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-- BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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May 18, 1995

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BWA president sees tragedy,
hope during visit to Rwanda

By Wendy Ryan

Baptist Press
5/18/95

KIGALI, Rwanda (BP)--In the first visit to Rwanda by a leader of the Baptist World Alliance since the start of civil war a year ago among rival Tutsis and Hutus, BWA President Knud Wumpelmann of Denmark reported Baptists in Rwanda as saying: "We are not discouraged. There is hope. We have many needs, but we trust the Lord."

With the reports of continuing death and rape in Rwanda, Wumpelmann met pastors who are living out their trust in the Lord during his May 1-8 visit.

"I was especially happy to meet one pastor I had known," said Wumpelmann. "Though retired, he took over the responsibility for a church when his successor fled to Zaire. When the soldiers of the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front came, almost all the Hutus fled, the pastor said, but many have returned, although every day 10 to 12 Hutus are killed by the soldiers, some of them in a very brutal way.

"The 67-year-old pastor is a Hutu but decided to stay in spite of the constant danger of being killed, and he and his wife are now taking care of six orphans from their family."

With so many of the pastors and leaders of the French-speaking Union of Baptist Churches in Rwanda out of the country, new leaders have been chosen by those who are in Rwanda -- a situation that calls for prayer and much understanding, Wumpelmann said.

Wumpelmann met with Samweli Rugambage, the new general secretary of the union who has lost his father and mother, four of his brothers and one sister in the massacres.

Rugambage told Wumpelmann the union guarantees all pastors who return to Rwanda a church to serve. However, in the light of continuing reports of vengeance killings of religious leaders, it is a very difficult situation, Wumpelmann reported.

As best they know, Rugambage said there are approximately 31,000 Baptists in the union in 10 districts. He reported the union office in Butare is badly damaged and in need of repair. Their eight cars have disappeared and their 13 primary schools, handicraft school, two secondary schools, three health centers and clinic have either been destroyed, damaged and/or robbed. Their bank account is almost empty.

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The Rwandan Baptist leaders were especially thankful for the three Southern Baptist missionaries who had come back and were helping especially with the women and children. Stan and Marlene Lee of Greenville, S.C., and Martha Colwell of Wilkesboro, N.C., have returned to Kigale to resume ministries suspended by last year's bloodshed.

Now as Rwandan Baptists look ahead to their ministry, four main needs are to re-establish the union office, develop evangelism, restart their educational and health programs and get transportation for pastors and evangelists, Wumpelmann reported.

With so many pastors outside the country, there is also a great need to train new local leaders, he said.

The union's president, Deny Rutayigirwa, told Wumpelmann a key ministry for trained leaders involves the tragedy of Christians, Baptists included, who were part of the killing, because there was not a deep enough understanding of the Christian faith.

Wumpelmann told the Rwandan leaders "of the deep sympathy and great concern" Baptists have for them and the situation there.

"I emphasized as Christians we refuse to choose sides between Hutu and Tutsi, because we are one in Christ," he said.

Seemingly unaware of the scope of Baptist help they had received, Wumpelmann told Rwandan Baptist leaders much of the support they received through Danish missionaries had come from Baptist World Aid, the relief and development arm of the BWA.

Wumpelmann's last stop was a visit to the Baptist church in Kigali. "The church was full and there were many children and young people there," he said. "Several people gave their testimony.

"While it was tragic to see so many houses empty or destroyed and so many fields not cultivated, it has been a great experience for me to be back in Rwanda," he said. "May God bless this beautiful country which has experienced so much pain with a new Rwandan revival."

Baptist World Aid is continuing to need funds to assist those suffering in Rwanda and neighboring countries. Donations can be made to Baptist World Aid, 6733 Curran Street, McLean, VA 22101-6005.

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Russian parliament leader
cites Baptists as legitimate

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
5/18/95

MOSCOW (BP)--The chairman of Russia's parliamentary subcommittee on religious groups reportedly has named Baptists among those who should work to help the country achieve spiritual rebirth -- and he invited missionaries to help.

Southern Baptists now maintain 53 Foreign Mission Board missionaries in Russia, the first of whom began to arrive about the time communism fell in all of Eastern Europe.

Vitaly Savitsky's statement, quoted in the Moscow Tribune, sounded a different not from regularly published remarks by communists and nationalists in parliament who have backed Russian Orthodoxy as the only legitimate Russian religion. These leaders have characterized anything non-Orthodox as foreign and have even threatened to curtail their activities.

Savitsky accused some government officials of using alleged activities of cult groups to portray democracy as a first step toward anarchy, according to the newspaper report.

For their own political agenda, officials opposing democracy are pointing to groups such as the cult Aum Shinri Kyo from Japan as reasons why free expression will eventually unravel Russian society, Savitsky was reported as saying.

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The leader of Aum Shinri Kyo and 24 of his followers were charged May 15 with murder and attempted murder in a nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway system March 20. The cult is known to be extremely active in Russia.

In his statements, Savitsky condemned foreigners who impose alien ideas on Russians but stressed groups seeking "to contribute to the country's spiritual rebirth" will always be welcomed to Russia.

The significance of Savitsky's comments lie in his next statement:

"Why don't (missionaries) help the Orthodox re-establish churches or train priests, or help the Catholics, that have nothing, regain an official church building, or work with the Baptists that have been in Russia for centuries? That's what's really needed here," he said.

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SBC resolutions committee asks
to preview messengers' proposals

Baptist Press
5/18/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The Resolutions Committee for the 1995 Southern Baptist Convention has issued a call for preliminary copies of any resolutions messengers intend to introduce during the June 20-22 annual meeting in Atlanta.

Committee chairman Charles Cater, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala., noted messengers still must formally introduce their proposed resolutions during the convention's business sessions.

But the committee welcomes preview copies, Carter said, adding, "We will circulate them among the committee members in anticipation of our meeting in Atlanta."

During the convention, the Resolutions Committee will recommend specific resolutions for adoption to messengers at the SBC in the Georgia Dome.

Preliminary copies of proposed resolutions may be mailed to Convention Relations, SBC Executive Committee, 901 Commerce Street, Nashville, TN 37203, or faxed to (615) 742-8919.

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FMB puts trademark application
on hold until meeting with WMU By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
5/18/95

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Putting on hold an application to trademark the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin said May 18 the matter first will be discussed with leaders of Woman's Missionary Union.

The Southern Baptist mission agency's application for a trademark was called into question by Virginia WMU's executive board May 13. The FMB trademark application with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office was initiated in July 1994 and, beginning May 26, was to begin a 30-day public review period.

The application to trademark the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, which raises more than \$80 million annually for FMB work, "was a responsible business decision" first suggested by legal counsel in 1990, Rankin said in a May 18 statement released to news media, "and there was no intention of offending or neglecting the Woman's Missionary Union. We are deeply sorrowed and regret that we have offended the WMU, which fills such a strategic role as a partner in missions education and promotion."

Rankin said he and WMU's national executive director, Dellanna O'Brien, have talked at length by telephone and will meet in person as soon as schedules permit.

"Both Dr. O'Brien and I have overseas travel commitments over the next few weeks," Rankin said, "but I consider this a matter of utmost importance and we will do all that we can to meet at the earliest opportunity."

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Rankin reiterated his intention to maintain FMB-WMU ties, stating, "We are excited about what the future holds for both the WMU and the Foreign Mission Board as we work together to lead Southern Baptists to be on mission with God."

O'Brien issued a statement May 18, responding, "We are pleased with this action. When a Christian brother asks for forgiveness, you give it. The details will have to be worked out later. This is the first step toward a fuller understanding of this unfortunate incident."

"To WMU, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is not just an offering, but a symbol of the commitment of WMU to the sharing of the gospel around the world," O'Brien continued. "To remove that representation from us is like removing something of our heart. We are grateful for the acknowledgement and understanding of Dr. Rankin to the depth of feeling about this issue in the hearts of WMU members." WMU began the offering for Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board causes the same year WMU was organized, in 1888, renaming it the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering in 1918.

According to the FMB, the trademark application was filed in July 1994 after concerns arose over unauthorized use and distribution of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Rankin noted the question at hand is not one of ownership, saying, "All of the money raised is the Lord's. In 1990 after questions about the beneficiary of the offering arose in the settlement of an estate, we asked for an opinion from the counsel of the Southern Baptist Convention about the synonymous identification of the offering with the board."

"An opinion was rendered showing the Foreign Mission Board as the exclusive beneficiary, and the leadership of the WMU also received a written copy of the opinion at that time," Rankin said. "Legal counsel then advised us of our vulnerability with regard to such a large source of funds without any legal registration of the offering that would clearly identify the Foreign Mission Board as the beneficiary. Because the leaders of the WMU had been contacted and have not questioned the legal identification of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering with the Foreign Mission Board, it did not occur to us to consult with them further. We regret that oversight and insensitivity to their historic identification with the Offering and would not want to proceed without further consultation with them."

Virginia WMU's executive board, in a May 13 statement, asked O'Brien as WMU's national executive director to investigate the FMB action prior to the June 17 meeting of WMU's national executive board in Atlanta.

The Virginia WMU statement noted its executive board had "recently discovered that the Foreign Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, began efforts in July, 1994 to claim sole ownership of the Lottie Moon trademark."

The Virginia statement requested "a full report of this investigation" and "appropriate action," but did not specify possible actions.

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Prayer voiced for seminarians
in Africa church-planting role By Dwayne Hastings

Baptist Press
5/18/95

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--In an historic service at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, nine students began a journey down a road never before traveled -- completing their seminary studies on the foreign mission field.

Standing in Southeastern's Binkley Chapel before the seminary family, the students who are enrolled in the seminary's master of divinity in church planting degree program, heard Southeastern President Paige Patterson tell them they had a heavy responsibility as the first class to participate in the new degree program.

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As faculty and students drew close around the Kenya-bound students and their families kneeling at the altar, their hearts and hands joined in the tender moment, Patterson prayed: "Protect these my children. Watch over them Lord. May they abide in the shadow of the Almighty."

Patterson, the father of two children himself, was particularly moved as he voiced concern for the youngsters in the group during the May 3 service. Continuing his petition in a half-whisper, he said: "May you let no evil thing come near them. Protect them physically, especially the little ones that go with Mom and Dad." The nine students, having finished at least two years of their graduate theological studies, will complete their degree over the next two years in Nairobi, Kenya, while working with missionaries in starting new churches in the east African nation. The degree program is a unique arrangement between the Wake Forest, N.C., seminary and the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Patterson reminded the students, who begin their classes on the field in the fall, they are first and foremost students -- who are to finish their studies -- but are also "to start churches and preach the gospel."

"You have a heavy responsibility. This has to work. It is critical," he said. "If you are successful it will enable folks to be eligible for permanent appointment to the mission field one year earlier than usual.

"This is an incredible thing God has brought about. These students have to succeed and they're not going to do it if they are on their own," said Patterson, making a plea for the seminary community to commit to pray for the students by name over the next two years.

Patterson confessed to the group there will be a fair measure of suffering they will endure in their new culture: "All you can do is go over there and find what great things you must suffer for the Lord."

Then, in reassuring the students and their families, he added: "I want you to know there is a glory that will attend it that you cannot even begin to imagine right now. So go with the heart of a servant to do the impossible and trust in God and he will bring it to pass."

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FIRST-PERSON

Mother who gave up daughter
to adoption at peace with God

By Linda Beasley

Baptist Press
5/18/95

CONROE, Texas (BP)--July 23, 1994, came around just as it had for the past 28 years, but this July 23 held special meaning. It brought with it memories of a July in 1966 that had been shrouded in a cloud of denial all these years.

It brought with it joy in the celebration of the birth of my first daughter, a daughter born out of wedlock, viewed only briefly in the delivery room while under heavy sedation and relinquished for adoption. It brought resolution to the pain and sorrow teeming just below the surface of my otherwise cheerful facade. It brought knowledge of the EXACT date of her birth.

My journey as a mother began awkwardly and in an untimely manner. Because of the social climate of the mid-1960s, pregnancies of unmarried women were cloaked in secrecy and those found guilty were spirited away from public scrutiny and scorn. I spent six months in Sellers Maternity Home in New Orleans, where I adapted well to the pregnancy and confinement, but my performance at delivery time left much to be desired. I know now that my reluctance to birth was because delivery was not for me, but for the prospective adoptive parents. It was "THE END" for me and my relationship with the child I had lovingly carried in my womb for nine months.

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I chose not to see my baby girl after delivery because I feared any further emotional attachment. I left New Orleans in despair, entrusting my daughter to God's care and keeping, with the silent hope that we would be reunited again if not in this life, then in the one hereafter. I lived with my secret shame believing I had done something so terrible that no one would ever understand or forgive me.

During mid-life, I had been struggling with the issue of my first pregnancy and the relinquishment of my daughter, and although I had a lovely family with two beautiful children, there was a big empty space in my heart that could only be filled by the tiny baby I saw only briefly in New Orleans. I began to question God as I questioned my own motives and actions in the decision-making process surrounding the event of so many years ago.

"Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Micah 6:7b (NIV).

In mid-October 1993, I received a letter from the maternity home stating my daughter was looking for medical and background information. It was an answer to prayer! By a series of miraculous events, God had opened the door and bridged the gap in communication between me and my daughter, renamed Lori by her adoptive parents. God had heard my heartfelt plea and whispered in Lori's ear that it was time to reach across the years and the miles to a woman who desperately needed to know that she was alive, well and happy.

Lori and I exchanged letters and pictures and in February 1994 she visited in my home for four days. Words cannot express my joy in having the opportunity to meet and know my first child. She has been the adored and adorable daughter of a Southern Baptist minister and his wife who have poured their faith and life into her, creating the lovely jewel she has become. She has been able to achieve an education, career and personal goals I would not have been able to afford her as a single parent. She is currently pursuing her doctorate in biblical counseling. "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you." Isaiah 49:15 (NIV).

On Friday, the event of Lori's 28th birthday, I was depressed about the missed opportunity of knowing and raising my own child. I read some brochures I had picked up from Living Alternatives Crisis Pregnancy Center and was filled with a deep sense of awe and peace. I was reminded once again of the sanctity of life and realized that God had entrusted me with Lori's life for the first nine months and I had been faithful with the time he had given me.

When she was born I entrusted him with the rest of her life and he has been more than faithful!

In his mercy and infinite wisdom, he chose her family so she could be brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord, then he caused our paths to cross once again this side of heaven. Oh, the unspeakable joy of meeting and getting to know my first-begotten daughter AND of knowing a sovereign God who holds every minute in his hand and controls our destinies!

In today's "quick-fix" society, some would say Lori's life should never have been. It was unplanned and untimely. I say, "The proof is in the pudding!"

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Beasley is a member of First Baptist Church, Conroe, Texas.

Southeastern taps Reid
as evangelism professor

By Dwayne Hastings

Baptist Press
5/18/95

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--A prominent scholar in evangelism and spiritual awakening will be the first to occupy the Bailey Smith Chair of Evangelism at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Alvin Reid, currently assistant professor of Christianity at Houston Baptist University in Texas, has been appointed to the faculty of the Wake Forest, N.C., seminary as associate professor of evangelism and church growth effective, Aug. 1, 1995.

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"The opportunities at Southeastern are great," Reid said, adding he had not been looking to leave Houston Baptist when God called him to the Southeastern.

"I have really loved what has been happening at Southeastern. When we visited the campus, it was as if God had opened the door. It was clear this is what we are supposed to be doing. We really haven't looked back."

In announcing the appointment, Southeastern President Paige Patterson said, "It's a very encouraging moment for us to have someone like Alvin Reid who has both academic and organizational abilities.

"He brings a tremendous versatility for a man his age," Patterson said of the 36-year-old Reid. "I am elated that he will be the first to fill the Bailey Smith Chair of Evangelism. It's a high honor." The Bailey Smith Chair of Evangelism is Southeastern's first endowed academic chair.

"It is important that students learn how to share their faith," said Reid, who served the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in an appointment as associate director of evangelism for the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana from 1989-91.

Graduates of Southern Baptist colleges and seminaries should have the ability to witness to others of their personal faith in Christ, Reid said. "There is a danger in studying about God and not knowing God intimately. I think we need to consistently work to do both.

"For many years we may have emphasized intellectualism at the expense of spiritual growth," Reid suggested. "I think we are coming back to a balance, though. There is evidence that schools are waking up. You can be intellectually keen and spiritually on fire."

L. Russ Bush, Southeastern's dean of the faculty, said Reid's experience as director of evangelism in Indiana means he brings valuable insight to the classroom. "Reid knows firsthand how churches organize and work and how evangelism is promoted," Bush said. "He has the advantage of having done state convention work in evangelism as well as academic work in a Baptist university."

Noting the critical link between spiritual formation and evangelism, Reid said: "When I teach evangelism I spend a great deal of the class trying to help students know how to walk with the Lord. And how to know God personally. I think out of that intimate fellowship with God we are much more effective in sharing Christ."

Reid, who received his doctor of philosophy and master of divinity degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, has taught as an adjunct professor at Southwestern and Oklahoma Baptist University's Ministry Training Institute, Indianapolis.

In his work in evangelism, Bush said Reid is not only a pulpit personality but has made a profound impact in the academic field as a writing scholar.

He is the co-editor with Tim Beougher of the Billy Graham Institute of Wheaton College of "Evangelism for a Changing World," a collection of essays in honor of Roy Fish, Southwestern professor of evangelism. The book was released this spring to mark Fish's 30th year of teaching at the seminary.

Broadman & Holman Publishers has selected Reid to edit a book which will track the recent evidences of spiritual awakening in America. He will cooperate with John Avant, pastor of Coggin Avenue Baptist Church, Brownwood, Texas, on the work which is scheduled for publication in September.

Presently filling the John Bisagno Chair of Evangelism at Houston Baptist University, Reid served as minister of education and music at First Baptist Church, Corinth, Texas, 1987-1989; pastor of Oak Ridge Baptist Church, Weatherford, Texas, 1985-1987; associate pastor of Faith Temple Baptist Church, Irving, Texas, 1982-1983; and minister of music, East Thomas Church, Birmingham, Ala., 1979-1980.

A native of Birmingham, Ala., Reid is married to the former Michelle Elizabeth Stidham. They have two children, Joshua Mark, 6, and Hannah Elizabeth, 2.

**Larry Cox named associate
to Europe area director**

WIESBADEN, Germany (BP)--Former missionary and college administrator J. Larry Cox has been named an associate to the area director in Europe for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Cox, 46, of Greenwood, Miss., will be based in Wiesbaden, Germany, with responsibility for missionary work in the North Europe, Central Europe and South Europe missions, which stretch from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean. Missions are the organizations formed by missionaries on the field for the purposes of administration and strategy.

Most recently Cox was a strategy coordinator in northern Africa and central Asia for Cooperative Services International, the Southern Baptist aid agency.

From 1988-94, he was assistant to the president at Mississippi College in Clinton, Miss., where he also taught a global awareness course. Before that he directed the National Fellowship of Baptists in Missions, officed at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn., 1987-88.

Cox came to the national fellowship post after serving as a Foreign Mission Board missionary in West Africa, 1975-87. He directed the publishing house in Ivory Coast and later was an agricultural evangelist in Burkina Faso. Earlier, he was minister of education at First Baptist Church, Vicksburg, Miss.

"Larry has worked in almost every facet of missions," said John Floyd, area director for Europe. "He and Cheryl (his wife) will be a real strength to our area team."

Cox received the bachelor of science degree from Mississippi College, Clinton; the master of religious education degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.; the master of agriculture degree from Mississippi State University, Starkville; and the doctor of philosophy in higher education degree from the University of Mississippi, Oxford.

He and his wife have four children.

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(BP) photo (mugshot) mailed to state Baptist newspapers 5/5/95 by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outline posted in SBCNet News Room.

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