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Concerns of Virginians  
'not heard,' report says

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RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) — Concerns of Virginia Baptists about the relationship between the state association and the Southern Baptist Convention "were not heard," a report issued Oct. 18 says.

The Baptist General Association of Virginia's two-year attempt to present a statement of concerns to Southern Baptists "has not been realized," the BGAV's Committee on the Denominational Crisis said in a report to be presented at the association's annual meeting Nov. 13-14.

Messengers will receive the report from the committee, ending a process that began in 1988 with approval of a "memorial" to be presented to Southern Baptists.

The memorial expressed Virginia Baptists' discomfort with the more conservative direction taken by the SBC since 1979 and asked the SBC messengers to the 1989 annual meeting of the SBC to consider five items.

The requests were: that the relationship between the SBC and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs be maintained; that "negative designation" be made part of the unified giving plan, the Cooperative Program; that the SBC foster "serious" theological education; that the SBC president appoint to the conventions' committee on committees persons nominated by the BGAV; and that the national convention develop a "new style of relating" with state conventions.

The memorial was referred to the SBC Executive Committee, which formed a liaison committee. Following discussions with the BGAV committee earlier last year, the liaison committee released its final report in September 1989, citing the "autonomy of each Baptist body." It did not recommend action on any of the five requests.

"All of our contacts with the SBC liaison committee have been marked by a courteous demeanor ...," the crisis committee final report said. "But ... we were not heard. The depth and seriousness of Virginia's distress was neither appreciated nor addressed."

The report continues. "Even though your committee persisted in our efforts to building bridges over which we could lead our people in continued cooperation with integrity, our attempts to communicate our concerns with the Southern Baptist constituency were not realized," it says.

It notes the memorial was "in effect buried. Our cherished relationships continue to be strained and our ongoing cooperation is made more difficult."

In the final report, the committee on the denominational crisis asks that a special nine-member committee be appointed by the GBV president to serve for three years and to be instructed to "inform Virginia Baptists about the issues and circumstances which affect our cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention and other Baptist bodies."

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(This story was written by Robert Dilday, associate editor of the (Va.) Religious Herald).

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Tenery resigns  
Morganton church

MORGANTON, N.C. (ABP)--Robert Tenery, one of the leading fundamental-conservatives in the Southern Baptist Convention, has resigned the pastorate of Burkemont Baptist Church in Morganton, N.C.

Tenery, 58, had no immediate plans and cited "turmoil in the church" as the reason for his resignation of the pastorate he has held 19 years.

"I am dealing with some pulpit committees," Tenery told Associated Baptist Press. "I am just praying that something will work out for my ministry."

For the past several years Tenery has been "interim editor" of the Southern Baptist Advocate, the publication of fundamental-conservatives in the SBC. He assumed the editorship after the resignation of founding editor Russell Kaemmerling of Dallas in 1985.

Tenery also published Baptists United News, a fundamental-conservative publication generally focusing on events in the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

He currently is a trustee of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. He served two four-year terms from 1981-89, and was reappointed to a new term in 1990.

"As far as the Advocate, it (the resignation) doesn't change anything. I was never anything but interim editor and I resigned that after New Orleans (the 1990 annual meeting of the SBC)," Tenery told ABP. He said he does not know what the Advocate board — which has never been publicly named — will do about a new editor.

The Advocate has been published irregularly, as Tenery cited financing difficulties. Generally, it was published in advance of the annual meetings of the SBC.

Tenery also said his resignation as pastor "doesn't change anything" as far as his trusteeship on the BSSB is concerned. He added most of the churches with which he is talking are in North Carolina. If he remains in North Carolina, he may remain a trustee, but if he leaves the state, he becomes ineligible for the post.

The top fundamental-conservative leader was asked by ABP about rumors he would be named either to one of the vacant positions at Baptist Press, the news service of the SBC, or as an employee of the BSSB.

The top two posts at BP became vacant July 17, 1990, when the SBC Executive Committee fired Al Shackelford, director, and Dan Martin, news editor. Neither of the posts had been filled by late October.

"There has been no discussion of that (the BP jobs)," Tenery said. "But even if I was interested, I don't think it would happen."

Of the BSSB rumor, Tenery said "there has been no discussion" of it.

Daily newspapers in North Carolina reported Tenery had been forced out of the pulpit by unhappy church members who blamed him for declines in church membership, a large church debt and a "dictatorial leadership style."

One unidentified church member told the Winston-Salem Journal church membership had dropped from 532 to 430 in the last year and that the church still owes \$1 million on its family life center built about five years ago.

Tenery told ABP the news reports were wrong. "The deacon body did not ask me to resign and I was not pressured to resign. There was just some turmoil in the church — sparked by the resignation of a staff member — and I felt it was best that I resign."