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FMB won't restore Ruschlikon funds,  
faces fallout in Europe relationships

By Greg Warner and Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- By a margin of two to one, trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board voted Dec. 11 not to restore funding to a controversial seminary in Switzerland, despite the advice of the board's attorney and the objections of Baptists at home and abroad.

A motion to "take no further action" on the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, passed 54-27 during the trustees' meeting in Richmond, Va., Dec. 9-11. The vote was by a much wider margin than the initial 35-28 decision Oct. 9 to cut the FMB's 1992 allocation to Ruschlikon of \$365,000, which represents about 38 percent of the seminary's budget.

The December vote came after two months of public debate about the seminary, and after two days of negotiations between leaders from Europe and the FMB failed to resolve the dispute.

Trustees said defunding the tiny school was necessary to maintain the FMB's commitment to conservative theological education abroad.

But the dispute -- which generated protests from most Baptist bodies in Europe, at least nine state Baptist conventions and hundreds of individual Baptists -- came to symbolize not just the fate of one seminary but the future of relationships between Southern Baptists and their Baptist counterparts in Europe.

The FMB's Dec. 11 decision, which came moments after trustees heard details of the board's massive "green alert" outreach into the former Soviet Union, immediately sparked dire predictions about relationships in Europe and beyond.

"I do not see a way for a new building up of trust and confidence, although...we dearly want this," Karl-Heinz Walter, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation, told trustees after the vote.

Board President Keith Parks said the decision "seriously jeopardizes" FMB work in Europe and reflects a different approach to missions than previously practiced by the board.

"This will hamper everything we are doing, especially in Europe, because everything we are doing depends on partnership," Parks said.

Ruschlikon President John David Hopper, himself an FMB missionary, told reporters the decision signals the "exportation" of Southern Baptists' biblical controversy "to all countries where Southern Baptists have work, and that is a disaster."

Trustees projected no such picture of doom, however. Although many acknowledge relationships with Baptists in Europe will suffer, they insist the defunding action is necessary to protect the theological integrity of the board and to make the most efficient use of the unparalleled opportunities for outreach in Europe.

During the debate, trustees seemed ready to settle the dispute.

"We now need to move on," said trustee Terry Harper of Colonial Heights, Va., who made the motion that won approval. "Any further...discussion would be counterproductive."

Harper's motion was offered as a substitute for one from Paul Brooks of Raytown, Mo., who asked trustees to make a one-time gift of \$365,000 to the seminary.

Brooks' original motion would not have restored the FMB's previous funding agreement, which promised to continue financial support for up to 15 more years but with a gradual reduction. Instead, it would have provided funding for 1992 only.

"We made a promise to pay the \$365,000 next year and we ought to keep our promise," Brooks said. "Remember, Ruschlikon is not our seminary any more... It belongs to our brothers in Europe."

The 48-student seminary, founded by the Foreign Mission Board soon after World War II, became a symbol of post-war cooperation among European Baptist groups and between European Baptists and their stateside brethren.

But critics say the school is too heavily influenced by neo-orthodox or liberal theology and not representative of many -- perhaps most -- European Baptists. Because the school is expensive to operate and attend and inaccessible to many Europeans, they say, it is ill-suited to lead a major thrust in outreach through the "open doors" of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

The debate on Harper's motion, which lasted an hour and a quarter, focused on broken promises. But trustees could not agree on who had been unfaithful -- the trustees themselves, whose vote in October nullified a 1988 agreement to continue funding the seminary, or Ruschlikon's leaders, who FMB trustees say promised in 1988 to make the school more conservative.

Trustee Ron Wilson, who in October said the temporary hiring of controversial Southern Baptist professor Glenn Hinson to teach at Ruschlikon demonstrated the school's liberal bent, said seminary administrators had broken their word.

"We made a commitment but they also made a commitment," Wilson said during the December debate. "And our commitment was made entirely on the commitment we received...(about) the direction that seminary was going to go in. They broke that trust. Therefore, I believe our reaction to it is appropriate."

Other trustees said they were "deceived" or "betrayed" by Ruschlikon's promises. But Ruschlikon President Hopper, who did not speak during the debate, earlier denied he made a promise to make the school more conservative.

Trustee Jack Bledsoe of Fordyce, Ark., said regardless of other criticisms of the school, Southern Baptists "expect us to live up to our commitments." Criticism about the expense and theological stance of the seminary are not the issue, he said. "The only issue is the integrity of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention."

After their October vote, trustees asked the FMB staff to seek a legal

opinion on whether the budget cut violated their 1988 agreement to continue funding for Ruschlikon. The board's attorney, Lewis Booker of Richmond, told FMB administrators the board likely would lose if Ruschlikon's trustees brought a lawsuit to recover the money.

Although Booker asked -- and trustees agreed -- that his opinion not be made public, it was reported in a Richmond newspaper prior to the December meeting. "It is really not a secret in light of that information," John Simms, a retired attorney from Salem, Va., told fellow trustees. "The (newspaper) report is correct."

Before their vote, however, trustees had been told by European leaders that no lawsuit would be filed.

Several trustees said their duty superseded the 1988 agreement.

"I do not ever want to break a trust to any group of people," said John Jackson of Fairfield, Calif. "However, I have a higher commitment, and my commitment is not to break a trust with the Lord himself."

"Our ultimate answer is in the Word of God," offered William Sutton of McAllen, Texas. "The Bible says two cannot walk together unless they are agreed. I cannot support a seminary that allows, encourages or aids in teaching doctrine contrary to Scripture."

After the vote, trustees agreed to hear responses from two European Baptist leaders, who had witnessed the debate but had not been asked to speak.

"We regard ourselves as Christians who deeply love God and the Bible," said Wiard Popkes of Germany, chairman of Ruschlikon's trustees. "We do not regard ourselves as liberals."

Despite the defunding, Popkes said, "we shall not forget the generosity that Southern Baptists have shown to us."

After founding the school and funding it for 43 years, the FMB transferred ownership of the institution, valued at more than \$12 million, to the European Baptist Federation as part of the 1988 agreement.

Walter of the EBF expressed his pessimism about restored relationships between European Baptists and Southern Baptists -- an opinion he said reflected his own personal view.

Both Popkes and Walter addressed the Dec. 5-6 meeting of trustee leaders, during which the leaders voted 13-10 not to recommend refunding the seminary.

Trustee chairman Bill Hancock of Louisville, who called the Dec. 5-6 meeting and presided over the Dec. 11 debate, expressed regret that a better solution was not found. He blamed the impasse on the inflexibility of the European leaders, the insensitivity of the FMB's Europe staff, the unresponsiveness of FMB administrators and a lack of grace from trustees.

"They (trustees) have done what they think is right, but they have done it at the wrong time and in the wrong way," he said.

Trustees asked Hancock to issue a "news release" to every Southern Baptist church, as well as to individuals who wrote critical letters, explaining the reasons for their action. Some trustees had objected to the handling of the controversy by FMB news reporters and staff members.

Several trustees privately called for disciplinary action against some staff members, including Hopper, who serves as an FMB missionary assigned to Ruschlikon.

It is unclear what, if anything, will happen to Hopper and two other missionaries who serve at Ruschlikon. A fund-raising campaign in the States and abroad is seeking money to replace the deleted funds, and some Southern Baptists have promised to send missions funds directly to the Swiss seminary.

Meanwhile, FMB leaders are concerned the riff over Ruschlikon will produce a major shortfall in the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, which provides about half of the FMB's annual \$184 million budget.

In other FMB action:

-- A task force overseeing the "green alert" in the former Soviet Union told trustees an estimated \$12.3 million will be needed to fund accelerated evangelistic efforts in that region during 1992.

A "green alert" permits the board to speed up normal procedures to take advantage of missions opportunities amid social upheavals. The collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union -- where many of the world's unreached people-groups live -- triggered the alert in September.

A portion of the \$12.3 million will fund the 139 career missionaries and 346 International Service Corps appointees which the task force projects the board will need to send to the fragmenting nation in response to requested needs.

In addition, as many as 1,469 volunteers from the United States will be invited to minister there during the next year.

The funds also will be used to provide translations of Bibles and discipleship materials in the major languages of the region, develop Sunday school literature for all ages, distribute copies of the film "Jesus" -- one of the board's most widely used evangelistic tools -- and provide loans for church buildings.

In cooperation with Baptists there, the FMB also hopes to establish indigenous mission boards and outreach programs. If the 15 republics of the former union agree, partnerships with state Baptist conventions also are envisioned.

-- New missionaries called out as a result of "green alert" goals will be added to a mission force which now totals 3,941 following the appointment or reappointment of 33 persons during the December board meeting. The mission workers serve in 121 countries and maintain a Christian witness in more than 80 additional nations.

Including the 33 additions this week, a total of 209 career missionaries were appointed or reappointed during 1991. Coupled with the projected 191 International Service Corps appointees -- who serve for two years or less -- a total of 400 mission workers joined the missions force this year.

That figure is slightly down from the 414 named in 1990. The FMB has a goal of supporting 5,000 missionaries by the end of 2000, as part of Southern Baptists' Bold Mission Thrust effort to share the gospel with every person on earth by the end of the century.

Jim Slack, a consultant in the board's research and planning office, has predicted that if appointments do not maintain the 1990 level for the next few years, the board will have to appoint more than 600 people a year toward the end of the 1990s to reach its goal.

-- A change in the way the FMB's candidate consultants are employed also received board approval this week.

Persons pursuing a call to missionary service work closely with candidate consultants as they move through the mission agency's appointment process. Currently, seven consultants work in the board's office of mission personnel.

Prior to the trustee action, candidate consultants were employed by three mission personnel office staff members -- the vice president, the associate vice president and the director of the personnel selection department -- and the board's president and executive vice president.

Now, trustees also will participate in selecting consultants through a subcommittee of the board's mission personnel committee. Potential consultants will be interviewed by the subcommittee and "no job will be offered...until after the outcome of the interview is known."

Ruschlikon vote may signal  
new direction for FMB missions

By Greg Warner

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- The tranquil setting of Ruschlikon -- a small town nestled on the shores of Switzerland's beautiful Lake Zurich -- belies the fact that the tiny seminary it hosts has become the centerpiece in a struggle over relationships between Baptists on two continents.

All involved in the fight over the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon agree the dispute has far-reaching implications, although there is not agreement on how far they reach and in what direction.

Trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, which founded and until recently owned the school, voted Dec. 11 not to reverse their October decision deleting the FMB's contribution to the seminary's budget -- amounting to 38 percent of the total.

Trustees said defunding the 48-student school was necessary to maintain the FMB's commitment to conservative theological education overseas.

But others say the vote represents a departure from -- or perhaps a redirection of -- Southern Baptist missions strategy abroad.

"This reflects a difference in the way we do missions," said FMB President Keith Parks, "and it will have repercussions for the way we do missions around the world."

Depending on one's point of view, the Dec. 11 decision either ends an unholy and ineffective alliance with European Baptists, who now own the seminary, or inaugurates a historic shift in international mission strategy from equal partnership with Baptists abroad to restrictive control.

Trustees have been upset for several years with what they perceive to be the liberal bent of the school, European Baptists' only international seminary.

During debate Dec. 11, trustees insisted they are accountable for the theology taught at overseas seminaries that receive FMB financial support.

"I have been given a trust by God and the constituency of the Southern Baptists who elected me (as a trustee)," Joel Gregory, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, told fellow board members. "That (trust) was to link fiscal stewardship and theological accounting of money given by the Southern Baptist constituency."

Gregory said there must be "a clear linkage between funds and the theological integrity of all institutions" with which the FMB relates.

Ruschlikon President John David Hopper later told reporters Gregory's approach -- which was echoed in comments by other trustees -- would "export the doctrinal understanding of conservative trustees and enforce it on European Baptists."

Parks also issued a caution.

"We have never tried to pass judgment on the theology of an institution," the FMB president told ABP. "That's not the way we do missions."

"The vote (by a two-to-one margin) reflected that our trustees have reduced a missions decision to a theological question," Parks said. "Missions decisions need to be broader than that."

Parks pointed out the Ruschlikon issue has preoccupied the FMB trustees for "months and months," and added, "Our trustees can't deal with every institution in the world."

The FMB supports many other seminaries around the world but traditionally has allowed each to reflect the theological context of the region.

Ruschlikon has a reputation in Europe as a top-notch academic institution, in the tradition of theological education on the continent. But

critics say the school is too heavily influenced by neo-orthodox or liberal theology and not representative of many European Baptists.

Trustees of the FMB prefer more practical, conservative training in theology, such as offered by some other FMB-supported seminaries in Europe.

Their efforts to turn Ruschlikon into such an institution lies at the heart of the conflict.

Trustees said the hiring this fall of a controversial Southern Baptist professor to teach temporarily at the seminary proved the school did not intend to become more conservative; hence the defunding.

Trustee chairman Bill Hancock tried to salvage the relationship Dec. 6 with a last-minute proposal that Ruschlikon's trustees "acknowledge their insensitivity to conservative concerns." The proposal, which would have restored FMB funding, also would have required the seminary to inform the FMB before hiring any professors and to give an accounting of funds received from other U.S. sources.

But European leaders rejected the proposal, which they said would infringe on the responsibilities of Ruschlikon's European trustees.

Karl-Heinz Walter, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation, said the true issue is how much theological agreement is necessary before two groups can work together.

"If it is possible to cooperate only if we are in the same line, then this is no dialogue," he said Dec. 6. "It is no dialogue if we each share our position and then one has to accept the other's."

For a majority of FMB trustees, not enough agreement exists. "The Bible says two cannot walk together unless they be in agreement," explained trustee Bill Sutton of McAllen, Texas, during the Dec. 11 debate.

After the vote, the EBF's Walter told trustees he is pessimistic about future relationships between Baptists on the two continents.

"I do not see from this the way for a new building up of trust and confidence in future relationships with European Baptist unions, although I want to underline again that we really want this, that I am convinced that we have to have a good relationship between you and European Baptist unions for the good of the kingdom of God and Christ in our continent."

The FMB's mission policy in Europe sends missionaries only into countries where the national Baptists have requested the help. Baptist bodies in at least two countries have said the riff over Ruschlikon could bring an end to future FMB missionary appointments in their countries.

That has FMB administrators worried.

Parks said he has to take "very seriously" the warning of Walter and other European leaders that Southern Baptists' relationships with their European brethren may be hurt beyond repair. "They have the pulse and the heartbeat of Europe better than I do," he added.

Parks said the Dec. 11 decision "seriously jeopardizes" FMB work in Europe. "This will hamper everything we are doing, especially in Europe, because everything we are doing depends on partnership," he said.

Trustees formed a task force to try to salvage the relationship with the Europeans.

But some trustees say the FMB's future lies not with the traditional Baptist leadership in Europe -- which they see as responsible for the continent's empty churches -- but with a new breed of Baptists that will emerge from Europe's sudden openness to the gospel, particularly in the East.

One trustee said trying to reach the "new" Europe through the structure of Europe's established Baptist groups and institutions is "like putting new wine into old wineskins."

He and others told ABP the Dec. 11 vote signals a new era of effectiveness for Southern Baptists in Europe -- one built on a strategy of doing Southern Baptist-style missions in Europe rather than European-style missions with Southern Baptist money.

By using money and personnel in projects more in line with SBC sentiments -- and applying sufficient theological restrictions -- the FMB can keep faith with its constituency and take advantage of the "new wind" blowing across the continent, they say.

If the defunding of Ruschlikon marks a new direction for the FMB, then that theory likely will be given a chance to work.

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Ruschlikon: From symbol of peace  
to center stage of controversy

By Lacy Thompson

(ABP) -- Actions in the past few years have propelled the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, into the Southern Baptist spotlight.

Prior to that point, the international seminary went largely unnoticed and even unknown by many stateside Baptists. Even now that the school has become a symbol of the division within the Southern Baptist Convention, most Southern Baptists do know the understand the history and work of the school.

Ruschlikon was launched by Southern Baptists in 1949, following a disastrous world war that changed the face of Europe. Historian Leon McBeth cites its impact in *The Baptist Heritage*:

"In many parts of Europe, churches were closed, buildings destroyed or diverted to non-religious use, congregations scattered, schools abandoned, church unions lapsed and leaders killed or imprisoned. It was not possible to continue the preparation of an adequate supply of pastors under wartime conditions, nor could such pastors have functioned had they been prepared. In many places in Europe after World War II, only a fraction of Baptists who had been active before the war could be found."

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board established the Ruschlikon seminary in hopes of offsetting some of the effects of the war, training new leaders and reuniting Baptists in that area of the world.

Four decades later, leaders agree the effort succeeded. European leaders especially credit the seminary with being a unifying force, noted Steve Hardy of North Carolina, who chairs the FMB trustee committee that oversees work in Europe.

"When it was founded, the seminary was very effective in bringing reconciliation among European Baptists," said Isam Ballenger, FMB vice president who oversees work in Europe. "Europeans learned to live together at Ruschlikon."

The seminary also proved effective in training Baptist leaders. Hardy notes that most of Europe's Baptist unions (or conventions) received their start through Ruschlikon. Most of the current Baptist leadership in Europe was trained at Ruschlikon as well, Ballenger said.

In time, Ruschlikon began building a reputation for such training. The school gained stature for its academic and theological training, Ballenger said. In time, students outside Europe began to express a desire to attend the school.

As a result, the school continued its task of bringing Baptists from different nations together for dialogue and study.

At Ruschlikon, these students learned to relate to one another, Ballenger noted. They also learned English, a valuable tool for European Baptist leaders. English is the official language of the European Baptist Federation, Ballenger said.

As times changed, however, the seminary began to feel the pressure of

increased living costs in Switzerland. In addition, some Baptists began to complain about the theological direction of the school and the lack of emphasis on training pastors and local church leaders.

In 1978, the Foreign Mission Board responded to financial concerns by approving an ongoing funding plan for the school. Under the plan, the board would provide financial support through 1992 and begin decreasing support in 1993.

Meanwhile, the seminary itself was implementing changes. In 1978, the school launched its Summer Institute of Theological Education. The annual one-month summer program is designed to provide basic theological education to pastors and lay leaders of local churches. Since its inception, some 400 persons have participated in the program.

In 1986, the seminary also launched an Institute of Mission and Evangelism. The institute is designed to provide training and practical help in the areas of missions and evangelism, through consulting services, workshops, short courses and the like.

In 1988, Southern Baptist missionary John David Hopper assumed the presidency of Ruschlikon and vowed to continue emphasizing such practical training. In 1990, for instance, the school launched the International Baptist Lay Academy in Budapest, Hungary. The academy focuses on providing training for church lay leaders and producing church literature.

However, Hopper also found the school confronted with what one FMB report terms "a desperate financial crunch." In fact, the 1988 crisis was so great, FMB trustees authorized a study committee to examine the situation and make recommendations for action.

The committee spent a week in personal observation in Europe. It concluded that there remained a need for a school such as Ruschlikon but also cited the need for the seminary to "intensify its efforts to 'fuse Christian scholarship with evangelistic passion' by fostering 'independent research on the firm foundation of God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ and the authority of Scripture.'"

The FMB study committee made 10 recommendations concerning the seminary, including that the FMB transfer ownership to European Baptists, continue to provide missionary personnel to the school and continue financial support until 1992, at which point a gradual subsidy-reduction plan would begin.

The recommendations also asked the seminary to write and adopt a charter for the school, to seek broader European representation and counsel, to develop a broader European Baptist financial base and to consider adoption of a written statement of principles and beliefs.

The recommendations were adopted without change, despite one effort to delay a vote and another to amend the proposal. The amendment, proposed by Paige Patterson, would have set up an annual review of the seminary subsidy from 1990 to 1992. It was defeated 33-26.

Hopper led the seminary to respond to the board's requests. The school adopted a charter and policy statements. It also began developing plans for a fund-raising effort. In addition, it adopted a statement of doctrinal principles that govern education at the school.

Ballenger and Hardy agree the school was faithful in taking the concerns seriously and responding to them. Hardy especially praised Hopper for his work in administering the school. But he added that some of the seminary's responses were not as satisfactory as others.

Some trustees especially found the doctrinal statement to be inadequate. The statement affirms God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It also affirms salvation "by grace through faith as God's answer to human sinfulness." It affirms the church as "the gathered community of believers" as well as the priesthood of all believers "through a personal relationship with God, who sets the believer free to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to work for justice and peace." It also cites the Christian hope

in "the coming kingdom of God, the hope for God's future, the consummation of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ our Lord."

Finally, it affirms "the authority of the Bible, God's Holy Word, the canonical writings of the Old and New Testaments, inspired and illumined by the Holy Spirit, as the only norm and rule for our Christian faith and practice, pointing us to Jesus Christ our Lord."

The principles were adopted by Ruschlikon trustees in November 1990.

Such actions failed to satisfy all FMB trustees, however. In ensuing months, concerns continued to be raised about seminary finances, especially on the cost of providing theological education.

Hardy said he felt the school was slow in responding to the need for raising funds in Europe. Other trustees said the board was paying too much to educate too few students. Until this year, the board was supplying more than \$750,000 to the seminary each year. Of that amount, \$400,000 was designated as "cost and support" for missionary families at the seminary. Those funds remain in the FMB budget for 1992.

But trustees insisted the remaining \$365,000 was too much to spend on fewer than 50 students. In its 43 years, 1,060 full-time students from 37 countries and five continents have attended the seminary. Currently, 48 full-time students are enrolled at the school.

Hardy said his primary concern was the amount of money put into the seminary and whether that has been an efficient means of evangelizing Europe.

Ballenger has acknowledged the cost of education at Ruschlikon is high, noting Switzerland is one of the most expensive countries to live in the world. He said after the World War II, however, it was necessary to found the seminary in Switzerland, which was a politically neutral country. In fact, until recent years brought changes in Eastern Europe; moving the seminary to any other country was out of the question for just that reason.

Ballenger also added it is unfair to use only a cost-per-student figure in evaluating Ruschlikon. "That's just one measurement, and you have to bring in other measurements -- what is being accomplished at the school, how many lives are being touched, and what is it meaning to the life of European Baptists," he said.

He added persons must consider the work of the school through its summer program, lay academy and other efforts.

The doctrinal statement of a year ago also did little to offset concerns about the theological direction of the school. In fact, it was that concern that immediately prompted trustees to defund the seminary in October.

Several FMB trustees have said the hiring of Southern Baptist seminary professor Glenn Hinson for a four-month term was "the straw that broke the camel's back," indicating the school was not moving in a conservative direction at all.

In response, trustees voted to delete 1992 funding to the school. And suddenly, "Ruschlikon" was a household term for Baptists.

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-- Lacy Thompson is associate editor of the Baptist Message of Louisiana.

Patterson declines Falwell offer  
amid talk of Drummond's departure

By Helen Parmley and Greg Warner

DALLAS (ABP) -- Paige Patterson has rejected an offer by Jerry Falwell

to become president of Falwell's seminary in Lynchburg, Va., and, for the time being, he will remain president of Criswell College in Dallas.

But sources said Lewis Drummond, president of the troubled Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., is expected to resign soon, and that Patterson, who was a leading candidate for the job when Drummond was hired in 1988, likely will succeed him.

Patterson said in a prepared statement that his goal for now is to continue to make the 335-student Criswell College "a major producer of pastors for tomorrow's churches."

In recent weeks, Criswell College trustees removed Patterson from his position as president and then retained him at the urging of three influential former presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention.

But Patterson said there continue to be "philosophical differences" between him and the trustees. Some interpret his reinstatement as only temporary.

Patterson, in a statement released Dec. 11, said he received with "profound gratitude" the offer made by Falwell to join the faculty of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, which has about 200 students.

Patterson said he "placed this matter before God for three full weeks" before reaching a decision.

"Though profoundly honored by Dr. Falwell's confidence," he said, "I have elected to decline the offer."

Falwell is an independent Fundamentalist Baptist, and neither he nor his school and church are affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

"All of my life I have worked within the context of Southern Baptist people," Patterson said. "With all of their many virtues and whatever weaknesses there are, Southern Baptists remain my people. To the best of my ability to determine God's will for my life, I believe that I should remain and work within our Southern Baptist Zion."

Patterson, 49, was the driving force behind the 12-year takeover of the 15 million-member Southern Baptist Convention by fundamental-conservatives. He has been president of Criswell College since 1975.

Patterson has been touted as a leading candidate for several top jobs in the SBC in recent years, although he told Associated Baptist Press in June he probably is too controversial to be hired by any SBC agency.

Trustees of Southeastern Seminary told ABP Patterson was a leading contender for the Southeastern post before, and some have said recently they would be pleased for him to succeed Drummond.

Speculation about Drummond's departure has increased since Southeastern was placed on probation by one of its two accrediting agencies Dec. 5.

But on Nov. 26, before the accreditation decision, Drummond told ABP that he had no plans to leave.

Asked if he was considering a teaching position at Houston Baptist University, Drummond responded, "How did you hear about that?"

He said he would not comment further about the Houston opening, adding, "I've made no overtures about it."

"I just want to do what God is leading me to do," he said.

E. D. Hodo, president of Houston Baptist, confirmed he discussed the position with Drummond by telephone in November. "He is one of the people we would be interested in talking to about the John Bisagno Chair of Evangelism," Hodo said, but he said there was no job offer.

Drummond's name also has been linked to teaching positions at other institutions, including Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., which is trying to fill the Billy Graham Chair of Evangelism and Church Growth.

Beeson dean Timothy George said he has discussed "various possible futures" with his friend Drummond, whom he described as "a major figure" in Christian evangelism. But George said it would be inappropriate to discuss

the situation further until Drummond's future at Southeastern is settled.

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-- Helen Parmley is religion editor of the Dallas Morning News. Greg Warner is executive editor of Associated Baptist Press.

Civil rights, abortion occupy  
attention of 102nd Congress

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The 102nd Congress began its first session early this year by authorizing U.S. participation in the Persian Gulf War and ended it by focusing on social issues, primarily civil rights and abortion.

During the year, the Senate also confirmed a new Supreme Court justice. And 7,640 bills and resolutions were introduced before Congress concluded business Nov. 27.

Initial steps were taken on legislation in the areas of education and church-state relationships, and Congress is expected to address those issues when it reconvenes Jan. 3.

#### Civil Rights Bill

Congress approved the Civil Rights Act of 1991 after reaching a compromise with the White House that perhaps ended a bitter, two-year struggle between lawmakers and the Bush administration.

However, President George Bush signed the bill Nov. 21 amid controversy over an administration proposal to interpret the measure.

The proposal, which was quickly withdrawn, was drafted by administration officials to end government-affirmative action and hiring guidelines that aid women and minorities. The directive circulated Nov. 20 and was withdrawn prior to the bill signing because it created a furor among civil rights supporters who said Bush was trying to circumvent the bill.

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

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

#### Abortion

Congress took action on a half dozen or so bills that would nullify or amend abortion restrictions at home and abroad. Bush has successfully blocked any loosening of abortion restrictions with a veto or veto threat.

-- The most-widely publicized abortion battle was over the so-called "gag rule," a ban on abortion counseling and referrals at federally funded family-planning clinics that was proposed by the Reagan administration. Bush has supported the proposal, and in May the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the ban.

Supporters of the Rust vs. Sullivan decision say family planning properly involves information about conception, not about termination of pregnancy. Opponents say the ban is a "gag rule" that inhibits free speech and violates medical ethics.

Two bills were introduced to counter the ban, and one of those bills already has fallen victim to a veto. Early in November, both chambers

approved an appropriations bill (H.R. 2707) that would block enforcement of the ban, but the House fell 12 votes shy of overriding Bush's veto.

A free-standing bill (S. 323), which would overturn the abortion-counseling ban, awaits action in the House.

-- Another abortion battle focused on a ban of federally funded research involving fetal-tissue transplantation.

A House-approved bill (H.R. 2507) authorizing \$4.4 billion for the National Institutes of Health also contained a provision that would overturn the ban.

Fetal-tissue research has been credited with making inroads into treatment for Parkinson's disease, juvenile diabetes, Alzheimer's disease and genetic defects. The administration issued the moratorium because it said such research would encourage abortions. The moratorium prohibits the use of tissue from induced abortions but allows use of tissue from still births or spontaneous abortions.

While the Senate's version of the NIH bill does not contain the research provision, a free-standing bill (S. 1902) that would overturn the ban has been introduced. The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee has held hearings on that bill.

-- Congress also backed away from an amendment in a bill (H.J. Res. 157) that would have allowed military women and dependents to have abortions on bases overseas. Facing another veto threat, Congress dropped the amendment Nov. 27 that would lift those abortion restrictions overseas.

### Thomas Confirmation

The Senate narrowly confirmed Clarence Thomas as the 106th justice of the Supreme Court on Oct. 15.

Thomas won Senate approval 52-48 after a second round of confirmation hearings to examine sexual-harassment charges by an Oklahoma Baptist woman. Anita Hill, a University of Oklahoma law professor and member of Antioch Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla., said Thomas repeatedly asked her out on dates and initiated conversations about sex when she worked for him.

Thomas categorically denied all of the charges.

Thomas, a former head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and federal appeals court judge, is President Bush's second appointment to the nation's high court.

During his confirmation hearings, Thomas affirmed the Jeffersonian wall separating church and state as an "appropriate metaphor." Thomas, the second black man to sit on the court, generally affirmed the principles of free exercise of religion and church-state separation but declined to take a definitive stand on either.

### Postal Rates

Congress approved a postal measure Oct. 3 that is expected to prevent a postal-rate increase for most non-profit publications, including state Baptist newspapers. The \$19.9 billion Treasury-Postal Service appropriations bill (H.R. 2622) 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.

### Preview of Second Session

When Congress reconvenes early next year, educational and religious-freedom issues are expected to be addressed.

The most controversial element of Bush's "America 2000" education-reform plan would provide vouchers for parents to send their children to public,

private and parochial schools. While many components of the president's education initiative have been well received, the educational "choice" provision has been a source of contention.

The House and Senate are poised to take action on education bills that are alternatives to Bush's plan.

The House Committee on Education and Labor voted 26-12 to approve a bill (H.R. 3320) Oct. 17 that would allow states to select from a range of federally funded options, including choice programs for private and public schools. A state could spend money on choice programs if the state's constitution permits it. Bush's plan includes more aggressive voucher provisions, allocating funds that could only be used for voucher programs.

The Senate bill (S. 2), approved in committee Nov. 13 by a voice vote, would allow choice programs only for public schools.

Two religious-freedom bills (H.R. 2797, H.R. 4040) were introduced in the House June 26 and Nov. 26, respectively. Both bills are designed to restore free-exercise protections abandoned in a 1990 Supreme Court decision that allows government to restrict religious freedom for almost any reason as long as religion is not singled out for adverse treatment.

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (H.R. 2797) simply would restore the compelling-interest test that government must meet before restricting religious practice. The Religious Freedom Act of 1991 (H.R. 4040) would add exemptions to ensure the legislation neither creates a religiously based right to abortion nor affects churches' tax status or ability to participate in government programs.

The Baptist Joint Committee and the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission have joined with more than 40 civil liberties groups in a broad-based coalition supporting the version without those special guarantees, which are advocated by the U.S. Catholic Conference (H.R. 2797).

Each Congress lasts two years, beginning Jan. 3 in odd-numbered years. The second year of the 102nd Congress begins Jan. 3.

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## Religious groups united, divided over religious-freedom legislation

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Religious bodies in the United States stand remarkably united today in their call for federal legislation that would make it harder for government to restrict religious freedom.

But that near unanimity now faces a new test.

Almost all religious groups agree legislation is needed to counter the impact of a 1990 U.S. Supreme Court decision that allows government to restrict religious freedom for almost any reason as long as religion is not singled out for adverse treatment.

In the historic case of Employment Division of Oregon v. Smith, the high court held that the government no longer need demonstrate a "compelling interest" to justify a restriction on religious practice.

What has united religious groups is the harsh reality of the high court's abandonment of its long-held "compelling interest" test: Religious groups challenging governmental actions as an infringement on their free-exercise rights almost always lose.

Testing that rare consensus among religious organizations, however, is the insistence by some groups -- most notably the U.S. Catholic Conference -- that the legislation exempt religiously based challenges to abortion restrictions, to the use of tax funds by religious groups, and to the tax

status of religious groups.

Most other U.S. religious bodies, which have joined with a number of civil-liberties groups in forming the 47-member Coalition for the Free Exercise of Religion, have resisted special treatment of any particular free-exercise claim. These groups seek a legislative remedy to the Smith decision that would restore the compelling-interest test but would not single out specific types of religiously based claims for enhanced or diminished protection.

The fracture among religious groups over whether specific types of claims should be singled out is now reflected in two legislative proposals designed to counter the Smith decision:

-- The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (H.R. 2797) was introduced June 26 by Rep. Stephen Solarz, D-N.Y. Backed by the 47-member religious coalition and co-sponsored by 124 House members, RFRA would prevent government from interfering with religious practice unless the governmental action represents the least restrictive means of advancing a compelling governmental interest.

-- The Religious Freedom Act of 1991 (H.R. 4040) was introduced Nov. 26 by Rep. Christopher Smith, R-N.J. It generally mirrors the Solarz bill but includes the specific exemptions proposed by the Catholic Conference. The Smith bill also lacks a provision contained in RFRA stating that the legislation, targeted at enhancing free-exercise protection, does not affect establishment-clause requirements.

Rep. Smith and the Catholic Conference contend that the exemptions are necessary to ensure that the legislation neither creates a religiously based right to abortion nor affects churches' tax status or ability to participate in government social programs. Coalition leaders say the exemptions are unnecessary and would jeopardize support for the legislation.

"The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (H.R. 2797) is scrupulously neutral on all free-exercise issues," said Oliver Thomas, coalition chairman and general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee. "This bill (H.R. 4040) is denominational pork barrel."

Smith, however, said language excluding religiously based challenges to abortion restrictions is considered essential by the National Right to Life Committee, Americans United for Life, the U.S. Catholic Conference and the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod.

"The bill I am introducing has a specific provision that makes it clear that the legislation cannot be used to secure a right to abortion or abortion funding," Smith said. "It also explicitly protects the tax status of religious organizations."

Members of the broad coalition supporting RFRA range from civil-liberties organizations, such as the American Civil Liberties Union and People for the American Way, to conservative groups that oppose abortion, including the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, the National Association of Evangelicals and Beverly LaHaye's Concerned Women for America.

In a Nov. 22 letter asking members of Congress to co-sponsor RFRA, representatives of these and other organizations that oppose abortion said the abortion language supported by the Catholic Conference "is unnecessary and would jeopardize passage of this legislation. This bill (RFRA) is neutral on the abortion issue, as it is on every other particular claim, including peyote use, tax exemptions and landmarks preservation. It must remain so."

When Smith's bill was introduced, four members of Congress -- Reps. Robert Dornan, R-Calif., Bill Emerson, R-Mo., Mel Hancock, R-Mo., and Harold Volkmer, D-Mo. -- dropped sponsorship of the Solarz bill to sign on as co-sponsors of H.R. 4040. Rep. Robert Lagomarsino, R-Calif., remained a co-sponsor of RFRA while also agreeing to co-sponsor Smith's bill.

Hearings on H.R. 2797 are expected to be held soon after Congress returns in January, according to Brent Walker, associate counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee. Walker said Sens. Joseph Biden, D-Del., and Orrin

Hatch, R-Utah, chairman and ranking minority member of the Senate Judiciary Committee respectively, are committed to introducing RFRA in the Senate when Congress returns.

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Southeastern placed  
on probation by SACS

By Greg Warner

NEW ORLEANS, La. (ABP) -- Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary suffered the worst blow in its four-year struggle to retain accreditation when one of the seminary's two accrediting agencies placed the beleaguered school on probation Dec. 5.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, at its annual meeting in New Orleans, imposed probation apparently because of Southeastern's lack of research and long-range planning, as well as trustee involvement in the selection of faculty.

"This is the final and most severe of our three sanctions," explained James Rogers, executive director of SACS' commission on colleges. "If (the violations) are not corrected, they are removed from the association."

The probation is in effect for a maximum of two years. At its annual meeting in December 1993, SACS must either remove the school from probation or withdraw its accreditation entirely. However, SACS can take either action earlier if it is warranted.

Southeastern is believed to be the first SBC seminary to be placed on probation by an accrediting agency, and none has ever had its accreditation withdrawn.

In 1987 Southeastern ran aground of its two accrediting agencies -- and stirred the ire of some Southern Baptists -- when trustees voted to hire only biblical inerrantists for the faculty. Southeastern's president and top administrators resigned in protest.

The seminary's other accrediting agency also has threatened to withdraw its endorsement. The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada will send an investigative team to the seminary in February to determine if probation or loss of accreditation is warranted.

Accreditation is the academic community's proof-in-packaging label. It means that a school has the resources, principles and commitment to provide its students with the education it claims to offer. Accreditation is critical to the school's ability to raise money and receive government funds and to the students' ability to transfer credits, apply for advanced degrees and qualify for some jobs.

Although not as serious as loss of accreditation, probation will make it more difficult for Southeastern to attract new students and financial support. Already full-time enrollment is down to 434 -- about half its pre-1987 level -- and financial troubles at the school are projected to get worse.

Southeastern administrators are worried that current students will leave the school now that the long-feared probation is official.

Immediately after the decision was announced, Southeastern President Lewis Drummond issued a letter to students that noted probation "does not mean loss of accreditation."

Drummond assured students that degrees awarded to those already enrolled are not jeopardized by probation or even by loss of accreditation. "You need not fear about the quality or recognition of your degree," he wrote.

Drummond's letter said the seminary is "forthrightly and energetically"

addressing the problems cited by SACS and has "every reason to believe we will continue" to be accredited.

The president later told Associated Baptist Press he expects Southeastern to clear up the remaining problems by April, when SACS makes its regular once-a-decade visit to evaluate the school. He said he expects the probation to be reversed well before the two-year limit.

But SACS' Rogers said the April visit could not produce a recommendation in time for the semiannual meeting of the commission on colleges in June. "So we are talking about next December before the commission would be able to make a decision," he said.

Although SACS offers counsel and assistance in helping Southeastern solve its problems, Rogers said, the burden of proof is on the school. "Southeastern needs to show some significant improvement by the time the committee gets there in April," he said.

Decisions by SACS are made by its member institutions, which include about 800 secular and religious schools ranging from junior colleges to research universities. The Southern Association serves an 11-state region and accredits four of the six SBC seminaries.

In an interview with ABP Dec. 6, Drummond tried to sound optimistic, saying probation is "serious" but not the end of the world.

"An institution rarely will get put on probation and not meet the criteria (for lifting probation)", he said.

Drummond said the reaction from students and others will be complicated by the "emotional factor" of the probation decision. "It sounds like you're going to lose accreditation, but in the academic community probation is not tantamount to losing accreditation," he said.

Drummond and Southeastern dean Russ Bush met with SACS officials in New Orleans Dec. 4, before the probation vote, to answer the agency's complaints and defend the school's efforts.

Drummond said he has not yet been told what specific violations have been cited.

Rogers, a Southern Baptist, said SACS' disclosure policy prevents the agency from revealing Southeastern's specific violations, although the school may disclose them if it wishes. He said, however, the violations come under the criteria categories of planning and evaluation, research, the faculty, the role of the faculty, and the governing board.

Rogers said the probation vote was based on the report of a special fact-finding committee that visited Southeastern. Although the report has not been released, those who have seen it say it laments the fact Southeastern lacks both a long-range plan and a process for developing one. That shortcoming is more important than other criticisms, notes the final paragraph of the report, because long-range planning is a condition for membership in SACS.

The document also reportedly criticizes the presence of a trustee on the committees that select new professors.

The trustee role in faculty selection has been a matter of controversy for several years. Fundamental-conservatives, who gained control of the trustee board in 1987, have insisted on direct influence in the selection process, which critics say is outside the trustees' legitimate responsibilities.

In December 1989, SACS placed Southeastern on "warning" status because of the revised faculty-selection procedure and other reasons. Although the procedure was revised again, giving trustees only one spot on the seven-person selection committee, it still met disapproval from SACS.

Southeastern is the only Southern Baptist seminary facing a serious threat to accreditation.

Some Southern Baptists upset with the treatment Southeastern has received from SACS and Association of Theological Schools have called for the

Southern Baptist Convention to set up its own accrediting agency. Opponents say that would be ineffective, too costly and deprive Southern Baptist schools of their hard-earned respect in the educational community.

The recent action by SACS, however, may renew that debate.

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Experts offer help for  
avoiding Christmas stress

By Lacy Thompson

(ABP) -- "It was the time before Christmas and all through the land/ People were moaning, "It's all out of hand./ There's so much to do and so many things./It wears on my patience and makes my head ring."

No, it's not terribly original, but for many people, it is a more honest and closer-to-home rendering of a favorite Christmas poem. Or as one wag observed recently, "Deck the halls with boughs of holly, fa la la la la la la la la. 'Tis the time of stressful folly. Fa la la la la la la la la." <sup>ii</sup> so many instances, Christmas signals not a time of rejoicing but a season of stress and hectic activity. At best, the spirit of the time is threatened by the sheer momentum of the holiday -- so much planning and preparing and going and shopping. Ho Ho Ho boy! What a season.

For many, the season presents a very great challenge, namely to survive the barrage and not allow the holiday busyness to overcome the meaning of the time.

The contributing factors are many.

For one, the growing commercialization of the season is hard to escape. One only has to consider how early Christmas decorations go up in stores -- often right after Halloween -- to realize how much the season is directed by merchants.

"We emphasize the material aspect of the season so much," says Hugh Bryan, a psychologist and member of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Alexandria, La. "We get caught up in the decorating, the meals, the events and all of those sorts of things and fail to recognize that it's the people and the relationships that are more important and that the obvious purpose of Christmas is to celebrate Christ's birth."

Persons also can find themselves caught in a financial tailspin struggling to buy and do too much.

Closely tied to commercialization is the very activity of the season, with its community functions, church events, social gatherings, shopping trips, school parties for kids and on and on. No wonder those "merry gentlemen" sought rest.

"A lot of people, especially Christians, get pushed into a feeling of guilt if they don't do everything," explains Cindy Nardini, a counselor and member of Pineville Park Baptist Church in Pineville. "If we feel like we have to do all things, we lose the whole meaning of the season."

Unrealistic expectations and commercial pressure to create the "perfect" Christmas can add to the stress of the season as well, Bryan and Nardini note. Some people try to recreate a past Christmas or a fantasy Christmas. Others approach the season with hopes and fears about how Christmas will turn out, often in connection with family gatherings: How will so-and-so act? How will tit and tat get along?

Finally, many people must deal with sad memories or anniversaries at Christmas. It may be the first holiday without a certain family member present. A loved one may have died in the past year. There may have been changes in the family makeup.

In such cases, persons should acknowledge the emotion, Bryan says. "Acknowledge that things are different and are going to be different and start creating some new traditions perhaps." Persons also may be able to use the season as a time for finalizing the grieving process, he says.

As for the other stressors, counselors offer a host of helps for those with wearing patience and ringing heads:

Focus on meaning. "I saw a billboard that said "Jesus is the reason for the season," Nardini says. "And I wondered how often we forget that, even as Christians perhaps."

The pace and schedule of the holiday season continues to grow each year, often at the expense of the spiritual dimension of the season, says Jimmy Hester, who works in the family ministry department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

"It seems like every year there's always something added to the pressure on the family," Hester says. "Every year, there's more and more pressure on the family to get into the commercial spirit of Christmas. In doing so, something has to give, and often it is the family time that suffers."

In some cases, churches are helping families combat that pressure, through such things as the distribution of advent materials, services oriented to helping families prepare for the Christmas season and services for persons facing their first Christmas after the loss of a loved one, Hester notes.

First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C., co-sponsors a "Christmas Service for the Bereaved" with three area hospitals and a hospice. Now in its fourth year, the service drew 150 participants last year.

"Christmas is a stressful time for people in grief," said Pastor John Hewett. "Each day of the season requires readjustment of family traditions and sacred memories. Every ornament, every song, every sight and smell remind survivors of experiences once shared with the deceased."

But families themselves also need to work to give the Christmas season meaning, Hester and others insist.

Nardini urges individuals and families to use every few minutes they can to focus on the meaning of Christmas. "Set aside time for a daily devotional or prayer. Do things that will force you to remember what the season is about."

The key is to give Christmas meaning beyond just a day, Hester adds, noting that for many people, all the pre-Christmas buildup merely leads to an emotional letdown after Dec. 25. "My father-in-law once commented, 'There's nothing quite as over as Christmas.' And I see so many people for whom Christmas is just a day for them."

However, Hester reminds persons that Christmas is relationship. "It is first of all a relationship to Jesus Christ. But it also has to do with community and other people. It's personal but it's more than personal."

Thus, families should focus both on setting aside daily time to talk about and prepare for Christmas and on demonstrating the love of God during the Christmas season.

"We should ask, what is the potential my family has to minister to others? What gifts do we have as a family? What can our family give? I think it's important for families to do that. The very act of giving is a demonstration of what Christmas is all about, in that God gave us his son."

-- Plan. A fundamental key to combatting the stress of the season is scheduling, Bryan notes, emphasizing the need to set an agenda so that details do not become overwhelming.

Persons should review a list of responsibilities and see if any can be eliminated, observers note. If possible, they divide the remaining tasks with others. They also should take care of details as early as possible, such as buying batteries and film for Christmas morning. In addition, family members should plan ways to help one another and take care to protect their time with

one another.

Nardini encourages families to draft and post a calendar. Look at the whole holiday season so that family members will not become over committed to activities, she says. Plan a budget together and stick to it so finances will not become a point of stress, she adds. "Plan everything. And in doing so, plan for some alone time, even if it's just a few minutes a day, just enough to get your thoughts together."

Nardini warns persons against overextending themselves, even for good causes. "No one knows your limits but yourself. Set your own limits and be respectful of others' as well. Only we know what we can and cannot do. And we need to make those decisions."

-- Clarify expectations. Families need to sit down and discuss their expectations of the season, helping one another be realistic. Perhaps they can spend time during dinner each night talking about what Christmas means to them.

Examining traditions also is an important aspect of clarifying expectations. Families should review traditions to see if they are still relevant and enjoyable, Bryan notes. "I think traditions are good, but they need to be serving a function for the family. And often, a family outgrows old traditions that have been there for a long time."

Nardini agrees that communication can help offset unfulfilled expectations. "See what everybody wants to do. Take everybody into consideration. Then find a balance."

-- Focus on the moment. If anything could be cited as a fundamental key to offsetting holiday stress, it would be attitude. "Probably the attitude we bring to the season is the primary element in dealing with stress," Bryan says.

However, most adults do not allow themselves to enjoy Christmas, Nardini explains. The key in changing that lies in focusing on the moment and in approaching the duties and events of the season in a positive frame of mind. Families should brainstorm on ways to enhance Christmas duties and even start some related traditions, observers say.

By focusing on the moment and maintaining a positive outlook, people also will be able to enjoy the task or event at hand and avoid the feeling that the season is going to overwhelm them, Bryan says. "I think more and more people feel like Christmas comes and goes too quickly. They're not prepared for it, and they haven't planned, and they haven't taken care of themselves by doing that planning. People just don't slow down enough."

Unfortunately, not even for Christmas.

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