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NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420,17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522, CompuServe 70420,250
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232, CompuServe 70420,115
NASHVILLE Linda Lawson, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300, CompuServe 70420,57
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151, CompuServe 70420,72
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223, CompuServe 71173,316

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Florida board delays HMB proposal, talks scheduled

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
9/9/94

LAKE YALE, Fla. (BP)--The Florida state board of missions has voted to delay consideration until January of a proposal which would alter the relationship between Florida and the SBC Home Mission Board.

Meeting at Lake Yale Sept. 8-9, the board accepted the recommendation of John Sullivan, executive director, to delay the matter "and authorize the (executive director) to meet with the Brister committee on Oct. 28."

The Brister committee is a SBC Executive Committee special program and structure study committee looking at the programs and organizational structure of the SBC. Mark Brister, chairman of the special committee, had requested in a recent letter to Sullivan that the proposal be delayed and also issued an invitation to meet with the study committee in October.

Another part of Sullivan's recommendation, approved by the Florida board, directed the state convention administration to meet with the Home Mission Board administration "as soon as possible." Sullivan will report to the board of mission at its January 1995 meeting.

Sullivan, in a prepared release, said the questions 'Who is responsible for mission work in Florida?' and 'How will it be financed?' must be addressed.

"My inclination would be to see our proposal tested as a paradigm shift in mission giving and cooperative relationships. However, in response to the 'Brister committee' that is studying all structure and relationships in the denomination, it is my heart to cooperate," Sullivan said.

"The Florida Baptist Convention has always done its work in the sunshine and we will continue to do so. This is neither compromise nor capitulation, but a desire to cooperate with brothers in seeking solutions to sensitive problems and to insure the aggressive ongoing mission of winning this diverse and dynamic state to Christ," Sullivan said.

The Florida proposal called for the state convention to retain, beginning in 1996, those funds (presently about \$1.3 million) which normally would have been channeled to the HMB through the Cooperative Program. The Florida budget committee approved the proposal last month and was scheduled to present it to the board of missions Sept. 9.

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Brister, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, La., said Sept. 8 the Florida proposal "not only relates (Florida) in a new way to one of our SBC agencies, (it) offers a paradigm shift in mission giving ... we have requested Dr. Sullivan delay the proposal."

Brister said the committee would like to hear the background, reasons and objectives which prompted the proposed Florida recommendation.

HMB president Larry Lewis had charged the recommendation, if passed, would strike a "death blow" to the Cooperative Program. He told Baptist Press Sept. 8 he met with Sullivan and several Florida convention leaders earlier in the week at a Florida Cooperative Program summit meeting. At that meeting Sullivan confirmed he would attempt to delay the proposal.

"It was a very good meeting. Discussion was candid and frank and a Christ-like spirit prevailed," Lewis said.

"I voiced my strong opposition to the proposal and urged that we strengthen our relationship rather than sever it."

Lewis said he too had been invited to discuss the proposal with Brister's committee and, although he has met with them previously, would be anxious to do so again.

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Martin King contributed to this story.

Michael R. Collins, 51,
is Michigan exec nominee

Baptist Press
9/9/94

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. (BP)--Michael R. Collins, a division director for the Ohio Baptist convention, is the nominee for executive secretary of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan.

Collins, 51, if elected, will replace the retiring Robert B. Wilson who was the state's executive for 23 years.

According to an announcement in the September issue of the convention paper, Michigan Baptist Advocate, Collins will be presented to the annual meeting of the convention Nov. 8-10 at Burton, Mich.

Damon Patterson, chairman of the search committee, said Collins is the man "we would like to introduce ... (who) we believe God has chosen to lead our state convention into the 21st century."

Collins is director of the church services/business support ministries division for the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio. He has been on staff of the Ohio convention since 1973 when he was named Sunday school director. In 1981 he became director of the state's stewardship development and church development division and a recent organizational change shifted his responsibilities to church services/business support.

A native of Jacksonville, Fla., Collins earned a bachelor's degree from Carson Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn.; a master of religious education degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, in 1968; and a doctor of ministry degree from Luther Rice Seminary, Jacksonville, Fla., in 1978.

Collins was on staff of Wallace Memorial Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tenn., and a Sunday school associate at the Florida Baptist Convention prior to moving to Ohio.

Collins and his wife, Maureen, have one son, Marc, and twin daughters, Michelle and Marnita.

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Hotel reservations for Atlanta
'95 SBC must be mailed Oct. 1

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Requests for hotel reservations for the 1995 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Atlanta should be mailed Oct. 1, according to convention manager Jack Wilkerson.

The June 20-22 meeting is at the new Georgia Dome/World Congress Center.

The SBC Housing Guide and Request Form is in the September issue of SBC Life magazine (formerly Baptist Program), published by the SBC Executive Committee. It can also be obtained from the executive directors' offices of the Baptist state conventions.

Wilkerson, vice president for business and finance for the Executive Committee, said the forms provide complete instructions for filing. They also list hotels in the 6,800-room Southern Baptist block and their rates.

Reservations must be postmarked on or after Oct. 1 and will be made on a first-come, first-serve basis through the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau's computerized housing system.

Individual registrants may not submit more than one request per person. Multiple registrants may submit no more than 10 individual requests in the same envelope.

The Hyatt Regency downtown is the convention hotel.

Information about group housing for 50 or more people or special needs housing can be obtained by writing to the SBC Housing Information Office, 901 Commerce St., Suite 750, Nashville, TN 37203 or by calling (615) 244-2355.

Transportation in Atlanta is being planned using the MARTA System. MARTA offers multiple day, unlimited travel passes that are very reasonably priced, Wilkerson said. Proximity to MARTA was a consideration in the hotel room block selection process.

"The need to drive personal vehicles to the Georgia Dome is virtually eliminated with a MARTA station located adjacent to the Dome," Wilkerson said.

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Dentist, sportsman to enlist
FMB medical, sports volunteers By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
9/9/94

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Two Southern Baptists -- a dentist and a sportsman -- have been tapped to help the Foreign Mission Board enlist volunteers in medical missions and sports evangelism.

Bill Snowden, 63, and Gene Greer, 72, began working with the board's volunteers in missions department Sept. 1 as Mission Service Corps volunteers.

Snowden, resident dentist at Clear Creek Baptist Bible College in Pineville, Ky., will match Southern Baptist health care professionals with volunteer medical projects overseas.

Greer, church recreation consultant for the Baptist General Convention of Texas in Dallas, will enlist Christian athletes for volunteer projects in sports evangelism. Both will help volunteers respond to specific requests submitted to the Foreign Mission Board by its missionaries.

The new roles will help deliver on "our commitment to enlarge opportunities for volunteers," said Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin.

"It's related to the growing momentum of interest among Southern Baptists in volunteer involvement overseas," Rankin said. "We recognize volunteers are a tremendous resource that can impact the world for Christ and be a valuable supplement to the work and strategies of our missionaries."

Snowden and Greer bring to their assignments "a network of professionals" in their fields, said Jim Furgerson, director of the board's volunteers in missions department. "This will broaden our horizons for ministry" through volunteer missions, he said.

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Greer and Snowden, who will work from their homes in Dallas and Winchester, Ky., respectively, also will promote volunteer missions among Southern Baptists in their fields.

Snowden, now retired from a private dentistry practice in Winchester, has worked overseas 17 times as a short-term dental volunteer through the Foreign Mission Board. He also helped establish the Baptist Medical-Dental Fellowship, an organization promoting volunteer missions among Southern Baptist health care professionals. He recently returned from a volunteer medical project in Russia. He also has been a dental volunteer for the board in the Caribbean, South and Central America, Africa and Asia.

Greer, a runner, retired in 1987 as program planning director for the state missions commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, a job he had held since 1974. Greer, who joined the Texas convention staff in 1959, served earlier in several Texas Baptist churches as educational director. During retirement he has been a Mission Service Corps volunteer serving with Texas Baptists.

Most recently Greer worked with the Dallas Baptist Association as strategy planning coordinator for area ministries related to the recent World Cup soccer tournament. In that role he helped Texas Baptists provide a Christian witness during the six World Cup games played in Dallas.

Both men hope to influence Southern Baptist volunteers who go overseas through other channels to get involved in Foreign Mission Board volunteer projects.

In both health care and sports, many Southern Baptist volunteers have gone out on their own and not worked with Foreign Mission Board missionaries, Snowden said. "If we can channel them through the board, the missionaries can benefit from (the volunteers' work)."

Greer and Snowden said they believe these specialized areas of volunteerism provide a unique way to reach people for Jesus Christ overseas. "The church isn't the drawing card it once was," Snowden said. "If you don't go out where the people are, you're not going to (reach) the masses. Jesus spent very little time in the temple. Most of his time was out on the boat, up on the hillsides, because he knew that's where the people were."

Many times Snowden has practiced dentistry overseas "under a tree, by putting my forceps and instruments on the front of a car. We didn't have any trouble getting people there, we had trouble keeping them back from where we were working. But when we shared Jesus Christ with these people, we knew we were reaching many we could never have gotten to the church."

Greer has seen the same thing in sports evangelism. "About 96 percent of the total world population is interested in some kinds of sports," said Greer. "When sports is mentioned, it automatically draws in people."

For example, in 1982 Greer helped to organize the "Run of the Century," in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, a sports outreach project held in cooperation with Southern Baptist missionaries in Brazil and Texas Baptists. About 20,000 people ran from downtown Rio de Janeiro to Copacabana Beach. Through the run and other related activities, Brazilians heard about Jesus Christ from Christian athletes and trainers.

Greer and Snowden said they believe such projects will enhance the work of career missionaries. "We want the people influenced by these volunteers to find the connection for discipleship and growth in Christ in the churches where our missionaries are working," Greer said.

Volunteers are "supplements" to the career missionary, Snowden added. "Without the career missionaries, we can't do this."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: For information on volunteer projects in sports evangelism and health care through the Foreign Mission Board, call Alvinia Michalec, enlistment assistant/secretary in the board's volunteers in missions department, 1-800-888-8657. (BP) photo (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers Sept. 9 by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet News Room.

Clinton speaks to Baptists,
National Baptists that is ...

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--President Bill Clinton will address a Baptist national meeting, but it is not a Southern Baptist meeting.

Calls to the SBC Executive Committee office in Nashville and many state convention offices indicated some confusion as to which Baptist group President Clinton is going to address.

Adding to the confusion were remarks by conservative radio/TV commentator Rush Limbaugh early Sept. 9 which indicated Clinton was going to speak to Southern Baptists in New Orleans.

Clinton, a Southern Baptist, will speak to the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. which is holding its annual meeting in New Orleans this week. The NBC, USA has about 8 million members in 33,000 churches and claims to be the world's largest black organization.

Interestingly, the NBC, USA, Inc. is based in Nashville, Tenn. And the Southern Baptist Convention will hold its annual meeting in New Orleans -- but in 1996! And, another large black Baptist group, National Baptist Convention of America, is holding its annual meeting this week -- in Nashville!

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Self-denial, cross-bearing crucial
for disciples, Cedars speakers note By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
9/9/94

DALLAS (BP)--Christians must be willing to deny self radically and take up their crosses willingly before they can follow Jesus faithfully, participants at Cedars VI were told.

More than 750 people from 19 states and nine foreign countries attended the sixth annual Cedars of Lebanon prayer retreat at Mt. Lebanon Encampment, Sept. 2-5, sponsored by Texas Baptist Men.

Responding to an appeal to "deny self," at least a half-dozen couples committed their lives to career foreign missions service and many others volunteered for short-term missions projects, including the "Greater Nairobi Crusade" next summer.

Gifts placed in a "Chest of Joash" -- named for the Old Testament collection to rebuild the temple -- included jewelry, pledges of real estate and checks totaling about \$20,000.

Proceeds will be used for relief in Rwanda, search and rescue of Cuban refugees in the Florida straits, "Experiencing God" discipleship materials for South Africa and other TBM projects.

Encounters with God are always God-centered, not self-centered, according to Henry Blackaby, director for prayer and spiritual awakening for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

"When the Father convinces you that Jesus is the Christ, the only response that is worthy of him is to deny self immediately that he might, under all circumstances and at all times be Lord of your life," he said.

If Jesus is not Lord in their lives, professing Christians do not need to rededicate their lives, Blackaby said. They need to repent.

Cross-bearing by a Christian is a voluntary act of shared suffering, he said.

"The cross is something you can avoid if you want to," he said. "And many of us have avoided what God has assigned because we knew what it would cost us. We chose not to hurt."

But a disciple can never follow Jesus until he takes up his cross, Blackaby said. The Christian life is an invitation by God to follow his Son on his terms, he insisted.

"The following of Jesus requires absolute obedience," he said.

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Too many church-goers are content with "paltry preaching and perverted doctrine" and "a Christianity that has lost its teeth" because they never had a genuine sense of their lostness, according to Richard Owen Roberts of Wheaton, Ill., author and lecturer on spiritual awakening.

"If you offer salvation to someone who doesn't know what sin is, all you will accomplish is superficial healing," Roberts said.

One reason for superficial healing is healers who never have been healed, he said, citing his belief that a significant number of preachers never have been genuinely born again.

"There is in our day a grievous danger -- the danger of an unconverted ministry," Roberts said.

The modern generation has a shallow understanding of God's abiding wrath toward sin and a sentimental view of his love, the conservative Congregationalist minister said.

"God does not commit himself to love the unrepentant sinner," Roberts said. "We have no right to say God hates the sin but loves the sinner. The wrath of God is against the unrepentant sinner all the days that he is a sinner."

Some Southern Baptists "greedy for numerical gain" have diluted the demands of discipleship, he said. The cross means suffering, death, burial, resurrection and victory, first for Jesus Christ and then for all those who are in Christ.

"You cannot know the triumph and skirt the suffering," he said.

Don Miller, director of Bible Based Ministries in Fort Worth, Texas, challenged Cedars participants to check their own "turf" to see if it is hard, dry and fallow or broken by the Master's plow.

"This business of breaking up your fallow ground is not group therapy," Miller said. "It is a personal confrontation between you and a holy God as you live and are forced to exist in a very unholy environment."

Believers need to prepare for the fruits of revival by seeking the mind of Christ, according to Claude King, author from Murfreesboro, Tenn.

"It is not enough just to say we have departed and let God cleanse and forgive us. We need to be filled with his presence and his power," he said.

To develop the mind of Christ, disciples must fix their minds upon him, allow God to renew and cleanse their lives, and then be ready to function as Christ gives opportunity, King said.

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SBC leaders pray, meet
with President Clinton

By Martin King

Baptist Press
9/9/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--Three Southern Baptist leaders spent more than an hour making a pastoral visit to the president of the United States Sept. 8.

The three were Jim Henry, SBC president and pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla.; Henry Blackaby, director of prayer and spiritual awakening for the Home Mission Board; and Rex Horne, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, Ark., President Bill Clinton's home church.

They were joined by Vice President Al Gore for half the meeting which followed a White House prayer breakfast attended by 60 religious leaders.

During the breakfast Clinton called on people of faith to debate the issues without screaming at each other. "We mustn't let the culture war divide us. Pray for me. I'm doing the best I can," Clinton said.

Blackaby told Baptist Press the purpose of the private meeting was not to discuss politics, convention or national, but rather "to encourage the President to be a spiritual statesman and to urge him to openly call for the nation to pray for him."

"We wanted to let him know that during these times of bewilderment and change, people are looking for someone who rises above the mess and sees things as God sees them," Blackaby said. "We wanted to pray with him and affirm that God's people are praying for him. It was a very, very productive meeting."

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Jim Henry agreed the session was extremely positive. "Henry and I were able to share our hearts, our perspectives and our concerns as Southern Baptists. I feel he is open, sensitive and listening. It was a very special time. I came away encouraged."

Blackaby said he presented Clinton with a copy of his book "Experiencing God" and an oil painting by Texas pastor and artist Dick Moody. The president vowed to hang the painting in his home, and his staff said he would probably read the entire book before the end of the day.

The meeting was concluded with prayer according to Blackaby.

"The four of us, joined by two presidential aides, all stood and joined hands in a very sweet time of prayer. I was on one side of the president and Jim Henry was on the other. I feel this could be the beginning of a very important relationship," Blackaby said.

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Tom Strode contributed to this story.

CORRECTION: Please change the fourth paragraph of (BP) story titled "Southwestern Seminary houses Charles Spurgeon's manuscripts," dated 9/8/94, which begins "After describing Spurgeon ... " with:

After describing Spurgeon as the "prince of preachers," Hemphill said, "We (Southwestern) are grateful for Spurgeon's College allowing us to play such a major part in the furtherance of our rich Baptist heritage. We are privileged that young pastors now will have the opportunity to look at manuscripts which will challenge them to excellence in preaching."

Thanks,
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