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Missouri Baptist messengers  
reject plan to fund BJC

By Trennis Henderson

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. (ABP) -- The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a recurring topic of controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention in recent years, took center stage during the Oct. 28-30 Missouri Baptist Convention in Springfield, Mo.

Messengers voted 890 to 700 Oct. 29 to reject a \$15,000 allocation for the BJC in Missouri Baptists' 1992 executive board budget.

The next day, however, members of the moderate-conservative Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Missouri pledged \$16,070 to replace the rejected funds.

The Missouri controversy comes on the heels of action by SBC messengers in June to defund the BJC, a Washington-based religious-liberty organization representing nine national Baptist bodies.

The Baptist Joint Committee enjoyed close ties to the Missouri Baptist Convention prior to last year. From 1986 through 1989, MBC messengers adopted resolutions supporting the BJC, including the 1989 resolution in which Missouri Baptists' voted to "voice our strong reservations about any attempt to reduce or terminate the Southern Baptist Convention's cooperation" with the Baptist Joint Committee.

Last year, however, following SBC action partially to defund the BJC, Missouri Baptist messengers declined to amend the state's Cooperative Program budget to include \$15,000 for the BJC.

During last year's debate, Bridgeton pastor Wally Jones, a member of the state's executive committee, spoke against putting the BJC in the budget, cautioning messengers against amending the budget on the floor of the convention.

During this year's debate, Jones presented the recommendation from the executive board proposing the BJC allocation and again argued against

amending the budget -- this time to delete the BJC funds -- and argued for the allocation.

"I believe very strongly that it is a mistake in procedure to amend line items in the executive board budget," Jones explained. He said his opposition to last year's proposal was "not because I opposed support for the Baptist Joint Committee but because I believe it is poor procedure to construct a budget on the convention floor."

"The fact is the Baptist Joint Committee has adhered strictly to its one specific assignment -- religious liberty," he said. "Criticism has been directed at areas not related to the issues of religious liberty."

Criticism aimed at the BJC included a four-page brochure distributed to messengers as they entered the convention center. The material, published by the Missouri Baptist Layman's Association, charged the BJC has "ties to liberal organizations and individuals."

Robert Collins of Blue Springs offered an amendment to delete the \$15,000 budgeted for the Baptist Joint Committee. "It is wrong to force the individual Baptist churches to support the Baptist Joint Committee by making it part of the Cooperative Program budget," he said. He added that "any church desiring to do so" may individually send money to the Baptist Joint Committee "by simply writing a check."

Lee Saunders of Thayer said he supports the Baptist Joint Committee "on the strength of its record." Citing the BJC's support of equal-access legislation, he said that legislation allowed 20,000 Missouri students to participate in recent prayer rallies held around school flagpoles.

Lindy Reed of Independence called the proposed allocation "a political statement." "Missouri Baptists already have a voice in Washington, that being the Christian Life Commission," Reed said. "I believe they can adequately do the job for us."

Benny King of Fenton called the proposed allocation "contribution without representation. We have no connections with the member of the board of the Baptist Joint Committee either from Missouri or from the Southern Baptist Convention.

"We say that we don't want national issues to divide us, yet we have invited the hottest issue in the Southern Baptist Convention into our parlor by putting this into our budget," King continued. "We have about as much opportunity to benefit from this contribution to the Baptist Joint Committee as the U.S. Senate had opportunity of benefiting from the public televised hearings of Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas."

Following the ballot vote to delete the BJC allocation, the remainder of the budget was approved without debate.

An estimated 250 people attended the breakfast meeting of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship the next morning, during which the \$16,070 in pledges to the BJC were announced.

Fellowship leaders later denounced the decision by Missouri Baptists. "The action of the convention is reprehensible," said Kirkwood pastor Paul Duke, a member of the national Fellowship's coordinating council. "It was a continuation of the ongoing disinheritance that Southern Baptists have been inflicting on themselves. It's a betrayal of our heritage, the selling out of our birthright. I'm ashamed."

"It was done by a substantial enough majority that we in Missouri fear a significant and permanent shift to the right," he said.

James Dunn, executive director of the BJC, attended the Missouri convention and later praised the promised funding from moderate-conservatives. "Baptists will honor this commitment, regardless of political takeover, doctrinal departure and attempts to revise Baptist history," Dunn said in a statement.

Dispute over BJC fund threatens  
Baptist relationships, leaders say

WASHINGTON, D.C. (ABP) -- Representatives of the seven Baptist denominations affiliated with the Baptist Joint Committee say the attempt by Southern Baptists to gain control of a BJC capital-needs fund is an "assault" that could "create disharmony and disunity" among Baptist groups in the United States.

In an Oct. 23 letter, the seven leaders -- all members of the BJC -- asked three key Southern Baptist leaders to stop the attempt by the SBC Christian Life Commission to gain control of an unused \$380,000 capital-needs fund assigned in 1964 to the BJC, a Washington-based religious-liberty coalition.

"We ask that you please do everything in your power to prevent this misguided attempt from coming to fruition," the letter said.

It was addressed to SBC president Morris Chapman, as well as the president and chairman of the SBC Executive Committee, which formed a task force in September to consider the disputed fund.

David Hankins, chairman of the Executive Committee and a member of the task force, declined comment on the letter, which he said would be shared with task force members. He told ABP the special committee will meet in January in an attempt to "make headway in resolving the matter."

Trustees of the Christian Life Commission say they are the rightful recipients of the money, since they replaced the BJC as the SBC's primary representative on religious-liberty issues.

In the letter to Hankins, Chapman and Executive Committee President Harold Bennett, the BJC leaders said they were disappointed but "not surprised" when Southern Baptists deleted all future SBC funding of the BJC last June. "We never could have anticipated, however, an attempt to divert funds away from the BJC that have been in its name and under its control for at least 23 years," the leaders wrote.

"This assault on the Baptist Joint Committee has significant implications for dialogue and work among Baptists," the letter continued.

"Any attempt to divert the BJC's funds to another entity could only create disharmony and disunity with our various conferences and conventions. The gravity of the matter is underscored by the potential for involvement by secular courts."

The letter was signed by BJC chairman Tyrone Pitts of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Daniel Weiss of the American Baptist Churches in the USA, Robert Ricker of the Baptist General Conference, Marvin Griffin of the National Baptist Convention of America, S.M. Wright of the National Missionary Baptist Convention, John Binder of the North American Baptist Conference, and Leon Lawton of the Seventh-day Baptist General Conference.

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-- By Greg Warner

FMB trustee action could sever  
ties with European Baptists

RUSCHLIKON, Switzerland (ABP) -- Actions by trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board against the Baptist seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, have created a backlash which could slam the door on FMB efforts to take advantage of unprecedented mission opportunities in Eastern Europe.

That backlash comes at a time when the FMB has announced a far-reaching

"Green Alert" plan to place 116 missionaries in the Soviet Union and gear up for opportunities in other newly free nations of Eastern Europe.

The backlash has escalated as a growing chorus of European Baptist leaders, including Eastern Europeans, has condemned the 35-28 vote by the FMB trustees Oct. 9 to cut off \$365,000 in promised funds to the Swiss seminary, which has students from 23 countries.

Baptist leaders of at least 17 European countries -- including the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Hungary -- have expressed dismay that the trustees took the action unexpectedly, without consultation and despite a promise by the FMB to fund the seminary through at least 1992.

That action has led Ruschlikon seminary president John David Hopper to sound the alarm that the FMB action may sever many cooperative FMB relationships with European Baptists. He strongly urged trustees to reconsider their vote.

"National leaders among these Baptists unions have made it clear that this unwarranted action...could mean the severing of many or most working relationships between the SBC and cooperating Baptists of Europe," Hopper wrote in a statement released Oct. 29 from Ruschlikon.

Hopper, a Southern Baptist missionary named Ruschlikon seminary president three years ago, quoted letters of concern from several European leaders.

Czechoslovakian Baptist General Secretary Pavel Vychopen called the trustees' vote "an unfriendly action toward us" and also disagreed with the FMB decision to give the \$365,000 slashed from Ruschlikon to theological training needs in East European countries like Czechoslovakia.

"In no means could we accept an argument that the money released in this way will be used to support theological training in Eastern Europe," the Czech leader said. "We will not only be unprepared to receive such money but we will have to re-examine our recently renewed relations with the Southern Baptist Convention."

Hungarian Baptist President Janos Viczian said: "Our people will fear that in the future the SBC will not respect the Hungarian mission agreements. Any time they might withdraw their financial support and even their missionaries. Ruschlikon could be the very first step and we could be the second."

"I am sure the Foreign Mission Board members did not recognize that in Eastern Europe we have religious freedom, and without any problem the students from these countries can attend the international Baptist seminary," Viczian said. "This decision now makes this impossible."

FMB trustee Ron Wilson of California, who helped convince trustees to cut off the funds, has been quoted as saying the decision reflects the trustees' displeasure with the seminary's theological stance -- an issue that has been simmering for years.

Wilson said the presence of Glenn Hinson as a visiting professor for a semester on the Ruschlikon faculty shows the seminary's "liberal" bias. Hinson, a professor of church history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and his seminary colleagues deny he is a liberal.

But the issue of Hinson, regardless of what individuals believe about his theology, seems to have been lost in the chorus of protest pouring out of Europe.

The issue, say European Baptists, involves trust, respect for them as equal mission partners, and keeping a promise to fund the seminary's operating budget through 1992. That promise, which included a plan to slowly decrease funding over a 15-year span, was approved by FMB trustees in 1978 and 1982 and reaffirmed in 1988.

"Many European Baptists interpret this action to mean that the Foreign Mission Board is dismissing them as being insignificant and failing to

recognize their religious freedom," Hopper said in his statement. "It is rupturing a relationship it took more than 40 years to build."

"The psychological impact is worse than the monetary impact," Hopper said. "To break these ties of 43 years abruptly, without consultation and in the face of agreements...has provoked a storm of protest from Baptist unions all over the continent."

Bulgarian Baptist President Teodor Angelov addressed the theological needs filled by the Ruschlikon seminary, which Hopper said "has trained more than 400 pastors" for service in Eastern Europe.

Angelov said the small Bulgarian Baptist Union, which has no seminary or Bible school, has been besieged by many problems since the country regained its freedom. That includes efforts by outside religious groups to drain off their young people.

"So many different denominations and parachurch organizations are coming here bringing their own ideas and wanting to teach us," he said. "Some are offering scholarships and taking away some of your best young members."

"Our answer was that we have our seminary in Ruschlikon and we do not need their help," Angelov said. "How can we withstand their proposals if the seminary in Ruschlikon will no longer exist?"

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Ruschlikon seminary launches  
fund-raising effort in U.S.

RUSCHLIKON, Switzerland (ABP) -- The Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, is set to embark on a wide-ranging financial campaign in the United States and Europe, following action by trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to eliminate about 40 percent of the school's operating budget for next year.

Seminary leaders say plans were put in place for a fund-raising effort a year ago. But the Oct. 9 decision deleting \$365,000 allocated to Ruschlikon in the FMB's 1992 budget has accelerated the effort.

Trustees omitted the money when they learned church history professor Glenn Hinson is teaching at the seminary near Zurich. Some trustees charged Hinson, on sabbatic leave from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., holds liberal views. They said his presence at Ruschlikon violates an understanding to retain more conservative professors there.

In a late-October statement, Ruschlikon president John David Hopper announced details of the fund-raising project, including:

- Employment of David Rogers of Nashville, Tenn., as the seminary's vice president for development. Rogers, a 44-year-old public relations and marketing executive, will direct the stateside campaign from Nashville and will assist the campaign in Europe, Hopper said. Rogers has been an assistant to two Tennessee Republican politicians, former Gov. Lamar Alexander and former Sen. Howard Baker.

- Approval of Cargill Associates, a Texas fund-raising organization, to conduct a feasibility study for a three-year campaign. Many of Cargill's top leaders are Southern Baptists and the firm frequently assists Southern Baptist churches in raising funds for building projects.

- Recruitment of American donors who will be "pacesetters in the campaign." Darold Morgan of Dallas, retired president of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board, will coordinate the search process.

- Selection of the Friends of Ruschlikon Foundation, established in 1989 in San Antonio, Texas, as a channel for special gifts and bequests. Contributions to the seminary also will be received through the Foreign

Mission Board and the moderate-conservative Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

In a related action, Virginia Baptists are expected to consider a motion to allocate \$100,000 to the Ruschlikon seminary through the 1992 budget of the Baptist General Association of Virginia. John Herndon, a former Southern Baptist missionary in Europe now serving as a Virginia pastor, announced plans to present the motion to the November meeting of Virginia Baptists.

Herndon, pastor of Jefferson Park Baptist Church in Charlottesville and missionary to Portugal from 1964-79, said the funds would come from the \$1.6 million designated to the Foreign Mission Board in the proposed 1992 Virginia budget.

Also a resolution is expected to surface at the Nov. 12-13 Virginia meeting that would ask the Virginia-based FMB to restore the \$365,000 allocated for Ruschlikon and apologize to the seminary and European leaders.

The eliminated \$365,000 was part of a 1978 agreement between the FMB and seminary to fully fund the school through 1992, then slowly reduce support. Seminary President Hopper said the fund-raising campaign was initiated to meet Ruschlikon's financial needs beyond that time. But the unexpected FMB action "has forced the seminary to accelerate the fund-raising effort," Hopper said.

"We think that friends of a Baptist witness in Europe will rally to support a financial campaign now underway" for Ruschlikon, said Hopper, himself a missionary appointed by the Foreign Mission Board.

The president said gifts could be sent through the Friends of Ruschlikon Foundation, P.O. Box 791052, San Antonio, Texas 78279-1052; the Foreign Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, Va. 23230; or the Baptist Cooperative Missions Program Inc., P.O. Box 450329, Atlanta, Ga. 30345-0329.

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-- By Robert Dilday

Senate approves  
civil rights bill

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Senate may have ended a two-year stalemate between Congress and the White House by approving a compromise civil rights bill Oct. 30.

The Senate approved the bill (S. 1745) by a 93-to-5 vote.

The Civil Rights Act of 1991 is designed to negate a series of 1989 and 1991 Supreme Court decisions that have made it more difficult for women and minorities 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.

The bill would allow women to collect damages for sexual discrimination, with caps ranging from \$50,000 to \$300,000 depending on the company's size. No caps were put on racial bias.

The Senate also approved an amendment applying anti-discrimination laws to employees of the Senate and executive branch and making senators personally liable for damages.

Controversy and heated partisan debates have engulfed the civil rights legislation for nearly two years. President George Bush vetoed a civil rights measure last year, because he said it was "a quota bill" that would lead to reverse discrimination. The Senate failed to override the veto.

The bill (H.R. 1) was reintroduced in the U.S. House of Representatives

in January 1991 and was approved handily, 273-158, June 5. Bush again threatened to veto.

For months, Sen. John Danforth, R-Mo., waged an effort to reach a Senate-White House compromise, but it seemed doubtful until negotiations produced an agreement Oct. 25.

The compromise primarily deals with job practices that lead to unintentional bias. From 1971 to 1989, businesses had to show that such discriminatory practices were necessary for their operation. In 1989, a U.S. Supreme Court decision (Wards Cove Packing Co. V. Atonio) reversed the burden of proof; workers had to demonstrate that practices hurting them had no "business necessity."

The original bill would have returned the burden of proof to employers. Bush opposed that provision because he said it would bring quota systems to avoid litigation. While the new language would place the burden with employers, it would give considerable leeway to the courts in determining what constitutes a business necessity.

Bush said he will support the compromise bill. The House is expected to take action as early as next week.

The Senate, which recently was embroiled in a debate over sexual harassment during confirmation hearings for Supreme Court judge Clarence Thomas, also unanimously approved a resolution (S. Res. 209) condemning sexual harassment.

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-- By Pam Parry

Arson blamed in string  
of Florida church fires

By Barbara Denman

OCALA, Fla. (ABP) -- Three Florida Baptist churches were among six congregations in Central Florida hit by suspicious fires during a six-day period in late October. They are the latest additions to a growing list of Florida churches victimized by suspected arsonists.

Since January, 21 Central Florida churches of various sizes and denominations have suffered fires determined to be either arson (12), suspected arson (four) or of unknown origin (five). Most are in Gainesville and Winter Haven. Most of the fires were reported in the early morning hours.

The rash of fires has prompted some church members to set up nightly vigils in their church buildings, a practice not recommended by fire officials.

By far the church most seriously damaged was First Baptist Church of Ocala. The congregation's sanctuary and two educational buildings were destroyed by arson Oct. 24. The loss was estimated at \$4 million.

North Central Baptist Church in Gainesville sustained at least \$25,000 in damage to its sanctuary in an arsonist's blaze Oct. 23. On the same day but further south, Zolfo Springs Baptist Church in Zolfo Springs suffered a \$200,000 loss in a fire of undetermined origin.

Firemen worked for more than four hours to save the buildings of the downtown Ocala church. Flames from the early-morning blaze licked the brick walls above every window of the historic church.

Established in 1850, the congregation built its present sanctuary in 1926. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Ocala church probably will be without a permanent meeting site for two years. The first Sunday after the fire, 1,800 members of the congregation gathered at an Assembly of God church to worship and to look to the future.

"Our initial reaction was one of horror and sadness," said Ed Johnson, pastor of the 3,300-member Ocala church. "But our folks know that God will somehow do great works through this tragedy that has occurred."

The congregation recently finished paying for a \$2 million, 29-acre site on which it planned to build a new facility. Although the plan to move had met some resistance from long-time church members, the fire has united the congregation and solidified its resolve, Johnson said. "We'll look back on this and rejoice with what we have been able to accomplish," he added.

The buildings were insured, but Johnson said he is unsure whether the insurance money will cover the damage. The church's offices, located across the street, were unscathed by the fire.

In Gainesville, firefighters were fighting a blaze at First Church of Christ, Scientist, when a second fire was discovered nearby at North Central Baptist. Although the Christian Science church was destroyed, the fire at North Central was brought under control before serious damage was done.

This is the second time since January that North Central Church sustained damage from a mysterious fire. On both occasions, a nearby church of another denomination was burned to the ground.

"We believe the providence of God has protected us, again," said Greg Hochstetler, associate pastor at the Gainesville church. He estimated the church will regain use of the sanctuary in three weeks.

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Supreme Court case may be  
church-state turning point

By Lacy Thompson

WASHINGTON, D.C. (ABP) -- Next month marks the 200th anniversary of the nation's Bill of Rights, but many religious-liberty advocates are foregoing a celebration just yet.

For one thing, they are too busy struggling to restore a key protection of the "free exercise of religion" that they say was guaranteed by the Constitution's First Amendment but rendered null and void last year by the U.S. Supreme Court.

In addition, a Supreme Court hearing Nov. 6 could result in another critical change in how church and state relate in this country.

"It could be a crossroads," American Jewish Congress lawyer Marc Stern said of the upcoming religious-liberty court case. "It may well mark a turning point in church-state relations."

At issue in the Nov. 6 case (Lee v. Weisman) is whether a Rhode Island school violated the First Amendment by allowing an invocation and benediction at a school commencement exercise. Lower courts have said the prayers violated the ban on establishment of religion by the state. The high court will review those rulings.

But that issue pales in comparison to the larger question the case poses for the court, namely, how to interpret the First Amendment clause that protects against the establishment of religion.

"This case has become a vehicle for this greater debate about what the proper relationship between government and religion is," says Oliver Thomas, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee, a Washington-based religious-liberty coalition.

The U.S. Justice Department has asked the high court to use the prayer case to overturn its longstanding test for determining when the state has violated the constitutional ban on establishment.

Many religious leaders decry that attempt, insisting it will open a veritable Pandora's box of woes for church and state. Other religious voices

say it is time for a new test that better accommodates religion in the public arena.

For Baptists, the issue is of particular importance. Historically, Baptists have been champions of religious liberty. In fact, Baptists played a key role in drafting the Bill of Rights, which opens with the First Amendment's promise that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

It was a long fight gaining that protection. But the struggle has continued over what that simple sentence in the First Amendment means.

Ultimately, it has fallen on the nation's Supreme Court to do such defining. For the last 20-30 years, the court has used the so-called "Lemon test" and a "compelling-interest" standard to guide that task.

The compelling-interest test relates to the free-exercise portion of the First Amendment. For 30 years, the test required the government to prove it had a compelling interest and had exhausted all alternatives before it could burden a person's religious exercise or practice.

Last year, however, the high court rejected that standard, ruling that government only has to prove a "reasonable interest" in order to restrict someone's religious practice.

With near unanimity, religious leaders have decried the move as opening the door to all sorts of government intervention into religion and essentially negating the First Amendment protection of free exercise. They also have joined ranks to push for a legislative remedy to the problem through the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. However, Congress has yet to consider that measure.

However, no such unanimity has developed in the debate over the Lemon test, which for the time being at least continues to guide the court in establishment cases. The three-part Lemon test was devised out of the 1971 *Lemon v. Kurtzman* case and stipulates that government action related to religion must have a secular purpose, can neither promote nor restrain religion, and must avoid excessive entanglement with religion. If a government action fails at any point, it is unconstitutional under the test.

At this point, however, the future of the Lemon test is uncertain, which makes many church-state experts nervous. "We're in a period of extreme transition on all church-state issues," BJC's Thomas said. "And my fear is that the Supreme Court is getting out of the business of enforcing either clause rigorously."

Observers cite various factors that led this crossroads.

Increased pluralism in America has heightened the focus on minority rights and freedoms. The Supreme Court has undergone a fundamental shift as well, from a liberal/moderate majority to a conservative makeup.

In addition, the rise of the so-called "moral majority" and new religious right has fueled reconsideration of what is meant by separation of church and state and the First Amendment. Some religious conservatives make no bones about it, blaming the separation concept and the Lemon test for a host of social ills.

Thus, the unanimity the religious community has found on free-exercise issue on the one hand quickly disappears in debate over the establishment clause and Lemon test.

On one side, those who favor a strict division between government and religion (separationists) argue the Lemon test has served the nation well, forcing government neutrality toward religion.

On the other, those who favor what has been called a "benevolent neutrality" and government accommodation of religion (accommodationists) insist Lemon has created confusion and an artificially secular society that favors the absence of faith over any faith.

The Baptist Joint Committee upholds the first view and has joined in a Supreme Court legal brief urging the high court to maintain the Lemon test.

Meanwhile, the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has proposed a new "accommodation" test to replace Lemon.

Separationists insist a move away from Lemon would lead to extensive government involvement in religion, harm the cause of Christ, result in a majoritarian society in which religions would battle for influence, and fuel massive relitigation of all existing church-state standards.

Separationists especially decry the "no coercion" view proposed by the U.S. Justice Department. That view essentially mirrors a suggestion from Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy that would allow government involvement in religion as long as government did not coerce anyone to support or participate in any religion and did not act in a way that would create a state church or religion.

Separationists warn that such a move would allow all sorts of government promotion of religion. Government could finance religious education, erect religious displays and even pass laws requiring religious behavior as long as they did not favor one religion to the point of setting up a national church.

Thomas said the Justice Department proposal would replace the traditional wall of separation between church and state with a picket fence.

In a court brief on the issue, University of Texas law professor Douglas Laycock notes: "(The) coercion standard would leave America's many religions exposed to the corrupting intrusions of government. Government could sponsor preferred churches, preferred theologies, preferred liturgies, preferred forms of worship and preferred forms of prayer. Government by its sheer size, visibility, authority and pervasiveness could profoundly affect the future of religion in America."

Laycock and others argue the courts have never supported a mere coercion test and that the nation's first Congress rejected that low standard during debate over the First Amendment.

To move in that direction now would mean a divisive shift in which the religion that is promoted is the one favored by the majority, critics suggest.

That may sound fine to some, especially those in the majority. However, Thomas noted freedom of religion never was intended to be a matter of majority rule.

"The Bill of Rights is in the Constitution to place some values that are so fundamental to our system of government, so fundamental to the American way of life, that we have placed those values beyond the reach of the majority," he said. "So we don't care if you're a majority of one when it comes to your speech, what you write, what you believe, what you practice in your religion. We're going to protect it -- until now."

Historian Barry Hankins noted it was not so long ago that Baptists were a minority and needed protection from majority rule and persecution. "I say a principle is a principle," explained Hankins, a professor at Louisiana College in Pineville. "If it's right for you when you need it, it's right for others even when you don't need it."

And subtle persecution would come with a scuttling of Lemon, separationists insist. In fact, there could be a resulting patchwork of state laws regarding religion, favoring one group in one area, another group in another area.

The relitigation that would result from a new standard would be a nightmare as well, coming not just on the national level but at individual state levels as well, onlookers warn. "Lawyers would clean up," Stern said. "Everything would be up for grabs," Thomas added.

That scares many, including Hankins. "To me, religion is just too important to be a prerogative of the government. If you want to see the government mess something up, watch what they do to religion."

However, accommodationists say that already has happened with Lemon. Richard Land, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, notes:

"The test guarantees not neutrality but hostility toward religion. Lemon favors those who do not believe over those who do believe and segregates religion in the public school arena."

Accommodationists contend Lemon has led government to seek to remove all religious reference in the public arena, thus discriminating against religious expression. They also contend the test has given minorities unfair power to contest and ban religious expression.

Land focuses on how this has impacted schools and insists there must be a delineation between what schools cannot do and what students must be allowed to do, namely, exercise their religious convictions.

Land also dismissed the threat of majoritarianism by noting there is no danger as long as a school is accommodating religion and not weighing in for one particular religion.

He also suggested the Constitution has no guarantee against being offended. "If the word 'God' uttered in a profanity is protected First Amendment speech even if offensive to believers, then the word 'God' invoked in a prayer is protected First Amendment speech even if offensive to non-believers."

At that point, the CLC and other groups agree with the Justice Department -- Lemon needs to be scrapped. A CLC brief on the case says: "An establishment-clause test should be reformulated to allow official accommodation, but not official endorsement, of religious speech." It also urges the court to protect "religious expression in civic ceremonies so long as official coercion is absent."

However, Land parts company with the Justice Department in what kind of test should replace Lemon. He insists the rights of minorities must be protected but not allowed to supersede the rights of others. He also maintains the CLC opposes any action to favor one religion over another and denies that a move to an accommodation standard will result in that trend.

Land agrees that Justice Kennedy's test does not offer adequate protection. In fact, he says that's why the CLC decided to file a brief offering a "better and more balanced alternative."

The CLC test proposes three questions to be asked regarding church-state issues -- whether government action induces or coerces particular beliefs, forces persons to participate in religious observance, or favors one form of religious belief over another. The test also proposes a similar question for cases involving tax money.

Other tests have been proposed as well, but Land says he is hopeful the court will consider seriously the CLC proposal.

However, it is not even assured the court will turn away from Lemon. Thomas sees three possibilities: a decision to stay with Lemon and uphold the commencement prayer in question as not representing a significant endorsement of religion; a decision to stay with Lemon and reject the commencement prayer as unconstitutional; or a decision to scuttle Lemon while holding the commencement prayer constitutional.

Thomas dismisses the middle scenario as very unlikely, leaving the fight to whether Lemon will be upheld or not.

It appears four justices (William Rehnquist, Antonin Scalia, Byron White and Kennedy) are ready to scrap Lemon. Three justices (Sandra Day O'Connor, John Paul Stephens and Harry Blackmun) apparently support the long-standing test. The deciding votes fall to the newest justices -- David Souter and Clarence Thomas.

"We don't know how these two justices will vote," Thomas admitted.

In the end, how they vote will determine if *Lee v. Weisman* stands as a historical landmark in the modern church-and-state era. Until that vote is known, however, the jury is out. As Stern pointed out, "Only nine people know for sure, and I'm not one of them."

Insurance crisis puts squeeze  
on Baptist ministers, churches

By Toby Druin and Ferrell Foster

DALLAS (ABP) -- When it comes to medical insurance, Southern Baptist ministers and churches nationwide are caught in an economic vise grip between rising costs and reduced benefits.

Churches that use the medical insurance offered by the Southern Baptist Annuity Board have seen insurance premiums climb 81 percent over a five-year period. Church ministers and employees, like their counterparts in other vocations, face the dilemma of premiums they can't afford and protection they can't afford to be without.

That dilemma was demonstrated by three Baptist ministers in Illinois who sat down recently to talk about the problem. One was considering discarding Annuity Board coverage, one already had, and the other had no choice but to stay with the plan.

Scott Harner is 35, a healthy husband, father and pastor with much of his ministry ahead of him. He wants to keep Annuity Board coverage and the long-term benefits it provides, but the premiums are eating into the income his family needs to live on today.

Albert Moore is 72, a retired minister now serving as an interim pastor, and he is healthy. He dropped Annuity Board coverage several years ago to get a better rate on his Medicare supplement and for better service. He's glad he did.

Verlee Eaker is 62, an associational director of missions with a health problem that makes independent insurance coverage too expensive. He has no choice but to stay with the Annuity Board plan.

The Annuity Board's commitment not to cancel the policies or raise the rates of high-risk participants like Eaker is one reason why everybody's rates have skyrocketed, board administrators say.

Do the Illinois ministers blame the Annuity Board for the problems?

"I want to believe that the Annuity Board is caught just as I am," said Eaker, who has diabetes. "The young, the healthy are getting out and that leaves the Annuity Board saddled with those of us who are old and with health problems.

"I still have faith in the Annuity Board," he added.

Harner agreed, but the young pastor seemed less certain. "When I see inflation eating into provisions for my family...." Harner left the sentence unfinished.

"When I get a raise the only place it is going is straight to insurance," Harner said. "It's not going to additional food. It's not going to more clothing. It's not going to additional provision."

If improvements aren't made in the Annuity Board's program, Harner said, "I'm going to drop out because, regardless of my loyalty, you know I'm punishing my family right now."

Harner realizes the effect his departure would have, when coupled with thousands of others. When healthy ministers drop out, he said, the premiums go up more and drive out others. "It just keeps on spiraling the rates higher."

Moore already has departed. Although retired, he is healthy and was able to secure medical coverage at less expense. "I felt like they were rather high for us, and then the service was not quite what we thought we should have," he said, adding he and his wife have had no second thoughts about the wisdom of their move.

Baptist ministers and employees from around the country tell stories

that are quite similar, and often much worse. Since Annuity Board rates are based on the zip codes of participants, those who live in cities with high-priced health care have been hit particularly hard.

Annuity Board premiums have increased as much as 300 percent in South Florida since the board instituted zip-based rates, said Doyle Wetherington, director of missions for the Miami Baptist Association. Many Miami churches have been forced to drop coverage for their pastors, he said.

Consider the plight of one ethnic pastor in Miami whose insurance premiums already exceed \$1,000 a month -- more than his monthly salary. His wife's paycheck has been paying for all other family expenses besides health insurance. Now her paycheck will have to be stretched even further to cover the premium increases announced by the Annuity Board for Jan. 1.

The good news is the Annuity Board will boost rates only 4.9 percent for the programs that cover most church ministers and employees -- the church and seminarian comprehensive medical plans. That's the lowest increase since 1987.

The bad news is the rate will go up again six months later. The average increase for 1992 is expected to be 11 percent.

Add that 11 percent to 20 percent in 1988, 30 percent in 1989 and 20 percent in 1990, and it adds up to financial disaster for many.

The problem is serious enough that it prompted five motions at the Southern Baptist Convention last June, each calling for some form of relief. All were referred to the Annuity Board, which administers the SBC's medical-insurance programs for churches, state conventions and agencies.

The health-care crisis is also attracting attention elsewhere:

-- The weekly publication of the United Methodist Church said in a two-issue series that the cost of medical insurance is seriously threatening the mission and ministry of the church.

-- A survey of 600 chief executive officers of American corporations indicated that providing medical coverage for employees was by far the largest problem they face.

-- The CBS Evening News recently devoted portions of every newscast for a week to the health-care crisis.

-- A recent New York Times/CBS News poll revealed that 29 percent of Americans -- maybe as many as 70 million people -- had no health insurance during the past year. Three persons out of 10 had remained in a job simply to keep the health-insurance benefits.

It will be a rare Southern Baptist church -- large or small -- that doesn't rethink its approach to medical insurance in future budgeting. How a church responds may depend in large measure on its size.

Churches with smaller memberships often offer the pastor a salary package, out of which he pays for health insurance for himself and his family. Too often, however, the package gets no larger when the cost of insurance goes up.

One Texas pastor noted increases in his salary during the past four years have not even kept pace with the increased cost of health insurance, much less with other cost-of-living increases.

Larger churches, which at one time customarily provided health insurance for all ministerial staff members and dependents, increasingly are paying only for coverage of the minister or employee, and maybe not all of that.

For instance, First Baptist Church of Dallas, the largest SBC church with some 28,000 members, provides medical insurance for all of its 100-plus full-time employees but not for dependents. The 7,000-member First Baptist Church of Arlington, Texas, now asks its ministers to contribute \$100 a month to help defray the cost of medical insurance and no longer pays for dependent coverage.

In Florida, the state convention has appointed a committee to study the escalating insurance costs for churches. Meanwhile, the state convention has

authorized spending contingency funds to assist pastors facing medical emergencies. Robert Knight, a Miami pastor and chairman of the State Board of Missions, said the health-care crisis is creating "a new class of indigents in Miami" -- Baptist preachers.

Like churches, state conventions and Southern Baptist agencies are also feeling the pinch of rising health-insurance costs. Group plans are expected to rise about 25 percent this year for the fourth year in succession.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas will spend \$820,000 in 1992 to provide its 250 employees with health insurance. The BGCT will pay 80 percent of the premiums and the employee will pay 20 percent. Dependent coverage is not included.

Southern Baptists' mission boards have not escaped the escalating prices either.

The Home Mission Board will provide insurance for some 1,190 missionaries and their families and 530 retirees at an annual cost of \$7.5 million in 1992. Although the HMB is essentially self-insured, reimbursing Aetna to process its claims, the cost of the program has risen 67 percent in the past five years. To cope, missionaries began paying about 10 percent of premiums in 1990.

At the Foreign Mission Board, health-care costs are increasing "at almost four times the rate of increase in income for the board," said Carl Johnson, vice president and treasurer. Between 1986 and 1990, he noted, the average annual increase in missionary medical expenses was 14.77 percent, while the average annual increase in FMB funding was 3.98 percent.

No increase is expected this year in the FMB's two primary sources of income -- the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and the SBC Cooperative Program. "It is the first time since 1932 that both Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and Cooperative Program receipts have been less than the year before in the same year," Johnson said.

Employees at the FMB's headquarters in Richmond, Va., are covered through a conventional insurance company. Employees pay for the cost of their dependents and, depending on their coverage options, may pay for part of their own insurance.

Historically the board has been self-insured for all missionary medical expenses, Johnson said. But beginning in August, the board has been insured for catastrophic claims exceeding \$10,000 with Lloyd's of London. One claim this year has reached approximately \$750,000, he noted.

Large losses will drive the insurance industry in the future, said Baptist layman and insurance agent Lyman Eudy of Jonesboro, Ill. "Very definitely, insurance is going to be retooled for the big loss rather than the small loss," said Eudy, a State Farm agent and former treasurer at First Baptist Church of Jonesboro.

Eudy, who sold 72-year-old Albert Moore the policy to replace his Annuity Board insurance, was sympathetic about the Annuity Board's plight. Like all insurance providers, he said, the Annuity Board is caught in the wake of rising health-care prices.

There is no easy solution to the problem, "and I don't have the answer," Eudy said. But Americans in general are going to have to change the way they think about medical insurance, he said.

"It's not a maintenance program," Eudy said. "It's not for small losses. And that's just the way its going to be." Insurance companies "can't pay everything and stay in business," he said.

Annuity Board's insurance program  
on the mend, Paul Powell says

By Toby Druin

DALLAS (ABP) -- The health-insurance program of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board has been "sick" but it is beginning to get well, according to board President Paul Powell.

"Premiums are catching up with the claims," he said. "We feel like we have stopped the bleeding, and are on the road to having a good program. If that continues, maybe we can begin to offer some options."

The announcement that the Annuity Board's 1992 health-insurance rates for most church ministers and employees will go up "only" 4.9 percent on Jan. 1, and the increase for the year will be "only" 11 percent, bear out Powell's prediction about the improving condition of the insurance program administered by the Annuity Board.

But an average increase of 11 percent is good only when compared with the upward spiral of the rates in recent years -- 20 percent in 1988, 30 percent in 1989, and an average of 20 percent again in January 1990, when a shift was made to a six-month rating schedule and to a zip code-based rating system. Rates went up again in July 1990 by almost 15 percent when Annuity Board switched from Aetna to Prudential as the insurance provider.

Powell said the skyrocketing rates resulted because the Annuity Board had not increased its rates during a period when health-care prices escalated industrywide. As a consequence, over a period of a little more than three years, the board paid out of its insurance reserve \$33 million more than it collected in premiums.

The premium increases over the last three years have brought the plan to a state of near good health, Powell said, but they have also brought criticism from churches and ministers who, in many instances, have seen the increases outstrip their resources to pay.

At the Southern Baptist Convention last June five motions were made related to health insurance and its rising cost. One asked for a provision permitting persons beyond child-bearing age to opt out of maternity coverage. Another sought lower copayment limits, the amount paid by the insured. A third sought lower premiums for smaller churches. A fourth asked support for ministers' wives whose husbands divorce them. And the fifth asked the convention to consider buying an insurance company or establishing its own to reduce rates.

The motions all were referred to the Annuity Board, which has considered them but will not be able to act on them, Powell said.

Powell said Southern Baptists must realize two important benefits about the insurance program administered by the Annuity Board: "First, it is portable. If you are in our plan, you can move from church to church without having to be reinsured.

"Another thing is we do not cancel anybody's insurance. Because we never reunderwrite and never cancel anybody out, we keep on our rolls 6,000 or 7,000 very unhealthy people. Other companies periodically underwrite their program and eliminate those people so they can keep their premiums down. We never do that."

Premiums could be reduced immediately, Powell said, if the high-risk participants were dropped, "but we would leave a lot of sick people out there high and dry. If we are going to continue to cover them, then the premiums are going to be higher for some young, healthy people who could go out and get a cheaper policy somewhere else."

One of the things that drives the premiums even higher is that those "young, healthy people" are doing just that -- leaving the Annuity Board program for cheaper coverage elsewhere.

"And you can't blame them," Powell observed. "But at the same time it hurts the program. And one of these days they are liable to want back in (the Annuity Board program) and they are going to face the same problem."

Many ministers and other employees have the option of getting out of the program because smaller churches, with fewer than 10 staff members or employees, qualify for an "association" plan rather than a "group" plan. Group plans require that all employees be in the program; association plans do not.

Lower rates possibly could be extended to smaller churches if they were in a group plan. But a study commissioned by Powell concluded that Southern Baptist polity would have to be changed before local churches could be required to include all their employees in the health-insurance plan.

"The only way to have a true group is for it to be compulsory to be in the plan," said Powell. "When they can opt in and out, the healthy ones have a tendency to leave and the sick ones tend to stay. So things get out of balance, and you have too many claims against it."

Once out, a person has to prove insurability to get back in, whereas if he or she moves from one church to another or from one institution to another that has its insurance program with the Annuity Board, the coverage is "portable" or transferable.

Mark Ely, new pastor at College Heights Baptist Church, Cleburne, Texas, said he has some health problems and would not want to consider going to a church that did not offer insurance coverage through the Annuity Board. He got out of the Annuity Board program once, he said, and fared well for three or four years until his new insurance company raised his rates and then went bankrupt.

Don French, who recently became pastor at First Church, Ingleside, Texas, transferred his health insurance coverage from his previous church too. And despite the fact that the Frenches incurred considerable medical expenses with the premature birth of twin girls, his insurance rate has dropped with the move to a new zip code -- from \$532 monthly in the Houston area to \$439 monthly at Ingleside.

The zip code rating system considers the cost of medical care in a given area and affixes premiums accordingly. The system has 12 rate areas. Rates for a typical family of four range from \$382 a month in area one to \$915 a month in area 12.

The frustrations expressed by Southern Baptists who introduced the motions at the SBC in June are simply reflections of a nationwide crisis, Powell noted.

"The biggest problem we face," he said, "is the pastor in the smaller church who is having to pay the cost of his insurance out of his own pocket. Most businessmen and employees of state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention don't realize what their insurance costs because it is provided for them. It is the man who has to pay out of his own pocket who knows the real cost of health insurance."

And those who are having to pay out of their own pockets are the ones asking the Annuity Board to subsidize premiums, Powell said.

"But the Annuity Board has no money of its own" to subsidize insurance premiums, he noted. "We simply manage the money of ministers and employees and we are not free to use it to subsidize someone else's program."

It would take an astronomical sum of money to reduce rates by any significant amount, Powell said.

"We receive about \$100 million a year in premiums," he said. "To make any significant difference across the board we would have to cut people's premiums in half."

That would require \$150 million, Powell said, which means even if the entire national budget of the SBC were used to subsidize rates, the subsidy would reduce rates only by half.

"It simply cannot be done," he said, "although one of the first things we did was to ask if any funds were available. There are no funds, we were told. The Cooperative Program has enough shortfall as it is."

Powell acknowledged there is a mindset among many that since their churches support the Cooperative Program, their health-insurance costs should be cared for or at least subsidized. Many smaller churches, however, do not give as much to the Cooperative Program as the cost of their pastor's insurance program.

Establishing its own insurance company or purchasing one is not the answer to lower costs, Powell said.

"The person who made the motion (at the convention last June) said we should start our own company and take the profits and subsidize the premiums," said Powell.

"If we started our own company, a profit-making company, the premiums would be substantially higher," he continued. "Since we are only administering the program as it is now, we are as cheap as you can get."

"Basically, we are self-insured, and we simply contract with Prudential to manage the program. We pay them 6 percent of our premiums to process all claims, help us set premiums to determine what they are going to pay for a benefit, and administer it. We receive the premiums and pay the claims. So the program is just what it costs."

A for-profit company would charge as much as 35 percent for profit and administrative costs, whereas the Annuity Board's comparable cost is 6 percent, he observed.

The Annuity Board and Prudential announced a new innovation in coverage in July that met some of the requests at the SBC. They put together a "preferred provider organization" or PPO, available in many areas, to lower deductibles and copayments if participants use certain hospitals and physicians. Participants in 10 localities were notified of enhanced benefits available through the plan, called PruNetwork. Additional hospitals were added in September and more will be added by January.

The problem of rising medical-care costs is vast, Powell said.

"For example, probably 20 percent of health costs in America are due to malpractice insurance," he continued. "Doctors and hospitals have to carry so much insurance (that) the cost of it is passed on. In Texas you can sue an obstetrician up to 20 years after the birth of a child. That is ridiculous, but the doctor has to carry insurance to cover that."

"Also, if a person goes to an emergency room at a hospital, the hospital must treat him. So emergency rooms spend all weekend treating gunshot wounds, people wounded in bars and fights. And somebody has to pay for it. If the patients can't pay, the costs are passed along to those who can -- the insurance companies."

For the last several years, the government has underfunded Medicare, Powell pointed out, and as the costs of medicine and services have gone up, the deficit has been made up by passing on additional charges to those who can pay.

"We are not just paying for our own medical care," said Powell. "We are also paying for malpractice insurance and the 37 million Americans who have no insurance and everybody who goes to an emergency room and can't pay."

Another factor in the rising costs is the tendency to overuse medicine, Powell said.

"We go to the doctor or hospital if the least thing goes wrong and expect medical insurance to pay for it," he said.

The crisis is of such magnitude, he said, that the federal government probably will step in eventually and set up a national health-care program.

"I don't think that is the best solution," he said. "It may be the easiest solution, and we in America have a tendency to take the easy way out."

In the meantime, he said, the Annuity Board will stay in the insurance business, seeking ways to offer the best plan for the least money. One solution might be to offer the option of a catastrophic policy to protect against a high-dollar claim but keep the premium low enough so that a young pastor on a relatively small income could handle it.

"The pastor in the small church is having a tough time," Powell said, "and I promise if there is any way to give him better insurance at a cheaper price, we will be the first to do it."

"But in 1989 there were 43 life and health insurance companies that went out of business. Up until now we have had sufficient money to pay every legitimate claim, and we want to continue to pay them. But the program must pay for itself and most people understand that. We can't pay out more than we take in."

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Congress probes decision to approve  
inerrantist accrediting agency

By Greg Warner

WASHINGTON, D.C. (ABP) -- A congressional subcommittee is investigating whether Lamar Alexander, secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, misused his authority when he granted federal recognition to an agency that accredits Christian colleges.

Alexander gave department recognition to the Transnational Association of Christian Schools July 26 over the objections of the department's advisory board, which has voted against approval of TRACS three times since 1988.

The congressional investigation was initiated Sept. 13 by Rep. Ted Weiss, D-N.Y., chairman of the House subcommittee on human resources and intergovernmental relations. Weiss has asked for all Department of Education documents related to the TRACS decision.

The congressional probe will try to find out if Alexander's approval, which has caused a stir in both governmental and educational circles, was granted "within the restrictions of the law," according to the lead investigator.

Transnational, based in Murfreesboro, Tenn., was founded in 1979 to serve as a national accrediting agency for Christian institutions that believe in biblical inerrancy, biblical authority, creationism and the historicity of the first 11 chapters of Genesis.

Some SBC leaders have suggested SBC colleges and seminaries affiliate with TRACS. The agency currently accredits seven institutions, including Luther Rice Seminary in Atlanta and Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., but agency officials predict the list will grow to 100 now that TRACS has been approved by the government.

Government recognition is one important step in any attempt by a new accrediting agency to gain national acceptance. Only colleges accredited by government-approved agencies are eligible for federal student aid.

Equally essential, however, is recognition of a new agency by the country's other accrediting bodies, as represented by the Council on Post-secondary Accreditation. Colleges normally must be accredited by COPA-approved agencies before their degrees and course credits will be accepted at other accredited schools.

The Education Department's advisory panel, in recommending against government approval of TRACS, said the agency's standards are not recognized nationally by any other accrediting agency. Supporters of TRACS, however, say those agencies are discriminating against TRACS because its doctrinal

positions are unpopular among educators.

Alexander, who authorized an appeal hearing for TRACS after its third panel rejection, apparently approved TRACS's application on the basis of a Department of Education report that said two recognized accreditation agencies had approved of Transnational -- an assertion both agencies deny.

According to Transnational officials, both the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the American Association of Bible Colleges agreed to conduct joint accreditation visits with TRACS. The Department of Education report submitted to Alexander argued such visits are "tantamount to recognition."

Both accrediting agencies deny the visits ever took place, however, according to the Chronicle of Higher Education, an education journal. And both agencies said they have neither reviewed nor endorsed TRACS's standards.

However, Gordon Henry, TRACS executive director, said the American Association of Bible Colleges agreed to sign a reciprocity agreement with TRACS once it received government recognition.

There is disagreement among TRACS's supporters and detractors over the value of COPA approval. Both Henry and Gene Williams, president of Luther Rice Seminary, said approval by the Department of Education is all that's needed to make degrees and credits from TRACS schools transferable. But other educators say TRACS will have to be recognized by COPA before degrees from its schools will gain such legitimacy.

Government recognition "will be enough," Henry said. "At this point, TRACS has not made application to COPA since recognition from the U.S. Secretary of Education meets our present needs."

Henry told ABP the Education Department's advisory council withheld endorsement of TRACS only because the group failed to see "the need for an accrediting agency that would do what TRACS would do."

Council members contend AABC and the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada can meet the needs of inerrantist institutions, Henry said. "But we have some (institutions) that are very suspicious of regulators," he explained. "They would not turn to a secular agency, but they would turn to TRACS."

Henry said he welcomed the congressional investigation, since TRACS is in compliance with the Department of Education's "very meticulous" standards for recognition.

Mark Smolonsky, an investigator on the staff of Rep. Weiss' subcommittee, said the unique character of TRACS is not an issue in the investigation.

"The issue is whether or not the Department of Education handled this process properly," said Smolonsky, who is conducting the investigation. He said an earlier decision by Alexander to recognize another accrediting agency also prompted an investigation.

Smolonsky said the latest investigation was begun not at the request of TRACS's critics but on Weiss' own initiative. "He has some concerns that the process was not done within the restrictions of the law," Smolonsky said.

As a result of the investigation, the Department of Education could be forced to withdraw recognition of TRACS or to change the way it approves accrediting agencies. "Theoretically, if the department acted improperly, it would have to correct whatever is wrong, if something is wrong," Smolonsky said.

Henry said TRACS is not worried that the hard-earned recognition from the Department of Education will be withdrawn. "There's not going to be anything like that, I am relatively sure, because we have the documentation," he said.

No timetable has been announced for concluding the investigation.

Some Southern Baptist leaders have suggested TRACS, if it becomes fully

recognized, can provide Baptist seminaries and colleges with an alternative source of accreditation.

Currently all six Southern Baptist seminaries are accredited by the Association of Theological Schools as well as by regional accrediting agencies -- all COPA-approved. Close scrutiny of the seminaries by ATS and at least one regional agency has prompted some critics to call for the seminaries to withdraw from those agencies and for the Southern Baptist Convention to establish its own accrediting agency.

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Missouri pastor bikes  
for state missions

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- How can a church promote a familiar offering in a fresh way? Members of First Baptist Church of Jefferson City, Mo., did that recently by sponsoring their pastor, Gary Parker, in a bicycle ride across Missouri to raise money for state missions.

Members were encouraged to sponsor Parker in the 250-mile ride at a per-mile rate of their choice or by making a lump-sum donation. Proceeds went to the Rheubin L. South Missouri Missions Offering. The project helped the church raise more than \$8,000 for the offering -- \$3,000 more than its 1990 offering and a record for recent years.

The ride took place on four consecutive Saturdays in September, with the pastor riding about 60 miles per day. At the end of each Saturday ride, a group of church members met Parker at his destination, where they participated in a hands-on missions project: older adults brought supplies for Baptist Home residents in Chillicothe; children delivered food to retired missionaries in Jefferson City; youth performed clean-up work at a mission church and a puppet show at an apartment complex in Lake Ozark; and young adults delivered school supplies and personal-care items to residents of the Baptist Children's Home in Bridgeton.

Leaders of the church's Woman's Missionary Union organized the effort. "They really made it work," Parker said. "I just had to ride."

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-- By Shari Schubert

Sunday School Board elects  
management team for Draper

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- In a special called meeting Oct. 24-25, trustees of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board approved a new management structure for the board, then staffed it by electing three executive vice presidents and an assistant vice president.

Elected unanimously as executive vice presidents were Michael Arrington, operations; E.V. King, finance and administration; and Eugene Mims, planning, research, and denominational relations. Charles Wilson was elected assistant vice president of business.

Both Mims, who is a pastor, and Wilson, a businessman, are trustees of the board. King has been a vice president at the agency since 1984. And Arrington is a businessman and member of the Texas church where James Draper was pastor before his election as board president in July.

The four elections put in place the management team that will work with Draper, who succeeded Lloyd Elder as president after Elder was forced to

resign in a dispute with trustees.

The move to create a new management structure came as a unanimous recommendation from the board's general administration committee, chaired by attorney Dan Collins of Taylors, S.C.

Under the board's previous system, there was one administrative vice president -- James Williams -- and four vice presidents. Williams resigned to become president of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn.

The new structure creates only one new post, the executive vice president for operations, Collins told trustees. In effect, Mims fills the post vacated by Williams and King's previous position as vice president was restructured, Collins explained.

Under the new arrangement, the three executive vice presidents report directly to Draper. Should Draper become incapacitated for any reason, Mims would oversee the board on an interim basis.

When Draper was elected board president in July, he initially said he would seek a chief operating officer to manage the board on a daily basis.

After studying the idea, however, Draper said he was not comfortable with that approach. "I wanted to be more involved in the life of the board," he said.

Draper, with the advice of outside, paid consultants, began to consider a "leadership team approach" and liked the concept. "Four of us are bound to be smarter than any one of us," he said.

One of the strengths of the new style, he said, is "it does not disturb the present structure or create turmoil or uncertainty in the board."

Draper noted that "no one is getting fired or displaced." The board's three remaining vice presidents -- Johnnie Godwin, general publishing; Dennis Cook, church programs and services; and Jimmy Edwards, marketing and distribution -- will continue to function. Under the new structure, they will report to Arrington, executive vice president for operations.

Draper noted that establishing a senior leadership team, while leaving the other executives in place until any needed changes are identified, "is the least disruptive process and enables us to move on with stability and confidence."

Draper did not set a timetable for additional changes, noting the new approach "will enable us to take as much time as we need."

Another reason for the team approach, Draper said, is the "necessary tension" that exists at the board between business and ministry. That tension will always be there, he noted.

"The new structure will help us have the proper tension that will allow us to move forward in the direction we ought to go," he said.

Trustees asked several questions about the proposed plan. Those questions were welcomed by Draper. "Your job is to challenge everything I suggest and make sure I'm making the right decisions," he told the trustees.

The board approved the new management structure unanimously.

Draper then presented the three men he was recommending as executive vice presidents as "the three best men in the Southern Baptist Convention" for these positions.

Past relationships did not enter into his decision, Draper said, noting he did not know Mims or King until earlier this year.

Although Arrington was a member of First Church of Euless during Draper's pastorate, Draper said, "We were not great friends." He noted he had been in Arrington's house only once in eight years and they had played golf together only twice during that time.

"I tried to look at these men in light of their abilities and in light of the will of God," Draper said.

Draper said each of the three men have different strengths and talents. He emphasized he was not looking for "yes" men but instead wanted men "who

will argue with me and disagree with me, but when we walk out of a room, we walk out together."

Prior to their election, the men fielded questions and shared personal testimonies. With the exception of King, each were asked to give their views of the Bible.

Arrington, 46, an executive assistant to the chief operating officer for Texas Utility Electric Company in Fort Worth, said he believes "the Bible is inspired by God, is infallible, and is applicable to every area of my life."

He told trustees, "I may be a businessman but I feel a responsibility to the ministry."

Mims, 41, pastor of First Church of Cleveland, Tenn., and chairman of the board's executive committee, told trustees his life and ministry have been strongly affected by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

In regard to Scripture, Mims said, "I believe what it says. It is infallible and inerrant."

Wilson, 48, said he realized during the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in June that he had allowed his business to "stand between me and anything else God wanted me to do."

Wilson resigned his job with Precision Sheeting Service of Camden, N.J., shortly afterwards. He noted he has worked "for money and status," but is coming to the board "out of love for the Lord Jesus Christ and the ministry of the Baptist Sunday School Board."

King, 48, who has served as vice president for business and finance at the SSB since 1984, said his goal as a member of the senior executive staff will be to help build "trusting relationships."

Trustees were to have heard from psychologist Bill Montgomery about results of psychological testing of the four candidates, but prior to Montgomery's report a motion was made to go into executive session.

Administrative committee chairman Collins opposed the motion, noting the only time the board had gone into executive session was during a question-and-answer time with Draper in July. "We do not want to set a precedent," he said.

Bob Tenery, a trustee from Mocksville, N.C., disagreed, saying he felt "all personnel matters ought to be done in executive session."

Before the vote was taken, Kirk Humphreys of Oklahoma City, Okla., made a substitute motion not to hear Montgomery's report. The motion was approved.

Trustees then approved all four men unanimously for their respective positions.

King's position will become effective immediately. Mims is expected to come on board in early November, while Arrington plans to begin duties Dec. 1. Wilson is expected to join the staff Nov. 1.

During the trustees' meeting -- their third special meeting this year -- they also authorized the \$150,000 sale of the satellite transmission equipment used for the now-discontinued Baptist Telecommunications Network and authorized the purchase of a piece of property at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center in North Carolina for \$12,500.

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