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January 6, 1995

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Top four office holders  
all Southern Baptists

Baptist Press  
1/6/95

WASHINGTON (BP)--Not only are the top two office holders in the nation members of Southern Baptist churches, but the next two officials in the presidential line of succession are as well.

When the 104th Congress was sworn in Jan. 4, Newt Gingrich and Strom Thurmond became, in order, the next two people in line to succeed the president. Gingrich and Thurmond, as well as President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore, are Southern Baptists.

If the presidency and vice presidency simultaneously are vacant, the speaker of the House of Representatives is next in the line of succession, as determined by the 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The president pro tempore of the Senate follows the speaker. Next in the line of succession are designated members of the president's cabinet.

With the Republican Party now holding majorities in both houses of Congress, Gingrich, R.-Ga., was elected speaker of the House Jan. 4, and Thurmond, R.-S.C., became president pro tem of the Senate.

Gingrich is a member of New Hope Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Ga. Thurmond's membership is at the First Baptist Church of Aiken, S.C.

Clinton is a member of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, Ark., and Gore is a member of Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Alexandria, Va.

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14,000 receive food  
in Haiti relief effort

By Tim Yarbrough

Baptist Press  
1/6/95

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Since food distribution efforts started in Haiti in December, more than 14,000 people have received commodities through the effort.

Mark Rutledge, agricultural missionary to Haiti, and Harry Campbell of Killeen, Texas, on-site coordinator for the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, reported Jan. 5 that 13,914 "family packs" of basic food commodities that includes flour, cooking oil, beans, rice, as well as a gospel tract, have been distributed to 24 Haitian churches and missions. The packs were distributed to 3,053 families and totaling 14,357 people.

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"Rutledge and Campbell are reporting progress in solving the transportation problem of getting food to remote areas," said Mickey Caison, project manager at the Brotherhood Commission. "There are reports of deaths in these areas because of a lack of food."

The Haiti relief project is a joint effort of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and Brotherhood Commission. The agencies are working in conjunction with the Baptist Convention of Haiti.

Caison said volunteers used "down times" during the holidays to continue to repair vehicles for the project.

"Team members have also salvaged tents that can be used by the teams that will work in other phases of the Haiti relief project," he said.

"The spirits and morale of volunteers working in Haiti are high," said Caison. "They continue to exhibit cooperation and willingness to do what needs to be done, even under circumstances we cannot control."

Securing food supplies through various channels in Haiti has been difficult at times, but appears to be stabilizing. For two weeks in late November and early December volunteers were without electricity, which resulted in water rationing.

Recruiting efforts for the Haiti project continues to go well, said Caison.

Teams of 10 volunteers each for food distribution have been filled through Feb. 25, he said. Two spaces remain unfilled on the Feb. 17-March 4 team and one volunteer is still needed for the Feb. 24-March 11 team.

So far, a total of 81 volunteers have served in food distribution efforts in Haiti. Volunteers recruited for the food distribution and initial construction teams total 164. It is expected that more than 200 additional volunteers will be needed for construction, well repair and medical phases of project.

The first construction team that will build a barn at the agricultural center in Marmont in central Haiti where missionaries Mark and Peggy Rutledge live arrived in Haiti Jan. 7. Caison said the team went to Haiti absent six members.

"It will be necessary to hire local block layers to assist this team in the construction of the barn," he said. A second construction team for Feb. 24-March 11 is now being recruited.

Volunteer recruitment for the well repair phase of the project is underway, said Caison. Eight teams of 10 volunteers each will be needed starting Feb. 18. Well repair efforts are scheduled to continue through June 10.

"There is an urgent need for recruiters to assist us in recruiting volunteers for these teams," Caison said.

Information about the Haiti relief effort may be obtained by calling the Brotherhood Commission at 1-800-280-1891, or (901) 272-2461. Financial contributions for the Haiti project may be sent to the Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104, or the Foreign Mission Board, Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230-0767.

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**Bob Clements: country preacher  
with a passion for Africa**

**By Mark Kelly**

**Baptist Press  
1/6/95**

AUSTIN, Texas (BP)--Bob Clements may be from Texas, but his heart belongs to Africa.

Clements found Christ in his early 20s as a roughneck in the oil fields of west Texas. Forty-five years later, he exudes the rough-hewn charm of a country preacher. Underneath the charm, he's a determined missionary.

Friends have seen his missionary heart through his more than 31 years as pastor of churches in Texas -- at Matagorda, Kingsville, Austin, Brownsville and Dallas. During his 14-year ministry in Brownsville, Clements led First Baptist Church to establish 12 mission churches in Mexico, as well as an orphanage and medical clinic.

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Yet while much of his ministry has been in Texas, Clements' heart is overseas -- in Africa and 24 other countries where he's led 37 evangelistic projects since 1963. He and his wife, Fay, operate an evangelistic association and still take at least two evangelistic trips a year -- one to India, the other to Africa. They will continue that as long as their health permits.

"India is our Samaria," said the 66-year-old evangelist. "It hurts to go there because there's so much hurting and so little you can do.

"Africa, on the other hand, is our choice, and Kenya is where our heart really is. If we were 30 years younger, we'd move to Africa and stay there."

The Clementses' African odyssey includes the 12 trips they have made to nine countries there since 1987 -- many focused on Kenya's Maasai people.

"The Maasai are a very special group of people," Clements said. They're warriors and nomads and herdsman. Initially they can be very resistant to the gospel, but they make dedicated Christians. I admire the simplicity of their faith. They believe you pray for things and God gives them. They believe God heals. We've seen some miraculous things happen."

Jimmy Hooten worked closely with Clements during Hooten's years as a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionary in Kenya.

"Bob Clements was a big help to us in Kenya," said Hooten, who now coordinates short-term volunteer projects in Africa for the Foreign Mission Board. "He meant more to what I did than anyone."

Not only did Clements lead soul-winning and church-planting teams, but he also played key roles in training new believers and pastors and in development projects.

"We had a drought in Kenya in 1988, and water for cattle became critical among the Maasai," Hooten said. "Bob raised thousands of dollars that helped us build dams to create water catchments. That was a big thing to the people and gave us a wonderful opening into the country."

Clements has made a significant contribution to bringing the gospel to the Maasai, according to Hooten. The tribe once was considered an "unreached people," virtually unexposed to the gospel. Because of efforts by Clements and many others, however, "a huge percentage" of the Maasai have heard the good news, Hooten said.

Most of the Clementses' trips have revolved around one-on-one street witnessing, and preaching and teaching in local churches. But they also have worked in larger efforts, such as the 1990 Kenya Coastal Crusade. That four-week project involved 538 Southern Baptist volunteers and resulted in more than 56,000 professions of faith in Christ and organization of 84 churches.

Now they're helping organize the Greater Nairobi Crusade, a five-week effort in Nairobi, Kenya, set for June 13-July 17. It's expected to be the largest volunteer project ever coordinated by the Foreign Mission Board. As many as 1,500 volunteers are being recruited, and Clements hopes to see more than 75,000 professions of faith and 150 churches started.

"I'm praying more preachers will get off their duffs and go to Africa with us," said Clements, who will step down in April as a Foreign Mission Board trustee after completing two four-year terms.

"In 1990, 38 of the 538 volunteers were preachers. We'll need many more than that this time. I'm also praying at least half the Foreign Mission Board's 88 trustees will feel led to go.

"It could be the greatest movement of God in the last few years," he added. "You certainly can't spend two weeks in Africa and come back the same."

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(BP) photos (one horizontal, one vertical) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outlines available on SBCNet News Room.

**Grubbs named conventions manager  
for SBC Executive Committee, BSSB**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Bruce Grubbs, an 18-year employee of the Baptist Sunday School Board, has been named conventions manager, which includes a joint assignment with the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee and the BSSB.

The newly created position housed at the Sunday School Board, effective Jan. 1, combines similar responsibilities from portions of jobs at each institution, and funding will be shared by the two organizations.

Grubbs will coordinate all physical arrangements related to the SBC annual meeting, including work with convention center management, assisting the local arrangements committee, exhibitors and SBC leadership to assure smooth functioning of convention-related meetings, according to Jack Wilkerson, vice president for business and finance for the Executive Committee and convention general manager for the annual meeting.

Grubbs will coordinate the Sunday School Board's participation in the annual meeting, including development of plans for BSSB exhibit space and work with its exhibitors. He will coordinate the BSSB's participation in state Baptist conventions, scheduling representatives and exhibits, and serve in a staff role to T. Michael Arrington, BSSB executive director of corporate affairs.

"Bruce Grubbs' denominational experience and formal training are uniquely suited to serving the board and the Executive Committee in a consolidated role for maximum managerial effectiveness," Arrington said. "His knowledge of state- and national-level denominational functions, along with his extensive experience in management, will serve everyone well. And combining responsibilities will be good stewardship for both organizations."

Wilkerson said Grubbs' "experience and knowledge of the Southern Baptist Convention have been a valuable resource to the Executive Committee through informal consultation in his earlier work at the board. I now look forward to formally expanding the relationship through this partnership with the Sunday School Board. It is indeed a pleasure to work with the board in an effort that improves effectiveness and teamwork of our organizations through sharing key resource personnel."

Grubbs has been a consultant and manager in various facets of church administration work at the board since 1976. Earlier, he was a pastor in Tennessee churches for 13 years.

In addition to his work as an administrator and conference leader, he has written for a variety of denominational periodicals and is the author of several books.

He is a graduate of Bethel College, McKenzie, Tenn., and holds the master of arts degree from Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tenn., and the master of arts degree in evangelism from Scarritt College, Nashville. He earned the master of divinity degree in preaching and worship and the doctor of ministry degree in organizational development from Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press.

**SBC resolutions committee next  
for racism repentance proposal**

By Terri Narrell Mause

**Baptist Press  
1/6/95**

BALTIMORE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention Committee on Resolutions is the next stop for a resolution of repentance for racism adopted by several state Baptist conventions last fall.

The resolution seeks to break down racial barriers, both real and perceived, between white Southern Baptists and African Americans, according to one of the document's coauthors, Mike Fahey, director of missions for the Baltimore Baptist Association.

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"(The resolution) is not some bleeding-heart-ringing-our-hands statement," he said. "It's rather an attempt to say there is a barrier that exists and we need to remove the barrier."

The resolution or similar statements -- an outgrowth of dialogue between directors of missions for 12 major metropolitan areas and several African American leaders -- was adopted by state conventions in Georgia, Illinois, Maryland-Delaware, Pennsylvania-South Jersey, District of Columbia, California, New York and New England.

Proponents plan to submit the document to the SBC Committee on Resolutions for consideration at the June 20-22 annual meeting in Atlanta, when the SBC celebrates the 150th anniversary of its founding. Whether the resolution will come to a vote will be determined by that committee.

The SBC did adopt a resolution titled "On Racism" during its 1989 meeting in Las Vegas. It noted, among other things, that "Southern Baptists have not always clearly stood for racial justice and equality" and stated, "... we repent of any past bigotry and pray for those who are still caught in its clutches." The resolution also encouraged SBC entities to "seek diligently ... greater racial and ethnic representation at every level of Southern Baptist institutional life."

The new resolution, as adopted by Maryland-Delaware Baptists last fall, admits, "... our relation to persons of African descent has been less than ideal." It cites the desire to appoint slave-holding missionaries as a factor in the SBC's founding in 1845 and also notes the failure of the denomination to speak up for black people during the civil rights movement.

The document concludes by repenting, apologizing and asking forgiveness for "condoning and perpetuating individual and systematic racism for which we may have been responsible."

"Though we may have not personally participated in such distant acts of racism (i.e. slavery), we continue to reap the bitter harvest of the resulting inequality," the resolution says. "Our own healing is at stake ... racism impedes our own development as a people and discredits the gospel we proclaim."

The idea for the resolution began two years ago when the directors of missions for 12 major metropolitan areas met in Atlanta to discuss issues facing Southern Baptists in urban areas. Realizing that 42 percent of the nation's African American population dwelt within the boundaries of those 12 cities, the group invited several black leaders to share their feelings about the relationship of Southern Baptists with their community.

As a result of that meeting, the 12 directors appointed a task force, consisting of Fahey; Jere Allen, executive director/minister of the D.C. convention; Penny Ellis, an African American pastor's wife who lived in Illinois at the time; and Delroy Reid-Salmon, pastor of Grace Chapel, Bronx, N.Y. After several months, the four presented the resolution to the directors and encouraged them to "identify with the sentiments expressed" and share it with their home conventions.

Fahey said the long, sensitive process of drafting the document was not without controversy. From the beginning there have been many who pointed to black members within their churches to illustrate their stands against racism.

Many felt the resolution dug up sins from the past in which they played no part.

"It's hard to address the sins of the fathers," Fahey said. "But Nehemiah did it, so it's surely scriptural."

Fahey said he understands the reluctance of colleagues and peers who have opposed the document, but he believes it is important to express to African American Christians that "we genuinely regret the things that have happened ... and we want to put this thing behind us."

"I understand not everybody sees it the way (the four writers of the document) saw it," he said.

"If we're going to deal effectively with the black community, then we have to deal with their perceptions. We say, 'Oh, that stuff happened a long time ago. It's not an issue anymore,' but to them, it's like it was yesterday."

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Resolutions adopted by Baptist conventions have little, if any, effect on the day-to-day operations of local, autonomous churches. Fahey said he hopes the public statement, however, will be followed by personal efforts on the part of church members across the convention.

"You're not going to solve this by resolutions," Fahey said. "It's a person-by-person process."

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Mause is a correspondent for Maryland-Delaware Baptists' newsjournal, Baptist Life. Art Toalston contributed to this story.

**Ever-ready to evangelize,  
woman credits God's love**

By Kelli Williams

Baptist Press  
1/6/95

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--While praying at her church, Birute Whisnant felt the Lord telling her to go witness to someone at the Days Inn motel next door.

"I went over there, and he directed me to the registration area," said Whisnant, of Raleigh, N.C. "So I walked to the counter and told the lady who registers guests, 'I was in the prayer room at Providence Baptist Church praying that the Lord would lead me to witness to someone. Are you the person I'm supposed to speak to?'

"She said, 'Well, I don't know but you can share if you like.'" A few moments later the woman received Christ as her Savior.

"Wherever God places you, he's already working, and he's brought you there to be a part of it," said Whisnant, known for her evangelist-like witness to those she meets.

"Everywhere the Lord sends me -- whether I stay at home or go to the grocery store -- I think of that as my mission field, where the Lord has purposely sent me," she said. For example, one morning while driving to the dry cleaners, she noticed some men gathered in a parking lot preparing for work.

"The thought came to me, 'Those men need to know about Jesus,'" Whisnant recounted. "And I thought, 'Lord, do you really want me to go over there and tell them? Well, all right, Lord, if they're still there when I drive back, I'll stop and talk to them.'

"They were still in the parking lot when I drove back, so I went to the supervisors in the work truck and said, 'I know you're going to think I'm crazy, but I'm here to tell you about Jesus. He said I should come.' They said, 'Go right ahead. Just share whatever you want with these men.'"

Whisnant shared the good news about the Lord with several of the workers; later the supervisors told her they were Christians and had been praying for the men, asking God to send someone to help them witness.

"It's amazing to see how God cares for people and how he wants each one to be personally drawn to him," Whisnant said. "This is so basic, but that's how I see God's love. It's not a group thing; it's individual. Some people feel lost -- like they're just a number -- and then God sends someone to share his love and comfort."

Whisnant did not become a Christian until she was 39 years old, but after joining a Bible study, she spontaneously shared her excitement with another person in a store.

"I had no idea what witnessing was at that time," she said. "That's when you know your experience is real -- when you want to share what Jesus is doing in your life. That is witnessing. It's that simple.

"I think people sometimes have the idea that you have to present the whole gospel to someone at one time or you're not witnessing," Whisnant said. "There will be many times when you will not have that opportunity. God uses different people to do his work, and you may not always have the privilege to pray with someone as they accept Christ, but God uses you to be part of that person's life -- to plant a seed or to water it. It's all part of His purpose and plan."

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Just offering friendship to another person is a witness, Whisnant noted. During a retreat, she made friends with Thomasina, a lady working in the camp's kitchen.

"We only talked for 60 seconds as I passed through the serving line each day, but we began to know each other," Whisnant said. Before leaving the retreat, Whisnant said good-bye to Thomasina, telling her how much she appreciated her sweetness and humor.

"You must be a Christian," Whisnant said. After Thomasina said she was not one, Whisnant added: "You act like a Christian and say the right things. Is there any reason why you aren't one?" Right then, Thomasina accepted Christ as her Savior.

Whisnant said she believes the love she shared with Thomasina helped bring her to Christ -- and "God gave me that love for her."

Start witnessing by inviting family, friends and neighbors to church or out for coffee, Whisnant suggested. Invite them to Christmas or Easter events, where they can hear the gospel. Tell people you are praying for them or send them an encouraging note with some Scripture enclosed. Or a small gift, such as a Christian book on art Whisnant recently bought for a neighbor interested in the subject who recently had back surgery.

"Just ask God to give you a love for the people around you," Whisnant said.

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Williams is a free-lance writer in Raleigh, N.C.

Lay witness lists helps  
for effective witnessing

By Kelli Williams

Baptist Press  
1/6/95

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--You don't have to be a great speaker, have a degree in theology or be a foreign missionary to be an effective witness for the Lord, according to Birute Whisnant. Rather, you need preparation and obedience, said the lay evangelist, of Raleigh, N.C.

She offered the following suggestions for those developing their evangelistic skills:

1. Before doing anything or saying anything to anyone, you must pray -- and pray specifically. If you're concerned about a person's salvation, pray for him or her by name. Ask God to burden your heart for the lost. Witnessing is secondary. You must be in prayer.
2. Share your own testimony. No one can say it's not true; just share what God has done for you. The greatest evangelical training is your own life.
3. Take an evangelism training class such as Continuing Witness Training or Evangelism Explosion.
4. Never assume -- even in a Christian setting -- that a person is saved. Whisnant led a woman to the Lord who had been praying for her children's salvation but did not know Jesus herself.
5. Use a coloring book to present the gospel to children: Cut strips of colored paper and bind them together in this order:  
Yellow -- God loves and cares for us.  
Black -- We are dirty inside because of sin.  
Red -- Jesus' blood saves us.  
White -- When we confess our sins and ask Jesus to come into our heart, we become clean.  
Blue -- We have assurance that Jesus will never leave us.  
Green -- We can grow as Christians by reading God's Word, attending church and Sunday school, loving others and witnessing.
6. Whisnant said she recommends the following books: "Concentric Circles of Concern" by W. Oscar Thompson and "How I Can Share My Faith Without an Argument," available from Radio Bible Class, Grand Rapids, MI 49555-0001.

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