

Historical Commission, SBC  
Nashville, Tennessee

# Associated Baptist Press

Editor: Greg Warner  
Associate Editor: Bob Allen  
Phone: (904) 262-6626  
Fax: (904) 262-7745

January 14, 1997

(97-4)

## In this Issue:

- **Gingrich says nation needs divine guidance**
- **Bill Moyers given humanities award**
- **Moderate Baptist seminaries announce new faculty, staff**
- **Returning refugees given seeds by Baptist group in Rwanda**
- **Churches attacked in Indonesian riot**
- **'Souper Bowl' organizers hope to raise \$2 million**
- **Pastor keeps sense of humor despite surprise illness**

## **Gingrich says nation needs divine guidance**

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- After being re-elected speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich of Georgia told House members of the 105th Congress that until the country seeks "divine guidance" in a "nonsectarian way," its problems will not be solved.

Gingrich, a Southern Baptist, made several religious references in his Jan. 7 speech after becoming the first Republican since 1929 to be re-elected to the position. He said faith must be a part of the nation's solution to problems such as drug addiction.

"I would just suggest to all of you that until we learn in a nonsectarian way ... to re-establish the authority that we are endowed by our Creator, that we owe it to our Creator, and that we need to seek divine guidance in what we are doing, we are not going to solve this country's problems," Gingrich said.

In an unusual break with tradition, nine Republican colleagues did not support Gingrich for re-election as speaker because of pending ethical charges against him.

Gingrich has admitted that he failed to seek appropriate legal advice before using funds for political purposes from nonprofit organizations supported by tax-deductible gifts. He also admitted to submitting misleading and inaccurate statements to the House ethics committee.

The House is scheduled to vote Jan. 21 on a punishment for Gingrich, who apologized for his actions.

In his speech, Gingrich challenged leaders "to reach out beyond party and beyond ideology and as Americans to say one of the highest values we're going to spend the next two years on is openly dealing with the challenge of meaning."

Gingrich challenged lawmakers to recognize that the Declaration of Independence's description of inalienable rights endowed by God refers to "every child in every neighborhood of every background."

"And every time America fails to meet that, we are failing to meet God's test for the country we should be," he said.

Gingrich also touched on the issue of drug abuse. "If we did not have drugs in this country, the amount of spouse abuse, the amount of child abuse, the amount of violence would drop dramatically," he said.

He noted that a recent study found that one of the best predictors of whether a child will stay free of drugs is whether that person practices a religion. Joe Califano, former President Jimmy Carter's secretary of health and human services, "says that religion is part of the solution to our drug problems and drug treatment itself," Gingrich said. He added that Alcoholics Anonymous "refers to a higher power."

He also noted references to God in historical speeches by Abraham Lincoln, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

Gingrich said a friend had offered to say a prayer for his re-election but he asked him not to. "I asked him to pray to God that whatever happens is what God wants and then we would try to understand it and learn from it," he said.

-30-

## **Bill Moyers given humanities award**

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- President Bill Clinton called veteran broadcast journalist Bill Moyers a true "20th century Renaissance man" when presenting him an award from the National Endowment for the Humanities Jan. 9.

The president and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton presented Moyers the Charles Frankel Prize for his contribution to public understanding and the humanities.

Moyers received one of five 1996 Frankel awards given to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the public's understanding of history, literature, philosophy and other disciplines.

"Bill Moyers has received about every award there is in his field, quite simply because he has proved himself a giant in broadcast journalism," Clinton said. "At a time in which the media often is used to truncate, oversimplify and distort ideas in a way that divide rather than enlighten, the work of Bill Moyers' life is truly and profoundly important and encouraging."

In a ceremony at Washington's Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium, Clinton added: "Most important to me, he is a living rebuke to everybody's preconceptions about Baptist preachers. He is truly a 20th century Renaissance man."

Moyers, a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, has often written and spoken of his Baptist faith.

In an interview following the presentation, Moyers said he was flattered to receive the award. "My role is very interesting to me, but minor. My job is to point the way to the people who truly are the giants," he said.

Moyers said true credit should go to public broadcasting. "Public broadcasting has room for ideas and will give someone, like me, time to take an idea, a story, or a person and develop that theme, that story, that idea, that person with patience and with respect for the complexity of ideas," he said.

He recalled the example of a 90-minute documentary on the hymn "Amazing Grace" that he produced. "We could not have done that documentary in half an hour, even an hour. Public broadcasting said you could have 90 minutes. And we did a powerful documentary that showed why and how that hymn has touched so many millions of lives irrespective of doctrinal differences or religious origin," he said.

By contrast, the commercial media are driven "toward the lowest common denominator in which the enemy is brevity," Moyers continued. "None of life can be reduced to bumper stickers and sound bites, and that's part of what's wrong with our political discourse today."

"We are talking at each other and not with each other, and it takes time to talk with each other," he added.

Asked about Clinton's description of him as a living rebuke to preconceptions about Baptist preachers, Moyers cited harsh criticism of the president by some religious leaders. "When Jerry Falwell, repeatedly on his broadcast, keeps accusing the president of being a murderer, I think the president is delighted to discover that's not true of all Baptist preachers. And Jerry Falwell does not represent most Baptist preachers," Moyers said.

Continuing the topic, Moyers discussed his concerns about continuing controversies between conservatives and moderates in the Southern Baptist Convention.

"That fundamental core of Baptist experience is the intensity of the individual conscience and our individual relationship with God," Moyers said. "And no Baptist preacher and no Baptist seminary president and no Baptist tribune can tell me or any Baptist what is our obligation before God."

"That's why I'm in the controversy," he continued. "I don't want to lose the historic Baptist conviction to a bunch of people who are hijacking it for their own ecclesiastical or political reasons."

The event marked the eighth year of the Charles Frankel Prize. Other recipients were: Rita Dove, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and former U.S. poet laureate; Doris Kearns Goodwin, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and news commentator; Daniel Kemmis, political philosopher and author; and Arturo Madrid, founding president of the Tomas Rivera Center who helped develop the field of Latino studies in the U.S.

-30-

## **Moderate Baptist seminaries announce new faculty, staff**

(ABP) -- Three moderate Baptist theology schools have announced recent faculty or staff additions. One of them also recently occupied a new building, which also houses new offices of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Mercer University's School of Theology has hired longtime pastor Truett Gannon to head the Atlanta school's mentoring program, which will place students in supervised ministry settings in Baptist churches while they study. Gannon has been pastor of Smoke Rise Baptist Church in Stone Mountain, Ga., nearly 20 years. He becomes senior professor of ministry experience June 1.

Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary hired Christian educator Bill Treadwell as associate professor of Christian education and leadership administration, also effective June 1. Treadwell currently is minister of education of First Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, and an adjunct faculty member at the seminary, which opened in 1994. He has co-authored two books and worked at several churches.

Longtime Baptist development officer Pat Pattillo will help Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond in a \$10 million capital campaign, officials at the Virginia seminary announced Jan. 10. Pattillo, who worked more than 20 years as vice president for development at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., will play a key role in enlarging the seminary's development program and carrying out its "Building the Dream" capital campaign, said Tom Graves, seminary president.

The Richmond seminary recently purchased a building and three acres of land from the Presbyterian School of Christian Education, where it has rented space since opening in 1991. The \$10 million, five-year capital campaign will finance the property purchase and renovations, annual operating expense and endowment.

Pattillo, president of the National Foundation for Youth, will work for the seminary from Birmingham, where he lives.

In addition to adding faculty, Mercer's theology school also recently occupied a new 30,000 square-foot building on the Georgia Baptist university's Atlanta campus. Sixty students are enrolled this spring at the theology school, which opened last fall with 44 students.

Construction on the \$3 million building began last February and was completed in early December. The architecture is accessible, emphasizes community and worship and includes the latest in computer and communication technology, said Alan Culpepper, dean of the theology school.

The building also houses offices of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which last year agreed to a \$2 million lease and property purchase with Mercer. Under the agreement, the Fellowship, which has rented office space in Atlanta, will lease offices for five years and obtained a piece of land adjacent to the campus.

Fellowship officials said the property was purchased as an investment and as a way to help Mercer raise funds for the theology school but that it could be used in the future to build a permanent headquarters.

-30-

-- By ABP staff

### **Returning refugees given seeds by Baptist group in Rwanda**

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Refugees returning to Rwanda are getting help in making a new start in their country in the form of beans for food and seed offered through a Baptist relief agency.

More than 3,500 people have received beans purchased with a \$50,000 grant from Baptist World Aid, the relief arm of the Baptist World Alliance. Another \$50,000 has been pledged but not yet raised, the Washington-based BWA announced.

"Those who have been served are very busy preparing the ground for the new seeds," said Buzizi Claver, development manager for the Union of Baptist Churches in Rwanda. "You can hardly imagine how the refugees are so pleased to receive a good quality of seeds to plant their lands."

Claver said Baptist leaders in Rwanda decided to buy both higher-quality seeds for planting and cheaper beans for eating immediately. Emphasis on the relief operation is to help with rebuilding of the country that has been torn apart by ethnic conflict, he said.

Claver also reported collaboration with the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, which is supplying materials such as hoes, soap and seeds to almost 11,000 returning refugees.

In addition to beans for seeds and for eating, BWAid is supplying blankets and rice for returnees. Funds from BWAid are also being used to transport and store supplies. Most of the aid is going to Baptists, Claver said, but is not limited to them.

-30-

-- By Wendy Ryan

## **Churches attacked in Indonesian riot**

TASIKMALAYA, Indonesia (ABP) -- Rioting apparently sparked by a report of police brutality against a Muslim teacher targeted Christian churches in Indonesia in late December.

According to reports, at least four churches were burned down Dec. 26 in riots in the town of Tasikmalaya, 125 miles southeast of Jakarta. Three others were reportedly damaged heavily and three others sustained light damage. Also damaged were two Christian schools, banks, shops and car showrooms owned by ethnic Chinese. Reuters reported that two deaths were confirmed.

Police estimated 5,000 rioters ran amok in the 500,000-population town. The riot apparently was sparked by a report that police had beaten teachers from an Islamic school after a teacher had disciplined the son of a policeman.

The attack was the first in Indonesia since 26 churches were burned down or vandalized and five people killed Oct. 10 in Situbondo, East Java. That riot was sparked by the heresy trial of a Muslim. The man subsequently was sentenced to prison for blasphemy.

Observers claim Muslim fanatics have attacked more than 300 Indonesian churches in the last five years.

More than 80 percent of Indonesia's nearly 200 million people are Muslims, but the government recognizes all the major world religions.

Analysts say Christian churches become the target for mob violence primarily for economic and social reasons. Christians often are the more affluent members of the community, Reuters reported.

-30-

-- By ABP staff

## **'Souper Bowl' organizers hope to raise \$2 million**

COLUMBIA, S.C. (ABP) -- Organizers of this year's "Souper Bowl" are aiming for a \$2 million goal as they kick off the innovative anti-hunger ministry Jan. 26.

The Souper Bowl program was inspired by a pastoral prayer on Super Bowl Sunday in 1990 by Brad Smith, associate pastor of Spring Valley Presbyterian Church in Columbia, S.C.

The event has grown from 22 churches in 1990 to more than 4,600 from various denominations last year. Participating congregations raised more than \$1.3 million last year.

Youth invite parishioners to drop one dollar into large soup cauldrons as they leave worship on the morning of the National Football League championship game.

Participating churches report their totals by phone and then send funds directly to the charity of their choice.

Organizers do not handle any money or tell people where to send their donations. They ask only for a phone report so national totals can be tabulated.

"We have seen a significant increase in participation and contributions each year since we started," Smith told Presbyterian News Service. "But we really would like to get more congregations involved. It is such an easy way for all of us to greatly impact our local communities and to collectively make a difference across this country."

To participate, Smith said, churches need only to:

- announce the effort, asking parishioners to give one dollar;
  - have young people receive donations in large soup pots or bowls as worshippers leave services on Sunday, Jan. 26;
  - call 1-800-358-SOUP between noon and 9 p.m. EST on Super Bowl Sunday to report totals;
  - deliver or mail the funds directly to a soup kitchen, food bank or other charity of the church's choice.
- Youth groups are also encouraged to spend a day serving at the recipient ministry.
- Public service announcements about the ministry will be aired in a few NFL cities, and a site on the World Wide Web ([www.mindspring.com/~souperbowl](http://www.mindspring.com/~souperbowl)) is devoted to the Souper Bowl .

-30-

-- By ABP staff

## **Pastor keeps sense of humor despite surprise illness**

By Jim Jones

AUSTIN, Texas (ABP) -- Surprises come to everyone. Some are delightful. Others are horrendous.

No one knows that better than Ralph Smith, a highly successful Texas Baptist minister for many years.

What most remember about Smith, a former president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, is his irrepressible sense of humor. He still has it. It's a wonder, though.

Nothing funny has happened to Smith lately.

Smith was the pastor of the 10,500-member Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin two years ago. Life was good. Then came the surprise.

"I had been watching a national championship basketball game on television," Smith said recently. "I got up from my chair, then slumped to the floor of my living room. I started to get up. I couldn't do it."

Emergency attendants took him to a hospital.

He was diagnosed with a rare disease called Guillain-Barre syndrome which is usually caused by a virus and damages the myelin sheath of nerves that control the body. It can be fatal.

"I'd never heard of it," Smith said. "Doctors in Austin told me it was the worst case they had seen."

"The world became a blur for four or five months," he said. "My mind was active. But I couldn't talk. I couldn't move a finger."

Smith gave up his pastorate. Deacons immediately named him pastor emeritus.

"It was really a tough thing," he said. "Without the Lord and the good doctors and my loving wife, Beth, I wouldn't be here. I'm very grateful to be alive."

He was in intensive care and on a respirator for seven months, fed through tubes.

"My heart stopped once," Smith said. "I got pneumonia four times."

Not a happy position for a highly active man and former college cheerleader who hadn't been sick a week during his adult life.

His muscles atrophied. But Smith, through six months in a rehabilitation hospital, has recovered some of his movement. His muscles were stimulated electronically. Now he can move around on a walker.

"I won't do much until I get where I can walk, and dress myself," Smith said.

He was scheduled to make his first major address since his illness in January at the Texas Baptist Evangelism Conference in Fort Worth. The sermon topic: "Faithful in Suffering."

"I'm going to talk about Joseph, who was thrown in Pharaoh's prison for 14 years, then emerged to become one of the rulers of Egypt," Smith said.

Smith says he also felt imprisoned in his own body. He will continue struggling to be set free, he said.

"I believe I will get it [body movement] back, but it's taking longer than I hoped," he said.

Smith, who holds a bachelor's degree from Ouachita Baptist University in Arkansas and a master's and doctorate from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, has served in high positions among Southern Baptists.

When stricken, he was chairman of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. He is a past president of the Southern Baptist Pastors Conference and a former chairman of trustees of Southwestern Seminary.

None of that seemed too important when he was lying on the floor paralyzed, he said.

Smith is praying for a full recovery, and he wants it to happen sooner than later. "I'm the kind of guy who prays, 'Lord, give me patience -- now,'" he said.

Smith says his sense of humor has helped him survive.

"I've lost everything but my mind," he said, "and sometimes I wonder about that."

-30-

-- Reprinted with permission from the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

---

**END**