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EDITORS' NOTE: This story replaces (BP) story titled "FMB vice president Compton says 'stayers' also have integrity," dated 4/2/93.

FMB execs respond to Spurgeon,
other 'protest retirements'

By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press
4/5/93

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--In the wake of yet another "retirement in protest" announcement at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, two staff members who plan to stay are offering a very different perspective.

Alan Compton, a missionary for 23 years and board vice president for communications since 1988, sent a memorandum April 2 to interim president Don Kammerdiener, copying trustees, other high-level administrators, communications staffers and Baptist Press. In it, he said his own daily decision to continue serving the Foreign Mission Board is a "matter of integrity" based on "my call and commitment to Christ and his mission in the world," family members and almost 3,900 missionaries.

The same day, Thurmon Bryant, associate vice president for mission personnel, wrote Kammerdiener that he felt "the vast majority of our administrative staff remains firm" in commitment to missions and to the Foreign Mission Board. Bryant, a missionary to Brazil for 14 years and area director for Eastern South America for a decade, now supervises missionary health and services, volunteers and missionary orientation and development.

The statements came two days after an announcement by Harlan Spurgeon, board vice president for mission personnel, that he will retire early. Also a former veteran missionary, Spurgeon charged that board trustees no longer base their decisions on what's best for global evangelization but on "a single-minded political agenda."

Other board administrators also were reported to be working on statements affirming the board's present leadership.

Spurgeon wrote that he felt in danger of losing his integrity if he stayed on at the mission board. He is the third vice president in the past 15 months to announce early retirement because of disagreements with trustees. Former President R. Keith Parks also retired last October for similar reasons.

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In his memorandum, Compton said he remains committed not only to missions but to "those sincere brothers in Christ in the local churches of this convention and the trustees they have elected to represent them. They are challenged by the same Scriptures and the Holy Spirit's work in the body of Christ as I. Many are committed to missions. They are our convention.

"It is because of my commitment to the staff of the office of communications and the FMB staff in general that I am here today. The measure of their commitment is no less than any other. They are in it with our Lord for the long haul."

His integrity, Compton said, is not based "just on principles. Principles are very important for me as missionaries, staff and trustees can testify. I have not been silent. (But) for me integrity is based on commitment also."

In an interview with Baptist Press, Compton said he spoke out because several of the executives who have announced departures from the mission board in the last year, including Spurgeon, indicated their integrity was at stake if they stayed.

While respecting others' right to leave or make statements as an expression of their integrity, "I just felt like there are others of us around here who are also making our decisions daily based on integrity," Compton said. "And I also wanted to say that for me personally -- and I can't speak for anybody else -- integrity does relate to our principles but it also has to do with our commitment. You have to balance those off sometimes. You maybe even have to give a little on some of the principles in order to fulfill the commitment I have not compromised principles or commitment."

Compton said he had not been asked to make a statement by anyone and had not considered doing so until he reflected on Spurgeon's announcement -- and past announcements like it -- at home the night of April 1.

"The thought just came into my mind, 'Why haven't we had a chance to explain where we stand -- those of us who are still with our board and working every day? Why haven't we had a chance to say what we feel about our interpretation of integrity?'" he explained. "I prayed about it and just felt led to write that statement, and I felt good after I had written it. Maybe I should have written it to myself and filed it, but I didn't do it that way because I felt I needed to be heard. I speak only for myself and not anyone else."

Bryant also sent copies of his letter to staff and trustees. He admitted there had been "tense moments in some of our board and staff meetings and some decisions made with which I have not agreed." But given the ongoing battles in the denomination, he said, the tension is understandable. Some volatile issues had been "thrust upon" board trustees, he added, and he felt their response has been "fair in the main."

"I do not sense that we are in a state of turmoil" among FMB staff, Bryant said. "Though some questions treated by the trustees, such as moving the board out of Richmond, restructuring of staff, lack of salary increases in recent years, etc., generate some unsettledness on the part of staff, I find morale in general to be healthy I do not sense that large numbers are about to 'jump ship.'"

He also cited as healthy signs: last year's largest-ever number of baptisms overseas, continuing Southern Baptist financial support despite unemployment and recession, more than 10,000 volunteers going abroad each year and growing state convention involvement in partnership missions with the board.

Bryant also questioned several of Spurgeon's contentions about a serious downturn in missionary appointments. Southern Baptists' goal of having 5,000 missionaries overseas by A.D. 2000 "has become a casualty of the controversy," Spurgeon charged, because a broad range of mission candidates don't believe they can be appointed.

From 1988 to 1989 the board's missionary force fell from 3,867 to 3,780, a 2.25 percent drop. The total climbed 2.19 percent to 3,863 in 1990 and rose to 3,906 in 1991. However, last year the mission force fell again to 3,893. The total includes career and associate missionaries and International Service Corps workers and journeyman serving overseas for two years.

"I do not find the current missionary personnel picture to be frightening," Bryant responded. "In light of the large number of retirements among our missionaries, which will continue through most of this decade, I do not think it alarming that the number under appointment may drop now and then. The interest in possible appointment among candidates seems to be about what it has been across the years, maybe even greater. Indications for larger number of appointees are looking very good at this time of the year."

Bryant added "less than a dozen" missionary candidates in recent years had asked to have their files closed.

"I suspect that we would have this many in any similar period of time," Bryant said. "Furthermore, if one asks to have his file closed because of uncertain times, I would question whether that one should be appointed. If uncertainty is disturbing now, it will be even more so after arriving on the field where missionaries live every day with uncertainty."

Personnel selection department records confirm that nine missionary candidates have specifically requested their appointment files be closed.

As for missionary appointments for the rest of this year, "it's hard to estimate," said Jim Riddell, associate director of personnel selection. "My guess is it would be pretty even with last year."

Measuring overall interest among missionary candidates is "strictly subjective," Riddell added. The general volume of contact "is up one minute and down the next. I gauge things off of people coming to missionary candidate conferences. Early in the year it was really down but the last two or three conferences it's been up. Things are so confusing we really can't tell. There's no trend."

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Hurricane victims celebrate
progress, seek peace of mind

By Barbara Denman

Baptist Press
4/5/93

FLORIDA CITY, Fla. (BP)--Seven months after Hurricane Andrew ripped through the south Miami area destroying homes and livelihoods for more than 250,000 people, there's an uneasy mixture of hope and despair.

Many homes have been repaired, landscaped and manicured -- picture perfect except for heaping mounds of trash piled in front yards. But tens of thousands of homes still lay with their insides ripped out and addresses scrawled on the walls. Reopened businesses support a flurry of activity, while other shops remain boarded up and destined for the bulldozers or public auction.

Peace of mind has eluded almost everyone. The incidents of domestic violence are up. Nightmares plague children who cry and whimper during a storm.

The realization that hurricane season begins in June, coupled with new reports that predict three hurricanes to hit North America this year, has struck panic in all ages. The first graders in Jackie Caproon's class become noticeably agitated "when they see clouds begin to get dark. I have to tell them it's not a hurricane"

Where Hurricane Andrew was the great equalizer, destroying \$500,000 residences and \$50,000 homes alike, time and insurance has created a disparity between economic levels.

The affluent and comfortable have received insurance checks, rebuilt homes and are getting on with their lives. The poor continue to see the heavens when they sleep at night, get wet when it rains and live a life with little hope.

Migrant farm laborers returned to the area to harvest the crops planted last fall. But with only two apartment complexes ready for habitation, many migrants sleep in tents or stack several families in a trailer.

An increasing number of migrants are asking Florida Baptists for financial help to buy food, pay rent and help with utility bills.

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During the past seven months, volunteer teams coordinated by the Florida Baptist Convention have "closed the books on 457 homes and 11 churches.

Another 179 homes are in the process of being rebuilt and authorization has been given to help 230 additional families in the economically deprived communities of Richmond Heights, Goulds and South Miami Heights. Each week more than 100 Southern Baptist construction volunteers report for work at the convention's relief center at First Baptist Church of Florida City.

Florida Baptist Convention officials have said they will stay in south Florida as long as they have funds, volunteers and the call from God. Since August, the state convention has received more than \$2.8 million for disaster relief, most of which is being plowed into construction costs for homes and churches.

According to Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission sources, summer is the prime time for construction volunteers to take vacations. With that in mind, convention officials expect to remain in Florida City until the end of the year.

Seven months of work by Southern Baptists has made an indelible impression on Otis T. Wallace, Florida City's mayor, who said he "thanked God" for the ministry of Southern Baptists in the hurricane's aftermath.

"They are not the type of organization to seek credit for what they are doing. They ... just rolled up their sleeves and began working," he said.

Wallace noted that at the earliest stages Baptists were one of two organizations operating feeding stations for the community's residents, and he called the feeding and rebuilding efforts "widespread."

Southern Baptists "have taken a great burden from us," Wallace said. "Although we were inadequate to the task, we felt good inside that they were here and able to help us. They've restored my faith in the ultimate goodness of man."

Other benevolent groups including Mennonites, Methodists, MasterServe, Habitat for Humanity and Centro Campecino, a migrant farm worker organization, are helping residents recover from the storm. Residents have learned that each organization can help with specific repair projects.

Florida Baptists helped repair the roof, drywall and provide cabinets for Consuelo Anguiano, who lives directly behind the Florida City church. Other organizations provided additional repairs. So many, in fact, that Anguiano is unsure who has done what. "So many people have come, we feel like they are all brothers and sisters," she said. "It doesn't matter who has done it, it has been from their hearts."

"I'm very grateful for all their generosity. We thought it would take us years to get to this point."

Elementary school teacher Caproon is still not back in her house, even though insurance and private contractors are repairing the damage. The teacher lived two blocks from the First Baptist Church of Cutler Ridge, where the Florida Baptist Convention established a feeding site immediately after the hurricane.

Caproon said that before the hurricane, she did everything the officials said to do, but to no avail. The wind blew the storm shutters off of the windows. The stockpiled food was soaked by the rain.

Caproon and her family survived by eating at the Florida feeding van. "We were middle class, professional people and suddenly we were homeless. I don't think we will ever forget losing everything," she noted. "My son still has nightmares.

"The Baptist church was the first there and last to leave. I don't know if we would have food if it wasn't for them."

As a result of the ministries provided from the church grounds after the disaster, the Cutler Ridge residents "know where we are," said Charles Koch, pastor of the First Baptist of Cutler Ridge. "They did not always know where we were before. People say, 'That was the church that fed us.'

"There is no doubt that this was a Baptist witness, not a social or Red Cross effort," Koch said. "Baptists put feet to their words."

However, the Cutler Ridge church has not been able to capitalize on that goodwill. Church attendance is 30 percent below pre-hurricane days.

"The community is still overwhelmed with rebuilding homes. And our own congregation has not mobilized to reach out to the community further. They are still resolving their own building needs."

On Feb. 28, almost six months to the date that Hurricane Andrew ripped it apart, the Cutler Ridge church held a grand reopening celebration, offering the community a new and improved sanctuary. "We are really encouraged by the facility and the beauty of the church," Koch said. "What has been done is a positive thing for congregation and community."

But Koch is troubled by "the inflated unrealistic economy" caused by a proliferation of large insurance checks. Koch predicts an economic crisis may hit when the insurance money is gone and effects from the decision not to rebuild Homestead Air Force Base are felt.

That is the time, Koch said, when the church will determine "if it will continue to be a viable ministry."

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**Hurricane Andrew forces
mission church to regroup**

By Barbara Denman

**Baptist Press
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CUTLER RIDGE, Fla. (BP)--The starting of a new church is often hampered by setbacks, but few church starters have had to recover from the most destructive hurricane in U.S. history.

In February 1992, John Phillips, a recent graduate from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., arrived in Miami as a Home Mission Board-appointed church planter. His assignment: to start a new church in the communities off Old Cutler Road.

For six months, Phillips and volunteers surveyed and cultivated two targeted housing developments off the southern portion of Biscayne Bay built for upwardly mobile families who could afford homes of \$90,000 to \$150,000.

That summer, Phillips began holding worship services in the Centennial Junior High School, located between the two neighborhoods. Survey teams discovered five families who agreed to open their homes to Bible studies as the core group of 20 struggled to gain acceptance in the community.

Plans also called for the church to begin an aggressive telephone marketing campaign in the neighborhood, a church-starting technique found extremely effective in south Florida communities.

But on Aug. 24, those plans were washed away as Hurricane Andrew came ashore at the same location of the targeted communities. The force of the storm surge, believed to be the highest of its kind, sent a 17-foot wall of water throughout the area, wrecking or flooding everything in its path.

Immediately after the storm, Phillips began "a chainsaw ministry," enlisting volunteers to help the community recover. Together the volunteers and homeowners cleaned out houses, tore out carpeting and attempted to wash the mud and silt brought in from the sea.

Phillips watched as many residents left the area to find other places to live. Those who stayed began spending all their free time rebuilding their homes. Updated building codes demanded that the residents of one development raise their homes four to eight feet -- a costly process for the average homeowner.

The telemarketing campaign was scratched due to interruption of phone service. Things looked pretty grim for the mission church that never was.

But the church planter refused to give up. For a month, Phillips led worship services at his home until the school could reopen for classes and the congregation.

Enlisting volunteers as survey teams, the church targeted surrounding communities not as badly damaged as the Saga Bay and Lakes by the Bay communities. More than 25,000 homes are in the communities located between First Baptist Church of Perrine and First Baptist of Cutler Ridge.

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Using teams of volunteers Phillips is planning to reach the communities through direct ministries, especially by offering backyard Bible clubs for children. In the aftermath of the hurricane, many families still live in recreational vehicles in their front yards.

Parents respond favorably to planned afternoon activities for their children. "We want to get the youngsters involved and out of the trailers," he said.

Seven months after the hurricane, the mission congregation is finally back to the original attendance of 20.

Phillips said the hurricane has helped the mission church overcome an identity crisis. "Before the hurricane people down here didn't know who Southern Baptists were."

But Southern Baptists' relief ministries in the aftermath of the storm changed that, he said. Now people open their doors when they learn Phillips is starting a Baptist church.

"We have had a number of families tell us they would not have made it after the hurricane if it was not for Southern Baptists," he said. "One family said now they knew we were a community-oriented denomination."

"These people are looking for a church that's going to help their community. Many are dissatisfied that their own church did not respond during the disaster."

Phillips said the Southern Baptist response also helped the members of the mission church understand what Southern Baptist were all about. "Before they were hearing us, but they were not seeing it. When they saw the disaster relief teams come through this area, they realized what we were telling them about Southern Baptists' cooperative efforts. Offerings went up."

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Willard Scott to address
ministers' wives luncheon

Baptist Press
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HOUSTON (BP)--Willard Scott, the weatherman from NBC's "Today" show, will speak at the 1993 Southern Baptist Ministers' Wives Luncheon during the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston.

Scott is widely known for his weather reports from state fairs, parades and civic events and his birthday greetings to centenarians. A broadcaster for more than 40 years, Scott first appeared on Today in 1980.

The luncheon will be at the Hyatt Regency Imperial Ballroom Tuesday, June 15, at 12:15 p.m., according to June Honeycutt of Louisville, Ky., president of the ministers wives' luncheon.

Tickets ordered by May 20 are \$18 and may be obtained by sending a check and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the group's recording secretary, Rena Henderson, c/o First Baptist Church, 729 Ocean Blvd., St. Simons Island, GA 31522. After May 20, tickets will be \$20 and may be purchased at the door.

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Agee, OBU group in Moscow
as tensions surround Yeltsin

By Marty O'Gwynn

Baptist Press
4/5/93

SHAWNEE, Okla. (BP)--As Americans listened to media coverage of the unfolding Russian political drama in late March, Bob Agee listened to the chairman of Russia's Liberal Democratic Party of Congress.

Meeting with the leader of efforts to save Russian President Boris Yeltsin's job was one of the highlights of a serendipitous week for the Oklahoma Baptist University president.

Agee led a group of representatives from the Shawnee, Okla., Baptist college to Moscow for a week of meetings with Russian education officials, March 21-26, as they discussed varied ways for OBU to assist Russians in education and business development.

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When the Oklahomans arrived in the Russian capital on the afternoon of March 21, Agee said they found themselves "in the thick of it."

"It was an unrepeatable moment," Agee said. "We were able to be there while the world was shaking in its boots over frightening possibilities of the outcome of Russia's democratic reform movement."

The OBU delegation was in Moscow to formalize the university's role as a partner in creation of the Moscow Economic School, a model school (kindergarten through grade 11) that has received endorsement from Russia's education ministry and the Moscow Department of Education. Their meetings were scheduled well in advance, to coincide with OBU's spring break, but their timing and accommodations allowed them an inside look at a pivotal moment in history.

Agee and his colleagues, OBU trustee chairman Sam Hammons and his wife, John Cragin, OBU's Peitz associate professor of business, and recent OBU graduate Greg Long, were housed in the former Warsaw Pact headquarters, which is now a military compound.

"While we were there, the former defense minister for the Soviet Union was meeting with generals who were gathering from all over the Commonwealth of Independent States," Agee recounted. "We were staying at the headquarters where the military decisions were being made."

In addition to sharing the halls with military strategists, the OBU group met for dinner March 25 with leaders of Russia's Liberal Democratic Party, who were instrumental in mounting congressional support for Yeltsin to avert a successful impeachment vote.

"They needed 689 out of 1,033 members of Congress to impeach," said Agee. "When we met with the Democratic Party leaders on Thursday, they said their opponents had about 650 votes. We were spending time with key leaders in Congress who were trying to head that off."

The OBU group also felt the tension of the events in their discussions concerning the Moscow Economic School.

The school, funded by the Moscow Stock Exchange, will offer a college preparatory curriculum focusing on free market economics, English as a second language and Christian studies. As hard-line Communist Party officials sought to regain control of the government, Agee said Moscow Stock Exchange officials were seriously concerned about possible reversals in their nation's struggle toward economic reform.

"Since 1989 the exchange's board of directors had worked to develop industries, banking firms, investment firms, a commodities exchange," Agee said. "They were feeling concern for their destiny."

As their week's stay concluded on Friday, March 26, Agee was able to gain another perspective on the turmoil as he received permission to stand in the midst of demonstrations outside the Kremlin. He witnessed the efforts of police to keep protests from escalating to violence as Communist Party supporters packed in around Lenin's Tomb and supporters of democratic reform demonstrated near St. Basil's Church.

"If word had come out that Yeltsin had been impeached, I believe there would have been physical violence and conflict," Agee said. "Emotions were that high."

Agee said the final outcome of Russia's political crisis is "still anybody's guess," but he views the continuing events with a fresh perspective.

"We were that close to political explosion," he said, bringing his thumb and forefinger to nearly touching. "It was a time that could have been, with the outcome, one of the most startling events on the world scene."

Californians named as teachers
at seminary multicultural center

By Cameron Crabtree

MILL VALLEY, Calif (BP)--Two California pastors have been named adjunct faculty of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary's new Learning Center for Multicultural Ministry, which opens this fall.

Lawrence Au, pastor of San Bruno Chinese Baptist Church, and David Gill, pastor of Concord Korean Baptist Church in Martinez, will each teach one course as the center officially gets under way. The learning center was approved by seminary trustees in October 1991.

"The center has been established to help educate students from the perspective and background of their own cultures so they can lead more effectively the churches in which they minister," said Clayton Harrop, Golden Gate's vice president for academic affairs.

With three campuses located along the Pacific Rim and Ethnic Leadership Development Centers in several western states, the seminary student body is 45 percent Anglo, 22 percent Asian, 21 percent Hispanic. Blacks, native Americans and international students comprise the rest of the student body.

For too long, Harrop observed, the seminary unconsciously tried to impose upon its students Anglo mentality, culture and methods of ministry.

"The seminary must equip students to serve the churches and the cultures to which they are called," Harrop said. "While not diminishing our current program, Golden Gate must deal seriously with the differences that exist within our student body and the churches they serve."

Au will teach church administration. He holds a bachelor of science from University of San Francisco, a bachelor of theology from Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary and master of religious education, master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Golden Gate Seminary.

"Dr. Au has worked with churches in the Bay Area for 30 years and has been instrumental in starting several Chinese churches," Harrop noted. "He is highly respected in the Chinese community and very knowledgeable about Chinese churches and cultural life."

Gill will teach personal evangelism. He holds a bachelor of arts from Soong Sil University in Korea and master of arts in Christian education and master of divinity degrees from Golden Gate Seminary. In addition, Gill is pursuing a doctor of ministry degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary.

"He has demonstrated his abilities in leading Korean churches and is one who can assist students in their training to lead and minister in Asian culture churches," Harrop said.

The emphasis on multicultural ministry reflects a growing concern at the seminary for developing Christian leaders who minister in highly diverse regions, Harrop said. Golden Gate is one of six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries and the only SBC agency in the western United States.

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