All-around thanks: White’s 25 years celebrated

By Scott Barkley
Web Content Editor

LAWRENCEVILLE — In person and on video, friends and colleagues congratulated J. Robert White on 25 years as executive director for Georgia Baptists Nov. 14 toward the conclusion of the GBC annual meeting.

“It was 25 years ago [Georgia Baptists] met in our annual meeting that your Executive Committee unanimously elected Dr. J Robert White as our executive director,” noted Mike Stone, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Blackshear, in kicking off the portion of the Tuesday afternoon program dedicated to the commemoration.

Stone referenced the environment in Georgia Baptist life circa 1992. It was, he said, a time of tumult. During the Conservative Resurgence it required “an act of God” for complete agreement among Baptists such as the one bringing White to Georgia.

Following Stone, four of White’s peers in other Baptist state conventions brought messages via video.

“You’re one of my best friends and somebody I have such regard for,” commented Anthony Jordan of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. “You’re a visionary leader and done a remarkable job … for Georgia Baptists.”

Rick Lance of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions talked on White being a resource. “I don’t know how many times I’ve thought to myself ‘I need to talk to Bob White about that’ when I have a challenge or problem,” he remarked.

Pointing out the Georgia executive director’s roots in his home state, Lance continued, “You’ve meant a lot to Alabama Baptists. … I appreciate you walking the path – the journey – with me and with others. You are a Barnabas, an encourager.”

Notable among leaders

Other video messages brought compliments from Milton Hollifield, executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, and Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee President Frank Page couldn’t attend in person but extended his thanks and congratulations on video as did First Baptist Woodstock Pastor Johnny Hunt, who was en route to help facilitate a pastors conference in Southeast Asia.

Also on video, Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland conferred an honorary doctorate on White from the latter’s alma mater, presented in person by R. Philip Kimrey, vice president of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. SCOTT BARKLEY/Index

J. Robert White receives an honorary degree from his alma mater, Samford University, presented by R. Philip Kimrey, vice president of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. SCOTT BARKLEY/Index

Also on video, Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland conferred an honorary doctorate on White from the latter’s alma mater, presented in person by R. Philip Kimrey, vice president for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. The audience was also reminded of White receiving a distinguished alumnus award from another alma mater, Southern Seminary.

Sing Oldham, vice president for SBC Communications and Relations, delivered a resolution of appreciation to White’s leadership and championing the Cooperative Program.

During White’s tenure, Oldham said, Georgia Baptists have contributed $1.1 billion to CP.

Other presentations included a collection of letters from Georgia Baptist Executive Committee members. “[We’ve] enjoyed your leadership and steady hand these 25 years,” First Statesboro Pastor John Waters said in handing the book.

Appreciation for ‘Miss Janice’

Perhaps the biggest round of applause came for White’s wife, Janice. “Behind every successful man is a better woman,” expressed Jimmy Blanton, director for Columbus Baptist Association.

After calling her forward, Blanton continued. “We could never show to her our deepest appreciation for … her sacrifice. Time away from her husband … a lot of nights when he was restless. She has given beyond the call of duty.”

“Janice and I talk continuously about how miraculous the reality that God would call us to serve among Georgia Baptists. We feel so deeply blessed,” said J. Robert White. “This is, I believe, a unique Baptist state convention. Love truly dwells here, and there’s a wonderful spirit in this place. I find this spirit all over the state of Georgia. The key to that is you.”

White went on to express his thanks to Stone and all who played a part in putting together the celebration.

At the conclusion of the program, Stone announced that a special commissioning of “Great is Thy Faithfulness” – one of White’s favorites – had been presented for the occasion. Then, the Jubal Chorus performed the special-commissioned hymn for the first time.

After the final gavel of the GBC meeting, a final Anniversary Celebration of White’s 25 years was held in the North Metro Fellowship Hall.
Inspiration from athletes who are amputees

By Gerald Harris
Editor

ATLANTA — Mountain Park First Baptist Church hosted the Amputee Soccer Team from Haiti recently. For several years the church has hosted homeless families in the Atlanta area in a ministry called Family Promise, so the church was well equipped and trained to open their doors to the group from Haiti and exercise their gift of hospitality (1 Peter 4:9).

Dr. Fred Sorrells, a Southern Baptist from Conroe, TX and the president of Operation Go Quickly, brought the Haitians to the United States. The purpose of his organization is to fulfill the mandate of Christ found in Luke 14:21 where the bible says, “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt and the blind.

Sorrells indicated many of the soccer players lost their limbs due to the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti in January 2010. That earthquake measured 7.0 on the Richter scale and according to CNN resulted in as many as 220,000 deaths 300,000 injuries and 1.5 million people being displaced. Tens of thousands of people remained displaced even to this day.

Sorrells indicated that many of the amputees lost their limbs due to insufficient medical attention. One news report said the earthquake created a generation of amputees. A physician ministering to the victims of the earthquake said it was like “war surgery.” Many surgeons estimated that as many as 200,000 Haitians lost at least one of their limbs as a result of the earthquake.

The Word of God in Luke 14:21 has inspired the mission of Operation Go Quickly and the organization is ministering to various groups like the Haiti Amputee Soccer Team, but it is also implementing the admonition of the Luke passage by mobilizing the body of Christ to serve people with impairments in the less economically developed countries worldwide.

Sorrells not only facilitates a ministry to groups like disabled athletes from Haiti, but he also prepares them to minister to others. He testified, “A woman in great distress heard these young men singing ‘Amazing Grace’ and stated that she had been contemplating suicide, but the ministry of the young amputees singing about God’s grace had renewed her faith and given her hope for the future.”

Prior to coming to Atlanta the Haitian Amputee Soccer team was engaged in an outreach tour in the Houston, TX area. They provided several exhibitions and demonstrations of their athletic skill and prowess. Their efforts to spread encouragement and a spirit of overcoming faith is well received everywhere they go.

While in the Atlanta area the ambassadors from Haiti went to Trickum Middle School in Lilburn to showcase their talent and to inspire the students. Alexander Lee, writing for Truth NetMedia, reported about the Haitian amputee soccer team’s experience with Soccer in the Streets in downtown Atlanta on Sunday afternoon, December 3rd. It was a special day, because those who gathered were present to celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The team was scheduled to play an exhibition game at 1:30pm in front of an audience to bring awareness to the sport of amputee soccer.

Lee writes, “When the Haitians arrived they were met with a surprise. A group of children as young as 7 years old were practicing with their coach and saw the Haitians approaching the field. Out of curiosity they invited the Haitians to join the on the field to play a scrimmage match. The game commenced between the Haitians and the youth and immediately sparks of laughter and joy were in the air. “After the match Wounded Warrior, war veteran and USA Amputee Soccer Player Robert Ferguson gave a word of encouragement to the children to keep playing the sport of soccer and to never give up on their goals and dreams. The whole purpose of Soccer in the Streets is to keep children away from gang violence, drugs, and alcohol that is rampant in the city of Atlanta. This enables the children to stay in a positive environment while playing the sport they love so much.

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Southern Baptist evangelist Billy Graham celebrated his 99th birthday on Nov. 7, 2017. Dr. Graham’s son, Franklin, said, “Dad is entering his 100th year. He told us on his 90th birthday that he thought that he was going to live to be 95. But, when he got to 95, he moved the goal post. And he said, ‘I want to live, I believe, to be 100.’”

In Decision Magazine the younger Graham stated, “As my father enters his 100th year, we are joyfully celebrating his life and ministry with a yearlong series of special events.”

Billy Graham has preached in evangelistic crusades all over the world. In 1973 in Seoul, South Korea, he preached to 500,000 each evening with more than one million people in Yoido Plaza hearing his message on the last day of the crusade.

Billy Graham has preached to more than 215 million people in person in more than 185 countries and territories and multiplied millions more through radio and television.

For eight decades Billy Graham has consistently preached the exclusivity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Franklin Graham stated, “Here at his home in North Carolina, he has a Bible verse printed in very large letters pinned up on the wall in his bedroom (It’s also in the bathroom, dining room and several other spots around the house). It’s his life verse and it reads, “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14).

Franklin stated, “My father has truly lived that verse his entire life … As I travel and preach today, I invariably meet someone who shares a story with me of how they made a decision for Christ through my father’s Gospel proclamation. All to the glory of God.”

I am glad I have had the privilege of living throughout the crusade ministry of Billy Graham. I was only six years old when he conducted his first crusade in Grand Rapids, MI. I attended my first Billy Graham Crusade in Charlotte in October of 1958.

The crusade I remember most was the New York Crusade held in Madison Square Gardens from May 15-Sept. 1, 1957. It was broadcast via WBTV in Charlotte every night for 16 weeks, and I watched Billy Graham preach the Gospel on our black and white television every night. Can you imagine a major television network suspending their regular prime time programming to televise an evangelistic crusade in our present day?

In his autobiography Just as I Am, Graham said on the very first night of the NY Crusade, “We have not come here to put on a show or an entertainment. We believe that there are many people here tonight who have hungry hearts. All your life you have been searching for peace, joy, happiness, and forgiveness. I want to tell you before you leave Madison Square Garden this night of May 15, you can find everything you have been searching for in Jesus Christ.”

Every night the 19,500-seat arena was filled to capacity and on some nights beyond capacity. The choir of 1,500 directed by Cliff Barrows was in top form. Georgia Beverly Shea sang “How Great Thou Art” 99 times during the crusade. During those 16 weeks, 2,397,400 persons attended the meetings and 61,148 made decisions for Christ.

In his autobiography Graham said he prayed two prayers. (1) “Lord, help these people to receive You in answer to the prayers of the people – and do not let me get any credit. (2) I am willing to take any kind of tiredness, disease, or whatever it is, for this one night, for you to win these people.”

Graham’s insistence that God get the credit for the results of the crusades was indicative of his humility and it has been that characteristic along with his integrity that has marked his life for these 99 years. In contrast to some other national ministries, Graham’s ministry has been scandal-free. In fact, Graham’s name is frequently cited as a model of integrity for all ministers.

Billy Graham was a friend and spiritual mentor to 12 United States presidents, beginning with Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, the first president who really sought great counsel from Graham, remarked, “Billy Graham is one of the best ambassadors our country has, but he told me, ‘I am an ambassador of heaven.’”

After the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan’s life, Graham flew immediately to Washington to comfort and pray for the Reagans. Reagan said, “It was through Billy Graham that I found myself praying even more than on a daily basis.” Barack Obama was the first sitting president to visit with Billy Graham in his home in Montreat, NC.

Billy Graham is widely regarded as the most influential preacher of the 20th century. Last December, Gallup released its annual list of the ten most admired men in the world and Billy Graham was named as one of the 10 most admired men for a record 60th time. He has appeared on the top ten list every year since 1955, except 1976, when the survey did not happen.

In 1954 Billy Graham was named Time magazine’s “Man of the Year.” Elizabeth Sy, writing for MediaMass, declares, “According to a credible source, Billy Graham is leading the race to become Time magazine’s “Person of the Year” in 2017.

The renowned evangelist has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In fact, Graham was the 1,000th person to have a star installed. He received an honorary knighthood by Sir Christopher Meyer at the British Embassy in Washington, D.C. His life and legacy are represented at the Billy Graham Library and museum in Charlotte, NC. His earthly honors have been significant.
ACROSS
1. Snow gliders
5. The disciples were ___ ___ in John 21:1 (2 wds.)
10. Make lace
13. Capital of France
15. “A ___ in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7)
16. Lyric poem
17. Having wings
18. “Sin which doth so easily ___ us” (Heb. 12:1)
19. “David hastened, and ___ toward the army to meet Goliath” (1 Sam. 17:48)
20. Both ___ and women were baptized in Acts 8:12
21. “For ___ was first formed, then Eve” (I Tim 2:13)
23. “God created man in his own image ___” (Gen. 1:27)
25. After being baptized, Philip was “caught ___” by the Spirit of the Lord (Acts 8:39)
26. Isaiah, e.g.
28. “Thou shalt not let him ___ empty” (Deut. 15:13) (2 wds.)
30. Actor Alda
31. Bumps
34. Sentence part
35. Niche
36. Purple vegetable
38. Philip opened his ___ , and preached unto him Jesus (Acts 8:35)
40. Idiot
41. “I believe that Jesus Christ is the ___ of God” (Acts 8:37)
42. “The angel of the ___ spake unto Philip” (Acts 8:26)
43. The Lord to Noah: “Come thou and all thy ___ into the ark” (Acts 8:3)
44. Baits
45. Young swan
46. “There shall be ___ , and pestilences” (Matt. 24:7)
47. One hundred of these makes a shekel in Israel
48. Parrot
49. More irritated
50. Opened mouthed
51. Simon was amazed at the “signs which were ___” (Acts 8:13)
52. Petroleum engineer, for short
53. “It is a ___ thing that the king requireth” (Dan. 2:11)
54. Adam and Eve’s garden
55. Physician, for short
56. “___ is among the mountains” (Jer. 46:18)
57. “___ I am warm” (Isa. 44:16)
58. “With ___ and bridle” (Ps. 32:9)
59. Leading
60. “He went on ___ way rejoicing” (Acts 8:39)

DOWN
1. Canned meat brand
2. Cabbage cousin
3. Iraq’s neighbor
4. “Come up and ___ ” (Acts 8:31)
5. Treed (2 wds.)
6. “Simon offered ___ money” so he could have the power of the Holy Spirit, too (Acts 8:18)
7. Distress call
8. Before (poet.)
9. Barnabas should go as far as ___ (Acts 11:22)
10. Jewish scripture
11. Expression
12. Belief of the truth
13. Sea route
14. God called light this (Gen. 1:5)
15. Speed measurement
16. Reverent
17. Poem creator
18. Naomi’s daughter-in-law (Ruth 2:22)
19. Parrot
20. Former magistrate of Venice
21. Crescent-shaped object
22. Book of hymns
23. Metric measurement (Brit.)
24. The eunuch ___ Philip no more (Acts 8:39)
25. Fake butter
26. Actor Alda
27. Bumps
28. Sentence part
29. Niche
30. Purple vegetable
31. Bumps
32. Speed measurement
33. Abraham ___ spake unto the sons of ___ (Gen. 23:3)
34. Seize
35. Reverent
36. Poem creator
37. He ___ the book of the covenant (Acts 8:32)
38. The eunuch ___ Philip no more (Acts 8:39)
39. Mined metals
40. Former magistrate of Venice
41. Crescent-shaped object
42. Book of hymns
43. Metric measurement (Brit.)
44. The ___ of truth shall be established for ever” (Prov. 12:19)
45. Crow’s cry
46. Dims
47. One hundred of these makes a shekel in Israel
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