
A S S O C I A T E D B A P T I S T P R E S S

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June 25, 1993

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Gregory offered post
at Southern Seminary

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Joel Gregory, Southern Baptists' best known unemployed preacher, has been offered the job of dean of the chapel at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Last September, Gregory abruptly resigned the pastorate of First Baptist Church in Dallas -- the Southern Baptist Convention's largest church -- in a leadership dispute with the congregation's senior pastor, W. A. Criswell.

Gregory, a Foreign Mission Board trustee, also was chairman of the committee that nominated Jerry Rankin as FMB president. Rankin was elected June 14.

Al Mohler, Southern's president-elect, said through a seminary spokesman June 15 that he would have no comment on Gregory's situation. Gregory could not be reached for comment.

However, Gregory and his family visited the seminary's Louisville campus June 24-25, where the possibility of his employment was widely known by seminary faculty, staff and students. He was involved in several meetings with faculty and staff members, and was the guest of honor at a reception the evening of June 24, seminary sources confirmed.

Knowledgable sources on campus, who spoke only on condition of anonymity, said Mohler apparently has offered Gregory the position but Gregory has not decided whether he will accept it.

Exact details on what Gregory's responsibilities would entail could not be determined: Dean of the chapel would be a new position, apparently replacing some of the duties currently held by Bill Cubine, seminary pastor.

Cubine, however, apparently would remain on staff as seminary pastor, concentrating his efforts on pastoral duties such as student counseling and hospital visitation, as well as teaching two courses in the fall semester. Cubine was named seminary pastor in October 1991 by President Roy Honeycutt.

Gregory would take over Cubine's responsibility for coordinating the seminary's chapel program. However, much of the role of selecting chapel speakers historically has rested with the president.

Gregory also would teach some courses in Southern's preaching department, sources said, although there are no current vacancies in the department.

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Apparently Gregory also would be free to continue his itinerant preaching ministry, at least on weekends. He is a much-sought-after preacher for churches, conferences and other events nationwide.

A native of Fort Worth, Texas, Gregory has spent most of his career in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Before moving to First Baptist Church of Dallas, he was pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church and Gambrell Street Baptist Church, both in Fort Worth. He also taught preaching for a few years at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

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Keith Parker resigns
CBF post in Europe

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Baptist missionary veteran Keith Parker has resigned after less than a year as coordinator of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missions in Europe.

Parker told Fellowship Missions Coordinator Keith Parks that he and his wife, Jonlyn, plan to return to the United States to pursue ministries in pastoral counseling and social work. The date for his departure has not been determined.

Parker and Parks acknowledged that Parker's decision was influenced by differing perceptions about the nature of Parker's role in the Fellowship's European missions strategy. Both stressed that most of the problem could be attributed to the difficulties of launching an ambitious mission venture within a new organization.

"With some restructuring of the administrative elements of the CBF missions organization in Europe, this seemed to be the right time for us to refocus and redirect our ministries," Parker said. Plans about their relocation have not been finalized, he added.

Parks said the Fellowship's 20-person missionary force in Europe does not require a traditional administrator -- a role Parker has filled for the Fellowship since last July -- and he urged Parker to continue in a revised capacity.

Parker said some missionaries and Europeans have questioned whether such a change indicates European missions will take a back seat in the Fellowship's future. But both Parker and Parks said that while the nature of the Fellowship's work will change its commitment to Europe won't.

After nearly 24 years in European missions, Parker said he and Jonlyn leave with mixed feelings: "We are sad in leaving our many friends, both European and American colleagues. We are joyful in having had a hand in setting up the beginnings of a CBF mission program in Europe, especially in working with exceptional missionaries and other fellow workers.

"The open receptivity from our European colleagues and the European Baptist Federation for working in close partnership with the CBF has been a source of joy."

Parker said he continues to "feel very positive about CBF as an organization, and I think the CBF missions program has great potential in Europe."

Fellowship leaders were quick to praise the Parkers for their leadership.

"Keith and Jonlyn are devoted missionaries who have laid a strong foundation for the Fellowship's growing mission work in Europe," said Parks. "We are particularly indebted to them for the relationships they have built

with leaders of the European Baptist Federation and the Baptist Seminary at Ruschlikon (Switzerland)."

Added Fellowship Coordinator Cecil Sherman: "Both the Parkers and everyone at CBF remain firmly committed to our growing partnership with European Baptists. Due in large measure to the Parkers' efforts, our mission program in Europe has every prospect of surging forward."

Fellowship moderator Hardy Clemons of Greenville, S.C., who spent most of last fall in Europe, said the Parkers had earned "inordinate respect" from European Baptist leaders. "I'm sad at losing the Parkers," he said, "but I respect their decision that their ministry needs to take another direction."

Parks said Fellowship missionary Jim Smith, who is also in Europe, has agreed to assume responsibilities as liaison with the European Baptist Federation and Fellowship following the Parkers' departure.

The Parkers and 20 other missionaries were commissioned during the Fellowship's general assembly in May in Birmingham.

Keith Parker, 57, was one of several top administrators who left the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign Mission Board in recent years in response to changes instituted by FMB trustees.

One of the changes was a decision in October 1991 to cut all FMB funding for the Ruschlikon seminary because of alleged liberalism among the school's faculty. The decision, made over the objections of then FMB President Parks and other staff, triggered an international controversy over Southern Baptist missions philosophy and practice.

Before he became FMB area director for Europe, Keith Parker was a professor at the Ruschlikon seminary, where he taught pastoral care and counseling, and was associate to the FMB's area director for Europe and the Middle East. Jonlyn Parker also served in the seminary administration and as a social worker in the Swiss prison system.

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-- By David Wilkinson and Greg Warner

Europe administrator fired
at Foreign Mission Board

By Greg Warner

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Tom Warrington was fired June 23 from his administrative post at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Warrington, associate area director for FMB missions in Europe, was fired without warning by John Floyd, who as area director for Europe was Warrington's immediate supervisor.

Warrington was the highest-ranking Europe administrator to remain at the FMB after a staff showdown in 1992. Keith Parker, Floyd's predecessor, and Isam Ballenger, former area vice president, resigned to protest changes in FMB policy in Europe -- changes they said indicated the FMB's conservative trustees were trying to impose their brand of theological orthodoxy on European Baptists.

But Floyd said Warrington's dismissal was routine and unrelated to the earlier upheaval.

"I'm aware of political connotations this might bring forth," Floyd said in an FMB news release. "... This is purely an administrative evaluation that the job requirements for this position can best be filled by a person with

different strengths than Tom."

"There's another side," Warrington told Associated Baptist Press June 25.

Warrington, 48, declined to discuss the situation further, saying he will make a public statement at a later date. But some colleagues said Warrington was singled out for his close relationship with Parker, who hired him in 1991, Ballenger and former President Keith Parks, who likewise later resigned because of philosophical differences with trustees.

"This is strictly a power play," said one current administrator who asked not to be identified for fear of retribution. Many FMB staffers were shocked by Warrington's dismissal, he said. "They are asking, 'If it happened to him, could it happen to me?'"

Floyd, a conservative who was elected area director by trustees in February, said Warrington was asked to apply for another position with the FMB. Warrington has 13 years of experience with the board. Floyd, a former missionary to the Philippines, was vice president at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn., when hired by the FMB.

Staff members said Warrington's abrupt firing without warning is not the normal procedure for dismissal at the FMB, particularly if Warrington was eligible for another position.

But Skip Smith of Houston, chairman of the trustee committee that hired Floyd, said Floyd asked for and received permission to hire his own staff.

Warrington's firing came nine days after trustees hired Jerry Rankin to replace Parks as FMB president.

Rankin, Floyd and the other FMB administrators had kind words for Warrington, who is credited with holding together the FMB's European missionary force during the recent upheaval.

"Tom has been a valuable and effective part of our staff team over the years," Rankin said in the FMB release. "He is a gifted person and deeply committed to our missions task."

"Tom's been through a nightmare in the past two years," said Sam James, who replaced Ballenger as vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. "I hope this can take that pressure off and be the beginning of a new life for him," said James, who was consulted before the firing.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: In the June 24 ABP story "SBC now on trial," please replace the last sentence of the 3rd paragraph with the following:

The motion would have expelled the church from participation in the convention, although its messengers could apply for registration next year.

***** END *****