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In this issue:

- Parham proposes agenda for ethical church leadership
- Leadership must incorporate stance, style, strategy, Dale says
- Integrity, competence form basis for effective leadership, speaker says
- Preachers urged to balance pastoral, prophetic stances
- Conference speaker offers points on handling conflict
- WMU mails 'special report' responding to Rankin's letter
- Education secretary addresses BJC board
- Oklahoma Fellowship hires first full-time coordinator
- William Hendricks to direct Baptist studies program at TCU

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Parham proposes agenda for ethical church leadership

By Mark Wingfield

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (ABP) -- The ethical Christian must know the difference between what he or she has the right to do and what is the right thing to do, according to Robert Parham, director of the Baptist Center for Ethics.

Parham, of Nashville, Tenn., borrowed the definition of ethics from former Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart to introduce a seven-point agenda for ethical church leadership Oct. 2. He spoke at the opening session of a Baptist Center for Ethics-sponsored conference on "Church Growth with Leadership Integrity," held at Providence Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C.

In America, particularly, people are prone to talk about their rights. And while some individuals and groups may be denied their full rights, that is not the major problem the nation faces, he said. "Our problem is not a lack of rights but a lack of responsibility."

In response to this challenge, Parham outlined a seven-point agenda for church leaders to act ethically:

-- Be positive. Christians often speak in terms of the negative, he said, noting prohibitions on drinking, dancing and smoking as illustrations. "It's high time for thoughtful Baptists to be for something rather than against something all the time," he declared.

-- Be proactive. "Too often we are passive Christians, ... waiting on God to tell us what to do rather than taking an initiative and taking a risk," he said.

-- Act with your neighbor's welfare in mind. Parham told a story about a boat occupied by two men, one of whom decided to drill a hole in his side of the boat. The other man protested that the boat would sink, but the driller said not to worry because he was drilling the hole only under his seat.

Americans are so individualistic that the tendency is to "engage in actions without thinking of the consequences for our neighbors who are in the raft with us," he said.

-- Act today for tomorrow. The current culture promotes a short-sightedness based on self-gratification, Parham said. This contrasts with some Native American traditions, which emphasize decision-making based on the impact to be felt seven generations later, he explained.

Such forward thinking is a biblical idea based on love for one's neighbor, Parham asserted. "We need to move into a broader definition of neighbor to include those who live across time."

-- Sometimes do nothing. This Sabbath ethic, demonstrated by God in the creation of the world, says that "doing nothing sometimes may be the ethical thing to do," Parham said.

-- Be civil. Parham labeled civility a "contemporary fruit of the Spirit" generally absent from heated debates on issues such as abortion, gun control and school prayer. He suggested the question ethical Christian leaders ought to ponder is, "How do we state our own positions without bashing our opponents?"

-- Play. Everyone needs time to rest and relax, lest the task of Christian living become a burden, Parham said. "Sometimes the right thing to do is to interrupt our serious efforts to change the world with play."

-30-

Leadership must incorporate stance, style, strategy, Dale says

By Bob Allen

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (ABP) -- To be effective, leadership must be sound at three levels, Baptist scholar Bob Dale told a gathering of church leaders Oct. 2

Dale, director of the Center for Creative Church Leadership Development in Richmond, Va., spoke at a Baptist Center for Ethics conference on Church Growth with Leadership Integrity in Charlotte, N.C.

Dale, a former seminary professor who since 1989 has served on the staff of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, described three "building blocks" for leadership. The foundation for leadership is the "stance" that underlies "styles" and "strategy," he said.

"Good leaders are going to have to pay more and more attention to building a stance for leadership," Dale said. "Servanthood, I think, is a stance."

Styles of leadership can emphasize "mission" or "morale," he said, noting that Baptist seminaries have often neglected the latter. Baptists "are good at dealing with mission; we are not good at dealing with morale," he said.

"I want to suggest to you that our style of leadership is a balance of mission and morale," he said.

Strategy, Dale said, is "the most artistic form of leadership."

"Strategy is what you do when you realize you can't be two places at one time," he said, "when you realize you have more opportunities than you have resources."

In a forthcoming book, "Leading Edge: Leadership Strategies from the New Testament," Dale studied leadership strategies in the New Testament. He noted transition in strategies used as the early church matured.

"Jesus was a highly focused leader," Dale said. "He didn't take on too many things. ... He just tried to bring in the Kingdom of God."

Taking a key from that example, Dale said, "The first thing you and I have to determine is what will I give my attention to, what will I be zealous about."

In the Book of Acts, leadership was marked by flexibility, Dale noted. "Every time the Holy Spirit opened the door, they were quick to move through."

Leadership strategies took a different focus, however, by the time pastoral epistles were written, Dale said. When the early church turned into "an establishment," he observed, its leaders "all of a sudden stopped playing offense as they had in the Book of Acts and started playing defense."

The writers of the epistles emphasized "negative verbs" in their admonitions, like "rebuke," "fight back," and "guard against," Dale noted.

Dale observed that leading established churches poses a special challenge. "When we become the establishment we become so engrossed in protecting our present and our past we run risk of losing the future," Dale said.

A final shift emerged in the Book of Revelation, one of only two biblical books written when Christianity was in danger of annihilation, Dale said. Leadership in that era offered "encouragement" and an appeal to return to the basics of the gospel, he said.

Dale said a cultural shift from an industrial society to one characterized by information redefines the task of leadership from "making things" to "making sense." The gospel message, which offers a way for people to make sense of their lives, should benefit under the new paradigm, he said.

"You are what you eat" is no longer true; neither is another adage, "You are what you read," Dale said. "In an information age, we are what we understand," he said. "The leader is not the person at the front of the room. The leader is the person who can help people make sense."

-30-

Integrity, competence form basis for effective leadership, speaker says

By Mark Wingfield and Bob Allen

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (ABP) -- Integrity and competence are the foundation for building effective church leaders, according to a pastoral counselor and minister.

Leadership is not something that can be learned instantly or even developed quickly, said Steve Scoggin of Valley Pastoral Counseling Center in Waynesboro, Va. Scoggin also is a certified facilitator for Stephen Covey's "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" seminars.

Effective leaders develop certain habits over time, Scoggin explained. And the foundation upon which these habits are built is integrity, he said.

"Our culture is tired of disintegrated leadership that has made promises it cannot keep," he declared. "Keeping promises ... builds integrity."

National polls have shown that integrity and competence are the two traits most desired in leaders, Scoggin reported.

Many leaders are good people who are not competent, and others are competent people with no character, he said. But the effective leader will exhibit both competence and integrity.

Integrity, or character, is like a deep root system that anchors a person, Scoggin said. "Leadership isn't about a quick fix. It's about developing in ourselves a massive root system that will develop over time."

Scoggin spoke at an Oct. 2-3 conference on Church Growth with Leadership Integrity in Charlotte, N.C. The Nashville, Tenn.-based Baptist Center for Ethics sponsored the conference, held at Providence Baptist Church.

Another plenary speaker, Larry Donnithorne, shared reflections from his book, "The West Point Way of Leadership," based on his observations as a cadet and 13 years on the faculty at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y.

"I believe leadership is inextricably interwoven with morality," said Donnithorne, now president of College of the Albemarle, a junior college in Elizabeth City, N.C.

He outlined five objectives for moral development at West Point. Each cadet, he said, is expected to learn to:

- appreciate moral values;
- apply principles to facts and reason in moral terms;
- appreciate moral rules or norms of behavior;
- obey moral values and apply moral principles, even when costly; and
- develop a "willingness to accept final responsibility for one's own moral beliefs and actions and to challenge norms and practices one finds questionable."

"Practically every leader finds himself or herself eventually in a position where there is moral objection to what he has to do. It is at that point the moral dimension of leadership becomes acute," Donnithorne said.

-30-

Preachers urged to balance pastoral, prophetic stances

By Mark Wingfield

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (ABP) -- Integrity in preaching calls for a balance between pastoral sermons and prophetic sermons, Charles Bugg told participants in an Oct. 3 conference.

Bugg, pastor of Providence Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C., and former preaching professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, led a session on preaching during the Baptist Center for Ethics conference on "Church Growth with Leadership Integrity."

Pastoral sermons represent a therapeutic model, based on the assumption that people in the congregation are spiritually or emotionally sick, Bugg said. This is the type of sermon most commonly preached.

Prophetic sermons, on the other hand, view the congregation as collectively healthy and able to move into the world on mission, he said. "Prophetic sermons are calling the church to be the church in the world."

Most pastors shy away from prophetic sermons because of "the danger of specificity," Bugg said. "As long as we talk in general terms, everybody in the congregation is going to agree with it."

While pastoral sermons may be easier to preach and may meet spiritual needs in the congregation, prophetic sermons provide a balance, Bugg said.

"Sometimes we need to go into the church with the assumption that the congregation is well enough to go out into the world and make a difference," he asserted.

People do not come to church today to hear sermons promoting institutional needs, Bugg said in another part of his seminar. Rather, people come because they want to experience something in their lives, he said.

"There is a dearth of hope, of meaning, of purpose" in people's lives today, he explained. This hunger can be filled in Christian worship, but many spiritually hungry people can't see the nourishment available there because of the form in which it is presented, he added.

"If people are hungry, they may eat junk food if they can't find something else," Bugg said.

Modern preaching has fallen into a deductive style, based on the assumption "If I can give information to you, you can change your life," he explained.

Yet most people already know many things they don't put to practice in their own lives, he added.

Effective leadership through preaching will move sermons from mere information to transformation, Bugg suggested.

Preachers of transformational sermons pay attention to details such as word usage, images and stories, he said. They also connect with the congregation through intimate delivery.

"The sermon is not the exchange between us and the words we prepare," Bugg said. "It is the exchange between us and the congregation."

-30-

Conference speaker offers points on handling conflict

By Mark Wingfield

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (ABP) -- Conflict is inevitable in the church, according to Dave Odom, a specialist in helping congregations resolve conflict.

"The definition of peace is not the absence of conflict," said Odom, director of the Center for Congregational Health in Winston-Salem, N.C. Odom led a session on conflict resolution during the Baptist Center for Ethics conference on "Church Growth with Leadership Integrity."

Ministers often are the last to admit that conflict has risen to dangerous levels, Odom said. And even laypeople often deny the presence of conflict in the church, he added.

Odom outlined a process that conflict often follows in churches and noted some conflicts can be thwarted by facing them head-on as they arise. As conflicts elevate to higher levels, the chance of avoiding long-term damage decreases, he noted.

The first step to resolving conflict is to understand that different people employ different styles of conflict management, Odom said. He outlined five styles identified by Speed Leas:

-- Persuade. The persuader assumes that the other person is simply ignorant or incorrect and needs to be changed. This assumes that with enough persuasion, the other person will change positions.

-- Compel. The compeller uses the force of authority to demand compliance.

-- Avoid/accommodate. This style, which Odom said is the most common for ministers, leads a person to stay out of the conflict, either actively or passively. While such a style is appropriate sometimes, it is dangerous at other times, he said.

-- Collaborate. The collaborator gets everybody together to look for a "win-win" solution. But Odom said such an outcome may not be possible in every situation.

-- Negotiate. The negotiator employs a strategy similar to the collaborator, but doesn't look for a "win-win" solution. In this model, no one gets everything they want, but some resolution is achieved.

-- Support. The supporter merely listens to the conflict without offering any solution or direction. This is the style most often employed by counselors, Odom said.

Each of these styles of conflict management may be appropriate in certain settings, he said. The effective leader will know how to adapt to the circumstances and not remain stuck in one style, he explained.

The simplest way to manage conflict is to keep it at the most basic level or move it back to that basic level, Odom said. This basic level focuses on "we have a problem to solve" rather than on personalities and side issues.

Odom advises writing out a "workable problem statement" as the guide to solving the problem at hand. This statement must be free of blame, specific and descriptive, not have to do with the distant past, not be a "put down" of any involved party and must be agreed to by all involved as a definition of the problem.

The Center for Congregational Health, which Odom directs, is a ministry of North Carolina Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem. The center offers consulting services to all churches in the Jewish and Christian tradition to help congregations understand their identity, clarify their mission and resolve conflict.

WMU mails 'special report' responding to Rankin's letter

By Bob Allen

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- Woman's Missionary Union has mailed a four-page "special report" to Southern Baptist churches, responding to a similar bulk mailing in August that criticized WMU leaders from the president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

A letter on the cover of the mailing says its purpose is to "interpret" the WMU's recent decision to produce missions education materials for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The rest of the report consists of 10 short articles describing various ways WMU supports mission efforts of the Southern Baptist Convention.

In August, FMB President Jerry Rankin wrote about 40,000 pastors and WMU leaders in local churches to criticize the decision by WMU leaders to produce the Fellowship materials. Rankin said the move would be "counterproductive" to SBC missions and asked church leaders to pray that WMU leaders would change their minds about the decision.

Conservative SBC leaders say the Fellowship competes with denominational programs. WMU leaders said they remain loyal to the SBC but want to serve all Southern Baptists, including those who support the Fellowship's alternative missions program.

The recent "WMU Special Report," dated Sept. 13, reports that beginning Jan. 1, WMU will offer a supplement to its coeducational missions education materials with information about missionaries of the Fellowship, an organization for moderate Southern Baptists that has about 80 missionaries.

The report was mailed third-class to pastors, directors of missions, and church and associational WMU directors. SBC leaders, state convention executives and Baptist state paper editors received it first class.

The WMU mailed about 78,000 copies of the report at a cost of about \$8,800, said Teresa Dickens, a communications official at the auxiliary's headquarters in Birmingham, Ala. Production costs were not available at press time, she said.

An FMB official estimated Rankin's letter in August cost \$11,500 to produce and mail.

Unlike the Foreign Mission Board, which receives the vast majority of its support from the SBC's unified budget called the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon annual missions offering, WMU receives no direct denominational funding.

The bulk of the auxiliary's income is from literature sales. The organization does receive a small portion of its budget from the Home and Foreign Mission boards, to help with promotion of the SBC's two annual missions offerings.

WMU Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien initially issued a reaction statement describing WMU leaders as "furious" over Rankin's letter. Rankin called O'Brien's statement an emotional response.

Later, Rankin and O'Brien, along with other leaders from the two agencies, met for several hours behind closed doors to seek to resolve the dispute. After the meeting, Rankin said he and O'Brien "continue to disagree" about the WMU's decision but affirmed their "friendship and our mutual commitment to work together."

Education secretary addresses BJC board

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley said Oct. 2 that his department has received an overwhelmingly favorable response to the set of guidelines on religion in public schools it mailed in mid-August to the nation's 15,000 school superintendents.

Riley gave the update at the annual meeting of the Baptist Joint Committee board held Oct 2-3 at Riverside Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

The BJC board also elected a new slate of officers, adopted an \$830,000 budget for 1996, unanimously approved a statement opposing a "religious equality" amendment to the U.S. Constitution and began planning for the agency's 60th anniversary celebration next year.

Riley told the group that the guidelines were designed to help local school officials move from polarization toward common ground. He lauded the agency and its board for being "pathfinders" in that endeavor.

He pointed to the BJC's role in helping to draft and distribute "A Joint Statement of Current Law" that outlines what religious expression is permissible in public schools. He said the administration drew heavily from that document in providing guidance to school districts.

Many people have been surprised at how much religious expression is permitted in public schools, Riley said, adding that the guidelines have helped to "counteract the misperception that schools must be religion-free zones."

Dwight Jessup, vice president for academic affairs and dean at Taylor University in Upland, Ind., was elected chair of the BJC, succeeding Sarah Frances Anders, professor emeritus and former chair of the department of sociology and social work at Louisiana College, Pineville, La.

Other officers are Lola Langley, a professor at Audrey Cohen College in New York, first vice chair; Phil Strickland, director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, second vice chair; and Benjamin Leslie, a faculty member at North American Baptist Seminary in Sioux Falls, S.D., secretary.

The BJC's 1996 budget represents a 3.2 percent increase over the 1995 budget of \$804,100. It projects income from the Alliance of Baptists, American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., Baptist General Conference, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, National Baptist Convention of America, National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Inc., National Missionary Baptist Convention, North American Baptist Conference, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Religious Liberty Council, Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, as well as Baptist state conventions, churches and individuals.

In its statement opposing a religious equality amendment, the BJC board said the nation's spiritual rootlessness must be addressed by "a rededication of families and churches to prayer, religious education and evangelism," not by "school-sponsored religious exercises and government-endorsed religious expression in public places."

The statement called on government to "accommodate religion without advancing it; protect religion without privileging it; lift burdens on religious liberty without extending religious benefits."

In other actions, the BJC board scheduled its next annual meeting and 60th anniversary celebration Oct. 6-9, 1996, and named Brent Walker, general counsel and associate executive director, to serve as acting director during a four-month sabbatical planned by Executive Director James Dunn. Dunn's study leave will run from October through February.

Oklahoma Fellowship hires first full-time coordinator

SHAWNEE, Okla. (ABP) -- Rick McClatchy of Shawnee, Okla., has been elected state coordinator of the Cooperating Baptist Fellowship of Oklahoma.

McClatchy, formerly pastor of University Baptist Church in Shawnee, began duties Sept. 15. The Oklahoma Fellowship is one of several state organizations affiliated with the national Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization for moderate Southern Baptists. It is the first state group to hire a full-time executive officer.

A native of Texas, McClatchy moved to Oklahoma in 1993. He is a graduate of Howard Payne University and holds both a master's and doctor of philosophy degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

He held previous pastorates at Rockwood Baptist Church in Rockwood, Texas, and Woodcreek Baptist Church in Brownwood, Texas.

-30-

-- By Bob Allen

William Hendricks to direct Baptist studies program at TCU

DALLAS (ABP) -- Longtime seminary professor William Hendricks has been chosen to direct a Baptist studies program at Texas Christian University, a Disciples of Christ school in Dallas.

Hendricks, currently senior professor of Christian theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., has accepted an appointment to TCU's Brite Divinity School as director of the school's Baptist studies program and a lecturer in theology.

Hendricks, 67, has taught theology at three of the six seminaries owned by the Southern Baptist Convention. He has been at Southern since 1984. Previously he was at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, from 1957 to 1967 and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., from 1978 to 1984.

He has written eight books, including "Who is Jesus Christ?" and "A Theology for Aging." He is also noted for his interest in the study of theology in the arts.

"We are extremely pleased that Dr. Hendricks will be joining our faculty and staff in the summer of 1996," said Brite Dean Leo Perdue. "His leadership in directing our expanding Baptist Studies Program will help us to shape an academic climate and religious ethos that will be responsible to our growing Baptist student population."

Baptist studies programs at non-Baptist schools have emerged alongside new seminaries in recent years as an alternative for many moderate students to SBC seminaries, which are now controlled by conservatives. Other established Baptist "houses" are at Duke, Princeton and Emory University's Candler School of Theology.

Hendricks will join another former Southern Seminary professor, Andrew Lester, as the second Baptist faculty member at the Brite Divinity School.

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