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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Southern: Richard Jackson
nev r was invited to teach

By Michael Duduit

Baptist Press
4/28/95

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Officials at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary were surprised to receive word of Richard Jackson's public announcement he would not teach at the seminary's Boyce Bible School this summer, since Jackson had never been invited to teach.

"Dr. Jackson's letter -- which was apparently sent to news media before I received it -- was unexpected, since we had never extended a teaching contract to him or had any prior contact," said David S. Dockery, vice president for academic affairs. "In fact, my first contact with Richard Jackson was his letter declining a nonexistent invitation."

A Boyce staff member contacted Jackson, president of the Richard Jackson Center for Evangelism and Encouragement at Howard Payne University, Brownwood, Texas, several months ago to explore the possibility of his teaching a one-week class, according to Dockery. The seminary did not proceed with extending a contract for Jackson's services, in part because Jackson refused to sign the Abstract of Principles, the seminary's confessional document signed by all faculty and instructors. No formal invitation ever was extended to the former Arizona pastor.

The published Boyce class schedule for July 1995 confirms Jackson's name is not included among those teaching at the school this summer.

Baptist Press attempted to contact Jackson at Howard Payne University April 28 but was unsuccessful by the afternoon press deadline.

Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. confirmed Jackson could not have received an invitation to teach, since "I will never sign a contract or approve for instruction any person who refuses to sign the Abstract of Principles. I will not approve for employment any person who has assumed a leadership or other public role in support of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the Alliance of Baptists or any other group opposed to the Southern Baptist Convention."

Mohler expressed disappointment with Jackson's public criticism of the seminary, in an Associated Baptist Press April 27 story, for requiring faculty to "adhere to a specified creed," a stance Jackson termed "anti-Baptist."

"This characterization would certainly come as a surprise to the founders of Southern Seminary and to Southern Baptists, for all six convention seminaries operate under an explicit confession of faith and require the faculty to sign the confession," Mohler said. "This is not a new development, for since 1859 Southern Seminary has required all professors to sign the Abstract of Principles."

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Jackson is former pastor of North Phoenix Baptist Church, Phoenix, Ariz. He retired from the pastorate in 1993.

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Georgia hospital authorized
to pursue Columbia/HCA link

By James Dotson

Baptist Press
4/28/95

ATLANTA (BP)--The Georgia Baptist Health Care System was given the green light by the Georgia Baptist Convention executive committee April 11 to proceed with negotiations on a joint venture with Columbia/HCA Healthcare Corp., the nation's largest comprehensive health care services provider.

The 83-2 vote, taken at the end of a rare special session of the executive committee, authorizes the Health Care System and Columbia/HCA to sign a non-binding letter of intent to form a partnership that would include all of Georgia Baptist Health Care System's facilities as well as the nine additional hospitals in the Atlanta area owned by Columbia/HCA. The letter of intent will allow time for both sides to conduct further investigation into the transaction and negotiate a final agreement. Georgia Baptist officials say a vote on that agreement could come during the executive committee's September meeting.

The action would remove Georgia Baptist Medical Center from 100 percent Georgia Baptist ownership for the first time in its 93-year history, but convention leaders say it is essential if the hospital is to continue as a viable ministry vehicle in an era when the trend is toward managed care contracts with large groups of hospitals.

"This is an important step," said J. Robert White, GBC executive director-treasurer. "It will enable us to explore the possibilities of a relationship that would expand our healing ministry, without sacrifice to our commitment to the Georgia Baptist mission, culture or values."

The Georgia Baptist Health Care System would own a minority stake in the partnership and would receive earnings and earn representation on the partnership's governing board based on its equity stake, which will be determined through subsequent negotiations. But the GBC executive committee would be given a controlling vote over certain key issues such as abortion at any Georgia Baptist facility; the potential dissipation of assets; or the establishment and continuation of chaplaincy programs in all Columbia/HCA hospitals in Georgia.

White has estimated the Georgia Baptist Health Care System could net as much as \$100 million in cash from the deal, while still retaining an equity stake of between 20 and 40 percent.

The arrangement differs from a sale or merger in that both Georgia Baptist and Columbia/HCA would be contributing assets to the partnership, while retaining their separate identities, according to Frank Upchurch, executive vice president of Georgia Baptist Health Care System.

The names of all Georgia Baptist facilities would remain the same unless changed by trustees of the Georgia Baptist Health Care System, which would remain as a separate nonprofit entity under the plan.

The key to the continued ministry under the partnership lies in the "non-negotiable" items which Columbia/HCA already has tentatively agreed to honor. They include:

- application of the present GBMC policy against abortions to all Columbia/HCA facilities in Georgia.

- commitment to the same level or greater of charity care currently being provided at Georgia Baptist Medical Center.

- expansion of the chaplaincy program at GBMC to include all hospitals in the state. A director of chaplaincy in Atlanta, appointed by White, would oversee chaplains hired by each Columbia/HCA hospital.

- extension of the current discount benefits for Georgia Baptist ministers that apply at GBMC to all Columbia/HCA hospitals in Georgia.

- the mission of the hospital remaining consistent with the values and beliefs of the Georgia Baptist Convention. Plans call for the current mission statement of the Georgia Baptist Health Care System to be a part of the agreement.

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David Harrell, CEO of Georgia Baptist Health Care System, said he first approached HCA about some sort of agreement in April of last year. At the time, he said, the company was nearing completion of the merger agreement with Columbia.

The impetus for such a move on Georgia Baptist's part is the current realignment of the entire health care structure into large blocks of health care "payers" (HMOs, insurance companies and other managed care providers) that contract with large groups of health care providers for services. Those institutions that are not a part of such a network often find themselves with fewer customers as competition increases.

"So what we have evolving are large block purchasers and large block providers that will dominate the health care market over the next decade," said Marty Perlin, a consultant with the Atlanta firm McManis Associates Inc. who made part of the presentation to the state convention's executive committee.

As a result of technological improvements and the increased use of managed care, Perlin said projections call for a significant reduction in the total number of hospital beds needed in Atlanta. Only those hospitals with the best networks and management stand to survive the resulting downsizing, he said.

The Georgia Baptist Health Care System has expanded greatly in recent years to build a larger network, but Harrell said the system is limited in its ability to compete on its own.

Net income has been on a downward trend in recent years. Last year's unaudited figures show net income of about \$3.5 million, compared to more than \$4 million for the Health Care System in 1993 and more than \$11 million in 1992.

Columbia/HCA, meanwhile, currently has nine hospitals in the Atlanta area, and when the Georgia Baptist facilities -- particularly the clinics and doctors' offices south of Atlanta -- are added, the result is one of the best networks in the city. Columbia/HCA also needed a flagship hospital in the city, a large "tertiary" hospital that does major procedures such as open-heart surgery. Georgia Baptist is one of only three or four such hospitals in Atlanta.

The corporation also has experience forming similar partnerships with several formerly nonprofit hospitals in Texas and Louisiana.

Georgia Baptist Health Care System brings a debt of about \$135 million to the agreement, but its assets are tentatively valued at about \$300 million, according to hospital officials. Among those assets are the 460-bed Georgia Baptist Medical Center, the 36-bed Baptist North Hospital in Cumming, three nursing homes, hospice and home health services, a large multi-specialty physician group practice and other health-related programs and services.

The cash proceeds of up to \$100 million could be invested with the income being used for medical ministry projects.

White speculated on some of the possibilities. An immunization program, for instance, could be sponsored by Baptists for all children in Georgia that could also include distribution of New Testaments, he said. Other options would be local medical missions, retirement homes and medical scholarships for Baptist students. "It's just as far-reaching as you can imagine, and yet you still retain a position in your health care system where you have ministry and influence," he said.

Proceeds from Georgia Baptist's stake in the partnership would also go to fund missions and ministries of the nonprofit Georgia Baptist Health Care System. The Georgia Baptist College of Nursing and the Clinical Pastoral Education Program would be among recipients of those funds.

The College of Nursing already is a separate entity under the Georgia Baptist executive committee, and the Clinical Pastoral Education Program likely would be housed at the College of Nursing.

In other aspects of the partnership:

-- The annual Mother's Day Offering for the hospital would continue, and Health Care System trustees currently are considering recommending all of the proceeds be used in health missions and ministries throughout Georgia.

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-- If Columbia/HCA changes controlling ownership in Georgia Baptist facilities, there are provisions for the Georgia Baptist Health Care System to buy back its interest in assets or sell partnership interests to Columbia/HCA. In the same manner, if Columbia/HCA decides to abandon or dispose of a Georgia Baptist site then the Health Care System would have repurchase rights.

-- Hospital officials believe Columbia/HCA will allow the appointment of at least one Baptist representative on the board of each of its other hospitals in Georgia. White referred to this possibility as "an exciting opportunity to broaden the influence of Baptists across Georgia."

In explaining the plan to executive committee members, White used the parable of the talents to express the importance of being good stewards of the health care system. "My tendency is to say I love the Georgia Baptist Health Care System and I don't want it to change," he said. "But the truth of the matter is things have changed. The question that comes to us is our stewardship; how do we keep what we have and expand it and multiply it, continuing to make it grow and continuing to survive, so that one day our Lord will say, 'Well done thou good and faithful servant.'"

The only voiced opposition to the proposal came from Sam Tate, pastor of Cheek Memorial Baptist Church, Americus, who expressed concern about "God's people being in partnership with the world."

"It is my feeling that whenever one gives the world any kind of binding input into its actions, it proves in the long run to be detrimental," he said. "I, in my heart of hearts, feel like this was begun as a kingdom ministry, and we ought to operate it as a kingdom ministry or dispose of it and no longer be involved."

Others responded that the realities of the health care industry, coupled with the promises of continued and expanded ministry inherent in the plan, make it a worthwhile move. Bert Vaughn, pastor of First Baptist Church, Calhoun, called the expansion of ministry -- particularly through the commitments not to do abortions -- a good way for Georgia Baptists to be "salt" and "light" in the world.

Frank Cox, pastor of North Metro First Baptist Church, Duluth, said, "I understand that what we're saying to this body is that times have changed, and either we are going to change with the times or we are going to find ourselves out of business in a few years."

The executive committee is the legal owner of the Georgia Baptist Health Care System and is thus empowered to make decisions regarding it without convention approval, but White said the agreement -- if approved by the executive committee in September -- would be included as part of the committee's report presented to the full convention for approval in November.

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New Englanders pray & walk
for church-starting sites

By Dan Nicholas

Baptist Press
4/28/95

HALIFAX, Mass. (BP)--Eight Southern Baptists gathered quietly on the steps of the Halifax, Mass., city hall one recent Saturday morning, not to wave banners in support of a social cause, gather signatures for a school board candidate or even conduct a bake sale.

Led by Greater Boston Baptist Association director of missions Ignatius Meimaris and prayer consultant Craig Schroder, the small band met for a much more solemn reason -- to talk candidly with God about what he intends for the surrounding neighborhoods.

For about 90 minutes, the group drove and walked and prayed their way around Halifax, a 7,500-resident community, and the neighboring town of Plympton, home to 3,000 people.

The "prayer walk" of a town that may need a new congregation or a Bible study has been called "praying on site with insight."

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For 15 of the last 18 months, a similar prayer walk has been conducted somewhere under the auspices of the Greater Boston's Associational Missions development council (AMDC) and with the participation of anyone interested in discovering what God is doing in the region.

The prayer walking is just one example of how Southern Baptists are taking prayer seriously as they attempt to start and grow New England churches.

In addition to the city halls of both communities, the walkers stopped by four churches, a school and a typical residential neighborhood.

Not wanting to miss any of the essential locations, they even visited the town line or "gateway" so they could pray for the town from its main entrance point, according to Schroder, former pastor of Hope Community Church, Arlington, Mass.

"We pray for the gospel to be preached and the Lord to be honored. We're not doing this for the publicity. We want God to see us, whether others see us or not," Schroder explained about the low-key approach a prayer walk takes.

"We just want to cooperate with the Lord. We have a conversation with God and report to him our impressions" in dialogue form, he said.

The prayer walks are one of the focal points for planting churches, according to Meimaris. Using a broadcasting analogy, he noted, "We're hoping to see the work develop out of God's frequency, rather than on our frequency."

Meimaris said he believes through prayer walking God will direct Southern Baptists to "the contacts he has in a community, to those who are ready to respond."

By walking, the group members make themselves available to the Lord without any preconceived notions. If God chooses to close the door to a community, that's OK with Schroder.

"We just want to understand where the Lord is working and let the other areas percolate," he said. No decisions have been made about Halifax and Plympton yet. A prospective pastor from Texas and his wife were present for the walk.

In fact, the first prayer walk, held in Acton, Mass., with three people in November 1993, has not yet led to formation of a Bible study. A walk in Randolph, Mass., however, led Community Baptist Church of East Weymouth to plant a congregation. Duke Waldron is now pastor of Family Baptist Church of Randolph.

Other prayer walks were held in Waltham, where a Bible study may be starting; in Medford, where a monthly "Prayer Center" meeting has formed as the first step in considering a church planting; in Rockland, where Suzanne Lacy has started First Brazilian Baptist Mission; in Cohasset, where a Bible study continues to attract interest; and in Brighton, which Schroder said counts fewer churches per capita than any other Boston neighborhood.

Schroder figures if a dozen prayer walks a year are held and those areas are studied, as many as three Bible study groups could be formed. Out of those three groups, he prays that at least one church will be formed.

In addition to praying, the AMDC members study the town's demographics, which is available by zip code or census tract from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, and they may talk with church and community leaders.

"Each town is different," Schroder said. "We want to get the flavor of the town and be prepared for a church planter.

"No area's too small for a prayer walk; the Lord is concerned for them all. God has a strategy; we're trying to understand what it is," he said.

For additional information on this method of prayer, Schroder directs people to a book: "Prayer Walking," by Steve Hawthorne and Graham Kendrick (Creation House, 1993).

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80-year-old Vermonter joins
missions force via prayer

By Dan Nicholas

Baptist Press
4/28/95

RANDOLPH, Vt. (BP)--From the moment she awakens, Marj Hart of Randolph, Vt., finds herself on the front lines of missions and ministry, even though a heart condition confines her to home most days.

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In a continual attitude of prayer "before my feet ever hit the floor," the 80-year-old Vermonter does spiritual battl for Christians around the corner and missionaries around the world.

On one recent afternoon, between oxygen treatments for "congenital heart trouble," Hart prayed by name for 455 people, reviewed missionary prayer letters and fielded a few calls from pastors around New England and the United States with whom she has had contact over the years.

A spunky and inspiring figure by any standard, Hart is difficult to forget once someone has met her. She is pleased to tell visitors of her prayer basket that contains an index card for each of the requests she follows. A visitor's name is often written on a card and dropped in the basket.

"Time goes pretty fast when I'm praying and having a good conversation with the Lord," Hart says. She remains in a spirit of prayer throughout the day, continually "listening for what God is doing and what he is going to do."

Until several years ago, Hart wrote to 120 missionaries as she prayed for them. When diminished eyesight prevented her from writing, Hart prayed for someone to take over that task. "I didn't want to see those missionaries being dropped all of a sudden," she says.

The answer to that prayer came when Meg Ellis of Baptist Fellowship of Randolph volunteered to write the missionaries. Ellis often includes a greeting from Hart and she reads her the responses.

"It's so wonderful to think of missionaries and to pray for them. I've seen so many things happen. The people felt the prayer," she comments. "There's nothing like prayer!"

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**Baptist medical volunteers
reap harvest in Venezuela**

By Linda Fisher

**Baptist Press
4/28/95**

VALENCIA, Venezuela (BP)--Eighty-nine Southern Baptist medical volunteers recently treated 14,245 patients in clinics near Valencia, Venezuela, leaving in their wake 2,295 new Christians.

The volunteers provided free, basic medical care in poor communities in and around Valencia, a central Venezuelan city about 80 miles west of Caracas, the capital. They served in 22 locations, chosen by Venezuelan Baptists as potential church planting sites.

Volunteers worked with Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionaries and Venezuelan Baptist translators, who were available to give patients spiritual counseling and a chance to respond to the gospel.

The 2,300 people who accepted Christ included a 112-year-old Venezuelan, the oldest patient treated. Volunteers worked in diverse facilities -- government medical clinics, houses with no running water and even a barn.

Such medical campaigns have had "a significant impact" on opening doors for Christian witness in Venezuela, said Dickie Nelson, administrator of the organization of FMB missionaries in Venezuela. Besides those who became Christians in the Valencia project, hundreds more said they wanted to participate in Bible study groups or get more information about the gospel.

Follow-up -- through evangelistic visitation and home Bible studies -- is the key to using medical clinics in church planting, Nelson added.

After the Valencia clinics, for example, each sponsoring church will follow through with discipleship classes, Bible study and visitation. In August Southern Baptist volunteers will lead an area evangelistic campaign.

This cycle of spring medical clinics, coupled with summer evangelistic campaigns, forms the core of the "Open New Works 2000," a Venezuelan Baptist church starting plan. Its first three-year phase was completed last fall around Caracas, resulting in 38 new Baptist works. The Valencia clinics are th first step in a new three-year emphasis on church starts in central and southern Venezuela.

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The sparkplug of the plan's medical projects is Dewey Dunn, a veteran Southern Baptist medical volunteer. Dunn, chief of gastroenterology at Veteran's Administration Hospital in Nashville, Tenn., first came to Venezuela in 1987 with evangelistic volunteers through Tennessee Baptists' partnership with Venezuelan Baptists. During that trip he visited a Venezuelan hospital, and from that experience grew a vision for health care projects in Venezuela.

"Baptist visibility increases with the evangelistic campaigns, but credibility increases with a medical project," observed Dunn, who led the recent medical volunteers in Valencia.

Dunn saw that happen when he brought his first volunteer medical team to Venezuela in 1988. Those volunteers had to overcome so many obstacles that missionary Buck Smith told Dunn, "The devil is unhappy because he knows how much good this campaign will do. God is going to do something great."

God did, and undreamed of doors of opportunity opened to the team. "We were prohibited by the Venezuelan government from bringing in any medicines or supplies," recalled Dunn of the first trip. "So we passed around a garbage bag and took up a collection from the volunteers. We raised several thousand dollars, which we used to buy medicines locally."

That first campaign built bridges with government officials, who now welcome the U.S. volunteers. The recent team brought in more than three tons of medicines and supplies for use in the clinics, with the full blessing of the Venezuelan ministry of health.

"God brought you here to serve our country, and our local and regional governments greatly appreciate your visit," Venezuelan health ministry official Jose Perdomo Fuentes, a Baptist, told the recent volunteers.

Dunn said he firmly believes in the clinics' spiritual as well as physical value. "Health care (volunteers) know all our work is only temporary, but the spiritual work is eternal," he said. "Our whole posture with these campaigns has been to have them saturated with prayer."

Prayer was a big part of the recent Valencia project. Before the campaign, Dunn and his colleagues marked the clinic sites on a map of Venezuela spread on his dining room table. "Then we got down on our knees, because we recognized this would be our biggest challenge yet," he said.

Fifty-five of the 89-member team brought to that challenge experience from earlier volunteer trips to Venezuela.

Volunteer John Chapman, an eye doctor from Kingsport, Tenn., marked his eighth mission trip. During the Valencia project he fitted more than 1,000 patients with eyeglasses.

"I don't believe anyone has more fun or has been more blessed than I've been on these trips," added retired Nashville pharmacist Larry Poston, 71, who has worked with Dunn on 10 other medical mission trips.

Dunn called this trip "one of the most prayed-for projects we have ever done." Much of that prayer support came after his wife, Bobbie, was diagnosed with lymphoma just a few weeks before the team left for Venezuela.

In closing ceremonies for the project, Venezuelan Baptists and FMB missionaries gave Dunn a plaque for his wife, who had just undergone a round of chemotherapy back in Nashville. The plaque symbolized the prayers of Venezuelan Baptists.

Missionary Joe Powell, from Wynona, Okla., praised team members for their work. "We rejoice with the angels that the lost have been found, new works have been started and weak works have been strengthened," he said. "God's love has united people of different languages and cultures to work together to do his will."

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Fisher is a Foreign Mission Board missionary in Venezuela with her husband, Gary. They earlier served in Spain.

**Southwestern v.p. accepts
Lockman Foundation post**

By Jan Johnsonius

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Jay P. Chance, vice president for institutional advancement at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has announced his early retirement to accept the post of vice president of The Lockman Foundation.

The purpose of the Lockman Foundation, based in La Habra, Calif., is to translate and disseminate the Scriptures. The most notable translation of The Foundation is the New American Standard Bible.

Chance's early retirement becomes effective May 13 and he will assume the vice presidency at The Foundation May 14. In making the announcement, Chance noted, "I am not leaving, but rather going to a new opportunity of service and ministry beyond my greatest expectations. When events take place as they have at Southwestern during the past year, additional options of ministry seem to afford themselves in great number. Such has been the case for me. I looked and asked God to lead me in making the right decision."

In responding to the early retirement announcement, Southwestern President Ken Hemphill stated, "Jay Chance has served Southwestern Seminary with integrity for five years as vice president for institutional advancement. He has been helpful to me personally during these months of transition and he will be missed by his colleagues. We can only wish for him God's best as he continues in the service of our Lord."

Chance said his responsibilities at The Lockman Foundation will include marketing, public relations and assisting with the foundation's recent international emphasis on providing the Scripture in all major languages of the world.

President of The Lockman Foundation is Robert Lambuth, a member of the Southwestern Council since 1991. The Southwestern Council consists of laypersons who serve as goodwill ambassadors, helping fulfill the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary's mission through development and the recruitment of qualified students.

"Jay Chance has been involved with two agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention, a Baptist college and a major state university. That experience is just what The Lockman Foundation needs to move assertively worldwide in scope," Lambuth noted. "Jay will begin by strengthening ties with all evangelical denominations nationally and assist in providing an international focus."

Before coming to Southwestern, Chance served as vice president for public affairs at California Baptist College in Riverside from 1980-90. He has also served as assistant director of the Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University in Starkville; supervisor and instructor at East Mississippi Junior College in Scooba; national director of Royal Ambassadors at the Brotherhood Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention; and director of youth education at First Baptist Church, San Angelo, Texas.

Chance noted his "love and admiration for Southwestern remain strong," and he and his wife Gailya will maintain their home in Fort Worth as well as a residence in the La Habra area of California.

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**Use caution, secretaries urged,
in ministering to the minister**

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
4/28/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--If a church secretary becomes involved in ministering to the pastor through a personal or professional struggle, the goal should be helping the pastor be "strong enough and fearless enough to confront his problems himself," a consultant in pastor-staff issues told church secretaries during a national seminar.

Norris Smith, a Baptist Sunday School Board consultant, told participants in the National Conference for Southern Baptist Secretaries that "caregivers tend to be rescuers, but a supportive posture encourages people to be responsible for themselves."

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The kind of trouble the pastor is having will dictate the kind of support that is needed, Smith said. Among the questions that may help determine appropriate help are:

- Is this a new kind of trouble?
- Is there some history of this?
- Is it professional, physical, financial, emotional, marital or spiritual?

A minister looks at his problems through his sense of calling, Smith maintained.

"He looks at his own humanity in terms of preaching the ideal; he sees his family in terms of his calling; he sees the church, the community and you in the role as secretary through his sense of calling," he said.

Secretaries should prepare themselves before offering help to the troubled pastor by seeking God's wisdom through prayer and by praying for calmness when the pastor's behavior causes concern, for insight, for inner strength and for the pastor and his family.

"You don't have to agree with what a person is doing to pray for them," Smith reminded. "And reign in the tendency to draw conclusions too early."

Secretaries should review their job descriptions to be reminded of their relationship to the pastor and to the church, he continued, to avoid "crossing over into other assignments to rescue the pastor."

"Be clear on how you stand with the pastor in relationship to other staff persons. Are you expected by the rest of the staff persons to fix the problem?"

In dealing with the pastor, Smith suggested secretaries be clear about their limitations.

"The answer to his needs may be outside your role and responsibilities," he observed. "You are not his counselor. Don't get fuzzy on your role to him as a friend as well as boss. Keep your job description in mind."

On the matter of confidentiality, Smith said the greatest difficulty may be knowing what to do with "guilty knowledge" -- incriminating information one may discover in the course of performing the job.

"Go back and review your job description," Smith repeated, "to see where you stand structurally and legally with the church. Keep a confidential log on the pastor's behavior, and hope and pray it is never needed. Bide your time, and listen for evidence that surfaces through others. See if a behavior pattern emerges and if he is responding consistently in every area of ministry."

Other options, he said, could include deciding to resign to remove oneself from the problem or seeking wise counsel outside the church.

"The people who blow the whistle often become the victim," he said. "Think through who in the church structure is to handle the problem. Is it the deacons or the personnel committee? Know the policies of the church when problems arise."

Dealing with "gossip mongers, snoops and information seekers" can be handled by asking three questions, he observed. Truly concerned persons will respond positively to one of the following:

-- Have you had a chance to talk to the pastor yourself?

-- Would you be willing to go with me, and we will talk to the pastor about this together?

-- Do you mind if I tell the pastor you came to me and raised this concern?

"Don't let people push you to violate your integrity," he said. "If the pastor knows you are aware of the problem, covenant with him what is to be shared and how it is to be shared."

Don't let the pastor "put on you what you are unprepared to do," Smith emphasized. "Suggest what you can do. Help by pointing to alternatives for help. Referral isn't rejection. It is added support."

The 1995 National Conference for Southern Baptist Secretaries was sponsored by the Sunday School Board's pastor-staff leadership department. Approximately 750 secretaries from a wide range of church, associational, state and national agency roles participated.

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