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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Exec Committee debates cooperation,  
approves PAC-CLC merger, elects VPs****by Greg Warner  
Associate Editor of the Florida Baptist Witness**

NASHVILLE (ABP) — The SBC Executive Committee decided Feb. 19 how to spend the money Southern Baptist churches contribute to their cooperative budget next year but failed to decide what makes a church cooperative.

Committee members also:

—Approved a merger of the Public Affairs Committee into the Christian Life Commission—two of the three organizations authorized to represent Southern Baptist on religious liberty issues, and

—Approved the earlier hiring of three vice presidents to serve on the Executive Committee's Nashville-based staff.

The committee adopted with no debate the proposed 1991-92 Cooperative Program allocation budget, which plans to spend more than \$140 million to support the work of Southern Baptist agencies and institutions.

But the committee could not decide if support of the Cooperative Program should become the basis for a church's participation in the annual Southern Baptist Convention meetings.

Participation has been open to any church that contributes "to the Convention's work." That phrase in the Southern Baptist Convention constitution has been interpreted to include contributions to any SBC cause—the Cooperative Program, annual missions offerings or even designated gifts to specific agencies or institutions.

But last week the Executive Committee proposed a constitutional amendment to limit participation in annual conventions to those churches that contribute to the Cooperative Program at both the state and national levels. The proposal is seen as a blow to churches that give money to alternate missions-funding plans or designate that their contributions be used only for selected SBC causes.

During their Feb. 18-19 meeting in Nashville, committee members debated the proposal at length before referring it to their bylaws committee for further work. Several committee members expressed disapproval with various aspects of the proposal and others admitted they were confused about its ramifications.

The issue originated during last June's annual convention, when messenger Craig F. Stout of Missouri asked the Executive Committee to study the constitutional terminology related to "cooperation."

Although Stout's motion asked for the study to be completed by the 1991 convention, the committee's decision to study further makes it unlikely that a proposal will be ready by June. A constitutional amendment must be approved by two successive conventions.

During the 12-year controversy in the SBC, some churches on both sides of the conflict have designated funds away from various SBC causes that they find objectionable.

Under the convention's current constitution, however, those churches have not been denied participation in the annual Southern Baptist cause currently is eligible to send at least one messenger to the annual meeting.

The proposed change would have limited participation in the SBC to churches that contribute at

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gested the proposal be studied further. A motion to refer the amendment back to the committee's bylaws workgroup passed with little opposition

#### **Cooperative Program Allocations**

No such debate developed on the question of how to spend Cooperative Program money, however. The 1991-92 budget, drafted in January by the program and budget subcommittee, was approved unanimously by the full Executive Committee. The budget awaits approval by the Southern Baptist Convention in June.

The \$140,710,282 spending plan, which represents a 2.46 percent increase over the current budget, must be approved by messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in June. It includes largest increases for three organizations—the Christian Life Commission, Public Affairs Committee and the Executive Committee itself.

The Executive Committee's basic operating budget of \$2.7 million carries an increase of 15.5 percent, which committee members said is necessary to pay the rising costs of the annual convention and to fund an expanded public relations program for the SBC.

The largest percentage increase—30 percent—will go to the Public Affairs Committee, even though Executive Committee members later voted to dissolve the group. The entire PAC budget of \$32,500 would be assigned to the Christian Life Commission if the proposal to merge the two organizations is approved in June.

The CLC also will receive a 6.3 percent increase of its own, bringing its CP allocation to \$1.3 million. The increase reportedly will fund the CLC's expanded program statement, which now includes religious liberty.

The Foreign Mission Board and Baptist World Alliance each received a 2.46 increase in CP allocations, the Home Mission Board received a 2.5 percent increase, while all other SBC-related entities received increases of 2 percent or less.

Before presenting the budget to the full committee for approval, the program and budget subcommittee eliminated a \$12,500 allocation for Religion in American Life, a national organization that promotes religious participation. Subcommittee members were concerned that the group includes Muslims, Jews and Mormons. They voted to give the money to the Home Mission Board instead, ending at least 25 years of SBC association with RIAL.

Committee members also heard a report on Cooperative Program receipts for the first quarter of the 1990-91 fiscal year, which recorded an increase of 3.54 percent for the three-month period ending Dec. 31. However, no mention was made of the 29 percent drop in Cooperative Program receipts for the month of January.

#### **PAC Merger with CLC**

The proposed merger of the Public Affairs Committee into the Christian Life Commission will reduce from three to two the number of organizations that represent Southern Baptists on religious-liberty issues.

The 19-member PAC has served as the Southern Baptist contingent on the larger Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a religious-liberty watchdog organization that includes nine Baptist denominations.

Last year the PAC and the CLC were given religious-liberty assignments of their own. Although the SBC's 50-year relationship with the Baptist Joint Committee was retained, SBC funding of the Washington-based agency was reduced 87 percent to \$50,000.

Under terms of the proposed merger, the Christian Life Commission would be enlarged to make room for the current 12 at-large members of the PAC to serve as CLC trustees. The seven ex officio

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PAC memberships—mostly SBC agency executives—would be eliminated immediately. The CLC then would determine who would represent the SBC on the Baptist Joint Committee.

The CLC would receive the PAC's Cooperative Program allocation until the current PAC members finish serving their terms, after which the CLC would return to its original size.

Debate on the merger focused on how long those at-large members would be allowed to serve as CLC trustees.

The original proposal presented to the administrative and convention arrangements subcommittee would have allowed those eligible for a second three-year term on the PAC to serve their full time on the CLC. However, SBC president Morris Chapman of Wichita Falls, Texas, offered an amendment to eliminate those positions at the end of the current terms.

Chapman's amendment passed the subcommittee by a three-to-one margin. But when the proposal was presented to the full Executive Committee, it was reversed again.

Pressler made a motion to restore the merger proposal to its original form and allow the second terms, which he said were "part of an agreement" reached in January by a group of 10 people representing the PAC, CLC and Executive Committee. "This is not an effort to work out a deal," explained Pressler, who said the agreement was a "good faith" effort to reach a compromise.

But Robert Jackson said Pressler's amendment "artificially increases the size of the CLC" by allowing second terms. "I don't see the point of this if our purpose is to merge . . ."

Six PAC members are eligible for second terms: Robbie Hughes of Jackson, Miss., Robert Showers of Arlington, VA., William Stone of Phoenix, Ariz., Jay Strack of Dallas, Norris Sydnor of Oxon Hill, Md., and J.T. Williams of Tallahassee, Fla.

Permitting the second terms would give the CLC the benefit of the PAC members' expertise in church-state matters, said Eldridge Miller of Sallisaw, Okla. "This is not enlarging the CLC but only making it possible for them to serve a little longer," he said.

"People's feelings are important," argued T. C. Pinckney of Alexandria, Va. Allowing the second terms "is a small thing we can do," he said.

Pressler's motion passed 37 to 22.

The merger, which then was approved overwhelmingly, asks the CLC to adjust its charter to make room for the PAC members and asks the Southern Baptist Convention to amend its bylaws to eliminate the Public Affairs Committee.

#### **Election of Vice-presidents**

In separate secret ballots, the Executive Committee unanimously approved the employment of three new vice presidents. All three had been hired earlier by the committee's officers under a special authorization.

Richard P. Rosenbaum Jr. was elected vice president for business and finance. He previously was manager of the conference center marketing section for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Mark T. Coppenger was elected to the new position of vice president for public relations. He previously was executive director-treasurer of the State Convention of Baptist in Indiana.

Herbert V. Hollinger was elected vice president for Baptist Press, the denominations' news service. He previously was editor of the California Southern Baptist.

Hollinger and Coppenger replace Al Shackelford, who filled both the public relations and Baptist Press roles before he was fired last July.

Committee members later voted unanimously to reduce the minimum age for early retirement of Executive Committee staff members from 60 to 58 in order to make it possible for Shackelford to

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apply for early retirement. Although Shackleford has not requested early retirement, Bennett said he has been unable to find another job.

#### **SBC Committee Criteria**

Although the Executive Committee could not decide how to define "cooperation," they did approve an amendment to the SBC constitution to require all members of SBC committees to come from "cooperating" churches. Already the constitution requires that all SBC officers, trustees, commissioners and missionaries to be members of cooperating churches.

Executive Committee members acknowledged that a dispute involving the chairman of the 1990 Committee on Nominations—Roland Lopez of McAllen, Texas—probably prompted the constitutional changes. Messengers from Emmanuel Church in McAllen, where Lopez is pastor, were focus of controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention last June because the church had not contributed to SBC causes in the previous year.

Executive Committee members defended Lopez, noting SBC officials later determined Emmanuel's messengers technically were eligible since a mission of the church had contributed.

Pressler, who was moderating the meeting when the constitutional amendment was approved, explained: "This should not ever be construed as critical of anybody." He pointed to a resolution, later adopted by the committee, that defended Lopez and the church against the "unfair treatment" they received.

Another proposed constitutional amendment will attempt to clear up confusion concerning the annual report of the Committee on Nominations. The Executive Committee will propose amendments to the SBC constitution that will treat the annual slate of proposed trustees as a report rather than as nominations.

As a result of the change, which must be approved by the SBC in two successive conventions, messengers would be allowed to challenge only one nominee at a time, eliminating the possibility of a replacement slate of nominees.

Committee members were told the amendments would not alter the way the nominations have been handled in recent years but only clear up the constitutional ambiguity by codifying the current practice.

#### **Other Actions**

The Executive Committee asked its institutions workgroup "to study the procedures and impact of the accreditation of the six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries." Because at least two seminaries have encountered accreditation problems recently, some Southern Baptists have called for the SBC to set up its own accrediting agency.

The issue was debated in the program and budget subcommittee, which heard that a similar study already had been conducted by the SBC Education Commission at the request of SBC messengers. Subcommittee members decided to ask for their own study of accreditation, however, while seeking assistance from the seminaries and the Education Commission.

The Executive Committee took several other actions affecting SBC agencies and institutions:

--Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in June will be asked to eliminate at-large and local trustees from three SBC agencies. The Foreign Mission Board will eliminate 10 local members. The Home Mission Board will eliminate seven local members. And the Brotherhood Commission will eliminate eight at-large members.

The request came from the three agencies after the Executive Committee last year asked all SBC entities that have the special positions to determine if they are needed any longer. All other agencies requested no changes be made in their charters.

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--Trustees of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., were asked to consider amending the seminary's articles of incorporation to eliminate their power to remove trustees. Committee members pointed out that no other SBC entity has such power and that the Executive Committee is considering adding such a provision to the SBC constitution.

--The Radio and Television Commission was asked to submit an amended charter for Family-Net, a religious TV network it intends to buy and operate as a subsidiary. Southern Baptist agencies must receive authorization from the Executive Committee to operate subsidiaries.

--Such authorization was granted to the Home Mission Board, which will operate Utah Missions Inc. as a subsidiary. The Oklahoma-based corporation, which is expected to be donated to the HMB, is an evangelistic ministry that targets Mormons.

--Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., was authorized to borrow up to \$300,000 to make improvements on seminary housing.

--Minor revisions were made in the program statements for the Sunday School Board and Brotherhood Commission.

In other actions:

--The Baptist Convention of New England was approved for representation on the Foreign Mission, Home Mission and Sunday School boards as a result of an increase in church membership above the 20,000-person threshold. The multistate convention already has one representative on the Executive Committee.

--Larry Nail, pastor of First Church of Eldorado Springs, Mo., was named to fill a Missouri vacancy on the SBC Committee on Nominations. He replaces Rick Kunz, who moved from the

--In addition to the resolution commending Roland Lopex and his church, resolutions of appreciation were approved for retired state Baptist newspaper editors Donald T. McGregor of the Baptist Record of Mississippi and Jackson Walls of the West Virginia Baptist.

--The committee voted to hold the annual convention in the year 2000 in Orlando June 13-15.

The Executive Committee also heard a message from SBC president Chapman, who called Southern Baptists to respond to America's spiritual hunger. Chapman urged prayer for a swift end to the Persian Gulf War and for a "safe and speedy return of loved ones and a genuine and lasting peace."

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(This article includes information from Don Kirkland of the Baptist Courier of South Carolina, Robert Dilday of the Religious Herald of Virginia and Bill Webb of the Illinois Baptist.)

### **McGregor named executive head of Associated Baptist Press**

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WASHINGTON (ABP)—Don McGregor, former editor of the Baptist Record with 40 years experience in journalism, has been elected executive director of Associated Baptist Press.

ABP, an autonomous news service not structurally related to any Baptist entity, is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of 15 Southern Baptists from across the nation.

McGregor, who retired last year from the editorship of the Mississippi state Baptist paper, was the unanimous choice of the Board. Immediately before his service in Mississippi, McGregor was editor of community newspapers in Texas. He joined the staff of the Texas Baptist Standard in 1952 and became associate editor in 1960. Later he was editor of the California Southern Baptist before returning to his native Texas.

"We feel so fortunate to have a man of McGregor's experience and commitment to head up

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**ABP," Charles Overby, chairman of the Board, said immediately following McGregor's election.**

**"He brings to the task all of the insight and ability gained from his long service in Baptist journalism," Overby added.**

**ABP was chartered in July 1990 and launched in September 1990. It has operated up to this point with a consulting firm and temporary reporters and writers.**

**Overby, president and chief executive officer of the Gannett Foundation with headquarters in Arlington, Va., and McGregor will immediately seek to employ an executive editor and editorial assistant. Central operations for ABP will continue to be located in Nashville, Tenn., with a corps of correspondents distributed around the country.**

**The news service is available to Baptist publications, agencies and institutions as well as all secular media outlets.**