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Religious leaders meet
with Clinton, share views

By Greg Warner

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (ABP) -- A week before his inauguration, President-elect Bill Clinton met with 15 religious leaders, including 10 Southern Baptists, and discussed a wide range of social and religious issues he will confront as president.

The two-hour luncheon at the governor's mansion Jan. 12 was arranged by Clinton's pastor, Rex Horne of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, Ark.

Horne described the session as "a get-acquainted meeting with no agenda and no motive." However, Horne confirmed the group discussed homosexual rights, abortion, taxation of churches and other issues with the soon-to-be president. Most of the topics were at Clinton's initiation, according to Horne and others.

Horne said he suggested to Clinton that he host such a meeting, which "he was most agreeable to do." Horne himself selected the participants, mostly pastors. "I said, 'Here are some guys that you might like to know.'"

The Southern Baptists attending were Ken Branam, pastor of Plymouth Park Baptist Church in Irving, Texas; Wendell Estep, pastor of First Baptist Church in Columbia, S.C.; Randall Everett, pastor of First Baptist Church of Pensacola, Fla.; Roger Freeman, pastor of First Baptist Church of New Orleans; Horne; Ron Lewis, pastor of Richardson Heights Baptist Church in Richardson, Texas; Bill Merrell, a director of associational missions in Lawton, Okla.; David Napier, church administrator at Immanuel Baptist; Stan Parris, pastor of First Baptist Church of Hope, Ark., Clinton's hometown; James Pleitz, pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas; and Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church near Memphis, Tenn.

Others attending were Charles Swindoll, Christian author and pastor of First Evangelical Free Church in Fullerton, Calif.; Bill Hybels, pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in Barrington, Ill.; Max Lucado, Christian

author and pastor of Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas; and Ed Matthews, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Little Rock, where Clinton's wife and daughter are members.

Rogers, three-time Southern Baptist Convention president, could not be reached for comment.

According to sources, only a couple of the 15 voted for Clinton, who alienated many conservative Christians with his support of homosexual rights and abortion rights. But, participants said, there was no hostility or debate during the two-hour meeting.

"He recognized that many of those people were not his supporters, (but) this was a way to establish some groundwork," Horne reported. In that regard, he added, Clinton may have improved his standing with the leaders.

New Orleans pastor Freeman serves as president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, which voted in December to convey to Clinton their strong opposition to him on abortion.

"I did say we fear the wrath of God upon our country if we continue the practice of the indiscriminate ending of life through abortion on demand," Freeman reported after the meeting with Clinton. "I asked him to support the sanctity of human life in America."

In response, Clinton said he considers abortion to be almost always the wrong decision, Freeman said, and that as president he wants to promote adoption rather than abortion. "He did not go any further than that, and I do not expect him to come out against the pro-choice position."

Clinton brought up the issue of homosexuals in the military, Freeman said. "His position is that as long as someone behaves in the military, we can't be a watchdog on every one of their personal preferences," he said. Clinton asked if adulterers and alcoholics likewise should be expelled from the military, according to Freeman.

"It seems as if his (Clinton's) own personal beliefs are fairly conservative in these areas," Freeman said. "But he feels like it is impossible to legislate his own personal beliefs for the entire country."

On church-state matters, Clinton said he strongly supports tax exemption for churches and church organizations and opposes any government interference in church hiring practices, including forced employment of homosexuals or other minorities, Freeman said.

"One of the things we tried to communicate with the president," Freeman said, "was that even though some of us differ with him on some of the philosophies of his party, we are his supporters and we are his friends. And any people who are radically threatening to him do not represent what we feel is the true evangelical voice of America."

Despite the group's differences with Clinton, "they were very impressed with him," reported Dallas pastor Pleitz.

"Listening to him, I'm convinced he has a relationship with the Lord and has deep convictions about right and wrong," Pleitz said. "But he has some reservations about legislating morality."

Pleitz described Clinton as relaxed and congenial, "like he had nothing else to do" -- although the luncheon was interrupted for 15 minutes while Clinton took a telephone call from Polish leader Lech Welesa.

"Just to be there for a little while and see some of the demands on this man, and see that he had time for us, was impressive," Pleitz said.

FMB chairman says search group
has picked presidential nominee

TALLADEGA, Ala. (ABP) -- The committee seeking a new president for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has found its nominee, according to the chairman of the agency's trustees.

Committee members agreed not to reveal the choice, however, according to board chairman John Jackson, who serves on the search group.

Jackson told the Executive Board of Woman's Missionary Union Jan. 11 that the search committee prayed until God revealed to them the identity of the nominee. The 15-member search committee met for a prayer retreat Jan. 7-9 in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The nominee will be presented to trustees for election during their meeting Feb. 8-10 or perhaps in April, Jackson said.

The new president will replace Keith Parks, who retired Oct. 31 in a dispute with trustees. Parks said trustees had allowed denominational politics to infiltrate the missions program.

In October committee members said they had narrowed their choice for president to two men, one FMB employee and one former employee. It is not known if the new favorite is one of the two or, as some members suggested earlier, the committee has gone to someone else.

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Supreme Court reverses decision
against abortion clinic blockades

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A provision of an 1871 civil-rights law cannot be used by federal courts to bar blockades at abortion clinics, a splintered U.S. Supreme Court ruled Jan. 13.

The post-Civil War legislation -- popularly known as the Ku Klux Klan Act -- empowered federal courts to protect the civil rights of individuals and classes threatened by mob violence.

A majority opinion written by Justice Antonin Scalia and joined by four other members of the court reversed lower rulings that women seeking an abortion constitute a class of persons protected under the 1871 law. The lower courts had barred Operation Rescue from engaging in anti-abortion activities at clinics in northern Virginia.

Scalia, joined by Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Associate Justices Byron White, Anthony Kennedy and Clarence Thomas, said federal law's protection is invoked only when two conditions are met. Under court precedent, conspiracies to deprive citizens of equal rights trigger the act when they are motivated by "some racial, or perhaps otherwise class-based" hatred and when they are "aimed" at rights that are "protected against private, as well as official, encroachment."

The majority said Operation Rescue's activities did not meet either test.

"Whatever one thinks of abortion, it cannot be denied that there are common and respectable reasons for opposing it, other than hatred of or condescension toward...women as a class -- as is evident from the fact that men and women are on both sides of the issue, just as men and women are on both sides of (Operation Rescue's) unlawful demonstrations," Scalia wrote.

The abortion clinics and women who challenged Operation Rescue's activities pointed to the right of interstate travel as the right protected against private infringement. The majority held that the infringement must be intentional and that Operation Rescue's purposes targeted abortion, not interstate travel.

The majority vacated the award of attorney's fees but refused Operation Rescue's request to lift the permanent injunction against clinic blockades. Instead, the case was returned to federal district court to determine whether state-law claims can be used to keep the ban in place.

Writing separately, Justice David Souter cited his reluctance to depart from settled court precedent in siding with the majority on the 1871 provision at issue in the case. But Souter argued that the case should be returned to the district court to determine whether federal courts may bar Operation Rescue's blockades under another provision of the law.

That provision applies to conspiracies to prevent or hinder state authorities from securing equal protection for citizens.

Souter said the facts would support a conclusion that Operation Rescue intended to prevent or hinder Virginia authorities from securing equal protection for its citizens and that the district court should be asked to decide the issue.

The court majority said the abortion clinics' lawsuit had not sought protection under that provision and rejected the view of Souter and other dissenters to consider it in this case. Scalia suggested that a challenge to Operation Rescue under the "hindrance" provision would also fail.

In a dissenting opinion joined by Justice Harry Blackmun, Justice John Paul Stevens said women seeking an abortion are protected under both provisions of the 1871 act.

Stevens said the court majority ignored the "obvious...congressional intent" of the statute "to protect this nation's citizens from what amounts to the theft of their constitutional rights by organized and violent mobs across the country."

The statute, he argues, "provides no basis for excluding from its coverage any cognizable class of persons who are entitled to the equal protection of the laws."

The case -- *Bray vs. Alexandria Women's Health Clinic* -- is not about abortion, Stevens said, but about "the exercise of federal power to control an interstate conspiracy to commit illegal acts."

In yet another dissent, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, joined by Blackmun, also argued that Operation Rescue's actions "fit precisely within the language" of both provisions of the 1871 law.

O'Connor said she did not question the sincerity of Operation Rescue's opposition to abortion but challenged its methods.

Operation Rescue members, she said, "are free to express their views in a variety of ways, including lobbying, counseling, and disseminating information. Instead, they have chosen to target women seeking abortions and to prevent them from exercising their equal rights under the law."

O'Connor said that although the 1871 act's immediate purpose "was to combat animosity against blacks and their supporters," its language "is more expansive than the historical circumstances that inspired it."

She criticized the court majority for "restricting the scope of the statute, to the point where it now cannot be applied to a modern-day paradigm of the situation the statute was meant to address."

One member of the court majority, Justice Kennedy, noted in a concurring opinion that federal law enforcement is available to states upon request to the U.S. attorney general. In a footnote to his dissent, Stevens called that reminder "puzzling and ironic, given the role (the Bush)

administration has played in this and related cases in support of Operation Rescue."

The court's decision prompted promises from lawmakers in both houses of Congress to introduce legislation to provide federal protection against clinic blockades.

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Fellowship funds up
62 percent in 1992

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Contributions to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship totaled \$7.3 million in 1992 -- a 62 percent increase over the previous year.

A record month of contributions in December boosted the Fellowship well over its own income projection of \$6.5 million for the year, according to preliminary year-end figures from the Atlanta-based group. The two-year-old organization of Southern Baptist moderates took in \$7,325,902 in 1992, compared to \$4,535,507 in 1991.

December was the Fellowship's first million-dollar month. Contributions totaled \$1,334,453 -- more than any month on record. The December total was 29 percent higher than the previous record, last December's \$747,267

Boosting the December figures were contributions to the Fellowship's first global missions offering. So far \$368,635 has been received toward the offering's \$2 million goal, with more expected in January and February.

Even without the offering receipts, however, the Fellowship's regular contributions during December were enough to set a record -- \$965,817.

Even better news, according to Fellowship Coordinator Cecil Sherman, is that the money given to the Fellowship for its own programs grew faster than other receipts in 1992.

Churches and individuals who contribute to the Fellowship earmark their money for one of three funding plans that divide support among Fellowship programs and traditional Southern Baptist causes. Sherman said more contributors are now choosing the two plans that offer significant support for the Fellowship's own programs.

"The real money given to the programs of the Fellowship tripled in '92," he explained.

In 1991, 76 percent of the money contributed through the Fellowship went to traditional Southern Baptist causes on the state and national level. That percentage fell to 56 percent in 1992, leaving more money for Fellowship projects.

Approximately \$3.9 million was spent on Fellowship and Fellowship-funded programs in 1992, compared to approximately \$1.2 million in 1991.

While gifts to the Fellowship grew last year, contributions to the Southern Baptist Convention went down slightly. The Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' national budget, fell \$2 million during the 1991-92 fiscal year ending last September. The \$138 million total was a 1.4 percent drop from 1990-91's \$140 million.

Although the Fellowship's budget is tiny by comparison, the drop in SBC funding could fuel criticism from Southern Baptist leaders that the Fellowship is draining funds from SBC coffers.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was established in 1990 by Southern Baptist moderates displeased with the current leadership of the SBC and its agencies.

The Fellowship's three funding plans allow churches and individuals to

bypass the Cooperative Program and to withhold funds from Southern Baptist agencies of which they disapprove.

Sherman predicted the Fellowship's income will continue to grow this year. He said his "target" for 1993 is \$10 million in contributions, with \$4 million going to Fellowship causes. "We will be stronger next year," he said.

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-- By Greg Warner

State leaders say WMU plan
expands mission opportunities

By Teresa Dickens

TALLADEGA, Ala. (ABP) -- What do the changes made by national Woman's Missionary Union mean to state WMU programs across the Southern Baptist Convention? The answers given by state WMU executive directors range from "nothing" to "everything."

Under a plan adopted Jan. 10, the national women's organization will support the missions programs of other Southern Baptist groups such as the moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, forge relationships with evangelical missions organizations outside the SBC, become more involved in direct missions through volunteers, and become active in social issues.

"We will continue to do all the things we have done before," said Willene Pierce from the Maryland/Delaware convention. "There is a lot to do in missions education and we don't intend to back down one iota.

"We have a variety of churches in our convention," she added. "Some will be distressed, others excited about the decisions the WMU board made. My hope is that we will be given a chance to communicate with them what the changes actually mean. Words on paper don't always communicate.

"I believe the changes will give WMU an opportunity to do more in missions and missions education," Pierce commented. "I especially like the greater emphasis on volunteerism and social issues. Those are areas I have been thinking about for some time. I'm glad they were included."

Earlene Jessee from Virginia said the changes will be "very important in my state. Our convention is very diverse. The recommendations we adopted provide a model for us to be able to do missions. They open the door for us to work with all of our churches."

Attributing the WMU board's decision to "a movement of God's Spirit," Jessee declared: "Our move was not an attempt to alienate ourselves politically. We want to involve everyone in missions and missions education."

"I'm especially pleased with the decision to print generic missions education materials," said Betty Lynn Cadle from the Minnesota/Wisconsin convention. "The sale of these materials may validate our work to other evangelical groups, especially in our area of the country. Southern Baptists are often seen as a cult there. Biblically based missions material with our name on it will go a long way in explaining who we are and what we believe."

Cadle also noted divine intervention in the decisions of the board. "I believe we followed God's leadership in an effort to find more ways to lead church members to participate in the spreading of the gospel. We also acknowledged the reality that it is going to take all evangelicals working together to win our nation to Christ.

"I view the decision as very positive and forward thinking, not

revolutionary," remarked Marjean Patterson from Mississippi. "It is an attempt to involve different kinds of women in missions."

Like Pierce from Maryland/Delaware, Patterson doesn't foresee changes in the way WMU work is done in her state. "We are going to continue to promote the Cooperative Program through Mississippi Baptist churches the way we traditionally and historically have done."

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San Francisco church leaves SBC over homosexual issue

SAN FRANCISCO (ABP) -- A third congregation has left the Southern Baptist Convention because the denomination excludes churches that condone homosexual behavior.

Delores Street Baptist Church in San Francisco voted to leave the SBC because, according to the pastor, the denomination has chosen "to be Baptist no longer."

Last June messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention took the first step toward revising the SBC constitution to exclude from SBC affairs all congregations that "affirm, approve or endorse homosexual behavior." The constitutional change must be ratified again this year.

The action was aimed at two North Carolina churches, one that licensed a homosexual divinity student to the ministry and another that performed a marriage-like ceremony for a homosexual couple. Both churches were expelled in June.

As a result, two churches voluntarily left the 38,000-church SBC in August -- Covenant Baptist Church in Houston and Riverside Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

Delores Street Baptist Church joined them Jan. 10, saying the expulsion of SBC churches was unprecedented and "totally contradicted Baptist tradition."

"Up to now," explained Pastor Marilyn Chilcote in a statement, "there has always been room in the SBC for a variety of perspectives and viewpoints on complex social and ethical issues. We at Delores Street strive to uphold Baptist polity and principle. However, we see this recent action by the Southern Baptist Convention as a voluntary and intentional choice to be Baptist no longer."

"We cannot support and stand with a denomination that as a matter of policy condemns and excludes a part of our family: lesbian, gay and bisexual women and men," the statement continued.

The San Francisco church was expelled from the California Southern Baptist Convention and its local Baptist association in the San Francisco Bay area after declaring its openness to homosexuals in 1981. The first Southern Baptist congregation to be formed in San Francisco, Delores Street celebrated its 50th anniversary Jan. 10, the day it withdrew from the SBC.

The church will maintain its affiliation with the Alliance of Baptists and is in discussion with the American Baptist Churches about joining that convention, a spokesman said.

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Pastor's complaints get woman
kicked off evangelism program

By Pat Gilliland

OKLAHOMA CITY (ABP) -- Anne Graham Lotz, daughter of evangelist Billy Graham, was removed from the program of the state evangelism conference in Oklahoma because of a pastor's complaint that a woman should not preach to men.

Lotz, a popular speaker from Raleigh, N.C., was scheduled to speak twice during the annual Evangelism Conference Jan. 18-19 at First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla. The meeting is sponsored by the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma.

Wayne Keely, pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Claremore, Okla., said he complained because Lotz was scheduled to give two, 45-minute messages. He said that opens the door to women preaching, which he believes is against the Bible's teaching.

Keely interrupted a woman speaker at a Baptist youth evangelism conference Dec. 30 when she asked the audience to turn to selected Scriptures and began to discuss them.

"I think it would have been a sin for me not to do something," he said Tuesday.

Wayne Bristow, the state Baptist convention's evangelism director, said Lotz was replaced because of concerns raised by pastors who believe the Bible teaches against such a role for women. He did not name Keely.

"This conviction is so strongly held by a number of pastors that it began to be obvious back in early December that this was going to be disruptive," Bristow said.

As a result, he said, "I talked to Anne and the decision was made to try to avoid there being a distraction from the real purpose of the conference."

Lotz, director of Angel Ministries in Raleigh, could not be reached for comment. She is married to Daniel Lotz, whose brother Denton is executive director of the Baptist World Alliance.

In a telephone interview Tuesday, Keely said he would love to hear Lotz. "I didn't want her canceled," Keely said. "But to have her come in to preach to a bunch of conservative Baptists is ridiculous."

He said he also doesn't oppose women on church programs, as long as they stick to sharing their personal testimonies and avoid preaching or teaching men.

Keely bases his position on such biblical texts as I Timothy 2:11, where the apostle Paul writes: "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."

Jill Briscoe, the speaker who was interrupted by Keely at the December youth conference, said she and her husband, Stuart, used the disruption as an opportunity to help the youths see that Christians can have differing views of Scripture.

Briscoe was born in England and is head of women's ministries at Elmbrook Church in Brookfield, Wis., where her husband is pastor. She said she also pointed out that she was at the youth conference under the "authority" of Bristow, the state evangelism director.

Keely said he isn't trying to stir controversy. "The bottom line is, I try to stand on scriptural principles. We have to stand by our conviction."

Bristow said the evangelism conference's focus -- to prepare Christians to spread the "good news" of Christ -- is too important to be disrupted by side issues. He said he thinks the evangelism conference still

will speak to women but not as directly as before.

Taking Lotz's place at the conference will be Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission.

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-- Pat Gilliland is religion editor for the Daily Oklahoman in Oklahoma City. This story is reprinted with permission.

'Shared awareness' called key
to strong family relationships

By Ken Camp

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Communication characterized by shared awareness of needs, goals, feelings and ideas is imperative within a minister's family relationships, according to Ben Loring, pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas.

Loring was workshop leader for a couples seminar attended by more than 180 ministers and spouses Jan. 11 prior to the 1993 Texas Baptist Evangelism Conference.

Family relationships have tremendous potential for cherishing and nourishing, or for bruising and battering, Loring said.

"The principal purpose of family is nurture," Loring said. The family should be a place where a person is nourished intellectually, emotionally, physically, relationally and spiritually, he added.

Unfortunately, a distorted view of biblical "roles" within marriage by some evangelicals has left some spouses and children "battered into submission," either physically or emotionally, Loring said.

"It seems the greatest pain in church life comes from people who have been bruised in family relationships," he said.

"Pilgrimage" is an important word in family relations, according to Loring. Family life should be viewed as a journey, not an accomplished feat, he emphasized.

"Family relationships are never finished. They are always progressing or regressing, but they are never static," he said, emphasizing that past failures can be corrected if family members are willing to deal redemptively with each other.

"We are not condemned to repeat the past," he said. "We are liberated to reshape the future."

Communication -- which Loring defined as "shared awareness" -- is the practical key to open, intimate, vulnerable, initiative-taking relationships that make other family members feel valued.

"Communication is the functional glue of relationships. It is also the wedge that will drive us apart if it is not experienced," he said.

Faithfulness to one's spouse, children and God is foundational to family life, according to keynote seminar speaker Herb Pedersen, director of the missions division of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

"Be absolutely certain there will be storms along the way in life -- times of disappointment, times of sorrow. Whether the minister's house stands or falls during these times depends upon the foundation on which it is built," said Pedersen, former pastor of Oak Cliff First Baptist Church in Dallas.

Citing a construction principle that is also true in family life,

Pedersen said, "The depth of the foundation determines the height of the building."

Where problems exist in a minister's home, Pedersen offered a prescription of communication, cleansing, companionship and commitment.

Muriel Burress, conference leader from Round Rock, Texas, said the secret to a balanced family life is devoting proportionate -- not necessarily equal -- time and attention to the family and one's ministry. She particularly encouraged involvement in school and community projects.

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