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Phone: (904) 396-0396 Fax: (904) 396-4441 CServe: 70420,73

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Parks weighing options
for called trustee meeting

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board President Keith Parks is "considering all options that may arise" at next week's crucial meeting of FMB trustees, who appear likely to examine his future relationship with the board.

Trustee leaders have called an unusual meeting of the full board to convene at 2 p.m., Feb. 10., purportedly to question Parks about his involvement in a Jan. 7 news conference held by two retiring board staffers at the FMB's Richmond headquarters.

Isam Ballenger, vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and Keith Parker, area director for Europe, retired early to protest recent trustee actions, including defunding of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

The men's frank criticisms angered many trustees, some of whom have expressed outrage that Parks would permit the news conference to be held in the board's chapel.

But some observers predict the agenda at the Feb. 10 session will expand to include discussion of Parks' tenure. The confrontation comes on the first day of the board's regularly scheduled three-day meeting. Normally trustees gather in committees for two days before convening the full board for business on the third day.

Reports continue that some trustees will ask for creation of a search committee to seek a successor to Parks, who will turn 65 this October. In the

past Parks has said he would like to remain as president for several more years.

"I've heard rumors all across the gamut (about the called meeting), from calmness and efforts to bring about a truce to setting retirement dates," Parks told ABP Feb. 5.

"I don't know what my response will be," he continued. "I'm trying to consider all options that may arise. I'm very deeply trying to seek the Lord's leadership."

In the past few years, Parks has said publicly that if he was unable to function as president with integrity, he would inform Southern Baptists. But he was cautious when asked if that time has arrived.

"I'll have to express some concerns at this meeting," he said. "That's part of the struggle (in determining a response) -- how to do it in the most productive way and for the good of missions."

Parks, a 37-year veteran of missions, has been FMB president since 1980.

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Romania offers FMB foothold
for new Europe strategy

By Greg Warner

(ABP) -- Romanian Baptists, for decades isolated from their Baptist brethren worldwide, now find themselves at the center of an international tug of war between Baptists on two continents.

What is at stake, according to some on both sides, is nothing less than the future of Baptists in Europe.

Several recent events have combined to make such an unlikely circumstance possible:

-- After the fall of Romania's totalitarian government in 1989, the Baptist Union of Romania, fearful that its own government-approved leaders had become "compromised" during communist rule, acted to remedy the problem with a clean sweep of its leadership. Ultraconservative Baptists, who for many years had operated on the fringe of the union, effectively moved into the power vacuum. Once considered outsiders because they operated independently of the union structure, they now hold sway among Romanian Baptists.

-- In the United States, conservative Southern Baptists, whose own recent rise to power bears some resemblance to the Romanian saga, have used their ties to such high-profile Romanian leaders as Josef Tson to forge a new alliance with conservative Romanian Baptists. Their goal in Romania, they admit privately, is to gain a foothold for a new mission strategy for the continent -- one that commits the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to work with a more conservative "emerging leadership" in all of Europe.

"I think Romania is the linchpin nation for Europe, at least for Baptists in Europe," explained Phil Roberts, a Southern Baptist working in Romania who figures prominently in the new strategy.

Roberts may be a linchpin of sorts himself. He is academic dean of the Oradea Bible Institute, an independent church-based training school founded by Josef Tson, probably the most powerful of Romania's new ultraconservative leaders.

Roberts is a conservative who has taught evangelism at two Southern Baptist seminaries, most recently Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Although not a missionary, he has served as pastor of three churches in Europe. And he has been a frequent channel of information for FMB trustees.

"Phil Roberts is an expert on Europe," said FMB trustee Ron Wilson of Thousand Oaks, Calif. Roberts has been a major resource for trustees wanting inside information on Europe from "outside normal (FMB) channels," said Wilson, who serves on the FMB committee that oversees work on the continent.

Roberts' brother, Roger, is an FMB trustee. His former pastor is FMB chairman Bill Hancock of Louisville, Ky. And Roberts counts another former chairman, North Carolina pastor Mark Corts, as a personal friend. Roberts acknowledges those close ties with trustees. "I've worked with a lot of them over the years on different projects," he said in a recent interview from Germany.

It's little wonder Wilson and other FMB trustees have their eyes on Roberts to take a key position on the FMB's restructured European staff, perhaps replacing area director Keith Parker, who resigned in January over what he called the trustees' imposition of "theological orthodoxy" on European Baptists.

Roberts said the rumor that he will replace Parker is "speculative," particularly since it would be a departure from FMB policy to hire a non-missionary for the post. But he added he "probably could help" the FMB in such an administrative role.

Trustee Wilson said few of his colleagues would be opposed to hiring Roberts, regardless of policy, because of the need for "new blood from outside the system."

Several FMB staff members say privately that Roberts already plays a key role, using his ties with trustees to undermine the FMB's current staff and strategy in Europe. And they charge he has parlayed those connections into a promise of FMB money for the Oradea school.

"It's a foregone conclusion that the money was promised by trustees," said one FMB insider, who asked not to be identified out of fear of reprisal. Another said Romanian leaders have acknowledged the promise of "large sums of money" for Oradea -- as much as \$2 million.

When FMB trustees defunded the European Baptist seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, last October for alleged liberalism, the Baptist Union of Romania -- probably the most conservative union in Europe -- ignored an avalanche of protests in order to endorse the action. It was the only union in Europe to do so.

Since the Oradea school stands to gain financially from Ruschlikon's loss, the Romanian endorsement sparked charges of collusion.

"This decision was motivated by promises of massive funding in return for their support," said Charles Thomas, a Southern Baptist missionary in Romania.

Thomas charged that Nic Gheorghita, general secretary of the Romanian union and vice chancellor of the Oradea institute, admitted the endorsement would put the Romanians "first in line" for the Ruschlikon money. Thomas and his wife, Kathie, veteran missionaries who last year became Southern Baptists' first workers in Romania, resigned Jan. 11 in protest.

Nic Gheorghita, Phil Roberts and FMB trustees publicly deny any deal was struck. And no proof of a promise has surfaced.

But trustee Wilson predicted at least some of the Ruschlikon money will go to the Oradea school. "I think we've all assumed that," he said. "I'd be surprised if it didn't. The Oradea situation is the biggest, most growing, dynamic situation (in Europe)."

The validity of the Romanian endorsement has since come under question from Romanians themselves. They say the endorsement, which came in a letter from Gheorghita and union president Vasile Talos, was not authorized by the union's general council.

The confusion centers in part around the role of Josef Tson, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Oradea and founder and chancellor of the institute.

In a Nov. 1 letter to FMB chairman Hancock, Tson congratulated the FMB

for defunding Ruschlikon. Tson's letter said Ruschlikon and the European Baptist Federation which operates the seminary are afflicted with "this deadly disease of unbelief in the Bible." He cited the need to "provide Europe with Bible-believing seminaries."

Romanian president Talos tried to calm the furor with a Jan. 27 letter to the European Baptist Federation and the FMB. He said Tson's letter "aroused suspicions in Romania among some pastors and council members who considered it an intention to orient the financial support to the Second Baptist Church of Oradea," which operates the school.

Tson, one of the most influential people in Romania's new leadership, serves as chairman of the union's theological education committee, which will give him significant influence over how any FMB money for education is spent in Romania. Sources say he has asked for \$2 million each for his Oradea school and the more traditional Baptist seminary in Bucharest.

After becoming pastor of Oradea's Second Baptist Church in the 1970s, Tson spent much of the 1980s in the United States under what he termed as exile from Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. From a base in Wheaton, Ill., the charismatic pastor operated the Romanian Missionary Society, raising as much as \$1 million a year for his Oradea projects from among American evangelicals, fundamentalists, parachurch groups and conservative Southern Baptists.

When he returned to Oradea after the fall of Ceausescu, Tson led the 3,000-member church -- one of the largest in Europe -- to found the Oradea Bible Institute in October 1990, with the help of Roberts.

Tson and Roberts clearly have big plans for the Oradea school which go well beyond training pastors for Romanian churches, including opening a Christian college.

"Our Bible Institute of Oradea may become the first Christian university of Eastern Europe," Tson wrote in a 1991 fund-raising letter circulated in the United States. The school's goal, he wrote, is "to produce the Christian intellectuals of tomorrow," both for Romania and the rest of Eastern Europe.

Last year Romania's post-communist government declared its openness to religious instruction in public schools, with students studying the faith of their choice. Tson plans to use the Christian university to train hundreds of Romanians to teach Christianity in the public schools.

Since opening in 1990, Roberts said, the Bible institute already has grown to 190 ministry students, compared to 138 who are enrolled in the older, union-run Bucharest seminary.

Although the institute's curriculum -- like other seminary instruction in Europe -- is taught on the college level, Roberts said, the content is similar to American seminaries. Since the Oradea school is built around a theology of biblical inerrancy, with which FMB trustees are more comfortable, the school has won favor from trustees. In an unusual move last year, trustees sent \$50,000 to the church that sponsors the school.

The FMB staff in Europe, which traditionally has related only to seminaries sponsored by and accountable to national Baptist unions, has not been so enthusiastic.

The need for theological education in Romania is acute, all agree. Under communism, the government tried to close down churches by limiting the number of students allowed in seminaries and creating a pastor shortage. As a result, there are few trained pastors and even fewer full-time pastors in the country, and many serve multiple churches.

By training pastors, the Oradea school has quickly won many supporters in Romania and elevated the role of Second Baptist Church in the union.

Despite open doors throughout Eastern Europe, Romania offers the best opportunity for Baptists to make an immediate impact, say Roberts and others.

The reasons why Romania is the "linchpin" for Europe, Roberts said, are both mathematical and spiritual. Romania has more Baptists (120,000) than any

other European country except the former Soviet Union and Great Britain. Baptists in Romania represent a larger percentage of the population than anywhere in Europe, Roberts said.

And churches are growing. "There is a spiritual intensity in Romania that could produce explosive growth," Roberts said. "There is an opportunity to experience the kind of spiritual turnaround that has happened in South Korea, for instance."

Such potential has caught the attention of Roberts' friends on the FMB. That promising picture is only enhanced in the eyes of trustees by the fact Baptists in the country are the most conservative in Europe, even before the Oradea group rose to power. As a result, trustees have found much-needed allies for their attempts to redirect mission work in Europe to a more conservative course.

Those same trustees, who chafed for years at the high cost of theological education at Ruschlikon, also have been attracted by the relatively low cost of doing missions in Romania, where American dollars go further than in much of the world.

Noting employment restrictions in Switzerland that hinder the seminary there, trustee Wilson said, "For the cost of the cook at Ruschlikon, we can take care of theological education in Romania for a year!"

The inroads made in Romania may soon bear fruit in other East European countries, Roberts said. He sees the Oradea institute as a model for a new brand of theological education on the continent. "I think it could be duplicated in other European countries," he said. "It's a better model than Western seminaries."

With help from Oradea, a similar training center already is being established in the Ukraine, Roberts said. Other countries like Poland and Russia could be next, with the emphasis on national seminaries rather than international schools like Ruschlikon. And sources say Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, with their conservative Baptist constituencies, offer further room for expansion.

Although each country is unique and will require a tailored approach, Roberts said, the Oradea model -- low-cost, practical training conducted on a national level with an emphasis on evangelism and biblical conservatism -- bears repeating.

With churches in Eastern Europe now free to expand, and a shortage of trained leaders holding them back, Roberts sees theological training as the mission priority of the future.

"That is the key," he said. "It is probably the greatest missionary contribution we can make because we are helping them train themselves."

A professor of evangelism at Southeastern Seminary for the past two years, Roberts has taken a one-year leave of absence to work at the Oradea school. Before he left for Romania, Southeastern President Lewis Drummond made his former doctoral student the first director for Southeastern's missions school, the Center for Great Commission Studies.

The arrangement calls for Roberts to return to Southeastern to direct the center in 1993. But he said he expects to retain a relationship with the Oradea school -- "maybe even as acting dean" -- if he returns to Southeastern.

Roberts said he plans to "interrelate" the two roles as a way to involve Southern Baptists -- particularly seminary students -- in Eastern European missions, through church planting, church-to-church partnerships and student exchanges.

The strategy is called Project Macedonia, a program developed by Roberts and funded in part by PRO Missions, an independent fund-raising organization based in Memphis, Tenn.

Southeastern Seminary also "is in partnership" with PRO Missions in Project Macedonia, according to Southeastern's press release announcing

Roberts' appointment as center director. And Roberts' work in Oradea is funded in part by PRO Missions, which is headed by Jimmy Ervin, a member of Bellevue Baptist Church.

The PRO Missions connection is one of several alliances established in the United States by Roberts and Tson to support their work in Oradea. Because of his time spent in the States, Tson also claims friendships with Bellevue pastor Adrian Rogers, Atlanta pastor Charles Stanley, Dallas educator Paige Patterson, other prominent SBC conservative leaders, and an impressive list of conservatives outside the SBC, such as Jerry Falwell.

Some of his stateside contacts assisted his work even before the fall of communism, at a time when the FMB would work only through official union channels.

Roberts acknowledged some Southern Baptists are uncomfortable with the fact Tson has accepted money from conservative American churches and groups of almost every stripe, including independent fundamentalists, charismatics, pentecostals and a wide variety of parachurch groups. Tson's fund-raising newsletter and other materials downplay his Baptist background in an appeal to a larger evangelical audience.

"There have been suggestions made that they (Tson and others) break relationships with them," Roberts said, but he added that's not likely. These are the people who "came during the hard years" of communism, he said, "and there is no way we are going to tell our friends goodbye."

Roberts also is aware of concern that Romanian Baptists, by their endorsement of the Ruschlikon defunding and close ties with Southern Baptist conservatives, have invited the SBC controversy into their country. But he predicted such criticism will have little effect on the Oradea project or Romanian Baptists.

"I think the conservative ties and conservative theology are going to get some criticism," he said, "but these guys weren't tied down by Ceausescu, and they won't be by a little criticism."

Still it is clear from the Romanians themselves that the flap over the Ruschlikon endorsement has embroiled them in a controversy they neither want nor understand. Some say the battle that has divided Southern Baptists for more than a decade now threatens to drive a wedge into the Romanians' already fragile fellowship.

Nic Gheorghita, general secretary of the union, said he is worried Romanian Baptists, who remained unified even under Ceausescu's dictatorship, may now be divided by a controversy that "is more across the ocean."

However, some observers, even in Romania, are not so willing to absolve Romanian Baptists of blame: The affinity of some Romanians for American money has made them not merely pawns of international politics but players in the game.

Either way, the stakes are high.

Sudden freedom has produced an unprecedented opportunity for Baptists to flourish in Romania, if they don't fall captive to the well-intentioned charity or political machinations of the West.

"In totalitarianism there was unity; in freedom there is division," said Paul Thibodeaux, the FMB's associate area director for Eastern Europe.

"It could be that the Western mission organizations, with their money and differing mission philosophies, could do what the iron-fisted Stalinists were never able to do, by contributing to the division of the fellowship of believers in Romania."

Drummond retiring in June;
terms not disclosed

By Greg Warner

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) -- After four tumultuous years as president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Lewis Drummond announced Jan. 30 that he will retire at the end of June.

Drummond, 65, made his announcement in a special closed-door meeting of the seminary's trustee executive committee on the school's campus in Wake Forest, N.C. The trustees met privately for about three hours while reporters from national and local media waited outside.

The 12-member executive committee approved a retirement agreement -- which includes a financial package for Drummond -- but declined to release details of the agreement until it is approved by the full trustee board in March. They said they will begin the search for Drummond's successor immediately.

Drummond's announcement ended months of speculation about his tenure, heightened by the Dec. 5 decision by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to place Southeastern on academic probation. The school already faces a financial crisis and dwindling faculty and enrollment.

In light of those challenges, Drummond said in a statement, "it has become increasingly a clear conviction that I must leave the rebuilding to another."

"I have made my contribution, under God, in a turbulent, transition time," his statement said. "Now I lay down the mantle in retirement for another to pick up and move forward."

Drummond's short tenure was marked by struggles with the school's trustees, faculty and accrediting agencies. He became president in 1988 after former president Randall Lolley resigned in protest of trustee decisions to hire only biblical inerrantists to the faculty.

Southeastern, one of six seminaries owned by the Southern Baptist Convention, was the first to come under the control of SBC fundamental-conservatives, who took the reins of the denominational structure in 1979.

Drummond inherited a trustee board anxious to steer the school to a more conservative course, a faculty resistant to that new direction, and accrediting agencies that scrutinized the conflict carefully.

Eventually SACS placed Southeastern on probation, citing excessive involvement of trustees in the administration of the school. The seminary's other accrediting agency, the Association of Theological Schools, will visit Southeastern in February to decide whether or not to place the school on probation or withdraw accreditation.

As a result of the turmoil, the school's enrollment has dropped from over 1,000 in 1987 to about half of that. A rash of faculty resignations and retirements will also reduce the faculty to about half its 1987 size by next fall, with only seven of the 34 faculty members remaining from 1987.

While the loss of faculty will now clear the way for the trustee-mandated changes, the shift didn't come soon enough for Drummond. Still trustees defended their transitional president.

"We called him to do an impossible task," summarized Robert Crowley of Rockville, Md., who chaired the committee that recommended Drummond for president. "Lewis Drummond would have succeeded if the faculty had cooperated."

Although Drummond's failure to resolve the conflicts at the school put him at odds with some trustees, Crowley and others said those who met Jan. 30 expressed no animosity toward the departing president.

"Nobody said anything negative about Louie Drummond," Crowley said after more than three hours of closed-door discussion, much of it held without

Drummond present. Crowley and others would not say if trustees revived their earlier criticism of Drummond for spending in excess of \$200,000 renovating the president's house.

Instead trustees emerged from their private meeting with words of praise for Drummond. A three-member subcommittee was appointed to draft their own statement about Drummond's retirement Jan. 31.

Meanwhile, trustee chairman Roger Ellsworth refused to blame Drummond for Southeastern's woes.

"Dr. Drummond has labored under extremely difficult circumstances," said Ellsworth, a pastor from Benton, Ill.. "We are concerned about the SACS probation, and we are concerned about student recruitment and faculty recruitment. But I do not lay that at his feet."

Trustees would not say why they deliberated so long, however. Some hinted the details of the retirement package were the cause of the delay.

Ellsworth declined to release details of the package before they are made available to the other board members. The information, including the financial agreement, will be sent to all board members immediately, the chairman said.

They will be asked to accept Drummond's retirement by mail ballot -- a step necessary to begin the search process -- but they are not scheduled to vote on the financial terms until the full board meeting March 9-11.

Asked why Drummond would commit to retire before trustees had approved the agreement, Ellsworth said, "I should think that he should have every confidence that the package will be approved."

Trustee sources indicated the agreement calls for Drummond to continue to receive his salary and benefits for at least a year after retirement and perhaps longer. As president he reportedly receives more than \$100,000 annually in salary and benefits.

One trustee said Drummond got almost everything he asked for.

"He was very pleased," said another. "There were only minor changes, one or two substantive changes."

For his part, Drummond declined to say if he had been pressured to retire. "I don't have any comment on that because, you know, these men are my friends and they've treated me well. So I sure have no complaints."

But privately one trustee acknowledged the board has been encouraging Drummond to leave his post for as long as two years.

Although Ellsworth acknowledged discussing retirement with Drummond "three or four times in the last year," the chairman said Drummond stepped down voluntarily and at a time of his own choosing.

Ellsworth offered no clue why Drummond retired in January instead of waiting for the regular meeting of trustees in March, since the agreement would require approval of the full board anyway.

Neither did Drummond explain the timing. "I retire now because I genuinely feel led by the Spirit of God to do so," he told reporters.

The president declined to discuss his future plans. "I don't have anything to announce on that at all," he said.

Drummond, who taught evangelism at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary before going to Southeastern, reportedly will be offered an evangelism professorship at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

Trustees briefly discussed the Beeson situation during their closed session, according to one trustee, but Drummond reportedly said no decision had been made.

Drummond, who had surgery for colon cancer two years ago, told reporters his health was not a major factor in his decision.

He said he would like to have solved Southeastern's financial and accreditation problems before retiring but suggested the school is well on its way to resolving them.

"We're meeting all the (accreditation) criteria, the standards, as best we can and as rapidly as we can," he said, "and I would hope by the time that I am through we will have met those...criteria."

He said the school's money troubles are the result of Southern Baptist budget woes, "of which we have no control at all." But the budget corrections instituted by Southeastern mean "our financial problems...are essentially solved," he said.

According to Southeastern's bylaws, the executive committee serves as the search committee to find Drummond's successor. Trustees would not comment on reports that Paige Patterson, president of Criswell College in Dallas, is the leading candidate.

Patterson, a key leader in the fundamental-conservative movement in the Southern Baptist Convention, was highly considered for the post in 1988.

Ellsworth would not say if he expects to have a new president by the time Drummond leaves June 30. But he said the school's ongoing problems would be helped by a speedy transition.

"We do want to move with deliberate speed," he said.

Ellsworth acknowledged the trustees did little other business during the special meeting, which was called to deal with several matters related to accreditation as well. "When the president resigns, it moves everything else to the back burner," he explained.

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Trustee agreement pays Drummond
for 19 months, blunts criticism

By Greg Warner

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) -- Trustee leaders at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary agreed Jan. 30 to name retiring President Lewis Drummond chancellor of the school and pay him his salary for 19 months after he leaves in June.

According to one trustee, they also agreed not to publicize any "irregularities" that have occurred during Drummond's administration.

Drummond's retirement agreement, adopted by the trustee executive committee Jan. 30, must be approved by the full board of trustees March 9-11 before it becomes effective.

The 65-year-old Drummond, who has been under pressure from trustees for failing to solve the school's academic and financial problems, met with the trustee executive committee in a three-hour, closed-door session Jan. 30, during which details of the agreement were finalized.

Trustee leaders would not release any details of the agreement before board members approve it in March. But a copy of the agreement was obtained by Associated Baptist Press.

In addition to granting Drummond 19 months of pay -- one year salary plus seven months for a sabbatic leave -- the agreement gives him the normal retirement benefits of a 10-year administrator: a one-time payment of 10 percent of his salary, 22 days of vacation pay, a \$20,000 life insurance policy, a Medicare supplement for him and his wife for life, and lifetime use of the seminary's health center.

Drummond, who has served at Southeastern for four years, reportedly earns an estimated \$70,000 base salary, plus annual benefits of more than \$30,000.

Trustees also gave Drummond his seminary car and his choice of furnishings from the presidential residence "up to the amount of his

contribution." Drummond, who was criticized by trustees last year for spending about \$200,000 in remodeling the house, agreed at the time to repay about \$28,000 of the costs. It is not known how much of the debt has been paid.

Drummond had been negotiating his retirement with trustees since at least October. A document obtained by ABP indicates Drummond originally asked for much more during those earlier negotiations, including a retirement supplement equal to half his current salary for life for his role as chancellor.

According to the earlier document, he also asked for forgiveness of his outstanding loans and debts and for control over what the seminary says publicly about the retirement package.

Trustee sources indicate Drummond, after meeting with trustee leaders privately in recent months, trimmed his request before the Jan. 30 meeting with the executive committee. After that meeting, one trustee said only "one or two substantive changes" were made in his revised proposal.

Drummond originally asked for "an agreement to view any and all alleged irregularities as mistakes and to avoid publicity of these errors." Though not spelled out in the Jan. 30 document, this was accomplished through a "gentleman's agreement," said one trustee.

"There was a gentleman's agreement that there be no acrimony," the trustee explained.

Presumably this would preempt further trustee criticism of not only Drummond's purchases for his office and house but administrative decisions about the school.

Drummond's original request also tried to blunt criticism of his wife, Betty, who has been faulted for traveling unnecessarily on her husband's business trips, for excessive use of seminary funds, and for alienating some people in the seminary community.

Drummond reportedly asked that she be recognized for her "important contributions to the seminary community and the value of her presence on presidential journeys."

Instead, a trustee statement released the day after Drummond's retirement announcement cited her as "her husband's constant companion and pillar of strength" who "has contributed greatly to the seminary as a whole."

In a Feb. 3 letter from trustee chairman Roger Ellsworth, all 30 Southeastern trustees were asked to approve Drummond's retirement by mail ballot so that the search for his successor can begin. However, they were not asked to vote on the terms of the package before the March meeting.

Drummond presumably will be allowed to take another job in retirement without affecting the package. He reportedly will be offered an evangelism professorship at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., in the next few weeks.

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Trustees asked to name
center for Drummond

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) -- Trustee leaders at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary are recommending that the school's new Center for Great Commission Studies be named for retiring President Lewis Drummond.

Drummond, 65, who established the center, announced Jan. 30 that he will retire at the end of June.

The recommendation, which must be approved by the full trustee board, came in a Jan. 30 statement of appreciation from the trustee executive

committee.

The statement, drafted by three executive committee members, also suggested that Drummond's "expertise, guidance and teaching...be utilized in the future in the missionary work of this Center."

The statement acknowledged Drummond "has led the seminary during a very difficult and trying time...in a positive way with a loving spirit."

It also commended several achievements during Drummond's administration, including adoption of a new faculty-selection process and establishment of "fraternal relationships" between the seminary and Baptists in Eastern Europe and Asia.

Drummond's wife, Betty, was cited as "her husband's constant companion and pillar of strength" who "has contributed greatly to the seminary as a whole."

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-- By Greg Warner

SACS report faults Southeastern
for trustee role in administration

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) -- Trustees of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary must become less involved in running the school if Southeastern is to retain its accreditation.

That's the ruling from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, which placed Southeastern on one-year probation Dec. 5 but did not state its reasons until recently.

In a Jan. 28 letter to the seminary explaining its decision, SACS expressed "great concern regarding the involvement of the trustees in the administration of the seminary."

Trustees have been under fire since 1987, when they changed seminary policy to ensure that only biblical inerrantists are hired for the faculty. The former president and most top administrators subsequently resigned.

Trustees later adopted a new faculty-selection process that placed three trustees on the committees that select new professors. The number was later reduced to one, but even the smaller role for trustees was apparently not acceptable to SACS.

The SACS letter cited Southeastern for failing to comply with five accreditation criteria: planning and evaluation, institutional research, faculty, the role of the faculty and its committees, and the governing board. The only criterion discussed in the letter, however, concerned the governing board.

The letter asked Southeastern to submit a response by Oct. 15 "showing evidence of recognition that the function of the board of trustees is to make policy, not to execute and administer the policy."

Members of Southeastern's trustee executive committee were expected to give attention to the SACS situation during their special Jan. 30-31 meeting. But the SACS letter was received only a day before the meeting, which trustees said limited their ability to respond.

Trustees did hear a report from the seminary's long-range planning committee, which presented a working draft of a strategic plan for the seminary covering 1992-96. The plan is the product of the school's current self-study.

The self-study plan, though not a policy document, addresses "things critical to preserving accreditation," explained Dean Russ Bush, and is designed to bring Southeastern into conformity with the accreditation criterion cited by SACS.

Although the plan addressed some of the criteria, trustees have not yet resolved the issue of their involvement in faculty selection.

A SACS committee will visit Southeastern in April to gauge progress in solving the problems cited. That committee will report to SACS' committee on criteria in December.

Southeastern administrators also will be invited to report to the December meeting, during which a decision will be made to remove Southeastern from probation, continue the probation or remove the seminary's accreditation.

Meanwhile, Southeastern's other accrediting agency, the Association of Theological Schools, will visit the seminary Feb. 23-25 to decide whether or not to place Southeastern on probation or remove its accreditation.

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-- By Greg Warner

Basic virtues necessary in '90s,
conference participants told

By Mark Wingfield and Greg Warner

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Any emphasis on Christian ethics in the 1990s must begin with reclaiming "salt-of-the-earth" virtues, participants in the first conference of the Baptist Center for Ethics were told.

"Could it be that in the social turmoil of the '60s, the narcissism of the '70s and the upwardly mobile sophistication of the '80s, many of us have lost touch with salt-of-the-earth virtues like honesty, fidelity and integrity?" asked David Hughes, pastor of First Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C.

"Saying what you mean, meaning what you say, and keeping your promises have almost become extinct species in the ethical kingdom," Hughes said. "Sadly, Southern Baptist denominational life is no exception to this rule."

Hughes was among 20 speakers and panelists participating in the Feb. 3-4 conference at Immanuel Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn. This was the first national conference sponsored by the Baptist Center for Ethics since its formation last year by Robert Parham, who left the staff of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

About 300 people from 17 states registered at the conference, with the largest numbers coming from Tennessee, Kentucky and Alabama.

The registration dwarfs that of recent national conferences sponsored by the SBC Christian Life Commission, which has changed its focus as fundamental-conservative Southern Baptists gained control of the agency's board of trustees. The most recent CLC annual conference in Fort Worth, Texas, attracted about 121 registrants.

"The conference clearly exceeded my numerical expectations," said center director Parham. "This gives the center the traction necessary to break out of the backfield of obscurity and into the open field of credibility."

Conference topics included genetic engineering, the health-care crisis, hunger, the education crisis, teenage sex, racism, civil religion and a reading by author Will Campbell.

Parham said the smorgasbord approach was intended to attract more participants and "to deal with a variety of issues that haven't been dealt with recently" in Baptist circles.

Sound ethics for the '90s also must include sound theology, said Emmanuel McCall said in one of two theme interpretations. McCall, former

longtime director of black church relations for the SBC Home Mission Board, is pastor of Christian Fellowship Baptist Church in Atlanta.

McCall called for a clear presentation of the gospel that avoids "syrupy sentimentalism" and the preaching of a "gimme God" as presented by television evangelists.

Further, McCall said, Christians must learn that ethics means "we cannot really love God and hate people." The church is not immune to "displays of unlovable ugliness that pervade our nation," he said.

Legendary college football coach Bobby Bowden said every coach faces a decision whether or not to cheat to win. Bowden's football program at Florida State University is one of the most successful in the country but also has avoided the scandals that have hit other successful schools.

Bowden said colleges don't have to cheat to win but acknowledged "it's easier." While some college recruits and coaches fall victim to the temptation to trade performance for cash, Bowden said, "We will not bid at Florida State University."

Despite well-publicized scandals, Bowden estimated only 10-12 percent of colleges break NCAA rules that govern college athletics. Like other coaches, Bowden said he is frustrated by the number and complexity of NCAA rules. "If everybody would obey the rules, we would only need 10 of them," he said. "The Ten Commandments would do."

"Football is a microcosm of society," he said. "If they've got crooks, we've got crooks." He stressed the importance of family and ethical teaching for keeping sports clean.

Since most violations involve money, and so many athletes are poor, Bowden said he favors paying college athletes a small stipend, perhaps \$50 or \$75 a month, to keep them out of trouble. "Look what they do for us," he said, noting football earned FSU \$5 million last year.

Thomas Corts, president of Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., said giving government funds to private and church schools is not the answer to America's education problem.

In a speech on the state of American education, Corts outlined a list of challenges facing schools. Even public schools are strangling under regulations that come with government funding, he said.

"Money alone is not the answer," Corts said. Public schools need more funds "but also need a new conviction about teachers, hiring gifted persons and giving them tools and power to do their jobs, and bold new avenues of parental involvement," he said.

The demise of strong families is a major contributor to the demise of America's schools, Corts said: "Even objective secular researchers are acknowledging the role of parental encouragement in student learning. Low levels of parent involvement have been cited among the four or five major causes of poor achievement by U.S. school children."

However, a further detraction to American education has developed as schools are given too many extraneous things to do, Corts said. "No group enterprise can succeed over a period of time without a well-defined and limited central mission. If we want our schools to be welfare agencies, day-care centers, soup kitchens, penal institutions, entertainment centers, first-aid stations, we forfeit the right to expect them to be schools."

Afterward, participants gave organizers feedback on the center's first conference, for which they paid a \$95 registration fee. Most expressed satisfaction with the program, while many offered suggestions for additional topics -- clergy ethics, pornography and First Amendment issues, the ethical use of money, peacemaking and the environment.

Others asked for small-group sessions, more practical application of ethics and success stories from churches that have applied ethics in their communities.

"I'm very pleased with the enthusiasm I felt from participants in the

room," Parham said later. He noted the conference was staffed with volunteer help and that some program participants voluntarily paid their own expenses and declined to accept honoraria.

"I think everybody realizes this is a shoestring operation, and they expressed their support in a variety of ways," he said.

The board of directors for the center met after the conference and adopted bylaws. They also expressed a desire that more lay persons, African-Americans, and other people of color be added to the board, Parham said.

Parham said the conference likely will become an annual occasion, probably in February.

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Churches must say 'good things'
about sex, professor says

By Mark Wingfield

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Churches must begin to "say good things" about sex in order to stop a sexual epidemic among U.S. teenagers, a college psychology professor said.

By failing to speak constructively about sexuality, churches have left adolescents with no moral guidelines, said M. B. Fletcher, professor of psychology at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn. Fletcher spoke at the first annual conference of the Baptist Center for Ethics at Immanuel Baptist Church in Nashville Feb. 3.

"The church needs to get real," Fletcher said after describing seven years of research on the sexual involvement of Christian teens. His research found that Christian teens are just as likely as non-Christian teens to engage in premarital sexual intercourse.

Fletcher suggested churches should teach parents how to socialize their children sexually and should develop aggressive sex-education programs.

"Teen-age sex in America has reached epidemic proportions," he said. "If teen-age sex is to be dealt with effectively, the church must take a more active role."

Positive talk about sex in church youth groups must be straightforward and include open-minded listening, Fletcher said: "I talk about orgasm and masturbation in my class the same way you talk about atonement and justification from the pulpit."

Rather than avoiding the subject of sex in a prudish manner, churches should speak out clearly and compassionately with biblical guidelines, he said.

Fletcher collected his data on Christian teens through anonymous surveys of Carson-Newman students in human sexuality courses since 1984.

Since 1984, the number of male students reporting experience in sexual intercourse has increased from 55 percent to 70 percent, he said. During the same period, the number of female students with sexual experience has increased from 27 percent to 53 percent.

"I am convinced that many in the church believe that the Christian values we teach our children are controlling their sexual behaviors," Fletcher said. "The evidence suggests that this is simply not the case."

Christian teens know the church's position against pre-marital sex, he explained, but do it anyway.

Teens surveyed "have rationalized their behavior to permit a more acceptable and comfortable sexual lifestyle," Fletcher said. "Their rationale is simple: If you are in love, sex is a natural, meaningful way to express your feeling for your partner. If you love someone and are committed to them,

it is the same as being married, it is just not official."

Within the context of their personally crafted value systems, Christian teenagers do not consider their sexual behaviors immoral, the professor said. He suggested this occurs because modern adolescents have no commitment to moral absolutes but instead view all moral decisions as flexible.

He illustrated by citing a Christian student who wrote in his journal, "I know that the Bible says, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' but I just don't believe that anymore."

Society has taught teens--even Christian teens--that morality is a private matter for each person to decide and has thereby erased religious guidelines, he added.

"In a culture that values sex so highly yet presents such a confusing picture of sexual ethics, it is not surprising that sexual development is problematic for so many youngsters."

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Peace dividend should be spent
on hunger relief, economist says

By Mark Wingfield

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Rather than giving wealthy and middle-class Americans tax breaks, Congress should use dollars saved by the end of the Cold War to feed hungry people, the president of Bread for the World said.

David Beckmann spoke during the first annual conference of the Baptist Center for Ethics at Immanuel Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn., Feb. 4. Bread for the World is a Christian organization that focuses on political action related to world hunger.

Beckmann cited President Bush's recent State of the Union address where he called for sharing the "peace dividend" with Americans in the form of tax breaks. Democratic Congressional leaders countered that the Republic president was pushing tax breaks for the wealthy that really should be given to the middle class, he noted.

"Nobody's saying those resources should go for food for hungry pregnant mothers," Beckmann explained. Feeding America's 20 million hungry people should have "a higher priority claim than tax cuts for the wealthy or middle class," he charged.

Beckmann said Bread for the World advocates redirecting Cold War defense spending two ways: "half to reduce the budget deficit and half to balance the human deficit" of hunger.

Beckmann is a Lutheran clergyman commissioned as a missionary-economist. He assumed leadership of Bread for the World last year after serving 15 years as an economist at the World Bank.

Christians concerned about ethics must be concerned about hunger issues, Beckmann said: "Responding to hunger is to Christian faith as breathing out is to breathing in."

Christians have made an enormous contribution to fighting hunger by direct action such as food pantries and soup kitchens, he said. However, in their action, Christians have neglected attempts to influence public policy, which can have a greater impact.

"A thousand points of light are not enough," Beckmann said, referring to Bush's emphasis on volunteerism to pick up what government programs can't do.

He explained that federal programs currently provide \$24 billion to fight hunger. For comparison, he said the total efforts of church feeding programs in the United States equal about \$2 billion annually -- one-tenth of the amount the government provides.

"Christian people who are concerned about hunger and poverty need to go beyond charity and use their citizenship to influence public policy," he said.

Beckmann said government spending on hunger issues actually saves money in the long run. He cited research which has shown for every dollar the government spends to prevent hunger, the government saves at least \$3 in programs that combat problems that result from hunger.

This means Christians concerned about sound fiscal policy should support spending on hunger prevention, Beckmann said. Further, he said Christians concerned about abortion should be concerned about hunger issues because poor nutrition kills the unborn as effectively as abortion.

Letters, calls and visits from individual voters have a greater impact on legislators than the work of lobbyists, Beckmann said. He urged Christians to contact their elected officials in support of programs that benefit the hungry.

This year, Bread for the World is focusing on legislation that would increase government funding for three programs: WIC, which is aid for women, infants and children, Head Start and Job Corps.

Through an emphasis called "Every Fifth Child," Bread for the World is asking people to write letters to their legislators supporting increased funding for these three programs.

Beckmann suggested churches plan special worship services about hunger and invite members to write letters as part of their worship. Suggestions for planning an "offering of letters" are available from the organization's national headquarters in Washington, D.C.

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Some forms of civil religion
acceptable, professor says

By Mark Wingfield

NASHVILLE, Tenn, (ABP) -- The civil rights movement illustrates one form of civil religion possibly acceptable to Baptists, while Reconstructionism represents an extreme and dangerous form of civil religion, an expert on religion and culture said.

Andrew Manis presented a paper on civil religion, Christian Reconstructionism and racism during the first national conference of the Baptist Center for Ethics in Nashville Feb. 4. Manis is assistant professor of religion at Averett College in Danville, Va.

He defined civil religion as the "intermixing of patriotic fervor with religious piety" or the "blending of allegiance to God and allegiance to country."

While many Baptists would argue civil religion has no place in American life, Manis said he believes certain forms of civil religion might be acceptable. As an example, he cited the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr.

Manis, who is white, was raised in Birmingham, Ala., during the heat of the struggle for civil rights.

"Throughout the struggle for civil rights, African-Americans often accepted a divine role for America -- of becoming the nation which would teach the world the true meaning of brother/sisterhood," he explained. "In this public faith, God called America to teach the world how to live with its pluralism."

On the other hand, modern expressions of Christian Reconstructionism illustrate a dangerous form of civil religion, Manis said. Reconstructionists

call for American society to be "reconstructed" according to biblical law, including the minute details of Old Testament law.

The problem with Reconstructionism is "it makes no distinction between civil religion and the rule of God," he explained.

Manis said tenets of Reconstructionism include an extreme view on biblical inerrancy, belief that all people must be governed by God's law as defined in the Old Testament, Christian dominion over governments and people, and a post-millennial approach to end times.

Also, Reconstructionists believe God has a special covenant with America as a "Christian nation," Manis said. He quoted a leading advocate for this philosophy who describes America as one of several "authorized distributors" of Christianity in jeopardy of losing its distributorship because it is getting too cozy with secular humanism.

Differing beliefs about end times create a barrier between Reconstructionists and most fundamentalist Christians, Manis noted, even though the two share other beliefs.

To meet historic Baptist principles, Manis said, any acceptable civil religion must:

-- Avoid coercion. For example, Reconstructionism fails this test because of its dependence on governmental power to enforce religious beliefs, Manis said.

-- Be shaped by the love ethic of Jesus. "Disciples of Jesus are called to servanthood rather than dominion," he noted.

-- Be universal. "Civil religion (that is) focused only on 'our kind of people' very easily degenerates into a baptized chauvinism," Manis explained. "The concept of an elect people becomes racist if it becomes purely nationalistic, uncontrolled by the universal impulses of the Christian gospel."

-- Be self-critical. Civil religion tempts people to believe not in original sin, Manis said, but in what one author has termed "American Original Sinlessness."

-- Be alien. If Christians are "aliens" in this world, as the Bible teaches, "then let our loyalty to Caesar remain under control, even when Caesar is on our team," Manis said.

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Administration wants churches
to report charitable donations

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The Bush administration wants to require churches and other tax-exempt organizations to report to the Internal Revenue Service the charitable contributions of donors who give more than \$500 annually.

The proposal, part of the administration's fiscal 1993 budget plan, is aimed at helping IRS catch taxpayers who inflate the amount of deductible contributions. According to an administration document, preliminary IRS data shows that taxpayers frequently have overstated charitable contributions in filing income tax returns.

The proposal drew criticism from Baptist church-state specialists.

"It is yet another ill-informed attempt of government officials who apparently have no depth of understanding regarding the dangers of church-state entanglement," said James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee. "It is more serious than a superficial reading would indicate because it represents a recurring pattern of willingness to use the churches for government's purposes. It is none of the business of religion to

be a government agent."

Existing law requires most tax-exempt organizations that receive tax-deductible contributions to file annual reports (Form 990) identifying donors who give \$5,000 or more in one year. Churches and their related organizations have been exempt from this requirement.

"That's the way it should be," said Brent Walker, associate general counsel at the Baptist Joint Committee. "This proposal opens the door even more for government to intrude into religious affairs and would result in unwholesome church-state entanglements. Proposals like this one belie Mr. Bush's public rhetoric about the importance of religion in our country."

Walker said the proposed reporting requirements, which the administration wants in place by July 1, also would create a record-keeping nightmare for churches.

"It would be awfully burdensome for big and small churches alike," Walker said. "Any member who gives as little as \$10 a week will hit the \$500 figure. Multiply that by the millions of church members and you've got a monumental mass of red tape."

The administration's proposal would require churches and other tax-exempt organizations to determine whether the amount is potentially deductible as a charitable gift or whether it is non-deductible because it was received for goods and services -- a requirement Walker said could put churches in a "dubious position."

"That should be between the IRS and the taxpayer," he said. "Churches should not be asked to give tax advice."

According to the Treasury Department, the proposal is designed to remedy the problem IRS has in distinguishing between gifts to charities and payments to charities for goods and services, such as admission to entertainment events or purchases made at charity auctions.

Charities with annual gross receipts of less than \$25,000 would be exempt from the reporting requirements. The Treasury Department indicated IRS likely would revise its tax forms to require separate rather than aggregate reporting of charitable gifts.

The administration estimates the change would save the federal treasury \$100 million annually through 1996 and recover \$200 million in 1997. The administration would use the savings to offset the amounts it would lose in providing more favorable tax treatment for gifts of appreciated property and gifts by multinational corporations to charities.

The House Ways and Means Committee is expected to begin taking action on the administration's tax proposals Feb. 12.

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-- By Larry Chesser

Analysis

Bush targets smaller audiences
for conservative social agenda

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Americans who grew accustomed to calls for school prayer and abortion legislation during Reagan-era State of the Union addresses may have missed such appeals in President George Bush's annual reports to Congress and the nation.

But while Bush and his speech writers have avoided President Ronald Reagan's practice of using State of the Union addresses to trumpet his

abortion and school-prayer views, he has not altogether abandoned the issues.

Generally, Bush has addressed such topics before narrower, more targeted audiences -- such as the annual meeting of the National Religious Broadcasters. In a speech about "values which sustain America" the day before his Jan. 27 State of the Union address, Bush touted his conservative views on abortion, school prayer and aid to private and religious schools.

"The first value is not simply American, but universal," he said. "And I refer to the sanctity of life. I will stand on the side of choosing life."

Calling for a return of religious exercises in public-school classrooms, Bush referred to belief in prayer as the ultimate value.

"Well, in Sunday school, children learn that God is everywhere," he said, "but in public school, they find that he's absent from class. And I continue to believe, as do the overwhelming majority of Americans, in the right to non-denominational, voluntary school prayer."

Bush expressed similar views in previous addresses to the broadcasters and the 1991 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The one element of a conservative social agenda Bush has alluded to in his last two State of the Union addresses is aid to parochial schools. But the "parochial aid" references were more veiled and general than direct and specific. In both instances Bush issued a call for "parental choice" in education, a euphemism for his proposal to give parents vouchers to send children to private and parochial schools.

In remarks to groups such as the broadcasters, Bush has not been hesitant to discuss world events in religious terms. But that strategy is not without risk, as became evident when Bush told the broadcasters that America's role in the world was Christ ordained. Jews, Muslims and others were angered when Bush thanked the broadcasters for supporting the 1991 Persian Gulf War and "for helping America, as Christ has ordained, to be a light unto the world."

Despite the considerable rhetoric on issues such as abortion, school prayer and parochial-school aid, neither Reagan nor Bush has put enough political muscle behind legislative proposals to move them through Congress, even during the six years the GOP controlled the Senate (1980-86). That observation is consistent with former Attorney General Edwin Meese's 1990 admission that abortion and school prayer were not top priorities in the Reagan administration.

Despite their less-than-all-out efforts to persuade Congress to act on these issues, the Reagan-Bush administrations may yet change America's social landscape.

What they failed to achieve legislatively, they may obtain via another branch of government -- the federal judiciary. Eleven years of Reagan-Bush court appointments lead many to believe the Supreme Court soon will overturn its 1973 landmark decision affirming a woman's right to privacy in abortion decisions.

And in a graduation-prayer case this term, the high court is weighing whether to replace its strict standard that requires governmental neutrality toward religion with one that would allow government involvement in religion as long as coercion is not involved.

Already a Supreme Court dominated by Reagan-Bush appointees has abandoned its long-held requirement that government have a compelling reason to restrict the free exercise of religion. Court observers view that as a strange turn of events from presidents who came to power opposing such judicial activism.

invocation by Muslim

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Senate witnessed history Feb. 6 when -- for the first time -- it heard a Muslim offer the invocation, the traditional opening of the chamber's proceedings.

Imam Wallace Mohammed, a Muslim-American spokesman from Illinois, offered the prayer, asking God's blessings on America and its political leaders.

"Grant to this nation that Americans continue to live as a prosperous nation of 'many in one' and as a people of faith taking pride in human decency, industry and service," he prayed.

"Grant that we Americans understand better our brothers and sisters around the world and reject unsuitable national pride for a global community of brotherhood and peace," he continued. "Bring all citizens and governments together, those of great means and small means, to appreciate more our nation's solemn pledge of liberty, peace and justice for all."

After the prayer Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., told senators that history was made in a small way this morning. He said it is important for Americans to reach out to people of all faiths.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, heralded the historic moment as "a great day" and "great strides" for the U.S. Senate.

James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee, said later, "We Baptists affirm the openness to religious freedom and genuine pluralism evidenced by this prayer and made possible by the distinctive American doctrine of church-state separation."

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-- By Pam Parry

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