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Young, Chapman, two others
meet with Clinton, Gore

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
9/17/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore held a lengthy meeting Sept. 16 with four Southern Baptist ministers, including the president of the Southern Baptist Convention and the president of the SBC Executive Committee, where disagreements on moral issues were expressed but a desire for further discussion was voiced by both parties.

Clinton and Gore, both Southern Baptists, met for about an hour and 40 minutes at the White House with H. Edwin Young, SBC president and pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston; Morris H. Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee; Wendell Estep, pastor of First Baptist Church in Columbia, S.C., and Rex Horne, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, Ark., where Clinton is a member.

Then on the morning of Sept. 17, Young went jogging through the streets of Washington with Clinton.

It was Clinton's first meeting with Southern Baptist leadership since messengers to June's annual meeting overwhelmingly passed a resolution separating themselves from the president's support of abortion and homosexual rights. Although the resolution was not specifically cited, the president initiated the discussion on the issues at the start of the meeting and seemed well aware of the views Southern Baptists had expressed through resolutions, Chapman said.

"We talked about areas where we as Southern Baptists strongly disagree with the president and the vice president," Young said. "We are pro-life. We are deeply concerned about the gay agenda, and the perception is that the president and his administration have totally endorsed pro-choice, have endorsed the homosexual lifestyle as a minority lifestyle. ... we dealt with this. Scripture was used."

On abortion, Clinton "gave an extended monologue of his position, and we listened and commented," Young said.

"We really didn't get into a debate. We simply stated our position biblically. He stated his position and how he came to that position. He knew we didn't agree with him."

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Estep told the president there needs to be a "a conservativ evangelical who has a prominent place in the administration of the president," Young said. "(Clinton) said he wants the cabinet to look like America, and from our perspective it looks like the far left of America."

"The president seemed to be very open to the suggestion," Chapman said.

Despite the subject matter of some of the meeting, both Clinton and Gore seemed grateful "we were able to have a congenial conversation, although it included disagreement," said Chapman, who led in expressing Southern Baptists' concerns over th president's policies on abortion and homosexuality.

The meeting, which was held on the Truman Balcony overlooking the south lawn, was a "very frank, candid, congenial conversation," Chapman said.

Young, Chapman and Horne all said the meeting succeeded in fulfilling its purpose.

"What I was hoping would happen in the meeting was there would be an open, frank, cordial dialogue, and we could leave the meeting thinking there would be the openness to meet again," Horne said.

"While there are key issues with which most Southern Baptists would disagree with the president, he did express an interest in a continuing dialogue on the value systems of the nation," Chapman said. Clinton "was certainly a willing listener," he said.

Young said, "It's a beginning dialogue. If there were any agenda, it was get to know one another, talk, share. We left it like, 'We need to sit down and talk again away from the public eye.'"

Young called it a "wonderful time of praying together, sharing together." Horne has said he has discussed his differences with Clinton on issues such as abortion and homosexuality. He also had organized a January meeting for 15 Southern Baptist ministers and evangelical leaders the week before the inauguration in which those issues also were addressed.

When he asked if he saw any movement in the president's positions, Horne said, "I don't know about movement as far as legislation is concerned," but "if we can express our concerns and hopes" they may "get into the mix of things."

He had been seeking to arrange the meeting since before the SBC's annual meeting, Horne said, and it had nothing to do with the convention's action.

Gore mentioned the "silence basically of the church in environmental issues," Young said.

He "expressed some frustration and inability to understand why people who believe God made the heavens and earth would not have greater concern about the environment," Chapman said.

The vice president said the ministers perceive the government is "not exerting moral leadership in the fashion" they would like, but "there are two Southern Baptists up here who feel the church needs to answer some questions," Young said.

Early in the meeting, Young gave both Clinton and Gore copies of the SBC Brotherhood Commission's new "Pray for the President" intercessory prayer plan. It leads people to pray for an issue, for Clinton and for Gore with specific requests each of 40 days.

"I came away with a strong impression to spend more time praying for both th president and the vice president," Chapman said.

Young also presented new Bibles to the president for his wife, Hillary, and him, and presented one personally to their daughter, Chelsea.

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SIDEBAR

'Pray for the President'
helps church overcome strains

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
9/17/93

ST. LOUIS (BP)--A little booklet costing all of 35 cents seems to have helped a St. Louis church overcome some internal strains that arose after last year's presidential election.

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Richard Lay, pastor of Harmony Baptist Church in St. Louis, decided to offer copies of "Pray for the President" to the congregation after he "felt convicted" about his own lack of prayer for the nation's leaders and saw evidence of friction within the church.

A tract-sized publication introduced by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission last June, "Pray for the President" is a guide to 40 days of "fervent prayer" for the president and vice president of the United States. More than 18,000 copies have already been distributed.

Harmony Baptist is less than a block from the corner of Grand Boulevard and Gravois Street in south St. Louis city -- "ground zero" of a decades-old blue collar neighborhood of spotless, solid-brick homes and manicured lawns. The German-Americans ("Southside Dutch" in local shorthand) who built it still set the tone, though arrivals from Eastern Europe and Asia have added spice to the mix as of late.

According to Lay, the church is a mirror image of the area, ethnically and racially mixed, drawing about 150 worshippers each Sunday.

"We were having a struggle, some real conflict because of the combination of Christian values and longtime Democratic party loyalties among many of the members," Lay said. "Many of our people are concerned with Christian issues, and there were a lot of political overtones to statements being made within the church. I was bothered by that."

Lay said he ordered 50 copies of "Pray for the President," thinking that would be enough, and planned to begin 40 days of prayer on July 4.

"I was surprised as folks came to the altar to sign a commitment sheet," Lay said. "We ran out of booklets."

After the 40-day prayer period was over, Lay noticed a significant change in the atmosphere.

"I don't hear either the Clinton-bashing or the negative remarks about the Republicans in the corridors here like I used to," he said. "Overall, I hear far more of 'here's an issue we need to pray about' and less of an inclination to 'choose up sides' right away."

"Now, at least, we talk like Christians, praying for those who lead us."

What happened at Harmony Baptist has gratified the booklet's creators at the Brotherhood Commission and affirmed their decision to publish it.

"God's word commands us to pray for our government leaders and further promised us 'the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective'," said James D. Williams, president of the Brotherhood Commission. "All believers need to pray for President Clinton, remembering that prayer is not getting man's will done in heaven, but getting God's will done on earth."

Copies of "Pray for the President" are available only from the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission. Orders may be placed by calling 1-800-727-6466.

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CBF council appoints 6 new
missionaries, cites growth

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
9/17/93

DECATUR, Ga. (BP)--Three couples appointed missionaries highlighted the fall meeting of the Coordinating Council of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship which also disposed of mostly routine business and heard encouraging reports.

The Sept. 14-16 meeting in this Atlanta suburb is one of three held during the year by the 80-plus member steering committee of the CBF, an organization of moderate Southern Baptists who are critical of conservative SBC leadership.

The appointment of the six people as missionaries -- couples to south Florida, Indonesia and the Czech Republic -- boosted the total number of missionaries to 26, according to David Wilkinson, CBF communications coordinator.

Although most business at the sessions was routine, the council did hear a number of reports of growth for the three-year-old organization.

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"We are adding a church a day," Cecil Sherman, CBF's coordinator, told the council in his report. Sherman, the group's chief executive officer, said at the end of eight months of 1993 there were 1,094 churches which had contributed \$6.8 million through the three CBF giving plans. That compares to the \$7.3 million received in all of 1992 and \$4.5 million in 1991, from 841 and 391 churches, respectively.

Although some of the funds received by the CBF are channeled to SBC agencies, more is being channeled to CBF causes each year, Sherman said. Between \$5.5 and \$6 million likely will be channeled to CBF causes this year from the three giving plans, he said.

Sherman did not specifically identify the churches but most are Southern Baptist, some of which give both through the CBF and the SBC's Cooperative Program. The SBC has more than 37,000 churches and a CP budget of about \$140 million.

In other business, the council approved: charging a \$10 registration fee for its annual meeting which will be held in May 1994 at Greensboro, N.C.; providing airline expenses for council members to attend its meetings, if needed; dates for future council meetings and the May 4-6, 1995 annual meeting in Austin, Texas, with a theme of "Pressing Toward The Mark;" procedures for requests for inclusion in the CBF budget or giving plans; and a change to a July 1 through June 30 fiscal year beginning July 1, 1995 for the CBF budget; plus a number of changes to the group's personnel policies and procedures.

Reports were brought by the five standing committees and five ministry groups.

From the Ethics and Public Policy ministry group, the council was told \$50,000 would be split between the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, Va., and the new seminary at Baylor University in Waco, Texas as "seed money" for proposed chairs of ethics at the two seminaries.

The Theological Education ministry group said it would recommend, at a later time, assistance for a proposed new theological school/seminary in Georgia. Mercer University, a Georgia Baptist college, has such a proposed divinity school or seminary under consideration, the council was told.

James Slatton, pastor of First Baptist Church, Richmond, Va., and a member of the coordinating council, was appointed to a one-year term as a non-voting member of the board of trustees of the Richmond seminary.

The goal for the CBF's Global Missions Offering for 1993-94 will be \$3 million, R. Keith Parks, global missions coordinator said. Parks said he was optimistic about achieving the goal since people will see "we're appointing new missionaries, that we're expanding our fields, that we're moving out in some exciting new directions." Parks said the CBF has enough budget to support at least 40 missionaries.

Parks said CBF will purchase some generic missions material, tailored for CBF use, from Woman's Missionary Union, SBC for the offering.

The council also decided to drop the term "missioner" for "missionary" because the former term was not clearly understood. CBF had used "missioner" to describe the first 20 people sent out via its global missions strategy but will now refer to them as "missionaries."

The six new "missionaries" were appointed Sept. 15 at a special evening service at First Baptist Church, Decatur, where the council was meeting.

David and Tracy Bengston will work with the CBF Relief Coalition in Miami. David, 30, a native of Florida, is an engineer and Tracy, 31, a native of North Carolina, is a freelance writer. The couple has a daughter, Miranda Clare.

Glen Allen and Verr Dean Williams will go to The Czech Republic. Glen Allen, 32, will be a theological teacher at the Olomouc Baptist Vocational Education Center while Verr Dean, 33, will be a church and home worker. He is a native of Jackson, Miss., and she is a native of Crosbyton, Texas. The couple has three children: Brittany Nicole, Bethany Ann and Katy Brooke.

Williams has been associate pastor of Bayou Sara Baptist Church, Saraland, Ala., since 1990.

Stanley and Kay Parks will work in Indonesia, where he was born. He will be a strategy coordinator for work among World A people group while she will be a church and home worker. Stanley, 30, is a doctoral candidate at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas and Kay, 30, is a teacher in Arlington, Texas. The couple has a daughter, Noel Katherine.

Parks has been pastor of Cross Point Baptist Church in Arlington since 1989. He is the son of Keith Parks, the CBF global missions coordinator.

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**Southern Baptist chaplain
faces discharge hearings**

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
9/17/93

ATLANTA (BP)--Discharge hearings began in September for a Southern Baptist Air Force chaplain and Vietnam veteran who questioned the use of military force in the Persian Gulf.

Lt. Col. Rob Robertson, 47, was endorsed by the Southern Baptist chaplains commission in 1983. The Mississippi native currently is stationed at Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene, Texas.

Huey Perry, Home Mission Board director of chaplaincy, said Robertson "is still in good standing with us. We have no basis to withdraw his endorsement."

The conflict leading to the discharge hearings began in 1991 when Robertson wrote a letter to the editor of the Abilene Reporter-News, said Lew Burnett, HMB director of military chaplaincy. Written before war was declared, the letter questioned the wisdom of using military force to evict Iraqi soldiers from Kuwait, Burnett said.

Chaplains have the freedom to express their views, Burnett said, but military regulations require authors of such letters to not use their military identification. Robertson was reprimanded for identifying himself with his military unit in the letter, Burnett said.

After the reprimand was reported in the local newspaper, Robertson was reassigned to fewer preaching engagements and less contact with troops. He also was required to undergo three mental health examinations, the newspaper reported.

The hearings will be held by a military judge and a panel of three officers. Their recommendation to discharge Robertson or allow him to retire will move through military channels until it reaches the secretary of the Air Force who makes the final decision, Burnett said. He added the process could take months.

Robertson declined an offer to retire early, receive full benefits and avoid the discharge proceedings, according to the Reporter-News.

Robertson has 26 years of active and reserve military duty, including service as a pilot in Vietnam for which he received the distinguished flying cross for heroism in combat.

He left the military in 1976 to pursue a master of divinity and doctorate in ethics from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He returned to the Air Force as a chaplain in 1982.

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**Pro-choice advocates make gains
in Senate, House committees**

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
9/17/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--Pro-choice abortion advocates recently made gains through committee actions in both the Senate and House of Representatives.

On Sept. 14, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education spending bill without the long-standing Hyde Amendment, which prohibits Medicaid from paying for most abortions. On the same day, the House Judiciary Committee approved the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, which would make blockading an abortion clinic a federal offense.

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The Labor/HHS/Education Subcommittee passed the spending bill without the Hyde Amendment, and pro-life members of the Appropriations Committee chose to wait until the floor vote to seek to insert it.

"Obviously, we're concerned that the committee would take such action, but we realize that the real battle is on the floor," said James A. Smith, director of government relations for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "We have said all along that this will be more difficult to win in the Senate than in the House, and we're about to find out just how difficult it's going to be."

The Hyde Amendment also was removed in the House in June but pro-lifers used a rare parliamentary maneuver to gain inclusion of it. The amendment passed by a 255-178 vote.

The Hyde Amendment has prevented Medicaid from funding abortion in most cases since 1976. From 1981 to 1993, the Hyde Amendment, named after Rep. Henry Hyde, R.-Ill., allowed Medicaid funding of abortion only when the mother's life was threatened. This year's House version allows for funding of abortions for rape and incest, as well as the life of the mother.

Medicaid paid for about 300,000 abortions a year prior to 1976. In 1990, Medicaid funded only 69 abortions under the Hyde guidelines.

In the abortion clinic access issue, the House Judiciary Committee approved a substitute version of the FACE Act, H.R. 796, thereby correcting some potential constitutional problems and bringing it more in line with the version already approved by a Senate committee. The vote on final passage of the bill was 24-11, with all 21 Democrats in support.

The bill calls for a penalty of up to one year in prison for a first offense of blockading an abortion clinic and up to three years for a second conviction.

Three attempts by pro-life Republicans on the committee to amend it failed.

While the chief sponsor, Rep. Charles Schumer, D.-N.Y., contends the bill exempts sidewalk counseling and peaceful picketing from prosecution, some pro-lifers fear the vagueness of some of its language could be used to halt such activities as well.

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**Missionaries in South Africa
seek prayers as violence grows** By Donald D. Martin

**Baptist Press
9/17/93**

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (BP)--Violence in South Africa will only get worse as the country moves toward its first multiracial election, Southern Baptist missionaries fear.

That concern has prompted the missionaries to seek an intensive prayer partnership with Southern Baptists back home.

"Our prayers are for a peaceful transition," explained missionary John Gordy, who works in the Johannesburg area. "I feel that the majority of the people here want to live and work together in peace and harmony ... even though there's so much violence and unrest."

Still, the country suffers tragic effects of political turmoil that may polarize it. Several political groups, black and white, seek to disrupt current negotiations between the government and 23 political organizations. Negotiators have worked for months on a transitional plan to produce a new constitution and eventual black majority rule.

"One day I feel good about the political progress and feel they're going to have a semi-peaceful transition and election, but then on other days the news of more killings makes me wonder," said Gordy, from Chattanooga, Tenn.

Violence escalated in July when negotiators, led by the government and Nelson Mandela's African National Congress, announced elections would take place April 27. In the 10 days following the announcement, violent outbreaks claimed the lives of 160 people. The murder rate in South Africa is now 10 times higher than the U.S. rate, according to a human rights report.

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Living in such an atmosphere imposes heavy burdens on missionaries who work in the black townships of Johannesburg, and has heightened tension throughout the community of 68 Southern Baptist missionaries in South Africa.

"Some of our people who work with the black community in these townships are finding it more difficult to go in," Gordy said. "When we go in, we usually go in with Africans who are known there and often with pastors whose churches we'll visit. But even this has become more difficult."

Missionaries have reduced their visits to townships and squatter camps and limited the places where they operate outreach and hunger relief programs -- called the Thusong projects.

Because of the violence, missionaries recently completed a series of conferences on ways to increase security in their homes and ministries.

And they're asking for prayer. Gordy and his wife, Pat, prayer coordinator for the missionaries, have enlisted the prayer support of Alabama churches through Harrell Cushing, assistant to the executive secretary for the Alabama Baptist State Convention. Cushing is a former chairman of trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

With the support of state convention leaders, Cushing has worked to assign a church to each Southern Baptist missionary family or individual in South Africa. So far he has created 15 prayer partnerships and expects to find church partners for the remaining 19 families or individuals by Sept. 24.

Cushing experienced some of the tension missionaries face when he spoke to a meeting of missionaries in South Africa in July. Awareness of the vast potential for bloodshed in the country overshadowed the meeting, he recalled.

"They were going on with business as usual, but you knew this was in the back of their minds at all times," he explained. "There wasn't a paralysis of fear. You saw they were aware God had called them there. They were going ahead with their work and yet ... taking precautions and not running unnecessary risks."

Cushing has asked Alabama churches to commit to pray for the missionaries and the situation in South Africa through Sept. 30, 1994.

One of the most critical times for prayer will come in the days leading up to April elections, which will select lawmakers who will produce a final version of the nation's constitution. In the meantime, negotiators have worked on an interim constitution the current Parliament is expected to approve in November.

The Zulu-dominated Inkatha Freedom Party and white separatist groups oppose the interim constitution -- and the elections. The resulting political system, they say, will rob them of regional autonomy. Inkatha and white separatist negotiators walked out of the talks when the election date was set, charging their concerns were being ignored.

Since the walkout violent clashes, mainly between African National Congress and Inkatha supporters, have stunned a nation. The murder rate has spiraled out of control since 1990, when President F.W. de Klerk dismantled the country's apartheid system. Most press reports estimate more than 10,000 people have died in political violence over the last three years.

Each new advance in the negotiations has launched a deadly wave of violence. In a recent outbreak, 23 people were killed and 25 wounded Sept. 9 -- the day after the democracy talks made progress on the formation of an interim governing body.

Those praying need only to follow news of the current negotiations to know when to pray for peace and an end to the cycle of violence in South Africa.

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Islamic expert says Baptists need to
look past Muslim stereotypes

By Jon Walker

Baptist Press
9/17/93

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--In order for Christians to reach out to Muslims, such as the Palestinians, it is important to understand them and their views of Jesus Christ, said George Braswell, one of the leading Islamic experts in the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Braswell, professor of missions at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., was the first Southern Baptist missionary to Iran and holds a Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

Braswell said understanding the Islamic worldview is important to formulating a response to that worldview.

"It doesn't change the Gospel message, but it helps to frame that message in a way that we hope God will use to bring them to a saving knowledge of him," Braswell said. "It is somewhat like the Apostle Paul going to them and saying, 'I see you are very religious people.' My concern is we be sensitive to their religiosity."

Once Christians move in that direction, then they can better engage Muslims in theological dialogue, Braswell said.

"For example, Muslims speak very highly of Jesus," Braswell said. "They say he was born of a virgin and view him as a miracle worker. We need to understand that Muslims know something about Jesus, they just don't know enough about Jesus."

Braswell said the Koran calls Jesus the Messiah and the Word of God, yet, they do not understand the significance of those titles.

"The Koran does not call Mohammed the Messiah and the Word of God," Braswell said. "If Baptists can begin to understand that Muslims say a whole lot more about God and Jesus than they even know they're saying, then we can take the Bible and we can also say, 'Look at your own Koran! Look at what you are saying about Jesus. You are saying more than you ever said about Mohammed.'"

Despite the good things Muslims know about Jesus, Braswell pointed out they cannot tolerate the central concept of our faith, that Jesus died on the cross.

"You can't have a resurrection unless you have a crucifixion, therefore, Muslims deny two of the great components of our biblical Christian faith -- crucifixion and resurrection," Braswell said.

Baptists need to be sure that stereotypes do not get in the way of the truth, Braswell said. Otherwise, we will "write off" over a billion people.

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Jack Graham calls Southwestern students to 'authentic ministry' By Brian Smith

Baptist Press
9/17/93

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The key to success in Christian ministry "is not how you start, but how you finish," a leading Southern Baptist pastor told students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, during the school's annual revival Sept. 14-17.

Speaking to near-capacity crowds during each of the five services, Jack Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas, encouraged the students to "let Jesus Christ have all his will and all of his way in all of us all the time."

Graham was joined by retired Prestonwood music minister Dick Baker, who led the revival's music. The theme for the week was "A Spiritual Awakening." The revival team was joined during one service by Prestonwood's sanctuary choir and orchestra.

Graham pointed out during one of his messages that many ministers have experienced success early in their ministry only to fizzle out later. "It's not how you start the Christian life but how you finish it that counts," he said.

"If there's anything on my heart this week, it's a challenge before me and before you to maintain integrity and authenticity in ministry all the days of our lives," he said. "God has promised us that he will finish what he starts."

Emphasizing the spiritual war facing Christians, Graham reflected on his own career in the ministry.

"In the last 10 years I've discovered that ministry has turned into a battle. We are in a cultural war with our own society and we're facing personal battles, as well as battles within our own churches. Hardly a day goes by when we don't see the ravages of this war," Graham said.

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Noting this spiritual war can be seen in many marriages, Graham illustrated the importance of ministry beginning at home. "Marriage isn't a duet -- real marriage is a trinity. If you don't have this kind of marriage, you don't have much of a ministry," he said.

Graham also pointed out the importance of Christians demonstrating sincere love. "Christian life is conspicuous in its presence and its absence," he said. "We demonstrate the genuineness of our faith with the genuineness of our love. And until the church gets out of our buildings and starts expressing love to people who are hurting, we'll never achieve God's purpose for our churches."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary.

Southwestern music prof faces
key change from local church

By Scott Collins

Baptist Press
9/17/93

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--It was Feb. 2, 1981 when Lyndel Vaught wrote in his daily prayer journal, "Someday I will teach at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary."

The minister of music at First Baptist Church, San Angelo, Texas, had just visited the seminary campus to participate in the School of Church Music's annual Music Workshop. He was so impressed with the professors and students, that a desire to become a part of the seminary began to grow.

But time passed, and Vaught continued his ministry in San Angelo. The work of coordinating the church's music ministry, including choirs for children through senior adults, absorbed him. Ten young people have followed Vaught and become music ministers.

As the years went by, Vaught continued writing in his prayer journal and every page seemed to take him further from Feb. 2, 1981, and the dream of teaching at Southwestern.

God's plan, Vaught said, was for him to continue his ministry in San Angelo.

In 1979, he started First Baptist's senior adult choir with 17 members.

Today, the choir has more than 125 singers and has traveled to Mexico and England on concert tours.

The idea for a senior choir came when he moved to San Angelo in 1976. He met Sara Thompson, retired music librarian and professor from Southwestern Seminary. With her added encouragement, Vaught began a senior adult handbell group, and before long the Glory Choir was formed.

Vaught's experiences with the Glory Choir have made him the leading authority in senior adult music in the Southern Baptist Convention. This past spring, he directed a mass choir of more than 4,000 singers during the Senior Adult Convention in Atlanta.

While Vaught has seen success in his conducting ministry, he admits his first musical love is solo performance. He began singing while he was a junior at First Baptist Church, Lindsay, Okla.

Vaught's youth director, Paul Justice overheard the youth singing as he walked down the stairs at church. Justice said he wanted Vaught to sing a solo the next Sunday. It was an experience that changed his life.

"I sang the song, 'Something for Thee.' It seemed God was speaking to me through the words of the song," Vaught said. Since the church didn't have a youth choir, he joined the adult choir, enrolled in the choir at school and began voice and piano lessons.

He attended Oklahoma Baptist University and the University of Oklahoma, where he earned the master's in music education.

As he walked from the B.H. Carroll Memorial Building toward Cowden Hall on Southwestern's campus on a hot August day in 1993, Vaught's eyes filled with tears. He was on the verge of fulfilling the next step in his call.

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"God has given me absolutely the best thing I could possibly have," Vaught said. "If I could have my choice of anything in this world that I could do, without exception, it would be this job.

"Coming here (Southwestern) has given me the opportunity to do something I have always wanted to do, and that's teach."

And while Vaught's official title at Southwestern is associate professor of church music, he said he will always be a minister of music.

"If people ask me, 'Who are you?', I am a minister of music. I'm always going to be a minister of music. That's what God called me to do."

With 30 years of church experience, Vaught intends to inject practical applications into his classes at Southwestern, while emphasizing the ministry aspect of music.

"A minister of music is a minister through music as opposed to being a musician in ministry," he said. "I am a minister first."

That attitude is what Vaught hopes to instill in his students, and it is one he has lived out, from the bedside of dying church members to visitation and outreach, and in worship.

Vaught also plans to help his students by visiting several churches in the SBC to see what trends are working in church music. He hopes to expose students to his findings.

His goal is to help students see that the "church must be relevant in order to minister to people of all ages. We are preparing young people for the 21st century. They're going to be faced with a variety of musical styles and with a variety of different churches and it's our responsibility to help them feel comfortable in whatever situation God calls them to.

"My only goal is to help whoever is in my class be the best minister of music they can be."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary.

**Church's deaf worker
is answer to prayers**

By Ferrell Foster

**Baptist Press
9/17/93**

JACKSONVILLE, Ill. (BP)--"She's an answer to our prayers; she really is," Bob Landes, Illinois Baptist missionary to the deaf, said. He was speaking of Jamie Eshbaugh, coordinator of deaf ministry at Lincoln Avenue Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Ill.

"Jacksonville has been the focus of the prayers of many, many people" for more than a decade, Landes said.

He described Jacksonville as the "hub of a lot of deaf activities" in the state, primarily because the Illinois School for the Deaf, the only such state school, is located there. Besides more than 300 students at the school, about 200 deaf people live in the Jacksonville area, Eshbaugh said.

The years of prayers began to be answered last year as Lincoln Avenue "started an all-out effort toward deaf ministry," pastor Dennis Higgins said.

"The Lord laid on our heart the need," Higgins said, and the "ministry kind of evolved."

Member Charlie Martin last fall began a class teaching sign language to hearing church members.

Then in May this year Eshbaugh, also a member of the church, graduated from MacMurray College in Jacksonville with a degree in education of the hearing impaired. In June, she joined the church's staff as coordinator of deaf ministry.

Eshbaugh, 22, is paid \$100 a week by the church and \$450 a month by Illinois Baptist State Association from the state missions offering. She also earns money signing for area schools, and her parents, Janet and James Eshbaugh of Hazelwood, Mo., help with expenses. "God sort of provides it in different ways," she said.

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"This really is a mission kind of work," Eshbaugh said. "We're getting a lot of people who are previously unchurched. We're reaching out to a totally new territory."

The deaf population functions as a "sub-culture," with its own language and norms, Eshbaugh said. And deaf people are proud of American Sign Language. "That's their language, their culture," she added.

Eshbaugh and others at Lincoln Avenue church have learned that language and are reaching into that sub-culture.

In the three months since Eshbaugh joined the church's staff, the ministry has grown rapidly. It started with one deaf person who attended occasionally. In July, Martin began teaching a Sunday school class for deaf adults. In August, Eshbaugh began a Sunday school class for deaf children in grades one through six. And three deaf children attended Vacation Bible School. A total of at least 19 deaf people attended Sunday school or worship at Lincoln Avenue during the three summer months, Eshbaugh said.

The church is fortunate to have a number of hearing members who know sign language and are familiar with the deaf community. "We have some very talented people in the church who work with the deaf," Eshbaugh said. The church has five deaf interpreters now and others are learning sign language, she said.

"Interpreting is a very difficult skill," noted Eshbaugh, who began "finger spelling" as a 5-year-old in Vacation Bible School. "I'm still working on stuff. You can never be perfect."

Eshbaugh said "coordinator" describes her role well. She does a variety of things -- interprets, screens and buys materials, does public relations -- to make sure the various facets of the church are "accessible to the deaf community." And as a Sunday school teacher for deaf children, she develops her own basic lessons because the children have no prior church experience and because they are "very visually oriented."

"I feel God has given me some skills" in deaf ministry, Eshbaugh said. And she wants to use them "for him."

The church's goal is to eventually "train up deaf leaders to lead the deaf," Eshbaugh noted. "It's their ministry, and they probably have more of a heart for their own than anyone else does."

But for now, Eshbaugh and others at the church are doing "mission work," and it's part of the church's larger mission in reaching the unchurched in Jacksonville.

"It is one of many areas that we are looking at to reach the unchurched," Higgins said. "We just believe that it has a tremendous amount of potential."

"This church has been growing by leaps and bounds," Eshbaugh said. On Labor Day weekend, 315 people attended worship, according to the pastor.

"God has just kind of poured out his Spirit on that church," Landes said.

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BJC's Thomas resigns,
to return to Tennessee

By Tom Strobe

Baptist Press
9/17/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--Oliver Thomas has resigned after eight years as general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs but says he plans to "stay very active in the First Amendment field."

Though he is returning to his home state of Tennessee, Thomas said he is negotiating with some religious organizations to represent them, which would involve some travel on his part. He also hopes to teach, preach, write and work on some special projects involving religion and the public schools, Thomas said.

His departure from the church-state organization will be official Oct. 31, but it will take effect for practical purposes Oct. 1, Thomas said in his resignation letter.

No replacement has been named for Thomas, though Associate General Counsel Brent Walker is a likely candidate. The BJC's annual board meeting is scheduled in early October.

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Thomas plans to remain as chairman of the coalition supporting the Religious Freedom Restoration Act until it is passed by the Senate and signed by President Clinton, he said. Thomas has been chairman of the coalition since 1990.

RFRA, which was passed by the House of Representatives in May, may be voted on in September. The bill would again require government to demonstrate a compelling interest before restricting a person's free exercise of religion, a test eliminated by the Supreme Court in 1990.

Thomas' wife, Lisa, and their two daughters have returned to Tennessee, where she is teaching school in the Blount County public school system near Knoxville.

The BJC serves as a religious liberty representative for a variety of Baptist conventions and conferences. Among its financial supporters are the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and some Southern Baptist state conventions and churches.

The Southern Baptist Convention was a founding member of the BJC in the 1940s but voted to end its ties to the committee in 1992.

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EDITORS' NOTE: Baptist Press has asked several Southern Baptist scholars to comment on 1) whether the Bible speaks in any way concerning the peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians and 2) whether this agreement in any way reflects a view of the end times. (BP) will print various responses as they are received.

COMMENTARY

On the peace agreement
and the end times ...

By Sallie Cook Lanier

Baptist Press
9/17/93

The biblical references to peace between the nations and their worship of God refers to Jerusalem. "All nations will come and worship."

The present peace agreement concerns Jericho and Gaza -- not Jerusalem. In Jewish tradition it is the remembrance of the Amalekites which represents the ultimate of Israel, not necessarily the people who at various times have occupied the Land of Promise.

The agreement made between two old warriors who represent their secular people groups in no way reflect one way or the other in the times. For us to sit on the sidelines and watch God at work would be a travesty of our faith and belief. God is sovereign and no one knows his timing.

If we forget ourselves in service of God and man, we will not need to know when the End Times occur or will occur.

We have the assurance of an abundant life in the Lord (John 10:10) and we know that the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together (Isaiah 40:5), but in the meanwhile we are admonished to be about our Father's business using our gifts under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that all may know our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

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Lanier was a Southern Baptist representative in Israel from 1960 to 1989.

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Deborah Key named first woman vice president in RTVC history," dated 9/15/93, please note the following corrections:

The headline should read: Deborah Key named second woman vice president in RTVC history.

Change the first paragraph to read: The second woman vice president in the 52-year history of the Southern Baptist Convention's Radio and Television Commission in Fort Worth has been named.

Insert the following paragraph between 4th and 5th paragraph: Bonita Sparrow in 1979 was the RTVC's first woman vice president.

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Christian Life Commission OK's purchase of building in D.C.," dated 9/16/93, please correct the 8th paragraph to read:

Louis Moore, the CLC's director of media and products, told trustees the historic high in sales was achieved only four years after the historic low point, when CLC sales plummeted to about \$68,000 in 1988-89 during the transition of the agency

Thanks,
Baptist Press

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