

# Associated Baptist Press

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## **Mark Brister named president of Oklahoma Baptist University**

SHAWNEE, Okla. (ABP) -- Louisiana pastor Mark Brister has been elected the 14th president of Oklahoma Baptist University.

Brister, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, was elected April 27 at a called meeting of the university's board of trustees. He will succeed Bob Agee, who retires Sept. 1 after 15 years as president of the 2,400-student Baptist school in Shawnee, Okla.

Brister, pastor of the 6,000-member Shreveport congregation since 1989, was chairman of the blue-ribbon committee which led in a recent reorganization of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Previously, he was pastor of Memorial Baptist Church in Baytown, Texas, and First Baptist Church in Bolivar, Mo.

Brister is a graduate of Baylor University who earned master's and doctor's degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has taught as an adjunct professor at Southwestern Seminary and as a guest professor at New Orleans and Midwestern Baptist seminaries and at the Baptist Theological Seminary of Eastern Africa.

His father, C.W. Brister, has taught pastoral care at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, for 40 years.

Brister's wife, Rhonda, directs New Orleans Seminary's satellite program in Shreveport and earlier was on the faculty at Southwest Baptist University, when they lived in Bolivar. The Bristers have two children: Barrett Nugent, born in 1981, and Austin Andrew, born in 1986. Brister said he will wrap up his ministry in Shreveport in May. In June his son Barrett is scheduled to undergo orthopedic surgery. The family plans to take a vacation in July, and then to move to Shawnee Aug. 10.

Agee, OBU president since 1982, will become president emeritus, continuing to assist OBU with the leadership transition and with fund-raising and alumni relationships.

Agee also will become, effective June 1, executive director of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools, an association of 65 Southern Baptist-related seminaries, colleges, universities, Bible colleges and academies.

Brister was nominated for the post by John Newport, vice president for academic affairs and provost at Southwestern Seminary. In a letter to trustees, Newport said Brister "has just the right background and qualifications to be president of OBU."

"From my perspective, Mark has the right theological and denominational perspective for OBU and Oklahoma," Newport wrote. "I believe Mark Brister is a person uniquely equipped for this strategic position."

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-- By ABP staff

## **Clinton says he doesn't know how God would divide Israel**

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- President Clinton says he does not know how God would divide Israel, but he urged Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders to pray for wisdom about how to resolve conflicts in the Middle East.

At an April 27 White House ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of the Jewish state of Israel, Clinton said extremists have sought to derail peacemaking efforts in the Middle East. "Again and again, they demonstrate the real divisions today are not between Jews and Arabs but between those stuck in the past and those who long for a better future," he said.

"As a Christian, I do not know how God, if he were to come to Earth, would divide the land over which there is dispute now," said Clinton, a Southern Baptist.

"I suspect neither does anyone else in this audience," he continued. "But I know that if we all pray for the wisdom to do God's will, chances are we will find a way to close the gap in the next couple of years between what might be and what is. I think that is what we owe the founders of Israel."

Clinton received an honorary doctorate of philosophy from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to commemorate the anniversary.

Clinton quoted David Ben Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, who commented on President Kennedy's assassination in 1963 that tragedy is the difference between what is and what might have been.

"Let us define triumph by turning his formula on its head," Clinton said. "Triumph is when there is no difference between what might have been and what is."

Speakers at the event included James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee; Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, chancellor of New York's Jewish Theological Seminary; Sulayman Nyang, president of the Interfaith Conference of Washington; actor Richard Dreyfuss; and actress Linda Lavin.

The three religious leaders read various scriptures. Nyang read from the Koran, the holy book of Islam. Dunn and Schorsch read from the Bible's Old Testament.

Dreyfuss read a passage from "Plain Speaking, An Oral Biography of Harry S. Truman" by Merle Miller. Truman ignored the advice of aides when he signed a document recognizing the Jewish state only 11 minutes after its self-declaration on May 14, 1948.

"We, in becoming the first country to recognize Israel, had one of our proudest moments," Clinton said. "Not only that, but 50 years later, old Harry Truman looks pretty smart."

Jews have faced exile and persecution since biblical times. Following the Holocaust and World War II, the state of Israel was established as a Jewish home land. Since then Arab and Jewish factions have repeatedly fought over the land which is considered holy by three major world religions -- Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The dispute has been marked by wars, bombings, terrorism and high death tolls on all sides.

Clinton concluded his remarks on the South lawn of the White House by imagining what Israel's 100th anniversary will be like.

"Sure as the world, our grandchildren will be hanging around here on this lawn," he said. "What do you think they'll be able to say? And what will they be celebrating? It is my dream that on that 100th anniversary, people from every country in the Middle East will gather in the Holy Land, and all the land will be holy to all of them."

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## **Late Rich Mullins named gospel artist of the year**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Gospel artist Rich Mullins, who died in a car wreck last September, was named the Gospel Music Association's Artist of the Year at the 29th annual Dove Awards April 23 in Nashville, Tenn.

Mullins, 41, won the honor over finalists Bob Carlisle, Steven Curtis Chapman, Jars of Clay and Point of Grace.

Chapman won five Dove awards, including best male vocalist and best songwriter, at the ceremony broadcast live on the Nashville Network.

Amy Grant's "Behind the Eyes" won the award for best pop-contemporary album. Her husband, Gary Chapman, won best country album for his "Hymns from the Ryman."

The alternative rock band Jars of Clay was honored as group of the year.

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-- By ABP staff

## **Baptist school to challenge NCAA vote on Sunday play**

BUIES CREEK, N.C. (ABP) -- Campbell University will request an override vote on an NCAA decision to eliminate a rule accommodating schools which refuse to play on Sunday, the university's president announced April 23.

The NCAA's Division I board of directors gave approval April 23 to a proposal to eliminate a bylaw which allows adjustment of championship schedules to accommodate schools with a policy against Sunday competition.

Only a few schedule adjustments have been made in the more than 30 years since the implementation of bylaw 31.1.4.1, officials said, but such changes have resulted in certain events not being televised.

In an April 23 letter, Norman Wiggins, president of the Baptist school in Buies Creek, N.C., asked other Division I schools to join his call for a vote to override the NCAA proposal.

The bylaw "has provided a fair and effective accommodation for those institutions with long-standing policies prohibiting Sunday play," Wiggins wrote. Its elimination "will ultimately place member institutions in the untenable position of choosing between an institution's fundamental principles and championship participation opportunities for their student-athletes," he added.

Wiggins termed it "disappointing" that the NCAA, which last year earned \$191 million in television rights and \$250 million in total revenues, "would sacrifice its traditional respect of religious principles in exchange for a few more additional television dollars."

Under NCAA procedures for overriding of a board action, 30 chief executive officers of Division I schools must request an override vote within 60 days. Upon the receipt of 100 requests, the legislation would be suspended until a final vote is taken by NCAA membership.

Brigham Young University is expected to join Campbell in leading the effort to override the vote. Over the years, the bylaw has been known informally as the "BYU rule" because its impact on the Utah school sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ, Latter-day Saints.

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-- By ABP staff

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