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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

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

BUREAUS

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

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TENNESSEE--FMB trustees send out 38 new missionaries to proclaim God's Word.
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FMB trustees vote to release
\$10 million in overseas needs

By Mark Kelly

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board addressed urgent missionary needs around the world and accepted another agency's good will offer to assume responsibility for a missionary retirement fund during their regular board meeting Dec. 11-13 in Memphis, Tenn.

The trustee board also addressed a worrisome decline in giving to Southern Baptist hunger and relief projects overseas and appointed 38 missionaries for service in 20 countries around the world.

The rapid growth of Southern Baptists' worldwide missionary force -- now at 4,139 in more than 130 countries -- has created an urgent need for missionary housing and automobiles, said John W. White III, assistant vice president for overseas operations. The needs are especially critical in Eastern Europe, where the collapse of communism opened doors closed for 70 years.

Providentially, up to \$10 million to be freed from Hong Kong for global capital needs could help fill this gap.

Five years ago, 90 Hong Kong Baptist churches and their Southern Baptist missionary partners targeted 45 strategic areas for new work. Many of those areas are high-rise apartment communities housing hundreds of thousands of residents. To help start the new churches, 25 missionary families moved into the high-rises.

The resulting sale of older missionary properties will plow as much as \$30 million back into the board's Global Missionary Capital fund, White said. Trustees voted to release one-third of that, up to \$10 million, for housing and automobiles around the world -- as the proceeds are received by the board. The other two-thirds will be invested, as usual, into the global capital fund.

Trustees also accepted a proposal to transfer to the Southern Baptist Annuity Board responsibility for the Foreign Mission Board's pension plan for missionaries appointed before 1982.

That plan promised missionaries a fixed monthly benefit based on years of service, said Carl W. Johnson, FMB vice president for finance. But it required the board to bear the investment risks necessary to guarantee that promised benefit for 3,000 retirees.

In a proposal dated Dec. 1, 1995, the Annuity Board offered to assume the plan's \$24 million liability and an equal amount of investment assets -- relieving the Foreign Mission Board of future interest rate funding risks. With the change, missionaries under this plan will be eligible for periodic benefit increases, including a 5 percent increase Jan. 1, 1996.

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"This proposal reflects the servant heart of the Annuity Board and the partnership between the agencies," FMB President Jerry A. Rankin told trustees. "The Annuity Board exists to serve Southern Baptists, and this is a profound gesture of good will on their part."

"Our offer to assume responsibility for these benefits is simply a reflection of who we are and what we do," Annuity Board President Paul W. Powell told Baptist Press. "We are pleased to offer the service."

The Annuity Board will not be assuming any unfunded liability but can bring an "economy of scale" in managing the plan and simplify record keeping and communications, Powell said.

Trustees also heard Southern Baptist giving to world hunger and relief has dropped dangerously low at a time when needs and opportunities are greater than ever, said Bill Bullington, vice president for overseas services.

Giving to Foreign Mission Board hunger and relief projects has been steadily declining for several years, and receipts for 1995 are running 15 percent below last year, Bullington told trustees. The result is only 31 of 45 project requests for 1995 could be funded -- and those at only one-half the need.

"You're on solid biblical ground when you care for the hurting and dispossessed and those in need," Bullington said. "The prophet Amos said God judges a nation for not caring for the poor."

In addition, hunger and relief projects involve many Southern Baptists in volunteer efforts overseas and provide an important platform for ministry in countries closed to traditional missionary activity, he said. Yet agreements between Southern Baptist agencies prohibit the Foreign Mission Board from actively promoting hunger and relief giving.

Trustee chairman Leon Hyatt Jr. of Pineville, La., appointed a five-member committee chaired by Stephen P. Davis of Russellville, Ark., to study the problem and report back to the board.

In other action, trustees appointed 38 missionaries for service in 20 countries in a Tuesday evening service at Broadmoor Baptist Church in Memphis. The action brings the number of appointments so far in 1995 to 542, just three shy of 1994's record 545. The Foreign Mission Board now supports 4,139 missionaries in more than 130 countries around the world.

Trustees also upheld the termination of missionaries Charles and Sharon Carroll for teaching and advocating the practice of "falling" or being "slain in the spirit" in Community of Praise Baptist Church in Singapore. Such experiences are outside the boundaries of generally accepted practices for Southern Baptists, and Foreign Mission Board missionaries should not lead churches into such experiences, trustees said.

Rankin also presented certificates of cooperation to 15 members of the Fellowship of Baptist World Ministries, an organization of autonomous groups, led by Southern Baptists, that conduct different types of overseas missions ministries, primarily evangelistic and human needs projects. Their ministries regularly involve thousands of Southern Baptist volunteers in overseas projects.

Rankin and fellowship president Jim Ponder signed a covenant of cooperation between the two groups in June during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Atlanta. By signing the covenant, fellowship groups agree to plan overseas projects around the Foreign Mission Board's strategic field requests in exchange for FMB endorsement of the projects.

Trustees also reported on their pledges to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions during the three-day meeting. Fifty-five trustees said their personal gifts to the annual offering would total \$110,026.

The 1995 Lottie Moon goal is \$100 million. Trustees have voted to inject anything over \$90 million into "White Harvest" mission efforts in former countries of the Soviet bloc.

The next Foreign Mission Board trustee meeting will be Feb. 12-14, 1996, in Knoxville, Tenn.

**FMB trustees send out 38 new
missionaries to proclaim God's Word**

By Lonnie Wilkey

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--With the celebration of Christ's birth just two weeks away, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees commissioned 38 missionaries to proclaim the good news of Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection around the world.

The Dec. 12 missionary appointment service at Broadmoor Baptist Church was held in conjunction with the FMB trustees' Dec. 11-13 meeting in Memphis.

Approximately 1,500 people listened as the new missionaries shared testimonies of God's call to missions.

A common thread woven among many of the testimonies was the influence of Southern Baptist missions organizations such as Royal Ambassadors, Girls in Action, and Acteens.

"Tonight, a GA's call to be a missionary is being fulfilled," said Grace Smith Morris of Wickliffe, Ky., who along with her husband Mike, will serve in South Korea.

Robert Nichols, a pastor in Dunbar, W.Va., shared God called him to be a missionary in 1981 while he was working with RAs at his church. At the same time his wife, Deborah, was working with Acteens. The Nichols will be going to spread the message of Christ in Uruguay.

Several missionaries also cited their involvement in volunteer or summer missions as keys to their decisions to become career missionaries.

For one new appointee, the service was an answer to his parents' prayers.

"Forty-four years ago tonight I was born and my parents dedicated me to spreading the Gospel," said Glenn Ellis, pastor of Liberty Grove Baptist Church, Jackson, Tenn., "I go with excitement to share the Good News."

Ellis and his wife will serve in Brazil. She expressed the concern of older missionaries who leave grown children behind in the United States. "God freed me of my fears when my children assured me we would spend eternity together," she said.

For missionaries such as Sherri Hewlett Smith of Cordova, Tenn., the appointment represented a return "home." The daughter of missionaries in Brazil, Smith, along with her husband Jenö, will return to the country where she was reared. "I thank God for the opportunity to go and serve him," she said.

In his charge to missionaries Avery Willis, senior vice president for overseas operations for the Foreign Mission Board, reminded the appointees they were not going out on a mission for the FMB or Southern Baptists. Instead, "you're going on a mission with God. It is God's mission," Willis stressed.

Willis pointed out several assurances from Scripture that the "arm, hand, and finger of God" will be with them on their journey.

The providence of God is identified in the hand of God, Willis said. "He will guide you and open doors in ways you never thought of," he told the new missionaries.

The FMB administrator reminded them the arm of the Lord is revealed in his son, Jesus Christ. "You have a message of joy. Never forget the purpose God sent you for," Willis challenged.

Willis pointed out there will be dangers on the mission field. He related the story of two missionary families kidnapped recently in Tanzania. The missionaries were found unharmed because they said the "hand of God" protected them, he related.

"We go with the power of God and the protection and provision of God," Willis reminded the missionaries.

Willis noted by "his finger God wants you to reach out and touch people. God will take you, use you, and demonstrate his power.

"The finger of the Lord reaches out through you to accomplish his work and glorify his Son."

During a time of commitment, FMB President Jerry Rankin reminded the audience that "God can use anybody when you respond to his touch, his call."

He noted the new missionaries face "the reality of a lost world," but they have responded with obedience to God's call."

Rankin challenged the audience by reminding them that "it is never too late to respond to God's will.

"God is calling Southern Baptists to reach that last frontier. Who'll tell them if you're not willing to go?" he asked.

The 38 named missionaries in Memphis bring the board's total missionary count to 4,139. That figure includes 3,515 career and associate missionaries and 624 two-year workers.

For the year the FMB appointed 542 missionaries, just shy of the 1994 record of 545. The 542 figure includes 246 career and associate missionary appointments and a record of 296 two-year workers -- including 198 International Service Corps volunteers and 98 journeymen. That 296 two-year total will increase since more will be assigned before Dec. 31, FMB officials said.

The Foreign Mission Board's next appointment service will be Feb. 13, 1996 at Wallace Memorial Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tenn.

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CP threatened by
changing attitudes: Lewis By Martin King & Sarah Zimmerman

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ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--Southern Baptists' cooperative missions funding is threatened more by changing attitudes in local churches and state conventions than by competitive mission causes, said Larry Lewis, Home Mission Board president.

Speaking to HMB board of directors during their Dec. 13 meeting, Lewis praised the year's record giving for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions, but said he is concerned about the Cooperative Program.

"Many have lamented the divisive and competitive efforts of groups like the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and we deeply regret the million of dollars that have been diverted from the Cooperative Program to fund such competitive causes," Lewis said. "However, an even greater threat to CP comes from ... state conventions that have been for some time in a pattern of reducing the funds that go outside their state to SBC causes in order to fund expanded programs and increased personnel within their states."

"An even greater threat than that are local churches which have lost their vision to be part of a world strategy for sharing the Gospel," Lewis continued. "The typical Southern Baptist church now gives less than 7 percent to CP, and it's getting smaller every year even though the needs of the world are constantly expanding."

Lewis challenged board members "to assure your church is a pace-setter in missionary support both in percentage and actual dollar support through CP and the special mission offerings."

In other business the board approved a 1996 budget of \$88.6 million, a \$1.4 million increase over the 1995 budget; restructured three internal divisions; transferred property in Massachusetts to the state convention and in Arizona to a local association; and addressed six motions referred to the HMB by the 1995 Southern Baptist Convention.

Directors also appointed 11 missionaries, elected three new staff and honored nine retirees. The chaplains commission endorsed 49 chaplains, bringing the total number of Southern Baptist chaplains to 2,413.

New staff includes Donoso Escobar, associate director of church and community ministries; Jess Fairbanks, associate director for language church starting; and Robert Clayton Vickers, director of military chaplaincy.

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Born in Nicaragua, Escobar received bachelors and masters degrees and a doctorate from the University of Arkansas. He was a bivocational pastor in Arkansas for 10 years, and he taught social work at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for 12 years. He currently teaches social work at Mississippi College in Clinton.

Born in Spain, Fairbanks graduated from Christian Heritage College and Talbot Theological Seminary in California. For 11 years he served in various roles in California, including teacher, pastor and seminary extension director. Currently he is director of language missions for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan.

Vickers has been an Army chaplain since 1975, and will retire as a colonel next year. The Kentucky native graduated from Eastern Kentucky University and Southern Seminary. He has received doctorates from Lexington Theological Seminary in Kentucky and Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn. He was a pastor in four Kentucky churches before joining the military.

The retiring staff recognized by the board has a combined total of 131 years of HMB service. They include:

-- Lew Burnett, director of military chaplaincy. The Texas native joined the HMB staff in 1985 after serving as an Army chaplain.

-- Reid Coons, division editor for new church extension. Born in Georgia, Coons worked for the board 14 years.

-- June Davis, deputation assistant. The Florida native worked at the board 15 years.

-- Hank Ernest, general maintenance worker. Born in Louisiana, Ernest served in the Army and Air Force before joining the HMB staff 15 years ago.

-- James Forrest, loan officer. Forrest was born in Arkansas and was a pastor in Texas and Colorado before beginning his HMB career as a missionary in California's Long Beach Harbor Baptist Association. He began working for the church loans division in 1984, for a total of 25 years of service.

-- Martha McDowell, executive assistant in the planning and finance section. The Georgia native worked at the board 12 years.

-- Helen Pitts, switchboard operator. Born in Atlanta, Pitts worked at the board 10 years.

-- Phyllis Ragan, clerk/secretary in prayer and spiritual awakening. Ragan was born in West Virginia and worked for the board 10 years.

-- Dolores Waters, executive secretary to the president. Waters worked 19 years at the board, beginning as a secretary in associational services. She is a Kentucky native.

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Jim Henry describes the
peace of Christmas to HMB

By David Winfrey

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ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--The Christmas story in the book of Luke describes the search, source and satisfaction of peace found in God, Southern Baptist Convention President Jim Henry told the Home Mission Board.

Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., brought the devotional message to HMB staff and directors before the directors' winter meeting, Dec. 13.

His text was the second chapter of Luke in which the angels exclaim, "Glory to God in the highest. And on earth, peace to men on whom his favor rests."

"When the angel spoke that word, he was speaking of a great need of man's heart and that is a search for peace," said Henry. He recounted his travels to Israel a year ago for the signing of a peace accord and then a month ago for the funeral of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

"We were driving into Jerusalem to a weeping city," he said. "That elusive search for peace continues to elude us."

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The Christmas story points to God as the source of peace, and it also speaks to the satisfaction of peace, Henry added. "The peace with God is also the peace of God," he said. "He is the satisfaction when he brings his peace that nothing or no one else can give or do."

He noted some HMB staff could be seeking peace in the face of restructuring that will combine the board with the Brotherhood Commission and the Radio and Television Commission

"Let me just urge you to look to Jesus to be the satisfaction, your peace. He's enough," Henry said. "His peace is satisfying."

Henry recalled when his church voted against a plan to purchase 22 acres north of their former site -- a piece of property he said he was confident they were supposed to buy.

Instead, they bought 150 acres southwest of their former site, and a new parkway brings 100,000 cars driving by the church daily.

"I'm just Calvinistic enough to believe that God is sovereign in what he's up to corporately and individually," he said. "Had we gone the other way in the way we thought we ought to go, we would have missed God."

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NOBTS trustees elect
Smith interim president

By Debbie Moore

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The trustee executive committee of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary unanimously elected Provost Billy K. Smith as interim president Dec. 12 following a resignation announcement from Landrum P. Leavell II, the seminary's interim president since Dec. 31, 1994.

Leavell, president of New Orleans Seminary since January 1975, originally announced his retirement to the seminary's trustee executive committee Dec. 13, 1994, with an effective date of Dec. 31, 1994, but subsequently agreed to the committee's request to remain as interim president. Leavell and his wife, Jo Ann, moved to a new home in Wichita Falls, Texas, at the end of March. They have made regular trips back to the seminary campus throughout the academic year. Leavell will officiate at the seminary's mid-session commencement service Dec. 15.

"Words cannot express how much all of us love and appreciate Dr. Leavell," said Edward D. Johnson, NOBTS trustee chairman and pastor of the First Baptist Church in Ocala, Fla. "We wish him the very best in his retirement and hope he will be a frequent visitor to the seminary campus."

Leavell, who was named professor emeritus of evangelism in March, will be named president emeritus during the March 1996 trustee meeting.

"I think Dr. Smith was the natural choice as provost to lead us during this interim period," Johnson said. "We are very excited that he has accepted this responsibility, and we believe that our seminary will be in great shape as we go into a new year."

"I am committed to seeing the seminary through this time of transition," Smith said. "At this point I feel that is my responsibility. The response of the faculty has been very affirming and encouraging."

Smith has served at New Orleans Seminary since 1976. A professor of Old Testament and Hebrew and former chairman of the division of biblical studies, he was named vice president for academic affairs in March 1992. Later the same year he was named provost and academic dean of the graduate faculty.

Smith received a bachelor of science degree in physical education from Louisiana Polytechnical University in 1952, a bachelor of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary in 1956, and a doctor of theology degree in Old Testament and Hebrew from New Orleans Seminary in 1963.

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Before becoming a professor, Smith was a pastor for 20 years, serving churches in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas: Charpentier Baptist Mission, Montegut, La., 1954-57; Society Hill Baptist Church, Oakdale, Miss., 1957-59; Monte Sano Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, La., 1959-65; First Baptist Church, Homer, La., 1965-71; and First Baptist Church, Alvin, Texas, 1971-76.

During his years as a pastor, Smith was a member of the NOBTS board of trustees and served on the seminary's presidential search committee following the resignation of President H. Leo Eddleman.

Smith is the author one of the latest additions to the New American Commentary series published by Broadman and Holman, volume 19 on Obadiah, Jonah and Amos. He has also written many lessons and articles for the Baptist Sunday School Board.

A former high school coach, teacher and semi-professional baseball pitcher in Louisiana before going into the ministry, Smith grew up on a small farm near Spearsville, La., along with three brothers and three sisters. He is married to the former Irlene Monroe of Glenmora, La., who completed the bachelor of religious education degree at New Orleans Seminary in 1958. She taught grade school mathematics for nearly fourteen years. The Smiths have five grown children and five grandchildren.

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