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Clinton's church faring well  
despite controversy, pastor says

By Lynn Clayton

ALEXANDRIA, La. (ABP) -- When Rex Horne visited Little Rock, Ark., in view of a call as pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church nine years ago, two members of the search committee took him to the governor's mansion to meet the congregation's most famous member.

When the three guests arose to leave, then-Gov. Bill Clinton told Horne, "I hope I never do anything to make things difficult for you."

Horne could not have imagined how much his decision to accept the pastorate would change his life. Or what would be involved in being pastor to the most powerful man in the world and one of the nation's most controversial leaders.

Horne acknowledges Clinton has been a controversial president, perhaps the most controversial in recent history. "People seem to really like him or really despise him," he said in an interview.

That controversy has at times been projected onto Immanuel Baptist Church and its pastor as Clinton's views on subjects such as abortion and homosexuals put him at odds with many political and religious conservatives, including many within the Southern Baptist Convention. Those feelings have intensified during the last year with disclosure of the president's involvement with Monica Lewinsky.

At every annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention since he has been president, resolutions have been proposed calling upon Immanuel to publicly rebuke or discipline Clinton.

Other failed efforts would have called on the convention to withdraw fellowship from Immanuel unless the congregation ousts Clinton as a member.

Demonstrators frequently picket the church, carrying placards with all kinds of messages condemning Clinton, Horne and the church.

Horne recently was in Alexandria, La., to lead a winter Bible study at Parkview Baptist Church, where his cousin, Tim Everett, is pastor. During the visit, he told the Baptist Messenger newspaper the experience has been trying yet also a time of growth both for him and the church.

"Our fellowship has remained strong," Horne said. He said the church has lost somewhere between a dozen and 20 members because of Clinton. "Some churches lose more members than that over painting a Sunday school classroom," he said.

Clinton had been a member of the church for 10 years when Horne became pastor in 1990. Horne followed Brian Harbour, who served five years after succeeding W.O. Vaught, a well-known conservative who retired in 1983 after 38 years in Immanuel's pulpit. Horne had been at the church only a year when Clinton announced he would run for president.

"So, from that point on, he was not in church as much," Horne related. "And, of course, after he was elected president, he moved to Washington, and we seldom see him. So, most of my pastoring of President Clinton has been a long-distance effort."

Horne said there are no changes in the service when the Secret Service calls to say Clinton will attend worship. "I read in a book about all the anticipation and excitement and change of a church when they discovered President Bush was coming to their worship," Horne said. "They even played 'Hail to the Chief' when he walked in. Immanuel's attitude is, 'If he comes to church, he comes to church.' We don't make any changes, and we don't make any fuss."

Horne said he usually talks with the president once a week. That practice began when Horne and his wife traveled to Washington for Clinton's first inauguration. While there, Horne asked Hillary Clinton, a Methodist, "Is there anything we can do?"

"She suggested that I call President Clinton every week and gave me his private number," Horne said. "The first time I called, the people there got me through, so it was obvious that Mrs. Clinton was serious and had spread the word to get me through to the president."

Horne said there are no limits on what they discuss. "I try to encourage him where I can and even challenge him when I think I should."

Horne said Immanuel's members are like the rest of society in their attitude toward Clinton. "Some like him; some don't."

But the church has committed to pray for the president every Sunday. "We told him we would pray for him every Sunday, and we have done that," Horne said. "We also pray for our governor and legislators and mayor -- our government leaders. We follow the biblical injunction at this point."

Horne said the church would continue to pray for Clinton's successor. "For any president, there is such a great weight placed upon him," he said. "They know things they cannot tell anybody -- so many national secrets, so many crises. That is one reason you see presidents aging so much during their terms. They all need our prayers."

Despite suggestions from SBC leaders and others outside the congregation, Horne said there never has been any serious talk within the church about disciplining Clinton or dismissing him as a member.

“People outside the church have no idea what we have done or haven’t done in relationship to Bill Clinton,” Horne said. “After the Monica Lewinsky thing broke, he wrote a handwritten letter to the church asking the church’s forgiveness.”

“I guess I am a literalist with the scripture that says if we do not forgive our fellow man, then God will not forgive us,” Horne said. “We have focused on forgiveness and redemption. The Bible says that we are to forgive 70 times seven, as long as a person wants to be forgiven and asks for forgiveness. Our focus is upon the spiritual and not the political or government aspects.”

One misconception the public has about Immanuel Baptist Church is “because the president thinks one way, we must think that way, because he is part of us,” Horne said. “That is not true. We can accept the president as a fellow member and disagree with him, as I do on some issues.”

Asked for an example of an issue on which he and the president disagree, Horne responded: “Abortion. On some of his orders about homosexuals, such as in the military. And, concerning the Monica Lewinsky thing, I think it is an abomination.”

Horne said his greatest disappointment with his pastoral relationship to the president has been the effect that some people’s “awful” actions have had on his family.

“We have to have an unlisted number,” he said. “People, many of whom identified themselves as Christians, were calling -- and when my children would answer, the callers would begin to tell them things like, ‘Your daddy has been responsible for so many deaths today through abortion, because he is Bill Clinton’s pastor.’”

Still, Horne said he has determined he will not let such episodes make him bitter.

“What others say, they are responsible for. What I say, I am responsible for. We all need to be careful about our rhetoric.”

Horne said Immanuel continues to be strongly supportive of the Southern Baptist Convention. “We are number seven in Cooperative Program gifts in the entire Southern Baptist Convention. And the church has done this while it has been taking some pretty heavy hits from some of the convention’s leadership.”

The Arkansas Baptist State Convention has elected the 45-year-old Horne as president twice during Clinton’s presidency. “Our church sincerely seeks to do the right thing, in the right way,” Horne said. “I have never been an apologist for the president. I have just tried to be his pastor, and for the most part, it has been long distance.”

“I try to remember we are God’s ambassadors,” he said. “The church as a whole has been very redemptive and committed to its mission. We have been very careful not to get intoxicated by the rarified air of being in the spotlight and searchlight.”

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Baptist leaders react  
after Senate acquittal

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Baptist leaders offered various reactions following U.S. Senate

votes Feb. 12 acquitting President Clinton of two articles of impeachment.

Daniel Vestal, moderator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, said he is "saddened and grieved by the president's actions," but Clinton "has asked for forgiveness and I am prepared to give him forgiveness."

Vestal noted that Clinton asked for prayers from the American people in facing the future. "He surely has mine," Vestal said, adding he would also be praying for Congress.

Vestal said the nation "faces many challenges -- moral, social and economic -- my hope is that the president and the Congress will find ways to work together to meet the challenges." He added, "This republic is strong and healthy, with an awful lot of good people, and we will move forward."

Officials of the Southern Baptist Convention, meanwhile, who earlier urged the president to resign, decried Clinton's acquittal.

"The people of the United States have sown the seeds of dissolution of our republic," said Paige Patterson, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, in remarks released by Baptist Press.

Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said the vote "will be long remembered as one of the most decisive moments in America's moral history."

"Confronted with one of the greatest moral challenges in its history, the Senate responded with moral apathy," Mohler said.

Also criticizing the Senate acquittal was Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. "The president's inability to fully come to grips with the shameful of his behavior and the fact that he lied under oath, coupled with the congressional inability to rise above petty, partisan bickering and deal in any statesmanlike fashion with the profound issues involved in the nation's chief law enforcement officer doing severe damage to the nation's judicial system by committing perjury and participating in obstruction of justice, reveals a great deal about the men and women we have elected to serve us in public office and even more about us -- the people who elected them," he said.

But James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee, accused Southern Baptist leaders of "overheated" rhetoric. "In response to the acquittal, they have practiced their professional outrage in a orgy of overstatement," Dunn said. "We're hardly on the brink of the 'demise of the country' or the 'dissolution of our republic.'"

"It is at least possible that the outcome of this national nightmare could signal a sort of moral maturity," Dunn said, "if the American people have come to see morality as far broader and deeper than sexuality, and if they demand repentance and contrition and move toward reconciliation and a fresh start."

Stan Hastey, executive director of Alliance of Baptists, said, "a heavy burden now falls on both the president and Congress to make the most of these next two years for the common good of all the citizens who have entrusted them with leading the nation."

"But a similarly heavy burden also rests on us citizens," Hastey added. "Despite his failures, President Clinton deserves our good will. Those of us who are Christians have a still heavier responsibility; we are enjoined in Scripture to pray for him and compelled by Christ's love to love him."

In a written statement, Daniel Weiss, general secretary of American Baptist Churches,

U.S.A., Weiss said that the “antipathy many now feel toward politics and politicians must be tempered with a realization that they are part of God’s plan for our lives. ... We must not give up on, or separate ourselves from, the institutions of this world.”

“It is my prayer that American Baptists and all people of faith will continue to monitor, address, seek to impact and pray for those who represent us in government,” Weiss said.

“Now that the agony of the past year is diminishing,” Weiss said, “let us work and pray for reconciliation, avoid self-righteousness, seek to walk humbly and faithfully with our God and to continue to pray for the president of the United States and all governing officials. May this be a time for renewal for our nation.”

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Senate acquits president;  
censure motion dies

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The Senate voted Feb. 12 to acquit President Bill Clinton of perjury and obstruction of justice charges, bringing an end to the five-week impeachment trial and a yearlong scandal.

The trial concluded the first impeachment of an elected president and marked only the second presidential impeachment trial in the nation’s history.

It ended as Chief Justice William Rehnquist, presiding over the court of impeachment, asked lawmakers on each article, “Senators, how say you? Is the respondent William Jefferson Clinton, guilty or not guilty?”

In alphabetical order, senators stood at their seat one-by-one and said “guilty” or “not guilty.” One lawmaker, Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., answered, “not proved, therefore not guilty.” Ten Republicans joined all 45 Democrats to deliver a “not guilty” vote of 55-45 on the article of impeachment related to perjury.

On the second article, five Republicans joined all the Democrats in a 50-50 vote, acquitting the president of obstruction of justice charges.

House managers needed two-thirds of the Senate to vote guilty to remove the president from office. Minutes after the president was acquitted, a censure motion offered by Sen. Diane Feinstein, D-Calif., failed on a procedural vote to get to an up or down vote.

In a rare occurrence, all 100 members of the Senate stayed perched in their chairs throughout the trial, rising only for short restroom breaks, back stretches or to cast votes.

Each day, the Senate clerk opened the trial by ordering all present to remain silent “on pain of imprisonment.” Reporters filled the press galleries. Forbidden from using tape recorders, they quickly wrote notes by hand.

The Senate voted after nearly four days of closed-door discussion, but each senator was allowed to make his or her statements public.

The article of impeachment dealing with perjury alleged Clinton “willfully provided perjurious, false and misleading testimony” to a grand jury in a sexual-harassment lawsuit by former Arkansas employee Paula Jones.

The second article listed seven specific acts in which Clinton allegedly “prevented, obstructed and impeded the administration of justice.” The acts included charges that Clinton influenced the testimony of White House secretary Betty Currie, assured Monica Lewinsky a job in return for her filing a false affidavit and directed the concealment of gifts given to Lewinsky.

In statements released after the hearings, senators revealed the reasoning behind their votes.

Some voting to acquit said the charges were not proven, while others said the charges were proven but did not rise to the level of a “high crime and misdemeanors” required by the Constitution to remove a president from office.

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, said the Senate “handled this trial in a very positive way.”

Hutchison, whose proposal for final deliberations to be held in public was defeated, said Americans “would have been proud of their elected officials had they been able to observe that debate.”

Hutchison, who voted to convict and remove Clinton said, “Would the president’s defenders forgive a school teacher who molests a student simply because the teacher’s classes are popular and his students all go on to college?”

Senators disagreed about whether the evidence proved charges of perjury or obstruction.

“Time and again the House managers failed to prove their case,” said Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill.

Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, called connections between Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr, Linda Tripp and Jones’ attorneys. “A sting set-up in the courts.”

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., however, said “the president thwarted justice.”

“No matter how unfair he or we may view a process that forces a president to disclose his own failings, we should not excuse or fail to punish in the constitutionally prescribed manner evidence that the president has deliberately thwarted the course of justice,” McCain said.

Sen. Robert Byrd, D-W.V., said the president “abused the powers vested in him by the people,” and that he believed the offenses fall in the category of a high crime or misdemeanor. “If you believe he is guilty, how can you not vote to remove him from office? There is some logic to the question. But simple logic can point one way, while wisdom may lie in quite a different direction.”

“To drop the sword of Damocles now, given the bitter political partisanship surrounding this entire matter would only serve to further undermine a public trust that is too much damaged already,” Byrd said. “Therefore I will reluctantly vote to acquit.”

After the vote, Clinton said: “I want to say again to the American people how profoundly sorry I am for what I said and did to trigger these events and the great burden they have imposed on the Congress and on the American people. I also am humbled and very grateful for the support and the prayers I have received from millions of Americans over this past year.”

A reporter asked Clinton, “In your heart sir, can you forgive and forget?”

Clinton responded, “I believe any person who asks for forgiveness has to be prepared to give it.”

-- Ashlee Ross contributed to this story.

## Nearly 4 in 10 Americans listen to Christian radio

By Marv Knox

VENTURA, Calif. (ABP) -- Christian messages soar over the airwaves and into the radio receivers of almost four in 10 American adults each week.

Christian radio programming reaches 39 percent of American adults during a typical week, according to a new poll by Barna Research Group. "That amounts to a net audience of 75 million to 80 million adults per week," reported the organization's president, George Barna, one of the nation's leading religion researchers.

Twenty-nine percent of U.S. adults listen to Christian teaching or preaching on the radio weekly, the survey discovered.

Listenership increases with age. Forty-three percent of people age 53 and older said they tune in to preaching or teaching during a typical week. Other groups most likely to listen to these broadcasts are political conservatives (37 percent of adults who describe themselves this way listen weekly), women (34 percent), Southerners (39 percent) and African Americans (57 percent).

Three fourths of those who listen to Christian preaching or teaching on the radio are Protestants, the survey showed. However, 10 percent are Catholics, and the remaining 15 percent classify themselves as atheists or adherents of non-Christian faiths.

More than one-third (36 percent) of listeners do not define themselves as born-again Christians, researchers learned, but almost half (48 percent) of born-again adults listen to some form of preaching and/or teaching in a typical week.

While preaching may claim the highest profile of Christian programs, Christian talk and music programs also enjoy widespread appeal, Barna said.

The survey showed that 32 percent of adults listen to Christian talk and/or music programs in a typical week. As with preaching/teaching, the audience is strongest among women, people age 53 or older, political conservatives, African Americans and Protestants.

Sixty-four percent of the talk/music audience is comprised of born-again Christians, researchers said.

Overlap among program listeners is strong, the survey discovered, with 58 percent of Christian radio listeners tuning in to both preaching/teaching and talk/music in a typical week.

When both Christian radio formats are taken together, audience loyalty correlates to age. The most loyal audience is comprised of listeners in their seventies and eighties, with 64 percent tuning in to some type of Christian broadcasting weekly. Among other age segments, the findings show decline -- people in their fifties and sixties (54 percent), Baby Boomers (38 percent), Baby Busters, 23 percent.

The findings present a surprisingly positive picture for Christian radio, Barna noted.

"Who would have imagined that more than 10 million people who never attend church services listen with some frequency to Christian radio broadcasting?" he noted. "Who would have

guessed that in a typical week nearly as many adults living in the West listen to Christian radio as attend church services? Or that the same number of men listens to Christian radio as attend Christian churches in a typical week?"

Barna said Christian radio is filling a spiritual niche. "It appears that Christian radio broadcasts may fill a very significant religious need for millions of people -- some of whom do not get all that they need from their church involvement, others of whom rely on non-church religious input for their spiritual development."

Pollsters surveyed a random sample of 1,015 adults. The maximum sampling error is 3 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.

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Church-state leaders consider  
European model of education

By Ashlee Ross

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Rather than viewing a wall of separation between them, America's education system should adopt a more complementary view of church and state that exists in European countries, said speakers at a recent faith and public-policy conference in Washington.

In most European states, "church and state are not deemed rivals," said Jan de Groof, president of the European Society for Education Law and Policy. He touted benefits of the European model of religion in public education in a panel discussion on "life without the wall of separation."

The panel was part of a daylong conference Feb. 5 sponsored by the conservative Ethics and Public Policy Center.

In Europe, "government does not have monopoly control over education," de Groof said. European governments consider private schools a "public service," he said, and "education is a matter of cooperative government."

Even those supporting the European model, however, acknowledged it encourages regulations which make private schools more like their public counterparts.

"Many denominational schools aren't that denominational any more," de Groof said.

"That's what I don't want to see," countered Steve McFarland, director of the Christian Legal Society's Center for Law and Religious Freedom. He argued against the European model, calling it both "unnecessary and undesirable."

"We can embrace choice without moving toward a marriage of church and state," McFarland said.

Peter Berger, director of Boston University's Institute for the Study of Economic Culture, also spoke in favor of the European model. "Vouchers level the playing field," he said.

"The European approach is far more liberal [than the American approach]," Berger said. "I personally think it is a better approach."

While advocating the European system, Berger cautioned against possible effects of government intervention in religious schools. "Make very sure government doesn't destroy these

institutions in the process of helping them,” he said.

McFarland said education is the responsibility of the parents, not the state.

“I think because faith is so important the government needs to stay out of it,” he said. “The heavy hand of government is usually the kiss of death for many religious groups.”

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Four churches work together  
to hire minister of missions

By Toby Druin

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- What one Texas church couldn't do alone, four are now doing together.

New Baptist congregations are being started in northeast Tarrant County, Texas, by Dennis Hudson, a minister of missions who is employed by four congregations.

Hudson is minister of missions for Northeast Ministries Inc., a church-starting program operated by Shady Oaks Baptist Church of Hurst, Birdville Baptist Church of Birdville, First Baptist Church of Watauga and Haltom Road Baptist Church of Haltom City.

Hudson functions in much the same way as ministers of missions in several larger congregations that are designated as Texas “key churches” which commit to hire a minister of missions and to help start a certain number of new congregations over a period of time. He starts preaching points in apartments, storefronts and mobile-home parks. The difference is he works for four churches instead of one.

Hudson credits Dwaine Greene, pastor at Birdville, with the idea that launched the ministry.

“He was the brains behind it,” Hudson explained. “Dwaine heard something said at an association meeting about key churches, but he didn't feel Birdville could support a full-time minister of missions. He asked why couldn't more than one church go together to support one.”

Greene knew the pastors at the other three churches. They got together and worked out the funding for the plan.

At the same time, Hudson, who had been an intern at Shady Oaks with Pastor John Bobo while attending Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, was getting restless in his sixth year as pastor of Providence Baptist Church in Bloomfield, Mo. He wanted to reach out more to the unchurched. When he heard about what the four churches were proposing, it piqued his interest. He interviewed for the job while in Texas to attend the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston in 1993 and went to work that September.

“Basically, they let me write my own job description,” Hudson said of the four pastors, who now form an advisory board for the ministry. Hudson answers to them and works with missions committees or missions development councils from each of the churches.

While Hudson coordinates the work for all four, each church supports its own ministries. First Baptist of Watauga ministers in an apartment complex. Haltom Road has a ministry in its neighborhood. Birdville works with a Hispanic ministry. Shady Oaks operates a tutoring ministry in an elementary school.

“Evangelism is subtle,” Hudson said. “Last year at the school, we bought each of the kids in the tutoring program a Bible. All but a couple of them accepted them.”

The four pastors have “bent over backward” to make the concept work, Hudson said. “All four are mission-minded, and that makes it easier.”

Hudson’s approach has been to start Bible studies in multi-housing complexes. To date, he has worked in 18 locations and now has five active programs in apartments and started a new one last month at Skyline Mobile Home Park.

The first apartment manager he approached didn’t want a ministry on her property, Hudson said, but couldn’t prevent it when the residents asked for a Bible study. The ministry began in November. The following spring Hudson and his volunteers went to a crime-watch meeting at the complex and heard the parents asking for something to be done for their children.

“We offered a recreation program that summer and ended it with a vacation Bible school,” he said. “We registered 80 kids.” A couple of weeks later he called the manager to give her a report, and she said she wanted the program to continue, because there had been less crime and less vandalism since the Bible study had been started.

“We asked for indoor space and for a reduced rate; she offered us a free apartment and utilities, though after six months she had to charge for electricity. She has become our best advocate and has led to two other managers calling about ministries at their complexes.”

Hudson uses volunteers from the four sponsoring churches to begin new works -- teaching Bible studies, leading recreation, mentoring, teaching English as a second language and tutoring.

“We’ll do anything to attract people,” he said. “We’ve offered parenting classes, money management, marriage enrichment, and in the course of everything else we throw in a little evangelism. Any job can be evangelistic if you choose for it to be so.”

One of the ministries, at Waldemar Apartments, has become a self-supporting church, Waldemar Baptist Chapel, with the help of seminary students from North Richland Hills Baptist Church.

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