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**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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TENNESSEE--News media takes note of SBC racial resolve.
WASHINGTON--Coalition, including CLC, decries U.N. women's confab.
WASHINGTON--CLC joins brief opposing ruling for homosexual rights.
TENNESSEE--SBC President Jim Henry withdraws as NOBTS presidential candidate
ALASKA--Oklahoma evangelism director nominated as Alaska executive.
TEXAS--Media ministry throws 'net a little farther.'
TENNESSEE--Church's media ministry an evangelistic outreach.
TEXAS--Media ministry begins with answered prayer.
NEW MEXICO--Mega-cities council pursues national prayer strategy.
NEW MEXICO--Lewis: People count, but do we care?
MINNESOTA--Couple serves time teaching parenting.
NEW MEXICO--Lewis: HMB chaplains commission does not endorse CBF chaplains.
TENNESSEE--Correction.

News media takes note
of SBC racial resolve

By Jon Walker

Baptist Press
7/28/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Media reaction across the country has been mixed, yet mainly positive, regarding the Southern Baptist Convention's resolution on racial reconciliation. Newspapers and magazines across the country, and even one in London, have carried news or offered commentary regarding the cleansing of the SBC's soul.

On June 20, messengers at the annual Southern Baptist Convention overwhelmingly approved a resolution calling for repentance of individual and systemic racism.

Gustav Niebuhr, writing for the New York Times, called the resolution a "dramatic move," particularly for a denomination that has turned to the "right both politically and theologically."

Other papers, among them both the Chicago Sun-Times and the Chicago Tribune, the Akron (Ohio) Beach Journal, the Atlanta Journal, the Orlando Sentinel, the Houston Chronicle, the (Memphis) Commercial Appeal, the Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel, and the (Jackson, Miss.) Clarion-Ledger ran editorials commending Southern Baptists for their boldness, even as some of them questioned the delayed timing or the practical significance of such a resolution.

"Yet the journey of a thousand miles always begins with the first step," said the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Added the Chicago Tribune, "... the salient fact is that the Southern Baptists could have said nothing, and nobody would have noticed. Instead, in an age when hardly anybody owns up to anything outside of an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, they stood up and made a full-throated admission of guilt and a public apology."

Gregory Freeman, a columnist for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, contrasted how Southern Baptists requested forgiveness for their sin of racism during the same week that Mike Tyson, speaking through his promoter Don King, said he had no reason to express remorse for his past sins.

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Richard Matthews, in the Atlanta Journal, noted Southern Baptists taught a lesson to the world that was evidently lost on the politicians in Tokyo, Japan, who could only express "regret" for their aggressive acts during World War II.

In an open letter to Jim Henry, syndicated columnist Carl T. Rowan wrote: "Your detractors say this is merely a scam to proselytize and take money from African-Americans who are desperate to find succor somewhere within an America that is violently polarized along race and class lines. I take your resolution as a genuine expression of a godliness that can meet the needs of America's very troubled times. ... if the preachings of Jesus that one good person can make a difference are valid, I shall not doubt that more than 15 million newly dedicated Southern Baptists can make a nation-saving difference."

Not all reaction was positive: Jack E. White, in a commentary for Time magazine, wrote, "That's mighty white of (Southern Baptists). Forgive me for being underwhelmed by this astonishingly belated act of contrition from the nation's largest Protestant denomination."

U.S. News and World Report noted a trend among Christian bodies proclaiming "collective repentance." This includes Catholics, whose pope wants them to openly repent of their historical transgressions, and Lutherans who have expressed remorse for their anti-Semitism.

The magazine pointed to the "danger in these sweeping apologies," ... "that of falling into what the Lutheran martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer described ... (as) ... cheap grace ... the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance." ... True grace is costly, said Bonhoeffer ... because "it cost God the life of his Son ... One can only imagine the impact had (Southern Baptists) repented when it mattered most."

The Louisville, Ky., Courier-Journal gave a nod to the SBC's action, but said the same repentance is necessary on the issue of sexism. The paper called Southern Baptist women "second-class citizens," adding sexism is a barrier to evangelism and, like racism, should be tended to within the church and society.

Perhaps the most bizarre criticism of the resolution came from a one-two punch by the Washington Times, a conservative paper owned by the Unification Church. Wesley Pruden, the Times editor who identifies himself as a Southern Baptist, argued the resolution was an indulgence in political correctness, "revising history by judging an earlier generation by the standards ... of our own shoddy era." He added most Baptists were too poor to own slaves.

The Washington Times' Samuel Francis proclaimed, "Neither Jesus nor the apostles nor the early church condemned slavery, despite countless opportunities to do so, and there is no indication that slavery is contrary to Christian ethics or that any serious theologian before modern times ever thought it was." Francis, possibly tongue-in-cheek, said Southern Baptists, who had so far avoided Enlightenment influence, were now succumbing to the "pseudo-Christian poison of equality" that now permeates the West "to the point that the mainstream churches now spend more time preaching against apartheid and colonialism than they do against real sins like pinching secretaries and pilfering from the office coffee pool."

Not every report understood the nuances of the resolution, some leaving the impression that Southern Baptists were asking forgiveness for the sins of their forefathers. However, Richard Land of the Christian Life Commission echoed the response of most Southern Baptist leaders: "I can't change my great-great-great grandfather's standing before God, but I can apologize for the consequences" resulting from his ownership of slaves.

Other press reports suggested Southern Baptists were financially motivated to embrace blacks. However, SBC polity is such that all church contributions to national Baptist causes are voluntary. In order to remain active in the SBC, a cooperating church can give as little as \$250 annually to the Cooperative Program or either of the two missions offerings.

**Coalition, including CLC,
decries U.N. women's confab**

By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP)--A coalition of pro-family and religious organizations, joined by some members of Congress, recently decried a proposed document for a United Nations women's conference as the promotion of a radical feminist agenda.

At a July 27 news conference, members of Congress and of the International Coalition in Defense of Womanhood criticized what they called an anti-family effort strongly pushed by the United States delegation. They also denounced holding the meeting in China, citing the communist country's flawed human rights record and its coercive abortion and sterilization policies. The coalition includes the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

The U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women is scheduled for early September at Beijing.

Critics of the conference called for President Clinton to reveal the members of the delegation to the American people and for the U.S. delegation not to participate unless changes are made.

The conference's agenda is a "sellout to radical feminists," said Rep. Andrea Seastrand, R.-Calif. The 121-page draft document "lurches well beyond political correctness."

Holding the conference in Beijing is "like holding the Olympics in Berlin in 1936," said Rep. Linda Smith, R.-Wash.

"Indeed, it is a slap in the face to women everywhere to schedule a conference on women's issues in China of all places, where women are routinely forced to undergo forced abortions and sterilizations against their will," said Sen. Jesse Helms, R.-N.C., in a written statement released at the conference. "Holding the conference in China says that the U.N. finds China's grotesque behavior acceptable."

Helms is chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.

Coalition members charged the document attempts to redefine the family and the sexes. The draft document refuses to describe gender as male and female, leading some coalition members to say the writers want to include homosexuals and transsexuals under the definition of gender. About one-third of the document has yet to be settled, and much of it involves abortion, one coalition member said.

"The document itself prepared for Beijing states that nothing less than a radical transformation of the relationships between men and women must take place," said Tom Minnery, vice president of public policy for Focus on the Family. "How dare the United Nations say such a thing and impose itself on the treasured relationships between men and women?"

"The words 'husband' and 'wife' do not appear at all. What the document encourages essentially is fatherless families."

If the drafters "wanted to help the family they would encourage it, not belittle and strangle it as this document does," Minnery said.

In a written statement, the Christian Life Commission urged Congress to pass legislation already introduced which would prevent participation by the White House's delegation unless dissident Harry Wu is released by China and the Chinese government assures freedom of speech, assembly and press for all participants.

At a recent briefing, the State Department said it could not guarantee some freedoms while U.S. citizens are in China for the conference, The Washington Times reported. Officials said Bibles might be confiscated by the Chinese, the paper reported.

The Christian Life Commission plans to send two representatives, including CLC board member Nancy Schaefer of Atlanta, to the meeting.

The CLC will "send representatives to Beijing to fight our government because it wants to stand against the values that our nation stands for and that our people stand for," said James A. Smith, the CLC's director of government relations, at the news conference. "... we will have somebody in Beijing because we believe that this administration cannot properly represent the values of the American people and that there needs to be people in Beijing who say so."

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First lady Hillary Clinton is to lead the U.S. delegation to Beijing, but little else is known of the members of the American party, the coalition said.

"The State Department has told us there will be no Rose Garden Ceremony or official White House press conference to announce the delegation to the (conference)," said Beverly LaHaye, president of Concerned Women for America.

"The reason is clear. President and Mrs. Clinton do not want America to see the radical women that they have chosen to represent them. Legitimate women's issues have been hijacked by the radical feminists for too long. President Clinton and Hillary Clinton cannot be all things to all people -- they need to take a public stand and let Americans see what radical, feminist policies they are promoting on behalf of American citizens."

In addition to CWA, Focus on the Family and the CLC, the 10-member coalition includes International Right to Life, Catholic Campaign for America and the National Association of Muslim Women.

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CLC joins brief opposing
ruling for homosexual rights

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
7/28/95

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has joined in a brief asking the U.S. Supreme Court to protect religious liberty by upholding a state initiative prohibiting homosexual rights.

The case, Romer v. Evans, promises to be one of the most closely watched in the high court's next term, which begins in October. The court's opinion may be a pivotal one in the escalating battle over one of American culture's most hotly debated issues -- civil rights for homosexuals.

In February, the justices granted a review at the request of the state of Colorado and Gov. Roy Romer of a Colorado Supreme Court opinion which ruled as unconstitutional a 1992 initiative prohibiting the passage or enforcement of laws granting civil rights status to homosexuals. In a 6-1 vote announced last October, the court upheld a lower-court ruling against Amendment 2, the first state provision against homosexual rights.

While the high court may rule on the issue of homosexual rights, it could determine the case without deciding whether homosexuals make up a class deserving of legal protection. Voters' rights also constitute an important issue in the case.

The friend-of-the-court brief signed onto by the CLC and written by the Christian Legal Society argues Amendment 2 would protect religious freedom in a way religious exemptions would not. The Colorado court said such exemptions would provide adequate protection.

"There is a veritable explosion of instances where either individuals of faith or religious organizations are being forced to comply with gay-rights ordinances and other nondiscrimination regulations where sexual orientation describes a protected class," the brief says. "Amendment 2 holds considerable promise as a barrier to these restrictions on religious exercise and interventions into the internal operations of religious organizations.

"The addition of sexual orientation to (nondiscrimination requirements which apply to religious organizations) imposes serious burdens upon religious exercise that exemptions do not sufficiently protect. Applying such exemptions to religious organizations is extremely difficult, frequently involving courts in an intrusive examination of a religious institution's doctrine and practice."

The brief also says, "The social agenda of gays, lesbians and bisexuals is moral legitimacy for their sexual practices. Religion, at least orthodox and traditional religions, generally deny them moral legitimacy. This places religion foursquare in their path. Accordingly, religious persons and religious groups -- and hence free exercise and institutional autonomy -- are not a mere side issue in this case."

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CLC General Counsel Michael Whitehead said, "Religious liberty should not hang from the slender thread of a grant of grace from Caesar in the form of an exemption. What Caesar gives, Caesar can take away on another day.

"The people may rightly insist on a constitutional guarantee that secures their religious liberty beyond the reach of city councils or bureaucrats who would decide whether or not to grant an exemption to churches or religious organizations from homosexual rights laws."

Focus on the Family, National Association of Evangelicals, Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod joined the CLC on the brief authored by CLS.

Others filing briefs supporting the state include American Center for Law and Justice and Concerned Women for America, as well as the states of Alabama, Idaho and Virginia.

Among those filing briefs on the other side were the Human Rights Campaign Fund, the country's largest homosexual lobbying organization; NAACP; National Education Association; American Bar Association; AFL-CIO; American Psychological Association; American Psychiatrist Association; People for the American Way; American Jewish Committee; United Church of Christ Office for Church in Society; the bishop of the Episcopal Church, and several pro-homosexual religious groups, including Evangelicals Concerned. Also supporting the Colorado Supreme Court's decision were the states of Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada and Oregon.

Opponents of Amendment 2 argue it unconstitutionally discriminates against a class of citizens, homosexuals.

Citing a lack of a federal role, Attorney General Janet Reno decided in June not to have the Department of Justice file a brief in the case. Some homosexual rights advocates expressed displeasure with the Clinton administration's refusal to join the case on their side. A White House spokesman confirmed the president still opposes Amendment 2.

In a similar case, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld in May a Cincinnati referendum banning civil rights for homosexuals. Cincinnati voters had passed such a referendum in 1993 with a 62 percent majority.

Colorado voters approved Amendment 2 with 54 percent of the vote. It overturned homosexual rights ordinances already in force in cities such as Denver, Boulder and Aspen.

Southern Baptist leaders in Colorado were among those publicly supporting the amendment during the '92 campaign. The executive board of the Colorado Baptist General Convention unanimously endorsed it.

The Supreme Court has yet to set a date for oral arguments in the case.

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SBC President Jim Henry withdraws
as NOBTS presidential candidate By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
7/28/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The apparent leading candidate for president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary -- SBC President Jim Henry -- has withdrawn his candidacy, Baptist Press has learned.

New Orleans Seminary is in a search for a new president to succeed Landrum P. Leavell II who has retired.

Henry, re-elected to his second one-year term as Southern Baptist Convention president at the annual meeting in Atlanta in June, had been identified as the leading candidate by sources close to the search committee.

"I am deeply grateful that the school I love so much considered me as a candidate for president," Henry told Baptist Press. "I believe at this time, it is best for me to withdraw my name and to continue to pray for the Holy Spirit to lead the committee to his man at this critical time in the seminary's life."

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Henry, 57, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., declined to elaborate on his decision.

A presidential search committee, composed of 10 trustees from the seminary's board of trustees, has been conducting a search since late last year. The committee was appointed in December by trustee chairman Edward D. Johnson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Ocala, Fla. He named Morris L. Anderson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pigeon Forge, Tenn., as chairman of the committee.

Both Johnson and Anderson were unavailable for comment at Baptist Press' deadline July 27.

Henry had been the leading candidate from a list of 22 the committee was using and had been interviewed. The committee met July 6 on the New Orleans campus but, Anderson said earlier, the committee was continuing to work and would not comment on its progress.

Leavell, 68, retired effective Dec. 31, 1994 but has continued on an interim basis awaiting the trustees' election of a new president. Leavell has retired in Wichita Falls, Texas, where he was a longtime pastor of First Baptist Church prior to his 20 years as president of NOBTS.

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Oklahoma evangelism director
nominated as Alaska executive

Baptist Press
7/28/95

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (BP)--Cloyd Sullins, evangelism department director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, is the nominee of the Alaska Baptist Convention's executive board for the state's executive director-treasurer.

Sullins will be nominated at the annual meeting of the ABC Aug. 8-9 at First Baptist Church, Anchorage. If elected by the messengers, Sullins, 59, will succeed Bill G. Duncan, who retired March 31, as the convention's top executive.

Sullins previously directed the evangelism and church growth departments in Alaska from 1991-94. Last year he returned to Oklahoma, where had been a pastor, to lead the evangelism department.

A graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, he also is a former SHARE facilitator in Denver and Indianapolis, under an appointment by the Home Mission Board.

Sullins and his wife, Cecilia, have four daughters.

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Media ministry throws
'net a little farther'

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
7/28/95

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The goal of Ronnie Floyd's media ministry is simple. It is that in every message he delivers people have an opportunity to respond to Christ.

"The vast majority of so-called Christian programming doesn't give people that opportunity," said the preacher for Invitation to Life, seen weekly on ACTS and FamilyNet.

Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church in Springdale, Ark., said most alleged Christian programming is non-confrontational.

"Some preachers are so afraid of offending viewers that they don't offer them the plan of salvation," he said. "Early in my ministry I determined that if I was ever on television, I would give people the opportunity to be saved. I don't think providing that opportunity offends the majority of viewers. What I think offends them is a watered-down version of what the Bible says we must do to be saved."

Recently, Floyd said, a 95-year-old woman saw Invitation to Life, called and gave her heart to Christ.

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"She said she had wasted her life and was ready to commit suicide," he said. "She's representative of thousands upon thousands of senior citizens who are dependant because they don't feel as though they're needed.

"Many people say we're preaching to the choir on Christian television, reaching a lot of people over 60 and shut-ins who are even older. That's not true, but if it were I'd have to say that millions of people over 60 haven't experienced the saving grace of Jesus Christ. And when it comes to proclaiming the Word of God, are to we to ignore older people and concentrate only on the young?"

Floyd said that each week Invitation to Life receives calls from people in practically every state.

"And those calls come from people of all ages and from every walk of life," he said. "Quite a few of our callers, young and old, profess faith in Christ as a result of our invitation to accept him as Lord and Savior. If asking people to accept Christ is confrontational, I guess our ministry is confrontational. But it's also very New Testament."

The pastor said that wherever he goes people come up and tell him they have watched "Invitation to Life."

"I've had many, many pastors tell me they are encouraged by the program," Floyd said. "They say that people have been saved as a result of the program and have come to their churches to make public professions of faith. They also appreciate our strong stand in proclaiming and defending the gospel, in not backing off. Being honest in our approach about what Jesus wants a lost person to do doesn't offend as some people think."

Floyd said one of the greatest decisions made by First Baptist Church of Springdale was to go on television.

"For us, it's missions," he said. "It enables us to reach behind closed doors with the message of Christ. And you'd be surprised by the number of young people, people of all ages, who are behind those doors and who are watching and listening.

"Recently a young girl called on three different occasions and my wife led her to Christ. She was an abused child and was afraid her mother and father would find out about her experience with Christ.

"That's just one of many such calls. There are millions of young people who, if they hear the gospel at all, will hear it on radio or television."

Floyd said when "hurting" people write Invitation to Life or call the program's 800 number asking for help, they are assisted by volunteers from the church's Sunday school classes.

"We have 10 phones now," he said, "and have as many as 500 calls a week. When people call one of the primary things our counselors are trained to do is to encourage the caller to seek out a Bible-believing church.

"Listening is also one of the most important things our phone counselors do. Hurting people with problems or troubles need a sympathetic ear. And they need to know that God loves them."

The pastor said if one of his church members was not sold on a national TV ministry, being a telephone counselor would change his or her attitude.

"Involving our people in this way has given them a better overall perspective of ministry," he said.

In October First Baptist Springdale will celebrate five years of television ministry. The church used radio exclusively before making the commitment to television.

More than three years ago the church launched its national TV ministry on ACTS and FamilyNet. For more than two years Floyd, who is a graduate of Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, has served as preacher for Invitation to Life.

The church's worship service is carried locally by the ABC affiliate in nearby Fayetteville, which covers western Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma. Floyd, who has been at the church for almost nine years, said broadcasting in the area has been a factor in church growth.

"This area is experiencing excellent growth," he said, "but I attribute much of the growth of the church to exposure on television. When I came here we had a membership of 3,800. We now have more than 9,000 members.

"Being on television raises the visibility of the church and pastor. And people who visit for the first time often have become familiar with the church as a result of our broadcast. More important, I am always seeing people who came to know Christ as a result of our TV ministry.

"What we're doing with our media ministry is throwing the net a little farther."

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Church's media ministry
an evangelistic outreach

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
7/28/95

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (BP)--The woman was sitting on the bed in the master bedroom of her home in Dallas, gun in hand, contemplating suicide. For some reason, which she did not understand, she had the remote control for the television set in her other hand and was channel surfing.

A statement made by a man on one channel caused her to stop. That man was Ron Phillips, pastor of Central Baptist Church of Hixson, Tenn., and he was saying there was no darkness in life that could not be penetrated by the light of God's love in Jesus Christ.

She wondered. She was the wife of a successful doctor, materially living the American dream. But her husband's request for a divorce, the scorn she faced in the community and constant stalking throughout the ordeal had become intolerable.

She looked at the gun and she listened to the preacher. Finally, what he was saying awoke in her a hope that had long been dormant in her life. She laid the gun aside, got down on her knees and asked God to take away the darkness. He did.

After the woman's divorce was final, she took a job, and later through God's providence, was transferred to Chattanooga, Tenn. That enabled her to walk the aisle of suburban Central Baptist Church of Hixson, and meet the messenger who had been God's instrument the night she was contemplating suicide. She now sings in the Central Baptist choir and is a testimony for the church's media ministry.

Ron Phillips has been a pastor since 1967 and has had a media ministry for 25 years.

"I started with radio and publications," he said, "but 10 years ago the church here moved into television and we're head over heels into it."

Phillips is moving toward his 16th anniversary at Central Baptist.

The Central Message, the church's Sunday morning worship service edited to a 30-minute format, is seen weekly on ACTS and FamilyNet. The program is also carried by the Inspirational Network and several independent stations.

"We're on the ABC Television affiliate in Chattanooga," Phillips said, "and have the number one rated religious program in the area. We're pulling 11-, 12- and 13,000 people 18 or older according to Nielsen ratings."

This gives the program a three to four Nielsen rating, which is excellent. Most churches have difficulty pulling even a one Nielsen rating in metropolitan areas.

"People really know us through television," Phillips said. "I'd estimate that 50 percent of our new members have their first contact with us through TV. And that's a modest estimate. Television is our number one outreach."

Phillips said he did not think a church could really move forward without using media.

"I call it artillery," he said. "It softens up the ground for Christ's foot soldiers. Almost every week we have at least one person call our 800 number to accept Christ. People call for all sorts of reasons, of course, most asking for prayer.

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"The gospel is media. We're here to communicate Christ to people. And when you consider what is spent to reach so many people with the message of salvation, there is not a better buy."

Phillips said Central Baptist gives more than \$200,000 annually to support its television ministry.

"Our people support the media ministry above their tithes and offerings," he said. "They understand its importance in the total outreach of our church."

The pastor said the church does not ask for money on the air.

"People give but we don't ask," he said. "We don't have time to make an appeal on a 30-minute program. And we wouldn't if we had more time because that's not our focus. Our focus is to introduce people to Jesus Christ. That is the only reason we are involved in a media ministry."

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**Media ministry begins
with answered prayer**

By C.C. Risenhoover

**Baptist Press
7/28/95**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The current preacher for The Baptist Hour said his media ministry began with answered prayer.

"When I was attending Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and pastoring a church, I used to listen to The Baptist Hour on radio," said Frank Pollard, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jackson, Miss. "I prayed then that I would someday be given opportunity to be The Baptist Hour preacher."

That prayer was answered years later when he was called on to substitute on the program for Herschel Hobbs, who was then The Baptist Hour preacher and pastor of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City. The prayer was further answered when Pollard became the preacher for the worldwide The Baptist Hour radio program in 1976, a position he held until 1986. And, his prayer was answered again in 1991 when he became preacher for both the radio and television versions of The Baptist Hour.

"I never talked to anyone other than the Lord about a media ministry," said Pollard. "I grew up very poor in the Texas oil patch, was called to the ministry, and never sought any position other than through prayer."

Born in Olney, Texas, Pollard first aspired to be a professional baseball player. He calls himself mediocre, but as a 16-year-old he was given a partial baseball scholarship to Texas A&M University. His freshman coach, former St. Louis Cardinals outfielder Wally Moon, encouraged him to sign a professional contract.

He said his father, an oil field worker, discouraged him because he was familiar with, and did not approve of, the lifestyle of some minor league ball players.

Pollard went on to graduate from Texas A&M with a business administration degree, earned a bachelor of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctor of ministry degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He received an L.H.D. degree from California Baptist College and a doctor of divinity degree from Mississippi College.

"I never imagined or dreamed what my ministry through media would become," he said. "I just prayed to be in God's will."

The television version of The Baptist Hour is carried weekly on the SBC Radio and Television Commission-operated networks ACTS and FamilyNet, reaching into millions of homes in the United States. The translated Russian version of Pollard's powerful weekly TV message reaches a potential audience estimated at almost 100 million in the former Soviet Union.

The radio version of the program is carried by 362 stations in the U.S. and has a potential worldwide audience of 197 million people.

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Pollard said the anger he once felt at what some televangelists were doing on television also provided impetus and purpose for his media ministry.

"I was ill one Sunday back in the '70s and couldn't preach," he said, "so I stayed home and turned on my television set to hear the gospel. Instead of hearing preaching, I heard a lot of pleas for money for this thing or that. I thought the way these preachers were asking for money destroyed their credibility, so I prayed for a TV ministry that would be different."

That prayer was answered with a weekly TV program called At Home With The Bible, hosted by Pollard and jointly produced by the Baptist Sunday School Board and the RTVC. In recognition of Pollard's hosting and teaching on the program from 1978-1984, the Sunday School Board issued the following statement about him:

"His personality and penetrating portrayal of scriptural truth sets a standard for accurate and applicable Bible teaching on television. During 124 episodes he has helped create an audience impact that has won this series the National Religious Broadcasters award as the nation's outstanding religious television program, plus eight other national awards in both the television and radio formats.

"Its impact in reaching the masses with the gospel of Christ contributed to an unprecedented response of more than 500,000 people being enrolled in home Bible study during the first five years of its existence. The Baptist Sunday School board acknowledges its gratitude for his role in these programs that have been seen and heard in every state in the nation and distributed by the U.S. Armed Forces around the world."

At Home With The Bible was discontinued, Pollard said, because of organizational changes at the Sunday School Board and a lack of funding.

As to how he views the future of Christian media, the pastor said, "It softens hearts and opens doors. It provides us an entree with many people who will not come into a church building to hear the gospel. There are many millions of people who can only be reached through media.

"It's important, of course, that we connect those people with Bible-believing churches. And it's still important to go one-on-one. But there's no doubt that media can open the door for evangelistic opportunity."

Pollard said sometimes the perceived glamour of a television ministry causes a church to fail to consider a radio ministry.

"Radio is one of the very best ways to communicate the message of Christ," he said, "because you're not distracted by what you see. Radio is a vital part of the media mix in reaching the masses for Christ."

The pastor expressed appreciation for the people of his church who are "so supportive of our media ministry." He said he spends 20 to 30 hours weekly praying and getting ready to preach.

"There's a lot of ministry I can't do alone," he said. "We have a great staff at First Baptist Church and they help carry the load.

"The people here believe in our media ministry and they believe in quality. That's why the congregation was willing to invest \$450,000 for new equipment, and why they're so supportive of the media ministry to Russia. We've bonded with Central Baptist Church in St. Petersburg, Russia. The people there translate the hundreds of letters we receive from the Russian people who see our broadcast every week.

"We know our media ministry is worthwhile because many of the people who write are discovering Christ for the first time."

Pollard praised Jack Johnson, president of the RTVC, for all the work he had done in getting the program aired in Russia.

**Mega-cities council pursues
national prayer strategy**

By David Winfrey

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (BP)--Claiming "the spiritual battle for the hearts of our cities is won through prayer," the Southern Baptist council that assists associations in America's largest urban areas endorsed a national prayer strategy for the cities.

The strategy, to be developed by the start of 1996, will involve prayer coordinators for each large city and a network for communicating prayer concerns across the country, said members of the Mega-Focus Cities coordinating council.

"It changes the whole process," said Hugh Townsend, Home Mission Board director of Mega Focus Cities. The coordinating council helps associations in the nation's 50 largest cities with strategic planning.

Southern Baptist agency representatives focus on these cities, in part, because they represent 57 percent of the country's population.

The council assists about six "mega-cities" each year with planning. Prayer has been one part of each city's strategy, but Townsend said associations too often don't take it seriously enough. "I think they all believe it, they just haven't implemented it."

One likely change will require prayer strategists from the association to attend the initial meeting between the city's Baptist leadership and the Mega Focus Cities council.

Prayer requests for the cities can be communicated in a variety of ways, said council member Ann Brack, of Women's Missionary Union. Among them: state Baptist newspapers, SBC publications and SBCNet -- the convention's on-line computer network.

Council members said they expect the increased prayer effort to open doors in the inner city.

"There is a growing awareness and body of evidence that the task of reaching our cities for Christ is more than strategic, but is essentially spiritual," said Sam Williams, pastor of Bay Marin Community Church in San Rafael, Calif. "The spiritual battle for the hearts of our cities is won through prayer."

"We have been long on planning and programs and short on praying. We will do better planning and programming if we begin with prayer," he added. "We are outnumbered and we are out-resourced unless we pray."

Townsend agreed. "I think that we're going to see strange things happening in our cities. By strange, I mean things that the spirit of God is doing that we're going to be amazed at."

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Lewis: People count,
but do we care?

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
7/28/95

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--"People Count" is next year's theme for the Season of Home Missions, but Southern Baptists must constantly ask themselves whether they really care about the lost, Home Mission Board President Larry L. Lewis told those attending Home Missions Week.

Lewis reminded missionaries, pastors and others that former HMB President Arthur Rutledge kept a sign reading "People Count" on his desk.

"We have to ask continually, 'Do I really care about the unsaved?'" Lewis said, citing several statistics as a cause for concern to Baptists and other Christians.

Although the country's population grew 22 percent between 1970 and 1990, the number of churches grew 7 percent, he said. Southern Baptist churches grew 12 percent in the same time. America needed 96,000 churches overnight to have the same ratio of citizens to churches it had 20 years earlier, Lewis said. "If we don't care, who's going to care?" he asked.

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Cities of 100,000 people or more account for 74 percent of America's population, yet they contain just 42 percent of the country's churches, Lewis said.

"Do we care about our cities?" he asked. "I think the world is looking to Christians and asking, 'Do you have an answer?'"

If Christians care, Lewis said, they should do three things: make witnessing a priority, make church planting an obsession and make ministry the goal.

"Our goal is not 50,000 new church starts by this decade," he said, referring to Bold Mission Thrust, a set of target statistics for Southern Baptists by the year 2000. "Our goal is to evangelize America."

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Couple serves time
teaching parenting

By Gomer Lesch

Baptist Press
7/28/95

DULUTH, Minn. (BP)--Larry and Glenna Faus, family ministries directors for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention, had a new experience last month: they served time in a federal prison.

Chaplain Cliff Rawley invited them to present a "Parenting by Grace" seminar at the Duluth Federal Corrections Center. A varied national and ethnic background was represented among the prisoners who attended. The Fauses wondered how the program would be received. They even wondered if attendance would be primarily to earn some "good time."

One man said his reason for being there was in the hope that he could learn ways to be the kind of father he wished he could have had as a boy. He said, "If I'd had the right kind of parenting, I don't think I would be here today. I'm not trying to blame my folks, but they sure didn't give me anything that would help keep me out of the kind of trouble I got into."

Another prisoner asked the Fauses for special prayer on his behalf. He taught a lesson in parenting by his actions.

His wife recently died of cancer, leaving his children without a parent nearby. He asked to be transferred from this minimum security prison with its many recreational facilities and no "hard-timers," to the new maximum security prison in Colorado, which has been referred to as the modern Alcatraz.

Why did he request this transfer? In Colorado, he said, his children could come to visit once a month, while if he had stayed in Duluth, they could never see him. He wanted them to have a father, since their mother was now dead.

Faus encouraged prayer for this prisoner who is now in Colorado. He said he was humbled at the sacrifice the man made in order to be a better person.

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Lewis: HMB chaplains commission
does not endorse CBF chaplains

Baptist Press
7/28/95

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (BP)--The Home Mission Board Chaplains Commission has not and will not endorse any Cooperative Baptist Fellowship chaplaincy candidates, according to HMB President Larry Lewis.

Lewis was responding to news media reports from the recent annual meeting of the CBF in Fort Worth, Texas, where an official said CBF chaplaincy candidates have been endorsed by the HMB.

"The Chaplains Commission endorses persons who are active members of cooperating Southern Baptist churches and meet the qualifications for endorsement. We do not endorse chaplains for the CBF or any other para-denominational group," Lewis told Baptist Press.

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News media report d Ed Beddingfield, CBF Coordinating Council member from Sylva, N.C., said the HMB has not turned down any CBF chaplaincy candidates and has "bent over backwards" to help. Lewis said that implies "we are working with the CBF to endorse chaplains. That is not true. The Home Mission Board has no working relationship with the CBF on this or any other issue."

"Although we do not question chaplain candidates about their church's support of the CBF, we do ensure that every candidate is an active member of a church that supports the Cooperative Program. Candidates, many of whom are laymen, must also give testimony of their salvation experience and affirm traditional Baptist doctrinal beliefs," Lewis said.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is a four-year-old organization of moderate Southern Baptists who are critical of SBC leadership.

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CORRECTION:

In (BP) story titled "Biblical illiteracy crippling American Christian community," dated 7/26/95, please change the fifth paragraph to read as follows:

Describing America's multi-billion dollar Bible industry, Martinez related, "This year alone there will be eight new translations introduced into what is called the 'Bible market.'

Thanks,
Baptist Press

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