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One candidate, one possible
for SBC election in Orlando

Baptist Press
2/10/94

By Herb Hollinger

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--The election of a new president of the Southern Baptist Convention at the annual meeting June 14-16 has at least one announced candidate with another possible -- both high-profile pastors.

The candidacy of Fred Wolfe, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala. was publicly endorsed Feb. 8 in Jacksonville by two former SBC presidents: Jerry Vines and Charles Stanley.

Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church in Orlando, where the annual meeting of the SBC will be held, has been asked if he would allow his nomination and is seriously considering the possibility. Henry told Baptist Press he is "seeking God's will in the matter."

Wolfe, chairman of the SBC Executive Committee, was "enthusiastically endorsed," according to Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church in Jacksonville. The endorsement came during the final night of the Jacksonville church's annual pastors' school.

About 8,000 people, about half registered for the conference, were in attendance that night, Vines said, and the Wolfe endorsement drew wide applause. Later, Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church in Atlanta, said he also endorses Wolfe.

Both Wolfe and Henry are considered conservatives among Southern Baptists and, apparently, friends. In fact, one year Wolfe nominated Henry for president of the SBC Pastors' Conference.

There are other similarities between Henry and Wolfe: both are 56 and have held their current pastorates for a long time. Henry has been at Orlando for more than 16 years while Wolfe's 23rd anniversary is this month at Mobile.

However, Wolfe has received the backing of a group of 60-70 conservatives who have met twice in the past year and given Wolfe unanimous support. The group met in Texas last summer and in Kentucky last fall, according to Wolfe, who was not present at the meetings. The leaders asked Wolfe to be a candidate.

"I have not sought, nor am I running (for president)," Wolfe told Baptist Press. Wolfe said after the leaders' request he did seek advice from some former SBC presidents who also were unanimous in their support.

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Wolfe's one-year term as chairman of the powerful SBC Executive Committee concludes at Orlando in June and he would be eligible for a second term. However, he said, if elected SBC president he would not, "of course, consider a second term" as chairman of the Executive Committee. The election of chairman comes the day after the election of the SBC president in Orlando.

Henry said he was prayerfully seeking God's will about the matter. At this point, Henry told Baptist Press, "I don't know . . . I may know in the next couple of weeks."

Current SBC President Edwin H. Young, pastor of Houston's Second Baptist Church, concludes a second one-year term at the Orlando meeting.

The election of a president has been a key part of the "conservative resurgence" since it began in 1979 when Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in suburban Memphis, Tenn., was first elected. The president, according to the SBC constitution, appoints the SBC Committee on Committees, leading to the election of directors and trustees of SBC agencies.

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Foreign Mission Board
widens volunteer channels By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
2/10/94

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board have unanimously approved a policy to widen the agency's channels for sending volunteers overseas.

The new policy, adopted Feb. 9, aims to increase the number of volunteers going overseas through the board and outlines principles for cooperating with Southern Baptist volunteer groups working outside board channels.

"Volunteers are a resource that can impact a lost world," said Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin. "We need to mobilize that resource and develop the kind of strategy that incorporates volunteers -- working alongside career missionaries -- into all we're trying to accomplish overseas in Jesus' name."

The policy reaffirms career missionaries as the board's "centerpiece for missions" but acknowledges the importance of volunteers to overall strategy, said Bob Oxford, chairman of a trustee-staff subcommittee that drafted the recommendations. The group was appointed in 1992 to study the use of volunteers and develop philosophical principles to recommend to the board.

Career missionaries should "think of volunteers as part of their mission tools" in such tasks as church planting and discipleship training, said Oxford, a layman from Denver.

"The whole idea of volunteer participation is that it will strengthen the work of the career missionary, and if properly planned and designed, it will result in a good experience" for missionaries, volunteers and the overseas Christians they serve, he said.

Jim Furgerson, director of the board's volunteers in missions department, added: "The Great Commission wasn't just given to missionaries. It was given to all Southern Baptists . . . This policy will cause Southern Baptists to look seriously at the their personal commitment to carrying out the Great Commission." Volunteers can't take the place of missionaries, Furgerson said, but they "can sure hold the board while (missionaries) drive the nails."

Last year the Foreign Mission Board sent 10,265 short-term volunteers overseas. About 40 percent of them served through volunteer partnerships with Southern Baptist state conventions, associations, churches and agencies. The board currently has 25 active partnerships and 14 more in the works.

In 1988 Southern Baptists met their Bold Mission Thrust goal of sending 10,000 volunteers overseas annually. And they did it 12 years early; the goal was set to be met by the year 2000. The 10,000 mark has been topped each year since by the Foreign Mission Board, with a high of 12,108 volunteers in 1991.

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With the new policy in place, "I envision we will vastly increase volunteers going overseas annually," Rankin said.

The board has identified as many as 35 autonomous Southern Baptist volunteer groups that have expressed interest in working with the board in volunteer missions, according to Oxford.

"The Foreign Mission Board would like to be the agency of choice by which all Southern Baptists participate in missions overseas," said Oxford, while recognizing "some churches or groups might still elect to work on their own."

The policy calls for mission board staff to develop ways to cooperate with such groups. It encourages autonomous groups to go to areas of strategic importance to missions and to take out the board's insurance package for volunteers.

It also asks volunteers going outside mission board channels to plan for follow-up and discipleship of people who become Christians through their projects.

The subcommittee that drafted the policy worked for 14 months seeking input from a variety of Southern Baptist leaders, including missionaries, mission administrators, state Baptist convention executives and representatives of autonomous volunteer groups.

"It's been a combined effort and a very comprehensive process," Rankin said.

Among the board's February missionary appointees and reappointees were three people whose assignments will include significant work with volunteers: -- Mike and Kay Norfleet, former missionaries to Taiwan, reappointed as missionaries to Ukraine, formerly a republic of the Soviet Union. The Norfleets, from Marlow, Okla., will coordinate the work of short-term volunteers in Ukraine, including those who don't work directly through the Foreign Mission Board.

Kathy Abshire, of Ringgold, La., will coordinate work among volunteer teams in Central Asia.

"Missions is made up of volunteers," said Norfleet. "It is made up of people who have felt a call and a compassion for the work that Jesus Christ gives to every one of us."

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Blackaby urges FMB trustees
to ask for the impossible

By Don Martin

Baptist Press
2/10/94

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptists' goals for overseas missions may insult God if their plans rely only on man's vision, Henry Blackaby told Foreign Mission Board trustees during their February meeting.

"Is God being honored in the requests you make?" he asked. "Or does he have to say, 'Is that all you think I can do?'"

Blackaby is director for prayer and spiritual awakening at the Home Mission Board. He has agreed to work part time with the Foreign Mission Board and the Sunday School Board as a special assistant to each agency's president in the area of spiritual awakening.

In his first month of work with the Foreign Mission Board, he has led spiritual renewal meetings with furloughing missionaries, missionary candidates, International Service Corps personnel and top administrators. He also has scheduled three trips overseas this year to lead missionaries in spiritual retreats.

But his main focus in 1994 still centers on helping Southern Baptists in the United States seek spiritual revival, he said. That includes working to introduce a new discipleship resource, "Fresh Encounter," which he wrote with Claude King.

The two-part study series follows their successful 1990 collaboration, "Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God," which has sold more than 550,000 copies -- one of the Sunday School Board's all-time best sellers.

In working with the presidents of the three agencies, Blackaby noted a common desire to seek spiritual awakening -- both in the convention and among missionaries.

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"I've sensed one heart in these leaders," he said. "They have each said they want to know how their efforts can be right in the middle of God's leadership. All three agencies are serious about experiencing renewal and spiritual awakening that can lead to things we've not even dreamed of."

Blackaby fashioned his message to FMB trustees out of this belief.

"I believe our Lord, with one great heart cry, is saying, 'Oh Southern Baptists, what do you want me to do for you?' And may we, with all of our heart, ask for the impossible to men because we know that nothing is impossible for God," he said.

Blackaby warned against reducing God to a comfortable level. If mission planners only tackle what is possible according to physical and human resources, he said, they perform a disservice to God.

"Every time we confidently call on God, it honors him," he said. "When we ask the impossible and confidently wait with expectation, he does it. And when he does, honor comes to our Lord.

"God is waiting for us to get into a situation that is beyond us, so God can say, 'Let me bring an answer.' And when God does, he will be honored."

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(BP) PHOTO (vertical) mailed Feb. 9 by Richmond (foreign) bureau of Baptist Press. Outline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

CLC, BJC disagree
on prayer amendment

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
2/10/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--When the Senate recently passed the Clinton administration's Goals 2000 education bill, it included three prayer-related amendments -- one which brought opposing views from the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

The Senate earlier had approved by a 75-22 margin an amendment withholding federal funds from any state or local educational body which prevents "constitutionally protected prayer in public schools by individuals on a voluntary basis." The amendment, introduced by Sen. Jesse Helms, R.-N.C., also prohibits any agency from requiring a person to pray or from influencing the form or substance of a "constitutionally protected prayer" in the schools.

The education bill already had been passed by the House of Representatives without such language. The legislation will go to a conference committee to reconcile the differences before returning to both houses for final passage.

The Christian Life Commission expressed support for the amendment, while the BJC opposed it.

"We certainly support strong sanctions against any school district which intentionally refuses to allow constitutionally protected, voluntary prayer by individuals in the public school setting," CLC Executive Director Richard Land and General Counsel Michael Whitehead said in a prepared statement.

"This amendment protects only those prayers at public schools which are already constitutionally protected. The bill does not expand the scope of prayers protected in school and does not change the Supreme Court's precedents about what is voluntary and non-coercive," the CLC officials said.

BJC General Counsel Brent Walker said the amendment was unnecessary and potentially harmful to church-state separation.

"Students already have the right to pray privately, even corporately sometimes," so the amendment "doesn't really do anything," Walker said.

As a result of the amendment, local school officials "might bend over backwards" under pressure to allow unconstitutional prayer "for fear of losing their funding," he said.

The amendment, however, may bring some school officials into compliance with laws already guaranteeing religious expression, the CLC's Land and Whitehead said.

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Though the Senate passed the Equal Access Act in 1984 and the Supreme Court upheld it in 1990, "many school boards continue to refuse access to prayer," the CLC statement said. "Others have been trying to skirt the law, denying equal access to prayer groups by claiming that all other school clubs are 'curricular' or by abolishing the extracurricular period.

"This evasive approach may carry more risk under Sen. Helms' proposal. In the past, schools have been threatened with litigation by the ACLU or threatened with non-coverage for punitive damages by their own school insurers. Now, to balance the risks, they are threatened with loss of federal financial aid if they violate the right to voluntary prayer," Land and Whitehead said.

The concerns about schools stonewalling on equal access "may be true," the BJC's Walker said, "but I think the Equal Access Act is going to shake out . . . we are moving in the right direction on equal access."

The Equal Access Act allows student-initiated, student-led meetings to be held on campus outside class hours if the school permits other extracurricular clubs to meet.

In supporting the amendment, the CLC also said, "On Feb. 2, President Bill Clinton, at the National Prayer Breakfast, used a phrase that he has used before: Our First Amendment guarantees freedom of religion, not freedom from religion. For those school officials who have behaved with hostility toward private, voluntary religious speech, Sen. Helms' bill would put teeth into the president's pledge."

The full text of the amendment says: "No funds made available through the Department of Education under this Act, or any other Act, shall be available to any state or local educational agency which has a policy of denying, or which effectively prevents participation in, constitutionally protected prayer in public schools by individuals on a voluntary basis. Neither the United States nor any state nor any local educational agency shall require any person to participate in prayer or influence the form or content of any constitutionally protected prayer in such public schools."

During floor debate, Helms added the phrase "constitutionally protected" in two places at the suggestion of Sen. Robert Packwood, R.-Ore. Sen. Edward Kennedy, D.-Mass., the manager of the bill, announced his support for the amendment when the new phrase was added.

The senators adopted by a 78-8 vote a sense-of-the-Senate amendment by Sen. John Danforth, R.-Mo., encouraging schools to have a daily period of silent meditation for students. They also approved by voice vote an amendment by Sen. Carl Levin, D.-Mich., preventing funds from being denied to schools which have adopted a "constitutional policy relative to prayer in public school." Contending Levin's amendment did not conflict with his, Helms did not oppose it.

A Helms amendment which would have withheld federal funding of condom or contraceptive distribution to minors without parental consent failed by a 59-34 vote.

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EDITORS' NOTE: In addition to the (BP) story "HMB executive committee affirms Lewis, staff and Masonic report," dated 2/9/94, following is the full text of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board executive committee Feb. 8 resolution concerning ongoing challenges to the HMB study of Freemasonry:

WHEREAS, at the direction of the 1992 session of the Southern Baptist Convention the Home Mission Board was directed to cause its Interfaith Witness Department to conduct a study of Freemasonry, and

WHEREAS, the Home Mission Board was further directed to issue a report to the 1993 session of the Southern Baptist Convention containing its findings and recommendations, and

WHEREAS, the Home Mission Board fully complied with the directions of the Southern Baptist Convention, and

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WHEREAS, the 1993 session of the Southern Baptist Convention overwhelmingly approved the report of the Home Mission Board:

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the Executive Committee hereby affirms the actions taken by the trustees and staff of the Home Mission Board in complying with the directions of the 1992 session of the Southern Baptist Convention, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Executive Committee affirms the actions and statements of its president, Dr. Larry Lewis and the Home Mission Board's trustees and staff, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Executive Committee deploras any statements attacking the Christian integrity and motives of the Home Mission Board's directors and staff or any implications the report was developed under the supervision of Masons or that fear of financial repercussions caused us to compromise on this issue.

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Also, the following paragraphs could be added to the end of the (BP) story:

Larry Holly, the Texas physician who initiated the Freemasonry challenge in 1992, issued a statement after the executive committee action, reiterating various criticisms of the HMB study he previously has voiced.

Concerning the resolution's denial of the HMB study being "developed under the supervision of Masons," Holly wrote that an upcoming third book he has written on the subject, which is now at the printer, will demonstrate "that the HMB's Study was developed under the scrutiny of the editor of the Oklahoma Mason and the Director of the Masonic Leadership Institute, Mr. Jim Tresner."

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Adventure Week mailing
causes confusion with VBS By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
2/10/94

NASHVILLE (BP) -- A mailing received by some Southern Baptist churches about Adventure Week, a recreation-based event designed by the Baptist Sunday School Board primarily for non-Southern Baptist churches, has created some confusion about SBC-produced Vacation Bible School materials.

Adventure Week, which blends Bible stories, games, crafts, music, drama and a video for child-centered learning, was promoted in late December 1993 and early January 1994 to mailing lists purchased from other publishers, according to John Garner of the board's church recreation program and project director for Adventure Week. No Sunday School Board customer lists were used.

The combined list of 200,000 names was pared to approximately 155,000 names in an effort to remove duplications and undeliverable addresses. However, Garner said, some SBC-affiliated churches did receive the mailing, creating confusion about distinctives of the materials.

In contrast to "Trail of Treasures," the 1994 VBS materials produced for Southern Baptist churches by the board's Bible teaching-reaching division, Adventure Week materials do not reference Southern Baptist causes or entities.

Adventure Week is designed to provide biblically based materials for non-SBC-related churches. However, Garner said the materials are suitable for use in SBC churches that want resources for activities beyond VBS, such as a school spring break or other off-school events sponsored by churches.

"For churches whose children are involved in a year-around school situation, Adventure Week may be a resource for off-school time," Garner observed. "We want Southern Baptist churches to choose Southern Baptist Vacation Bible School materials which are available for all ages and which have been redesigned and improved for 1994. For those who may not, we would like for them to consider Adventure Week before selecting materials from another publisher. Adventure Week is designed as a VBS complement in Southern Baptist churches, not a substitute."

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"Trail of Treasures" and Adventure Week materials may be ordered through the board's toll-free order number, 1-800-458-2772 and through Baptist Book Stores and Lifeway Christian Stores.

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All-American rouses youth
to 'keep pressing on'

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
2/10/94

GATLINBURG, Tenn. (BP)--All-American long jumper and sprinter Clyde Duncan roused more than 700 youth at this year's national High School Baptist Young Men's Rally to "keep pressing on" and "use what you've learned here to help someone else through the storm."

In line with the rally theme, "Never Alone," based on Matt. 28:20, Duncan said, "Jesus will never leave you nor forsake you, he will never abandon you, so when hard times come, you know what to do. Keep pressing on." The Feb. 4-6 rally was held in Gatlinburg, Tenn.

Duncan told of his own experience in "turning tragedy into triumph." "I had posted a long jump of 27 feet before the (1992) Barcelona Olympics, only to tear a tendon in my right knee before the trials," he said. "There was discouragement, sadness, pain and even anger. But the Word tells us to be angry, but sin not. I didn't give up."

Duncan still went to Barcelona, but found himself in "a different venue."

"I was asked to be an assistant chaplain to the athletes, and I probably reached more people than I would have had I been competing."

While he recuperated after reconstructive surgery, Duncan's grade point average soared to a near-perfect 3.8, and he began to speak at Christian youth functions. And Duncan hasn't given up the dream of competing in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

He continues to train in his hometown of Houston while completing a master's degree in sociology at the University of Houston, where he earned his bachelor's degree in communications and was an All-American in track and field.

The two-day rally also featured conferences with titles that ranged from "Giving Your Faith Away" to "How To Raise Your Parents" and a hands-on mission project directed by M.B. Howard, national coordinator for volunteers on construction projects throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.

Howard supervised as the youth assembled and painted toys from handcrafted wood parts. The toys will be given to churches in Mexico and the Gatlinburg area.

This year's rally attendance of 729 was an all-time record. The event reflected the sponsoring Brotherhood Commission's phaseout of the High School Baptist Young Men and Pioneer Royal Ambassador programs and the launch of Challengers, which will add young men in grades seven through nine when it begins in October.

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(BP) PHOTOS mailed to state Baptist newsjournals by the Brotherhood Commission.

Baptists in north-central U.S.
view HMB commissioning service

Baptist Press
2/10/94

OAK BROOK, Ill. (BP)--More than 700 leaders from the seven north-central states witnessed the first-ever Home Mission Board commissioning service in the region and heard challenges to win their states to Christ in their triennial meeting in Oak Brook, Ill., Jan. 11-13.

They represented five state conventions -- Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota-Wisconsin and Ohio -- and one state fellowship -- Iowa -- as part of the 19-year-old North Central States Mission Thrust.

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The laymen, church starters, pastors, directors of missions and state leaders also heard testimonies from their peers and participated in several how-to seminars, but the keynote service of the three-day rally was the commissioning service for 47 newly appointed home missionaries.

Gihwang Shin, commissioned with his wife, Hye Sun, to serve in Indianapolis, told of being stricken with polio as a baby and with being healed of spiritual blindness.

"I accepted Christ and started a new journey," he told an enthusiastic crowd. "We go with great joy because we have the love of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

Shin's parents traveled from Seoul, Korea, to be present for their son's commissioning.

Said another of the new missionaries, Don McMurray, "We all have one thing in common: We've all been touched by the Lord."

McMurray and his wife, Norma, from Missouri and North Carolina respectively, serve in Dayton, Ohio.

Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis gave the charge to the candidates, citing the parable of the great banquet in Luke 16 and telling them if they wanted to fill the church, "Here's how you do it."

That parable included an invitation, "come, all things are ready and the price has already been paid;" an exhortation, "go to the highways, that's where people gather in great numbers;" and an affirmation to go quickly, "Jesus was talking about the urgency of the day."

"Missionaries, I charge you, just do it," Lewis said.

The chairman of the North Central States Steering Committee, Wyndell Jones, executive director in Iowa, said the first commissioning service ever held in one of the seven north-central states was significant for Baptist work in the region.

"I thought it was significantly important to have the commissioning of missionaries in this area," he said, because it gave symbolic evidence the Home Mission Board acknowledged the area had come of age in its Baptist witness.

"There are not many states that have joined together for events such as this," Jones told participants. The missions thrust had produced a "spirit of oneness in reaching people and starting churches" in the region, he said.

Several of the missionaries commissioned in the service either come from the area or have been assigned to missionary positions in one of the seven states, which together account for 25 percent of the population of the United States.

Robert Wilson, executive director for Michigan Baptists and the dean of present executive directors in the area, said the 19-year partnership between Baptists in the north-central states and the HMB, Baptist Sunday School Board, Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood, has been at least twofold.

"It has been an undergirding for each other," he said. "The fellowship is important. Many of them are scattered across our state. It gives them the feeling that they are part of something bigger."

Referring to the long-time North Central States goal of doubling the number of churches in the seven states, Wilson added: "To me it has helped us keep a focus on what we are all about in Michigan and in all of the area, that is, establishing churches in every city and community that will aggressively share Christ with the people."

Said Jones, "I think it has given visibility to the national convention to recognize the needs and opportunities in these states."

Released to participants in the rally was a history of the missions thrust from 1975-90, written by E. Harmon Moore, formerly on the Illinois staff and later executive director in Indiana for 22 years.

Wilson credited Moore and Noel Taylor, former executive director for Illinois Baptists, with providing the "heart for sparking" the North Central States Missions Thrust at its beginning. Both were recognized from the platform for their contributions.

Other speakers on the program included Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr., SBC Executive Committee President Morris H. Chapman, Brotherhood Commission President James Williams and Ann Brack from the national WMU office.

Draper urged participants to be sure the growth in their churches was also "kingdom growth," explaining while church growth can be by biological and transfer additions, the "only way the kingdom grows is by conversion."

"Church growth begins with the sovereignty of God," he said. "And we need to have a resurgence of an emphasis on the lostness of man."

To fully accomplish kingdom growth, Christians need to recall the "strategic place of the church and denomination in all this," Draper added. "Lone ranger Christianity is out of place."

Chapman, referring to the release of God's power at Pentecost, told participants, "Our generation has yet to see an outburst of Pentecostal power. We have not had a spiritual awakening in our time. We have not yet known Pentecostal power."

"The disciples paid the price of Pentecost," he explained. "It was the price of prayer."

"Spiritual awakening could begin in your church," Chapman said. "It could. Whether it does or not, will I be able to say, 'Lord, I was ready when you poured out your power.?'"

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