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FMB eliminates funding
for Ruschlikon seminary

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Funds allocated for European Baptists' only international seminary were eliminated by trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Oct. 9 before they approved a \$183 million budget for 1992.

The action, approved 35-28 at the board's October meeting despite an impassioned plea from FMB President Keith Parks, followed disclosure that church history professor Glenn Hinson was teaching at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

Hinson, a faculty member at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and a frequent target of fundamental-conservatives for his alleged liberal views, is teaching two courses at the seminary near Zurich while on sabbatical leave.

In addition, board members asked the FMB staff to examine the legal ramifications of their move and report their conclusions at the December meeting.

Although the Ruschlikon seminary and budgetary matters drew considerable attention during the Oct. 7-9 meeting, trustees also added 29 missionaries to the nearly 4,000 serving overseas and approved a year-long prayer emphasis for 1992 for people in the regions comprising the collapsing Soviet Union.

The \$365,000 which had been allocated for operating expenses at Ruschlikon will be diverted to meet theological needs in Eastern Europe.

That amount represents about one-third of the school's operating budget. Its loss is likely to cripple, if not destroy, the institution, say board officials.

Apparently unaffected by the trustee action is funding to maintain the school's president and business manager, as well as one of its professors. All three are missionaries appointed by the FMB and their support is included in another section of the board's budget.

Ruschlikon, founded by Southern Baptists in 1949, has been the subject of sometimes heated FMB debate in recent years. Some trustees decry what they say is liberal teaching unsuited to the evangelistic needs of European Baptists, especially in the wake of recent changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that increase opportunities for Christian witness.

Others insist it is important that European Baptists determine the seminary's direction free from outside interference. They cite diverse Baptist viewpoints in Europe and Ruschlikon's role in uniting Baptists following the divisiveness of World War II.

An agreement negotiated in 1978 and renewed in 1983 by the FMB and Ruschlikon provided for funding through 1992, with financial support beyond that year to be determined at a later time.

That agreement was affirmed in 1988, a year before ownership of the school was transferred by FMB trustees to the European Baptist Federation.

The \$365,000 proposed for Ruschlikon in the 1992 budget was the last allocation based on the 1978 agreement. Earlier this year, the board's Europe committee had formulated a recommendation for additional funds in 1993-95.

Both proposals appeared to have enough support to secure approval when trustees arrived Oct. 7 for their meeting in Richmond. But that support quickly evaporated when news of Hinson's teaching assignment at Ruschlikon circulated among board members the next day.

Attention riveted on the professor when his name appeared on a list of International Service Corps workers who had been approved for service in the past few months.

ISC workers are employed by the board for periods of two years or less. Unlike career missionaries, ISC applicants are processed and approved by a staff committee, not by trustees, who instead review lists of those selected. Frequently, these short-term workers are already on the field by the time trustees examine the lists at their bi-monthly meetings.

The ISC regularly assigns Southern Baptist seminary professors on sabbatical leave to teaching positions at Baptist theological institutions around the world. As part of that process, Ruschlikon administrators requested Hinson, who began teaching in August.

Inclusion of the professor's name on an ISC list distributed by staff the morning of Oct. 8 sparked a flurry of activity in board committees. The finance committee, meeting just after noon to finalize the 1992 budget, approved a motion recommending diversion of the \$365,000 to Eastern Europe.

But after warnings from board administrators and some trustees against hasty action, that recommendation was modified late in the afternoon by the administrative committee, which reviews most actions before presentation to the full board.

Instead, the administrative committee proposed that the 1992 budget be approved without the line item for Ruschlikon, that a study of legal ramifications related to the 1978 agreement be undertaken and that the amount be considered at the board's December meeting.

Meanwhile, the Europe committee convened a special meeting and voted to delay the 1993-95 funding proposal, which it had planned to present to the full board the next day. It is unclear when or if the 1993-95 proposal will be presented.

By the time the full board convened the next morning, support for the administrative committee's compromise had diminished. Morris Mills of Memphis, Tenn., moved to replace the compromise with the finance committee's original proposal to divert the \$365,000 to Eastern Europe. Trustees adopted Mills substitute 35-28.

Both supporters and opponents of Ruschlikon funding accused each other of broken vows.

Elimination of the allocation violates a "solemn and sacred promise," Parks told trustees, referring to the 1978 agreement. "I'm not so much concerned about whether it's legally binding, but about the spiritual and moral obligations.

"This kind of action will say to Baptist groups around the world, 'You never know what that board will do next,'" he added.

However, California trustee Ron Wilson said Hinson's teaching tenure broke an agreement to "bring on more conservative people" to Ruschlikon's faculty, a commitment he said John David Hopper made after his election as president.

Hinson is "more than a moderate -- even among liberals he is considered a liberal," Wilson said.

"A promise was made to bring in more conservative people," he added. "That promise has not been kept."

Hinson is in Europe and unavailable for comment.

However, Southern Seminary President Roy Honeycutt said he is "shocked" by the decision to defund the seminary "and in the process to malign the reputation of a renowned Christian scholar."

"This action effectively tries and convicts a respected Southern Baptist leader without a hearing and without recourse," Honeycutt said. "I am dismayed by the unnecessary pain this assault will inflict on Dr. Hinson, and I continue to wonder how much longer Southern Baptists will tolerate the devastating effects of partisan politics which have been inflicted on our Baptist way of life."

It is too early to predict whether Ruschlikon can recover its \$365,000 loss from other Baptist groups. Two moderate-conservative organizations -- the Southern Baptist Alliance and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship -- already contribute small amounts to the school.

The Alliance's Global Missions Offering provided \$4,800 this year, and \$6,000 has been approved for the 1992 offering. The Fellowship's budget includes \$20,000 for student scholarships at Ruschlikon.

Leaders of both groups expressed doubt that much more additional money could be allocated.

"Certainly one of the great concerns of Southern Baptist Alliance life has been to provide support for programs or agencies which have had their Cooperative Program funds reduced or in some cases eliminated," said Alliance president Richard Groves of Winston-Salem, N.C.

While Alliance support of the school will continue, Groves predicted, it cannot make up the loss. "At this point, we don't have that kind of money designated."

John Hewett of Asheville, N.C., moderator of the Fellowship, was reluctant to predict the Fellowship's response. "There are too many people who will have to be involved for me to predict what will happen," he said.

There might be some sentiment to fund projects defunded by the FMB, he said, "however, we don't simply want to go behind the Foreign Mission Board with a broom and a dust bin. We are dreaming new things and possibilities that they have not thought of."

The remainder of the \$183,655,000 FMB budget for 1992 was unchallenged and passed easily.

It represents a tiny 0.5 percent increase over the 1991 budget, with about 38 percent coming from the SBC Cooperative Program unified budget and 46 percent from the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions.

For the first time, the budget includes estimated income from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Baptist General Association of Virginia, reflecting growth in alternative channels of revenue for the board.

A total of \$1.8 million is anticipated from the two groups, less than 1

percent of total estimated income.

Most of the 1992 budget -- nearly 66 percent -- is designated for missions personnel support, which includes items such as salaries, housing and medical insurance. Allocations for stateside administrative and promotion expenses represent only 12.2 percent.

The 29 new missionaries appointed Oct. 8 bring the total mission force to 3,898 in 121 countries. Among them were Raouf and Carol Ghattas, the first mission workers assigned to Lebanon since Southern Baptist personnel were forced to withdraw from the country in 1987.

Ghattas, an Egyptian native and naturalized American citizen, also is the first Arab appointed by the board for service in the Middle East. Until Americans are permitted to return to Lebanon, the Ghattases will carry out their ministry in Syria.

A call to spend 1992 in prayer for the people of regions comprising the Soviet Union was recommended by the board's "Green Alert" task force, charged with coordinating accelerated efforts to evangelize the area.

"Green Alert" procedures allow the board to speed up normal procedures to seize missions opportunities during social upheavals.

Isam Ballenger, "Green Alert" task force chairman, said the board has identified 116 positions in the Soviet Union it hopes to fill during 1992. It would be the first time the FMB has attempted to place more than 100 missionaries in one geographic area in a year's time.

Ballenger said the board also will seek 200 ISC workers and hundreds of volunteers to participate in Christian witness in the Soviet Union.

In other action, the board approved transfer of responsibility for Guam to the SBC Home Mission Board. FMB work in Guam dates to the early 1960s, when three churches for American military personnel were organized. Today two of the churches are self-supporting and the third will be soon. All three have applied for affiliation with the Hawaii Baptist Convention.

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FMB decision threatens cooperation,
European Baptist leaders say

RUSCHLIKON, Switzerland (ABP) -- European Baptist leaders say the decision by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to cut all funding for the Europeans' only seminary is "a breach of trust" that jeopardizes future cooperation between Southern Baptists and their European counterparts.

Trustees of the FMB voted Oct. 9 to delete \$365,000 from the FMB's 1992 budget earmarked for the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, when they found out a controversial Southern Baptist seminary professor would be teaching temporarily at the international school.

Leaders of the European Baptist Federation said the Foreign Mission Board, which owned the Ruschlikon seminary until 1988, had agreed to continue the 42-year partnership with Ruschlikon until at least 1992.

"This is not a breach of trust primarily with the seminary in Ruschlikon but with the EBF and the 32 Baptist unions affiliated with it," wrote EBF General Secretary Karl-Heinz Walter in a letter to FMB President Keith Parks.

"We do not find the loss of the money to be the major issue," Walter wrote. "Rather, the decision destroys confidence in future partnerships with Southern Baptists."

Several leaders of Europe's national Baptist conventions joined in denouncing the FMB decision. Other criticism came from the trustee chairman at Ruschlikon and the faculty at the Southern Baptist seminary where the professor teaches full-time.

Glenn Hinson, professor of church history at Southern Baptist

Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., is teaching at Ruschlikon while on sabbatic leave. Hinson has often been a target of SBC fundamental-conservatives for what they consider to be his liberal views.

The \$365,000 cut represents a major portion of next year's budget for the European Baptist seminary, which has struggled financially in recent years.

"To have 40 percent of your income cut off at less than two months' notice is a cruel blow, whatever the reason," said Peter Barber of Scotland, outgoing EBF president. "It makes it all the harder to know it is the result of a decision by the leaders of a mission board whose support has been guaranteed in a carefully framed agreement."

Wiard Popkes, trustee chairman at the Ruschlikon seminary, called the FMB decision "a veritable shock" to the school, which he said was not consulted and had no warning.

"The decision does not reveal the responsibility for people, institutions and programmes which should be beyond question, not only among Christians," Popkes said in a statement.

"We do not really know the underlying motives of the FMB's decision," Popkes continued. "It seems, though, that they were not aware of the repercussions of such a step for the credibility of future activities of the FMB in Europe."

In Great Britain, lengthy negotiations had laid the groundwork for a large-scale partnership between British Baptists and the FMB. "These plans have not been changed so far, but they are now being questioned as a result of this action," said David Coffey, general secretary for British Baptists.

Birgit Karlsson, general secretary for Swedish Baptists and EBF vice president, said the Ruschlikon decision will hurt Southern Baptist relationships throughout the Baptist World Alliance, the international organization of national Baptist bodies.

Top Baptist leaders in Germany and Norway also joined the chorus of criticism.

The controversy comes at a time when the FMB is planning to step up its activities in Europe after the fall of communism.

Back in the United States, Hinson's colleagues rallied to his defense. Southern Seminary President Roy Honeycutt issued a statement in which he said the FMB had "malign(ed) the reputation of a renowned Christian scholar."

The Faculty Association at Southern endorsed Honeycutt's statement, affirmed Hinson's theological integrity, and called the professor "a faithful Baptist witness." The faculty statement said the FMB decision calls into question "the freedom and autonomy" of trustees and faculty at both Southern and Ruschlikon.

Hinson is in Europe and unavailable for comment.

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Parks, trustees avoid
conflict over tenure

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Potential controversy over the tenure of Keith Parks as president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board apparently was averted after a late-night session between Parks and trustee leaders.

Trustee chairman William Hancock of Louisville, Ky., told reporters Oct. 8 the chairman's council had "unofficially affirmed Dr. Parks' leadership at this point in time" following a meeting earlier that day that ended close to 1 a.m.

The affirmation came in place of a motion to seek Parks' successor.

The chairman's council, composed of board officers and committee chairpersons, met twice -- at noon and 10 p.m. -- during the board's October meeting to discuss a new worldwide evangelistic endeavor and Parks' role in implementing it.

Parks proposed the evangelistic thrust in August, telling trustees that he developed the idea after a "mountain top" spiritual experience and that he hoped to remain at the FMB helm until 1995 to initiate the plan. "I believe a change in the present administrative leadership before 1995 would jeopardize most of what I see in this vision," Parks, who will turn 65 in 1992, told trustees in August.

Southern Baptists plan to share the gospel with every person on earth by the year 2000 through a plan called Bold Mission Thrust. Parks' proposals to reinvigorate Bold Mission Thrust include regional meetings, worldwide consultations and use of large numbers of college, seminary and retired volunteers.

The president's desire to remain at his post three years beyond what some consider retirement age apparently sparked a motion in the chairman's council to create a committee to seek Parks' successor.

Phyllis Randall of Blacksburg, Va., made a motion to form the search committee three-and-a-half years prior to Parks' 1995 retirement date. However, Hancock said it and several other motions were defeated or withdrawn.

Instead what emerged was a motion by Paige Patterson of Dallas to affirm the recommendations Parks presented in August, to study them carefully and to report conclusions to the board. That motion was subsequently approved by the board's strategy committee, which will undertake the study.

Randall said she presented her motion as a "discussion starter" to help trustees begin thinking "transitionally."

"I did not see it as a finished thing, to be approved at this board meeting," she said. "It was just to get conversation going."

Parks said Randall's motion supported his recommendations and that he "took that as strong affirmation." He added, however, "Phyllis' motion was completely valid, but her timing was too early."

Both Parks and Hancock described the chairman's council meetings as "sessions that families sometimes have" that "cleared the air." In a news conference they praised each other's leadership.

Hancock "has been fair and evenhanded," said Parks, who said he and the chairman have a "good relationship."

"We have a great leader in Dr. Parks," said Hancock, adding the president showed "great vision."

Their words appeared to quiet, at least for the time being, the question of Parks' tenure. Recurring rumors indicating some trustees want to dislodge Parks have failed to materialize in the past.

"Unless there is a moral faux pas -- which is unthinkable -- this board is not going to fire Keith Parks, period," said Patterson.

But Parks' announcement in August has highlighted the question of his future successor in trustees' minds. "Whoever is on the trustee board has to be wise enough to set a timetable," said Hancock. "We don't want to wait until Dec. 1, 1995, to decide."

In fact, he added, the board should anticipate leadership needs for all the FMB's top administrative posts for the next five to 10 years, including the presidential post.

"We should be commended," he said. "The trustees are trying to be accountable."

Noted Patterson: "The questions do not relate to Keith Parks as an individual. They relate to how there will be an orderly transition when the time comes."

Baptist Joint Committee
adjusts to future without SBC

By Greg Warner

WASHINGTON, D.C. (ABP) -- The meeting of the Baptist Joint Committee Oct. 7-9 ushered in a new future for the agency -- a future that doesn't include the Southern Baptist Convention.

For the first time in 55 years, the annual BJC meeting was conducted without representation from the Southern Baptist Convention, which has cut all funding for the religious-liberty coalition and is in the process of severing all remaining ties with the group.

The 31 members present were told BJC fund-raising efforts have more than made up for the loss of \$400,000 in annual funding from the Southern Baptist Convention, which represents half the budget for the Washington-based agency.

Meanwhile, BJC members from the eight other participating denominations laid plans to counter a new threat to the agency's funding -- an attempt by the SBC Christian Life Commission to gain control of an unused \$380,000 capital-needs fund assigned to the BJC in 1964.

Also during its two-day meeting, the Baptist Joint Committee adopted an \$800,000 budget for 1991-92 and two position statements, one favoring charitable deductions for all taxpayers and one opposing President Bush's plan to use government funds for private and parochial education.

But a statement endorsing religious freedom in emerging democracies was tabled by the group, which earlier had been briefed on the state of religious liberty in the Soviet republics, Eastern Europe, Africa and Central America.

The BJC took no action on the disputed capital-needs funds, which are held by the Southern Baptist Foundation in Nashville. Both sides concede the dispute may be resolved only in court.

The BJC's legal staff outlined the agency's position and some of the legal ramifications in a confidential memo made available to board members only.

"This issue does have the potential of resulting in legal action down the road," BJC attorney Oliver Thomas warned board members.

Thomas later told Associated Baptist Press he would consider any attempt to divert the money to the Christian Life Commission "illegal." But he said the BJC is not threatening to sue. "Our board is not going to initiate any kind of legal action at this point," he said.

A study committee formed by the SBC Executive Committee in September will weigh the competing claims on the fund and recommend action, probably by February. The money was authorized by the SBC in 1964 for the BJC to purchase its own building in Washington. Instead the BJC has continued to rent office space, using interest on the fund to pay rent.

The Christian Life Commission, which has succeeded the BJC as Southern Baptists' representative on religious-liberty issues, says it is now the logical recipient of the funds -- and all the interest earned since 1964.

But the Baptist Joint Committee says the money was intended for its use and has been under its control for 27 years. Last month the BJC asked for the money to purchase a building, but the Foundation froze the funds until the Executive Committee acts on the dispute.

Because the Foundation won't release the money, Thomas said, the BJC had to cancel the contract to buy a building in Washington. Since purchase of a building was the only restriction placed on the fund, he said, "clearly the Foundation has an obligation" to release the money.

Thomas said he has sent a letter to the Executive Committee and the Foundation to "put them on notice that the delay has made it impossible for us to perform under the contract."

"There are potential damages that we could sustain as a result of the additional delay," the attorney added. "We will look to the Executive Committee and the Foundation to compensate us for any additional loss."

"The confidential memo explains all the implications of the Executive Committee's recent action and the Foundation's refusal to release the funds," he said.

"One possibility is legal action," Thomas acknowledged, but he added, "We do not intend to take any legal action until the study committee has gone through its work."

The Baptist Joint Committee meeting was void of the rancor that has typified BJC meetings in recent years. Members attributed the difference to the absence of the SBC delegation. Although 11 trustees of the Christian Life Commission still are eligible for BJC membership, the CLC voted in September not to send any representatives to the meeting unless the BJC paid their expenses.

The BJC has refused, citing the elimination of SBC funds and a BJC policy that allows paying expenses only for delegations that make "some reasonable pledge" to the agency's budget.

In recent years, fundamental-conservatives have made up the majority of SBC representatives to the BJC. As a result, the Southern Baptist delegation has found itself at odds with other BJC members over the agency's positions and leadership.

At this year's meeting, however, most actions were approved unanimously and the meeting closed with members holding hands in a circle of prayer. Both BJC members and staff remarked about the change in tone.

"It's nice to be able to deal with substance," said Thomas, the BJC's general counsel.

There were Southern Baptists present, however, both as observers and participants.

Three members of the Christian Life Commission's Washington staff monitored the meeting at the request of CLC trustees.

In part because of their presence, four 20-minute workshops for BJC members were closed to reporters and visitors. A BJC staff member said the sessions also were closed to encourage members to express their opinions more freely on issues.

In the workshops, BJC staffers briefed members on the agency's involvement on four fronts: legislation to require the government to prove a "compelling state interest" before limiting religious freedom, the Supreme Court's upcoming decision on prayers at graduation ceremonies, the president's plan to use government funds for private education, and infringements on religious liberty posed by government regulations.

Participating in their first meeting as BJC members were five people selected by the new Religious Liberty Council, a group composed mostly of Southern Baptists. A change in BJC bylaws last year allows the RLC up to nine members, representing Southern Baptist groups that contribute to the BJC through non-SBC channels.

Two of those groups are the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which contributed \$40,000 in the past year, and the Southern Baptist Alliance, which gave \$12,000, according to BJC documents.

Churches and individuals reportedly contributed \$309,000, including at least \$68,000 identified as from other RLC sources.

Baptist state conventions, including those in Texas, Virginia and Maryland-Delaware, also made direct contributions to the BJC totaling \$117,000, with the largest portion (\$56,700) coming from Texas Baptists.

Such outside contributions added almost \$477,000 to the BJC's 1990-91 budget, compensating for the loss of SBC funding, members were told. Another \$125,000 was received from the coalition's member denominations, including the final \$50,000 from the SBC. Approximately \$147,000 in sales, interest and

other sources brought the agency's 1990-91 income to slightly more than \$749,000.

"The fact that we are making up for the loss from the Southern Baptist Convention, and even exceeding it, is extraordinary," said Robert Tiller of Washington, a representative from the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. "Not many of us would have anticipated that a couple of years ago."

James Dunn, BJC executive director, said the transition has not been easy. "We have been floundering in terms of structure and finance," he said.

In addition to focusing on fund-raising, Dunn said, the BJC is considering restructuring its membership rules to allow representation from new Baptist groups like the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Southern Baptist Alliance.

Dunn said it is still too early to know what kind of denominational realignment will occur among Southern Baptists or what effect that will have on the BJC. "We don't know the future.... We're coping the best we can."

Earlier, in his director's report, Dunn called for "new levels" of participation from board members and other supporters. "It is a new day for the Baptist Joint Committee," he said. "Active involvement of everyone who believes in its reason for existence is essential to survival."

In other business:

The position statement on charitable deductions noted three-fourths of all taxpayers -- those who do not itemize deductions -- have not been allowed to deduct charitable contributions since 1986. Such a restriction by the government "discriminates against religious practice" (tithing) and "is fundamentally unfair," the statement said. The BJC endorsed two bills (H.R. 1556 and S. 63) that would restore charitable deductions for non-itemizers.

Another position statement "deplore(s) any attempt to funnel public funds to parochial education" through vouchers and tuition tax credits. Such an approach, which is part of President Bush's "America 2000" education-reform package, is "constitutionally suspect, bad public policy and a disingenuous political tactic," the BJC said.

Although members were in agreement about the need to safeguard religious liberty in the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe, they could not reach consensus on wording of a position statement. After several attempts to amend the statement, the board voted to table it until later.

The BJC also voted to change its fiscal year to coincide with the calendar year in order to simplify budgeting. Most member denominations except the SBC operate on a calendar year, members were told.

The BJC scheduled its biannual Religious Liberty Conference for Oct. 5-6, 1992 in Washington.

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State churches pose little threat
in Eastern Europe, specialist says

By Greg Warner

WASHINGTON, D.C. (ABP) -- Attempts to revive official state churches in some of East European countries have little chance of succeeding and pose little threat if they do, according to Erika Schlager of the Helsinki Commission.

Although some religions are clamoring for official recognition by the new democratic governments of Eastern Europe, Schlager said the traditional idea of a privileged state church is a "historical remnant" with little power.

"Many of these privileges have been whittled away" by legal reforms, she

said. "In most cases they are left with something very nominal, very much a figurehead."

Schlager, a staff member of the Helsinki Commission in Washington, gave her assessment in an Oct. 8 briefing for the Baptist Joint Committee, a religious-liberty coalition. The Helsinki Commission, otherwise known as the Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe, is an agency created by Congress to monitor international compliance with the 1975 Helsinki Accords on human rights.

Schlager said Poland is the only country in Eastern Europe where a dominant religion is strong enough to achieve official status with the government. "This is what the Catholic church in Poland is jockeying for," she said. "I don't think politically it's going to fly anywhere but in Poland."

In the former Soviet republic of Latvia, where an official church exists, "there is a lot of religious liberty," said John Finnerty, another Helsinki Commission staffer.

Finnerty, who monitors violations of religious liberty in the Soviet Union, said "things have improved dramatically" for people of faith there. "If picking up my paycheck depended on religious violations, I wouldn't have that much to do," joked Finnerty, a Baptist who recently returned from an official trip to Russia.

But there still are some dangers, he added. In some cases, the threat comes from "a rise of nationalism" or conflict between faith groups. Sources in the former Soviet republic of Georgia report evangelicals are "feeling some pressure from the Orthodox Church" there, Finnerty said.

Often such conflicts are "not so much a question of religious belief and theology" as conflicts of culture and language, he said, adding, "We'll have a problem where nationalism will repress the church a little bit."

Although religious freedom is now more freely practiced in Europe's post-communist countries, Schlager said, the process of translating those newfound freedoms into law has been slow.

"Many laws have been removed from the books or are not being enforced," she said, but crowded legislative agendas in the emerging democracies have delayed codifying many religious reforms.

"We try to read a little good faith into the process," said Schlager, a Harvard graduate and specialist in international law. "As long as we see a good-faith effort...we tend to go along with the process."

Faith groups in Eastern Europe usually are willing to trust democratic reform to resolve problems rather than turning to Western governments and organizations like the Helsinki Commission for intervention, Schlager said. "There is a strong effort to work, first and foremost, within their system," she reported.

In Poland the Roman Catholic Church reached agreement with the government to institute prayer in public schools, Schlager said, but the action "was met with tremendous dismay by Protestant groups who were shut out of the process."

"It will take some time before these governments come to understand there is a great diversity that needs to be taken into consideration," she said.

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First prison baptisms
reported in Russia

MOSCOW, Russia (ABP) -- Eighteen prison inmates were baptized this summer in Russia, according to a Baptist newspaper there. It is apparently the first time prisoners have been allowed baptism in the Soviet Union.

The prisoners were brought in from various labor camps to the settlement of Puksa in northwestern Russia, reported Khristianskoe Slavo, a publication of the Union of Christian Baptists.

Some of the new Christians came from camps hundreds of miles away, the newspaper reported in July. A portable baptistry was brought in from Moscow.

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HMB, FMB swap missions work,
property in Panama, Guam

By Jim Newton

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board deeded property it owns in Panama to the Panama Baptist Convention and accepted responsibility for missions work in Guam, Micronesia and the Mariana Islands during its fall board meeting Oct. 8-9.

The board also adopted new objectives for its church loans division in an effort to become "the preferred lender of all Southern Baptist churches" rather than "the lender of last resort."

And Gary Jones, HMB director of human resources, was promoted to vice president for services, succeeding Margrette Stevenson, the HMB's first female vice president. Stevenson, a native of Dallas, is retiring to her hometown after 16 years at the HMB.

Jones is a former pastor in Missouri and former faculty member at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he earned the doctor of divinity degree.

Board members adopted a 1992 budget of \$84.7 million, an increase of 5.2 percent over the 1991 budget of \$80.5 million. Larry Lewis, HMB president, told board members there has been no increase this year in income from either the Cooperative Program or Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, but almost \$600,000 additional income has come from "alternative funding" sources such as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Lewis urged board members to respond to the challenge issued by SBC President Morris Chapman by leading their churches to double their gifts to the Annie Armstrong Offering next year. Lewis said all gifts over the \$41 million goal would be used to finance the HMB's campaign to start 15,000 churches by A.D. 2001 and Chapman's call to start 1,000 churches on Easter 1992.

Four new objectives were approved for the HMB's church loans division, which has developed a new business plan in an effort to make more money available to finance church starts.

The No. 1 objective is to strengthen the division's support of qualified small churches and churches with first-unit building programs, said Bob Inlow, director of the division since January.

New objectives were adopted to become "the preferred lending institution of all Southern Baptist churches," to provide the highest-quality loan services to all SBC churches, and to assist all SBC churches in obtaining financing, subject to quality controls and the availability of funds.

Gene Bowman of Griffin, Ga., chairman of the trustees' church loans committee, said the new objectives reflect a major change in philosophy in an effort to serve all SBC churches, not just those that can't get loans from commercial lending institutions.

Inlow said the division is aggressively seeking to make loans to financially secure churches as well as to new congregations in an effort to diversify and balance the loans portfolio. Interest earned on the loans is

re-invested in the program so that more money is available to loan to other churches.

Lewis assured HMB trustees that the board "will never make loans to big churches at the expense of helping smaller churches get loans for new buildings and sites."

The action to transfer ownership of HMB-owned property in Panama to the Panama Baptist Convention came as a result of recent action by the Panama government lifting restrictions which had prevented the transfer.

In 1975 the Home Mission Board transferred responsibility for missions work in Panama to the Foreign Mission Board. The HMB owns 60 pieces of property in Panama. There currently are 87 churches and 97 missions in the Central American country.

Directors of the HMB also voted to accept the offer of the Foreign Mission Board to transfer responsibility for missions work in Guam, Micronesia and the Mariana Islands to the HMB. Baptist churches on those Pacific islands have requested membership in the Hawaii Baptist Convention, which relates to the HMB and SBC.

Four foreign missionaries currently serving in Guam will continue their work until they retire or seek reassignment. Wesley and Guinevieve Brizendine are involved in student work on Guam, and Bin and Pattie Fleming work with Calvary Baptist Church, where he is English-language pastor.

In other action, HMB directors elected Ron Barker, currently associate director of the board's personal evangelism department, to a staff position as associate director of the associational evangelism department.

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Kentucky church loses property
after defaulting on HMB loan

By Mark Wingfield

GOSHEN, Ky. (ABP) -- Goshen Baptist Church -- one of 20 Southern Baptist churches nationwide still occupying their buildings after defaulting on loans from the Home Mission Board -- locked its doors and disbanded last week.

Pastor Stuart Collier said the HMB forced his church to disband by reclaiming the property. In an interview, he suggested the HMB targeted his church because of its affiliation with moderate-conservatives in denominational politics.

However, officials at both the HMB and the Kentucky Baptist Convention said convention politics played no part in the decision. The church is solely responsible for its own problems, they said.

Pastor Collier said Goshen's members "think there is a fundamentalist church who wants the building."

"They think because the church has had a woman pastor (in the past), it's not on the right side of the fence," he said. "They're outraged. They're hurt. Nobody can believe it."

But Bob Jones, director of the direct missions department for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, said such accusations against the HMB are misguided. "The Home Mission Board has been far more tolerant than any bank would have been," Jones said.

Bob Inlow, director of the HMB's church loans division, also denied any political motivations. "We're in the business of making loans and administering them with compassion," he said. "When the churches don't make the payments, I don't think you can say we took action because they were of some political persuasion."

In 1984 Goshen Church, located in a growing area of suburban Louisville,

took a \$320,000 loan from the HMB, with monthly payments of about \$3,500.

At the time, the church was served by co-pastors, Sammy and Linda Weaver-Williams. When the couple left in 1986, the church was "strong and meeting all its obligations," Pastor Collier said.

But in subsequent years, the church lost members for various reasons, including internal conflict. According to HMB records, the church made no payments on its loan from February to December 1988, when the church deeded its property back to the HMB in cancellation of its debt.

At that time, the HMB agreed to lease the property to the church for \$500 per month for two years, after which the HMB renewed the lease for an additional year.

By the time Collier came as pastor in May 1989, the church had declined from more than 100 people in worship to about 35, he said.

In January of this year, the HMB requested financial records from Goshen but got nothing, Inlow said. In July the HMB informed the church the lease would not be renewed after Nov. 30 and gave the church 30 days to purchase the property.

Collier said the HMB's decision not to renew the lease sounded the death knell for his congregation. "Once we got the letter, we were dead in the water," he said. "We had no choice but to (disband) because another Baptist church would occupy that building and we couldn't attract people to a school or other building."

Collier said the congregation was never consulted about the HMB's decision. Meanwhile, the church's circumstances had improved, he said. "If the Home Mission Board had given us one more year, I think we could have done it."

Inlow said the lease termination should not have come as a surprise to church members, however. "They were not even close to being able to make their payments, and at no point did they suggest to us they would be able to make them."

The HMB has lost \$80,000-\$90,000 on the Goshen property, which is one of 25 church facilities or sites now owned by the HMB due to defaulted loans, Inlow said. Those 25 repossessions account for about \$2.5 million in investments and 2.3 percent of the HMB's 1,100 outstanding church loans.

Inlow said that ratio puts the church loans division "on the outer edge of the acceptable range" in the mortgage industry, which could hamper the HMB's ability to provide loans to churches that can pay.

"When we lose money, it has the effect of raising interest rates for the other borrowers who make payments on time," Inlow said.

To strengthen the HMB's loans program, Inlow is proposing changes to make the loans attractive to larger, well-established churches instead of just smaller, struggling congregations. Trustees of the HMB are expected to consider the changes during their meeting Oct. 8-9.

Meanwhile, Inlow said, the HMB has no offers for the Goshen property.

Pastor Collier said he is looking for other ministry-related work and considering affiliating with another denomination.

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Adrian Rogers appointed
to Southeastern's board

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) -- Tennessee pastor Adrian Rogers, three-term president of the Southern Baptist Convention, has been appointed a trustee of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Rogers, pastor of the 22,000-member Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, and William Bowyer, pastor of the 1,400-member Rock Hill Baptist Church in

St. Louis, Mo., were appointed by Southeastern trustees to fill two positions left vacant on the trustee board.

Although trustees for SBC agencies are elected by messengers to the annual Southern Baptist Convention, Southeastern's charter allows its trustees to fill unexpected vacancies temporarily until replacements can be elected by the SBC.

Rogers and Bowyers will be eligible to begin their service at the trustees' Oct. 14-15 meeting, although Rogers said he will be unable to attend. The pair replace Jack May of Memphis and Wendell Page of Lee's Summit, Mo., both of whom resigned.

In 1979 Rogers became the first convention president elected by SBC fundamental-conservatives, who since have gained control of most of the denomination's agencies and institutions.

Although a key figure in that movement, Rogers said he has not served as a trustee of any of those agencies. However, he said he has been associated with Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, a non-SBC school.

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Baptist Men's director in N.C.
charged with soliciting sex

By Andrew Barron

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (ABP) -- The director of the state Baptist men's fellowship has been suspended without pay after his arrest in Charlotte, N.C., on a charge of soliciting a male undercover police officer for sex.

David Langford, 45, of Raleigh has been placed on indefinite administrative leave from his job as director of the 7,700-member North Carolina Baptist Men, a group which promotes fellowship and mission work.

Roy Smith, executive director of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, said in a press release that the arrest had caused "shock and sadness" and that the convention would "continue to search out all facts and take appropriate action." Smith would not comment further.

Langford has been the director of the North Carolina Baptist Men for more than 11 years and is credited by state Baptist officials with energizing the organization and arranging mission work in other states and countries. He was driving a 1991 Chevrolet registered to the convention when he was arrested.

Langford was arrested shortly before midnight Sept. 30 outside an adult bookstore. Capt. David Grose of the Charlotte police said Langford approached a male undercover police officer and asked the officer for oral sex.

Langford has been charged with soliciting a crime against nature. He is free on \$100 bond and was scheduled to have his first appearance in court Oct. 3. Langford declined to comment.

Langford was in Charlotte to conduct a training session at Charlotte's Pritchard Memorial Baptist Church Tuesday, but canceled the appearance, citing family problems.

Bill Boatwright, director of communications for the state convention, said North Carolina Baptist Men is the denominational organization for laymen and used to be called the Brotherhood.

Langford was arrested outside the Independence News adult bookstore, the same place where the Rev. Willie Middlebrooks of Greensboro, N.C., was arrested in August on two counts of solicitation of a crime against nature.

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Senate delays Thomas vote
after charges become public

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Senate delayed the confirmation vote on Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas after sexual harassment allegations became public the weekend before the scheduled Oct. 8 vote.

Postponing the vote until Tuesday, Oct. 15, the Senate also authorized new hearings to investigate the charges. The hearings were scheduled to begin Oct. 11.

Thomas has categorically denied the allegations made by University of Oklahoma law professor Anita Hill, who said Thomas sexually harassed her when she worked for him at the Department of Education and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Thomas, through his Senate sponsor and spokesman John Danforth, R-Mo., asked the Senate to delay the vote so Thomas could clear his name.

President George Bush has remained steadfast in his support of Thomas.

Hill said that Thomas engaged in obscene, vulgar behavior that created a hostile working environment. She did not say that Thomas touched her in any way. She made the allegations after being contacted by Senate staff. These allegations eventually led to an FBI investigation.

The 14-member Judiciary Committee was briefed on the FBI investigation shortly before its Sept. 27 vote. The committee deadlocked 7-7 on a favorable recommendation of Thomas, sending the nomination to the floor without a recommendation.

Senate rules require that such FBI reports remain confidential, but an unknown source leaked the report to the press the weekend before the scheduled vote.

The report shocked the remaining 80-plus senators who had no knowledge of the allegations. While many Republicans scrambled to push the vote through, Democratic senators urged the body to delay for an examination of the allegations.

Republicans finally agreed to the delay after Thomas said he wanted to clear his name and Republicans could count only 41 certain votes for Thomas, who needs 51 votes for confirmation.

Danforth, one of Thomas' former employers, was visibly upset at the circumstances that resulted in the delay and in what he said was character assassination.

"This whole confirmation process has been turned into the worst kind of sleazy political campaign, with no effort spared to assassinate the character of Clarence Thomas," he said.

Thomas has signed an affidavit denying the charges, and Danforth said the bottom line is his word against hers.

Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md., one of only two women in the Senate, said she was disturbed that the male-dominated body was not taking the allegations seriously. "A woman was attacked on the Senate floor with unprecedented venom when she was herself talking about being a victim," she said.

Sen. Albert Gore Jr., D-Tenn., said a cavalier dismissal of Hill's allegations would be an affront to every woman who has "struggled to be heard over a society that too often ignores even their most painful calls for justice."

Graduation prayer dispute
tops church-state cases

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A dispute over a Rhode Island commencement prayer was the only church-state case slated for review as the U.S. Supreme Court returned to the bench Monday, Oct. 7, to begin hearing arguments in 57 cases.

However, the high court, has requests for review in other cases with church-state implications. The nine-seat court will begin the 1991-92 term with eight justices because a replacement has yet to be confirmed for retired Justice Thurgood Marshall.

Justices will hear oral arguments in the Rhode Island case, *Lee v. Weisman*, Nov. 6.

The case's impact could reach far beyond the narrow issue of prayer at commencement exercises because Providence, R.I., school officials and the U.S. Justice Department are asking the high court to discard its settled rule for safeguarding governmental neutrality in establishment-clause disputes.

Specifically, Providence officials and the U.S. solicitor general have asked justices to scuttle the Lemon test, a formula announced by the court in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* in 1976 to determine whether government actions violate the First Amendment's ban against state-supported religion. The Lemon standard requires that government actions have a secular purpose, neither advance nor restrict religion and avoid excessive entanglement with religion.

The Justice Department's brief asks the high court to replace the Lemon test with a "coercion" test that would permit government to support or promote religion as long as people are not forced to participate and the government's actions do not threaten to establish an official religion.

The Baptist Joint Committee has joined a broad coalition of Christian, Jewish and religious-liberty organizations asking the court to maintain its settled neutrality principle.

Other religious organizations, including the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, U.S. Catholic Conference and the National Association of Evangelicals, have filed briefs either in support of various forms of the coercion test or in defense of graduation prayers on free-speech grounds.

While the high court could decide the Rhode Island case without addressing the request to change its establishment-clause test, many advocates of church-state separation see a real threat in the proposed coercion standard.

"*Lee v. Weisman* is clearly the most significant church-state case the court will decide this term -- maybe this decade," said Brent Walker, associate counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee.

In addition to the Rhode Island case, the high court is being asked to review two other graduation-prayer cases. Walker said these cases and several other establishment-clause cases may well be accepted for review and disposed of in light of whatever decision is reached in *Lee v. Weisman*.

In a Texas case, the Supreme Court is being asked to determine whether the Clear Creek Independent School District's policy of allowing prayers approved by school officials to be delivered as part of commencement exercises violates the establishment clause. A federal district court and the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals have ruled in favor of the district, holding that the practice is consistent with Lemon test requirements. The case is *Jones v. Clear Creek Independent School District*.

In a California case, a divided California Supreme Court ruled in May that graduation prayers in the Morongo Unified School District impermissibly conveyed an endorsement of religion and involved excessive entanglement with religion. The school district has appealed, asking the Supreme Court to determine whether the inclusion of invocations and benedictions violate the

establishment clause. The case is *Morongo Unified School District v. Sands*.

In addition to the graduation-prayer cases, the Supreme Court is being asked to review several other cases in light of the First Amendment's free-exercise and no-establishment clauses. Among them:

-- In *Wilson v. National Labor Relations Board*, the Supreme Court is being asked to determine whether a provision of the National Labor Relations Act -- one that exempts from compulsory union membership members of religious groups that historically have maintained conscientious objections to union participation -- amounts to preferential treatment of some religious groups in violation of the establishment clause.

The dispute arose when Maurice Wilson, a member of the Assembly Church, sought to make a donation to charity rather than have union dues deducted from his wages as an employee of the Grand Rapids City Coach Lines. The 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals struck down the provision in the National Labor Relations Act.

-- In *Roberts v. Madigan*, the high court is being asked to determine whether barring a public school teacher from keeping a Bible at his desk and other religious books in his classroom violates the establishment clause.

The dispute arose when Kentucky fifth-grade teacher Kenneth Roberts was ordered to remove *The Bible in Pictures* and *The Life of Jesus* from a collection of books made available to students during a silent-reading period. The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in December 1990 that the district's order prohibiting Roberts from reading the Bible at his desk and from displaying the two books did not violate the establishment clause or free-speech rights.

-- In *Crestwood, Ill., v. Doe*, the high court is being asked to determine whether a city-sponsored mass during a week-long Italian festival violated the establishment clause. The 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals held that the sponsorship of the Roman Catholic mass violated the establishment clause.

Attorneys for Crestwood are also raising the same question presented in the Rhode Island prayer dispute, namely whether direct or indirect government coercion is a necessary element of an establishment-clause violation.

-- In *Munn v. Algee*, the high court is being asked to decide whether juries may be instructed to determine damages in a lawsuit based on their judgment of the reasonableness of a victim's adherence to sincerely held religious beliefs.

In this Mississippi case, the plaintiff's wife, a Jehovah's Witness, died after refusing a blood transfusion following a vehicle accident. The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals held that application of the "avoidable consequences doctrine," which prevents injured plaintiffs from recovering damages that they did not take reasonable efforts to avoid, did not violate the free-exercise clause.

-- In *Rolling Meadows, Ill., v. Kuhn*, the Supreme Court is being asked to determine whether the establishment clause prohibits sectarian religious images on municipal seals. The 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that municipal seal of Rolling Meadows, Ill., which contained a leaf, a water tower, two factories and a neighborhood church with a Latin cross in front of it, violated the establishment clause because it conveyed the message that religion or a particular religion is favored.

The appeals court's ruling that the city residents who brought the suit had legal standing to do so is also being challenged.

--In *Bishop v. Delchamps*, justices are being asked to review a ruling from the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that the University of Alabama's directive barring Professor Philip Bishop from interjecting his religious beliefs during instructional periods and from conducting optional classes to present a Christian perspective did not violate the First Amendment's free-speech, free-exercise and establishment clauses.

The high court is also being asked to decide whether a public university regulating academic speech may single out a particular viewpoint, such as a religious viewpoint, for regulation.

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Supreme Court refuses
3 church-state cases

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Returning to the bench to begin its 1991-92 term, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review lower court decisions in more than 1,300 cases, including three that involved disputes over the First Amendment's religion clauses.

The high court let stand a ruling by the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that the Stafford County (Va.) School Board's refusal to provide a cued speech interpreter for a hearing-impaired student at a sectarian school did not violate the free-exercise clause of the First Amendment and that providing a publicly paid interpreter at Fredericksburg Christian School would violate the no establishment clause.

Attorneys for the school district argued that the school board has offered to provide a cued speech interpreter at a public school and that federal regulations and Virginia laws prohibit the use of funds from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act at a religious school.

Additionally, school attorneys argued that the free-exercise clause does not require the school district to assist the students in religious studies and that providing a full-time cued interpreter would violate the establishment clause by impermissibly promoting religion and creating excessive entanglement between church and state. The case is Goodall v. Stafford County School Board (91-163).

The Supreme Court also let stand a ruling from the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that upheld the dismissal of a wrongful-death claim in the death of a Mississippi Jehovah's Witness who died after refusing blood transfusions after an automobile accident.

The appeals court held that application of the "avoidable consequences doctrine," which prevents injured plaintiffs from recovering damages that they did not take reasonable efforts to avoid, did not violate the free-exercise clause. The case is Munn v. Algee (90-1844).

The high court also declined to review a Massachusetts ruling that overturned a \$610,000 verdict against the International Society for Krishna Consciousness of New England Inc. A Massachusetts jury had awarded the judgment to Susan Murphy, a former ISKCON adherent, and her mother, Mary Murphy. They had alleged intentional infliction of emotional distress, interference with the parental rights and breach of duty to provide care, among other claims.

The Massachusetts high court, which characterized the lower court proceedings as a "heresy trial," ruled that the emotional-distress claims would violate the defendants' First Amendment right to practice their religion. The case is Murphy v. I.S.K. Con. of New England (91-191).

In other action, the high court:

--Declined to review a decision by the District of Columbia Court of Appeals that attendees and contributors of Mount Jezreel Baptist Church do not have standing to block the sale of the congregations's sanctuary. The case is Williams v. Board of Trustees of Mount Jezreel Baptist Church (91-187).

--Declined to review a decision by the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that upheld the denial of a Sunday liquor license to a Springfield, Mo., billiards center under a law that permits such sales for bowling centers and other sports facilities. Attorneys for the bowling center argued in

Spudich v. Missouri Supervisor of Liquor Control (91-201) that the center had been denied equal protection required by the 14th Amendment.

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--By Larry Chesser

Postal measure prevents rate
hike for most non-profit mailers

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Congress approved a postal measure Oct. 3 that is expected to prevent a postal-rate increase for most non-profit publications, including most state Baptist newspapers.

Both houses of Congress approved a conference report for the \$19.9 billion Treasury-Postal Service appropriations bill (H.R. 2622) that includes \$470 million for the non-profit mail subsidy for fiscal 1992.

The only non-profit mailers expected to receive a rate increase are third-class publications that are "flats," or non-letter size.

Bob Terry, postal affairs representative for the Southern Baptist Press Association, said the association is grateful that second-class non-profit rates will remain the same because most state Baptist newspapers are in that classification of mail.

Both chambers of Congress earlier approved the bill with substantial differences, especially in the non-profit mail subsidy, known as revenue foregone. Revenue foregone reimburses the U.S. Postal Service for the non-profit mailers' share of overhead expenses. Non-profit mail rates reflect only the cost of handling that class of mail.

The House version appropriated \$649.3 million -- the amount the Postal Service said it needed to maintain current postal rates -- for the revenue foregone provision. The Senate version appropriated \$383 million.

The bill then went to conference committee. The conference report recommended the \$470 million figure along with a reform that was unanimously adopted by the Senate in July. The reform, which would be phased-in over a two-year period, was suggested by the Postal Rate Commission to reduce the amount needed for revenue foregone.

The reform eliminates the subsidy for third-class non-profits that mail flats. And the Postal Service could increase their rates 2.2 cents per piece during each of the next two years. Flats are being singled out because they cost more to process. The Postal Service cannot process flats mechanically, requiring more personnel to hand-sort each piece.

Although Baptist editor Terry applauded the decision, he said it is unfortunate that Congress decided to add extra charges for third-class non-profits that mail flats. Congress mandated a reform through an appropriations bill, Terry said, noting spending bills are for appropriating money, not legislating reforms.

"I think the Congress needs to play by the rules which are established, or otherwise we don't know how the ball game is played."

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--By Pam Parry

***** END *****