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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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WASHINGTON -- Washington offices praise, decry SBC stance on Clinton.  
VIRGINIA -- FMB Europe director Floyd to replace associate director.  
WASHINGTON -- BWA hears reports of crises in Zaire, Angola, Liberia.  
NEW MEXICO -- Understand age groups' traits for 'doing church,' speaker says.

Washington offices praise,  
decry SBC stance on Clinton

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
6/24/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--Representatives of public-policy organizations in the nation's capital both applauded and decried the Southern Baptist Convention's recent resolution rejecting the policies of President Bill Clinton regarding abortion and homosexuality.

The White House, meanwhile, would not comment on the resolution, deputy press secretary Arthur Jones told Baptist Press June 24.

Messengers to the annual SBC meeting in Houston overwhelmingly adopted a resolution June 16 separating the convention from acts and positions of Clinton on those two issues and urging him to "affirm biblical morality in exercising his public office."

The resolution also requested Southern Baptists to pray for the president, who is a Southern Baptist, and to seek to influence him to reverse his stands on such moral issues.

The resolution mentioned several actions Clinton has taken demonstrating his support of abortion rights and homosexual rights.

Robert Dugan, director of the National Association of Evangelicals' public affairs office, said he was pleased the "president's own denomination" desired to be "'biblically correct' rather than 'politically correct.'"

"The Old Testament prophets would have referred to the president's policies as wickedness in high places," Dugan said. "I personally am praying for him to repent."

Gary Bauer, president of the Family Research Council, affiliated with the Focus on the Family ministry, said he was pleased the resolution was passed and thought it was "appropriate for Southern Baptists to express their concern and disappointment."

"I think that millions of Southern Baptists did vote for the president and believed that they were voting for someone who shared their basic value system," said Bauer, who, like Dugan, is a member of a Southern Baptist church in northern Virginia, "and I think instead there's a good bit of evidence, at least culturally, that we've got the most radical man in the White House to sit there."

Jay Lintner of the United Church of Christ expressed disappointment in "such a personal attack on the president. We try in our church to stay away from such personal attacks.

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"We also disagree with the content of the resolution," said Lintner, director of the UCC's Office for Church in Society.

"Where it says that the denomination separates itself from the acts listed in the resolution, the United Church of Christ would identify itself. The (UCC) general synod almost without exception would support those. ... We would support them based on our understanding of the Bible and biblical morality."

The UCC supports the attempt to lift the ban on homosexuals in the military, he said.

The UCC has 1.7 million members in 6,400 congregations, while the SBC has 15.4 million members in some 38,400 churches.

"This resolution is out of step with the majority of national mainline Christian denominations, who are on record calling on this country to respect the diversity of religious belief about abortion by ensuring the government (does) not impose one biblical morality on the whole country," said Ann Thompson Cook, executive director of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights.

While the SBC is free to express itself on public policy, Cook said Clinton "is quite aware that (the SBC messengers') position is not the only Christian understanding on abortion in this country. It is not his job to impose Southern Baptist religious beliefs on this country."

Denominational resolutions carry some weight, agreed spokesmen who were asked.

"It's not a dramatic, immediate impact," Bauer said, but this administration "clearly (is) concerned about the extremely low approval ratings. So I think when a resolution like this gets passed, it may spur them to be a bit more middle of the road on some of these issues."

Douglas Johnson, legislative director of the National Right to Life Committee, said resolutions like the one on Clinton and another opposing the expansion of abortion rights "could be very important either in persuading (the White House) to reverse course or in educating" people about its positions.

"I think the resolutions very lucidly demonstrate the direction this administration is going," Johnson said.

The UCC's Lintner said, "I think that the resolutions that are issue-specific do have considerable influence in public opinion and on Capitol Hill. I think when resolutions get into personality or party they lose credibility."

The National Council of Churches does not comment on abortion because of the diversity of opinion among its 32 denominations, a NCC staff member said.

Several calls to People for the American Way failed to produce a response from a spokesman for the organization.

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FMB Europe director Floyd  
to replace associate director

By Marty Groll

Baptist Press  
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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's new Europe director will replace one of his two top administrators, gearing up his own program in what has become one of Southern Baptists' fastest-growing foreign fields.

Area director John Floyd, elected by trustees in February, told associate area director J. Thomas Warrington to step down June 23 and asked him to consider interviewing for another job at the Foreign Mission Board.

Warrington declined to comment on his dismissal from the Europe office or his future plans but said he might have something to say later.

Newly elected FMB President Jerry A. Rankin said he hopes it will be possible for Warrington to continue work at the board in some capacity.

"Tom has been a valuable and effective part of our staff team over the years," Rankin said. "He is a gifted person and deeply committed to our missions task."

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Floyd will look for someone with missionary experience in Europe and a "different match of gifts" than Warrington, who has 13 years' experience at the board as a missionary and staff member. Floyd said the decision was not related to months of upheaval in Europe over philosophical differences of opinion between board trustees and some staff and missionaries.

Like Warrington, the new associate would work in the board's offices in Richmond, Va., as a counterpart to field-based administrators in Europe. Floyd, a former missionary to the Philippines but most recently vice president at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn., will move to Europe after he acquaints himself with the home office.

Warrington, 48, has worked for the board's Europe office for two years. He was a missionary to Costa Rica for six years until 1982 and rejoined the board in 1986 as a consultant to help guide missionary candidates through the appointment process. In June 1991 former area director Keith Parker tapped him as associate area director for Europe.

Just seven months later, Parker and regional Vice President Isam Ballenger announced early retirements from the board in protest of trustees' vote to defund the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland. Subsequent months brought resignations from a number of missionaries in Europe, including key administrators.

Floyd affirmed Warrington's strong counseling and pastoral skills. Many missionaries say they have benefited from those skills during months of turmoil and uncertainty. But in building a team for the future, Floyd said he needs a person with a "different match of gifts."

"Our purpose is to build as strong a Europe team as possible, capitalizing on the different strengths of individuals," Floyd said. "One of the difficult things in building a staff is to determine the strengths that are needed."

The board's Europe operations are expanding rapidly. With the opening of the former Soviet Union and the rise of ethnic nationalism and new nation-states, mission workers in the Europe area will be scattered across 15 time zones and 55 countries. Trustees elected Floyd with the understanding he would participate in a plan eventually to realign Europe mission work under two separate mission administrations.

Said Rankin of the region: "I'm excited about the opportunities we're finding in Europe and the potential of structuring an effective strategy and administration in impacting that area of the world."

Floyd decided to dismiss Warrington in consultation with Sam James, vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Questioned about the dismissal, James and Floyd said Warrington's relationship to the former administration was not a factor in their decision.

"Tom's been through a nightmare in the past two years," James said. "I hope this can take that pressure off and be the beginning of a new life for him."

"I'm aware of political connotations this might bring forth," Floyd said. "In reality Tom stayed in his position because of his devotion to the Europe area, and he's to be commended because of his commitment to that. This is purely an administrative evaluation that the job requirements for this position can best be filled by a person with different strengths than Tom."

Trustees told Floyd before he accepted his position that he was free to choose his administrators, said Leroy "Skip" Smith, chairman of the trustee committee that oversees mission work in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. "One of the things he asked for in the search committee was the chance to build his own team.

"Tom has really held up under a tremendous battle load, especially when the two leading staff members in that area were not there," Smith added. "I don't know that the true evaluation of all that he did during the ensuing months after Ballenger and Parker left will ever truly be known. I think he has given of himself, and we owe him a debt of gratitude."

Warrington was associate pastor of churches in Louisiana and Mississippi before missionary appointment to Costa Rica, where he was a general evangelist. Before returning to the board as a candidate consultant, he was pastoral counselor and associate director of The Family Life Center in Houston, Texas, 1982-83, and director of pastoral care at Holmes Regional Medical Center in Melbourne, Fla., 1983-86.

He received the bachelor of science degree from Belhaven College in Jackson, Miss., and the master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He did clinical studies in pastoral care and counseling at Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem, N.C., and Memorial Hospital Systems in Houston.

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BWA hears reports of crises  
in Zaire, Angola, Liberia

By Wendy Ryan

Baptist Press  
6/24/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--Baptists in Zaire say peace is their greatest need, while Baptists in Angola are desperate for food, clothing, medicine and agricultural tools, according to African Baptist leader Eleazar Ziherambere.

Ziherambere, regional secretary of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship, made up of Baptist groups from 21 African nations, and general secretary of the Union of Baptist Churches in Rwanda, visited Luanda, Angola and Zaire May 30-June 9 "to bring a message of sympathy and comfort" from the Baptist World Alliance to Baptists in those countries and to see how the BWA can help."

Needs amidst the crises in those countries and in Liberia also have been the thrust of letters received at BWA's headquarters in Washington from several Baptist leaders in the region.

"The (Zairian) people are in a desperate situation," said Ziherambere of his meeting with Zairian Baptist leaders, "but they agreed that peace is their greater need and believe any assistance should be held until things become clearer."

Ziherambere heard how Zairian Baptists have suffered from the looting and pillaging in Kinshasa, especially last January when Baptists' graduate school of theology was devastated by looting.

"They (the Zairian soldiers) took all the books, furniture, sinks, toilets, everything from the classes, library, homes and the chapel," Ziherambere recounted.

"More than 300 soldiers with their families came to destroy and to pack in big lorries (trucks) all that was in their way," he added. "One student was killed by the soldiers."

"They badly need books now for the theology school," Ziherambere said, but noted Baptist leaders asked that none be sent "until the time is right."

More news about the harassment of Baptists by Zairian soldiers came to the BWA in a letter from a Zairian Baptist leader, whose name cannot be published for safety's sake.

Last April, after a Baptist-owned car had an accident with a military car, soldiers entered the compound of the Western Zaire Baptist Community (CZBO).

"These soldiers came into the compound and had some pastors who were present kneel until CZBO paid them a large amount of money," the Baptist leader wrote.

He also told how soldiers tracked and attempted to kill him.

"It was when I was going to the (Baptist) General Secretary's house on the compound that I saw a soldier following me with a gun," the Zairian Baptist leader said. "When he tried to shoot me his gun fell down and by the time he got it up I was already in the general secretary's house.

"He came into the house to kill me. I told them I was innocent, but you can kill me if you would like to."

In thanking Baptists around the world for their prayers, the leader wrote, "I know God is protecting me through your prayers. Let God be blessed and let those who do not know Him or doubt Him know that He is great and is more than everything."

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This same faith in spite of difficult circumstances was expressed in a letter from a Baptist leader in Angola who wrote in June to the BWA and whose name likewise cannot be reported.

"With the breaking out of the war in Angola my church has suffered very much," the leader wrote. "Many members have fled from one area to another and have been caught in the middle of the conflict.

"Many have died and others abandoned their parents and families without knowing their whereabouts, but as we meet every day, there is much rejoicing in the Lord," the leader wrote.

"Many are placing their faith in Jesus, although death, hunger, sickness and despair constitute the day to day experience of Angolans."

The Angolan Baptist leader said the Baptist Convention of Angola is separated from the majority of its churches, which are in provinces not controlled by the Angolan government. "We have no communication with them," he reported.

"If the situation goes on as it is now, we even wonder how we are going to have our annual meeting," the leader wrote.

Baptists in Angola are in great need since "the war has robbed many of all their loved ones and their possessions," the leader continued. "For many Angolans, including Baptists, the scene is one of misery, hopelessness and despair."

The Angolan Baptist leader called on Baptists to help. "There is an opportunity for Baptists around the world to do something to show their compassion," the leader wrote. "Please call on Baptists around the world to pray for Angola and the Baptist work in this country."

Ziherambere, during his visit with Angolan Baptist leaders, heard of their great needs and those of the more than 2 million displaced people in Luanda.

"We realize we cannot expect everything from BWAid (BWA's relief arm)," Ziherambere quoted Angolan Baptist leaders as saying, "but we need help."

In a letter to BWA's Women's Department, Denira Agapito, national president of Angola Baptist Women, wrote, "... we need help very much, our country is devastated by war, drought, malnutrition and cholera."

Ziherambere reported that the Baptist Convention of Angola, the Baptist Evangelical Church in Angola and the Igreja Baptists Live em Angola had formed a team to try to respond to the needs.

"In responding to the cries for help from Angola, the BWA has designated this year 'the year of Africa,'" said Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary, "and we are pleading with Baptists around the world to help their brothers and sisters in Angola, and also Liberia."

In a recent visit to the BWA, Imogene Collins, head of Liberian Baptist Women pleaded with the BWA to call for help for Liberia, where war also continues. "Food, medical supplies and clothing are needed," Collins said.

Paul Montacute, director of BWAid, has called on member bodies to respond to these Africa crises and has promised to assist as funds are received from BWA donors.

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Understand age groups' traits  
for 'doing church,' speaker says By Chip Alford

Baptist Press  
6/24/93

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--The election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The bombing of Pearl Harbor. The assassination of John F. Kennedy. The rescue of Texas toddler Jessica McClure.

Depending on their age, church members may remember all, some or none of the above events happening during their lifetimes. How many they remember, however, has a direct impact on their view of life and likely influences the way they "do church," participants in a June 22 seminar at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center were told.

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"Most of our churches are made up of people from several different generations, each with their own outlook on life," Keith Williams, median/senior adult work consultant for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, told participants in his seminar, "Communicating with Adults Across Generational Lines."

"Because of their different life experiences, people see things through different filters. This has to affect how we minister," Williams said.

To effectively minister to members of each generation, Williams said Sunday school teachers and workers must first understand some of each group's unique characteristics. He and other seminar participants shared insights on the following generations:

-- "The G.I. Generation," those born between 1901 and 1924. These are today's active senior citizens. They came of age during the Great Depression, fought and won World War II and became the country's first Boy and Girl Scouts.

They sacrificed early to enjoy rewards later in life. Organized and politically powerful, they have strong opinions and clear identities.

They are very faithful to church, but reluctant to change. At church business meetings, they are likely to ask questions like: "How much is it going to cost?" or "Do we really need this?"

When communicating with or teaching members of this generation, Williams suggested giving clear instructions, minimizing small group activities, announcing your destination/plans and affirming their contributions.

-- "The Silent Generation," those born between 1925 and 1942. They were told children "should be seen and not heard." Inclusive and generous, they work best at bringing people of divergent views together. Many from this generation are in helping professions.

Many of today's church leaders and workers also come from this group. In church business, they are eager to reach consensus and keep peace in the body. When confronted with difficult or controversial church business, they are likely to suggest forming a committee to study the problem or need.

Members of this generation generally work well in small groups, Williams said, adding any communication with them should appeal to their generosity and inclusiveness and take into account their ability to deal with complex issues or situations.

-- "The Baby Boomer Generation," those born between 1943 and 1960. Idealistic by nature, members of this post World War II generation are often self-centered. They want the best for themselves and their children and they want it now.

Skeptical of the traditional, they are supportive of change. However, once they endorse an issue, idea or philosophy, they eagerly support it.

In church life, they are less loyal to denominations. They tend to be more impulsive or willing to "charge ahead" with a new ministry or building program. They might ask questions like "What will this program do for us?"

In working with "boomers," Williams suggested avoiding the traditional, emphasizing the visual and bold, stressing ideals and "what's right" and going for the creative.

-- "The 13th Generation," those born between 1961-1981, sometimes referred to as the "baby busters." The 13th generation to live under the American flag, members of this group are characterized by cynicism and a seeming lack of direction and purpose in life. They are the "latchkey" children and many come from broken or single-parent homes.

They are more realistic and practical. Because of educational defunding, they are generally not as well educated as boomers.

When it comes to church involvement, they may seem disinterested and non-committal.

To communicate with this group, Williams suggested avoiding guilt trips, being generous with affirmation and helping them know how to do specific tasks. Use of high-tech aids in teaching also would be helpful, he said.

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-- "The Millennial Generation," those born between 1982 and 2003. This still-arriving computer generation will be better educated than any of its predecessors. They will have the best but will tend to be more civic-minded than their parents.

Their characteristics are only beginning to be studied, but the use of high technology will be vital in any communication with this group, Williams said.

How can church staff members and Sunday school workers use the unique characteristics and gifts of each generation to further the cause of Christ?

One key, Williams said, is to involve church members from each generation in decisions related to church life and ministry. Another is to work to promote the respect of all opinions and differences.

"It takes a lot of prayer, a lot of respect and the understanding that the Holy Spirit works through people from all generations," he said.

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