to do is transcend that."

Pro-choice movement gains
edge as Clinton takes over

By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP)--When Bill Clinton takes the oath of office Jan. 20, his ascendancy to the presidency will complete a dramatic shift in the war over America's most volatile social issue, abortion.

In seven months' time, the pro-life movement will have watched the Supreme Court, consisting of five justices appointed by pro-life presidents, dash its long-anticipated hopes for reversal of the 20-year-old decision legalizing abortion and the White House, its last defense against more liberal abortion policy, surrendered to an unsympathetic president.

Some even are describing the abortion war as over, at least for now, with the pro-choice movement the victor.

Not so, according to Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"The people who are saying that suffer from historical myopia," said Land, citing the abolitionist and civil rights movements as examples of grass-roots struggles which eventually succeeded after appearing to be failures. "The pro-life movement in this country is not in the struggle for a day or a week or a year or a decade or a generation but for all time until we prevail."

For now, a hopeful pro-choice movement will see just how much of its agenda it can enact with allies in control of Congress and the White House, as well as a Supreme Court which has shown itself committed to upholding a woman's right to abortion. Even so, abortion advocates may find it difficult to totally fulfill their wish list.

Clinton, who as a Southern Baptist is a member of one of the country's most strongly pro-life denominations, will be able to grant some of those wishes on his own.

He has pledged to overturn the Title X pro-life rules, thereby permitting federal funds again to go to family planning clinics promoting abortion. Observers on both sides expect him also to act quickly to rescind the moratorium on federal support of fetal tissue transplantation research and to lift the Food and Drug Administration's ban on the importation of RU 486, the French abortion pill.

Clinton also could order the removal of the ban on abortions, except to save the mother's life, at overseas military medical facilities and the cancellation of the policy prohibiting aid to international family planning organizations which perform or promote abortions.

All of these and more are endorsed by the National Organization for Women in its "100 day executive action plan."

To achieve their ultimate desire, however, abortion advocates will need the cooperation of both the new president and Congress. The Freedom of Choice Act is the newest battle in the United States' abortion wars. For abortion proponents, it is a dream bill. For abortion opponents, it is their worst nightmare.

Abortion supporters contend FOCA is no more than a legislative version of the 1973 Roe v. Wade opinion legalizing abortion. In the 1989 Webster v. Reproductive Health Services and 1992 Planned Parenthood v. Casey opinions, the Supreme Court ruled Roe did allow for some restrictions on abortion.

Pro-lifers argue FOCA is a no-restrictions, abortion-on-demand-at-any-stage-of-pregnancy bill. Not even state statutes outlawing sex-selection abortions and requiring parental consent or notice for minors' abortions will stand under FOCA, pro-life organizations say. The American Civil Liberties Union even agrees laws mandating waiting periods and information for women about fetal development and abortion alternatives would be wiped out by FOCA.

Though pro-choicers have a majority in both the Senate and House of Representatives, pro-lifers are hopeful FOCA can be derailed.

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The vote in the House will be "very, very close," said Maggie Wynn, executive director of the House Pro-life Caucus. It is her observation "more and more members are seeing how extreme the bill really is."

There are even pro-choice members who "do not consider pro-choice to be pro-FOCA," Wynn said.

"I'm not sure, as bad as things have gotten in Congress, that even this Congress is willing to accept this bill in its most radical form," said James A. Smith, the Christian Life Commission's director of government relations.

Not only will the radical nature of the bill help pro-lifers, Smith said, but the new president's role in FOCA may aid them as well.

"Clinton, I do not believe, will make this a major agenda item for him to push, at least if he's as wise a politician as I think he is," Smith said.

Clinton, however, has promised to sign FOCA if it reaches his desk.

The new president's pro-choice views are matched by those of the new vice president, Al Gore, who, like Clinton, is a member of a Southern Baptist church. Both expressed pro-life sentiments earlier in their political careers but since have moved fully into the pro-choice camp. Gore even held an 84 percent pro-life voting record while a member of the House from 1976 to 1984, according to the National Right to Life Committee.

How do pro-life Southern Baptists, with two from their own denomination at the top of the executive branch, respond to the crisis over the abortion issue?

They should pray for the president, vice president, all elected leaders and judges, the CLC's Land said. They should be "salt" and "light" in society, providing alternatives to abortion, adopting babies and educating and influencing others, Land said.

Many pro-life organizations are refocusing their efforts on ministry to women with crisis pregnancies. Some, like Operation Rescue, expect larger numbers of persons to participate in civil disobedience to stop abortion. Other groups continue to work on the public-policy front in an effort to slow the liberalization of abortion laws.

Though the pro-choice movement certainly holds the upper hand now, pro-lifers generally seem intent on remaining in the struggle until victory is attained.

"I will certainly do everything in my power to persuade Americans to not heed the advise of the surgeon general-designate, Joycelyn Elders, who has told us that we need to get over our love affair with the fetus," Land said. "I remain confident that in the long term the forces of light and truth and life will prevail in our country over the forces of death."

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Clinton's homosexual/AIDS pledges likely to remain controversial By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
1/15/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--During his first several months as president, Bill Clinton will be watched closely to see if he keeps his many campaign promises. Perhaps most controversial are Clinton's pledges to homosexual advocacy groups.

Richard D. Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, opposes, for example, Clinton's promise to lift the ban on homosexuals in the military.

"We believe clearly that the majority of the American people are opposed to this," Land said, "as evidenced by the tremendous public reaction to the proposal in recent polls."

For a time, some commentators believed Clinton might be rethinking his pledge in the face of opposition from numerous military leaders, including Gen. Colin Powell.

"That's what people thought, because they were listening to themselves and not him," said Shepherd Smith, president of the Washington-based Americans for a Sound AIDS/HIV Policy (ASAP). "I think he's never really backed away from it."

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Another Christian ethicist said he considers it "foolishness" to think there have not been homosexuals in the military all along. "I think it is foolish as well to think that they might be the only ones that present some kind of sexual threat to the people around them," said William Tillman, associate professor and chair of the department of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

"The overwhelming numbers of population are heterosexual in orientation or practice. I think we need to be much more concerned about their actions and attitudes," said Tillman, an associate in the Nashville-based Baptist Center for Ethics and a local precinct chair for the Democratic Party in Tarrant County, Texas.

Tillman said he objects to homosexuality as a lifestyle on biblical grounds but considers the "bashing mentality much more destructive to the tapestry of our society over the long haul."

Guy Greenfield, pastor of Eastern Hills Baptist Church in Albuquerque, N.M., likewise objects to homosexuality on a moral basis. "I am unalterably opposed to the homosexual lifestyle," he said. "I think it is against God's plans for human beings. I think it is a chosen lifestyle."

But Greenfield said there is no ban on homosexuals in the military of some other countries "and they don't seem to complain about it. The governments and military institutions in those countries don't seem to have a problem."

Another Clinton promise is to support federal civil rights legislation for homosexuals, which could make sexual orientation a protected category -- similar to present legal protections for race, ethnic origin or gender.

Land said he opposes any such attempt. "We believe it would be extremely unwise public policy," he said. "You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that if you pass such a law, there will be no way any state or locality could keep homosexual marriage from having the same status as heterosexual marriage -- or prevent homosexual and lesbian couples from adopting children."

Greenfield said he sees no need for additional legislation to protect homosexuals. "I've looked at the Bill of Rights. I've looked at the Civil Rights Act of 1964. I think there are plenty of laws protecting everybody. I don't see any need for any special legislation to protect homosexuals," said Greenfield, who is a former professor at Southwestern Seminary, where he taught a class titled "Christianity and Human Sexuality."

"If you're going to give them special status," Greenfield said, "why not give it to bald people, obese people or the anorectic? When you get right down to it, an extremely obese person could face major discrimination in the job market."

Many AIDS activists are counting on Clinton's promises to spend more money on AIDS research and to appoint an "AIDS czar" who would coordinate the war against the disease.

With qualification, Land supports the idea of a national AIDS coordinator. "As a concept, I think it's good. But the question is, who will it be? If it is someone who advocates condom distribution and sex education for young people that depicts homosexual behavior as normal and acceptable, then we'd be opposed to that. But as an office and position, yes, I think we need a coordinated effort to combat AIDS," Land said.

Smith also expressed concern about the agenda of a possible AIDS czar. "If their message is condom distribution, free needles and rubber gloves (as the primary protection against AIDS for medical workers), then no," said Smith, who is a member of a conservative Presbyterian church in McLean, Va. "We have any number of layers of bureaucracy already dealing with this issue. What we need is real leadership from the president on down to the assistant secretary for the Public Health Service and the surgeon general."

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Tillman said he believes an AIDS policy director is essential. He said he would like to see "a figure like a C. Everett Koop," the former surgeon general, to help the nation "see the severity of the problem and that we're sitting on a time bomb that will erupt on us within the next decade. It has the potential of destroying the current health-care delivery system."

Greenfield agreed that an AIDS czar should be appointed and more money spent on AIDS research. "By the turn of the century, we're going to be seeing people die from AIDS like we've never seen in any other period. It's better to build a fence at the top of a cliff than to run an ambulance service at the bottom."

Smith questioned whether the government should spend more on AIDS research -- a criticism that had been leveled at the Bush and Reagan administrations by some advocacy groups.

He said there will be a "real push" for spending on AIDS but was not optimistic about the impact of more money. "Until you encourage more diagnosis and more people learn their HIV status, you're going to have an epidemic that's out of control.

"We don't need more research dollars," Smith added. "We need to spend the dollars differently. Before we spend more money on AIDS research, we need to look at other diseases and see if we're treating those other diseases fairly." As examples, he mentioned heart disease, cancer, Alzheimer's disease and diabetes.

A Clinton campaign flyer promised to oppose "needless mandatory HIV testing" in several federal organizations -- an idea opposed by Smith's organization, which advocates early diagnosis as the best way of combatting the epidemic.

In another promise, Clinton said he would crack down on so-called "hate crimes" against people because of their race, creed, religion or sexual orientation.

"We support efforts to punish hate crimes and gay bashing," Land said. "But there's a big difference between tolerating what we believe to be deviant behavior between consenting adults in private on the one hand, and seeking to normalize homosexuality as an acceptable behavior and to promote understanding and acceptance of it by minors, on the other hand."

Some in AIDS advocacy groups have urged the government to speed approval of medicines that haven't yet endured the usual pharmaceutical trials, which often last for years. Clinton has indicated he may support such efforts.

But Smith is cautious. "If you go too fast on drugs, you may do more harm than good," he said. "We want the process accelerated but not at the cost of science. It's a real tension. All terminal diseases should have access to promising therapeutics earlier than they have historically gotten."

Clinton also has promised to promote AIDS education in an "initiative that ... educates our children about the nature and threat of AIDS."

Land said he is opposed "if they mean by that 'frank information on condoms and how to use them.' The surgeon general-designate has said no one should let their daughter leave home without a condom. The use of condoms is not the answer. The answer is to teach young people that sexuality is an adult activity and that celibacy prior to marriage and monogamy within marriage are the only 'safe sex.'

"The use of condoms, if the condoms work and if other precautions are taken, means only -- in the best-case scenario -- that sex is slightly less dangerous. It is a cruel hoax on our young people to offer condoms as a remedy for AIDS," Land said.

Land predicted that in the near future some school systems may be sued after condoms fail to protect students from becoming HIV-infected.

Greenfield said he's concerned about what is already being taught in some public schools. "Certain school systems are actually teaching in class that homosexuality is a valid lifestyle," he said, "and I'm really upset that in public schools kids are being told such garbage. I think we've got to tell our kids of all ages that the heterosexual lifestyle is the intended plan of God."

**WMU seeks flexibility, relevancy
in future look of its organization**

By Susan Doyle

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--How Woman's Missionary Union looks in the local church in 1995 will be different from the way it looks today following action taken by the Southern Baptist WMU Executive Board Jan. 9-13.

WMU leaders describe the "WMU organization of the future" as more simple, flexible and relevant.

The WMU Executive Board made decisions during meeting in Birmingham and at Shocco Springs Baptist Assembly in Talladega, Ala., which will affect the way WMU organizations will look in the local church -- changes they believe will ensure something for everyone in missions.

Changes are found in the new "Church WMU Base Design," a document which defines what WMU tasks are and what WMU organizations will be in the local church. The new plan will become effective with the 1995-96 church year.

Changes found in the new plan came in direct response to requests from WMU members and leaders, said Bobbie Patterson, WMU associate executive director.

The first change can be found in WMU's tasks. While the principles are not different from WMU's current tasks, they have been simplified and re-prioritized, Patterson said.

The tasks, beginning in 1995-96, are:

- "Pray for and give to missions."
- "Do missions."
- "Learn about missions."
- "Develop spiritually toward a missions lifestyle."
- "Participate in the work of the church and the denomination."

WMU members will be encouraged to "do missions" more than ever before, Patterson said. "We think it is significant that we've listed 'doing missions' as our second task."

Between now and October 1995, WMU will continue to operate under the current task statements:

- "Teach missions."
- "Engage in mission action and personal witnessing."
- "Support missions."
- "Interpret and undergird the work of the church and denomination."

The new plan also includes a greater emphasis on church-wide missions, according to WMU leaders.

"This plan offers a continuing emphasis on strengthening our age-level organizations," said Karen Simons, WMU Churchwide Involvement Section director. "However, it goes beyond that to reach out to those church members who might not wish to belong to an organization. We have called this emphasis 'churchwide missions.'"

Churchwide missions includes ways local church members can be involved in missions: through awareness opportunities, one-time events, short-term activities and ongoing ministry projects. These approaches can be used by the entire congregation; by targeted audiences within the congregation such as the choir, senior adults or youth groups; and small groups within the congregation.

"I think WMU is being responsive to what churches and church leaders have requested," Simons said. "All that we have learned and heard about the church of today and the church of the future tells us that simplicity and flexibility will mean more involvement. Our goal is more involvement so that we can enable and equip believers to reach the lost world."

Beginning Oct. 1, 1995, WMU members will find the adult organization to be more innovative and unique than what they have today, said Andrea Mullins, national Baptist Women specialist.

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"We recognize that each Christian woman is on a spiritual journey, and we are not all at the same place in that journey," Mullins said. "Our concern and commitment is to ensure that there is an entry point in this organization for every woman to grow in missions commitment."

In the adult organization, women of any age or level of spiritual maturity can come together as a result of a common need, interest or lifestyle to grow in their love of Christ and respond to a lost and hurting world, she said. Each group will select one or more of the missions tasks as a focus.

The adult organization offers a plan for women to meet in small groups to grow together and fulfill God's mission for their lives, Mullins said. Each group will determine what they will do in ministry and witness as a result of their time together.

Several of the groups are designed for non-churched women, as well as churched. "We believe this will enable the groups to reach out to all women with the purpose of leading those to Christ who do not yet know Jesus," Mullins said.

"The organizational structure also provides for special times of celebration when all the women of the church can come together for worship, sharing what God has been doing and reaching out to women in their community who are unchurched," Mullins said.

"We believe this adult organization responds to the needs of women, blends spiritual development and missions, empowers the membership, allows for flexibility, reflects simplicity and preserves our commitment to missions," Mullins said.

While the adult organization will allow for more diversity, it will also provide for members who are happy with current traditional missions involvement.

A name for the WMU adult organization will be presented for approval at the June WMU Executive Board meeting.

Under the new plan, the Girls in Action organization will allow for older and younger groups within the organization. The new plan calls for strengthening the older girls' participation in leadership and planning and will provide curriculum and learning approaches more relevant to older GAs.

The plan also calls for some changes in Mission Friends, WMU's missions organization for preschool boys and girls. There are new ways that Mission Friends classes can be formed:

- A parent may teach Mission Friends to a preschooler in the home.
- A church member may teach Mission Friends in his or her home for preschoolers in his or her community.
- A Mission Friends class may be part of a community program such as a day-care center or other weekday programs.

A Mission Friends class for parents has been added as well, which will offer parental involvement in the Mission Friends learning experience, activities to reinforce learning in the home and guidance for the parents in child growth and development.

"Mission Friends will continue to provide appropriate activities which lay a foundation for a future faith in God," said Kathy Burns, national Mission Friends specialist.

"We are extremely excited about providing more ways for preschoolers and their parents to be involved in missions to make a difference in their own homes and to ultimately make a world of difference for Christ."

The new plan also provides a variety of options for what will be considered an Acteens organization. Acteens is the organization for girls in grades seven through 12. The new plan allows organizations of:

- One girl and one adult in the same church.
- Girls who choose to be involved by only using StudiAct, the individual plan of study.
- Girls who choose to be involved in the individual involvement plan.

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- Girls and adults who represent different churches and form an organization together.
 - Acteens-initiated coed youth missions projects or experiences.
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RTVC trustees hear of continued expansion, financial stability By Doug Dillard

Baptist Press
1/15/93

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission trustees, in their Jan. 11-12 meeting in Fort Worth, heard reports of greatly expanded audiences for its two television networks, accepted a "clean" auditors' opinion and learned of significant technical advancements in communications.

Jack Johnson, RTVC president, reported on a recent trip to the former Soviet Union to explore ways to capitalize on the agency's opportunity to air programming in the Russian republic. He reported on discussions with Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board personnel concerning a plan to reach people who respond to the two hours of weekly RTVC programming aired in St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad). Johnson added, "I met with Bella Kurkova," newly appointed head of the Russian television agency, "and we came to a meeting of the minds." Johnson predicted the meetings would assure continued free airing of Baptist programs on the government-controlled station.

Johnson also reported progress on an effort to air RTVC-produced radio programs in Russia.

Network operations vice president Michael Wright told trustees that FamilyNet and ACTS, RTVC's two television networks, now reach into 60.6 million homes across the United States with potential viewership of 163.8 million people. He said ACTS is now on 1,194 cable systems with more than 19 million households, and FamilyNet is carried by 64 low-power and 54 full-power TV stations covering 41.6 million homes.

Bill Airy, president of VGI, the corporation which handles transmission and sales for the Faith and Values Channel, announced impending expansion into 800,000 to 1 million subscriber homes in Boston; Fairfield County, Conn.; Chicago; Cleveland; and the New York boroughs of Bronx, Brooklyn and Long Island after successful negotiations with Cablevision Systems.

Auditors told trustees they had issued a "clean opinion" on the just-completed commission's audit. "The auditors confirmed what we already knew," said Richard T. McCartney, executive vice president. "Although we have not had all of the operating funds we need, we have operated within our resources to do the task assigned to us by the Southern Baptist Convention."

The major portion of the January trustee meeting was devoted to orienting members to advances in the electronic communications field. Seminars focused on potential opportunities in classroom television; on vast expansion of cable channels through digital compression; improved technical quality through digital recording technology; and expanding overseas opportunities.

"We are entering on some of the most exciting and fruitful days for transmission of the gospel via electronic missionaries," Johnson told trustees. "We dare not fail to take advantage of the Macedonian call we hear from a world in need of the message entrusted to us."

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Helping singles see purpose is goal of magazine editor By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
1/15/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--A commitment to help single adults "know God has a mission, purpose and ministry for them in the present, regardless of what plans and hopes and dreams they have for the future" guides the new editor of Christian Single magazine.

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Stephen Felts, who recently became editor of the national Christian magazine for single adults published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, has both a professional and personal interest in his publication, believed to be the only publication of its kind.

"As a never-married single adult, editing this magazine is a natural outgrowth of my life," Felts said. "That's who I am."

Felts, who also is pastor of Longview Baptist Church in nearby Bell Buckle, Tenn., had worked at the board on a part-time basis for more than two years, serving as a coordinator for single adult conferences and conducting leadership training for senior adults and singles.

He approaches his new work with the conviction that the magazine needs to deal positively with lifestyle issues to help single adults feel good about themselves.

"We can deal with problems so much singles can get a complex" about their lifestyle, Felts said. "We need to raise up positive role models who are successful and show others they can be successful without compromising their beliefs."

Positive role models don't necessarily have to be single, he emphasized.

"Christian single adults are adults first. Single adults are not one-dimensional persons. When they go to their jobs, people don't look at them first as single," Felts said.

Felts, along with assistant editor Leigh Neely and editorial assistant David Hargrove, plan to make the monthly magazine with a circulation of 73,000 more current by shortening the present 12-month lead time by at least half.

"There is no way we can be as contemporary and relevant as we need to be" with the present schedule, he said. "Things in our society change too quickly."

Also, they plan to deal more directly and in more depth with issues such as sexuality and AIDS.

"The magazine is not just designed for use within the confines of the church structure," Felts said, "but as a genuine resource for offering substantive answers singles can take back into the workplace."

More color, more art and photos and better paper will be part of efforts to make Christian Single more visually appealing.

In addition to his editing duties, Felts plans to participate in single adult conferences and other events where he can solicit feedback and suggestions for the magazine.

"I want to have an open ear. I have a strong belief in being consumer-oriented and sensitive to the needs that are there."

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