

A S S O C I A T E D B A P T I S T P R E S S

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The normal Thursday release of ABP is being sent Nov. 26 in order to meet earlier Thanksgiving deadlines.

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FMB likely to reconsider Ruschlikon,
but restoration of funds uncertain

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- While trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board are expected to reconsider their decision to eliminate \$365,000 in contributions to a controversial Swiss seminary, it is far from certain that the funds will be restored.

That's the assessment of trustee leaders prior to two December meetings that will focus on one of the most widely discussed missions issues in recent years -- funding for the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

On Oct. 9, trustees voted 35-28 to delete \$365,000 earmarked for the seminary from the FMB's 1992 budget and reallocate the money to theological education in Eastern Europe. The trustees' action raised protests from Baptists in the United States and Europe.

Resolutions adopted recently by at least 10 state Baptist conventions asked for reconsideration or restoration of funds, while two states voted to send money directly to the seminary.

Those protests directed at the trustees actually have led some trustees to harden in their opposition to Ruschlikon, warned FMB chairman William Hancock. And actions by state conventions have "broadened the gap of reconciliation," he said.

Although Hancock was reluctant to predict the outcome if trustees reconsider in December, vice chairman John Jackson said he doesn't expect the defunding decision to be overturned. "I doubt that the motion would pass at

this point," said Jackson.

Several trustees complained that news accounts of their defunding vote were distorted and avoided the real issue -- charges of liberalism at the seminary.

The action to defund the school followed disclosures that Southern Baptist seminary professor Glenn Hinson was temporarily teaching at the school. Some trustees said Hinson's alleged liberal theological views reflected a continuing leftward trend at the 43-year-old school -- European Baptists' only international seminary.

But other trustees noted elimination of the 1992 allocation, which represents about 40 percent of Ruschlikon's budget, would violate the FMB's 15-year funding commitment to the seminary. Opponents of funding responded that Hinson's presence violated the seminary's 1988 promise to bring on more conservative professors.

Partly in response to the public outcry, Hancock scheduled a special meeting to discuss the issue Dec. 5-6, just days before the trustees regular session Dec. 9-11.

Attending will be Ruschlikon President John David Hopper and other European Baptist leaders, as well as FMB trustee officers, members of the board committee that oversees work in Europe, FMB President Keith Parks and other staff members.

Also expected to be present are John Simms of Roanoke, Va., chairman of the board's administrative committee; Morris Mills of Memphis, Tenn., who made the motion to reallocate Ruschlikon's funds; and Paige Patterson of Dallas, chairman of the board's committee that oversees volunteers like Hinson.

Hancock, Jackson and Steve Hardy, chairman of the Europe committee, all agreed the Dec. 5-6 special meeting will significantly impact how the full board deals with Ruschlikon the following week.

"Whatever is done at that meeting will be brought to the board as a report," said Hancock, pastor of Highview Baptist Church in Louisville.

"I think trustees will trust the decisions and conclusions made at the early meeting, and whatever comes out of that meeting, that's the way trustees will go," said Jackson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Fairfield, Calif.

"Everything depends on the special meeting," agreed Hardy, pastor of Holly Hill Baptist Church in Burlington, N.C.

Although Jackson said he believes the October decision will not be overturned, Hardy and Hancock are less certain what the decision will be.

"I've talked to some trustees who have changed their views each way and to others who have hardened their views," said Hardy. "It would be difficult to predict where the board is."

Hancock said some trustees he's talked with have asked for additional information concerning the issue before participating in deliberations next month, while others "have become more adamant."

Part of the complex mix is the effect of this fall's state convention actions, the trustees said.

"It has severely complicated the process," noted Hardy. Because of the decisions by Baptists in Virginia and North Carolina to send \$100,000 and \$30,000 respectively to the school, Hardy said it is unclear whether \$130,000 should be deleted if funds are restored for Ruschlikon.

Some trustees have concluded that since states such as Virginia and North Carolina have allocated some money for Ruschlikon, trustees don't need to restore the funds, said Jackson. Hancock agreed he has heard some trustees express that view.

State convention action "has not been helpful," added Hancock. "It has broadened the gap of reconciliation."

Reconciliation also may be hard to achieve by trustees who some say have

been angered by critical response to their action.

"The trustees have been upset," said Jackson. "Some of this has made some of the trustees come under controversy."

Part of that anger appears to have been generated by trustee perceptions that their action was misrepresented or distorted.

Trustee Jack Bledsoe of Fordyce, Ark., told messengers attending the Arkansas Baptist State Convention that news reports on the subject contained misinformation. He also said Ruschlikon had not been defunded but that the final decision would be made in December.

However, minutes of the FMB's October meeting indicate trustees did remove the money from the seminary. An earlier motion that would have postponed a final decision until December was set aside by Mills' substitute motion to delete and reallocate the funds, according to FMB minutes.

Bledsoe's frustration with reports of the FMB action was shared by other trustees, however.

"There may have been a lot of hullabaloo about the board cutting out Ruschlikon, but nothing has been said about what will be done with those funds," said Jackson. "When people find out what will be done in Eastern Europe...they will see it as good stewardship of God's money."

Trustee Michael Catt of Albany, Ga., in an "Open Letter to Concerned Baptists" distributed Nov. 11, said Ruschlikon has only 50 students, while a "conservative seminary in Romania has over 200."

Also absent from the news accounts, the trustees said, are details of Hinson's and Ruschlikon's alleged liberalism.

"What is being reported in the majority of state Baptist papers appears slanted with the bombardment of 'concern' from some in Europe and America," said Catt in his letter. "Where are the objective reports of documented, blatant liberalism that is seemingly being ignored?"

Despite letters from Eastern European and Soviet Baptist leaders decrying the elimination of Ruschlikon funding, Jackson said, "there is no doubt in my mind" that Baptists in those regions believe Ruschlikon is too liberal. "The Soviets have no students enrolled there," he charged. "They won't send them because it's too liberal. The trustees are being crucified for trying to do things right."

Hardy said the question is not so much that of theology but integrity. "For several years John David Hopper has asked me not to interject the SBC controversy into Europe. Yet when he invites a well-known, often-quoted, well-read moderate to come and teach at Ruschlikon, but would not even consider inviting a conservative, he's done the very thing he asked me not to do."

Some of the anger may be directed at the FMB staff when trustees convene next month. "It appears to trustees that the staff is doing everything in their power to overturn a trustee action," said Jackson. "Trustees are upset at the way things have been handled by staff."

Hardy said it would be "inappropriate" to discuss concerns about the staff at this point. But Hancock acknowledged "administrative concerns have heightened anxieties of trustees."

FMB President Parks and a staff member in the office which oversees work in Europe denied staff members have acted inappropriately. "Some have accused us of stirring up the response," said Parks. "To my knowledge, we haven't tried to stimulate a response."

Isam Ballenger, regional vice president for Europe, was speaking in North Carolina and unavailable for comment. However, Tom Warrington, associate to the area director for Europe, also denied the staff has been involved in coordinating a response.

"I'd have been surprised if the Europeans hadn't responded the way they did," he said.

SACS report may foreshadow probation for Southeastern

By Greg Warner

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) -- Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary will learn the status of its accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in early December, but most seminary leaders do not expect the news to be good.

Most observers who are willing to predict SACS' upcoming decision say Southeastern likely will end up on probation -- a result that undoubtedly would damage the credibility of the troubled school even further.

The latest report from SACS cites the seminary's lack of long-range planning, as well as trustee involvement in the selection of faculty, as continued matters of concern.

The report, which is the product of a special fact-finding committee, will be presented Dec. 4 to SACS' criteria and reports committee, which will meet with Southeastern officials before making a recommendation to the full Commission on Colleges Dec. 5. The vote of the commission will be announced publicly Dec. 6.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, which represents schools in an 11-state region, is one of two agencies that accredit Southeastern. The other is the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, which will send its own investigative team to Southeastern in February to determine whether or not to withdraw its accreditation of the Wake Forest, N.C., school.

Both SACS and ATS have been investigating Southeastern since 1987, when most of the school's top administrators resigned in protest over trustee actions to guarantee that only biblical inerrantists are hired for the faculty.

In December 1989, SACS placed Southeastern on "warning" status because of the revised faculty-selection procedure and other reasons. The warning remains in effect for no more than two years, after which a school must be either cleared or placed on probation.

With the warning set to expire in December, "the commission needs to make a decision," explained SACS spokesman James Rogers, a Southern Baptist.

Although Rogers declined to predict which way the member colleges will vote, he said, "They will make a decision at their meeting in December, so it's an important meeting for Southeastern."

Probation would make it even more difficult for Southeastern to attract new students and financial support. Already full-time enrollment is down to 434 -- about half its pre-1987 level -- and financial troubles at the school are projected to get worse.

Russ Bush, Southeastern's dean of theology, said SACS may indeed place Southeastern on probation because the school has not resolved all eight concerns raised by SACS when the warning was issued in 1989. "I hope we're not going to be placed on probation, but it's not going to surprise me terribly if we are," Bush said.

Bush said he hopes reforms already initiated by Southeastern will convince SACS not to put the school on probation -- or at least ensure that the probation period is short.

Seminary President Lewis Drummond also declined to speculate on the outcome of the meeting with SACS. But others agreed with Bush's reading of the situation.

"I'll be surprised...if the seminary will be able to convince them they've done enough to warrant not being put on probation," said one long-

time faculty member.

Trustee Robert Crowley of Rockville, Md., offered a different point of view, however. "I don't think we're going to be on probation," the former trustee chairman predicted.

Crowley said his prediction "is not based on just my opinion" but on information he has uncovered on his own. He declined to reveal the source or nature of the information, however.

The SACS report itself was not available for view. Drummond sent the report to the faculty and trustees but with instructions not to release it to the public. While SACS' normal procedure is to let the school determine release of a report, Drummond told ABP only SACS could release the report. "It's not my prerogative," he said.

But SACS' Rogers said the agency has not restricted Southeastern's distribution of the report. "It's important for them to share it with trustees and the seminary community," Rogers said, but he added, "Since things are in a state of flux, it's probably best that that document not receive wide distribution."

According to those who have seen the report, it laments the fact Southeastern lacks both a long-range plan and a process for developing one. That shortcoming is more important than other criticisms, notes the final paragraph of the report, because long-range planning is a condition for membership in SACS.

"The lack of a plan for long-range planning is not just a criterion among criteria, but it relates to eligibility in the Southern Association," one seminary source explained.

The closing paragraph of the report "shook the administration significantly," the source said.

In recent days, Southeastern administrators have been conducting a crash course in long-range planning in preparation for the December meeting with SACS.

Howard Foshee, a retired administrator from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, held a seminar for administrators and the school's long-range planning committee. The seminar, which takes a week under normal circumstances, was reportedly compressed into a two-hour session. An official from ATS also held a session on planning with seminary leaders in late November.

Despite the rush to comply with SACS' requirements, Bush said the long-range plans cannot be completed in time for the Dec. 4 meeting. However, they should be in place by April, the dean added.

"We're just caught between a rock and a hard place," Bush said, since SACS must make a decision in December. "I don't think they should put us on probation if all we lack are the plans, except its one of the things they list as qualifications (for SACS membership)."

Drummond said SACS' focus on long-range planning is "a new emphasis" for the agency, one with which all SACS-approved schools are struggling to deal. But he acknowledged previous SACS reports have faulted Southeastern's lack of planning.

The latest report also reiterates the agency's concern over Southeastern's faculty-hiring process, which SACS said gives trustees too much influence.

In recent years, trustees have sought more direct involvement in screening and selection of new faculty members. A revised selection process negotiated in November by a trustee-faculty committee assigns the task to a committee of three professors, the president, the dean and one trustee.

The latest SACS report questions whether the presence of a trustee on the selection committee "preserves an appropriate separation of duties" between the trustees and the administration and faculty.

But trustee Crowley, who helped negotiate the new process, said

Southeastern is caught in a conflict between SACS and the Association of Theological Schools. While SACS has complained about the presence of trustees on faculty-selection committees, Crowley said, the practice was instituted at the suggestion of a consultant from ATS. "That's really frustrating," Crowley said of the conflict.

Crowley predicted Southeastern will employ its new faculty-selection procedure -- with its trustee involvement -- despite SACS' protests. He said he expects the plan to be approved by the faculty in a special meeting Dec. 5 and then by trustees through a mail ballot.

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Patterson weighs offer
from Liberty University

By Robert Dilday

DALLAS (ABP) -- Paige Patterson, who recently was fired and then reportedly rehired as president of Criswell College in Dallas, is considering an offer to become president of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, the ministerial-training arm of Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.

Patterson, a key leader in Southern Baptists' decade-long swing to the right, told the Religious Herald of Virginia he discussed the offer with television evangelist Jerry Falwell, founder and chancellor of Liberty University, during a Nov. 18 visit to Liberty's campus.

Also participating in the interview were university president Pierre Guillermin and Elmer Towns, dean of the school of religion, which administers the seminary. Liberty officials recently decided to separate the 200-student seminary from the school of religion -- though it will remain part of the university -- and seek a president to lead it.

The offer comes less than a month after Patterson was dismissed as Criswell College president Oct. 28 by a 14-1 vote of the school's trustees, who said Patterson was too deeply involved in the Southern Baptist controversy and not spending enough time attending to his administrative duties at the 335-student school.

Strong protests from students and prominent Criswell College supporters reportedly forced trustees to reaffirm Patterson's leadership a few days later. But speculation about his future has lingered.

Sources close to the trustee board said the board voted Nov. 20 to uphold the Oct. 28 firing and ask Patterson to find another job, according to the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch. School sources said the trustees were angered at being bullied by SBC leaders to reinstate Patterson in a meeting Nov. 5.

Patterson confirmed the Liberty offer but said he has not yet responded and no deadline for an answer has been set.

"When (Falwell) heard I might be available for some other responsibility, the administration voted to invite me to come over there to be president of the seminary," Patterson said, who added it was not the first time Liberty officials have raised the possibility with him.

"Actually, I'd been approached about this about a year and a half ago and did not feel that that was what I ought to do," Patterson said. "This time, Dr. Falwell, in his inimitable way, simply proceeded (to renew the proposal) and I think the offer is very genuine. They would like for me to come."

"I haven't had time to think about it, to be honest. Obviously, any time someone offers you a position like this, you can't disregard it. You have to place it before the face of God.... There are many things I have to take into

serious consideration in such a possible move. That is what I'm trying to do."

Accepting the position would likely diminish Patterson's powerful role in the Southern Baptist Convention. He and state appellate-court judge Paul Pressler of Houston are widely acknowledged as pivotal strategists in a successful effort to turn the Southern Baptist Convention in a more conservative direction.

In addition, a move would alter his close ties to First Baptist Church of Dallas, which founded Criswell College and is the largest Southern Baptist congregation in the world. It also would end his service on the board of trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, on which he serves as a Texas representative.

Attempts to obtain comments from top Liberty University officials were unsuccessful. Towns referred reporters to Falwell's office, but both Falwell and Guillermin were unavailable.

However, Mark DeMoss, a spokesman for Falwell, confirmed Patterson met with the three men Nov. 18. "They had serious talks about the presidency of the seminary, and at this point I would say the ball is in Dr. Patterson's court," said DeMoss. "He has indicated to us that he doesn't plan to make a quick decision."

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Politics, Ruschlikon and colleges
dominate state convention actions

By Lacy Thompson

(ABP) -- Close elections with political overtones, concern over a Swiss seminary, and debate over Christian higher education were themes that resounded through state Baptist conventions this fall.

Elections

Close elections at state conventions amplified a truth that has been demonstrated on the national level for more than a decade -- denominational presidents are viewed as playing a crucial role in directing the course of Baptists.

Many state and regional conventions elected or re-elected presidents without opposition. In several mainline states, however, elections were open -- and decided by slim margins.

Victors were almost evenly distributed between the two convention factions.

Four mainline states elected new presidents identified as, or supported, by fundamental-conservatives -- Tennessee, South Carolina, Missouri and Florida.

Six states elected presidents identified as, or supported by, moderate-conservatives -- Texas, Maryland, North Carolina, Louisiana, Arkansas and Virginia. Georgia Baptists also re-elected their moderate-conservative president but by a razor-thin margin.

The greatest margins of victory came in Virginia, Arkansas, Maryland and Florida, where presidents won election with 57-to-66 percent of the vote.

Elections in some other states were much closer, often decided by less than one percent. The Georgia Baptist president was re-elected with 50.7 percent of the vote. The new Louisiana Baptist president was elected with 50.9 percent of the vote.

Presidents were chosen in North Carolina with 51.4 percent of the vote, in South Carolina with 52.5 percent, in California with 53.3 percent, in Tennessee with 53.8 percent, and in Missouri with 54.4 percent.

Such slim margins of victory likely will mean continued politicking in most states and could result in a pingpong effect in some cases -- one group wins one year, another group wins the next.

Ruschlikon Seminary

The emotional winner in this year's state meetings was the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland. Messengers in at least nine states and the District of Columbia adopted resolutions opposing the recent defunding of the seminary by SBC Foreign Mission Board trustees.

Messengers in two states went a step farther and approved funds for the international seminary. Virginia Baptists approved \$100,000 for the school if the defunding decision is not reversed. North Carolina Baptists voted to send \$30,000 to the seminary immediately.

The various resolutions were not without opposition, however, and in Arkansas a motion of support for the seminary was defeated. But the determination of many Baptists to speak on the matter was illustrated in Louisiana, where messengers approved their resolution after rejecting two moves to forestall consideration of the statement.

The resolutions varied in language but in general cited the defunding as a threat to overseas missions and urged reconsideration of the FMB decision.

Baptist colleges

Messengers in four states dealt with issues related to state Baptist colleges.

In Texas, messengers approved a compromise that gives Baylor University in Waco almost full autonomy over the election of its trustees but preserves the school's Baptist moorings.

In South Carolina, messengers voted by less than 1 percentage point to sue Furman University after that school also assumed power to elect its own trustees.

In Louisiana, messengers easily approved a restated and renegotiated charter for Louisiana College in Pineville. The charter proposal was withdrawn last year for fear it distanced the school from the state convention.

In Florida, messengers rejected -- by a 24-vote margin -- a move to defund Stetson University in DeLand, which only last year was granted more power in selecting its trustees.

Colleges may become a key issue in other states as the national SBC controversy trickles down to the state level.

Cooperative Program

The Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' plan for unified missions giving, has been a battleground in the states because of several factors: an alternate plan advanced by moderate-conservatives, suggestions from a handful of leaders that the Cooperative Program needs to be revamped, and sluggish giving to the CP, which this year recorded its first drop in receipts in at least 57 years.

As in previous years, however, the 66-year-old funding plan weathered the challenge.

Only one convention decreased the percentage of the receipts it forwards through national CP channels -- the District of Columbia, by 1.73 percent.

Meanwhile, 22 states maintained their percentage allocation. And 13 states increased their percentage, ranging from 0.25 percent to 1 percent.

However, the numbers do not tell the whole story. Most of the increases came in smaller, newer state conventions. In addition, Baptists in Mississippi and Pennsylvania/South Jersey rejected moves to increase their percentage allocation through the national plan.

And Baptists in North Carolina and Virginia solidified their own alternate-funding options.

On the other hand, messengers in Florida, Indiana, Oklahoma and New York approved resolutions in support of the Cooperative Program. The Oklahoma Baptist statement discourages "any deviation from our existing cooperative method of mission support." The Indiana Baptist statement says the state is not to receive any direct financial support from plans or agencies "in competition with the Cooperative Program."

Messenger criteria

As the emphasis on denominational politics has grown, so has the focus on how to decide who should be eligible for representation at annual state conventions.

This year, messengers in at least four states discussed changes in how to qualify messengers. In most cases, the issue involved whether or not to base messenger qualification on undesignated gifts through the state convention or on all giving to Baptist work in the state.

Kentucky Baptists agreed to have a special committee study the matter. Baptists in Maryland/Delaware rejected a motion (210-to-169) that would have increased messenger representation for churches that give money to the state convention's work through channels other than the Cooperative Program.

Virginia Baptists also rejected several moves related to messenger qualification, including one to use contributions to the state budget -- not SBC Cooperative Program gifts -- as the basis for determining messenger status.

Meanwhile, California Baptists repeatedly discussed whether their use of the term "Cooperative Program" referred only to the national giving plan or to other financial support as well. Eventually, two constitutional amendments were proposed and will be discussed at the 1992 state meeting.

Debate over what qualifies a person as a convention messenger appears likely to intensify in the years ahead. An even more far-reaching question lingers on the horizon: What does it mean to be a cooperating Southern Baptist?

Baptist Joint Committee

Last year, after the Baptist Joint Committee was almost totally defunded by the Southern Baptist Convention, efforts in several states to finance the Washington agency through state convention coffers failed. This year, after the SBC voted in June to cut all funds for the BJC, the agency's ledger in the state conventions took a more positive turn.

Baptists in three states approved Baptist Joint Committee funding -- Texas allocated \$63,000, Virginia \$76,000, and New England \$200. Kentucky Baptists plan to include the BJC in their state budget for the first time in 1993-94.

But Baptists in Missouri and Maryland/Delaware voted to cut line items for the Baptist Joint Committee. And Ohio Baptists also easily defeated a move to send \$3,000 to the committee.

Resolutions

As always, resolutions were an integral part of recent state convention meetings.

Last year, abortion was the hot issue for resolutions. This year, with many conventions meeting in the wake of basketball star Magic Johnson's announcement that he has AIDS, sexuality was a focal topic.

Several states adopted resolutions on AIDS, sexuality and/or homosexuality. Indiana Baptists pledged ministry to persons and families affected by AIDS and defined "safe sex" as abstinence before marriage and fidelity to one's partner in marriage.

Florida Baptists approved a statement defining safe sex as abstinence before marriage, fidelity during marriage and celibacy while single.

Illinois Baptists approved a resolution labelling homosexuality a "perversion of divine standards and a violation of nature" but affirming that homosexuals can receive forgiveness from God.

States also continued to address the abortion issue. Louisiana Baptists reaffirmed their strong stand from last year. Baptists in North and South Dakota registered their opposition to abortion on demand and appealed to state legislatures to help put an end the practice. Indiana Baptists affirmed the right of Operation Rescue participants to conduct peaceful demonstrations against abortion.

Messengers in various states also opposed gambling, various types of abusive behavior, and ordination of women as pastors, while others urged environmental responsibility and encouraged the Foreign Mission Board in its efforts to share the gospel in a changing world.

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Suspect held in rash of Florida church fires

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (ABP) -- Police in Gainesville, Fla., have a suspect in custody in a rash of church fires in the state.

But police warned there is more than one suspect in the epidemic of fires, which have struck about 50 churches in central and northeast Florida. At least six of the churches are affiliated with the Florida Baptist Convention.

Patrick Lee Frank, 41, a transient from Tennessee, was jailed Nov. 13 in Ocala on unrelated trespassing and loitering charges. But authorities learned he also is a suspect in a string of church fires in Tennessee last summer. There have been no church fires since a Gainesville blaze Nov. 12.

Most of the fires have been classified as arson or "suspicious in nature" by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Federal agency that deals with bombings and arson.

The most destructive fire was Oct. 24 at First Church, Ocala, causing \$4 million in damage. The most recent Baptist church struck was First Baptist of Jacksonville Beach, where an early morning fire Nov. 8 destroyed the church's business offices and caused water and smoke damage in the sanctuary.

The ATF investigation is concentrating on a number of suspects at a number of locations, according to Malcolm Brady, assistant special agent for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms for Florida. Investigators are using a serial-arsonist profile developed by the FBI.

But investigators say they have no clues as to why a serial arsonist would target churches. Rarely do serial arsonists target specific types of buildings, as has been the case with churches in Florida, Gus Gary, an arson expert with the FBI, told the Florida Times-Union in Jacksonville.

Unlike a mass murderer, whose actions are usually public, an arsonist usually is secretive and more interested in property damage than hurting people, Gary said.

"Oftentimes, somebody is angry or disgruntled at a certain business," he said. "Some people blow it up. Some people want to burn it, rather than just being angry and writing a letter."

As the investigation continues, church leaders are considering ways to protect their property from arson. Some churches -- such as North Central Baptist in Gainesville, which has been struck twice -- use volunteers to monitor the grounds during the night-time hours.

However, church leaders have taken some comfort in the fact no other fires have been reported since Patrick Lee Frank was arrested Nov. 13.

Meanwhile, the American Family Association has labelled the church fires as "anti-Christian terrorism" and asked the U.S. Attorney General to create a special task force to investigate and prosecute those responsible.

Donald Wildmon, president of the Mississippi-based AFA, cited a federal civil-rights law that makes church burning a felony.

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-- By Jack Brymer

Pastor asks Senate to lift
ban on fetal-tissue research

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A pro-life Texas Baptist pastor has urged senators to lift a ban on federally funded research involving fetal-tissue transplantation, which he said may be saving his son's life.

The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, which opposes lifting the moratorium, tried to counter the pastor's testimony, however.

Guy Walden, pastor of Broadway Baptist Temple in Houston, testified before the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources Nov. 21. The CLC, although not testifying before the committee, distributed a statement by James Smith, CLC director of government relations, that took exception to Walden's position.

The hearing focused on a bill that would lift the Bush administration's moratorium (S. 1902). Co-sponsored by Sens. Brock Adams, D-Wash., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., the bill would establish safeguards to protect against abuses. It would prohibit the sale of fetal tissue, prevent a woman from giving the tissue to a specific person, establish a system of consent, and require that any decision to abort be separate from a decision to donate tissue.

Fetal-tissue research is credited with making inroads into treatment for Parkinson's disease, juvenile diabetes, Alzheimer's disease and genetic defects.

Walden told the committee that a fetal-tissue transplantation may be helping his 1-year-old son, Nathan, who suffers from a rare enzyme deficiency. Walden and his wife, Terri, have lost two of their five children to the disease.

They strongly oppose abortion and have declined medical advice to have one in the past.

"We told them (doctors) in no uncertain terms we are opposed to abortion," Guy Walden said. "They explained to us that this would be considered a medically necessary abortion. Again we told them that, due to our religious convictions, abortion was not an option for us."

When Terri became pregnant with their fifth child, they learned of a procedure that could help fetuses in the womb. After grappling with several ethical and moral issues, they said, the Waldens decided to allow the procedure. Tissue from an aborted tubal pregnancy was injected into the fetus Terri was carrying. Walden emphasized that the fetus used in his son's operation was aborted to save the life of the mother.

Nathan was born Oct. 30, 1990. A year later, he is producing the needed enzyme -- although at a low level. He is the first child born that has undergone this procedure, which was paid for through private funding.

"We believed that all of this would be consistent with (the) pro-life, anti-abortion position," said Guy Walden, a former missionary to Ecuador. "We believe that life begins at conception, and therefore the sooner we help these affected children in progressive diseases, the better life they will have.

"We endorse most types of organ donations and transplants to save lives. If life begins at conception, as we believe it does, then there is no difference in allowing fetal organs to be donated. We should try everything to save the fetus in the womb, including organ transplantation."

If the moratorium stays in effect, Walden said, parents whose children have these diseases face only two negative choices. They can abort the fetus as a medically necessary procedure or live with a severe medical problem, financial duress and possibly death, he said.

The Bush administration issued the moratorium because it said such research would encourage abortions. The moratorium prohibits the use of tissue from induced abortions but allows tissue from still births or spontaneous abortions. The administration said it also would allow tissue from abortions performed to save the life of the mother -- even though this is not explicitly in the language of the moratorium.

The CLC does not object to research allowed under the moratorium, Smith said. But the CLC argues that lifting the moratorium likely would lead to increased abortions.

However, Walden said fetal-tissue research -- if properly regulated -- could reduce medically necessary abortions by 12 percent.

The Waldens also agree with the findings of the Human Fetal Tissue Transplantation Research Panel, with minor reservations, he said. The administration put together a panel, including theologians, physicians, scientists and lawyers on both sides of the abortion issue, to explore the implications of such research. It overwhelmingly concluded that use of human fetal tissue for transplantation research "is acceptable public policy" as long as guidelines are adopted and enforced.

The CLC statement distributed at the Senate hearing, however, says that Walden's testimony was contradictory to a 1991 SBC resolution that called on Congress to maintain the moratorium.

"Rev. Walden's tragic circumstances have been outrageously exploited for an unethical end," the CLC statement says. "While we empathize with the family, we cannot condone the lifting of the moratorium."

The CLC took this stance for several reasons, Smith said, but the bottom line is that lifting the moratorium would most likely lead to an increase in abortions.

Walden took exception to a portion of the CLC statement that he said characterized him as a "barbarian."

The CLC statement says: "The barbarians are at the gate asking the federal government to give the 'Good Housekeeping' seal of approval (to the research) while taxpayers are being coerced to support this grisly, inhumane and unethical research."

Walden objected: "One of our Southern Baptist pastors is now a barbarian.... My whole motive is to reduce the number of abortions, improve the quality of life, and help the people that we can."

Smith emphatically denied that he characterized Walden as a barbarian. He said he regrets that the CLC's responsibility to represent the larger SBC body has placed the agency at odds with one Southern Baptist pastor.

Smith suggested Walden's personal circumstances have prevented him from seeing the larger picture, while Walden said the CLC is allowing political issues and alliances to render the agency short-sighted.

Walden was among 10 witnesses at the Senate hearing. The U.S. House of Representatives already has approved a bill (H.R. 2507) that lifts the ban. The Bush administration repeatedly has made good on its threat to veto any bill that weakens current abortion regulations.

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Appeals court to rehear
ban of Christmas display

By Larry Chesser

CHICAGO (ABP) -- In a rare move, a federal appeals court has agreed to reconsider its earlier decision upholding a ban on a series of paintings depicting the life of Christ at an Ottawa, Ill., public park.

The entire 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago will re-examine the split decision by a three-judge panel of the court. That decision, announced May 28, affirmed a lower court's ruling that the Christmas-season display violated the First Amendment's ban on an establishment of religion. Rehearing in the case, *Doe v. Small*, is scheduled Thursday, Dec. 19.

The 16 paintings, each more than 8 feet tall, depict various events in the life of Christ, including three related to his birth. Display of the paintings, which were first erected in 1956, was discontinued during the 1970s due to public criticism.

In 1980, the paintings were discovered in a municipal storage area, and later that year the Ottawa Jaycees requested and received permission to become the official "caretakers" of the paintings.

At issue in the case is the city's role in reintroducing and supporting the display of the paintings.

Writing for the majority, Judge Walter Cummings said, "The city encouraged, authorized and endorsed the Jaycees' display of these paintings in a public park, thus offending the core of the establishment clause's essential prohibition of state endorsement of religion."

Cummings said the city's involvement in the display can be seen in its role in soliciting a private group to display the paintings, in providing some of the labor necessary to erect the paintings, in a city council resolution endorsing the activities of the Jaycees, and in granting the Jaycees permission to erect permanent structural support for the paintings.

Cummings upheld the lower court's conclusion that the display violated the first two prongs of the so-called Lemon test established by the U.S. Supreme Court to preserve governmental neutrality toward religion. That test requires government actions to have a secular purpose, neither advance nor inhibit religion, and avoid excessive entanglement with religion.

In a dissenting opinion, Judge John Coffey disagreed with the majority's use of the Lemon test to decide the case.

"In applying the Lemon test to private speech in a quintessential public forum, the majority is instituting a dangerous and novel precedent of far-reaching import," Coffey wrote. "If this decision stands, private religious speech will be banned from public forums. Rather than demonstrating neutrality toward religion, a policy of banning private religious speech from a public forum clearly demonstrates hostility."

Coffey also disagreed with the majority's view of city involvement in the display. "The record is void of any evidence that the city took action to find a private sponsor for the display" or that the city has helped the Jaycees in any way other than allowing them to display the paintings, he wrote.

The panel majority, however, held that the display sponsorship has never been wholly private. "The degree of government involvement in endorsing the Jaycees' display blurs the line between private and public," Cummings wrote.

After rehearing the case next month, the full court of appeals could issue an opinion consistent with either the majority opinion or the dissent of the three-judge panel.

The appeals court could also put off a decision until the U.S. Supreme Court decides a case that could have a sweeping impact in the establishment clause field. In a graduation prayer case (*Lee v. Weisman*), the high court is being asked by the Bush administration and Providence, R.I., school officials to replace the Lemon test with a more lenient standard that would permit government promotion of religion as long as coercion is not involved.

In a footnote in his dissent, Coffey stated his support for using a coercion test. "Without such coercion, I doubt that there can be a governmental establishment of religion," he wrote.

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President signs bill amid civil-rights controversy

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- President George Bush signed a major civil-rights bill into law Nov. 21 after a controversial proposal drafted by the administration to interpret the measure was withdrawn.

Administration officials drafted a proposed directive to end government affirmative action and hiring guidelines that aid women and minorities. The directive circulated Nov. 20 but was withdrawn prior to the bill signing because it created a furor among civil-rights supporters.

Critics said Bush was trying to circumvent the bill he was signing -- the Civil Rights Act of 1991 -- which was approved as a compromise to end the two-year standoff between the administration and Congress over this issue.

The bill is designed to expand protections for women and minorities in the workplace, negating a series of Supreme Court decisions that have made it more difficult for employees to win job-bias cases.

The bill also provides -- for the first time -- the ability for women, the disabled and religious adherents to collect compensatory and punitive damages as victims of discrimination. Under current law, only victims of intentional racial discrimination are allowed to collect such monetary damages.

Bush vetoed a similar bill last year and threatened to do so again until Senate leaders negotiated a compromise.

Bush said the original version of the bill would have mandated quota systems, leading to reverse discrimination. Backers of the original version say Bush's argument was unfounded because the bill stated that quotas were not encouraged or permitted by the legislation.

Bush agreed to sign the bill when he said the quota issue was settled.

The Senate and the House of Representatives approved the bill 93-5 and 381-38, respectively.

Bush defended the administration's civil-rights stance. During the signing ceremony, he did not speak to the controversial proposal but said he supports affirmative action.

Bush pointed to a statement that he made last year about the civil-

rights bill: "This administration is committed to action that is truly affirmative, positive action in every sense, to strike down all barriers to advancement of every kind for all people.

"And in that same spirit, I say again today: I support affirmative action. Nothing in this bill overturns the government's affirmative-action programs."

Bush called discrimination for any reason evil and lauded the bill as good legislation to combat it.

The president added, "This bill, building on current law, will help ensure that no American will discriminate against another."

Sen. Howard Metzenbaum, D-Ohio, decried the administration's action as "an outrageously cynical effort to undermine the clear mandate" of the bill.

"President Bush has spent two years fighting the spirit and letter of this legislation," Metzenbaum said. "By repeatedly failing to recognize the distinction between unlawful use of quotas and lawful use of affirmative action, he has polarized the electorate on the race issue...."

"The American people should not be fooled," he continued. "The president may have backed off today, because it might ruin today's photo opportunity. But keep watching. And watch carefully. You will see the White House attempt to undermine the civil-rights consensus reached by Congress some time soon, if not this week, perhaps next week, or next month, or early next year."

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-- By Pam Parry

Bread for the World elects
Baptists to board of directors

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Bread for the World, a Christian citizens' hunger movement, elected two Baptists to its board of directors Nov. 19.

Eleanor Crook, a Southern Baptist from San Marcos, Texas, and William Epps, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Los Angeles, were among 15 anti-hunger advocates and community leaders approved to serve on the board. Epps is affiliated with the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A., the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A. and the Progressive National Baptist Convention.

Two other Baptists serve on the board. They are Pat Ayres of Austin, Texas, and Carolyn Crumpler of Cincinnati.

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-- By Pam Parry

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CORRECTION: In the Nov. 21 ABP story "State meetings give BJC..." please replace the 8th paragraph with the following:

-- In Kentucky, messengers voted 331-195 to find a way to provide money for the Baptist Joint Committee in the convention's 1993-94 budget. Dunn predicted the budget formula will provide his agency \$20,000.

***** END *****