



Nashville, Tennessee
Associated
Baptist Press

Editor: Bob Allen
Executive editor: Greg Warner

Phone: 800.340.6626
Fax: 904.262.7745
E-mail: bob@abpnews.com

August 31, 1999

(99-71)

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**Lineberger nominated
to lead Texas convention**

By Marv Knox

DALLAS (ABP) -- A Texas pastor and former state convention president has been nominated to become the next executive director of the 2.7 million-member Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Phil Lineberger, pastor of Williams Trace Baptist Church in Sugar Land, Texas, is the nominee. The state Executive Board will vote on him Sept. 14 in Dallas. If elected, he would succeed Bill Pinson, executive director since 1983, who retires Jan. 31.

"I'm very humbled, and I'm looking forward to the challenge that's out there," Lineberger said of his possible election. "I'm very excited. I appreciate the confidence of the committee.

"I have great love for Texas Baptists. I look forward to what Texas Baptists can do in the future."

Lineberger, 53, has been nominated by an 18-member search committee, which was selected by convention officers and the Executive Board.

The committee chose Lineberger from a "very solid and eminent list of persons" who were recommended by Texas Baptists, reported committee Chairman Bill Brian, an attorney and member of First Baptist Church in Amarillo.

The committee received more than 30 recommendations, carefully considered each recommendation and invited five candidates for interviews, Brian said. Four nominees accepted and were interviewed by the committee.

"We were led by Phil's known leadership in the convention -- as a convention officer, an Executive Board member and a trustee of Texas Baptist institutions," he explained. "We are excited that a man of Phil's energy, love for Texas Baptist people and willingness to serve will come to this position and succeed a great leader."

People who have known and worked with Lineberger through the years, Brian reported, described him as "a consensus builder, warm, a person who sets goals and achieves them, kind but firm, a self-starter, not autocratic, not a high-control leader, but one who leads through good vision."

Although Texas Baptists have been divided politically, Brian expressed confidence Lineberger can work with people who might take an adversarial stance toward him or the convention.

"Even those with whom Phil has disagreed would say he's fair," Brian noted. "As (BGCT) president, he was inclusive in platform roles. Persons who were known to differ were allowed to participate on the platform at the convention's annual meeting."

Lineberger became a Christian at age 10 in his hometown of Texarkana, Texas, after attending a revival led by longtime Texas evangelist Freddie Gage. He was ordained by Highland Park Baptist Church in Texarkana in 1968.

Williams Trace Baptist Church in Sugar Land has a resident membership of 1,152, according to the most recent state convention annual. The church averaged about 700 people in Sunday school attendance and baptized 73 last year, Brian reported. It contributed \$41,499 to world missions causes last year, including \$27,805 to the Cooperative Program for Texas causes and \$13,695 to the Cooperative Program for worldwide causes.

In addition to his pastorate in Sugar Land, Lineberger has been pastor of First Baptist Church, Tyler, Texas; Richardson Heights Baptist Church, Richardson, Texas; Metropolitan Baptist Church, Wichita, Kan.; Calvary Baptist Church, Little Rock, Ark.; and Calvary Baptist Church, Huntsville, Ark. He also was associate pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

He is a graduate of the University of Arkansas and also earned master's and doctor's degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He received honorary degrees from Baylor University and Dallas Baptist University.

Lineberger was president of the BGCT from 1989 to 1991 and vice president in 1988-89. He is a member of the BGCT Executive Board and a director of Associated Baptist Press. He also was a co-chairman of Texas Baptists Committed in 1994.

He has been a member of the Baptist World Alliance evangelism committee, a trustee of Dallas Baptist University and William Jewell College in Missouri and president of the Kansas-Nebraska and Arkansas Baptist pastors' conferences.

He and his wife, Brenda, have three adult daughters: Becky Lineberger Groves, who is married to Shawn Groves; Amy Lineberger Seay, who is married to Brian Seay and the mother of Olivia and Phillip; and Kathy Lineberger.

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Arizona Foundation terminates employment of three officers

PHOENIX (ABP) -- The Baptist Foundation of Arizona terminated the employment of three top officials Aug. 26, trustee leaders have announced.

The three officers -- President Bill Crotts, General Counsel Tom Grabinski and Controller Don Deardoff -- had been on administrative leave since voluntarily stepping down from their duties July 22.

That came after an investigation by Arizona Corporation Commission found the agency violated state securities law by failing to reveal its true financial condition to prospective investors. The state ordered the Foundation and two subsidiary corporations to stop selling investment products Aug. 10.

Foundation trustees had already taken that action voluntarily. They also placed a temporary freeze on the withdrawal of invested funds, continuing to pay only interest and distribution of Individual Retirement Accounts.

Trustees also set up two emergency committees at the July 22 meeting. One of the two, a Management Committee, now takes over full duties of the former officers, trustee officers announced Aug. 28.

Joe Panter, the founder and former CEO of an unnamed publicly held company, is director of the Management Committee. It also includes assistant director Mark Roberts and Mark Dickerson, general counsel.

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-- By ABP staff

Trail of 'coincidences' recalled as answer to prayer that opened Albania to the gospel

By Mark Wingfield

DALLAS (ABP) -- What some people call coincidence, others attribute to the power of prayer.

Albania once was considered the most-closed, most-atheistic nation in the world but now has gained access to the gospel.

Minette Drumwright of Fort Worth, Texas, told the following story at the recent Glorieta Prayer Conference in New Mexico about how God worked through a group of Christians committed to praying for nations of the world.

Drumwright, retired prayer-strategy coordinator with the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, also tells the story in the manuscript of a new book she hopes to have published.

In the mid-1980s, Sheila King Everett and her pastor-husband were serving First Baptist Church of Benton, Ark. During that time, a young woman who was preparing to go to Hungary as a missionary with Campus Crusade for Christ spoke in Sheila Everett's Sunday school class.

"She mentioned Albania at the time and said it's the only totally atheistic country in the world," Everett recalled in an interview. "From that time on, God put it on my heart to start praying. I started praying that God would break down the walls of Albania."

About that same time, Drumwright began her work as a prayer strategist at the mission board in Richmond, Va. She and other missionary leaders began asking churches to "adopt" unreached people groups for intensive prayer.

The Everetts' church was among the first to sign up for the new program, and IMB staffers randomly assigned the congregation a people group.

Everett recalls exactly where she was sitting in the Fellowship Hall of First Baptist Church on a particular Wednesday night more than 10 years ago. With the rest of the congregation, she heard for the first time her husband announce the church had received its prayer assignment for an unreached people group.

She was overwhelmed to learn their church had been assigned to pray for the people of Albania.

"I almost shouted," she said. "Some would say this was a random assignment, but I wouldn't."

A year later, the Everetts moved to Fort Worth, Texas. He became pastor of University Baptist Church. She brought her concern for Albania, and the Fort Worth church ultimately also adopted a prayer focus on Albania.

About the same time, a family in Brownwood, Texas, also felt led by God to begin praying for Albania.

David and Mary Carpenter were successful professionals, both active in their Baptist church. During the mid-1980s, they were members of First Baptist Church of Brownwood and helped start a new mission church. The two congregations applied separately to Drumwright's office for an unreached people group, and both were assigned Albania.

"That was our first introduction to Albania," David Carpenter said, noting that he thinks it was more than a coincidence that both churches were assigned Albania.

The Carpenters and their 4-year-old son began praying earnestly that the people of Albania would gain access to the gospel. It became such a habit that their young son mentioned Albania every time he prayed, whether at mealtimes or bedtime.

Before long, the Carpenters sensed God was calling them to go as missionaries to Albania. They contacted the mission board in Richmond but were told missionaries could not go to Albania.

"They were nice but not real encouraging," Carpenter recalled. "It was a closed country."

But the Carpenters persisted and proceeded with the missionary-appointment process over about a five-year period. Eventually, they sold their law practice, real estate investments and luxurious home. They auctioned off their belongings and moved to an apartment in Fort Worth for seminary training.

Even though Albania was a closed country at the time, they proceeded on faith, convinced God would open a way for them to reach the people of Albania.

"Our call to Albania was very specific," Carpenter said. "It almost wasn't a call to missions as much as a call to Albania."

Their first week in Fort Worth, the Carpenters picked a nearby Baptist church to visit on Wednesday night. That church was University Baptist, where the Everetts and the entire congregation were praying for Albania.

"We met the pastor and told him our story," Carpenter recalled. "He just turned white and said, 'Wait here. You've got to talk to my wife.'"

"We didn't know what was going on," he continued. "We met Sheila, and she turned white. She was in tears. When we stood there in front of her, she saw that as an answer to her prayers."

"God orchestrated to bring us together," Carpenter said.

The Carpenters saw no need to visit another church. Over the next months, the Carpenters and Everetts became good friends, and members of University Baptist added prayers for the Carpenters to their other prayers for Albania.

As they compared notes, the Carpenters realized the timing of their call to missions coincided with Sheila Everett's burden to pray for Albania. "You can track it back," Carpenter said.

Then, just as the Carpenters completed the amount of seminary work required for missionaries, they received news that Albania had opened enough so they could enter the country as language students.

They arrived in September 1992 and were among the first Christian missionaries in Albania.

"There were a few, very few Christians in the country," Carpenter explained. "Some missionaries had lived in Kosovo for a year or a little less."

Soon, however, the Carpenters were followed by a flood of more than 600 missionaries who eventually made their way to Albania. Amazingly, these missionaries from different countries and different Christian backgrounds were able to work together in an array of projects.

And even more amazing, Carpenter said, was when they discovered that each missionary had a similar story to tell about sensing God's call to pray for Albania during the same period of time.

"We saw how God works in so many different and varied localities and times and peoples," Carpenter said. "Hearing everybody's stories, we got goose bumps."

The Carpenters lived and worked in Albania for four years. Today, they live in Waco, Texas, where they work with an international mission organization called All Peoples. David Carpenter also practices law part time and serves on the staff of First Baptist Church of Woodway, Texas.

The Everetts now live in metropolitan Washington, D.C., where Randel Everett is pastor of Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, Va., and Sheila Everett is administrator of the John Leland Center for Theological Studies.

Yet the story continues.

"There are now churches in Albania," Drumwright noted. "There are discipleship groups. There are Albanians preaching the gospel.

"The beginning of this story for Southern Baptists, so far I as know, was when God reached down and touched Sheila Everett in Benton, Ark. Can one young woman's prayer make a difference? Definitely. Can one church's prayers make a difference? Definitely."

But ultimately, both Everett and Drumwright point to God as the impetus for prayers that change the world. As Drumwright said, "He places it in our heart to pray." And they're still seeing evidence this is true.

"Just last week, a family from Albania moved here to the Northern Virginia area," Everett said. "I have been in contact with them, a husband and wife and her mother. The daughter told me that during all those years (of oppression), her mother prayed in her home."

"I definitely believe God uses prayer to open up the hearts of people, to open up countries that haven't been opened or ethnic groups that haven't been opened," Everett said. "It's made me believe in his sovereignty even that much more."

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Prayer for the nations called ultimate expression of prayer

By Mark Wingfield

GLORIETA, N.M. (ABP) -- Prayer reaches where missionaries can't, Minette Drumwright told participants in the Glorieta Prayer Conference.

Drumwright, who now lives in Fort Worth, Texas, is a retired director of prayer strategy for the Southern Baptist International Mission Board.

Praying for the nations is the ultimate expression of prayer, she said. "The biblical basis for praying for the nations is the Bible -- all of it. It runs throughout the Bible."

Praying for the nations also reflects God's desire, she added. "Kingdom praying is praying for the lost of all the nations, praying that people of all the world will have opportunity to come into God's kingdom."

Two-thirds of the world's population is non-Christian, Drumwright said. And since the world population just surpassed 6 billion, that means 4 billion of the world's people are unsaved.

"That 4 billion begins in your neighborhood and mine and in some of our homes," she added. But it also stretches to remote parts of the world where no missionaries can go.

Perhaps half of the non-Christians in the world today live in areas with restricted access to the gospel, Drumwright explained. These 2 billion people "have no missionaries, no pastors, no Bibles."

"There are so many people in so many nations who need our prayers," she asserted. "What can we do? Throw up our hands? Well, yes."

Like Moses, modern Christians should throw up their hands in prayer to God on behalf of the world's people who need to know Christ, Drumwright said.

She listed seven points to be understood about praying for the nations:

-- Prayer begins with God. "Prayer is his idea," she said. "Prayer is our response to God's initiative. ... Everything we say about prayer needs to begin with God's concern that all the people of the nations be saved."

-- Prayer is powerful and effective. It's not that God is powerless without the prayers of Christians, but, "He has made a holy decision to give us this awesome role of partnership with him," she said.

-- The reach of prayer is total. "Prayer can reach into every home in your neighborhood and all 237 nations of the world. It goes places you can never go."

-- Prayer is something every believer can do with great impact. "Everyone cannot go personally, ... everyone cannot financially have an impact. Yet every believer can intercede and make a difference in the nations of the world."

-- Prayer enters the realm of spiritual warfare. "Kingdom praying is the only strategy that breaks the power of darkness," she said. "As we lift God's concerns to him, that breaks Satan's power."

-- Prayer calls forth laborers to go to the nations. Christians ought to pray that more believers will respond to God's call as missionaries, Drumwright said. "I'm pretty sure God is calling more than are responding."

-- Prayer is the most crucial work Christians can do. "It is work," she said. "Praying for the nations requires our attention, our focus."

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Sports ministry gearing up for Summer Olympics

By Marv Knox

HURST, Texas (ABP) -- Thousands of athletes and fans will travel to the Olympics next year worshipping sports and return home following Christ, predict leaders of Reach-Out 2000, a ministry to the Summer Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia, Sept. 15-Oct. 1, 2000.

About 5,000 Baptists are expected to volunteer for the Olympics ministry, which will begin in June and carry through the Olympic Games themselves, said Sam Mings, executive director of Reach-Out 2000.

The ministry is a joint venture between United States-based Lay Witnesses for Christ International, which Mings leads as president, and the Baptist Union of New South Wales, in the Australian state where the Olympics will be held. It's part of the Olympics Task Force, a ministry partnership embracing a multinational array of denominations and Christian groups.

Reach-Out 2000 will share the gospel with sports fans from around the world, present the Christian message to secular Australians and strengthen Australian Baptist churches, said Phil Skinner, general superintendent of the Baptist Union of New South Wales, who recently visited the United States.

"We're hoping to reach young people from around the world," Skinner said. "This will be a transnational missions experience. Because of the Olympics and the multiculturalness of Australia, there will be a

number of nationalities there. People will come (to the Olympics) as unbelievers and return as believers to countries that are closed to the gospel."

The effort is bigger than Baptists, he added. "This is a kingdom matter -- not a Baptist thing, an Anglican thing or an Episcopal thing -- that starts something we desire to see happen," he explained. "We're praying for this to happen."

"We'll use sports as a mechanism to reach people with the gospel. But evangelistic passion and enthusiasm will be reignited and enhanced. We will equip people in evangelism. The temperature will go up; the bar for evangelism will go up."

Not only will that atmosphere fuel evangelism, but it also will encourage Australian churches, Skinner noted. "It will give the local church a creative opportunity for the gospel to be proclaimed in its community. It will reignite evangelistic flames for some churches and enhance it in others."

Reach-Out 2000 volunteers will serve churches and minister in communities, even in rural areas, across New South Wales, Mings reported.

The ministry will include large rallies, such as Evening with the Olympians, featuring current Olympic athletes, and Night of Champions, which also will feature former athletic stars, Mings said. Multi-gold medalist Carl Lewis, the most decorated Olympic athlete of the century, will present his Christian testimony, even electronically in sites where he cannot attend.

The ministry also will feature sports clinics, beginning several months before the Olympics, if enough qualified volunteers step forward, Skinner said. Volunteers will branch out from Sydney, a city of more than 4 million people, and also minister in small towns throughout the region.

"Australia is a sports-mad nation," he added, explaining the desire to conduct the sports clinics in as many places as possible. "This is a tool to reach people."

In addition to the sports clinics, volunteers will be involved in hospitality ministry to athletes and fans at the games, and provide witness training in Australian churches, where they also will help with worship on Sundays, Mings said.

"We're not just looking for people to grab people on the street and hand out the Four Spiritual Laws," Skinner said. "We're looking for people who want to participate in a mission experience. They will go home -- to the United States, Japan, Britain or wherever -- and be changed. It's a two-way street. They will change others, and they will be changed."

"We're stressing accountability" in ministry relationships, Mings said of the partnership between U.S. Baptists and Australian Baptists. "We want to utilize our spiritual gifts. And we want them to want us to come back. This is the Australians' Olympics. We want to proclaim Christ to the world. We also want to build up the Baptist churches."

Lay Witnesses for Christ has participated in four previous Olympics ministries, but planners think the 2000 Games will be the best opportunity so far, said David Preston, the organization's senior vice president.

"We've never had the support we'll have in Australia," he said. "Being able to serve alongside Australian Baptists will help us."

Tony Woods, a missionary with the Southern Baptist International Mission Board who spent 20 years in Japan and worked in ministry at the Nagano Olympics, is coordinating ministry efforts. He's assisted by a missionary journeyman and eight "international directors" who are overseeing various phases of the ministry.

Volunteers are encouraged to participate for at least 10 days or more, Mings said.

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